

UNDISCLOSED, The State v. Dennis Perry
Episode 10 - Mafia
September 10, 2018

[0:44] Deputy Dale Bundy:

Were you at the Rising Daughter's Church on March 11th of 1985?

Donnie Barrentine:

No.

Deputy Dale Bundy:

Did you kill Harold and Thelma Swain?

Donnie Barrentine:

No.

Deputy Dale Bundy:

Do you know who killed Harold and Thelma Swain?

Donnie Barrentine:

No idea.

[0:55] Rabia Chaudry: Donnie Barrentine became a suspect in the Swain case after he and two other men were pulled over for a traffic stop in Telfair County, Georgia, and the state trooper discovered a machine gun in their car. Barrentine and the two men he was with were arrested, and not long after, one of those two men, Jeff Kittrell, began to talk. And he kept talking. About all sorts of things. Including a time Donnie had come over to his house in Marianna and brought along a friend who was a blond guy with glasses, and then Donnie had started bragging about how they went to a church and shot down a preacher and his wife.

As a result of what Jeff Kittrell said to investigators, Donnie Barrentine has been investigated in connection with the Swain case off and on for three decades now. He has always denied having any involvement in what happened at Rising Daughter.

Donnie Barrentine:

First of all, it would be completely stupid. Alright, you know if somebody is going to get killed in a church, they're going to turn the world upside down looking for you, you know. Now ... I mean who'd be stupid enough? If he was gonna kill the people, why would you wanna bring that kind of heat on yourself? That'd be stupid.

Despite the years of investigation, Jeff Kittrell's statements have remained the strongest evidence potentially linking Donnie Barrentine to the Swain case. But when Kittrell first told police about him, he was facing charges himself, and looking for help with his sentence. And so, he'd talked. Although, he said, he fully expected Donnie Barrentine to get back at him for it one day.

[2:38] Jeff Kittrell:

I know Donnie, and he gonna come after me one day, I know it. He's always telling me, "Either you're gonna be silent as a rock or you're gonna be like a rock."

[3:26] Rabia Chaudry: Hi, and welcome to Undisclosed. This is Episode 10 in the case of *The State v. Dennis Perry*. My name is Rabia Chaudry. I'm an attorney and author of the New York Times Best Seller, *Adnan's Story*, and I'm here with my colleagues, Susan Simpson, and Colin Miller.

Susan Simpson: Hi, this is Susan Simpson. I'm an attorney in Washington, D.C., and I blog at [TheViewFromLL2](#).

Colin Miller: Hi, this is Colin Miller. I'm an Associate Dean and professor at the University of South Carolina School of Law, and I blog at [EvidenceProf Blog](#).

THE FEDERAL CHARGES

[6:44] Colin Miller: As a result of the arrest in Telfair County, Jeff Kittrell pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit robbery. At his sentencing hearing, the State told the Court:

"Your Honor, Mr. Kittrell has been -- his help has been very beneficial in the investigation. He has cooperated with both Federal and State authorities in investigating all the circumstances surrounding this. We would urge the Court to accept the proposed plea agreement."

The court did accept it. Kittrell could have been facing charges that could mean a life sentence, but instead he got time served.

Kittrell didn't face any charges for possession of the machine gun that was found, but he'd been charged with conspiracy to commit robbery because there had been a few other items that were collected from the car as well. Things like gloves, and pantyhose, and rolls of duct tape. They were all recently purchased, too -- they'd been bought by the three men on their drive up from Brantley County to Telfair County that night, on their way to that house in McRae. They'd been sent by Donnie's cousin Greg to find the man who lived there, but when they got to the house, they'd found only a 14 year old boy at home. So they'd gone away again, before being pulled over by State Trooper Bobby Christian.

[7:44] Rabia Chaudry: At Jeff Kittrell's sentencing hearing, he took the stand, and was asked about the items they had with them: the gloves, and the pantyhose, and the duct tape.

"What were the gloves for?" the prosecutor asked him.

"They were to wear," Jeff Kittrell said. *"You know, when they went into the man's house to collect the money."*

"And what were the pantyhose for?"

"They were so they could hide their faces when they went in," Jeff Kittrell said, *"so that afterwards the guy wouldn't be sending no contracts out on anybody."*

"And what was the duct tape for?"

"I ain't sure," Jeff Kittrell said.

The prosecutor had no further questions. As a result of his cooperation, Jeff Kittrell was sentenced to probation for seven years, and released from jail. If he had not agreed to a plea, he could have faced up to ten years in prison.

David Roberson, the driver of the car, also pleaded guilty, but he didn't have a lawyer, and he got no recommendation of leniency from the State. When Roberson took the stand, he simply told the court, "I've got nothing to say. I'm guilty." Roberson was sentenced to three years in prison, and four years probation.

[8:58] Colin Miller: Donnie Barrentine, for whatever reason, was never charged with any offenses under state law. Instead, he faced a federal charge for possession of the machine gun, and was sentenced to five years, but was out in three. So in November of 1988, just a few days after the *Unsolved Mysteries* episode aired for the first time, Barrentine was released from federal custody, and returned to Florida.

All in all, things could've gone much worse for Donnie Barrentine, though. And for many of the people Donnie Barrentine worked for, things did go much worse. Exactly one week after Donnie Barrentine, Jeff Kittrell, and David Roberson were arrested in Telfair County for possession of the machine gun, Donnie's cousin Greg Barrentine was himself arrested on a federal warrant, after being indicted along with 38 other defendants as part of a drug conspiracy. That indictment had been the result of a sprawling, multi-year DEA investigation into a drug ring based out of Wilkes County, North Carolina. Greg Barrentine and other members of the conspiracy imported drugs into the U.S. through a network that ran from Florida up to North Carolina. They flew in marijuana from the Caribbean, shipped in cocaine from Colombia, and smuggled in firearms from locations unknown.

But then the conspiracy fell apart, and the indictments began. Greg Barrentine was charged in connection with his role in acquiring a shrimp boat called the Frances Louise, which was then used to smuggle in narcotics through ports in Jacksonville and Brunswick. Greg Barrentine was convicted in October of 1985, and sentenced to 35 years in prison. Although, his sentence was relatively light in comparison to some. One co-conspirator, Wayne Porter, received a sentence of 75 years. He's still in prison today.

[10:34] Susan Simpson: Donnie Barrentine was able to avoid that fate. Although DEA records show that, he too, had been involved in the Wilkes County operation, he never got caught up on any charges for it, aside from possession of that machine gun.

And, according to Donnie's relatives, it had been Greg Barrentine that had gotten Donnie involved in the whole conspiracy in the first place. In July of 1985, when Butch Kennedy and Joe Gregory went over to Marianna, Florida, they spoke to Donnie's relatives. And one of them told investigators:

"Donnie has really changed the last few years. He has gotten into robbing people and pistol whipping them. I've talked to him, but it doesn't do much good. I know he is really getting into serious trouble now that he's in Georgia living with [Greg]."

Donnie has talked about stealing drugs from drug dealers for [Greg] and getting into smuggling for [Greg]. There is no telling what he will do now that he is living up there in Georgia.

