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'Gentle giant' a cop-killer thug

Man killed acting 'the peacemaker' part of loyalist gang that kicked officer to death

Sunday, December 30, 2007

By Stephen Breen

The so-called 'gentle giant' who died after a fight outside a Co Antrim pub is today exposed as a cop-killing thug.

Heavyweight Darren 'Fat Fred' Murphy was dubbed a "peacemaker" in the wake of his death last week as he tried to break up a fight outside a bar in Armoyn.

But Sunday Life can reveal he was a member of the blood-thirsty loyalist mob that kicked to death police constable Greg Taylor outside a pub in nearby Ballymoney 10 years earlier.

Dad-of-three Taylor (41) was savagely punched and kicked by a gang of more than a dozen men outside Kelly's Bar in Church Street, Ballymoney, in June 1997.

Well-placed sources believe that 24-stone giant Murphy may have delivered the lethal blow by jumping on the police officer's head as he was attacked by the mob.

He was left so badly beaten that he was barely recognisable.

The frenzied attack on the off-duty cop, who had been socialising with pals in the bar, is believed to have been triggered by remarks made in relation to a loyalist band parade that had been blocked by police in Dunloy a week earlier.

'Fat Fred' Murphy was among 15 people - including at least two women - arrested and quizzed by detectives investigating the savage murder of their colleague.

However, he was not one of the four men convicted of the killing.

Detectives believe Murphy was assisted in covering up his involvement in the murder by someone who helped wash the cop's bloodstains from his clothes.

Said a former colleague of Constable Taylor: "It's ironic that he got away with his role in the murder of Greg and then, 10 years later, died in not dissimilar circumstances.

"It's sad for his family because, like Greg, he was a dad.

"It's just a pity he didn't choose to step in and act the peacemaker when it was Greg who was being attacked, and instead just joined in.

"Maybe it was a case of what goes around comes around."

Murphy (32) was buried last Thursday in the same Ballymoney cemetery as Constable Taylor.

He died in the early hours of last Sunday after intervening in a disturbance outside McClafferty's Bar on Main Street in Armoyn.

It's understood that motorcycling enthusiast Murphy - whose father Mel was a one-time mechanic for Joey Dunlop - died at the scene after his head knocked against a wall.

There is no link between the incident that led to Murphy's death and that of Constable Taylor.

A police spokesman refused to comment on Murphy, saying: "We cannot comment on a matter that is currently before the courts."

One of two men arrested following Murphy's death, Raymond Paul Hamilton (36), of Travers Place in Dervock, appeared before Ballymena Magistrates Court last Wednesday accused of unlawful killing.

He was granted bail and is due in court again next month.

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