

‘Divine Intervention’: Murder Solved with Help of a Family Bible

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Jesus said in Luke 8:17, “For nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor anything hidden that will not be known and revealed.”

These words are certainly true for the day of judgement when all of humanity will stand before the risen Lord. They also ring true for many evils that are committed on the earth and only come to light by what appears to be divine intervention.

According to several investigators working a murder case from 2015, that is exactly how their case ended up being solved.

In April 2015, 90-year-old Earl Olander was found murdered in his rural Minnesota home. There was little evidence found at the crime scene, and with no workable leads to go on, investigators were stumped for weeks.

In a recent episode of “20/20,” some of the investigators believe that it was divine intervention that led to the solving of the case.

“You’re always looking for that one nugget, that one thing that comes in that allows you to solve the case,” said retired Carver County Sheriff Jim Olson.

Olson and several others worked the case that started back in 2015, and all they had to go on at the time were some shoe prints left behind by the suspects.

What stood out to investigators as the possible motive was the fact that Olander lived a modest farm-life, but was

exceptionally wealthy.

It was later discovered that Olander had millions of dollars in his estate, much of which came from an inheritance he received along with farming over many years.

“You could tell that the suspects had spent a significant amount of time in the house going through all the drawers and cupboards,” said Chris Wagner, the former lead investigator for the Carver County Sheriff’s Office. “Money has always been in a lot of crimes that you’re looking into.”

After hitting dead end after dead end, with no reliable tips or leads producing a trail to follow, investigators finally caught a break on May 9, 2015 when they received a call from Barry Kyles of St. Paul, Minnesota.

Kyles broke the case after finding a Bible in an apartment he was cleaning. Inside the Bible he found a savings bond with Olander’s name on it, and later did a search of the name.

When Kyles found out that Olander had in fact been murdered, he contacted the police.

The Bible was unique as well, being over 100 years old, and was written in Norwegian and had been in Olander’s family for decades.

Now, the investigators had a suspect in their sites: Edson Benitez, the resident of the apartment in which the Norwegian Bible was found.

When confronted by investigators over the Bible, Benitez’s story changed several times.

First, Benitez told investigators that he had been given the Bible by a friend that had moved to Mexico. Then as the story he gave them did not add up, Benitez admitted to investigators that the Bible was in fact stolen.

Thus began a game of finger-pointing that would lead to four counts of murder.

Benitez said he was with Reinol Vergara, a friend of his who had worked on Olander's house and suspected Olander of keeping large sums of money in his residence.

Vergara was already known to police in the area, as he was a suspect in a burglary that had taken place at one of Olander's neighbor's homes years earlier.

Vergara was a painter by trade, and had done work at both Olander's home and the neighbor's house that had been burglarized.

Benitez then spilled the beans on the whole operation to investigators.

He claimed that he went to Olander's home with Vergara, then waited in the car while Vergara went into the home with a bag that allegedly had duct tape and a gun in it.

After approximately 20 minutes, Benitez said Vergara came back to the car and asked for his help looking for the money in the house.

Upon entering the home, Benitez said he saw a man with a blanket duct-taped over his head, as well as having his hands and feet secured with duct tape.

Benitez told investigators that Vergara hit the man with his gun and told him he was going to die, but Vergara said he never hit the man and that there was a third person with them during the break-in.

"There was an awful lot of finger-pointing that was going on in this case," Olson said in his "20/20" interview.

With the two suspects in custody, investigators were able to match the shoe prints that were found at the beginning of the

investigation to the two men's shoes. They also found cellphone records from the two suspects that showed they were at the house at the time of the murder.

With both suspects pleading guilty to one of the four charges of murder brought against them, authorities are confident there was no other person involved in the heinous crime.

"After law enforcement exhaustively investigated the murder and followed up on every lead, there was no reliable or credible evidence that a third person was involved in the murder of Earl Olander," the Carver County Attorney's office said to "20/20."

The Bible is the Word of God and it is always true, and truth follows it wherever it goes. Even in the case of a devout man, living his life peaceably who was unjustly killed, those who tried to hide the truth were found out by it.

Olander's longtime neighbor Bill Boecker told "20/20," "To me, there are no coincidences. There are only 'God-incidences.'"
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