

The background of the cover is a light yellow-green color with a subtle pattern of repeating leaf motifs. Each motif consists of a stem with two leaves, one slightly larger than the other, pointing towards the right. These motifs are scattered across the cover, with some appearing larger and more prominent than others.

# MURDER 101

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Homicide and Its Investigation

Robert L. Snow

The logo features a stylized green leafy branch to the left of the text. The word "Greenwood" is written in a large, elegant, dark green serif font. Below it, the words "PUBLISHING GROUP" are written in a smaller, dark green, all-caps sans-serif font.

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Homicide and Its  
Investigation

**Robert L. Snow**

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For Kay and Phyllis,  
sisters nonpareil

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## CHAPTER 1

# Murder in America

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On the morning of February 8, 2000, Indianapolis Police Department homicide detectives responded to a call from an apartment complex on the West Side of Indianapolis. At 8:30 a.m., a tenant of the apartments had gone out to the Dumpster with a bag of trash and discovered a woman's body inside.

As the captain in charge of the Indianapolis Police Department's Homicide Branch, I responded to the scene with my detectives, and indeed we found the body of a young black female, wearing only slacks and a bra, bound with duct tape and tossed into the Dumpster. As a part of his investigation, the lead detective assigned to the case, Ken Martinez, first began attempting to ascertain the identity of the victim, since the body had no identification on it. Within a few hours of the news media announcing the discovery of the body, the anxious parents of twenty-year-old Tahnesia Towner called the homicide office. Their daughter had been missing since the previous day, and they feared the woman in the Dumpster might be her. Unfortunately for them, the body did turn out to be their daughter's.

Once the family had positively identified the body as that of Towner, Detective Martinez began a check of Towner's background. While we often find that homicide victims have lifestyles that make them more susceptible to murder than non-homicide victims, that wasn't the case here.

What we found was simply a law-abiding, twenty-year-old college student from a good family, for whose murder we could see no apparent reason. Although partially clad, Towner's body, the autopsy revealed, showed no evidence of sexual molestation.

"This was a difficult case to deal with," Detective Martinez said. "I'm much better with cases of guys killing each other over dope. This woman was a totally innocent victim."<sup>1</sup>

Detective Martinez then began what turned out to be a non-stop investigation. (I noticed for several days following his assignment to this case that he wore the same clothing, and I later found out that he hadn't gone home for almost three days.) The detective's hard work, however, soon began to pay off. He quickly discovered that whoever the murderer was, he or she was well acquainted with the area around the apartment complex where the body was found. (Towner didn't live in the apartment complex where the tenant discovered her body, but several miles west.) The coroner fixed Towner's time of death, caused by strangulation, at between 4:00 and 6:00 p.m. the day before the tenant found her. Upon canvassing the neighborhood, homicide detectives assisting Martinez talked to several people who reported seeing a suspicious car around the Dumpster at about 9:30 p.m. the night before Towner's body was discovered. The Dumpsters at the apartment complex, we found, were routinely emptied between 2:00 and 4:00 a.m. each day, which meant that, if the suspicious car had dropped the body there, then by the time the resident carried her trash bag out at 8:30 a.m., the body should have been picked up with the trash and likely compacted with the Dumpster contents. However, we also discovered something that the murderer hadn't planned on. The man who ran the trash pickup route had called in sick that night, and so consequently no pickup was made.

Through her employment records, Detective Martinez found that Towner had clocked out at her job at 4:07 p.m.; and, through interviews and obtaining the victim's phone records, he confirmed that at 4:30 p.m. she had called the manager of her apartment complex and asked that her locks be changed because this was the second time she had come home to find her apartment door unlocked. However, when maintenance personnel arrived at her apartment fifteen minutes later, they discovered the door unlocked but no one home. They also found several pieces of furniture apparently overturned. Although her family tried several times to reach her that evening, no one knew where Towner was until the tenant

found her in the Dumpster the next morning. Consequently, we fixed Towner's time of death at between 4:30 and 4:45 p.m.