I knew he was into a lot of trouble here in Marianna. As I said before, he was into ripping off drug dealers and that kind of thing. I saw him up in Brantley County one time and he was running his mouth off about Greg teaching him how to smuggle in cocaine. He said something about making trips to the Bahamas. He said something about making trips to Mexico. He was always running his mouth off about being in the Mafia now and about a man named Avery that they call "Wildman" being his boss. I didn't know how much of it to believe, but now that all of this has happened, I guess he was telling the truth."

While down in Florida, the investigators also spoke to the ex wife of Donnie's cousin, Greg Barrentine. She told them,

"I can't tell you anything about a black man and his wife being murdered, but I remember reading about something like that in the newspaper and hearing about it on television, but I never heard Donnie or Greg talk about anything like that. Greg has really changed in the last four or five years. He started to change when our daughter was killed. Since then, he has almost gone crazy. I really believe he has lost his mind. I never heard the name Harold or Thelma Swain. Donnie did not like black people, neither did Greg. The only time I saw them around was at our son John's funeral a few weeks back. There were some black men there with the "Wildman." There was one driving his car and two with him. They were heavily armed. I don't know what that was all about. That was the kind of thing Greg had gotten himself into."

It's not clear what the trouble in Marianna was that Donnie Barrentine's relatives told investigators about. But Jeff Kittrell's statements may give us a few clues, or at least, there were a few more murders down there that Kittrell was trying to pin on Donnie Barrentine.

[13:03] Jeff Kittrell:

I don't know whether he used a 45 up there or if he used a 45 down here, but he shot the guy that runs the truck stop out here at Marianna. And he was living in Georgia at the time, and he come down here, and he was staying at ... over in Marianna, in a motel down there, under the alias, Ricky Lindsey. And a guy that runs the big truck stop out here, Donnie went up there to his townhouse and shot

him through the door. And he was using the alias Ricky Lindsey. And that guy that he killed out on the interstate, he shot him with shotgun, and laid his shotgun besides he trailer. That's his trademark.

Deputy Dale Bundy:

We found one over in an orange grove he'd done somewhere in Pensacola, he shot the head off a farmer. Had the shotgun lying right by the man's body.

THE DRUG RING

[13:57] Colin Miller: These other stories about Donnie Barrentine were not directly related to what the Camden County investigators were interested in, but they didn't completely ignore these stories, either. They were looking into the murder of the Swains and not an international drug cartel, but there were plenty of rumors going around Camden County that suggested the latter might somehow have played a role in the former. And although the bigger cartel that Donnie's cousin Greg had been tied up with was primarily based out of Wilkes County, North Carolina, Greg Barrentine himself lived in Waynesville, in Brantley County, not far from the Camden County line.

Susan Simpson:

Were there other stories like that ... you ever heard about motive or?

Butch Kennedy:

Yeah, the Morgans out of Brantley County. But Donnie, Donnie Barrentine was big friends with the Morgans, and the Morgans were big into the Dixie Mafia.

The Morgans were a family based out of Brantley County. They weren't related to the Barrentines, but it was well known to law enforcement that they worked together.

Butch Kennedy:

And that, uh, they were back and forth transporting drugs to Florida.

And this drug ring didn't just involve importing narcotics in from overseas. There was also a domestic side to production.

Joe Gregory:

The Barrentines worked for these two brothers over in Brantley County who were the big ... they had dope planted all over the county. Butch and I caught these

guys working the pot field there in Camden, and next thing you know, they're walking.

Susan Simpson:

Hmm.

Joe Gregory:

I mean literally. Let 'em go free. Walked out. And we found out that was from direct order from Glen Thomas, let 'em go.

And, according to Jeff Kittrell, it was while he was with Donnie Barrentine up in Brantley County, visiting the Morgans, that he saw Donnie Barrentine's coldblooded, blond-haired friend for the second, and final time.

[15:48] Jeff Kittrell:

Donnie showed back up. He showed back up, that's when he came over here to Greg Barrentine's house. And that night and the next day, me and Donnie and Greg went to Zebi Morgan's house, and that's when the blond-headed guy come walking up.

Deputy Dale Bundy:

You know who he was?

Jeff Kittrell:

I never knew the name. He was the guy that come with Donnie to the house.

Deputy Dale Bundy:

You ever heard of the name Dennis Perry?

Jeff Kittrell:

Nah. Anyway that blond-headed guy, he came walking up ...

The only other time Jeff Kittrell had seen this man, he said, was down in Florida. When Donnie Barrentine had brought him over to Jeff Kittrell's house, and had then bragged about how they'd committed the murders at Rising Daughter.

Jeff Kittrell:

And the guy looked at me, and I looked at him when he said that. And I looked at him and he turned around and walked back to the house. And that was the last time I seen that guy.

Deputy Dale Bundy:

The guy that was with Donnie?

GBI Agent Ron Rhodes:

Did he have glasses on him, this man?

Jeff Kittrell:

Uh huh.

GBI Agent Ron Rhodes:

What kind of glasses?

Jeff Kittrell:

Wire-rimmed glasses.

THE ARREST

[18:24] Susan Simpson: This cold blooded blond haired man has never been identified. And sometimes I wonder if he ever really existed. Because not all of Jeff Kittrell's stories checked out. Take, for instance, the story Jeff Kittrell told about how he and Donnie Barrentine and David Roberson had all ended up getting arrested together in Telfair County after State Trooper Bobby Christian had made that traffic stop.

[18:46] Jeff Kittrell:

That state trooper was shining a light in my eyes telling me not to move or he was gonna blow my head off. You know, I didn't know who it was at first, all I know was a bright light [crosstalk: Got your attention didn't it?] oh yeah, it sobered me up quick. So when I got out of the car, before I got out of the car, I said "I ain't gonna move", and so he went around and he got the driver out of the car, and Donnie handed me a pistol between the door and the seat back through and told me, says "Stuff this somewhere", and well shoot, I was 'bout half drunk, and I stuck the pistol down my pants [laughter] and that ol' state trooper, he took and he come back, he got ol' Donnie out of the car, and he came back and he got me out of the car, and he frisked me and all, and then he told me 'Sit over there on the ground over there beside Donnie'. And he was over there searching the car, and that's when he found the machine gun and all. And, Donnie said,

“You, what'd you do with it?” I said “do what?” “Do with that pistol?” I said “I got it down my pants. And uh...

Deputy Dale Bundy:

Trooper didn't find it when he frisked you?

Jeff Kittrell:

No.

Deputy Dale Bundy:

Oh lord.

The State Trooper had somehow missed the 9mm when he patted Jeff Kittrell down, leaving him still armed. And when David Roberson, the driver of the car, had realized that Kittrell was still armed, he'd alerted the state trooper.

[20:22] Jeff Kittrell:

And the boy that was driving the car, he took and he heard, so trooper had went over and got him, and called him over to the side and was asking him about the machine gun, and he told the trooper I had that doggone pistol, so he come over there and he frisked me again. And he walked back there and he called that boy over to the side and told 'em “keep your hands on the back of the car.” He called that boy over to the side and he talked to him, and he come back over there and he made me pull up my shirt and he run his thumb right on the top of my pants and still didn't feel that doggone pistol.

And this all sounds like just a funny anecdote, about a State Trooper's bumbling efforts to locate a gun that a suspect has shoved down in his pants in a frantic effort to hide it, but there's also a darker side here.

