

UNDISCLOSED, The State v. Dennis Perry
Episode 19 - The Paper Town Gothic
December 3, 2018

[0:09] Rabia Chaudry: In Melissa Fay Greene's award winning book *Praying for Sheetrock*, she tells the story Tom Poppell, the sheriff of McIntosh County, a rural area just two counties north from Camden, along the coast. Sheriff Poppell had inherited his office from his father, who was sheriff before him, and he remained in that position from 1948 until his death in 1979. As Greene writes in her book,

Sheriff Thomas Poppell flourished in a system of favoritism, nepotism, and paternalism known as "the courthouse gang" or the "good old boy" system. Georgia was infamous for much of this century for its highly evolved system of influential courthouse gangs. "Four or five counties down there along the coast practically controlled much of what went on in Georgia," said Lester Maddox. "Those who ran the county courthouses had their own empires in a lot of places."

The courthouse gangs ran the counties smoothly for years, enforcing race, class, and gender distinctions, while eschewing modern industrial development with its threat of civil equality, higher wages, and the migration of outsiders into their counties. A handful of white men controlled each county, succeeded themselves at every election for decades, packed other electoral and appointed posts from among their family and friends, and filled up their own pockets with fortunes. They were, in a sense, middlemen, guaranteeing their county's votes to state and national politicians, in exchange for favors they were then able to pass along to the constituents.

The office of sheriff in small rural counties is unique in U.S. politics, but what happened in McIntosh County is not. In the south, some counties evolved, or didn't, along with their sheriff. Camden County was no exception to that.

[2:07] Rabia Chaudry: Hi, and welcome to *Undisclosed*. My name is Rabia Chaudry, I'm an attorney and author of *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.

Rabia Chaudry: This is Episode 19 of The State v. Dennis Perry. We'll also have a special episode tomorrow, Tuesday the 4th, on the hearing in Adnan's case last week, before Maryland's Court of Appeals. So make sure you don't miss that special episode.

[4:26] During the 1980s, corruption was a rising concern among sheriffs in southern states, and in Georgia in particular. From 1981 to 1992, 27 sheriffs were indicted and charged with various crimes, most of them drug related.

In 1984, the New York Times published an article on the problem:

"For years it's almost been a way of life for these rural sheriffs to take petty payoffs from prostitutes and moonshiners and gamblers," said John Gill, the United States Attorney in Knoxville[.] "Now you get drug dealers coming around waving \$10,000 payoffs in the face of men who maybe make only \$20,000 a year, and you can see what is going to happen next."

In 1991, more than half of Georgia sheriffs made less than \$54,000 a year, in today's dollars. Some made even less than that. For instance, the sheriff of Taliaferro County in Georgia had an annual salary that would be equivalent to \$38,000 today.

In all Georgia counties, though, what was certain is that the paycheck that came with the sheriff's office would not be commensurate with its power. As was noted in an Atlanta Journal Constitution article about the problem,

"In a large part of the state, they are essentially the only thing standing between criminals and law abiders. They are the sole authority on who can sign bonds. They run the jail. And they answer to no one."

All of that made corruption a tempting option for many law enforcement officers. And in Georgia, the corruption could be particularly lucrative.

"[A]s Latin-dominated smuggling rings shift up the coast from Florida to Georgia, you're going to have Latins trying to deal with rednecks," said Al Pringle, a former

DEA regional director [for a] Miami-based federal task force. "And the only way to insure their drugs will get through is money."

What makes Georgia so attractive to smugglers is its proximity to the drug-shuttling Caribbean islands, the crackdown in Florida, and the dearth of law enforcement officials patrolling south Georgia. There are too many law enforcement officers with overlapping jurisdictions in Florida, so no one can guarantee safe passage.

In Georgia's rural outback, however, the sheriff is often a one-man band, []. The sheriff can't be everywhere and, if he has agreed to turn his head like [Sheriff] Jimmy Glass of [Henry County] [did], [the sheriff] might take the bribe and stay out of the way.

[6:30] Susan Simpson: It wasn't just the sheriffs, of course, but law enforcement officials lower down the rung too. And Camden County was not immune to the problem. Deputy Butch Kennedy remembers that, even if it wasn't officially acknowledged, you pretty much well knew that some officers were on the take.

Deputy Butch Kennedy:

If he builds a swimming pool on police's salary, when back then the police's salary wasn't but \$12,000 or \$13,000 dollars a year -- follow the money.

In 1982, the Washington Post wrote an article on the growing epidemic of corruption among Georgia law enforcement, linking it to the rising drug trade:

"There have been so many public officials arrested and indicted in this state, it's like going back to moonshine days," said Ray Vinsik, 45, regional director of the Drug Enforcement Administration. "During Prohibition, times were hard and bootleggers had plenty of money to run liquor and buy people off. We're facing the same times now."

[7:26] Rabia Chaudry: Camden County provides a textbook example of what the problem was like back in the Prohibition era. Sheriff Blame Smith, the grandfather of Sheriff Bill Smith, had been federally indicted in 1931 for his role in a liquor smuggling conspiracy. As sheriff, he'd worked out a deal with bootleggers who were transporting liquor from the Bahamas to the Georgia coast. For his part, Sheriff Blake Smith would clear the way for smugglers to bring their liquor into the state, and in exchange, he'd

receive a fixed fee of one dollar per a case of liquor that made it safely to Camden County's shores.

Not long after Sheriff Blake Smith was convicted and sentenced to two years in federal prison, he ran for reelection as sheriff of Camden County, and he won. However, due to being in prison, he was unavailable to perform the duties of the office, and a special election had to be held and a new sheriff elected.

After serving his sentence, Sheriff Blake Smith returned to Camden County and ran for office again. He won again. When he died a few years later, while still in office, his son Willie Smith was appointed to finish out the remainder of his term. He was only 32 at the time, and would continue to serve as sheriff for 34 years, until he retired in 1976.

