

Pending Cold Cases

No photos

By Katie Macdonald

The Federal Bureau of Investigation had “hopeful leads” in the 49-year-old case of Oneal Moore, Washington Parish’s first black deputy sheriff, who was gunned down in his patrol car nearly a half century ago by racists, the LSU cold case civil rights murders project team has learned.

Whether those leads, initially investigated four years ago, went anywhere or are still being actively pursued, however, remains unclear.

The Moore case, along with 111 others, occurring mostly in the Deep South, were reopened in 2007 under the Emmett Till Unsolved Civil Rights Crime Act, which assigned the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division and the FBI with appraising, investigating and evaluating 134 unsolved civil rights era homicides.

On Jun 2, 1965, as many as three men driving a black truck with Confederate flag decal shot at Moore and his partner Creed Roberts, killing Moore and partially blinding Roberts, who also was black. Police arrested the truck’s driver, Ernest Ray McElveen, a Bogalusa paper-mill worker from Mississippi and known racist. Although McElveen was extradited to Louisiana, he was never prosecuted and no other arrests were made.

As of Jan. 1, 2014, FBI agents still were working 16 of the 112 original cases – involving 18 homicides – listed in the Till Act. Many of those cases are expected to be closed during the current calendar year.

Eight years after it began, the FBI’s Civil Rights Initiative appears to be winding down. A combination of aging witnesses, destroyed evidence, dead

suspects and instances of double jeopardy continue to challenge agents in the remaining cases, almost all occurring from the 1950s and 1960s.

The FBI close cases more quickly than the Department of Justice, which released its 2014 report on civil rights era murder cases under investigation in January. The report revealed six cases, including nine victims in Louisiana and southern Mississippi, remain open.

Those cases include the high-profile murders of Wharlest Jackson of Natchez, an Armstrong Tire mid-level manager blown up in his truck, and Moore.

The FBI investigates rumors until they lead to a natural conclusion, an FBI intelligence analyst told the LSU student investigators, adding that one productive interview can change a case that originally looked unpromising.

However, the FBI has in the past acknowledged that several cases continue to remain open because agents have yet to scrutinize older case documents.

Despite the project's challenges, investigators still can bring some closure to victims' families. After ending an investigation, agents compile investigative reports explaining their actions and case evaluations. From the reports, the Department of Justice Deputy Chief Paige Fitzgerald of the Civil Right Division composes letters to the victims' next of kin, if they can be located, which are, in turn, hand delivered by FBI agents.

Families' reactions can be mixed. While some are angry that no arrests were made, others appreciate the explanation, say FBI sources.

The FBI encourages residents of Louisiana or Mississippi who have knowledge of a racially motivated homicides during the Civil Rights era are encouraged to contact the bureau's field offices in New Orleans or Jackson, Miss.

Cases remaining open from Louisiana and Mississippi, along with their location and date of the incident include Louis Allen, Amite County, Miss., Jan. 31, 1964; James Chaney, Philadelphia, Miss., June 21, 1964; Andrew Goodman, Philadelphia, Miss., June 21, 1964;

Wharlest Jackson, Natchez, Mississippi, Feb. 27, 1967; Oneal Moore, Varnado, La., June 2, 1965; Mack Charles Parker, Pearl River County, Miss., May 4, 1959; William Piercefield, Concordia Parish, La., July 24, 1965; William Roy Prather, Corinth, Miss. Oct. 31, 1959; Michael Schwerner, Philadelphia, Miss.; June 21, 1964.

Cases from Louisiana and Mississippi that have been closed, along with their location, include Benjamin Brown, Jackson, Miss.; Charles Brown, Yazoo City, Miss.; Gene Brown/Pheld Evans, Canton, Miss.; Jessie Brown, Winona, Miss.; Carrie Brumfield, Franklinton, La.; Eli Brumfield, McComb, Miss.; Silas Caston, hinds County, Miss.; Woodrow Wilson Daniels, Yalobusha, Miss.; Henry Hezakiah Dee, Parker's Landing, Miss.; Roman Ducksworth, Taylorsville, Miss.;

And Joseph Edwards, Vidalia, Miss.; James Evansington, Tallahatchie County, Miss.; Jasper Greenwood, Vicksburg, Miss.; Jimmie Lee Griffth, Sturgis, Miss.; Paul Guihard, Oxford, Miss.; Adlena Hamlet, Sidon, Miss.; Isaiah Henry, Greensburg, La.; Arthur James Hill, Villa Rica, La.; Ernest Jells, Clarksdale Miss.; Marshall Johns, Ouachita Parish, La.;

And Birdie Keglari, Sidon, Miss.; William Henry "John" Lee, Rankin County, Miss.; George Lee, Belzoni, Miss.; Hebert Lee, Amite County, Miss.; George Love, Ruleville, Miss.; Sylvester Maxwell, Canton, Miss.; Ernest McPharland, Puachita Parish, La.; Robert McNair, Pelahatchie, Miss.; Clinton Melton, Sumner, Miss.; Booker T. Mixon, Clarksdale, Miss.;

And Neimiah Montgomery, Cleveland, Miss.; Charles Edward Moore, Parker's Landing, Miss.; Frank Morris, Ferriday, La.; Samuel O'Quinn, Centreville, Miss.; Hebert Orsby, Canton, Miss.; Albert Pitts, Ouachita Parish, La.; David Pitts, Ouachita Parish, La.; Johnny Queen, Fayette, Miss.; Donald Raspberry, Okolona, Miss.; Marshall Scott, Orleans Parish, La.;

Jessie James Shelby, Yazoo City, Miss.; Ollie Shelby, Hinds County, Miss.; Ed Smith, Stateline, Miss.; Lamar Smith, Brookhaven, Miss.; Eddie Stewart, Jackson, Miss.; Isaiah Taylor, Ruleville, Miss.; Emmertt Till, Money, Miss.; Freddie Lee Thomas, Sidon, Miss.; Selma Trigg, Hattiesburg, Miss.; Clifton Walker, Woodville, Miss.; Ben Chester White, Natchez, Miss.; Robert Wilder, Ruston, La.

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