The day after the tenant reported finding Towner's body, Detective Martinez received a call in the homicide office from a district uniformed police officer. She told the detective that she had been called to take a burglary report at the apartment across the hall from Towner's, where the door had been kicked in, and that she had found Towner's door also kicked in. This incident had obviously occurred after Towner's murder because Detective Martinez knew that, in response to her call, maintenance personnel had installed new locks on her door.

As is common with unsolved murders, we sat around the office and discussed the case. We knew there had likely been at least a five-hour period between the murder and the placing of Towner's body in the Dumpster. "If you're the murderer," we mused, "what do you do with the body until you can take it to the Dumpster?" We reasoned that the murderer probably couldn't have carried Towner out to his or her car immediately after the murder without being seen, because this is an extremely busy time in the area, with many people coming and going from work. The murderer, we decided, likely hid the body somewhere until dark. This meant that the killer probably hid Towner's body somewhere in the apartment building and that the killer was possibly one of the other tenants. We also reasoned that hiding Towner's body in her own apartment until an opportune time to take it to the Dumpster would have been risky since the maintenance personnel could have found her, or a family member with a key could have stopped by to check on her. Just as risky would have been trying to hide Towner's body in one of the utility areas. It seemed more likely, our working hypothesis concluded, that she had been hidden in one of the other apartments until dark.

Consequently, Detective Martinez went to work checking on the other tenants of the apartment building. The tenants across the hall from the murder victim, a Mr. and Mrs. Desmond Loftus, the ones who had claimed that their apartment had been broken into about the same time as the murder victim's, reported that several items from their apartment had been taken in the burglary. Detective Martinez obtained a list of the items the couple claimed had been stolen and, as is routinely done, compared the list against recent pawn tickets. He immediately perked up when he found that the items, rather than being stolen, had actually been pawned several weeks earlier by Desmond. Although the couple

across the hall also both claimed not to have been home at the time of the murder, Desmond, who was unemployed, could not account for where he was. A background check showed that Desmond had a history of violence.

Detective Martinez served a search warrant on the Loftus apartment and found a roll of duct tape that the crime lab said matched exactly the tape used to bind the victim. Also in the couple's apartment, Detective Martinez discovered a shipping box addressed to Towner that contained Desmond's fingerprints, while a similar box, also containing his fingerprints, had been recovered from the Dumpster in which Towner was found. In addition, evidence technicians lifted one of Desmond's fingerprints from under the lip of a dresser drawer in Towner's apartment. Detective Martinez brought Desmond in for questioning, and he failed a voice stress test (a device, discussed in detail later, used to detect deception) when asked about the murder.

"He came close a couple of times to breaking down," Detective Martinez said. "He was close to tears."<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, Detective Martinez added, while Desmond wouldn't admit to the crime, he never denied it either.

Based on Detective Martinez' information, a court issued a murder warrant for Desmond Loftus. His wife, we discovered, had been at work during the time of the murder and the later dumping of the body and didn't, we believe, have any knowledge of the crime.

In his case summary, Detective Martinez theorizes that Desmond was likely in the process of burglarizing Towner's apartment when she came home unexpectedly. He apparently hid as best he could in the small apartment while she talked on the telephone about needing new locks on her door. When she was changing her clothing after the phone call (which explains her partially undressed state when we found her), she either stumbled onto Desmond or he panicked and confronted her. A struggle probably ensued, which explains the overturned furniture the maintenance personnel found.

Detective Martinez also believes that, after strangling Towner to death, Desmond likely carried her body back over to his own apartment, where he kept her hidden until taking her to the Dumpster later that night. Although Desmond didn't have to kick in Towner's door when he burglarized her apartment just before the murder—possibly meaning he had a key—maintenance personnel changed the locks soon afterward. Detective Martinez theorizes that Desmond for some reason

needed to get back into her apartment after the murder, possibly to recover some evidence left behind, so he kicked in her door. He then kicked in his own door in an attempt to throw off suspicion. Tying up the last loose end in the investigation, Detective Martinez also discovered that Desmond Loftus had previously worked at a location within view of the Dumpster where the tenant found Towner's body and consequently would have known the schedule for emptying it.