At that time, the heir apparent to the throne, Sheriff Willie Smith's son Bill, had begun a career in law enforcement as well, but he was not yet ready to take on the top law enforcement role in Camden County. Instead, for the interim, Willie Smith's deputy, Jimmy Middleton, became sheriff and served for two terms, until Bill Smith returned home to Camden County.

[9:04] Susan Simpson: Sheriff Bill Smith began his career in the Marine Corps and while still in the military, he was recruited by the FBI. After he got out of the marines, he went to Washington and became a federal agent.

Sheriff Bill Smith:

At the time, I was very proud of the fact J. Edgar Hoover hired me himself, and in my opinion, he was a patriot and one of the most loyal Americans ever to work in law enforcement. And I was very sure when we went after someone, we had almost a lock on it.

Sheriff Smith told me that it was from Director J. Edgar Hoover that that he had learned the importance of developing a case carefully, and of being sure that when he made a case, he had the right guy. And, Bill Smith said, his fellow FBI agents had all felt the same way as he had.

Sheriff Bill Smith:

We all feel the same way about him, that we were very proud to have served with him as agents with the FBI, but we're not proud of the FBI anymore because of all the controversy that's going on with Comey and all these other individuals. I just can't believe it, that it went on. If you had done anything near what they'd

done in the FBI, you would have been fired or sent off to prison. The stuff that's going on now in the FBI? That would have never happened under Mr. Hoover. I'm telling you, I just know that for a fact.

In 1984, after Bill Smith had returned to Camden County, Sheriff Jimmy Middleton declined to run for office, leaving the field wide open. Sheriff Smith, third of his name, would be elected to his first term in office. He would go on to be elected to six more terms.

[10:50] Colin Miller: That is not to say his reign as sheriff was all smooth sailing. From the beginning, his tenure was plagued with recurring scandals, many of them involving the county jail. As sheriff, Bill Smith did successfully turn the jail into a money-making venture, by renting jail space out to other counties that had no room to house their own inmates. But he was not so successful at actually keeping the inmates inside the jail. During one especially rough patch, there were 7 escapes in 3 weeks. According to an article from the Atlanta Constitution:

Smith said he had warned deputies to take more security measures before the most recent jailbreak. "I'd just threatened everybody with their jobs, and then to have two more escape -- I was unhappy, to say the least," the sheriff said.

Some of the escapes were due to outdated, overcrowded facilities, but that wasn't the only problem. Many of the escapes were the result of more-favored inmates taking advantage of certain privileges they were afforded. GBI Agent Joe Gregory remembers how one guy he'd arrested had ended up in the Camden County Jail, and from there made his getaway.

Agent Joe Gregory:

It was one of my cases, a burglary case. A guy burglarized the County Commissioner's home. They take him out of general population and shut down the infirmary cell, and let him and his boyfriend have it privately, and they were allowed to hang up blankets over the door. And, for some reason, some reason, somebody let 'em get a screwdriver, and they undid the plates in the ceiling and got on.

Or take what happened in April 2007, with an inmate who'd been given free reign over the Sheriff's Department in order to perform checking duties. He discovered a key while cleaning one of the deputy's desks, and he was able to get into the evidence locker,

where he took \$8,000 in cash and a Playstation. He kept the Playstation, and used the cash to pay his bond and get out of jail.

[12:35] Rabia Chaudry: The escapes were not the Sheriff's biggest problem. Throughout Sheriff Smith's entire time in office, there was one recurring scandal that he never could get away from, and that was his use of inmate labor. Put simply, Sheriff Smith liked to have inmates do chores for him and his friends.

For example, in 1991, Sheriff Smith brought an inmate from the Camden County Jail over to nearby Jekyll Island in Glynn County, so that the inmate could wax the floors at a house there. On the way back to the jail, though, Sheriff Smith had given the inmate his pay, and allowed him to spend it at a liquor store. Later that day, after becoming intoxicated, the inmate was driving around in a patrol car. The reason why the inmate was given a patrol car to drive around is never really explained, but due to being drunk, he ended up crashing and wrecking it.

The following year, during a GBI investigation into Sheriff Smith, he was ordered to hand over all statements related to this incident. Sheriff Smith instead held on to at least one critical statement, keeping it in his car rather than handing it over with the rest of the file, and as a result, he was convicted of criminal contempt of court.

That same GBI investigation resulted in Bill Smith being indicted with one count of violating his oath of office, in connection with alleged corrupt activities involving collection of bail bonds. This happened in 1992, right in the middle of a reelection campaign. Sheriff Smith was arrested and taken to jail, but was able to post bond in time to make it to his campaign barbeque event that afternoon. Three days later, he was reelected to his third term as Sheriff of Camden County. Eventually, the criminal charges against Bill Smith were dismissed, and in response, Sheriff Smith sued the GBI agents who had investigated him. That case was dismissed too. Still, all these legal proceedings came at a high cost for Sheriff Smith. Which is why, in 1996, the Georgia House of Representatives passed a resolution:

WHEREAS, Sheriff Smith should not be required to bear personal responsibility for payment of the legal fees incurred in defending himself and his deputies against the above-recited investigation, administrative proceedings, and criminal charges; and

WHEREAS, the loss occurred through no fault or negligence on the part of Sheriff Smith, and it is only fitting and proper that he be compensated for this loss.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA that the Department of Law is authorized and directed to pay the sum of \$120,308.00 to Mr. William E. Smith, the Sheriff of Camden County, as compensation as provided above.

Now, the resolution says that the loss occurred through no fault on the part of Sheriff Smith, but just to note -- although some of the charges had been dismissed, one of the investigations that Smith was being given compensation for was the successful conviction for criminal contempt.

[16:46] Colin Miller: Not everyone in Camden County liked how Bill Smith ran the Sheriff's Department, but there was a reason he kept winning elections.

Mike Ellerson:

He was a politician, not a law enforcement officer. That's it. In some aspects of the job he knew how to deal with the public. He knew how to go and talk to people and ...I could talk trash about him all day, but that man has helped a lot of people. I mean he went to bat for a lot of people in this county who didn't have, like I said, a pot to piss in or a window to throw it out. When it came to helping them, when people went to jail, he did the best that the possibly could as far as helping them get bonds and all kind of stuff. But at the same time, when it came to us deputies that time, it's not too many times I thought he was on our side.

