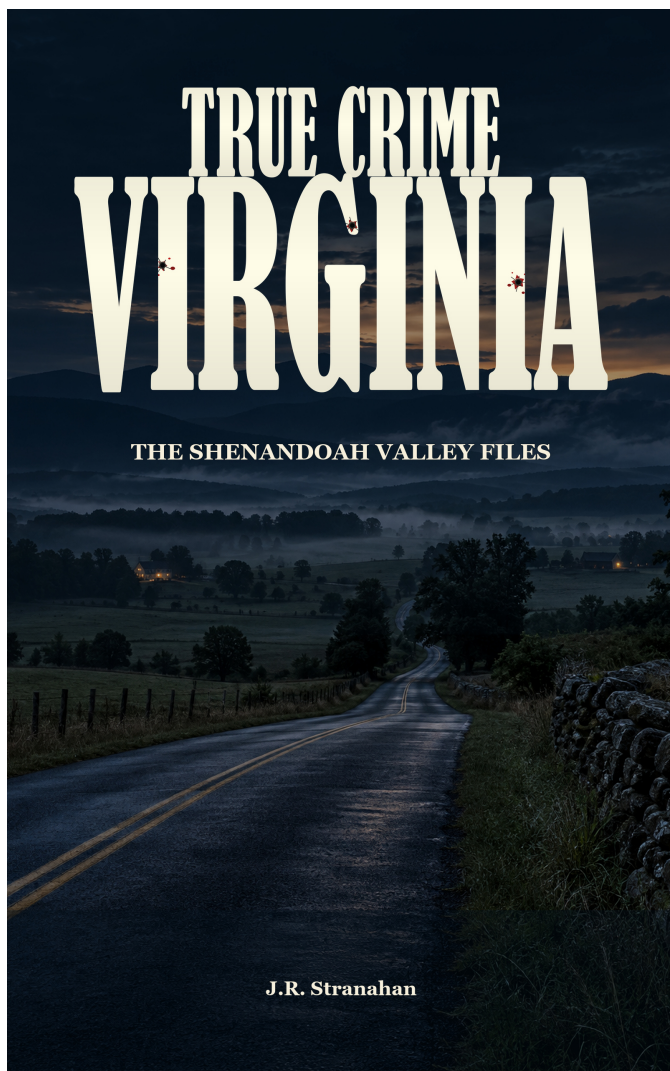


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The Name After Twenty-Eight Years

Two women in the park

Julianne "Julie" Williams and Laura "Lollie" Winans were hiking in Shenandoah National Park in May 1996. Williams was twenty-four. Winans was twenty-six. The National Park Service says they were last seen on May 24 with a Golden Retriever named Taj, whom the FBI identifies as Winans's dog. When the women did not return as planned, family members contacted the park. Taj was found wandering and was turned over to rangers near Whiteoak Canyon Trail.[WW1][WW2][WW3]

Searchers found Williams and Winans on June 1. Their campsite was off the Bridle Trail near Skyland Resort. The FBI's later account dates the murders to May 24 and describes an extensive search by park rangers. The NPS account supplies the last-seen date and the locations associated with the dog and campsite, but neither release reconstructs the women's final day.[WW1][WW2]

When Attorney General John Ashcroft spoke about the case in 2002, he described Winans as a student completing her studies at Unity College in Maine and working toward guide accreditation. He said she loved introducing people to the outdoors. A few months after her death, the college had called her parents to receive the degree she had been working toward.[WW4]

Ashcroft described Williams's academic achievement and service in different terms. She had graduated with high honors, spoke Spanish and was interested in helping migrant workers. He said she worked with families experiencing abuse and had interests in geology, the natural world and the Lake Champlain Project. These were brief public remembrances offered at a Justice Department news conference, not a full biography of either woman.[WW4]

Williams's and Winans's parents were present at that event. Ashcroft said he had met with them earlier that day.[WW4]

The separate case against Rice

The National Park Service and FBI joined forces in the investigation. At its 2002 news conference, the Justice Department said investigators had followed an estimated fifteen thousand leads and contacts. That was the department's description of investigative activity, not a count of suspects or physical exhibits.[WW4]

Darrell David Rice entered the public history of the murders through a different crime in the same national park. On July 9, 1997, he encountered cyclist Yvonne Malbasha. The Fourth Circuit's account says Rice removed the plates from his truck before driving close enough to force her off the road and bicycle. According to Malbasha, she used the bicycle as a barrier and struck him with a water bottle while resisting his efforts to pull it away.[WW5]

The opinion says Rice returned to his truck, then repeatedly drove toward Malbasha as she used a fallen tree for protection. A park ranger arrived after Rice left. Malbasha identified Rice after he was apprehended. By then, the court wrote, he had changed his shirt and restored the plates. Rangers found plastic flex-cuffs and nylon rope in the truck.[WW5]