"This was an exhausting case," Detective Martinez said. "But I really felt good about solving it."<sup>3</sup>

On August 15, 2001, a jury returned guilty verdicts against Desmond Loftus for murder, burglary, and theft. On October 9, 2001, a judge sentenced Desmond to eighty-five years in prison.

As sad and horrible as the case above is for the family of Tahnesia Towner, this is by no means an isolated incident. In every area of America, it seems, incidents such as this have become commonplace today. What just a few decades ago would have been seen as an act of incomprehensible violence is today seen as simply just another horrible, but inevitable, crime. Increasingly, violent acts perpetrated against innocent victims have become commonplace in our country.

As an example of how common murder is in our country, during 2002 police agencies across the United States responded to reports of 16,204 homicides (defined as the willful killing of one human being by another), or one every thirty-two minutes during the year.<sup>4</sup> Murder is so prevalent in the United States that on December 31, 2002, 3,557 prisoners sat on the various death rows across the nation for the crime of murder. Interestingly, 8 percent of these 3,557 death row inmates have a prior conviction for murder.<sup>5</sup> And while the number of homicides in the United States dropped each year from 1992 to 1999, in 2000 the number of murders nationwide began climbing again. In 2002, cities with populations of 50,000 to 99,999 reported a murder increase of 7.2 percent over the previous year, while suburban counties showed an even higher increase of 11.7 percent.<sup>6</sup>

"That's crazy in a city like this to reach that number in a year," said Detective Tom D'Aguzzo of the Phoenix Police Department. "It's amazing."<sup>7</sup> The number Detective D'Aguzzo was talking about was the 247 murders that had been reported in Phoenix by December 15 for the year 2003, a number that had already eclipsed the previous record

of 245 murders in all of 2001. By comparison, Indianapolis, approximately two-thirds the size of Phoenix, recorded seventy-five murders as of December 15, 2003.

"I think for anybody, it makes them sad that there are children who can't feel safe riding a bike or going to the store," said Shikha Hamilton, president of the Detroit chapter of the Million-Mom March.<sup>8</sup> Ms. Hamilton is referring to the fact that in 2003 the number of children murdered in Detroit doubled from the number in 2002 and likely would be higher than in any other large city in the United States.

"It's safe to say that we have a crisis," said Cincinnati Councilman David Pepper, commenting on Cincinnati's fifth year in a row of seeing an increase in the murder rate. "We're now in the company of cities that have reputations of being very dangerous."<sup>9</sup>

An article in the *Los Angeles Times* on April 2, 2004, reported that, even though Chief of Police William J. Bratton had set a goal of reducing murders in Los Angeles by 20 percent during 2004, murders during the first three months instead rose 5 percent over the previous year. Some individual police districts in Los Angeles saw increases of more than 500 percent over the numbers for the first three months of 2003.<sup>10</sup>

These increases in the murder rate in areas all across our country have confounded many elected and appointed officials. In the 1990s, many police chiefs and mayors were touting programs and claiming responsibility for the murder rate going down. Now they are hiding and dodging questions about the upswing in the murder rate. What these officials didn't tell the public during the 1990s was that the murder rate in the United States had more than doubled between 1960 and 1980; hence, any drop in the rate, such as the one that occurred in the 1990s, could be seen as miraculous.<sup>11</sup>

So, given that murder is becoming an increasing concern almost everywhere in the United States, who commits all of these murders, and who are the most likely victims? According to murder statistics from 1976 to 2000, compiled by the U.S. Department of Justice, the largest number of murderers in our country comes from the age group eighteen to twenty-four (34.7 percent). The largest number of murder victims during this same time period, however, belonged to the age group twenty-five to thirty-four (29.2 percent). These same statistics, however, also show that 49,334 of this period's murder victims were aged seventeen or younger.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, according to statistics from the Centers for