[21:07] Jeff Kittrell:

Right over there before the state trooper comes, Donnie says, “Let me see that pistol.” He says, “I'mma get us out of this.” He says “I'mma just kill him and we're going about our business.” So when he said that I took the pistol out and instead of handing it to him I stuck it to my right, 'cuz Donnie was on my left, I tuck it to my right.

Jeff Kittrell's story here in 2000, when Dale Bundy was interviewing in that Food World in Marianna, is that when he and the other two men had been pulled over that night in

Telfair, Donnie Barrentine had told him to kill the State Trooper. Shoot him, he said, and then we can be on our way again, get ourselves out of this. But Jeff Kittrell told Bundy he hadn't listened -- instead tossed the gun away, so that Donnie Barrentine couldn't get it.

[21:55] Rabia Chaudry: But this story from Kittrell isn't the story he told back in 1985. Back in 1985, Kittrell had given a different reason for throwing the gun away. He'd said he was worried about picking up a concealed weapons charge, so when the trooper had searched him twice and missed the weapon, and then looked away, Kittrell used the chance to ditch the weapon.

In fact, in 1985, Jeff Kittrell had claimed that the fact that Trooper Christian was still alive was proof they *hadn't* known about the machine gun in the car. In that first interview with Butch Kennedy and Hugh Jenkins, Jenkins had told Kittrell that the state trooper was lucky he hadn't gotten shot that night, and Kittrell responded:

"That's what I told them, I said well hell, I said well shit, if if if if we supposed to know there was a gun in the car like that why would we let one man take us in? A gun like that, ain't no way one man gonna take you in if you don't wanna go. Not with a gun like that. If you ever got that thing in action, not but one thing you can do."

There was no mention about Donnie Barrentine telling him to kill the trooper. The first time that story ever came up seems to have to have been in 1986, at Jeff Kittrell's sentencing hearing -- where he was sentenced to time served and released, due to his cooperation with the authorities. As his attorney told the court,

"Kittrell started running with the wrong group and before he knew it he was in over, his head. We are fortunate that the events turned as they did, as you will hear from the statement that he will give. It could have very well have been that we would have been looking for the person who killed [Trooper] Bobby Christian had the events not gone just the way they did. Mr. Kittrell did not understand and was not aware of what he was getting into until he got in over his head."

But according to David Roberson, the third man who'd been in the car with Kittrell and Barrentine, the way Jeff Kittrell had told the story wasn't right at all. In a 2002 interview, Roberson told investigators,

“Jeff Kittrell was carrying [my] 9mm handgun when [we] were arrested. Kittrell was going to shoot the state trooper with the 9mm handgun. I told Kittrell to put the handgun away, and Kittrell laid it on the ground underneath the car.”

And that's Donnie Barrentine's story too. That it had been Kittrell who'd wanted to kill the trooper, so that they could get out of the situation they were in, and that it had been Barrentine and Roberson that had talked him out of it. And given that Kittrell admits it had been Roberson who'd been trying to alert the State Trooper to the danger -- that it was because of Roberson that the trooper had even known to go back and check again for a gun -- that seems to lend credibility to Roberson's version of story, in which they stopped Kittrell from trying to shoot the trooper, rather than Kittrell trying to stop them.

[24:45] Susan Simpson: Whatever the real story is, the trooper got lucky that night, and wasn't shot. But he didn't find that 9mm under his patrol car, either. That was left there when Roberson, Barrentine, and Kittrell were taken off to prison.

The police did eventually recover it, though. In 2000, in that Food World interview, Jeff Kittrell also told Bundy about what had happened to that 9mm, and how the cops ended up finding it.

[25:12] Jeff Kittrell:

Went to jail and all, and while I was in jail I got hearing on the radio that school's fixed to start up. And I thought I had noticed a school sign across the street and all. And I got thinking. [crosstalk] Some little young'n gonna find that gun, and he gonna mess around and kill some other little young'n. So I went to raising some hell, holler and all, and they came round to see what I wanted, and I told 'em, I said, "I need to talk to y'all".

According to Jeff Kittrell, after their arrest he began to get worried about the 9mm that he'd stashed under the car. Because what if a kid found it, and shot some other kid? So, being the responsible guy he was, he decided to do something about it.

[25:52] Jeff Kittrell:

They were in there, and I told them, I said, told them right where the gun was and all that. State trooper was there, and he said "He's a liar, he's a liar." I told him, I said, "You go and look", I said, "right about where his car was sittin' there across from the school", I said, "you'll find that 9mm."

The way Jeff Kittrell tells the story, he's the guy who may be a bit rough around the edges, but he was worried about children being killed, so he'd confessed to having the 9mm, and told the police how to recover it. But once again, this story from Jeff Kittrell doesn't seem to be exactly how things really went down.

Because it wasn't Kittrell who told police where to get the 9mm. That was David Roberson. And David Roberson had a very specific reason for doing so.

[26:43] Colin Miller: Three weeks before the arrest in Telfair County, there'd been an awful accident back at home in Brantley County, where Roberson and the Barrentines were living. Roberson had a 14 year old son that was close in age to Greg Barrentine's son, and the two boys had been real close friends -- so close, in fact, that Greg Barrentine's son, whom everyone knew as Little John, had been staying with the Roberson's in their house that summer.

Then one day that June, the boys had been at David Roberson's house, and had been playing with a shotgun. Or maybe the shotgun had fallen from a shelf and Roberson's son was picking it up -- the exact circumstances aren't clear. But somehow, the gun had gone off, and Little John had been killed.

And after that, David Roberson said, he pretty well did whatever Greg Barrentine told him to do. Which is how he'd ended up driving Donnie Barrentine and Jeff Kittrell up to Telfair County that night in the first place. Greg had called him up and told him to do it. So he had.

So when David Roberson found out that Jeff Kittrell had ditched his 9mm under the trooper's car, and when he remembered that the place they'd gotten pulled over was next to a school, all Roberson could think of was that if some kid went and found it, and if the same thing that happened to his son had happened all over again, it would be a tragedy.

So it was David Roberson who had told the police up in McRae where to find the gun. Not Jeff Kittrell. In his re-telling of the story to Dale Bundy, Jeff Kittrell took credit for alerting the police, but that's not how it went down.

[28:00] Rabia Chaudry: Jeff Kittrell died a few years ago, and there's no way to ask him now about these discrepancies in his story about the arrest in Telfair County. But there were other discrepancies, too. Like the ones in his story about how the Swains

were killed. And these discrepancies are why, when Dennis Perry was indicted for the murders, the prosecution rejected the defense's claims that they'd gotten the wrong guy.

We know this because there's a memo in the DA's file on the Swain case about it, titled, "Notes on review of the Swain case file." It lays out a short summary of the State's case against Dennis Perry, and has a section called "PROBLEMS" that lays out the memo writer's concerns about the case the State was trying to make against Perry. At the end, though, the memo notes that there were problems with the case, Donnie Barrentine wasn't one of them:

I AM NOT concerned about the information in the file about Barrintine. Even though a convicted jail mate said that Barrintine said that he had killed, by mistake, a man and his wife in a church by shooting them, there is too much not like our case to make it credible. Barrintine is quoted as saying he, by mistake, killed a man and his wife in a church in Jacksonville by use of a 9mm and he shot at the organist, thought he hit her but missed. He had an accomplice who was outside to take care of anyone who left. Our first lady witness left without trouble. Barrintine has dark hair. However, if you color the hair of the composite black, it does look like Barrintine.

