

<http://www.courier-journal.com/article/20100103/NEWS01/1030320/1008/Pleas++doubts+ignored+in+man+s+wrongful+conviction+for+clerk+s+murder>

3 January 2010. "Pleas, doubts ignored in man's wrongful conviction for clerk's murder" [but police finally re-investigated case] by Jason Riley at Louisville Courier-Journal.

Excerpts from the article....

Tomorrow — more than two months after a judge vacated Edwin Chandler's conviction for manslaughter and robbery in Brenda Whitfield's death — another man, Percy Phillips, will appear in court on charges that he shot Whitfield in the head during a burglary at Watterson City Chevron Food Mart....

But it would take more than a dozen years before Gray's revelation helped prompt a Louisville Metro Police officer to take a fresh look at the case, ordering new testing of a fingerprint on a beer bottle held by the killer that quickly revealed Gray was telling the truth....

"It took a light breeze to convict you and a perfect storm to set it right," Marguerite Thomas, director of the Kentucky Innocence Project, which eventually helped exonerate Chandler, told him as the two sat for a recent interview....

John Adams Jr., a juror in the trial, said he was a lone holdout for a not-guilty verdict, saying he had "serious doubts" and the surveillance picture didn't look like Chandler. "I finally gave in," he said. "I guess I shouldn't have."

Another juror, Carl Mason, who was an alternate, said he never would have convicted Chandler, saying the confession seemed forced, the picture didn't fit Chandler and some testimony was weak.

"It was so much of a flimsy case," he said.

Finally, in 2008, a retired police officer working with the Innocence Project spoke to an officer in the Louisville Metro Police's cold-case unit, who referred it to Sgt. Denny Butler, who was just starting in the unit.

Butler agreed to meet with Chandler in June. He came away impressed. Police gave Chandler a polygraph, which he passed.

After looking for the evidence in the case, Butler found the fingerprint pulled from the beer bottle, hairs and surveillance video within a matter of hours.

With a more advanced automated fingerprinting system, a print on the bottle was quickly matched to Phillips.

"One solid cop, out of 17 years," Chandler said of Butler.



Edwin Chandler

In September 1993, a man entered a convenience store in Louisville, Kentucky, shot the clerk and stole \$32 from the cash register.

Police recovered a fingerprint from a bottle of beer that the shooter had been purchasing. One witness identified Edwin Chandler, already wanted on a jail-escape charge, as being near the scene of the crime. Another eyewitness tentatively identified Chandler as the shooter -- but Chandler's fingerprint did not match the one on the bottle.

Police originally had a security tape from the store, but taped over the surveillance video before trial. Chandler was interrogated by police, and after being told that they had evidence tying him to the scene, and that his sister would be prosecuted for harboring a fugitive, and her children would be taken away, he confessed to the shooting.

Chandler recanted his confession at trial, and a third witness testified that he was not the shooter, but a jury convicted him of manslaughter and armed robbery in 1995 and he was sentenced to 30 years in prison. He was paroled after serving nine years.

In 2004, the Kentucky Innocence Project took his case. In 2008, they persuaded the local cold case unit to take another look at the case, and they determined that the fingerprint on the beer bottle matched Percy Phillips, a man who had earlier been identified by one witness as the shooter.

In October 2009, Chandler's conviction was set aside and the charges against him were dismissed.

In October 2012, the city of Louisville settled a lawsuit brought on Chandler's behalf for \$8.5 million.

- *Stephanie Denzel*

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State: Kentucky

County: Jefferson

Most Serious Crime: Manslaughter

Additional Convictions: Robbery

Reported Crime Date: 1993

Convicted: 1995

Exonerated: 2009

Sentence: 30 years

Race: Black

Sex: Male

Age: 21

Contributing Factors: Mistaken Witness ID, False Confession

Did DNA evidence contribute to the exoneration?
No

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