

NORTHERN LIFE

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GREATER SUDBURY'S COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

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Renee Sweeney murder: Arrest made

The case that never went cold

Robert Steven Wright, 39, of North Bay faces first-degree murder charge

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The man Greater Sudbury Police believe brutally murdered Renée Sweeney 20 years ago appeared in bail court Wednesday morning.

Robert Steven Wright, 39, of North Bay, faces first-degree murder charges in the case. Wright is employed as a lab tech at North Bay Regional Health Centre.

Sweeney, 23, was working at an adult video store on Paris Street at 11 a.m. on Jan. 27, 1998, when she was attacked and killed. Police have been searching for her killer, periodically releasing new information in hopes it would spur a new lead.

Those efforts failed until Tuesday's shocking announcement that there had been an arrest. What hasn't emerged yet is how police found Wright after all these years, and what motive they believe was behind the crime.

Wright is tall with a muscular build, short, greying hair and a receding hairline, greying beard and wore glasses. About half a dozen friends and members of his family sat in the back of the court, later refusing to talk to reporters on the advice of lawyers.

He was represented at the hearing by lawyers Berk Keaney and Michael Venturi. Keaney asked for a publication ban and agreed to a Dec. 20 court date. Wright will appear by video, when a decision on bail will be made.

JAN. 27, 1998

On Jan. 27, 1998, Renée Sweeney, 23, was brutally attacked at her workplace, an adult video store on Paris Street, where she sustained multiple stab wounds and succumbed to her injuries. It was just after 11 a.m.

Cash and other items were miss-



Satisfied

To get to this point, as we've said all along we've never called this a cold case. This has been actively investigated with hope all the way through and so there's a feeling of satisfaction that we can get to this stage.



Following the trail

The forensic evidence provided the service with reasonable grounds to affect an arrest and obtain a search warrant.

ing from the store. A short distance from the scene, the suspect abandoned a lightweight jacket and white cotton gloves, which were located by a police dog. The suspect, at the time believed to be a white man in his early 20s, left his DNA on Renée's body, as well as on the jacket he discarded after the murder.

He stabbed her at least 30 times, and went to the washroom to clean up, thinking he'd killed her. He was wrong.

Sweeney, somehow, made it



Renée Sweeney was killed Jan. 27, 1998, after being attacked at her workplace. Twenty years later, Greater Sudbury Police arrested the man they believe is responsible for the homicide.

FILE PHOTO

and neck, the scratches would have likely been visible.

A couple of weeks after the murder, an arrest was made by Sudbury Police. In February 1998, John Fetterly, 31, was arrested and charged with first degree murder.

He was released days later with a formal apology. Police admitted they had the wrong man, but never elaborated on what prompted the arrest nor what prompted the withdrawal of charges.

He explained that DNA under the young woman's fingernails indicated she had scratched the killer several times. As the killer was fully clothed, except for his face

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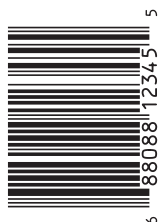
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FORENSIC LINK

Wright, who was 18 years old at the time of Sweeney's murder, was a resident of Sudbury and a student at Lockerby Composite School.

"This horrific event rocked the community to its core then, and is still very much part of our life today," said GSPS Chief Paul Pedersen said at the Dec. 11 press release after announcing the arrest. "I

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The kindness continues

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Questionable move

Does the mayor really need an adviser and does it have to be Rick Bartolucci, Michael Atkins wonders / Page 8

Bush time

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