One of the DA's concerns was about Jeff Kittrell incorrectly identifying where the murders had taken place. In his interviews with investigators, he'd told them that Donnie Barrentine had said this had happened in Jacksonville. Which, obviously, is incorrect -- they happened in Georgia, in Waverly. But although this was a big reason that Bundy and the DA rejected Kittrell's story, to me their concern seems misplaced. Jeff Kittrell was describing what Barrentine had told them when he came over to his house in Marianna, a four hour drive west from Jacksonville and Camden County. And Jacksonville is the closest major city to Camden County. The fact someone in Marianna might describe something in Camden County as "over near Jacksonville" doesn't seem particularly impossible or even implausible.

Same goes for the 9mm. The Swains were killed with a .25 caliber weapon, not a 9mm, yes, but Jeff Kittrell never says Barrentine actually used a 9mm in the murders. What Kittrell says is that Barrentine had tossed the weapon away after leaving Rising Daughter, and that at the time Barrentine was telling this to Kittrell, he'd been waving around a 9mm. He's not saying that a 9mm was the weapon Barrentine had used.

But there is one problem with Kittrell's story that concerns us just as much as it seems to have concerned the DA's office. And that's what Kittrell says happened after Harold and Thelma Swain were shot.

[30:50] Jeff Kittrell:

And he said then the organ player jumped up and went to screaming. He said "She was a big old fat black woman", he said, "and I shot her. I thought I hit her. But apparently I missed and she just fainted."

[31:08] Colin Miller: The woman Jeff Kittrell is referring to would have to be, from context, Cora Fisher. She's the one who told investigators that the killer had shot at her too, but she'd fainted, and so the man must have mistakenly thought he'd hit her too.

But Cora Fisher wasn't an organist. There was no organist that night. She'd been in one of the center pews along with the other women. The only woman sitting anywhere near the organ was Thelma Swain, and she was closer to the pulpit.

It's interesting, though, that even though Dale Bundy doesn't believe Jeff Kittrell's stories, he seems to have adopted Kittrell's description of where Cora was.

[31:40] Deputy Dale Bundy:

Miss Cora was sitting by the organ when the shootings happened.

There is some evidence to corroborate this part of Jeff Kittrell's story. And that's the fact it's exactly the same as Cora Fisher's story. About how she'd remained in the sanctuary when the other women had run out, and she'd seen when Thelma Swain was shot as she pushed through the double doors to the vestibule. And how the shooter had then pointed his gun at her and fired, and she had fainted. And, Cora Fisher had speculated, the killer must've thought he shot her too.

To Dennis Perry's defense attorneys, this had been proof of the truth of Jeff Kittrell's story. How else could Kittrell have known it, other than personal knowledge? But at Dennis Perry's trial, the prosecution introduced an article from the Florida Times Union, written in the week after the Swains murder. It noted,

"According to investigators, the gunman pointed his pistol at another woman in the church, who fainted. 'That's probably the only thing that saved her,' [Deputy] Easterling said."

Which means, as far as Jeff Kittrell's story about the woman who was supposedly shot at and had fainted-- well, he could've gotten that from the news article.

And there's at least one reason to think he might've. Cora Fisher's story is itself uncorroborated by anything except possibly for Jeff Kittrell's own story. Because no evidence was ever found to confirm her story of a sixth shot that was fired, at her, into the sanctuary, but that had missed.

[32:58] Deputy Dale Bundy:

And Cora Fisher saw that and -- plop.

Susan Simpson:

She thought he looked at her and like shot at her a couple times. But y'all think, there's no evidence, there weren't bullets recovered from behind the...wherever?

Deputy Dale Bundy:

No.

Susan Simpson:

Because it is interesting that Kittrell says that, when Donnie Berrentine's going on he's like - "I'm god, because god takes life away, and I took life away, and I tried to shoot the organist, but she just fainted or something."

Deputy Dale Bundy:

Don't know.

[33:49] Rabia Chaudry: But although some of Jeff Kittrell's statements about Donnie Barrentine were uncorroborated by other evidence, there was one part of Kittrell's story for which the police had no problem finding witnesses that could seemingly verify it. And that's the part of Kittrell's story about the time Barrentine confessed to the murders at the party. The first time investigators went to Marianna, they spoke to two people who Kittrell said had been at the party as well, and both of them confirmed it.

One of those two people was Sue Wilkes, who was Jeff Kittrell's girlfriend at the time. And the other was a friend of theirs named Timmy Walker, who was better known in

Marianna by the nickname Boo Boo. And when Kennedy and Gregory interviewed Boo Boo, he told them:

[Donnie] said that somebody went in while he waited outside and shot the preacher after they called him to the back. Then he said something about when the preacher's wife ran back and stuck her head in the door, that she was shot, too. He said something about shooting another lady, but it turned out she wasn't shot, she only fainted and he was worried about that because she had seen who had done the shooting. ... [Donnie] was always talking about being in the Mafia and his cousin Greg being in the Mafia. I remember that night he -- had a big roll of money and he tossed me a twenty dollar bill and told me to go buy some beer.

This story is very similar to the one Jeff Kittrell told, but it's worth noting that there's something missing from it. And that's the part about Donnie's friend, the blond man who was real cold-blooded and wore wire rimmed glasses. Neither his story, nor Sue Wilkes' story, mentions this man. And when they asked Walker who had *actually* done the killings, Walker didn't mention any cold blooded blond man, nor any man from Georgia. Timmy Walker told them:

I think he said his cousin did it. His cousin from down in South Florida. He didn't mention a name, but I'm pretty sure he said his cousin did it.

That might've been the end of Timmy Walker's role in this case. But then, many months later, just a couple of days after the one year anniversary of the Swains' murder, and long after the case against Barrentine had been declined by the DA, Timmy Walker got in touch with them again. As recorded in a memo from the GBI file:

On Thursday, March 13, 1986, Special Agent Joe Gregory received a call from Capt. Gary Sullivan of the Marianna Police Department. Captain Sullivan stated essentially as follows: "We have arrested Timmy Walker, AKA Booboo, on two counts of burglary. Timmy has been found guilty of these charges, and will be sentenced shortly. Timmy has agreed to a plea bargain in reference to probation time on other charges. Walker says that he wants to talk to you and Deputy Kennedy again in reference to Donnie Barrentine and the killings that you are investigating up there in Georgia.

