

Suspect in 1980 S. Lake Tahoe murder case behind bars

By Kathryn Reed

A nearly 32-year-old South Lake Tahoe murder case may have been solved with the arrest of a 50-year-old Carmichael man.

Andrew Sanford was booked into the Sacramento County Jail in the death of Richard Swanson on March 28. Sanford, who would have been 19 at the time, was a resident of South Lake Tahoe then.

Swanson was a 16-year-old South Tahoe boy working at the Shell station that used to be at the corner of highways 50 and 89 at the Y. The station was robbed and Swanson left for dead.



Richard Swanson was 16 in 1980 when he was killed at the now defunct Shell station at the Y in South Lake Tahoe.

For years the case went nowhere. That changed in 2006.

Ron and Sharon Swanson made a heartfelt plea to the City

Council at the time asking them to allocate more resources to the police department so the person responsible for their son's Aug. 14, 1980, death would be caught and justice served.

Then Police Chief Terry Daniels and Mayor Kathay Lovell met with the Swansons to talk about what could be done. The council approved additional resources.

When Chuck Owens retired from the department he was hired by Daniels to work the Swanson case, with money allocated by the council.

Even though today's council stopped the allocation, current Police Chief Brian Uhler saw the need to keep the investigation going. Tips were coming in.

The El Dorado County District Attorney's Office in Placerville will be handling the case. Most likely that is where the case will be tried, much like the Jaycee Lee Dugard case, even though both crimes were committed in the basin.

Trish Kelliher with the DA's office did not return a phone call.

Assisting with the case was the FBI. They have been working it more diligently since the Swansons, who now live in Tuolumne County, pleaded for officers to reopen the case.

"It's good to have a milestone here with an arrest," FBI agent Chris Campion told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Neither Uhler nor police Lt. David Stevenson had details on what the suspect has been doing with his life for the past 30-plus years. It's also not known if they knew each other.

"We don't want to really get into any details that might be discussed as part of the trial because of our desire to have a successful prosecution," Uhler told *Lake Tahoe News*.

From this killing the local Secret Witness program was formed.

The seed money was always to go to the person who helped solve the Swanson murder.

“This case and the Jaycee case were really the two cases that shook this community to the core. It really changed how we thought about this community. They were just two kids,” Lovell told *Lake Tahoe News*. She has been on the Secret Witness board for the past 15 years.

The Shell station also has a history for her family. Her brother owned it before the killing took place and had worked there as a teenager, much like Swanson did.

“It was very eerie for us to have it happen,” Lovell said.

Campion said for now details about what led to the arrest are not being released.