



SHERIFF
MIKE PRENDERGAST



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For more information, contact:

Lee Alexander,
Community Affairs/Senior Affairs Coordinator
(352) 341-7460

MISSING TO MURDER: JUSTICE FOR THE COIN DEALER

(Citrus County) A missing person case that started here in Citrus County in 2014 came to a conclusion on May 19th with a murder conviction in Pasco County. Billy Shuler, 69, a retired minister, enjoyed buying and selling rare coins. He was well known in his community and was nicknamed the “coin dealer”. Those who knew Billy Shuler said he was a man who would go out of his way to help others. On May 21, 2014, he left his home in Homosassa telling his wife he was headed to meet someone at the Family Dollar in Holiday to possibly buy a coin collection. Early the next morning, when her husband had not returned, Mrs. Shuler contacted the Citrus County Sheriff’s Office to file a report.

Initial investigative efforts by deputies and detectives in Citrus County resulted in identifying a possible location for Mr. Shuler’s cell phone in Pasco County. A request for assistance in locating Mr. Shuler was made to the Pasco County Sheriff’s Office. After a diligent joint effort between the two agencies Mr. Shuler’s vehicle was located near an industrial park in Pasco County. Blood evidence and a spent casing located in and around the vehicle did not create much optimism among the investigators. Using modern technology Pasco County detectives were able to access the history in Mr. Shuler’s GPS and back track his travels. As a result, the body of Billy Shuler was located. Thanks to the efforts of the investigators involved from both agencies, a suspect was identified, his name is Tony Maresca. He was the individual Mr. Shuler was meeting for the coin purchase. In addition, his fingerprint, in Mr. Shuler’s blood, was located in the recovered vehicle. Fearing law enforcement was looking for him, Maresca fled his home and went on a crime spree committing several bank robberies that ended with his arrest in June of 2015. He was later charged with the murder of Billy Shuler.

After waiting three long years, almost to the day, Billy Shuler’s family and friends finally learned the outcome of the case. On May 19, 2017, Anthony “Tony”



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Maresca was found guilty of the murder of Billy Shuler and he was sentenced to 40 years in prison for his actions. This sentence will run consecutively to another 40 year sentence he received for the numerous bank robberies he committed after the murder.

Sergeant Cregg Dalton was the lead investigator on the case for the Citrus County Sheriff's Office. "All the cases I have worked are important to me," Sergeant Dalton said, "but there are a few that affect me on a personal level more than others; this was one of those cases and I am happy that the Shuler family now has a small sense of closure."

Dan Shuler, one of the victim's sons, and other family members traveled to Florida to attend the convicted murderer's sentencing. Dan delivered the victim impact statement in court during which he focused on the positive impact his father had on everyone he met. "This sentence brings some form of peace to our family because now we know this animal cannot hurt other families like he did ours," Dan said. He added that even though it has been three years since his father's murder he still has a gaping hole in his heart.

Mrs. Shuler, who had been married to Billy Shuler for 51 years, had the most impactful words about her husband's murder and the loss that she feels. She said, "The bullet went through his head and straight into my heart as he was everything to me."

As a result of cases like the murder of Billy Shuler, the Citrus County Sheriff's Office will soon be unveiling a new initiative to create "safe sale zones" where people can meet to make custody exchanges or conduct other business safely. These locations will be identified and monitored by video surveillance.