So back to Marianna Joe Gregory and Butch Kennedy went, to interview Timmy Walker a second time. The GBI memo on this interview describes what they learned:

On Friday, March 21, 1986 Special Agent Joe B. Gregory reinterviewed Timothy Walker. [...] During the reinterview, Walker stated essentially as follows:

"I can't tell you much more than I did the last time you were here. I do remember Donnie talking about having to go to Daytona to deliver some money. He did have a large amount of money on him. He was running his mouth about killing two black people in a church. He said he had shot and killed a black preacher and that a black woman had started hollering and he shot her, too. He did not say if anyone was with him at the time. I remember him using the name Gene Roberts or Gene Robinson a lot, but I don't remember what he was talking about when he was using that name. I think it had something to do with his cousin Greg. He said something about Robinson or Roberts, whatever the name was, being in the Mafia and working with Greg. The only other thing I can tell you about is when Donnie and I went to his Aunt's trailer just outside Marianna, He threw a fire bomb thru the window and burnt it up."

Agent Gregory asked Walker if Donnie Barrentine had ever told him about killing anyone else and Walker replied:

"He once told me about going to Miami with Greg and ripping off some Cubans or Jamaicans drug dealers. They had some machine guns and on the way back somebody shot a black guy on the side of the road. I don't know if it was Donnie or Greg who did the shooting. Agent Gregory asked Walker if he could supply a date as to when the shooting occurred and Walker replied essentially that no sir, I really don't remember when it was. Donnie was forever running his mouth about crazy stuff and I really didn't pay much attention."

Deputy Kennedy asked Walker if he thought that Donnie Barrentine would kill anyone and Walker stated:

"Sure he would if Greg told him to. Donnie would do anything that Greg asked him to do."

[38:07] Rabia Chaudry: It turned out that Boo Boo probably could've spared Kennedy and Gregory the drive to Marianna, because there wasn't much new about his statement. And that was pretty much it for Timmy Walker's involvement in the case for nearly a decade.

Then, in 1994, for no reason that's explained by the case file, investigators made contact with him again. This time, it was only Agent Gregory -- Butch Kennedy had left the Camden County Sheriff's Office about a year or two before. It's not clear why exactly he got in touch with Timmy Walker again, but for some reason, Agent Gregory ended up giving him a call. And this time, Timmy Walker changed his story. He told Agent Gregory, "I'm sorry, but, I really can't help you with your case. I don't remember much about our conversations in 1985."

According to the GBI memo Agent Gregory wrote to summarize the conversation:

WALKER further stated that he was at JEFFERY KITTRELL's house in Marianna, Florida, in March of 1985 when DONNIE BARRENTINE was bragging about the deaths of a black Preacher and his wife. However, WALKER further stated he did not remember any of the conversation or the fact DONNIE BARRENTINE was actually there. WALKER advised AGENT GREGORY that his previous statements had been based on what he was told by SUE ELLEN WILKES and JEFFERY KITTRELL. WALKER further stated that he had been high on booze and drugs and did not remember anything. WALKER then stated DONNIE BARRENTINE did, on several occasions after March 1985, brag about knowing the people who killed the black Preacher and his wife, but never said he had participated. WALKER further stated that he believed DONNIE BARRENTINE had told him that his cousin had been there when the killings took place.

So according to his statement in 1994, Timmy Walker was not actually an independent witness who could confirm Jeff Kittrell's story. He didn't remember any party that Barrentine had confessed at, Walker said. Everything he knew actually came from Jeff Kittrell and his girlfriend Sue Wilkes.

[40:02] Susan Simpson: Timmy Walker did still say though that he had heard Donnie Barrentine brag about the church murders, even if he didn't remember hearing him talk about it at any party. But Timmy Walker's story about Donnie Barrentine's cousin, and how Donnie claimed his cousin was the one who did it, isn't something I'm entirely sure how to make sense of. Donnie Barrentine *did* have a cousin, Greg Barrentine, who lived up in Brantley County. And according to Kittrell, Greg Barrentine was the one who had supposedly ordered the hit to happen.

But Greg Barrentine couldn't have killed the Swains. He had what was, essentially, an ironclad alibi: he was six feet, seven inches tall. Way, way too tall to be the shooter. So

it wasn't Greg Barrentine. But if not Greg, who might Timmy Walker have been talking about?

One person who could answer these questions would be Timmy Walker himself. He's still alive, still in Marianna, so I have him a call. It was worth a try, anyway.

Timmy Walker:

Hello.

Susan Simpson:

Hi, is this Timmy Walker?

Timmy Walker:

Yeah.

Susan Simpson:

My name's Susan Simpson. I'm working on some cases from Florida, from back from the 80s, and some of the cases have your name in the case files as a possible witness, and I was hoping to speak to you--

Timmy Walker:

I'm not talkin' to you or anybody else. I don't know anything about that bullshit.

Susan Simpson:

What bullshit do you think I'm calling about?

[phone disconnects]

Susan Simpson:

Hello?

And that was that. Boo Boo is apparently a lot less chatty these days.

THE DUSTER

Despite Timmy Walker recanting his statements in 1994, six years after that, after Dennis Perry's arrest, Dennis' defense attorney decided that Timmy Walker was very important to Dennis's case. In May of 2001, Defense Attorney Dale Westling wrote a letter to prosecutor John Johnson. It said,

"I now ask specifically if there is any other Brady material that you have not yet turned over to me. I further question the ethics of continuing with this prosecution when the evidence so clearly points to another. Please allow me to provide further evidence and questions that I urge you to investigate."

Dale Westling's letter laid out three specific leads that he wanted the prosecutor to check out. And lead #2 on that list is about Timmy Walker.

The primary witness in this case is one Timmy Walker. He lives in Marianna, Florida, and provided evidence to Mr. Gregory and Mr. Kennedy that Barrentine had confessed to him that he committed this crime. Through our investigation we have now learned that Walker was arrested on April 7, 1985, in Marianna for the crime of aggravated assault. At the time, he was driving a Plymouth Duster automobile. Unfortunately, your office has not investigated this lead. I point this out since the Duster seems to be a relevant consideration.

I have no idea why Dale Westling would have decided that Timmy Walker was the primary witness in this case. He was a witness, yet, but everything he'd known was apparently second hand, and he'd already changed his story once.

But one part of Westling's letter in particular stood out to me. The part about him having a Duster. That was not something I'd recalled seeing before in the police files, but it sounded interesting. After all a Duster was what the police had ultimately decided had been driven by the killer in this case. It's not completely clear why they'd fixated on the Duster in particular, because at least initially, police reports referred to the car as some kind of older model Chrysler, light brown in color, possibly, but they weren't sure of the model -- so maybe it was a Duster, but maybe a Scamp, or a Satellite, or a Dart.

Whatever the reason, though, by 2000, all investigators, on both sides, seemed to have it fixed in their minds that a Plymouth Duster was the car to be on the lookout for. And if Timmy Walker had a Duster in 1985, well, that could suggest a possible reason for why he'd become so reluctant to talk about the case.

An April 2001, Westling wrote a letter to a defense investigator and it seemed to explain where Dale Westling got this idea about Timmy Walker and the Duster. The memo said:

I have also ordered and obtained copies of Timothy Walkers' arrest record and copies of report in which he was involved in. [...] I also obtained a photocopy of

a black and white arrest photograph of Mr. Walker. [...] On one incident report, dated April 7, 1985, Mr. Walker, along with J.P. Blizard, went to the residence of [RA] and shot at him twice with a 16 gauge shotgun. This incident was over a vehicle that the victim had and they wanted back. This vehicle was a green Plymouth Duster.

