

Gloucester County Cold Cases

SGT. JAMES SUTTON

Master Gunnery Sergeant James Sutton lived with his wife and young daughter in Logan Township. A member of the U.S. Marines from Norfolk VA, he had worked from the Philadelphia Naval Base since 1989. In 1992, he was in charge of recruiting offices in nine states.

A member of the Montford Point Marine Association, an organization that memorializes the first African Americans to serve in the United States Marine Corps, Sutton also had assignments at the Pentagon and at the Marine training base at Parris Island, NC.

Previously quartered on the Philadelphia Naval base, the Suttons had moved to what appeared to be a safe Gloucester County community.

But in a deadly mystery that continues to this day, multiple gunshots ended the 41-year-old Sutton's life on a sofa in his home in the early hours of November 14, 1992. Ironically, it happened just after Veterans Day that year. Sutton was still in uniform when his wife of 11 years found him.

Sutton's wife, Vivian, who had been working at a check-cashing business in Philadelphia that night, found him at about 12:30 a.m. when she came home with the couple's seven-year-old daughter after picking up Chinese food in the Mercedes her husband had given her as a birthday present.

There were no signs of forced entry. The weapon was not found.

Sgt. Sutton was buried with military honors at Arlington Cemetery, Washington, D.C.

County and local detectives were not alone in their search for Sutton's killer. The Naval Criminal Investigative Service Cold Case Homicide Unit has participated in the investigation. The NCIS unit, formed in 1995, has solved more than 60 murders. Its motto comes from the philosopher Voltaire: "To the living we owe respect. To the death we owe the truth."

The work to learn the truth about Sgt. Sutton's death continues.

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DESIREE MCGRAW

Desiree McGraw lived a hard, drug-addicted life that distanced her from both her son, being raised by her parents, and a daughter who Desiree's sister has mothered.

But in a brief conversation with her father in June 2006, it seemed that Desiree wanted more out of the life that took so much from her, her father later told a reporter.

"I'm tired of this life," she told Fred McGraw, who still lived where Desiree grew up in Maple Shade, NJ. "I don't want to live on the streets anymore," she said.

But something evil caught up with "Desi" McGraw before she could turn away from the streets of South Jersey, too frequently in seedy areas of Camden.

A few days after her call to Fred, Desiree McGraw's partially-clothed body was found behind the Jericho Fire Company in Deptford, NJ. She had been fatally shot. She was just 27 years old. Robbery did not appear to be a motive. Drug involvement was one possibility.

The date was June 6, 2006, primary Election Day that year, and the fire hall was to be a voting place. That changed, as voters were diverted elsewhere from what had become a crime scene. And life for the McGraw family was permanently and tragically changed.

For several years after 2006, Fred McGraw would speak with reporters around the June 6 date about the painful details of his daughter's life and death to remind the public that a killer still needs to be caught. Mr. McGraw died in September 2012, but the Gloucester County Prosecutor's Office still wants to make that arrest.

An \$8,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of Desiree McGraw's murderer is still offered.

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LOCKEY MITTEN

Lockey Mitten, whose not-too-common first name probably derived from English-Scottish ancestry, spent much of her working life keeping open the lines of communication for the public. For 40 years, she was employed with New Jersey Bell and Verizon before retiring in 1999, her obituary says.

Now a phone call via Verizon could help solve the mystery of her death.

Lockey had been married, then was widowed, and raised two daughters, who gave her four grandchildren.

A Baltimore native, she moved to the Williamstown area in 1968 and lived simply in the last years of life in a house trailer with her "faithful companion" pet dog, named Patrick.

Life in retirement ended violently on July 28, 2007, with the thrust of a knife in the hands of someone who did not enter her residence forcibly and was not there for theft, investigators found. An autopsy determined the cause of death was a knife wound to the neck and the manner of death was homicide.

For several years after her death, neighbors in the Colonial Park mobile home community held candlelight vigils in Lockey's memory. As neighbors moved away, the vigils ended.

Patrick was moved to an animal shelter and then adopted.

A donated billboard on the Black Horse Pike in Williamstown, not far from Colonial Park bore her face and her fate for several months in 2011 and asked for tips about her death. It mentioned a \$10,000 reward for information that would lead to a suspect and conviction. That reward is still available. A phone call can be made to the Gloucester County Prosecutor's Office (856-384-5500/ Sgt. Hemphill) or Monroe Township Police Department (856-728-0800/ Det. Wolfe).

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DONNIE FARRELL

“Donnie” Farrell—Donald James Farrell III—was an outgoing Rowan University sophomore from Mountain Lakes in Morris County, NJ. A good athlete in baseball and lacrosse, he was out with friends, including his longtime girlfriend, on a Saturday night after Rowan’s October 27, 2007 Homecoming Weekend football game with Montclair University.

The 19-year-old, one of four siblings, “a social connector with a big smile and wavy blonde hair,” as his parents described him, slowed behind his companions on the street near Rowan’s Triad apartment building off Route 322 as four or five unknown males approached and asked him for directions.

Suddenly, one or two of the strangers around Farrell began punching and kicking him and he dropped to the ground. One blow struck him in the neck. Before his friends could reach him, the assailants had fled into the night. They took his wallet and cell phone.

The next day, in a hospital, the much-loved son of Kathy and Don Farrell died of a ruptured artery in his neck. As his parents wished, his organs were donated for transplantation.

A \$100,000 reward from law enforcement agencies and Rowan was posted for information about the assailants. Billboard ads along local highways brought the homicide to the public’s attention. A 2011 Rowan University journalism class project about the campus tragedy can still be viewed online. But the investigation into the fatal attack continues without an arrest.

One predominant clue to a suspect was found early in the investigation, from a security camera video at a nearby convenience store where one of the assailants stopped. It was a distinctive “Coogi” hooded sweatshirt sold mostly in North Jersey and New York shops. The suspect also wore a Yankees ball cap. He told someone in the store he was known as “Smoke.”

As family members told writers for “theDonnieproject,” it took a long time to be able to talk about the son and brother they miss. Now someone needs to talk about those who took Donnie Farrell from them.