

Crane murder purely sensational

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Bob Crane, former disc jockey and ex-star of the World War II TV comedy *Hogan's Heroes*, was in the Valley in 1978 appearing in a dinner theater play, *Beginner's Luck*.

At 49, Crane was still pursuing wild sex, which he liked to capture on film and videotape. On June 29, someone **beat Crane to death, possibly with a camera tripod, as he slept** in his Scottsdale apartment, then tightly wrapped an electrical cord around his throat.

A small amount of blood was found in a rental car used by Crane's friend John Carpenter.

Carpenter, who had accompanied Crane in woman-chasing, had socialized with him until late on the night of the murder, then flew to Los Angeles early the next day.

Police theorized that Carpenter killed the actor because their friendship was ending.

But DNA analysis of the blood was inconclusive, so the best supposed clue against Carpenter was a police photo showing a tiny ragged lump of . . . something, on a door panel inside the rental car.

Prosecutors, arguing that the lump was flesh from Crane's head, finally put Carpenter on trial in 1994. But Carpenter's attorneys, including deputy public defender Candace Kent, questioned the lump.

"No one could even say the thing on the door panel related to the homicide," says Kent, now an attorney in private practice. "The alleged motive was ridiculous at best; there was no evidence. They had no case."

The defense pointed out an unidentified blonde hair found in Crane's room and noted that there appeared to be one or two videotapes and a photo album missing. Maybe Crane had been done in by someone upset by his sexploits.

Jim Raines, who investigated the case for the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office, says he's sure Carpenter killed Crane, but the DNA evidence was not quite there.

"The jury wanted DNA, and we couldn't give it to them, and that was the biggest detriment," Raines said.

The jury let Carpenter walk. He died of a heart attack in 1998 at age 70.

Auto Focus, a movie about the murder in which Greg Kinnear plays Crane and Willem Dafoe plays Carpenter, is to be released this year.

If you have information that would help solve this case, please call Scottsdale police at (480) 312-5100.



AP Photo

Authorities remove the body of actor Bob Crane from a Scottsdale apartment where he was discovered beaten to death on June 29, 1978.