Rice made statements to investigators about the confrontation while denying an intention to rape or have sex with Malbasha. He pleaded guilty to attempted kidnapping. At sentencing, the district court applied a guideline cross-reference based on a finding that his intended sexual purpose could be determined with reasonable certainty. It treated the truck as a dangerous weapon, denied a reduction for an uncompleted attempt and imposed an upward departure for planning.[WW5]

The Fourth Circuit affirmed the 135-month sentence on February 8, 2001. It upheld the finding that the victim's resistance, rather than a voluntary withdrawal, prevented completion. It also upheld the district

court's findings about sexual purpose, the truck and planning. Those rulings concerned Rice's conduct against Malbasha. They did not adjudicate the Williams and Winans murders.[WW5]

Even within that separate case, the opinion kept its categories distinct. The court did not treat Malbasha as having been moved to another location for the guideline definition of abduction. The sentencing court could still consider intended conduct that it found with reasonable certainty. The result was a sentence for attempted kidnapping, not a new conviction for completed kidnapping or sexual assault.[WW5]

The murder accusation

At the Justice Department's 2002 news conference, United States Attorney John Brownlee said interviews following Rice's 1997 arrest had caused investigators to focus on him. The department announced four federal capital-murder counts. Two alleged that Rice selected Williams and Winans because of gender or sexual orientation. Prosecutors also presented claims about statements and hostility they attributed to him.[WW4]

The announcement offered a prosecution theory, including an alleged motive. It did not supply an eyewitness account of the killings. When a reporter asked how Rice would have known the women's sexual orientation, Ashcroft declined to go beyond the materials submitted to the court and said no information on that point had been submitted. The force of the department's accusation should not obscure that limit in its own public account.[WW4]

On February 6, 2004, the Justice Department directed prosecutors to withdraw the intention to seek the death penalty. Its statement said additional investigation had yielded evidence making continuation as a capital case inappropriate at that time. The department described a responsibility to reassess prosecutorial decisions when the weight of the evidence changed.[WW6]

The statement withdrew the death notice and said the investigation would continue. It did not identify the additional evidence, declare Rice innocent or name another offender. The decision it announced was narrower than a conclusion about who had killed Williams and Winans.[WW6]

The murder indictment remained unadjudicated. WDBJ reported on February 25, 2004 that a federal judge had dismissed Rice's murder charges without prejudice.[WW7]

Twenty-five years later

On June 1, 2021, the FBI still described the murders as under joint investigation by its Richmond field office, the National Park Service and Virginia State Police. The agency issued updated seeking-information posters with additional photographs of Williams and Winans. It again asked the public for assistance, referring to an earlier appeal made five years before.[WW3]

The 2021 request looked beyond people still living near the park. The initial investigation had included interviews across the country. The FBI noted that hikers, visitors to local establishments and former residents might have moved elsewhere in the intervening twenty-five years. It asked that the case continue to be shared nationally because people far from Virginia might still have useful information.[WW3]

The appeal preserved both women's names and photographs while investigators continued seeking an answer. It did not announce a new defendant or an identification. As of that anniversary, the official public account was still one of an unresolved joint investigation.[WW3]

The new testing

The FBI later said a new Richmond investigative team took the case in 2021. Agents, intelligence analysts and other employees reassessed hundreds of leads and interviews. They identified and prioritized crime-scene evidence for retesting, then submitted items to an accredited private laboratory.[WW1]

According to the FBI, the laboratory obtained DNA from several evidence items. With assistance from Virginia State Police, investigators submitted a profile to the FBI's Combined DNA Index System, known as CODIS. The submission produced a positive match to Walter Leo Jackson Sr.[WW1]

FBI Richmond Special Agent in Charge Stanley M. Meador described an additional step. Investigators compared evidence from the murders directly with a buccal swab containing Jackson's DNA. Meador said the results confirmed the identification and allowed investigators to tell the families whom they held responsible.[WW1]

The FBI thus reported both a database match and a direct comparison. Its release did not identify the individual evidence items, name the laboratory or publish a statistical calculation. The account supports the agency's stated sequence and conclusion, without providing the underlying laboratory work for independent examination.[WW1]

Walter Leo Jackson Sr.

On June 20, 2024, the FBI Richmond Field Office and the United States Attorney's Office for the Western District of Virginia announced the identification. United States Attorney Christopher Kavanaugh said investigators could state after twenty-eight years who had committed the murders. He extended condolences to both families and expressed hope that the announcement might offer some solace.[WW1]

Jackson had died before that announcement. The FBI said he died in prison in Cuyahoga County, Ohio, in March 2018. The agency described

him as a convicted serial rapist from the Cleveland area with a criminal history including kidnapping, rape and assault. Those descriptions came from the FBI; the Ohio judgments are not part of the records reviewed here.[WW1]

The release said Jackson worked as a residential painter, was an avid hiker and was known to visit Shenandoah National Park. It also described vehicles investigators associated with him and asked for information about his activities. The FBI said it would continue working with law-enforcement partners to determine whether he was responsible for other unsolved crimes. That request did not establish responsibility for any additional case.[WW1]

