

TANKLEFF FAMILY

MARTY TANKLEFF

Currently serving a 50-years-to-life sentence for the murders of his parents. His persistent letter writing convinced a retired NYC police detective working as a private investigator to reinvestigate his case.

Jay Salpeter uncovered new evidence and witnesses by following leads never explored by Suffolk County law enforcement.



CONFLICT

Det. James McCready

Detective who interrogated Marty the morning of the murders. He did not live in the area and was not on duty at the time of the 911 call but he responded to the scene and isolated Marty as a suspect. Retrieved Steuerman after Steuerman fled to California. Testifying at trial, he repeatedly denied having any prior relationship with Steuerman, saying he "didn't know one thing about him" before the morning of the murders. Cited by the 1989 State Investigation Commission as "knowingly giving false testimony" in another murder case. Arrested in 1991 for assault and robbery and was acquitted in a judge trial. His defense attorney was Thomas Spota, now the DA. Two years after Marty's conviction, he opened a business with Marty's brother-in-law.

- Leonard Lubrano

Testified that years before the murders, when he distributed wholesale bakery products, he frequently saw McCready with Steuerman in the bagel stores. He testified that McCready had later told him that McCready's company did construction work on one of Steuerman's businesses.

- Defense Confidential Witness

While at one of Steuerman's bagel stores at least a year before the murders, **the witness** was introduced to Det. McCready by Jerry Steuerman as "one of his card-playing buddies." The witness then saw Steuerman and McCready enter a small office where there was a safe.

DA Thomas Spota

Suffolk County's DA since 2001. Because of his representation of McCready during the SIC Investigation and in a 1993 assault and robbery trial, Marty's lawyers requested he recuse himself from the current investigation. Spota declined, instead assigning

ADA Leonard Lato the investigation. After Defense filed a motion to disqualify Spota, it was revealed that Spota's former law partner had represented *both* Jerry and Todd Steuerman in 1989, at a time when Spota may have been sharing office space with him and that in 1983 Spota's *own* law firm represented Todd Steuerman in a case in which Todd pled guilty to selling cocaine out of his father's bagel stores.

Walter Warkenthien

A former colleague of McCready's, Spota assigned him to reinvestigate before assigning Lato. He testified he still reports directly to Spota and that he told Harris that if his allegations were true he'd be "trading places with Marty."

Honorable Stephen Braslow

Ordered the evidentiary hearing but declined Defense's motion for a Special Prosecutor after McCready and Spota's ties to the Steuermans were revealed. Will decide whether or not Marty Tankleff will get a new trial.

Seymour and Arlene Tankleff

Marty Tankleff's parents and business partners to Jerry Steuerman. Attacked September 7, 1988, at their home, where their son found them. Arlene was fatally stabbed and died at the scene. Seymour, found in his home office by Marty, who administered first aid as instructed by a 911 operator, never regained consciousness and died a month later.

MOTIVE, OPPORTUNITY & THE "SELDEN SEVEN"

Jerry Steuerman

Seymour Tankleff's business partner. He owed Seymour hundreds of thousands of dollars and was the last to leave the poker game in the early morning of September 7, 1988. One week after the attacks, he withdrew money from a joint bank account shared with Seymour Tankleff, named his girlfriend the beneficiary of his life insurance policy, faked his own death and disappeared. He was subsequently found living under an alias in California, having shaved his beard and changed his hair weave. He was alleged to have attempted to hire Joseph Creedon to cut out Marty Tankleff's tongue. Jerry Steuerman, who was never considered a suspect in the case, is said to have recently made statements acknowledging his own involvement in the murders, reportedly saying that he "cut their throats" but given his age he would be dead long before he'd serve any sentence.

Todd Steuerman

Jerry Steuerman's son. Convicted of dealing cocaine out of his father's bagel stores. According to a confidential defense witness, Todd admitted that "local police officers were paid not to interfere with the drug business." Allegedly shot Joseph Creedon, his drug-money collector, in the arm for refusing to cut out Marty Tankleff's tongue. According to the 1997 affidavit of Bruce Demps, Todd said he "knew for a fact" that Martin Tankleff did not commit these crimes because the murders were committed by friends of his father's.

(1) Brian Scott Glass

Was scheduled to testify for the defense that Jerry Steuerman offered to pay him to kill his business partner and that he passed the job to Creedon. A convicted, violent felon, Glass began cooperating with the DA's office after being released without bail for an armed robbery charge. He had asked the defense for assistance in finding representation for the robbery charge when he first approached them with evidence, and was told by Marty's lawyers that they could not help him. Glass, who was subsequently released without bail on two more charges, is now being represented by William Wexler, a high-powered attorney and friend of the DA. Wexler shares office space with Judge Braslow's father.

