

1978

Detective Thomas Doyle
Detective Leon Hodkey

Eastlake Police Department

Detectives often jokingly refer to themselves as “miracle workers.” They get the cases that the patrol force did not solve in the first minutes after a crime. They get the cases that no one wants to work because they are time consuming, painstaking, and sometimes thankless. Often after hours, weeks, months, or years of work, and tons of paperwork, the case is filed away, suspended pending new information. Often these suspended cases will haunt a detective long after everyone else has forgotten.

On September 20, 1977, Detectives Thomas Doyle and Leon Hodkey would be assigned to such a case, and, eventually, truly earned the title of “miracle workers.”

On that date, a body washed ashore from Lake Erie. The victim was a female, and was headless. Her wrists were bound with tape. Lake currents suggested that the body had come from the Cleveland area, and the condition of the body indicated that it had not been in the water for very long. However, immediate identification was impossible. Little investigation could be done, until an identity was obtained and a starting point determined. Doyle and Hodkey started the nearly impossible task of determining the victim’s identity. Computers were in their infancy at this time, and DNA identification had not been developed. The detectives spent hundreds of hours using records of countless agencies, and two months later, made a positive identification on the victim.

Based on that identification, it was determined that the husband of the victim was missing, and was a possible suspect. A search of the residence of the couple revealed a spent .22 caliber cartridge. The suspect was a Hare Krishna devotee. Using every investigative technique known at the time, Doyle and Hodkey were able to track their suspect throughout the United States, and then overseas, to England, Bombay, India, and Kenya. They contacted scores of Hare Krishna camps in an effort to find him. Information that the suspect received at these camps kept him on the run. Finally, on September 13, 1978, nearly one year after the discovery of the victim, the suspect was arrested as he attempted to enter Canada. He was eventually convicted of the crime and sent to prison. The detectives learned that the victim wanted to leave the Hare Krishna sect with their children, and this conflict provided the motive for the murder.

Detectives Doyle and Hodkey were nominated for the award by Eastlake Police Chief William DePledge. They were honored at the annual Blue Coats banquet held on November 29, 1978 at the Mentor Harbor Yacht Club.

Both men are now retired from law enforcement