I don't know what happened to these arrest records, but they're no longer in the defense file, and the police department no longer has them, or any records going back this long. So, to get more information, I contacted the man who'd been the victim in the case, to hear what he could remember about this incident.

[44:45] Susan Simpson:

Do you know what that incident was about? What the cause of it was?

RA:

Well, it was over a car. They really didn't shoot at me, they just shot a gun. They didn't really shoot at me.

Susan Simpson:

Was the car a Duster by any chance?

RA:

Nope.

Susan Simpson:

It wasn't.

RA:

Nope.

Susan Simpson:

What kind of car was it?

RA:

It was a Firebird.

Susan Simpson:

Did you own a Duster at that time?

RA:

No, I don't own no Duster.

Susan Simpson:

That's interesting. So a Duster is what I was interested in. The Police Report says it was a Duster. A green Duster.

RA:

No. I ain't had no green Duster.

Susan Simpson:

Okay.

RA:

I don't know nothin' about no green Duster. It was a little confrontation over a car, but it wasn't no Duster. It was a Pontiac Firebird.

So, it was not a Duster at all. It had been a Pontiac Firebird, apparently. I don't know if the police report got this wrong, or if somehow Dale Westling misread it, but whatever happened, it doesn't seem like Timmy Walker was driving a Duster around at all.

[45:56] Rabia Chaudry: Though, if the defense team was so interested in finding a Duster they could link to one of the Marianna crew, there was no need to go to the trouble of looking at Timmy Walker for it. Because there was in fact a goldish brown Duster, owned by Jeff Kittrell.

Deputy Dale Bundy:

What year did you own a gold Duster, do you remember? Or even, just what year the car was.

Jeff Kittrell:

Car was a 70 somethin' model, and I owned it in... however [...] Georgia. This is back in '87, '88.

Deputy Dale Bundy:

'87 is when you owned the car?

Jeff Kittrell:

Uh-huh.

Deputy Dale Bundy:

Now did you buy it then in '87 or '88?

Jeff Kittrell:

Yessir.

Deputy Dale Bundy:

So what you're tellin' me, you didn't own it, and Donnie Barrentine would have had no access to it in 1985?

Jeff Kittrell:

No.

When Kittrell talked to Bundy, he claimed he bought the Duster in 1987. But in 1985, when Butch Kennedy asked him about what car he owned, he'd had a different answer.

Butch Kennedy: What kind of vehicle do you have?

Jeff Kittrell: I ain't got one.

Kennedy: What kind have you had?

Kittrell: Uh, did have a gold Duster, '72 Plymouth Duster.

Kennedy: What happened to it? Break down on ya?

Kittrell: Uh, I sold it.

Kennedy: When did you sell it?

Kittrell: Huh?

Kennedy: When? Or... how long has it been since you...

Kittrell: Uh, about 3 months ago.

This interview took place on July 10th, 1985. So "three months ago" would have been around April of 1985. In other words, not long after the Swains were killed, Jeff Kittrell had, for some reason, decided to sell his gold Duster. So if Dennis Perry's attorneys wanted to find someone close to Donnie Barrentine with a brownish looking Duster, they had no need to bring Timmy Walker into it.

UNSOLVED MYSTERIES TIPS

[47:50] Susan Simpson: So in the years after Timmy Walker was first interviewed by investigators, he's changed his story some, and by 1994, he was no longer claiming to be able to corroborate what Jeff Kittrell had said. But there's another source of information in this case that may provide some backing for Jeff Kittrell's stories, and that comes from *Unsolved Mysteries*.

After the "Slain Swain" episode of *Unsolved Mysteries* first aired, in November of 1988, the show received hundreds and hundreds of calls, from all over the US, and even Canada, from people who had tips about the Swain case that they thought police should know about. And some of those tips called in were about Donnie Barrentine.

But those *Unsolved Mysteries* tips... well, many of them are intriguing, but also kind of irrelevant. Because there's no way now to ever evaluate their credibility, and no way to know if they mean anything at all, really. Because the callers chose to remain anonymous. There were no names, no phone numbers, no contact info whatsoever. All we have are the brief summaries from the tip sheets, that were written down by whoever answered the phone at the *Unsolved Mysteries* call center.

"In June of 1985, Donny Barrentine told caller that he committed this murder -- showed caller 9mm semi-automatic pistol which he had used in the murder -- this was in Marianna, Florida -- caller wishes to remain anonymous."

"Donny Barrentine told his mom that he had killed the wrong people. Right now he is in Panama City, Florida. When he got stopped he was on his way back to kill the right people. He is a dangerous man. The caller was afraid to stay on the line any longer, for he feared for his safety."

"Unknown white female [from Brantley County] called, stated she knew the sheriff, and knew who killed the black people. Knew Donnie Barrentine did not, but subject that did looked like him. Her conscience had been bothering her about what she knew. She was to call sheriff back in three weeks."

The unknown white female from Brantley County never called back, not as far as the records show, anyway. And the other callers, the ones from Marianna and Panama City, well there's no way to identify them, either.

But some of the tips about Donnie Barrentine might've been traceable. Or, at least might have been traceable back then, in 1988. For instance, there's one tip that was made by someone in Haines City, Florida, Out of all the tips that came in, that one is probably, to me, by far the most interesting.

"Caller said check in Lakeland Florida for Peggy Barrentine, her son fits the description of the killer. The motive is the preacher had a son who was supposed to testify. The son snitched on the Wilkes Mafia Family but the mafia could not touch the son because he was in witness protection program, so they got back by killing the preacher and his wife."

And the reason I find this tip so intriguing is that mentions something none of the other tips do: the Wilkes Mafia family. Wilkes County, North Carolina was home base for much of the drug conspiracy that the Barrentines were part of. Whoever called in this tip must have had some sort of personal knowledge of the Barrentine's and their activities, and this person, whoever it was, claimed to have very specific information about the motive for the murders at Rising Daughter.

But the caller didn't leave a name, just a number. And that number has changed hands several times over the years. And I know that because I've spoken to all the people I could find who have had that number over the years, but none of them had any clue what I was talking about when I tried to ask them about this tip.

And then there were four tips that mention Barrentine where the caller did leave a name and number. Though of those four, one of them refers to a Jimmy Barrentine, rather than a Donnie Barrentine. That caller was from Mississippi, and I was able to track down a guy with that same name, who'd had that same phone number, and had lived in Mississippi at the right time. So when I called him, I felt pretty sure I'd found the right guy.

[51:42] Susan Simpson:

And one of the things I have is a list of tips that were handed in over the years. And one of the tips came from a man who called in about someone he thought might have killed a preacher and his wife down in Georgia. Does that sound familiar at all?

Man:

Mmm, nope. I think you have the wrong person.

Susan Simpson:

Can I just read you what the tip says and see if it rings any bells? It said, the killing of the preacher and his wife, caller thinks a man named Jimmy Barrentine is wanted in Atlanta Georgia. Suspect works on a boat called Judy Sea that travels from New Orleans to Memphis.

Man:

Uh... none of that rings a bell to me.

Susan Simpson:

Okay. Did you ever know a man named Barrentine?

Man:

Nope, I sure don't.

Susan Simpson:

Do you know why someone might have used your name to call in a tip like that?

