

Unsolved mystery ...**Bizarre murder had Willcox connection**

By DON DEVEREUX

Special to the Range News

The trail has led to Willcox in the bizarre death of Charles C. Morgan, a prominent Tucson escrow agent, in June 1977.

NBC-TV's "Unsolved Mysteries" broadcast a segment nationally on Feb. 7 regarding the fatal shooting.

According to John McLaughlin, an executive of Cosgrove/Meuer Productions in Burbank, Calif., the Morgan segment "has now generated more calls than any other in the show's history."

For those who may have missed it, the broadcast in question currently is scheduled to be re-run on June 27.

It locally can be seen at 7 p.m. that Wednesday evening on KVOA-TV (Channel 4), Tucson's NBC affiliate.

The most important new leads developed from the initial broadcast have linked Morgan's death to a money laundering scheme involving Willcox area real estate back in the early-to-mid-1970s.

The illicit cash reportedly was being brought in from out-of-town, possibly from Phoenix.

An associate in the scheme is said to have been the late Jack Tillman, a Willcox real estate agent and a close friend of Morgan.

Tillman later died of cancer in 1981.

It was an especially free-wheeling period in Arizona financial history.

It was a time of rampant "blind trust" activity when quite an array of lawyers, bankers, accountants, real estate people, etc., unexpectedly got over their heads in the wave of "funny money" which swept the state.

The body of Morgan, a 39-year-old husband and father of four daughters, turned up along a desert roadside west of Tucson 13 years ago this week.

He had been shot once in the back of the head with a pistol which he had

been carrying, probably while kneeling, and was killed instantly.

He was wearing a bulletproof vest at the time, and a piece of tooth from his mouth was found wrapped in a handkerchief in his nearby car.

Pinned inside Morgan's underwear was a \$2 bill with a number of markings in his handwriting, including a biblical reference, some Hispanic names, and a map of the border area.

A few of the annotations have apparent Masonic implications, an organization to which he was deeply attached, but the significance of the \$2 bill remains a puzzle.

Morgan had been missing and evidently hiding from someone, moving from motel to motel around

See Murder on page 3



Charles C. Morgan

Arizona Range News, Thursday, June 21, 1990

Murder

Continued from page 1

Tucson, for about ten days before his body was discovered.

Earlier that year, in March 1977, he also had been the victim of a several-day kidnapping which he subsequently refused to report to the police or to explain.

In addition to a normal escrow business, Morgan's real estate clients included at least two organized crime factions: the late Ned Warren's Phoenix-based land fraud operation and the Mafia group centered around Tucson's Joseph Bonanno Sr.

Besides real estate, Morgan had been providing escrow services as well for large-scale transactions in gold and platinum.

A month before his death, Morgan also was a reluctant witness for the Arizona Attorney General's office in a probe of a now defunct Tucson bank.

Some investigators for the Pima County Sheriff's Department have insisted, and continue to do so, that Morgan's death most likely was a suicide.

Morgan's family and friends doubt that he took his own life, and substantial evidence — including the new information gleaned from more than 600 phone calls to "Unsolved Mysteries" — strongly supports their view.

According to confidential sources resulting from the recent NBC-TV broadcast, Tillman was both outraged and frightened by the shooting death of Morgan.

Tillman quickly was assured by one of those responsible that "as long

as nobody tells anybody anything, nobody else gets hurt," a source reported.

Nevertheless, Tillman angrily terminated his real estate dealings with those allegedly behind the murder, arranged to acquire a gun for protection, and talked about "possibly having to leave in a hurry," another source said.

According to yet another source, the principals in the money laundering effort whom Morgan and Tillman were assisting became alarmed about a secret file of documents on the spurious land sales which Morgan had hidden away as "insurance."

The March 1977 kidnapping seemingly was for the purpose of interrogating Morgan to learn where the documents were stashed and of detaining him long enough to recover them.

Still worried that Morgan's knowledge of money laundering posed a threat, those benefitting from the scheme then took steps in June 1977 to have him killed, the source said.

Tillman and Morgan had a private meeting about an apparent "contract" on the escrow agent during the final ten days when Morgan was on the run, the source added.

A further source, also a close friend and business associate of Tillman, recalled being told very emphatically by Tillman that, "Morgan didn't take his own life."

Tillman advised him, "Some high-up organized crime figures in the state were responsible for Morgan's death," that source remembered.

There are good reasons to believe

that others still in the Willcox area also may have useful information concerning Morgan's violent end and the money laundering scheme which seems to have caused it.

Anyone with information to contribute in helping "Unsolved Mysteries" to bring the Morgan case to a

successful resolution is encouraged to phone either Cosgrove/Meuer Productions in Burbank, Calif., at 800-876-5353 or consulting journalist Don Devereux in Phoenix at 995-8789.

As indicated, confidentiality will be offered if requested.