That was Mike Ellerson. He worked at the Camden County Sheriff's Office for 11 not-so-easy years.

Mike Ellerson:

On March 15, 1990, I got hired. Which is the day I should've walked out of there. Because that was the day that, there's a guy that used to be the NAACP president here, his name was Robert Cummins, I really admired that guy. I got mad respect for him. And he was in the office with the sheriff talking because they had a riot up there, and some of the inmates hadn't been treated fairly. So he was up there conversing with Bill, but that wasn't the way it was, it was some cussin' and fussin'. 'Cause while I'm sittin' in the lobby all I can hear is hollering and screaming and cussin' and fussin'. Well it's Robert Cummins - I know who

Robert Cummins is, I've never heard anybody talk to him all kinda way. Then this white guy with white hair comes out of the office, and he's cussin' back at him. That was the sheriff. So something said: Leave. And right when I was getting ready to get up and leave, Charlie Easterling comes out of the jail administrator's office and says "Hey, are you Mike Ellerson?" I say "Yeah". So "Come on in, let's get this interview together." And that's how I ended up at the Sheriff's Office.

GBI Agent Joe Gregory, who as a state employee regularly interacted with Sheriff Smith while working on cases in southeast Georgia, had a similar impression of Sheriff Smith.

Agent Joe Gregory:

And Bill Smith was, you know, he was nothing but a politician. He wasn't in the office for law enforcement, he was in there for the money, and for the power and for the things he could do for his constituents. And to be able to do whatever Gilman wanted him to do.

Now Gilman is not a person, but a company. The Gilman Paper Company. And back when Sheriff Smith was in office, it was the major employer for the region. The Gilman paper mill supported Sheriff Smith, and in exchange, he supported the mill.

This sort of patronage applied not just on an industry level, but also with individual citizens.

[19:32] Susan Simpson: Whenever I think about Camden County's individualized approach to sheriff politics, there's one man in particular that I met down there who comes to mind. He was big supporter of Bill Smith, and would vote for him again, given the chance. He told me that everything had just been better under Sheriff Smith. When I asked how it had been different, he gave me two examples. First, the man told me, when Sheriff Smith was in charge, if he'd ever gotten pulled over after he'd been out drinking, the deputy wouldn't give him a DUI. Instead, the deputy would have him park his car, and would then give him a ride home, and he'd just go back and get his car in the morning. The second reason the man told me had to do with how Sheriff Smith had responded when his brother had been killed by a drunk driver. Sheriff Smith had shown no leniency to the defendant, and she had received a very lengthy sentence. He was grateful to Sheriff Smith for that.

I asked the man if he thought it was possible that there could be a connection between those two things, if the one could have given rise to more of the other. He didn't answer. I don't think he liked the question very much.

[20:44] Rabia Chaudry: That Bill Smith's supporters received certain benefits wasn't some kind of deep dark secret in Camden County. It was often reported in the news. The Florida Times Union, based out of Jacksonville, covered a lot of it. Chris Viola, who'd been a photographer for Times Union in the late 2000s, covering the Glynn and Camden County area, and had heard it all when he was covering the Sheriff Smith beat:

Susan Simpson:

If you were a Sheriff Smith supporter, and you got pulled over for drunk driving, like he'd basically get a cab and take you home.

Chris Viola:

Yeah, it was a 'get out of jail free' card for a lot of people that were big time supporters, because that was something we could confirm, because we had written several stories about that, and a lot of anecdotal stuff too that people would tell us, so...

The result of all this was that Sheriff Smith enjoyed fierce political support from many in Camden County, but as time went by, he also had increasingly fierce political opposition.

Chris Viola:

People were very polarized over there. They either loved him like he was the second coming, you know, because his family had been sheriffs forever. And there was another half of that entire area in Camden County that kind of looked at him thinking like, oh my god, there was corruption.

Mike Ellerson, who spent a decade in the Camden County Sheriff's Office under Bill Smith, knew exactly what Susan was talking about when she asked him about these special privileges.

Susan Simpson:

And they'll tell me, things were better here under Bill Smith.

Mike Ellerson:

Yeah because it was the good ol' boys system.

Susan Simpson:

And I'd ask why and they'd tell me it was because they could do things and get away with it.

Mike Ellerson:

Yeah, they could do things and get away with it. And stuff. Some could, some couldn't. Some of us had to watch ourselves all the time.

Susan Simpson:

But how...I'm talking about people who the cops would pick up, and that would get away with it.

Mike Ellerson:

Yeah.

Susan Simpson:

But how...was it understood that certain people were off limits?

Mike Ellerson:

Yeah. Especially when the mill was open.

Being a high-ranking employee of the Gilman Paper mill was automatic admission to the Camden County good ol' boy list. Though, it's worth noting, being on the good ol' boy list wasn't some kind of a blank check, either. Mike Ellerson recalled one time when he actually had gone ahead and written a ticket up for one of these good ol' boys.

Mike Ellerson:

And I wrote a ticket on a guy who had passed someone using the turning lane. So I pulled him on over and wrote him a ticket. And that guy, he was pissed, and I know he was about to let the n-word come on out, but I guess he kind of figured that 'naa, this ain't the right one to say it to'. And he did say, "Well I'm gonna just get...make..."..somethin' like 'I'm gonna let Bill Smith know this', this and that...and I said "Sir, you do what you gotta do".

Susan Simpson:

Did you know who he was?

Mike Ellerson:

I can't remember who he was.

Susan Simpson:

But did you know him?

Mike Ellerson:

No, I didn't know him, but he worked at the mill. And of course Bill called me in the office - "He's a good upstanding citizen, you shouldn't have wrote him a ticket, yada yada yada, and he wanted me to drop the ticket. And I said "No, I'm not droppin' that ticket." I'm telling the sheriff that. And Butch Kennedy's sitting there, he's like put his head down, and Charlie's like shaking his head, like "I can't believe you just told the sheriff "No". And while I'm gettin' chewed out left and right about droppin' the ticket, I leave the office. Just walk on out. So I went and got my video tape, and I put the video tape in, and just stood there. And he looked at the video tape and he went "You should've locked his ass up!"

