

STARK MAN INDICTED FOR BOGUS CHECKS \ CANTON RESIDENT ACCUSED OF BEING PART OF RING THAT DEFRAUDED BANKS

*By Beacon Journal staff report January 19, 2001 Publication: Akron Beacon Journal (OH)
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A Canton man has been indicted on federal charges he was part of a counterfeit check-cashing ring that defrauded three banks of about \$83,000. Lonnie B. Thompson, 44, address unknown, was part of a ring with six or more others who cashed counterfeit checks, used bogus checks as payment at stores and cashed checks at stores, said Linda M. Betzer, assistant U.S. attorney in Cleveland.

She said the other suspects are from the Northeast Ohio area but declined to identify them.

The counterfeit check ring defrauded National City Bank, Key Bank and FirstMerit Bank by writing more than 220 checks during 1999 and 2000, according to the five-count indictment Wednesday by a Cleveland grand jury.

The checks drew money from four accounts, including one held by Cuyahoga County Community College. Thompson and others also cashed bogus checks payable to several individuals, the indictment said.

Betzer declined to disclose how Thompson or the others gained access to the accounts.

Thompson faces up to 30 years in prison and a \$1 million fine for each count.

The case was investigated by the U.S. Secret Service and FBI with the assistance of Akron police, other local police agencies and the security forces of the victim banks.

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Man sentenced for fraud, implicated in murder probe

By DAVE SERENO Repository staff writer January 9, 2002 Publication: Repository, The
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CLEVELAND □ A Canton man did something more sinister than run a counterfeit check ring, federal prosecutors say.

They claim Lonnie B. Thompson helped murder a witness against him and bury the body behind an Akron home.

Little mention of the alleged connection was made Tuesday at Thompson's sentencing hearing in U.S. District Court.

Judge John M. Manos ruled such testimony could violate Thompson's rights. He told investigators they can charge Thompson with the crime if they feel there's sufficient evidence.

Manos focused solely on Thompson's four bank fraud convictions from Thompson's June trial.

He gave Thompson 6 1/2 years in prison, the maximum penalty under federal guidelines.

Thompson, a 45-year-old who has been incarcerated for much of his adult life, lived briefly in Canton.

He has numerous convictions in Summit County for forgery, receiving stolen property and other charges.

His latest crime spree centered on the creation of bogus business checks. Thompson passed them at several banks in 1999 and 2000 to collect more than \$80,000.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Linda M. Betzer asked Manos to look beyond the regular sentencing guidelines and consider a substantially longer prison term because of Thompson's alleged involvement in the murder of Gerald Sykes, a witness in the check-cashing ring.

Federal law allows such a move in special circumstances where a defendant's offense doesn't reflect the seriousness of his criminal past or the likelihood he will commit new crimes.

Family members reported Sykes, 32, missing Jan. 1, 2000. His body was found March 10, 2000, buried four feet underground in a debris-filled yard. His arms and legs were bound by duct tape.

According to court records, Thompson told investigators where the body was and accurately

described the clothing Sykes wore.

□Thompson stated that he had been present and witnessed the killing but had not participated in it,□ Betzer wrote in her motion.

The man Thompson named as the killer had once lived at the home. Thompson met the man through prison.

Thompson admitted that he knew Sykes had talked to investigators about the check ring and was planning to testify, court records show.

Sykes reportedly told federal officials that Thompson had recruited him to help cash the bogus checks.

Neither Thompson nor the man he claimed did it have been charged with Sykes□ slaying.

Betzer declined to comment on why Thompson has not been charged with Sykes□ death or speculate if he would be.

□This is only a guess but they must not be completely comfortable that they can win a conviction,□ said Michael O□Shea, Thompson□s attorney. □It□s just a guess, though.□

O'Shea said Thompson's statement about his involvement in Sykes' slaying were not accurately portrayed in Betzer's motion for a longer prison term.

"I know what he said ... their characterization is lopsided in their favor," he said.

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POLICE IDENTIFY BURIED BODY OFFICERS SAY MAN FOUND IN AKRON GRAVE HAS BEEN MISSING SINCE JANUARY.

