

***The Forever Witness: How DNA and Genealogy Solved a Cold Case Double Murder* by Edward Humes**

Part true crime story and part historical overview of genetic testing, *The Forever Witness* is an engrossing book. In 1987 two young adults (Jay Cook and Tanya Van Cuylenborg) vanished on their way to Seattle during an overnight errand. Their bodies were found days later, but despite the best efforts of the family and police the case went cold. Over 30 years later, Detective Jim Scharf is in charge of the cold case files, and he diligently reviews all the evidence looking for a new lead. Since 2007 consumer-level DNA tests and associated genealogical research had exploded in popularity. Genealogist and actress CeCe Moore was at the forefront of DNA analysis for finding lost relatives and debunking (or proving) family lore. It was not long before detectives took notice and wondered if these tools could be used in their work. In 2016 Scharf began to investigate this new method in hopes of finding a new lead in the 1987 murders. By April of 2018 Moore was on the case and . . . solved it in just two hours once the suspected perpetrator's DNA (left behind at the crime scene) was analyzed and uploaded to the GEDMatch database.

The book then details the investigative journey Scharf took to obtain current DNA from the suspect, his arrest, and the trial (which was not as cut-and-dry as one would expect). The author also reviews the ethical questions which arose within the genealogy and genetic testing communities over privacy. These are not easy questions, but no one can deny the clear benefits of genealogy and DNA analysis in helping solve cold cases. Between 2018 and 2021, Ce Ce Moore alone identified 175 criminals and crime victims.

There is a lot of detail in the book, but if you love true crime and have a side interest in genealogy – it is a fascinating read.