Susan Simpson:

Bil Smith did?

Mike Ellerson:

He said that because of the way that guy was talkin' to me.

Susan Simpson:

Oh, so Bill Smith even had his limits then.

Mike Ellerson:

Yeah, yeah, he had his limits.

The mill employee's status had entitled him to some privileges with local law enforcement, but at least in this instance, at least in the 1990s when it took place, there were limits to it. But to understand why being a mill employee would even entitle someone to special favors from the Sheriff's Office, we have to go back in time just a little bit.

[24:23] Colin Miller: In 1972, the little town of St Mary's, Georgia, received national media attention, when it was featured on the TV news show 60 Minutes. The episode was about the Gilman Paper Company, and looked into the question of what happens when a little county becomes dominated by one big employer.

60 Minutes, Mike Wallace:

Well take a look at a story we call Company Town. Company Town is a pallid stereotype that obscures the fear and intrigue and alleged collusion that hang about the paper mill town of St. Mary's, Georgia.

St. Mary's is, or at least so the locals claim, the second oldest town in America. And in 1972, there was no way to determine where the town of St. Marys ended and the Gilman Paper Company began. The two were one in the same. Or at least Gilman wanted it that way.

60 Minutes, Mike Wallace:

St Mary's is tucked into the southeast corner of backwoods Ga, just across from Florida. At a quick glance, it seems a gentle, gracious, southern town. Its pace slow, its people friendly. But the whistle of the Gilman Paper Mill quickly scatters the illusion. That, and the acrid smell of hydrogen sulfide seeping across the trees and fields, and into the homes along St. Mary's' placid streets.

The Gilman paper mill polluted Camden County's rivers and estuaries, and fouled the air with a rotten sort of cabbagey stench -- the smell of money, as some optimistically referred to it. But St. Mary's suffered from it. It killed the Spanish moss that had once hung from trees, caused the paint to fleck from houses, and even ruined the chrome on cars that drove through St Mary's' streets.

And it was all tolerated, because almost everyone in St. Mary's, in one way or another, depended on the mill. The company manager once boasted that the mill was responsible for three quarters of Camden County's budget. Though, that's not to say that the Gilman Paper Company was overly generous in its tax payments. Just the opposite in fact. Since most the local tax assessors were also on the Gilman payroll, minimizing its tax burden wasn't hard to do. Not to mention, most the local school board was on the Gilman payroll too -- which made it easy to acquire new properties in the form of public school buildings sold off at a cheap price.

60 Minutes, Mike Wallace: *St. Mary's mayor is Richard Daly. He too works for the mill, and Carl Drury charges he is nothing but a tool of the Gilman Company.*

Carl Drury: Anytime you are on the salary and you take and go and oppose top management where it affects their economics, you are apt to get in trouble.

In Camden County, real power came not from elected office, but from Gilman.

60 Minutes, Mike Wallace:

George Brumley, the most powerful man in town, the most powerful man in Camden County Georgia, because he runs the mill.

[26:55] Susan Simpson: In the 60 Minutes interview, George Brumley, the resident manager of the Gilman Paper Mill, is sitting outside in an office chair. He has some impressive mutton chops, and he's wearing dark shades that make him look like some kind of wannabe mob boss, and he talks like one too.

60 Minutes, George Brumley:

The principal loyalty that we expect from our executives is not to adopt or take an anti-company position.

Mike Wallace:

What does that mean?

George Brumley:

Just what I said.

This prohibition on anti-company policies had a serious impact on Camden County, where in fact almost every local politician was on the Gilman payroll. Including the local state representative to the Georgia legislature, Robert Harrison, who was also the attorney for the Gilman Paper Company. In the 1970 election, though, Robert Harrison faced a new challenger.

60 Minutes, Mike Wallace

The story revolves around Dr. Carl Drury. He is 32 years old, has an attractive wife, five children, drives a Lincoln Continental, and lives in one of the most comfortable homes in town.

Dr. Carl Drury worked for the paper mill, in their hospital, but he had what George Brumley would have considered to be distinctly anti-company views.

60 Minutes, Mike Wallace

But back in 1970, he decided to get into politics, to run for Robert Harrison's seat in the legislature. He ran against the mill, he said it was polluter, that it didn't pay enough in taxes, that it stifled free speech in St. Mary's, and that Robert Harrison was the agent of the mill and all of its allegedly antisocial acts.

The Gilman Paper Company was not pleased with Dr. Drury's newfound political activism.

60 Minutes, Mike Wallace:

Former policeman Buddy Deets says he was told by St. Mary's Mayor Daly who works for the mill and by Police Chief Watts to keep Drury under surveillance during the election campaign.

Buddy Deets:

Well, St. Mary's Police Force was used just as if Gilman Paper Company or George Gilman owned them and they were working for him.

Surprisingly, Dr. Carl Drury won the election. He defeated Robert Harrison. But the company town wasn't going to take the loss without a fight.

60 Minutes, Mike Wallace:

Two days before he was to take his seat in the Georgia Legislature, he was charged with sexual assault, rape, by one of his young patients, Suzanne Bloodworth, who was then only 15 years old. The doctor had assaulted her in her hospital room, she said in an affidavit, on the evening of the day that he had performed a tonsillectomy on her. Suzanne's affidavit was drawn up in the office of lawyer Robert Harrison.

The rape had allegedly taken place in an open hospital ward, so there should have been witnesses. And there were.

60 Minutes, Mike Wallace:

One of Suzanne's friends, Vanessa Carter, claimed to have witnessed the rape, she was in the next bed. But she too told no one about it until she told Robert Harrison five months later.

Now you told your born daddy, after all this happened, you said "oh daddy, it's not so, it's just politics.

Vanessa Carter:

That's what he said. Everyone in town knows my father has to be the biggest liar to ever hit St. Mary's.