(2) Mark Callahan

Testified that in 1990 or 1991, Glass told him of his connection to Steuerman and the murders. According to Callahan, when the two recently met in a holding cell, Glass confided that, as a third time offender who could face 25 years to life on the armed robbery charge, he was being pressured by the DA to change his statement in the Tankleff case.

Bruce Barket and Barry Pollack

Attorneys representing Marty Tankleff at the evidentiary hearing.

John Collins

Prosecuted Marty in 1990 trial, he is now the Chief of the DA's Office Homicide Bureau.

Shari Rother Mistretia

Seymour's daughter from a prior marriage. Marty lived with her after he was released on bail until she asked him to leave when his lawyers asked her to return missing items from his parent's estate. During the trial, she became the only family member to question Marty's innocence. **Over twenty relatives** continue their outspoken support and belief in Marty's innocence. Upon his conviction, Shari became the sole heir of the multi-million dollar Tankleff estate. Two years later, her husband opened a business with lead detective James McCready.

(3) Joey Creedon

According to (4) independent witnesses, he has admitted his involvement in the murders of Seymour and Arlene Tankleff. He has also been placed by Glenn Harris at the Tankleff home the night of the crime.

(4) Joe Graydon

Testified that a few weeks prior to the Tankleff killings, he went with Creedon to Steuerman's bagel store to kill a partner in the business. The target did not show and when Creedon approached him again a couple of weeks later, Graydon declined the job.

(5) Glenn Harris

In 2002, Harris stated he drove Peter Kent and "Creedon to the Tankleff residence the night [the Tankleffs] were killed," ostensibly to burglarize it. The two passengers then went around the Tankleffs' home into the backyard. Fifteen to twenty minutes later, the two men "came running to the car, "one of them carrying gloves," were "nervous" and "winded" and demanded Harris drive off at once. At dawn, Harris observed Kent burning his jeans and black hooded sweatshirt he had worn the night before, and then heard on his car radio the initial reports of the attacks at the Tankleff home in Belle Terre. Harris passed a polygraph test.

(6) Peter Kent

Joey Creedon's alleged accomplice in the Tankleff murders. A hardened criminal, he testified for the prosecution, admitting he "broke into tears" after hearing he was implicated by Harris. DA Investigators immediately comforted him, saying "we don't believe you did this." They then gave him a defense witness's home phone number and had him record his unsuccessful attempts to discredit the witness.

(7) Billy Ram

Testified that Creedon, Kent, and Harris met at his house the night of the murders where Creedon asked Ram to go with him to "straighten somebody out." According to Ram, Creedon said he was working for "somebody in the bagel business," and they would be going to "straighten out" his partner, "a Jew in the bagel business." Ram refused to join in the job, and also refused to loan Creedon his mother's car, a recent model that would not look out of place in Belle Terre, where the Tankleffs lived. The next day, Ram testified, Harris came by Ram's house and told him, nervously, about what had transpired the night before. He was surreptitiously recorded by Kent at the behest of the DA.

CORROBORATION

- Karlene Kovacs

Executed an affidavit and passed a polygraph test regarding her early 1990's conversation with Creedon in which he told her that he and a Steuerman were involved with the Tankleff murders. He stated they hid in the bushes and that afterward "they were full of blood and had to get rid of their clothes."

- John Guarascio

Karlene Kovacs former boyfriend. was present the night of her early 1990's conversation with Creedon. Testified he overheard Creedon say "they were hanging out smoking in the bushes watching guys play cards."

- DA's Confidential Sources

According to the DA, Creedon admitted his involvement to two separate and confidential sources. Stating on more than one occasion in 1993, "the kid [Marty] didn't do it. I was there."

- DA's Confidential Witnesses

In an unethical attempt to discredit Harris, the DA, knowing Harris had counsel, used two cooperating witnesses to try to induce Harris to retract his statements while being surreptitiously recorded. On both recordings Harris affirms he is being truthful. When prodded, "Where does the fabrication come in?" he responds, "There was none. "When asked, "what part of the statement is false?" he replies, "Nothin, none, none of it..."

- Father Ronald Lemmert

Prison chaplain at Sing Sing, he testified, with Harris's permission, that Harris confessed to him his role as the unwitting getaway driver for Creedon and Kent. Harris also confided in him his reasons to plead the fifth: people had come to him in prison threatening, "We know where your children are," and "an investigator from the DA's office said he would spend his life in prison."

Robert Gottlieb

Marty's 1990 trial attorney. He was the Democratic candidate for DA when Judge Tisch was considering a run as a Republican.