Disease Control, homicide is the fourth leading cause of death for those aged one to nine, fifth for those aged ten to fourteen, and second for those aged fifteen to nineteen.<sup>13</sup>

Adding to these already disturbing statistics, records show that it's not strangers but family members who kill 71 percent of the very young children murdered every year in the United States.<sup>14</sup> And in contrast to statistics for adult murders, which show women perpetrators accounting for only 10 percent of all the murders nationally, women account for 43 percent of the murders of children under age twelve, with 75 percent of these victims being under age six. Additionally, it has been found that women who commit murder kill members of their families 79 percent of the time.<sup>15</sup> In addition to the above statistics, many experts believe that the number of children up to four years old who are murdered every year in our country is vastly underreported. A study of three years of murder records in Missouri found that only 39 percent of the fatalities of children in this age group that definitely had resulted from maltreatment, and only 18 percent of the fatalities that had possibly resulted from maltreatment, were reported as murders.<sup>16</sup>

However, when one looks at long-term national murder statistics, males, as may be expected, are much more often both the murderers (ten times as likely as females) and the murder victims (three times as likely), and more than three times as many males kill females as the reverse.<sup>17</sup> Interestingly though, while many elderly people feel anxious about crime and worry about becoming the victims of murder, those in the fifty and above age group actually have a very low victimization rate. This doesn't mean that murder doesn't happen to those fifty and older, only that their chances are smaller than for most other age groups.<sup>18</sup> And while many people may want to believe otherwise, overwhelmingly the races of both the murderer and murder victim are the same. From 1976 to 2000, 86 percent of whites were killed by whites, and 94 percent of blacks were killed by blacks.<sup>19</sup> Finally, statistics show that being killed by a lone murderer is much more likely than being murdered by a gang or a group of offenders, the chances being about four to one.<sup>20</sup>

When I first became a police officer more than thirty-six years ago, a large percentage of the murders we saw then were intimate partner murders. This type of murder, naturally, is relatively easy to solve. Unfortunately for the homicide clearance rate, though, this type of murder is no longer as prevalent. According to figures from the U.S. Department of

Justice, the number of intimate partner murders has dropped dramatically since the mid-1970s. From 1976 to 2000, for example, the number of men murdered by intimates dropped 68 percent, while the number of women killed by intimates stayed level for nearly two decades during this period, then finally declined 22 percent.<sup>21</sup> As commander of the Indianapolis Police Department Homicide Branch, I find that today a large number of our murders are drug-related, which means that the murderer and murder victim often don't have an intimately close relationship. Unfortunately, this makes solving these murders much more difficult.

However, regardless of this decrease in intimate partner homicide, murder is still a very personal crime. In the large majority of cases, murderers kill someone they know. Statistics compiled by the Federal Bureau of Investigation show that in 2002, only 14 percent of the murders in the United States where there was an arrest were committed by strangers.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, a major misconception many people in the United States have about murder, police officers find, is that it is mostly the province of urban areas. The truth is that no area in our country is exempt from the threat of murder. While the nation's cities had a murder rate of seven per 100,000 population in 2002, the suburbs still suffered a rate of four murders per 100,000 population, followed by rural areas, which experienced a rate of 3.8 murders per 100,000 population.<sup>23</sup>

Given all these statistics, many readers undoubtedly wonder, what causes all of these murders? While there may be many contributing factors, the police find that, overall, arguments are the most common reason given for murder (26.5 percent in 2002), followed closely (16.5 percent in 2002) by murder during the commission of another felony (rape, robbery, and so on).<sup>24</sup> Although the 2001 statistics cited drugs as the reason for fewer than 5 percent of the murders nationally, I've found during my time as homicide commander that this motive is vastly underreported.<sup>25</sup> A large percentage of the arguments that result in a murder, I've found, are arguments over drugs, and many of the robbery murders are robberies to buy drugs.

"If a person is not involved with narcotics, gangs, or an abusive relationship, their chances of being a homicide victim in Phoenix are pretty darn slim," Lieutenant Mike Hobel of the Phoenix Police Department told me. "Our most experienced investigators estimate that 60–70 percent of the murders in Phoenix are drug-related."<sup>26</sup> I and many other homicide commanders across the nation can echo Lieutenant Hobel's words.

