



D43 The Steven Tauzer Murder Case

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After attending this presentation, attendees will have an understanding of the pitfalls involved when a high ranking member of law enforcement agency is murdered by fellow member of that agency and the ramifications of conflict of interest charges brought against the crime scene investigation team and the laboratory analysts involved in the case.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by creating awareness on the complexity of murder cases that involve high ranking public officials and the ramifications of investigations by forensic laboratories situated in rural communities.

Assistant District Attorney Steven Tauzer was found murdered in the garage of his residence in September of 2002. Chris Hillis, a former lieutenant of the Kern County District Attorney's Office Bureau of Investigation was soon developed as a suspect. DNA located on key evidence was crucial in developing Hillis as a suspect. Although the case was investigated by the Kern County Sheriff's Department, the crime scene was investigated by members of the Kern County District Attorney's Office Regional crime lab (KCDA). Initial evidence processing was also conducted by personnel from the KCDA Regional Crime Laboratory (KCDA RCL). Because of the onus of 'conflict of interest', the processing of evidence was halted by KCDARCL personnel, and the evidence was then packaged and shipped to the California State Department of Justice Bureau of Forensic Sciences Laboratory. As a result of the Cal DOJ Laboratories Analysis of the

DNA evidence Chris Hillis was arrested and charged with the murder of Steven Tauzer.

This presentation will focus on the evidence collected at the scene, its processing, and the resulting interactions of the presenter with the district attorney, sheriff's homicide investigators, California Department of Justice personnel. The personal conflicts faced by the presenter having to investigate a high profile murder case of his boss and a colleague, who were both more than just acquaintances will be discussed.

Conflict of Interest, DNA, High Profile Murder Case