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District Attorney's Unit Returns Ex-Fugitive for Trial in 1994 Murder

Houston, Tx – The District Attorney's Office Cold Case/Fugitive Apprehension Section was instrumental in the capture and return Thursday of an accused murderer who had evaded authorities for more than 15 years, District Attorney Patricia Lykos announced.

Lynval Maclasa Pearson, now 47, was booked into the Harris County Jail after extradition from New York. He had disappeared while out on bond awaiting trial in 1994 on a charge of killing a South Houston man. Pearson had allegedly been using a Jamaican passport, obtained under an alias, to freely travel between the United States and that Caribbean nation.

The break in the case came after District Attorney Lykos took office in 2009 and created the Fugitive Apprehension Section. It began systematically delving into hundreds of old murder cases in which defendants had never been arrested, or had vanished before trial. District Attorney's Investigator J.J. Freeze began a fresh pursuit of Pearson for the DA's new section.

"Investigator Freeze applied sophisticated new technology with the traditional, old-fashioned, professional police work to find this fugitive," Lykos said. "This is a prime example of what this section accomplishes, working in close coordination with other local, state, federal and even international law enforcement agencies."

Freeze provided those agencies and their fugitive databases with Pearson's fingerprints. He also regularly monitored them for any indication of activity involving Pearson.

"We are determined to make full use of the new databases and significant other resources now out there to track fugitives," Freeze said. "Our jobs are to find information – and to find people. That what it is all about."

Last November, that diligence delivered results. Pearson's prints matched those of a Jamaican traveler who had entered the U.S. through a New York airport. Freeze relied on his 38 years of law enforcement to coordinate the hunt with the help of the Harris County Sheriff's Office, U.S. Marshals Service, Drug Enforcement Administration, FBI and other agencies in the New York and New Jersey area.

On May 25, officers arrested Pearson in New York City's Queens Borough. He faces trial in the 263rd District Court on a charge of murdering Salvador Ortiz Vargas on Jan. 15, 1994, on Winkler Street in South Houston.

Russel Turbeville, the Chief of the Cold Case/Fugitive Apprehension Section, said the unit has now been involved in the location, arrest or extradition of 17 defendants since the section was formed.

"This shows that no matter how old the case, there can be remarkable results achieved with skillful, intense investigations," Turbeville said. "J.J. Freeze did a great job." (end)