As I mentioned earlier, the most likely murder victim in the United States is a person between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-four. However, this in no way means that anyone, young or old, is immune to becoming a murder victim. And while, as I also stated earlier, many of those who commit murder in our country are in their teens and early twenties, this too, as I show below, does not exclude anyone, young or old, from becoming a murderer.

On February 29, 2000, a six-year-old boy who reportedly lived in a crack house with his uncle found a loaded .32 caliber semi-automatic pistol under a blanket in his uncle's house. Stuffing the pistol down his pants, the youngster took it with him to Buell Elementary School in Flint, Michigan, where he attended the first grade. The six-year-old boy walked up to a classmate, six-year-old Kayla Rolland, with whom he had fought the previous day, and shot her in the chest. Doctors pronounced Kayla dead a short time later.

While ordinarily a six-year-old child cannot be held accountable for committing a crime, even murder, since someone so young usually doesn't understand the ramifications of such an act (the boy reportedly sat down and began drawing pictures after being questioned by the police), this certainly doesn't lessen the apprehension of parents everywhere about the safety of their children. It certainly doesn't lessen the grief of Kayla's parents.

As the head of a major city homicide unit, I naturally see many murder victims every year, and I deal with many grieving relatives. Even when the murder victims are far from ideal citizens, their relatives still grieve. We had a case recently here in Indianapolis in which we found a drug enforcer, whom we suspected of committing at least a half-dozen killings, murdered in his van. When his family came to the scene, the grief they displayed was obviously very genuine, despite the victim's lengthy criminal record and his constant association with extremely violence-prone individuals.

Yet, as the Tahnesia Towner and Kayla Rolland murders clearly demonstrate, it is not just criminals and those who associate with criminals, but often truly innocent people who can become the victims of murder. These cases are the hardest for the family, the community, and the police to deal with. While police officers can harden themselves

when dealing with the murders of drug dealers and holdup men, this isn't as easy to do when dealing with murders like the ones below.

On the evening of December 15, 1996, when firefighters forced their way into a burning two-story house in suburban Marion County, Indiana, they stumbled onto a horrifying scene. Just inside the smoke-filled living room they found the body of sixty-four-year-old Cleta Mathias, her hands bound behind her, her head split open. Nearby, under a Christmas tree, they discovered the body of Cleta's husband, sixty-four-year-old Frederick Mathias, pastor of the nearby Northminster Presbyterian Church, an ax still sticking out of his head. The firefighters immediately called for the Marion County Sheriff's Department.

Although large in physical stature, Reverend Mathias had been well known around the community as a gentle and compassionate man, loved by almost everyone who knew him. Mrs. Mathias, a registered nurse who had worked in a geriatric clinic, also didn't seem to know anyone who didn't love her.

Because of the popularity of the couple, the 1,700 members of Reverend Mathias' upscale church were naturally stunned and aghast at the gruesomeness of the crime. Why would anyone, they asked themselves, want to so brutally murder such a harmless couple?

"This is a tough jolt for us in the holiday season," said P. E. MacAllister, a longtime member of the church.<sup>27</sup>

Early in the investigation of this crime, homicide detectives from the sheriff's department conferred with members of the arson squad and quickly determined that the fire had been intentionally set. While the police then knew that the fire had been started in an unsuccessful attempt to cover up the murders, they didn't know whether murder had been the original plan or if perhaps the murdered couple had simply arrived home unexpectedly while someone was in their home, possibly in the process of burglarizing it.

As is standard practice in homicide investigations where no suspect is readily apparent, and operating on the assumption that, because of its viciousness, this wasn't just a random crime, investigators began looking into the couple's background in an attempt to find someone who harbored enough hatred of either victim to warrant splitting their heads open with an ax. Detectives also began looking into the activities of Reverend and Mrs. Mathias in the days and hours preceding the crime,

again searching for interaction with someone who might have had a reason to commit such a vicious crime.