The FBI page title calls Jackson a suspect, while the quoted officials express a firm conclusion that he was responsible. The National Park Service described the cold case as resolved. Together, those statements establish the official investigative endpoint. Jackson's death had foreclosed a prosecution that could test the accusation in court; the 2024 announcement was not a conviction.[WW1][WW2]

The names that remain

The public record changed over twenty-eight years. The department that accused Rice in 2002 reassessed the evidence underlying its capital prosecution in 2004. The FBI was still seeking information in 2021. In 2024, it identified Jackson after new testing, and NPS described the investigation as resolved. Each announcement belongs to its own date and evidentiary setting.[WW4][WW6][WW3][WW1][WW2]

Williams and Winans remain more than the subjects of those announcements. The records preserve two women whose work and studies involved service and the outdoors, a trip from which they did not return, and families who sought help when they were missing. The long investigation concerned what happened to Julie Williams and Lollie Winans. The name announced in 2024 should not displace theirs.[WW1][WW2][WW4]

Sources from the edition

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[WW1]: Federal Bureau of Investigation, Richmond Field Office, "FBI Richmond Identifies Suspect in 1996 Shenandoah National Park Double Murder," June 20, 2024: <https://www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field-offices/richmond/news/fbi-richmond-identifies-suspect-in-1996-shenandoah-national-park-double-murder> . Complete substantive official article read; paragraphs 2 through 9 support family notification, FBI review, DNA sequence, identification, Jackson's death and attributed background. Preserved through official-domain search rendering after direct origin retrieval returned HTTP 403. The earlier parent files labeled captures summarize the three FBI/NPS articles rather than transcribe them; the independently preserved official representations control. No linked video, poster, laboratory report or image was treated as independently read.

[WW2]: National Park Service Investigative Services Branch, "Cold Case Resolved: Suspect Identified in 1996 Double-Homicide," complete Williams/Winans entry on News Releases page, last updated June 28, 2024: <https://home.nps.gov/orgs/1563/news-releases.htm> . Heading and all four body paragraphs read in current official rendering and preserved origin HTML. Supports names, ages, last-seen and discovery geography, DNA summary and resolved designation. The update label dates the page, not a separately established entry publication day. No autopsy, search log or incident file inspected. Other entries and images excluded.

[WW3]: Federal Bureau of Investigation, Richmond Field Office, "Shenandoah National Park Murders 25 Years Later," June 1, 2021: <https://www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field-offices/richmond/news/press-releases/shenandoah-national-park-murders-25-years-later> . Complete substantive article read through current official rendering. Opening paragraphs identify the victims and Taj; remaining paragraphs cover the

historical unresolved status, joint agencies, photographs and nationwide public appeal. Direct origin retrieval returned HTTP 403; navigation, linked posters and images excluded.

[WW4]: United States Department of Justice, Attorney General transcript, "News Conference with USA John Brownlee: Indictment of Darrell David Rice," page dated April 10, 2002: <https://www.justice.gov/archive/ag/speeches/2002/041002newsconferenceindictment.htm> . Complete transcript and Q&A read. Opening remarks supply attributed biography and charges; subsequent remarks give the estimated lead count; Brownlee's Q&A explains the focus on Rice; the first question concerns knowledge of sexual orientation. The internal transcript says April 10, 2001; the header, URL and 2004 DOJ statement support 2002. Its ambiguous "Carlton, Minnesota" biographical detail is not adopted. No original indictment or underlying filing inspected.

[WW5]: United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, *United States v. Rice*, No. 00-4594, February 8, 2001, unpublished per curiam opinion:

<https://www.ca4.uscourts.gov/opinions/unpublished/004594.u.pdf> .

Complete eight-page opinion and all three footnotes read; pages 1, 2 and 8 visually checked. Pages 2 and 3 recount the separate Malbasha offense, testimony and statements; pages 4 through 8 address sentencing issues and affirmance. The opinion concerns Rice's attempted-kidnapping plea and 135-month sentence, not adjudication of the Williams/Winans murders.

[WW6]: United States Department of Justice, "Statement of Mark Corallo, Director of Public Affairs, on the Death Penalty in U.S. v. Darrell David Rice," February 6, 2004:

https://www.justice.gov/archive/opa/pr/2004/February/04_crm_076.htm .

Complete release read. First substantive paragraph announces withdrawal of intent to seek death; third and fourth explain the evidentiary reassessment. It does not identify the changed evidence. Correctly decoded HTML checked against the parent text derivative.

[WW7]: WDBJ, News at 6, "Rice" segment, February 25, 2004: https://scholar.lib.vt.edu/VA-news/WDBJ-7/script_archives/04/0204/022504/022504.6.htm . Complete relevant segment read. No original dismissal motion or order obtained. The date is the broadcast date, not a separately verified order-signing date. Unrelated broadcast material excluded.

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