

## Sheriff

John F. Matz

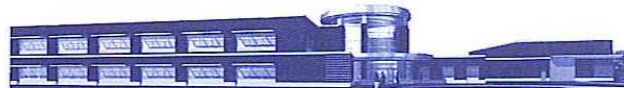
## Chief Deputy

Todd A. Christopherson



## Winnebago County Sheriff

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### PRESS RELEASE

07/16/2024

The Winnebago County Sheriff's Office has developed probable cause resolving the 1963 Homicide of Wayne Pratt. Sheriff's Detectives, working with multiple specialized DNA companies and laboratories, have identified a suspect in this more than half-century-old cold case.

On June 12, 1963, Wayne Pratt was killed at the former Enco Station along old U.S. 41 in Winnebago County. His wife, Marie Pratt told authorities in 1963 that Wayne had been watching television at home when a car pulled up to the station around 8:40pm. The Pratt's lived in a small house roughly 50 feet from the station and Wayne had walked over to help the customer. About 15 minutes later, Marie noticed the lights had not been turned on at the station. Marie walked over to the station and found Wayne, deceased on the floor of the back room of the station, covered in a blanket, the victim of 53 stab wounds. Evidence located at the scene suggested the perpetrator was bleeding after the attack as well.

Numerous leads and dozens of interviews were followed up on in the 1960's in an effort to find the killer. No arrests were made and there was limited information on the case after 1968.

The investigation went cold.

In 2011 the case was formally re-opened and evaluated for potential DNA evidence. Multiple items of evidence were sent to different laboratories for analysis. In 2015, Sorenson Forensics identified DNA mixtures on the blanket that had been used to cover Wayne Pratt. While we considered this progress in the case, DNA mixtures can't be entered into the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) to search for suspects, and we again were at an impasse.

In 2018 a warrant was signed to obtain a DNA standard from William A. Doxtator, of Bowler, WI. William Doxtator was identified as a suspect in this case just days after Wayne Pratt had been found murdered. Besides the initial investigation into Doxtator, the Sheriff's Office had received tips on William Doxtator in 1968 and 2009. New information had been developed on Doxtator in 2017, during the re-opened investigation. Doxtator, who was 82 years old in 2018, was not the only suspect to provide a DNA standard for this case.

In 2023, Sorenson Forensics conducted updated DNA testing and again, identified DNA mixtures. In 2024, Cybergentics used the latest technology for solving degraded DNA and complex mixtures. Their TrueAllele® data analysis determined that William Doxtator's DNA was statistically present on the blanket that had been used to cover Wayne Pratt. This DNA evidence, together with information from original reports and living witness statements, strongly supported the Sheriff's Office conclusion to refer a count of First-degree Intentional Homicide to the Winnebago County District Attorney's Office.

William Doxtator passed away in 2022.

The Winnebago County District Attorney Eric Sparr reviewed the referral and provided the following: "The Winnebago County District Attorney's Office has reviewed the reports generated by this investigation. I agree there would be sufficient evidence to support a factual basis and probable cause to pursue a homicide charge if William Doxtator were alive today. The District Attorney's Office commends the Winnebago County Sheriff's Office for its ongoing investment in this case over a long period of time, showing dedication to securing some sense of finality and resolution for the families impacted."

The Winnebago County Sheriff's Office would like to thank the Wisconsin State Crime Lab, Sorenson Forensics (Utah), and Cybergentics (Pennsylvania) for their work on the DNA evidence in this case. An additional thank you to the late Andy Thompson, long time reporter at *The (Appleton) Post Crescent* for his contributions and assistance with this case. His dedication was invaluable.

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