By Dave Ghose, Beacon Journal staff writer March 13, 2000 Publication: Akron Beacon Journal (OH) Page: B1 Word Count: 535

Akron police have identified a body that detectives found buried behind a West Akron home. The body of Gerald Sykes Sanders, 32, of Akron, was discovered Saturday in the back yard of a home in the 1100 block of Yukon Avenue, police said yesterday.

Detectives are investigating the case as a homicide, said Detective Washington Lacy.

The man, who lived about a mile away in the 1000 block of Wooster Avenue, had been missing since January, Lacy said.

Sanders was arrested Dec. 12 on a charge of possessing drug paraphernalia. He pleaded guilty that month in Akron Municipal Court and was sentenced to community service and fined \$311.

Details about his death remain murky.

Summit County Medical Examiner Marvin S. Platt performed an autopsy on Sanders yesterday, but police and Platt didn't release a cause of death.

Detective Rodney Tucker declined to discuss a report from a neighbor that the body was bound with duct tape.

A man and a woman who were at Sanders' address also declined to comment yesterday.

Reuben Sabree says the gruesome discovery doesn't accurately reflect the neighborhood near Akron's western border.

Police found the body buried 6 feet deep in Sabree's back yard. Sabree told police three weeks ago that he suspected from the appearance of the back yard that someone had buried something there.

Sabree has said the home was vacant from November through most of February while he lived in an apartment on Manchester Road near his appliance business.

He described the racially mixed neighborhood on Yukon Avenue as quiet and safe. The

numerous homes are close together on small city lots. Several homes surround the back yard where the body was found, but there is no clear view from those homes into the burial site.

A nearly 6-foot stockade fence surrounds the yard, which is littered with air conditioners and lawn mowers.

"This is one of the sweetest areas," said Sabree, a former New York City cabdriver. "We check on one another. It really is exceptional for something like this to happen, but it can happen anywhere."

The discovery of the corpse has at least one neighbor planning to leave the area, Sabree said.

"People are hurt," he said. "People are more upset than I am."

Sabree said he became suspicious three weeks ago, after noticing a 4-foot-by-3-foot sunken area in his yard and red mud near it. Sabree asked his neighbor, Floyd Randle, who lives across the street, to take a look at the mysterious site.

Randle was also suspicious as soon as he saw it. "This is a shallow grave," he recalled saying.

Randle suggested Sabree notify police. That day, Sabree, Randle and a pair of Akron officers watched another neighbor dig a 3-foot hole in Sabree's back yard.

The digging lasted about 20 minutes, but nothing unusual was discovered.

The three neighbors and police decided their suspicions were wrong, but detectives returned Saturday, spending more than four hours digging. Officers brought a dog trained to detect the presence of cadavers.

Detectives said they received a tip last week that enabled them to obtain a search warrant.

The news that his initial reaction was correct shocked the 57-year-old Randle. Both he and Sabree said they didn't know Sanders.

"It's a scary situation," Randle said.

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SLAYING VICTIM FACED CHARGE COUNTERFEITING PROBE TARGETED CANTON MAN

By George W. Davis, Beacon Journal staff writer April 14, 2000 Publication: Akron Beacon Journal (OH) Page: B1 Word Count: 480

The man whom Canton police believe was slain by his son on April 2 but whose body was not found until a week ago had been targeted since May in a broad counterfeiting investigation. However, the slaying of Keith L. Marsh, 36, is not related to the counterfeiting case, the U.S. Secret Service said.

Marsh's son, DeMario A. Marsh, 20, of Columbus, was charged Sunday with his father's murder; that was a week after the slaying, according to a statement the younger Marsh gave to Canton police detectives.

The statement came two days after authorities learned of the slaying, the fifth homicide in Stark County this year and the third in Canton.

David Lee, resident agent in charge of the Akron office of the Secret Service, said this week that the murder defendant was not under investigation in the counterfeiting venture.

The slaying victim had recently moved into the Ira Turpin Way Northeast home of his fiancée.

Canton Detective Lt. Jerry Steiner said the son admitted to investigators that he had stayed with his father for two days before they argued. He told police he stabbed his father repeatedly and left him lying in his blood before returning to Columbus in the father's sport utility vehicle.

