

Title: Summer of Terror – Trace Evidence in a Series of Hate Crimes
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On the night of June 18, 1999, arsonists destroyed the library and damaged the sanctuary at the B'Nai Israel Synagogue in Sacramento, California. Within the next 45 minutes, fires were set at two other synagogues, Beth Shalom and Kennesset Israel.

Since the attempt to burn the sanctuary at B'Nai Israel was incomplete, items of physical evidence remained in the sanctuary. The accelerant was a combination of oil and gasoline. This accelerant was splashed on the walls, piano, the bimah (alter area), and seating areas in the sanctuary. Fortunately, the fire extinguished itself after a few minutes. However, the library building of synagogue was a total loss. The other two synagogues that were victimized that evening were not as extensively damaged as B'Nai Israel.

Items left in the B'Nai Synagogue included three black one gallon Mobil oil jugs with "Delvac 1300 Super" labels in two different colors. A torn piece of fabric was tied around the handle of the jugs. Tufts of trace debris could be seen adhering to the oily mouth of these jugs. This evidence was documented and removed prior to the collection of the oil/gas liquid and the fingerprinting of the jugs. In addition, a wooden crate with a newspaper in the bottom was recovered from the exterior of the synagogue. The newspaper was the Record Searchlight from Redding, California, 150 miles north of Sacramento.

Anti-Jewish propaganda flyers that blamed the Jews for the NATO intervention in the Serbia-Bosnia conflict were strewn about the Beth Shalom and Kennesset Israel synagogue.

The following items of trace evidence were removed for the oil jugs.

- Paint chips with a light blue top coat over a red layer
- Red plastic chip
- White cotton strips of fabric
- White and brown dog hairs
- Numerous feathers primarily white and brown in color
- Numerous miscellaneous fibers of various types and colors

On the evening of July 1, 1999, Gary Matson and Winfred Mauder were murdered in bed while they asleep. They died in the town of Happy Valley, a small community located in the Redding area of California. Gary and Winfred were an openly gay couple. Their vehicle and some credit cards were also stolen during the commission of the homicide.

On the evening of July 2, 1999, an office building housing a medical clinic that preformed abortions in Sacramento was burned by arsonists. Originally, arson investigators thought that the owner of the building may have set the fire in order to collect insurance money. Initially, this arson was not linked to the synagogue arsons until later in the investigation.

On July 3, the vehicle belonging to Matson and Mauder was found abandoned in the Oroville area. Oroville is located between Redding and Sacramento. When the investigators opened the door to search inside, they noticed a strong odor of gasoline.

The break in these cases came when the credit card of Gary Matson was used to order ammunition from Arizona. The ammunition had been shipped to a mailbox or UPS store in Yuba City, California. Yuba City is just South of Oroville. On July 7, as the police arrived at the store in Yuba City to investigate this lead, they observed brothers Benjamin Matthew Williams and James Tyler Williams picking up the ammunition. Both were arrested at this time for possession of a stolen credit card. Numerous weapons and thousands of rounds of ammunition were recovered in subsequent searches of their vehicle and residence. One of the recovered weapons was identified as the murder weapon that killed Gary Matson and Winfred Mauder. The Williams brothers were then arrested for murder.

Investigators from Sacramento became interested in the Williams brothers because of the newspaper from Redding that was found at the synagogue fire scenes and the recognition that the homicide case in Redding may not be the only crime that the brothers had committed.

A black pry bar and a black wrecking bar were collected from the Williams' vehicle. Receipts showed that they had been purchased just prior to the synagogue arsons. Both bars had powdered glass fragments embedded in indentations on the surface of both bars. In addition, a large green paint on an aluminum metal shaving was present on the blade of the pry bar. None of the paint samples collected from any of the synagogue had green paint. After a discussion with investigators as to possible sources of this paint, the arson scene at the building with the medical in Sacramento was revisited on July 28. This was a white stucco building with green trim. The building was in the process of reconstruction. All the broken fixed windows had been repaired. One of the original metal framed doors with glass inserts located at the front entrance was boarded up between two sheets of plywood. The glass in the upper portion of the door had been

struck by a linear shaped object. It did not fall out of the door because the glass was a laminate. The frame of the door was aluminum that had been painted green. A black paint transfer was present on the broken edges of the glass. A comparison of the green paint chip on the pry bar and the black paint on the glass established that this pry bar most likely broke this window. Some of the glass on the prybar was similar in refractive index to the only existing broken window of the clinic. Other glass on the two bars was not similar to the broken glass in the recovered door. The other windows that were broken in order to gain entry into the building had since been replaced. So this was not an unexpected finding.

