

## WILLIAM FRANKLIN EXONERATED

Forty-four years ago, William Franklin was arrested and charged with the murder of Joseph Hollis and the attempted murder of John Pickens. Since 1980, Franklin has languished in state prison, always maintaining his innocence. Today, after years of diligent investigation, countless hours of legal work and many prayers, William Franklin has had his judgment of conviction vacated by the Pennsylvania Court of Common Pleas for the City and County of Philadelphia. Judge Tracy Brandeis-Roman signed an order which acknowledges the police and prosecutorial misconduct that led to this wrongful conviction. Mr. Franklin was represented in this matter by Joseph M. Marrone, Esq., Michael D. Pomerantz, Esq., and Steven J. Carroll, Esq. of Marrone Law Firm, LLC. The firm was aided in this matter by SecondJustice.org, a non-profit that provides legal support services to lawyers practicing post-conviction litigation.

The shooting occurred on October 22, 1976, which was several years before Franklin was arrested. Joseph Hollis' body was found in a pool hall in north Philadelphia. John Pickens was also shot in the pool hall but survived his wounds and managed to escape. Pickens never identified William Franklin or his co-defendant Major Tillery and he did not testify at either man's trial. Tillery is also represented by Marrone Law. His case is currently moving through the Federal Court system and his legal team hopes that today's decision will help Tillery win his freedom as well.

The Commonwealth's case against Franklin had no physical or forensic evidence that connected him to the crime. The lack of evidence caused the case to remain unsolved until a desperate Emanuel Claitt was convinced by Philadelphia homicide detectives to become a professional witness. In 1980 twenty-five-year-old Emanuel Claitt was facing so many open criminal charges that he was essentially looking at a life sentence. Knowing Claitt's vulnerability, homicide detectives coerced him into providing false evidence to "solve" a number of old homicide cases. One of those cases was the murder of Joseph Hollis.

With detectives' help, Claitt signed a statement filled with half truths and outright lies. He explained how the victims were lured to the north Philadelphia pool hall by drug kingpins. He described that the shooting was a premeditated execution following disrespectful behavior by lower-level drug dealers in this vast criminal organization. All of this was fictional and so haphazardly concocted that there were significant errors in Claitt's story - including the presence of a non-existent glass door. What has been unearthed since trial, however, is far more explosive.

Years later, Claitt gave a [video-taped statement](#) saying that he had lied in Franklin's case and in several other matters. He and others described how homicide detectives were their "handlers" and that they got special treatment for providing false testimony. Some of this special treatment included illegal drugs and private time to engage in sexual relations inside the police headquarters while Claitt and the other snitches were supposed to be in custody. The "Sex for Lies" scandal was the subject of extensive reporting in a recent Philadelphia Inquirer article: [Informants say Philly cops traded 'sex for lies' in murder cases \(inquirer.com\)](#).

[Joseph M. Marrone, Esquire and Marrone Law Firm, LLC](#) have been leaders in civil litigation in the Philadelphia area for decades, including multi-million dollar resolutions in civil rights claims relating to wrongful conviction. [Second Justice](#) is a non-profit that provides legal support for imprisoned Pennsylvanians who have been wrongly convicted.



Shirley and William Franklin, who were married more than 40 years, are shown when they were young and many years later after Williams' long incarceration.

(Above photo and caption from the Philadelphia Inquirer)