Reverend Mathias, the homicide detectives learned through their background investigation, had served as the pastor of Northminster Presbyterian Church for the previous thirteen years and for a number of years had also served as a pastor during the summer at the Big Moose Community Chapel in upstate New York. Every person the detectives talked to only confirmed over and over that everyone who knew Reverend Mathias loved and respected him.

“Fred’s approach was to preach love,” said a member of the congregation.<sup>28</sup>

Mrs. Mathias, known both in Indianapolis and Big Moose as a gracious hostess and a caring wife, mother, and grandmother, also seemed to be universally loved and respected. During their initial look at the couple, detectives could find no apparent enemies or any reason for such a gruesome murder.

“We just cannot believe that this can happen to such a fine couple,” said Ida Winter, a member of the Big Moose congregation. “They were such wonderful people.”<sup>29</sup>

However, digging deeper, the police finally uncovered a possible lead. When checking on the couple’s activities preceding the crime, they discovered that the day before the murder a fifteen-year-old member of the church, Sean Rich, had been in the Mathias house helping to carry out a rug. In addition, witnesses placed a young man fitting this teenager’s description in the neighborhood of the Mathias home the night the crime occurred. Further investigation revealed that Rich’s mother had previously been convicted of arson and that Reverend Mathias had interceded in the case and persuaded the judge to sentence her to home detention rather than jail. But what really sparked the detectives’ interest in this young man was his history of violence. In court documents recovered by homicide investigators, Rich’s mother described him as “physically violent.” Also, they found, in a fit of anger a year or so before, he reportedly broke his sister’s nose. But why, detectives asked, would he want to murder Reverend and Mrs. Mathias so brutally?

Digging even deeper, homicide detectives finally found a possible motive for the murder. The investigators discovered that Reverend Mathias had recently fired fifteen-year-old Sean Rich from his job as an usher at the church when a congregation member reportedly caught Rich stealing

money from the offering plate. For a teenage boy, detectives knew, this type of humiliation could be enough to cause intense hatred. Also, several students told the detectives that Rich had flashed a large amount of cash around school the day after the double murder.

“The best suspect we have,” was how Marion County Sheriff Jack Cottey described the teen when asked by the news media about the Mathias case.<sup>30</sup>

All experienced homicide detectives know, however, that having a suspect and having enough actual evidence to warrant the arrest of that suspect are often far from being synonymous. Rich’s mother claimed that her son had an alibi for the time of the murder, and consequently refused to allow officers to speak with him, insisting that her son, though at times untrustworthy and violent, could never commit such a horrible crime. So, the case stalled for over a year.

“We’ve by no means given up,” said the lead homicide detective on the case, John Gray, when asked many months after the murders what progress the police were making.<sup>31</sup> These murders had struck a raw nerve not just with the community but also with the police officers investigating them.

Yet, despite this detective’s perseverance, it still took over a year of sifting through information and talking to more than 200 witnesses before the police could amass enough evidence to finally arrest the now sixteen-year-old Sean Rich and another youth, eighteen-year-old Paul Brightman, charging them both with the Mathias murders. Surprised homicide detectives found that after they turned up information that led them to Brightman, he almost immediately, upon being brought in for questioning, broke down crying and admitted to being present at the crime scene, implicating Rich as the murderer.

“We didn’t have any direct evidence at first to connect Sean Rich to the crime,” said Detective John Gray, explaining why it took the questioning and subsequent arrest of Paul Brightman before they could finally also arrest Sean Rich for the murders. “But we highly suspected him.”<sup>32</sup>

Brightman, a reputed drug dealer who had a quantity of illegal drugs in his apartment when arrested, told homicide investigators that Rich had convinced him the Mathias home would be an easy burglary target since he had been there and cased the house the previous day. However, during the break-in, the elderly couple returned home unexpectedly and surprised the two young burglars. Brightman told the police that Rich held

the couple at bay with a handgun he had brought along. While their hands were being bound, Reverend and Mrs. Mathias reportedly begged the youths to just take whatever they wanted and leave without hurting them. Rich, however, allegedly told Brightman to bring him an ax from the Mathias garage, and then he murdered the elderly couple with savage blows to the head.

