

# Cold Case: On The Trail Of South African Crimes

By Alex J. Coyne

First published in People Magazine, 2016



THESE chilling cases still haunt the country's collective memory.

**Christian Botha is a Private Investigator with twenty years of experience, and he has an impressive list of case files behind his name, but there's something that sets him apart from the rest: Most of his case files arrive at his door cold.**

He defines a cold case as one where there is no physical evidence to link a suspect to the crime, no eyewitnesses and no more leads to follow. "You might find one simple thing. Look for what's been overlooked – like a piece of evidence that never made it to the lab."

Evidence like this can include DNA under a victim's nails, or skin particles off the aggressor. Time might also cause a conspirator to fess up, develop a conscience or let something slip.

"The first thing I look at is the crime scene plan, crime scene photo's, evidence collected at the crime scene and I make sure it was sent off to the lab."

The Deon de Villiers-case comes to mind. "He was stabbed 47 times and hit on the head with a rock." The suspects had made off with his car, a Mercedes-Benz.

By the time Christian had gotten the case, it was three years cold – and the other two PI's assigned to come up with leads had nothing to show. He started off by questioning regulars at Boksburg Lake, the scene of the crime. "I found a prostitute who recalled the incident." She told Christian that the car had stopped at a shebeen, and the two suspects had bragged: "I took the car from a *larney*."

From there, he had piqued enough interested to be able to see the docket. "There was one flaw: A call had been made from the deceased phone around the time of death or shortly after."

Christian managed to get hold of the man on the other end and set up a meeting, claiming the man had won a phone from Vodacom and had to meet to take pictures of his prize. "When he opened the box, there was a pair of handcuffs instead of a phone."

After being arrested and charged as an accessory, the man admitted that the suspects had paid him to stash the car in his backyard. "I found out the suspects were arrested for hijacking and awaiting trial." After questioning them at the prison, one of the suspects broke down and confessed to the crime.

In the end, the suspects received a sentence of 30 years each.

He says technology has made his job easier, especially in the case of unfaithful partners. “In the old days you would have to follow someone for 18 or 24 hours for a picture of them together; nowadays you can just ask a client: Where’s his phone?”

Deleted data which has been recovered from the phone is often the nail in the offending partner’s coffin, and he says that most of the evidence of the affair will be right there.

For people looking to hire a private investigator, he cautions them to make sure their PI is registered with PSIRA. “If you hire an unregistered PI, you are making yourself guilty of a criminal offense.”

- Christian Botha can be contacted through his website at [www.christianbotha.co.za](http://www.christianbotha.co.za)

### **GERT VAN ROOYEN: SA’S DARKEST MOMENT**

When Gert van Rooyen died in 1990, he left a dark shadow of multiple abductions and a seemingly-unsolvable mystery behind them. To this day there has still been no trace of the spate of abductions that took place at his hands during the 1980s.

There have been various claims from people trying to crack the case, including Danie Kügel, who claimed that he had invented a special device that could GPS-locate remains based on DNA evidence.

As part of an episode of Carte Blanche, he was tasked with locating remains – armed with his mysterious device and a lock of hair from one of the children. While remains were found in the process, the results did not point to it being the remains of the Van Rooyen children.

The horrors of the Van Rooyen family seemed to extend far beyond the sins of the fathers: Gert’s son Flippie van Rooyen was charged with the gruesome murder of a 15-year old girl.

Previously, Flippie has claimed insider-info on the famed van-Rooyen case: That the girls were sold abroad as part of a National Party conspiracy, that he had helped dissolve their remains in acid and then that they had been tortured and killed as part of a Satanic cult ritual. His claims were proven to be false with a lie detector test.

Gert’s other son, Gerhard, has had his own battles with the law, having escaped from a police station in 1999 by asking to make a telephone call, and more recently having pleaded guilty to eight counts of fraud and issued a suspended sentence in 2013.

Since then, various people including Jason Leppan, Director of Black Scorpion Protection Services and owner of the Facebook page “We are looking for Gerhard van Rooyen son of Gerhard van Rooyen”, have been looking for Gerhard in connecting with alleged fraud.

Will we ever see cold cases like the Van Rooyen case, the mysterious disappearance of socialite Bubbles Schroeder or even the chilling case of Jack the Ripper be solved? Seemingly only time will tell...