



RIVERSIDE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY
NEWS RELEASE
MIKE HESTRIN, DISTRICT ATTORNEY

WEBSITE: WWW.RIVCODA.ORG

TWITTER: @RIVCODA

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CONTACT: JOHN HALL
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER
951.955.8662

THIRD MAN ARRESTED AND CHARGED IN 1998 COLD CASE MURDER

RIVERSIDE – The son of a man already charged in a 1998 cold case murder has been arrested by DA’s Investigators and has now also has been charged in the murder.

Googie Rene Harris Jr., DOB: 4-9-79, was arrested in Palm Desert on Friday, Dec. 13, 2019. He has been charged by the DA’s Office with one count of murder and is scheduled to be arraigned today, Dec. 17, 2019, at 1:30 p.m. in Dept. 61 at the Hall of Justice in Riverside.

In April 1998, the body of Terry Cheek was found near some rocks along Temescal Canyon Road, near Corona Lake. Following an extensive investigation by Riverside County sheriff’s investigators, Horace Roberts, the victim’s boyfriend and co-worker, was arrested and later charged by the DA’s Office with her murder. In July 1999, he was convicted by a Riverside County jury of second-degree murder and sentenced to 15 years-to-life in prison.

After the conviction, the California Innocence Project took on Mr. Roberts’ case and began investigating. Recent advances in DNA technology resulted in the California Innocence Project obtaining additional DNA testing that was not available during the original investigation. The DNA testing provided additional evidence which the California Innocence Project brought to the attention of DA Mike Hestrin’s Conviction Review Committee. The Conviction Review Committee closely examined the newly discovered evidence and a decision was made by DA Hestrin to reopen the investigation into the murder of Terry Cheek.

Extensive investigation by the DA’s Office Bureau of Investigation ultimately led DA Hestrin in October 2018 to dismiss the case against Horace Roberts and agree to request a finding of factual innocence.

As a result of the new DNA evidence, the DA’s Bureau of Investigation was able to reopen the investigation into the murder of Terry Cheek. On Oct. 12, 2018, DA Investigators arrested Joaquin Lateee Leal, DOB: 12-31-65, of Compton; and Googie Rene Harris Sr., DOB: 8-5-56, of Jurupa Valley. Harris was married to Terry Cheek and Leal was the victim’s nephew by marriage.

Googie Harris Jr. was arrested last week after further investigation by the DA’s Office. A watch found near the scene where Cheek’s body was found has been connected to Harris Jr. through the results of DNA testing. It is believed that the watch was knocked off of Harris Jr’s arm when the victim’s body was left at the scene. The investigation also revealed that all three men were involved in the plan to kill Cheek.

The case, RIF1804461, is being prosecuted by Deputy DAs Michael Kersse and Emily Hanks.

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