A garbage truck driver, who was picking up trash early that morning from the clinic, saw the fire, and two men in jumpsuits speed away from the scene in a small dark colored box-like car. The description of the vehicle was similar to Gary Matson's car.

With this additional information and the information developed from the physical evidence left at the synagogue arsons, Sacramento FBI agents and ATF agents served an additional search warrant on the residences of the Williams brothers including their parents house in Palo Cedro outside of Redding, California, and the suspects' vehicle. In a prior search of the Palo Cedro residence, Mobil Oil bottles similar to those found at B'Nai Israel synagogue had been recovered. This suggested that the Palo Cedro residence was the place at which the arson devices were constructed. The warrants included collection of reference materials such as paint, animal hairs, feathers, and fabrics for comparison to the trace evidence already isolated from the arson devices used in setting the fires. A blue jumpsuit from a bedroom in the house and additional Mobil oil bottles from a shed outside the house were collected. Reference materials and additional trace evidence was collected from the Williams' vehicle and the Matson vehicle in order to link the Williams vehicle to the synagogue fires and Matson's vehicle to the medical clinic fire in Sacramento.

Examination of the physical evidence established many associations including:

- Medical Clinic Evidence
 - Paint on the blade of the Black Pry bar in the Williams' vehicle similar to the door from the medical clinic
 - Paint on the broken glass of the door of the medical clinic similar to the pry bar paint
 - Glass on the pry bar similar in refractive index and semi quantitative elemental analysis to the glass from the window in the door of the medical clinic
 - Glass on the floor of Matson vehicle similar in refractive index and semi quantitative elemental analysis to the glass from the medical clinic
 - Glass on the jumpsuit recovered from the Palo Cedro residence similar in refractive index and semi qualitative elemental analysis to glass from the medical clinic

- Fibers on the jumpsuit recovered from Palo Cedro residue were similar to the upholstery of the Matson vehicle
- Fibers on the front seats of the Matson vehicle similar to the fabric of the jumpsuit
- DNA (analyzed by FBI laboratory) on the jumpsuit matching the younger brother James Williams indicating that the younger Williams brother wore this jumpsuit.
- Synagogue B’Nai Israel Evidence
 - Glass on the black wrecking bar recovered from the Williams’ vehicle was similar in refractive index to the glass from a broken window at B’Nai Israel.
 - Paint on the broken glass of the window at B’Nai Israel was similar to the wrenching bar paint from the Williams’ vehicle.
 - Oil jugs similar to the Mobil oil jug from Williams’ Palo Cedro residence.
 - Dog hairs and feathers on the mouth of the oil jugs and rags tied to the oil jugs were similar to animals at the Palo Cedro residence.
 - Blue over red paint chips on the mouth of the oil jugs were similar to the paint from the shed at the Palo Cedro residence.
 - Newspaper in the bottom of a crate left at the synagogue arson was from the Redding area.
 - A palm print on one Anti-Jewish flyer left at the synagogues was identified as from (Benjamin) Matson.

Benjamin Williams had a list of Jewish church leaders and Jewish individuals influential in the national political arena on his computer. Investigators believed this to be a hit list. Fortunately, this crime spree was stopped early.

Both brothers were charged with several counts of arson, hate crimes, and murder. The first trial was to be held in the Federal court in Sacramento for the hate crime and arson. The attorneys for the defendants made a motion for a Daubert hearing in forensic hair analysis, forensic paint analysis, forensic glass analysis, and forensic fiber analysis. They claimed that present technology had changed significantly over the years and was not universally accepted by the scientific community. Declarations were written by Scott Ryland, Florida Department of Law Enforcement, addressing acceptance of forensic paint analysis, Jose Almirall, Florida International University, addressing acceptance of forensic glass analysis, Hal Deadman, George Washington University, addressing acceptance of forensic hair and fiber analysis, as well as a declaration by me. We addressed the issues raised by the defense attorneys in their bid for a Daubert hearing. These were incorporated into the arguments by the federal prosecutors against having a Daubert hearing in this case. This request for a hearing was denied by the Federal Court judge. Shortly after, Benjamin and James Williams pled guilty to the Sacramento charges and were transferred to Shasta County jail in Redding California.

Benjamin Williams committed suicide and James Williams pled guilty to murder with life in prison without parole in exchange for the State of California not seeking the death penalty.

Trace evidence was a key factor in linking the Sacramento cases to the Williams brothers and in its resolution of a guilty plea. These crimes were undoubtedly part of a larger master plan these brothers believed to be their divine destiny. Fortunately, the master plan did not proceed any further than the 1999 summer of terror.