Things were about to get worse for Dr. Drury, though. One day, the father of the girl he'd been accused of raping came to the hospital and attacked him.

60 Minutes, Mike Wallace:

Drury and 3 nurses who say they witnessed the scene swear that Bloodworth attacked Drury with a blunt instrument. Bloodworth has a different version.

Wallace: You did not attack him?

Bloodworth: I did not attack him.

Wallace: How did he get hurt?

Bloodworth: He fell. Running.

Wallace: Running....?

Bloodworth: It rained that night and he ran out on the gravel. And I don't know whether he had leather shoes on or what, but every time he'd make a cut he'd fall on the gravel, and he'd roll, and get up and run again.

Wallace: You were chasing him?

Bloodworth: Oh, sure.

Wallace: With a blunt instrument?

Bloodworth: No.

When the three nurses agreed to testify against Bloodworth, and to corroborate that he'd attacked Dr. Drury, the paper mill had wanted them fired. When the hospital administrator refused to do so, he was fired instead.

Bloodworth did end up getting charged for the assault against Dr. Drury, but he was acquitted of all charges, perhaps because 9 of the 12 jurors worked at the mill.

[30:59] Rabia Chaudry: One strange aspect of the case, though, is that Dr. Drury himself had not been fired, when, during the election, he was accused of raping a 15 year old patient. Drury's opponent, Gilman attorney Robert Harrison, had simply chosen not to do anything about it, until just before Drury was to take office.

60 Minutes, Mike Wallace:

And Harrison acknowledges that young Vanessa Carter told him about the hospital episode with Suzanne Bloodworth months before the charges were actually brought.

(to Harrison) So after the election and after you lost the election, why didn't you try to get him out of the hospital?

Robert Harrison:

I had no reason to do that.

Mike Wallace:

Well he works in the Gilman hospital, he is allegedly molesting young female patients in the hospital. You're the attorney for the Gilman hospital! One would think that the... the better part of public spirit would immediately get this sex maniac out of the Gilman hospital!

Robert Harrison:

Mike I am not the District Attorney for this area. My representation of Gilman hospital is a civil one.

Dr. Drury was ultimately cleared of the rape charges, and he served in the Georgia legislature for one term. Both Gilman's tax arrangements and rampant pollution came under investigation, and slowly, things began to change in Camden County.

In 1980, eight years after the 60 Minutes story aired, the girl that Dr. Drury had allegedly raped, came forward and recanted her story. She said she had been pressured by her father into making the false statements.

And thirty years after that, in 2001, Dr. Carl Drury was charged with attempted murder, in connection with a murder-for-hire plot. After a period of marital and financial difficulties, Dr. Drury had reached out to a friend and ATF agent to ask for help in hiring someone to kill his wife. The ATF agent had told Dr. Drury that he would connect him with a hit man he knew. Instead, the ATF agent notified his bosses, and it was an undercover agent that called Dr. Drury to make the final arrangements for the contract.

After Dr. Drury was arrested, he claimed that he'd been framed, once again. This time for attempted murder rather than rape. His defense was that he was participating in a role-playing exercise, to help train ATF agents, and that he'd never meant any of it sincerely -- it was just a favor he was doing to help a friend. Well, the jury didn't believe him, and he was sentenced to 17 years in prison.

[36:34] Dr. Drury was not the only Gilman employee that was deemed to have anticompetitive views. Wyman Westberry, a young Gilman employee with a reputation as either a troublemaker or a whistleblower, depending on your point of view, had also been causing problems for the company. Seeking to curb Gilman's rampant pollution,

Wyman Westberry brought outside journalists in to Camden County to see what was happening at the mill -- that's how 60 Minutes found the story. Westberry also brought in Nader's Raiders, a group of volunteer law students organized by Ralph Nader.

Gilman didn't like any of it. Wyman Westberry didn't realize how upset they were, though, until one day in 1972, Wyman Westberry got a call from his friend George Beaver -- who, we should point out, has no relation to Jane Beaver. Anyway, Wyman's friend George Beaver called Westberry, and told him that he needed to speak to him, right away. It couldn't wait.

Three Gilman executives have hired a hit man to kill you, George Beaver said. George Brumley, the manager, Robert Harrison, the attorney, and Tommy Thomas, a Gilman factory supervisor -- they're the ones behind it.

"Who did they hire to kill me?" Wyman Westberry asked his friend. George Beaver told him: "It's Lawrence Brown."

That's a call that, today, Wyman Westberry says he'll never forget. He knew he'd pissed off Gilman -- he just didn't realize he'd pissed them off that much.

[37:59] Colin Miller: Lawrence Brown, you may recall, was a relative of Harold and Thelma Swain. He was married to their niece, and his stepdaughter, Lafane, had been raised by the Swains since she was three years old.

But back in 1972, Lawrence Brown was a Gilman Paper Factory employee. And, according to his later testimony in a criminal trial, one day he was approached by Gilman Paper Company executives, who told him they wanted to hire him as a hit man. Kill Wyman Westberry, they told him, and we'll pay you \$1,500.

Lawrence Brown agreed. But, he said, he'd never actually intended to go through with the deal. His whole plan was to take Gilman's money, and then skip town. But before he did, he'd decided to tip off George Beaver, whom he knew to be a friend of Wyman Westberry's. He'd asked George Beaver to pass on a warning: hey, you should tell your friend that he's in danger.

After talking to George Beaver and Wyman Westberry, though, Lawrence Brown changed his plans. He agreed to call the FBI to tell them what had happened. He gave a statement and passed a polygraph, and an investigation was begun.

But then, a few days later, Lawrence Brown changed his story. After being interrogated by Sheriff Willie Smith and District Attorney Glenn Thomas, Lawrence Brown signed an affidavit. He had never been hired to kill Westberry, the affidavit said. Instead, he'd been paid \$10,000 by Dr. Carl Drury to frame the Gilman executives.

On May 17, 1972, Lawrence Brown testified before a grand jury in Savannah, and told the same story he'd told Sheriff Smith and Glenn Thomas. He had not been hired by the Gilman executives to be a hit man, he told the grand jury; he had been hired to *pretend* to be a hitman.

