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Cops earn salute for seeking truth, justice

By Peter Gelzinis | Sunday, November 22, 2009 | <http://www.bostonherald.com>



Photo by Stuart Cahill

Like most official statements, the pair issued this week by the **Boston Police** Department and the U.S. Attorney's Office are bland by design.

On the surface, they both dismiss lingering questions about Alfred Trenkler's guilt in the 1991 Roslindale bomb case that killed BPD officer Jeremiah Hurley and maimed his partner, Francis Foley.

But neither one begins to tell the whole story.

For example, missing from these two separate clusters of words is the fact the latest troubling suspicions about this tragedy were raised by veteran members of the BPD, who had more than a passing connection to the case.

They brought their doubts to Commissioner Ed Davis, who felt they warranted the attention of the U.S. Attorney's Office.

In a case involving the horrific death of a brother officer and the serious wounding of another, the department's willingness to go the extra mile in search of the truth was both a difficult - and noble - gesture.

It wasn't easy to go to Jeremiah Hurley's widow, Cynthia, and inform her that after 18 years - after Alfred Trenkler's double-life sentence - the department that laid her husband to rest with full honors was going to assign detectives to revisit the circumstances surrounding his death.

But they did.

The BPD could have treated Morrison Bonpasse, a Yale grad with a law degree from BU, who has immersed himself in every aspect of his case, as just some eccentric gadfly with a mission.

But they did not.

When Bonpasse appeared at Trenkler's re-sentencing in Moakley Courthouse two years ago, lugging a 700-page manuscript that detailed both his research and questions with the case, the BPD did not shut him out.

Instead, the mammoth project he called "Perfectly Innocent" was given a full and fair reading.

That kind of open-mindedness and curiosity speaks to an ethical confidence that is refreshing.

Yet none of that is reflected in two spare public statements that seem designed to push the matter into a closet and lock the door.

In dispensing with the latest questions about a bomb planted under a car on Eastbourne Street in Roslindale, the U.S. Attorney's Office made no mention of why Alfred Trenkler was suddenly moved to a federal prison more than halfway across country shortly after the Herald began kicking up dust with a series of FOIA requests.

Just a coincidence, obviously. Still, having Trenkler sitting in a Tuscon jail cell would certainly put a crimp in any effort by Boston cops to interview him.

The feds say they have reviewed the questions Bonpasse raised in his book and compared them against the trial transcript. They remain satisfied justice was done.

Five jurors who sat in judgment of Trenkler don't think so. Have they all been brainwashed by Bonpasse and his book?

Hopefully, the feds will soon issue a thorough and complete refuting of every doubt raised by Trenkler's dogged advocate. It's not simply what justice demands.

It is what Jeremiah Hurley's family, his partner Francis Foley and all those brother BPD officers - fair enough and brave enough to seek the truth - deserve.

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