Lee said the father had been under investigation by the Secret Service, the Canton office of the FBI and the Canton police in a joint probe since May as part of an investigation into a group believed to be making and distributing counterfeit checks.

Authorities said their investigation determined that Marsh and others were involved in making checks using computer technology. Marsh also was involved in making counterfeit currency, "which can be manufactured to a lesser degree with no type of photography or printing skills," Lee said.

In February, agents executed a search warrant on another Canton home where Marsh was then living.

Lee said Marsh confessed to buying credit information from associates in the Columbus area and also said he had learned from sources on the Internet how to make false identification documents.

A federal grand jury indicted Marsh on March 8. The same day, federal and local agents arrested him at the Ira Turpin Way home. He was arraigned before U.S. Magistrate James S. Gallas in Akron and released on bond. Lee said the maximum penalty for the bank fraud charge was 30 years in prison and a \$1 million fine.

On April 6, Keith Marsh's mother called the mother of his fiancée and asked her to check on her son because she hadn't heard from him in several days. Shortly after midnight on April 7, Marsh's body was found.

The fiancée, Cynthia Reynolds, 34, has been in the Reformatory for Women in Marysville since late March for violating probation from a cocaine possession conviction.

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MAN TURNS HIMSELF IN TO POLICE WITNESS SAYS HE SAW MAN STRANGLE VICTIM, BURY HIM IN WEST AKRON BACK YARD. DETECTIVES INTERVIEWING.

*By Dave Ghose, Beacon Journal staff writer March 15, 2000 Publication: Akron Beacon
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A man who a witness claims killed an Akron man and then buried him in a back yard turned himself in to Akron police for questioning yesterday. Maj. Paul Callahan, head of the detective bureau, said last night that detectives interviewed the man, but police haven't decided whether to seek charges against him.

The man traveled from out of state to reach Akron, Callahan said.

Callahan said he wasn't sure if the man was still in police custody last night. A deputy at the Summit County Jail late last night said the man was there.

On Thursday, a witness told Detective Gregory Harrison that around Christmas time, he saw the man strangle Gerald Sykes Sanders at a home on the 1100 block of Yukon Avenue in West Akron.

The witness said the man then buried the 32-year-old Sanders in a hole in the back yard, according to an affidavit filed in Akron Municipal Court to secure a search warrant.

Harrison took the witness to the home on Friday, and the witness confirmed it was the killing site, court records state.

Armed with a search warrant, officers on Saturday found the body of Sanders in the back yard after more than four hours of digging. It was 6 feet under.

Sanders had been missing since Dec. 21 or 22, court records indicate.

Callahan said he didn't know what prompted the killing.

Sanders was arrested Dec. 12 on a charge of possessing drug paraphernalia, and was sentenced to community service and fined \$311.

Summit County Medical Examiner Marvin S. Platt performed an autopsy on Sunday, but he hasn't indicated a cause of death yet.

Reuben Sabree, 72, the owner of the Yukon Avenue home, has said the home was vacant from November through most of February while he lived in an apartment on Manchester Road.

A nearly 6-foot tall stockade fence blocks the view of the back yard from the several homes that surround the property. Appliances also litter the back yard.

Sabree notified police three weeks ago that he suspected something was buried behind his home because of red mud and a 4-foot-by-3-foot sunken area.

Police came to the home, and watched one of Sabree's neighbors dig a 3-foot hole. Officers and the neighbors decided at the time that Sabree's suspicions were unfounded because they found nothing unusual.

Police returned after speaking to the witness.

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4 AREA RESIDENTS HELD IN BOGUS CHECK SPREE

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Four Akron-area residents allegedly cashed counterfeit government checks on a seven-state crime spree that ended Friday and Saturday with their arrests in Myrtle Beach, S.C.

Charged with conspiracy to counterfeit government checks were Tranda Booze, 25; Anthony Gadson, 24; Lonnie Bernard Thompson, 38; and Daniel Id Deen, 29.

The FBI in Columbia, S.C., said the group passed counterfeit checks in grocery stores in Ohio, Tennessee, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Florida and Kentucky. The checks were drawn on a bogus account in the name of Kelly Temporary Services, and printed by equipment transported with the group.

No details were available on how much money was involved.

If convicted, each defendant faces a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

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