[39:26] Susan Simpson: One week later, Lawrence Brown went to his attorney, and he prepared and signed a second affidavit. The affidavit said:

I was forced by Tommy Thomas to change my statement that he and Robert Harrison and George Brumley had offered me money to kill Wyman Westberry.

After I gave the changed statement to the GBI man with others present, Tommy Thomas [and two other Gilman employees] came to my house the night of May 9, 1972, pointed guns me and told me if I didn't come with them, they would kill me.

Lawrence Brown agreed to go with them. According to his affidavit, he was then taken across the border to Vero Beach, Florida, where he was held in a motel room until the day before he was due to go testify to the grand jury in Savannah.

That night (May 16) Tommy Thomas drove me to Savannah and we stayed at the Holiday Inn and went to the grand jury the next morning. Tommy Thomas told me that if I didn't say what he told me to say that he would blow my brains out. He had a pistol under his shirt.

He said they had a friend in the grand jury room and he would know what I said in there. He also told me if I told what he wanted me to say, I would receive \$10,000 and a lifetime job. I believed that if I did not do what he said, he would kill me and I did say what he told me to do, but it was not the truth.

My first statement, given to the GBI when I took a lie detector test, was the truth. After I testified, Tommy Thomas told me he knew what I said and that I did it all right. Tommy Thomas is supposed to deliver the \$10,000 to me tomorrow.

During the time I was held in Vero Beach, I did not lose any pay from my job but was paid in cash, instead of by check. There are witnesses who saw them take me from my home at gunpoint on May 9, who can uphold my story. This statement is the truth and the only reason I told a lie to the grand jury is because I was afraid I would be killed if I told the truth.

[41:07] Rabia Chaudry: District Attorney Glenn Thomas was not pleased with this new story from Lawrence Brown. He called it, quote, "a concocted political lie." And to prove it, he got a new affidavit -- this one signed by Wyman Westberry's friend, George Beaver. DA Thomas had granted Beaver immunity, and in exchange, Beaver signed the affidavit swearing that he, Wyman Westberry, and Dr. Drury conspired to pay Brown to make up the story about the murder-for-hire contract.

A few days later, George Beaver also issued a second affidavit, and, like Lawrence Brown, swore that nothing in his earlier affidavit was true. Beaver said he had only been pretending to go along with DA Glenn Thomas's affidavit plan, because the FBI had asked him to. And also because, when he signed the affidavit, he'd had his debts with the St. Mary's bank cancelled.

For a couple days, all was quiet again. And then someone tried to assassinate Lawrence Brown. As reported in the Atlanta Journal Constitution,

On June 2, Lawrence Brown was driving his Chevrolet pickup truck down a lonely road that connects coastal St. Marys with US Highway 17 and the rest of the world when someone attempted to ambush him.

Bullets shattered the truck window on the driver's side as well as the rear window. Miraculously, Brown was not hit by the bullets. Nevertheless, he was taken to Gilman Memorial Hospital in St. Marys[.]

Even his lawyer was denied access to him until FBI agents. a US. marshal and two deputy U.S. marshals came to St. Mary's and got him. The FBI questioned him for several hours about the incident. For the next several weeks, Brown was spirited in and out of motel rooms across south Georgia until, he demanded to be released from "protective custody."

When he was released he returned to Gilman paper Co where he worked a short time, then resigned.

After resigning from Gilman, Lawrence Brown disappeared.

In the AJC article, the headline reads, "Offered \$1,500 to Kill -- Now He's Missing." It's not clear where Lawrence Brown went -- possibly witness protection, or maybe Miami, the timeline isn't clear. Four years later, in 1976, he resurfaced once again, though. The Gilman Paper Company executives -- George Brumley, Robert Harrison, and Tommy Thomas -- were on trial. They'd been charged with subornation of perjury for inducing Lawrence Brown and George Beaver into falsely testifying that there'd never been a murder plot, but instead only an attempt to frame the Gilman Paper Company with a false murder plot.

At the trial, Lawrence Brown appeared, and testified, and went back to his original story. He had been hired to kill Westberry, he said. Tommy Thomas, the Gilman supervisor, had told him not to worry about getting charged with the crime -- that even if he did end up getting charged, Tommy Thomas promised him, he wouldn't be convicted. Tommy Thomas had told him once that, quote, "the jurors would be Gilman employees with homes valued at more than \$50,000" -- with the implication being that they'd lose their jobs if they convicted Brown.

There was corroborating evidence to Brown's story. At the request of the GBI, Lawrence Brown had gone to work one day while wearing a wire. On the recording, Brown tells Thomas that he's ready go through with the deal, and Thomas tells him: hold up for the time being, the FBI was in town right now. We need to take it easy for a bit.

There were corroborating witnesses, too. Another Gilman employee, one who'd allegedly helped in the kidnapping of Lawrence Brown, testified that he'd also been brought into the contract murder scheme. In exchange for a real estate deal he was offered by the Gilman Paper Company, the employee had agreed to provide Lawrence Brown with an alibi for the murder of Wyman Westberry.

Following the trial, the three Gilman executives were convicted of suborning perjury, and sentenced to a year and a day in prison. They never served those sentences, though. One year later, the convictions were overturned by the Fifth Circuit, which concluded that the three men could not be convicted of coercing Lawrence Brown to lie to the grand jury, because the lies Lawrence Brown had told, about the murder-for-hire plot, had not been material. The court found that the grand jury had been convened to investigate irregularities into the 1970 Camden County election. And so, the Court of Appeals concluded that a murder-for-hire plot that occurred in 1972 was immaterial to the grand jury's work.

The Fifth Circuit was particularly adamant that George Brumley, the manager of the Gilman paper mill, should never have been found guilty. They wrote in their opinion:

Brumley's conviction can only be explained by the admission of the lengthy testimony about pollution, about the Nader investigation, and about the CBS "exposé", in all of which, as Gilman's local manager, Brumley was held up in the worst possible light on matters irrelevant to the indictment. The trial court should have ordered the acquittal of Brumley for failure of the government's proof.

