



Web site seeks 'Justice for Don' (Berkebile)

By VICKY TAYLOR Staff writer

In search of answers about how the late Donald H. Berkebile died over a year ago, three of his cousins have established a Web site they have named "Justice for Don."

"Up until now we have been silent," said Berkebile's cousin, Ginette Isenberg. "But we are frustrated and would like to see some resolution (to the death investigation being conducted by Pennsylvania State Police and the Franklin County District Attorney's office)."

Berkebile, 81, died the morning of July 28, 2008, during a fight with his neighbor, 40-year-old Bryan Kendall. Franklin County Coroner Jeffrey Conner said Berkebile died at the scene of blunt force trauma to the head and neck. He ruled the death a homicide, which he defined as death at the hands of another person.

Police investigating Berkebile's death have released few details of the fight, the shooting of Kendall with a birdshot-filled pistol or Berkebile's death. Investigators said immediately afterward that evidence gathered at the scene had been sent to the state police forensics lab for testing.

Kendall, who was sent to Altoona Regional Medical Center immediately after the fight for treatment of birdshot wounds to his chest and

abdomen, was not interviewed by police immediately, but he talked to a Public Opinion reporter that afternoon from his room at the Altoona hospital.

He told the reporter that the fight started after he got out of his truck to talk to Berkebile, who was allegedly yelling at him from the side of an access road that crossed Berkebile's property and was his only access from his own Blue Spring Road home to the nearby highway.

He said Berkebile pulled a pistol from a holster buckled around his waist and shot at him. The pistol was loaded with birdshot, according to police.

Months later Kendall would claim in a civil lawsuit against Berkebile's estate that Berkebile was standing in the middle of the road with the pistol already out of the holster and hidden behind his back, blocking his way to the highway.

Investigators have not released information from their interviews with Kendall or anything gleaned from evidence they gathered at the scene.

Isenberg said she and two other cousins -- Joyce Babcock of Massachusetts and Jim Wolford of Alaska -- want to know exactly what happened that day, not Kendall's version but the facts as far as police investigators can determine them.

"Don didn't deserve to die that day," Isenberg said, expressing concern that the true story might never be known -- and that as time goes

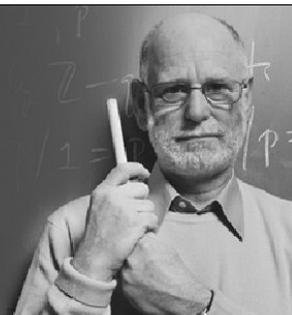
Advertisement



Florida Tech
UNIVERSITY ONLINE

Bring the Classroom to Your Home With a Degree Online From Florida Tech

APPLY TODAY!
FloridaTechOnline.com/FD | 1-888-253-5946



Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™



by, the case might be forgotten and unresolved.

Investigators and Franklin County District Attorney Jack Nelson have said periodically over the past year that they were waiting for key evidence in the case to get back from the state police lab before deciding what charges, if any, will be filed against Kendall.

Nelson said recently that the lab keeps giving his office excuses for not having the evidence processed, giving them new deadlines when the old deadlines pass.

Meanwhile, the cousins say they keep in touch with Trooper Franklin Hershey Jr., the lead investigator in the case, but get few answers.

On their Web site, they list a number of questions they would like answered, including:

- What were the circumstances that led to Don Berkebile's death that morning?
- Who was responsible for his death?
- Why has no one been charged for inflicting the injuries that resulted in his death?
- Why have the forensics from the case been pending for more than a year?
- Will the person or persons responsible for his death walk away free, never being held responsible?
- Don's wishes were that his estate be donated

to charities. The distribution of his estate is being held up by (civil) litigation related to his death. Due to delays in this process, how much of the estate will be consumed by legal and administrative fees instead of being distributed to these worthy charities as he intended?

- Will the passing of time eventually leave this case forgotten and unresolved?

Isenberg said the three cousins decided to put up the Web site as a way to become more vocal about their cousin's untimely death, and to dispel the notion that Berkebile was a recluse with no family and few friends.

"That wasn't the case," she said. "We were a close family, and we all talked to each other frequently."

She said two of the cousins spoke "at length" with Berkebile the night before his death.

"We were aware that he was concerned for his safety, and had been for some time." she said.

She said he had many friends, especially among people with similar interests.

Berkebile was a retired Smithsonian carriage curator and a collector of antiques who had ongoing restoration projects such as a Conestoga wagon that he had rebuilt.

He also collected guns and had a keen interest in history, she said.

Advertisement

UNIVERSITY of SAN FRANCISCO

End-to-End Training as It Should Be: 100% ONLINE!

Earn Your Master Certificate in Internet Marketing

→ SEO & Paid Search	→ Internet Law
→ Online Branding	→ Media Buying
→ Web Analytics	→ Social Media

→

1-800-268-9943
USanFranOnline.com/FD

Print Powered By FormatDynamics™



The Web site went up last Wednesday and has a growing number of hits as the cousins posted the link on special interest networking sites.

On the Web site, the cousins ask for help in moving their cousin's death investigation forward, providing an e-mail link, info@justicefordon.info where people can leave comments, ask questions and provide information if they have it about exactly what might have happened that July morning.

"Kendall's side of the story has been told," she said. "Don can't tell his side."

She said she has spent the last few days going to discussion boards, comment threads and networking sites, telling as much of their cousin's story as they can given the limited amount of information available about what actually happened that morning.

She posts the Justice for Don Web site address, asking readers to go to the site to learn more about Donald Berkebile and his untimely death.

The three cousins will maintain the site, she said, "hopefully adding information as the process unfolds."

She said the cousin's hope is that the Web site will result in a broader interest in her cousin's death, which in turn might encourage more action and bring a resolution to the case and justice for Don Berkebile.

Vicky Taylor can be reached at 262-4753 or vtaylor@publicopinionnews.com

To learn more:

Go to <http://www.justicefordon.info>

Click on "About Don Berkebile" link on left side of page to read Berkebile's story, and add your own Don Berkebile story

E-mail the Berkebile cousins with information about his death at info@justicefordon.info

Advertisement



USF

UNIVERSITY of
SAN FRANCISCO

End-to-End Training as It Should Be: 100% ONLINE!

Earn Your Master Certificate in Internet Marketing

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → SEO & Paid Search → Online Branding → Web Analytics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Internet Law → Media Buying → Social Media
---	--

→

1-800-268-9943

USanFranOnline.com/FD

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™