

AS EASY AS PIE

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Case: Pierce, Samson, male, Caucasian, age 69.

Officer in Charge: Police Lieutenant Arthur Jamison.

Cause of Death: Bullet fired into right temple.

Report of Death: Sergeant Jackson received call from Dr. Steven Mayhew, Resident Physician, Statler Place, that he had found Pierce dead during his early morning round of patients.

Facts Found at Scene of Death: Statler Place is a combination hospital and nursing home for elderly and incapacitated men and women. Dr. Mayhew led Jackson and me to Room 206, which had been Pierce's private suite. Corpse lay on back near edge of bed. Blood from fatal gunshot wound had coagulated on pillow. Revolver, .38 caliber, lay below fingers of stiff right hand. From state of rigor mortis, Dr. Mayhew estimated death had occurred during early hours of previous night. No one had reported hearing gunfire. Empty wallet found on floor. Strewn under bed large sum of dollars, keys, and credit cards. Jackson urged me to read "suicide note" typed by Pierce prior to his death. Note had been left in typewriter. Certain letters, like the "p" in "pie" were fainter than the others. Jackson found no sense in the note and commented that the word "offense" was misspelled. Note as typed follows:

Marginal regret, lament not, though soon I die.
Unsettled crime, angler recalls lack of fitness.
Ruined audience, was hidden, unwilling witness.
Diamond debacle, yegg's heist led to killing offence.
Escalated curse, exactions affirmed silence.
Remorseless act, revenge is as easy as pie.

Interviews: Was not convinced Pierce had committed suicide. Conducted following interviews:

Dr. Steven Mayhew: Stated that Pierce could not have moved right arm in such a way as to pull trigger. Right shoulder of Pierce had been treated by him the previous afternoon and shoulder was so damaged that right arm could barely move.

Resident Pharmacist Morton Rundle: Stated that he had found Pierce and Charles Rance, another patient, fighting in the corridor. Being younger and stronger he had broken up the fight with ease. Both men then had left to go to their private suites while he had returned to his pharmacy.

Charles Rance: Stated that he had started fight with Pierce.

He hated Pierce because Pierce had been responsible for the death of Mary Rance, his wife. The incident had occurred thirty years ago when he had been a corporation attorney and Pierce had been a teacher of high school mathematics. Pierce had run away with Mary. There had been a car accident and Mary had died in the crash.

Additional Facts: Analysis of typewritten note convinced me "offence" was not misspelled but mistyped. This fact and the two acrostics triggered memory of a past case. Returned to Headquarters. Removed from Pending File still unsolved murder of Arthur Castleman, an attorney known to traffic in stolen jewelry. Castleman had been found in his office shot to death. Only item of evidence was a jewel found in thick rug pile. Jewel matched one stolen from the Broadhill collection. File contained a photograph taken before jewels had been stolen and ballistics test report of bullet that had killed Castleman. Conducted ballistics test of bullet fired from gun that had been found at scene of death. Markings of this bullet matched those of bullet that had killed Castleman.

Final Confrontation: Removed photograph of jewels from Pending File. Returned with Jackson to Statler Place. Found suspect and requested that contents of pockets be examined. Final and only remarks made by suspect: "How in the devil did that get there? Must have put it in my pocket when I wasn't looking. No wonder I couldn't find it." Item proved to be similar to jewel shown in photograph. Suspect handcuffed by Jackson and taken to Headquarters. Subsequent search of killer's bedroom found key to safety deposit box. Key and court order led to discovery of remaining jewels of Broadhill collection.

Extrapolation: Hidden behind a drape, Pierce had witnessed killing of Castleman. Killer had not been pleased with money offered, so had taken money and jewels after shooting Castleman. In haste two jewels had been dropped. One had been found by the police. The other had been found by Pierce who had used it to blackmail the killer.

Main Clue: See Answers and Solutions at the end of this issue.

ILLINOIS NAMES SOCIETY

Onomasticians and name aficionados are invited by Laurence E. Seits, Waubensee Community College, Sugar Grove IL 60554 to join the recently-formed Illinois Names Society (\$10 per year dues). Members are entitled to attend the annual meeting of the North Central Names Institute and receive the Papers of the North Central Names Institute and the Bulletin of the Illinois Names Society (a more informal newsletter). He is eager to receive publishable articles on Illinois place names, surnames, given names, railroad names, street names, and the like.