Man:

Uh... No, I don't. I mean, I'm just, you got me bumfuddled.

Susan Simpson:

Do you ever recall calling in a tip from *Unsolved Mysteries*?

Man:

Uh... No. I haven't.

I still don't know what happened with that tip. Did I find the right tipster, and he had just forgotten he'd ever called in a tip to *Unsolved Mysteries*? It's possible. Some of the other tipsters I've spoken to also couldn't recall leaving a tip, although it was clear from

context that I had in fact found the right people. Or, maybe whoever had called in about the Judy Sea and Jimmy Barrentine had given a fake number and name. Whatever it is, there's no real way to find out now.

[53:14] Colin Miller: That left three more *Unsolved Mysteries* callers who mentioned Donnie Barrentine. And all three of them were named as witnesses by Dennis Perry's defense team.

In May of 2001, defense attorney Dale Westling wrote to prosecutor John Johnson about some of the evidentiary discrepancies in this case. This was the same letter where the defense attorney had said that Timmy Walker had been driving around in a Duster when he'd gotten arrested for aggravated assault. And in this letter, defense attorney Dale Westling wrote about three of the *Unsolved Mysteries* tips he found particularly important, though because the tipsters have expressed concern about their safety, they have been identified by their initials here in Westling's letter to John Johnson.

“Three of the people that called in “leads” to Unsolved Mysteries lived in the Marianna Florida area. All reported that the appearance of Donnie Barrentine was identical to the composite. Their names are DM, SJ, and PD. None of these individuals have been contacted by members of your staff or by Mr. Bundy. Do you not find it to be an incredible coincidence that the three people identified a person from the composite who happens to be the same person identified by Ms. Williams. He is also the same person who confessed to Walker and Kittrell. Are not the coincidences beginning to mount up in your mind?”

John, as a lawyer involved in 25 years of criminal defense work, I do not believe in coincidences. I know that you don't either. The evidence in this case is simply bizarre in that it is so strong in favor of an arrest of Barrentine. It is beyond my comprehension as to why this obvious conclusion has been ignored.”

Two years later, just before Dennis Perry's trial, the defense team submitted its list of witnesses. And witnesses 17, 18, and 19 were the three Florida tipsters who'd called in about Barrentine.

[55:00] Susan Simpson: None of these three witnesses were ultimately called at Dennis Perry's trial, but we were curious about what they might have to say. If the defense team thought they were important enough to include as witnesses on their witness list, they must have something interesting to add to the case. Although, I was

confused about one thing from Dale Westling's letter. He'd written that the three of tipsters had called in about the composite, and how it looked like Donnie Barrentine, but at least according to the *Unsolved Mysteries* tip sheets, that hadn't been what they'd called in about.

So, I called up the tipsters to try and figure out why the defense team had listed them as defense witnesses.

(phone ringing)

Tipster 1:

Hello?

One of the tipsters that the defense listed on their witness list was a man who turned out to have family in common with the Barrentines, and though he wasn't close to Donnie and didn't see him very often, he had heard things about him, from time to time, which is how he came to have information that he wanted to call in to *Unsolved Mysteries*. And when I called him, he did recall making the tip, but after thirty years the details were a bit fuzzy.

Susan Simpson:

And your name came up in the case file I have, about a tip you once called in to the cops. And I was hoping to be able to speak to you about that, if you recall it (laughs). This is from '88 or '89, so going way back. I can read it for you if it might help. It's from November of '88 and it says... "Believes he knows the suspect Donnie Barrentine, saw him a few years ago. He's in jail now for arms and a drug deal. Went to wrong church and killed the wrong people."

Tipster 1:

Yeah, that seems like, yeah that's the story I remember.

Susan Simpson:

Huh.

The tipster did not know, however, who the 'right people' were supposed to have been. All he could recall was he was told by someone he knew well that Donnie Barrentine had confessed to them, and told them that the couple in the church who'd been killed had not been the right targets. Wrong church, wrong people.

And there was one more thing the tipster remembered, though this was not included in the *Unsolved Mysteries* tip sheet, and either he hadn't told *Unsolved Mysteries* or whoever took the call hadn't written it down. But the tipster remembered being told that not only had Donnie Barrentine confessed to this person he was close to, but that Donnie Barrentine had also confessed to the murders while in jail. As in, he'd made a confession to the police. Only, the tipster said, the way he'd heard the story, when Donnie Barrentine had confessed in jail, the police hadn't believed him. The confession had been rejected. So he'd gotten away with the murders.

And there was one more thing the tipster told me:

Susan Simpson:

Did anyone ever contact you about this before, can you remember?

Tipster 1:

No, no.

Susan Simpson:

They didn't. Okay. That's interesting.

So then I got in touch with a second witness from the witness list that was an *Unsolved Mysteries* caller. In her *Unsolved Mysteries* tip, she'd left her name and multiple phone numbers where she could be reached, as well as the best times police could call her. It took me a little while to find her though, because she no longer had the same phone numbers, and whoever had taken the *Unsolved Mysteries* tip had spelled her name wrong, but eventually I tracked her down. She didn't recall too much about the tip she'd called in, which hadn't been as much about the Swain murders anyway, as it had been about a different murder she'd heard the Barrentines might be connected to. But she told me something similar to what the first caller had told me.

Susan Simpson:

And the police never talked to you about that?

Tipster 2:

No.

Susan Simpson:

Your name is listed as like, a priority to talk to. Priority tip to follow up on.

Tipster 2:

Nope.

Susan Simpson:

And yet, they didn't. That's crazy.

And the third *Unsolved Mysteries* caller that the defense listed as a witness -- well, it didn't seem like the defense ever talked to him either. Because the defense didn't even list his name right. The name they had given was similar, but not quite the same -- like someone hearing the name Taylor, then writing it down as Tyler.

Which means the *Unsolved Mysteries* leads in this case are another thing that, for three decades, were never actually investigated. And any further information that those leads might have provided, back in '88, when the tipster's memories were still fresh, and other witnesses were still alive to talk to, well, that may have been lost forever to time.

THE POLYGRAPH

[59:43] Rabia Chaudry: There's another piece of evidence regarding Donnie Barrentine that's worth mentioning, although it's meant different things to different investigators over the years. And that's Donnie Barrentine's polygraph. Because in 1985, Donnie Barrentine took a polygraph, and he failed it. Apparently pretty badly. On *Unsolved Mysteries*, Sheriff Smith cited it as evidence against Barrentine:

Sheriff Smith - *Unsolved Mysteries*:

Donnie Barrentine was then given a polygraph test. And he flunked it. Matter of fact, the polygraph operator told us that Mr. Barrentine was a very good suspect in the murder.

In 2002, when Dale Bundy interviewed Donnie Barrentine, he asked Barrentine why he thought he'd failed it.

Deputy Dale Bundy:

You took a polygraph about 10 years ago. What happened in that polygraph?

Donnie Barrentine:

Well they said I failed it.

Deputy Dale Bundy:

Why do you think that?

Donnie Barrentine:

Hell, I probably did bad one day. I always been real nervous. He said I failed it, hell, I don't know what them lines mean. Maybe he lied, I don't know. He, he gettin' paid by the people that was tryin' to hang me. You know.