[48:29] Susan Simpson: The Gilman Paper Company's reign in Camden County would not last forever.

The beginning of the end came just a few years later, after the Lawrence Brown hit man affair, when a new employer announced plans to open up shop in St. Mary's. It was the U.S. Military, and its new Naval Base would ultimately dwarf Gilman's operation.

GBI Agent Joe Gregory recalls how the mill had reacted to the news.

[48:52] Joe Gregory:

Gilman spent millions tryin' to stop that Navy base from coming in there.

Susan Simpson:

Wait, why?

Joe Gregory:

Because Gilman would not be the top dog and everybody in the county beholden to him for a job. He ran that county with an iron fist.

Gilman's efforts failed, and in 1979, the Kings Bay Submarine Base began operations. Today, the United States' nuclear submarine fleet calls Camden County home.

Mike Ellerson:

One of the best things to ever happen to Camden County was the military. Some people to this day still don't like it, but once the Naval base came in, and their families came in and you saw some diversity... that changed. It slowly but surely changed. But it was probably one of the best changes. 'Cause I can tell you right now, if the military had never come, we wouldn't be sitting here.

Susan Simpson:

So if Gilman's Paper Company had won out, kept out the military, it'd be a different town still.

Mike Ellerson:

Oh it'd be the same old way. Some other industry would have come, where the good ol' boys system could work, and it would still be the same.

[49:58] Colin Miller Now as for Wyman Westberry, his career with Gilman, as you might expect, had become rocky as a result of the hit man situation. One week after the story about the alleged plot broke, Westberry was fired from Gilman. Gilman claimed that, two years earlier, Westberry had thrown acid on a black Gilman employee, because the employee used what had formerly been a white's-only restroom. For some reason though, Gilman hadn't been able to identify the attacker as Westberry until it became politically expedient to fire him. Westberry didn't stay fired, though -- a federal arbitrator ordered him to be reinstated. Today, Gilman Paper Company is long gone from St. Mary's, having gone bankrupt in 2002, but Wyman Westberry is still there.

And as for Lawrence Brown, after testifying in the Gilman executive case, he briefly found a career in law enforcement. He moved to Screven County, near the city of Savannah, and became a sheriff's deputy there. Though, he was later fired for his role in an insurance fraud scheme. It was at some point after that, or maybe it was before -- again, the timeline isn't clear -- he switched to a career in international drug trafficking.

He was successful at this new line of work for many years. It only came to an end in April of 1985, when he was caught with a storage container with a false wall, and behind that false wall was 1,500 pounds of marijuana, imported from Jamaica.

Brown successfully made bail and was released. He was out in time to be involved in his stepdaughter Lafane's litigation in connection with the Swain estate -- in an equitable action, she was successfully named the Swains' heir. Lafane was also the recipient of the proceeds from four life insurance policies; three that were on Harold Swain and one that was on Thelma.

[51:34] Susan Simpson: Lawrence Brown's intense interest in the Swains' life insurance policies had alarmed some of the family though, and they alerted law enforcement to it. That, combined with the fact that Jeff Kittrell had named Lawrence Brown as the reason that Donnie Barrentine had been hired as a hitman to kill the Swains made him a person of interest to the Swain investigation.

Deputy Butch Kennedy remembers that they once tried to talk to Lawrence Brown. Though, they hadn't gotten much out of him.

Deputy Butch Kennedy:

I want to think that he had got into some kind of trouble, and we went to interview him, tried to interview him, and he said "I was there that night in front of the church with you, when you started talking to Miss Vanzola. And you wouldn't even talk to me". I said "I don't remember you." He said "Well I ain't got nothin' to say to you." I said, "Well, OK".

On the night the Swains were killed, Butch Kennedy had been trying to interview eyewitnesses in the church yard when Lawrence Brown had come up and tried to talk to him. Butch Kennedy had asked him to wait, because he had more pressing matters at hand, but later on, when Kennedy tried to interview Brown again, he'd refused.

I wonder a lot though about what Lawrence Brown had wanted to talk to Kennedy about in the church yard that night. Maybe it was nothing. Maybe it was more than nothing. But Lawrence Brown died a few years ago now in a car accident, so we'll probably never know now, either way.

[53:14] Rabia Chaudry: As for the Gilman Paper Company's supposed attempt in 1972 to hire Lawrence Brown as a hitman.... well, the story ends there, mostly. The question of whether Lawrence Brown was hired by the paper mill to be a hit man, or hired by Dr. Drury to pretend to be a hit man, was never officially resolved.

But there is a final footnote to this saga that may hint at an answer. It comes from a 1980 court case involving Roscoe Dean Jr., a colorful but ambitious Georgia State Senator, who, after 15 years in the Georgia legislature, had dreams of higher office. He'd run for governor before in 1978 and had lost, to incumbent Governor George Busbee, but he'd done surprisingly well, especially given the limited amount of campaigning he'd done. So he wanted to run again.

That's when Roscoe Dean hatched a plan. He got in contact with some Colombian drug traffickers, and made them a deal: in exchange for a \$10,000,000 contribution to his gubernatorial campaign, when he was elected he would open up Georgia's southern coast to the smugglers.

The plan did not work out. Roscoe Dean's cartel money scheme had a number of flaws, but the biggest was probably the fact that the Colombian cartel members he was negotiating with were actually undercover GBI agents.

But even if this plan had defied the odds and succeeded, the cartel money alone wouldn't have been enough to carry Roscoe Dean into the Governor's mansion. Which is why Roscoe Dean had a second plan, to complement the first: he would assassinate his political rivals, thereby opening his path to electoral victory. Governor Busbee was a frequently mentioned target, as was Joe Frank Harris, who would go on to be elected governor in 1982.

In order to carry out this part of his gubernatorial campaign, Roscoe Dean got in touch with a hitman that he was told could do the job, and he instructed the hit man to fly down to Jacksonville. There, Richard Daly, St. Mary's mayor and Gilman Paper Company employee, had picked the hit man up, and driven him to Brantley County, just north of Camden. The hit man was then taken to a secluded trailer, where Roscoe Dean was waiting for him.

