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Cases haunt Chickasaw officer

Investigator keeps files related to two missing men close at hand

Chickasaw County Investigator John Porter has closed the book on a lot of cases in his 20 years in law enforcement, but it's the two he hasn't solved that keep him coming to work every day.

On Feb. 16, 1994, two years after Porter became an investigator with the Chickasaw County Sheriff's Department, Frank Garcia disappeared from his job without a trace. Nine years later, Chickasaw County authorities are no closer to solving the case.

Another unsolved case confronted Porter on April 3, 2003, when L.C. "Breeder" Pulliam's body was found slumped over in his car, shot to death.

"Since 1994, I've gone home every night with these two cases on my mind," Porter said as he thumbed through Garcia's thick case file.

"We've questioned everyone we could, ran down every lead, and we still have no answers. What can we do? There are pieces of these puzzles missing, and we just don't have them yet," Garcia said.

Each day when Porter sits at his office desk, the first thing he sees are two manila folders with the names Frank Garcia and L.C. Pulliam.

"I have kept these files on my desk since the crimes happened," said Porter, tapping on the folders. "I don't keep them in a filing cabinet; I keep them here so I can see them, so I can open them up and look over them each day.

"The families always call me to make sure that I don't forget about their loved ones, but how could I forget? Two men are gone, and we don't know who did it. I'll never forget," he said.

The hardest thing about dealing with cold cases is seeing the family of the victims and not having anything to tell them, Porter said. He said the families feel the police don't care to find out what happened to their loved ones.

C.D. Pulliam, Breeder Pulliam's father, supports Porter's assumption.

"The police ain't doing what they supposed to do," said a frustrated C.D. Pulliam. "My son has been dead for two years, and no one has been arrested for it. Something ain't right about that. That's hard for me to deal with."

Breeder's mother, Ruthie Mae Pulliam, was just as selective with her words about the situation.

"Police ain't doing nothing," she said, a tinge of anger in her voice. "Breeder was my backbone, and somebody took him from me, and ain't nobody doing nothing about it."

As early as last year, Porter said his office got a possible tip about where Garcia's body may have been buried. After days of digging up levee banks, authorities had found no body, and the case was back to square one.

Porter said that, when these two cases are solved, he'll retire.

"I'd hang up my badge and retire," he said. "L.C. Pulliam and Frank Garcia are what keeps me going, what keeps me coming back to this office every day. I'll stay around for as long as I can to get these cases solved. I'll be here."