Deputy Dale Bundy:

Why did you take a polygraph back then?

Donnie Barrentine:

They asked me to.

Deputy Dale Bundy:

Okay. You didn't have anything to hide? So you weren't afraid of the polygraph?

Donnie Barrentine:

Right.

[1:00:53] Susan Simpson: I've always been real nervous, Barrentine said. I'd probably fail it now if I took it again.

And to Dale Bundy, the fact that Donnie Barrentine had failed the polygraph wasn't what was significant. Barrentine's willingness to take the polygraph in the first place was the part that mattered to him -- it showed he'd had nothing to hide. To me, the fact that Donnie Barrentine had agreed to take a polygraph and that he'd failed it didn't mean anything at all, in terms of substantive evidence -- it just isn't reliable evidence of anything. But what I did care about was the possibility that there was another record out there of an interview with Donnie Barrentine. It wasn't the polygraph results I was interested in, but I was hopeful that there might be still records out there somewhere of what questions Donnie Barrentine had been asked, and what his answers had been.

Unfortunately, those records no longer seem to exist, or at least no one knows where to find them now.

[1:01:46] Susan Simpson:

Do you know anything about Barrentine's polygraph? I know he took one and failed, but...

Deputy Dale Bundy:

I think his was inconclusive.

Susan Simpson:

Nah, I've seen the reports. He definitely failed it. But I don't put any stock in that at all. I'm just curious about what they asked him, or...

Deputy Dale Bundy:

Um... no. I wasn't, I mean, a guy named Guy Ellis, wasn't that his name? Guy Ellis ran the polygraph on Dennis ... or, on Donnie. But I don't really know anything about it. That was long before I got a hold of it.

So far, we haven't had any luck in find any further records about what Donnie said at that polygraph. But after going through the DA's file in this case, I did find something related to it. Because in 1999, the investigator for the Camden County DA's office, Vicki Moore, wrote a memo and added it to the Dennis Perry case file. It said:

"I just spoke with Guy Ellis. He remembered the case and his polygraph of Barrentine. Guy is of the opinion that Barrentine WAS at the scene or had direct knowledge of the crime. Guy also stated that he firmly believes that there were two people involved in this crime because the witnesses gave two different descriptions of the suspect. I told him that we had pretty much ruled Barrentine out because the story that he was telling about the shootings in Jacksonville was so dissimilar from the facts of our case, (9mm vs. 25 cal, organist, etc.). He still believes that Barrentine was somehow involved. He asked if our suspect knew or had ties to Barrentine, I told him as far as we can tell there isn't a connection and that Perry claims that he doesn't know Barrentine."

And there's one more thing that may be of interest in connection with this polygraph. And that comes from Donnie Barrentine's mother, Lucy Barrentine. In 2001, Deputy Dale Bundy and GBI Agent Ron Rhodes went back to Marianna to talk to witnesses, and while there, they found Donnie Barrentine's mother.

[1:03:32] GBI Agent Ron Rhodes:

There was a private investigator that came down here, was talkin' to some people. Therefore, we had to do the same thing. We had to come down and also talk to the people he talked to. You never talked to him, a private investigator?

Lucy Barrentine:

No.

GBI Agent Ron Rhodes:

Okay. And since we're here we thought we would talk to you, we're not tryin' to get Donnie into any other trouble or anything like that.

Donnie's mother agreed to talk to the investigators. Donnie hadn't done it, she told them. He couldn't have. Though she understood why it was he'd gotten mixed up in all this:

Deputy Dale Bundy:

What Donnie said, Donnie was at a party one time, I guess you've heard about that.

Lucy Barrentine:

Yeah. That's Donnie's mouth. It's what got him into that trouble.

Deputy Dale Bundy:

Did his mouth ever get him in trouble before?

Lucy Barrentine:

(laughs) Yeah.

So, Donnie Barrentine's mother said, it was his talking that had gotten him in trouble. But he hadn't said what it'd been reported he'd said. And, she told the investigators, there was a good reason to explain why he'd failed the polygraph:

GBI Agent Ron Rhodes:

If you think he said this at this party, do you think he bragged about killin' these people?

Lucy Barrentine:

No. He didn't say that part, that he killed...

GBI Agent Ron Rhodes:

He didn't? What'd he say?

Lucy Barrentine:

Um... he was just tellin' about the killing. Because he had never made it up there at the time. I think all Donnie knew about it was what he had been told and that's why he couldn't pass that lie detector test, you know, when they would ask him.

Donnie Barrentine's mother denied having any personal knowledge about any of this, at least as far as she was willing to tell investigators. But there was one name she was willing to share with them.

Deputy Dale Bundy:

Well do you know where he got the information he knew about it?

Lucy Barrentine:

Well, I have a very good suspicion as to where he got it. Greg Barrentine, you know, that was, over all the junk that they had going up there.

Deputy Dale Bundy:

Did Greg live up there at the time?

Lucy Barrentine:

Mhmm. And I think that's where he got the information. And he wouldn't tell. Just like he wouldn't tell where he got the machine gun that he had, you know, he had a machine gun and he never would tell 'em where he got that because it would hurt somebody else.

Donnie Barrentine never would say where the machine gun had come from. Apparently not even to make a deal to help himself to get out of the charges he was facing, and went to federal prison for. So if Donnie Barrentine had known something about the murder of Harold and Thelma Swain, would he have said anything about it to investigators about that?

Deputy Dale Bundy:

You know you didn't kill Harold and Thelma Swain?

Donnie Barrentine:

Right.

Deputy Dale Bundy:

And you don't know who did it?

Donnie Barrentine:

Not a clue.

Deputy Dale Bundy:

Never had any idea? Would you tell us if you did know?

Donnie Barrentine:

Depends on who it was.

So if Donnie Barrentine had known who killed the Swains, would he have said it? Maybe. But maybe not. That would depend on who it was.

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**[1:07:13] Susan Simpson:** And that was Episode 10 of Undisclosed: The State v. Dennis Perry. There's an addendum this Thursday, so send us your questions with the hashtag UD addendum. Also, just a heads up -- due to travel schedules, this will be the mid-season break in Season 3, and we'll return on October 1st with Episode 11. Next week, there will be a special bonus episode of Undisclosed for you, so don't miss that, and we look forward to seeing you again with more on Dennis Perry's case in a couple weeks.

Mital Telhan, is our executive producer. Our logo was designed by Ballookey, and our theme music is by Ramiro Marquez and Patrick Cortez. Audio production is done by Rebecca LaVoie of Partners in Crime Media, and host of the Crime Writers On podcast.

You can find case-related materials, timelines of key events, and witness charts on our website, at undisclosed-podcast.com. Transcripts of this episode and previous episodes will be available on our website at undisclosed-podcast.com, prepared by our transcribing team Brita Bliss, Erica Fladell, Dawn Loges, and Skylar Park.

And thanks so much to our sponsors for making it possible for us to come back week after week. Don't forget to follow us online, on all our social media our handle is @UndisclosedPod. That's Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter.

And if any of our listeners out there have information on Dennis Perry's case that you'd like to share, we'd love to hear from you. You can reach us at undisclosedpodcast@gmail.com, or leave us a message at (410) 205-5563.

That's all for this week, and thanks so much for listening.