“He wanted me to do it,” Brightman said. “I’m not a murderer. I’m a very sensitive person.”<sup>33</sup> Brightman claimed that before the murders he had pled with Rich to just leave, but he said Rich told him, “No, because they know me.”<sup>34</sup>

As he split Reverend Mathias’ head open with the ax, Rich, according to Brightman, reportedly screamed, “I didn’t steal your fucking money!”<sup>35</sup> The detectives, of course, believed Rich was referring to the recent accusation that he had stolen money from the offering plate. Following this, also according to Brightman, Rich then started a fire in the hope that it would cover up the crime.

Despite Brightman’s confession, however, Sean Rich steadfastly denied any involvement in the murders. He and several members of his family claimed that he had been at home on the evening of December 15. They said they remembered this because Rich had gotten into trouble for being on the telephone all evening talking to friends. Investigators discovered, however, that the records they subpoenaed from the telephone company didn’t support this alibi. In addition, a girlfriend of Rich’s told the police that he had confided to her that he was upstairs at the Mathias home on the night of the murders, and that it was Brightman who had killed the couple.

Not just Rich’s family, though, but even church members didn’t want to believe that another member could commit such a crime. “It would be easier,” Marianne Hedges said, “to believe such an atrocity was the work of outsiders such as a cult. That’s the stuff of tabloids. You can separate yourself from that.”<sup>36</sup>

In March 1999, however, a jury found Sean Rich guilty of burglary, theft, and criminal confinement, but couldn’t reach a decision as to whether Rich or Brightman actually swung the ax that killed the Reverend and Mrs. Mathias. Consequently, the jury didn’t render a verdict on the murder charges (a frustrating but fairly common occurrence we will discuss in a later chapter). While Rich faces the likely possibility of another trial on the murder charges, a judge sentenced him to ninety-three

years in prison for the crimes the jury did convict him of. In Indiana, this means that, with good behavior, Rich will have his first parole hearing in 2045, when he is sixty-three years old. In June 2000, because of his cooperation with the police, Paul Brightman, who pled guilty to his part in the crime, received a shorter sentence of sixty-five years.

“There was a lot of relief in the office when this case was solved,” said Detective John Gray. “We never gave up on it.”<sup>37</sup>

What the preceding incidents involving Tahnesia Towner, Kayla Rolland, and the Reverend and Mrs. Mathias clearly demonstrate is that anyone, no matter how innocent, can become the victim of murder. A person doesn't have to be in a violent domestic relationship or involved in crime in order to become a murder victim.

The police, of course, are tasked with the job of solving these murders, with arresting and jailing the perpetrators, and then with assisting in the prosecution. Doing this can occasionally be easy, but more often is extremely difficult. Solving most murders is a complex task that involves using both deductive reasoning and the ability to see what on the surface may not appear to be, but actually are, relationships of cause and effect. Solving murders also requires the assistance of many other professionals, such as forensic anthropologists, entomologists, pathologists, crime lab technicians, fingerprint analysts, criminal profilers, psychologists, and others.

However, before we get into how murders are solved, it's important to explain the different types of murders and other incidents of death, such as suicide, that homicide detectives investigate. I will begin with murder; as the following anecdotes demonstrate, murder can come in many forms.

On March 18, 2001, according to reports in the *St. Petersburg Times*, Phillip Walker, a convicted felon and drug addict, carried a gun with him when he walked into the Tampa Metro Treatment Center in Temple Terrace, Florida, a suburb of Tampa. The Tampa Metro Treatment Center distributes methadone to heroin users in order to wean them off their addiction to heroin. The management of the treatment center obviously realized that their organization dealt with unstable and dangerous individuals, and so consequently they kept the methadone, and the cash that addicts paid for it, inside a locked room in the treatment center offices.