"This is a good hideout," the hit man told Roscoe Dean. "Yes," Roscoe Dean replied. "It was used by our friend's lawyer to hide someone during a paper company executive's murder trial some years ago."

[55:29] Susan Simpson: The hit man was, of course, an undercover GBI agent wearing a wire, and the assassination plots were never carried out. But I've wondered about what Roscoe Dean told the hit man slash undercover agent. A witness who was hidden during a trial for a paper company executive? That sure sounds like Lawrence Brown. Could that trailer in Brantley County, then, have been where Lawrence Brown was taken when he disappeared, back in the 70s?

Maybe. But since the GBI no longer has records relating to these events, it's one mystery I've had to be okay with not being able to answer. At least for now.

[56:13] Colin Miller: Weird things happen in Camden County, that's undeniable. But Camden County has come a long way from its company town days.

Mike Ellerson:

As crazy as Comden County is - it's one of the craziest places on the planet - but it's one of the easiest places to live, at the same time. 'Cause I - this place is strange, the people are stranges, but I love every last one of 'em. It's

comfortable, I mean, you can't be complacent, but it's easy to raise kids. And if you're looking for that in life, or for a nice place to relax and retire, this is the place.

Mike Ellerson has been happier ever since he left the Camden County Sheriff's Office. He wishes he'd listened to his gut that first day, when he came in for an interview, and almost got up and left. He didn't. The Camden County Sheriff's Office turned out to be a hard place to work.

Mike Ellerson:

The atmosphere, because you still dealt with the good ol' boy system, we did the best job that we could. I'm not going to sit here and say we were the best, but some people had special privileges. Or, some things were overlooked. You couldn't really be yourself. There was always turmoil, there was always hell. I'm surprised more guys didn't have high blood pressure and heart attacks.

A little over a decade after joining the Camden County Sheriff's Office, Ellerson's career there came to an end.

Mike Ellerson:

How it started out to me, from what I was told, it was me, that one deputy Mac, and two other deputies were sittin' at a table in a restaurant talkin' bad about the sheriff, and a concerned citizen heard it. And they went back and told the sheriff that we were talkin' trash. And they described it as, they must have known the other two deputies, but they described me and Mac as a crew-cut white guy, and a bald headed black sergeant.

Ellerson learned of all this when, one day, he found himself summoned to a surprise meeting. His supervisors were there, and they wanted to know: is it true? Did you say something bad about the sheriff?

Mike Ellerson:

Well, I was sittin' there talking to two supervisors about it. They said "Well did you ever say anything?" I said "You said something bad about him, and you said something bad about him!" I said "We all talked trash about him! And you mean to tell me I'm in here for this?" I said "I've never heard...there's not one person in this department that didn't talk trash about the sheriff!"

This was a very serious case in Camden County, though. To get to the bottom of the mystery of the trash-talking deputies, Sheriff Bill Smith had brought in someone to polygraph the suspects. That included Mike Ellerson. And Mike Ellerson's interview... well, it didn't go great.

Mike Ellerson:

Now, was I wrong for some things? Yeah. I laid down the smack in that interview.

Susan Simpson:

Why were you in a polygraph in the first place?

Mike Ellerson:

That tis the question. Why would you polygraph me?

Susan Simpson:

Like why though? They just told you you had to polygraph?

Mike Ellerson:

Yeah, we had a polygraph.

Susan Simpson:

Why?

Mike Ellerson:

Because to find out whether or not we were telling the truth about talking about the sheriff.

Susan Simpson:

They polygraphed you to make sure you weren't talking shit about the sheriff?

Mike Ellerson:

Yes. And they put in a whole bunch of other questions, asked some personal questions, I don't know what they...it seems like they were after something else. 'Cause they asked about other officers, whether or not they were doing any wrong...

Susan Simpson:

It was a loyalty purge!

Mike Ellerson:

Yes.

It wasn't just other officers that Sheriff Smith wanted to know about, though. While hooked up to the polygraph, they started asking him questions about things closer to home.

Mike Ellerson:

Did I have any family members doin' this, this and that? I got real mad about that, because you bring me in for one thing and now you're questioning me about something else.

That's when Mike Ellerson's polygraph interview began to fall apart.

Mike Ellerson:

It was dumb but I let it get the best of me. I cussed and I fussed, and I threatened to tear up the machine. We're talking about me at 30, 31 years old, you know, I just didn't think it was right.

[59:56] Rabia Chaudry: Mike Ellerson was fired. Not so much for what had happened during the polygraph interview, but because he'd acknowledged, truthfully, that yes, he had in fact been known to trash talk the sheriff from time to time. After Ellerson left the department, though, the truth came out: the original complaint had not been about him at all.

Mike Ellerson:

I found out a while later, there's another black sergeant up there, same build and everything, and another deputy with the same haircut. And come to find out it wasn't us.

Mike Ellerson was far from the first officer who didn't survive a loyalty purge at the Camden County Sheriff's Office, and he wouldn't be the last either. Back in 1992, Butch Kennedy had also been fired, when he'd had a personal friend run against Sheriff Smith in the election. Kennedy hadn't renounced the friendship, and Sheriff Smith had fired Butch Kennedy for disloyalty as a result.

Deputy Butch Kennedy:

You had to be on his team. You had to either be his enforcer, or his -- go fetcher. You had to be his monkey.

Susan Simpson:

And if you weren't his monkey, you were out of the circus?

Deputy Butch Kennedy:

Right.

In Camden County, that was just normal. It's just how things were.

Deputy Butch Kennedy:

It's just one of the things, when you're in power you can do just as damn well as you please. [laughs]

Sheriff Bill Smith wouldn't always be in power, though. Eventually, his scandals would catch up to him. Next time, on Undisclosed.

[1:01:34] Susan Simpson: That's all for Episode 19 of Undisclosed: The State v. Dennis Perry. There's an Addendum this Thursday, so send us your questions with the #UDAddendum.

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