

Jill Monier

MEMPHIS, Tenn. - FOX13's Cold Case is out of Panola County, Mississippi where a 54-year old man was found shot and stabbed to death in his backyard. As FOX13's Jill Monier explains, police are still searching for an acquaintance of his, who's been missing ever since.

"None of the neighbors reported hearing any gunshots or screams for help," said Panola County Deputy Mark Whitten.

It was December 28th, 1997.

Deputies, making a welfare check on 54-year old Russell Davis, found his body face down in the backyard of his Sardis, Mississippi home.

"Memory serves me correct, we found the body on the other side of that boat, lying face down."

Deputies say Russell suffered blunt force trauma. He had been shot once, stabbed 24 times and slashed 9 times. They believe he was dead for about 2 days.

"It was just a very violent crime."

Police say Davis' house was ransacked and robbery appeared to be the motive.

"Someone had their hands in his pockets, the pockets were partially turned out."

Something else unusual was a car owned by 60-year old James Willie Roberson also known as "Skeeter" was sitting in the driveway. Investigators call "Skeeter" an acquaintance of the victim's.

"When we saw Russell's body and Skeeter's car sitting here, naturally all kinds of flags went up," said Whitten.

Investigators say "Skeeter" was reported missing by his family a few days before Davis' body was found.

"We had talked to a gentleman who owned a country store, who reported seeing both Skeeter and Russell together the 23rd of December. Basically that was about the last time anyone had seen the two alive.

Deputies were never able to locate "Skeeter".

At one time, they had reports he was living in Chicago. Deputies would still like to question him. They think he could hold the key to solving this case.

“Like every case, especially violent crimes, the family wants closure and we want to be able to give it to them,” said Whitten.

If you have any information about the death of Russell Davis or the whereabouts of James Willie Roberson call Panola County Crimestoppers at 662-563-6230. Your call will remain anonymous and may be eligible for a cash reward.