

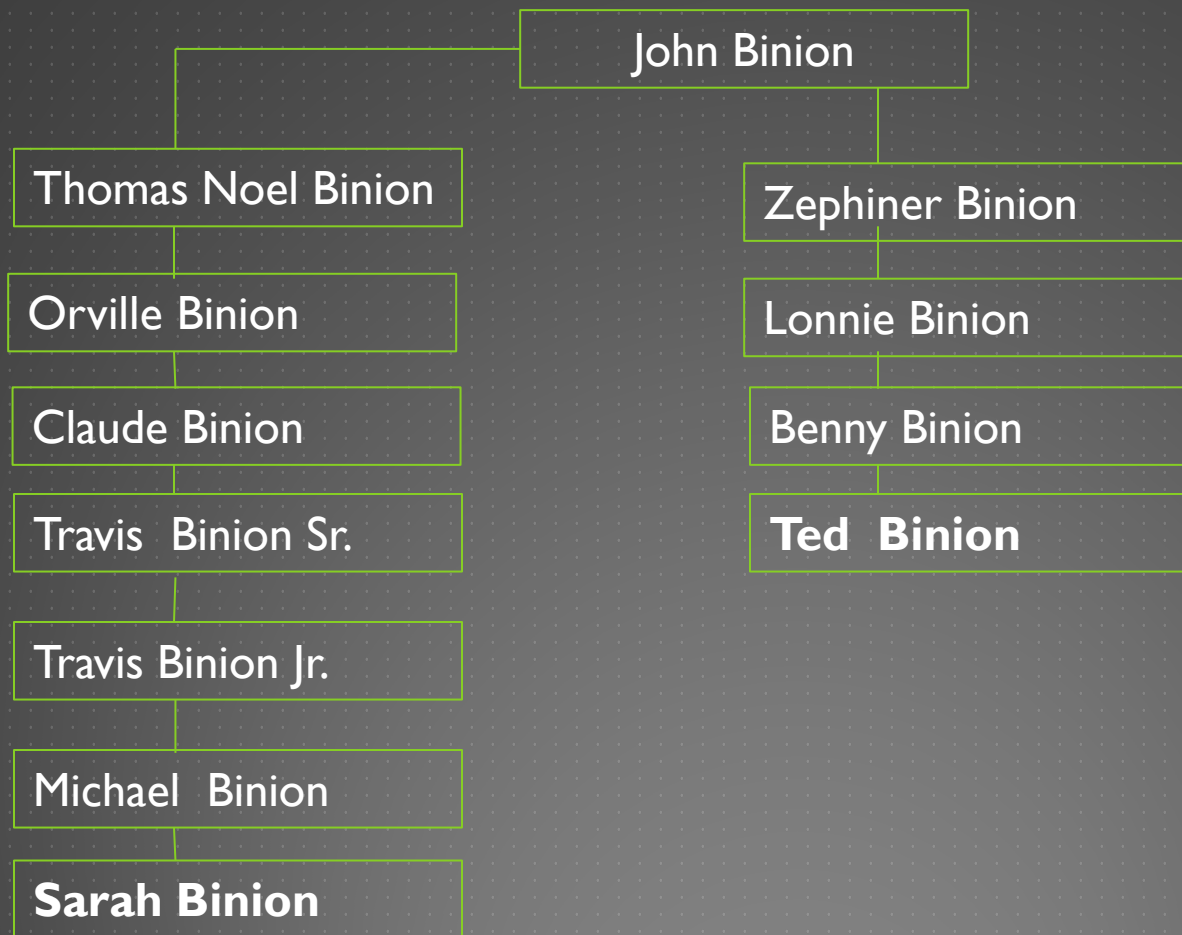
# NOT EVERYTHING STAYS IN VEGAS:THE MYSTERIOUS DEATH OF TED BINION

**Sarah Binion**

# OVERVIEW

- ▶ Background
  - ▶ Binion's Horseshoe
  - ▶ Ted Binion
  - ▶ Sandra Murphy and Rick Tabish
- ▶ September 17, 1998
- ▶ Evidence
  - ▶ Physical and Circumstantial
  - ▶ Suicide or Murder?
- ▶ Trial
- ▶ Media Impact
- ▶ Conclusions

# YES. WE ARE RELATED



# BINION'S HORSESHOE



- ▶ Purchased by Benny Binion in 1951.
- ▶ Sons, Jack and Ted, took over control after Benny served time
- ▶ In 1970, World Series of Poker is first hosted at the Horseshoe
- ▶ 1998, Becky Binion takes over control from Jack
  - ▶ Many changes implemented
- ▶ January 23, 2003, Becky reaches deal to sell the Horseshoe to Harrah's Entertainment
  - ▶ Sold following multiple lawsuits and seizures
- ▶ Multiple owner changes since selling

# LONNIE “TED” BINION



- ▶ Born November 28, 1943 in Dallas
- ▶ Moved to Vegas in 1946
- ▶ Took over day-to-day operations of casino in 1964 at the age of 21
- ▶ Arrested in 1986 on drug trafficking charges
- ▶ Met Sandra Murphy, who becomes his live-in girlfriend
- ▶ 1996, provisionally banned from any management role in the Horseshoe
- ▶ 1998, Ted's gaming license revoked
- ▶ Died September 17, 1998

# SANDRA AND RICK



- ▶ Moved to Las Vegas in 1995 at the age of 23
- ▶ Ted and Sandra start dating causing Ted's wife and daughter to leave him
- ▶ Moved Sandra into home the next day
- ▶ Lived the extravagant lifestyle

## Rick

- ▶ Quickly made a name for himself after moving to Vegas in '98
- ▶ Met Ted in men's room and quickly became friends
- ▶ Did much work for Binion as well as socializing with Ted and Sandra

# SEPTEMBER 17, 1998

- ▶ Tom Loveday, longtime gardener, arrived at house at 9 a.m.
- ▶ 3:55 p.m., Las Vegas police receive a call from a woman
- ▶ Call tracked to Binion residence
- ▶ Paramedics and other medical team members arrive at the house to a hysterical Sandra
- ▶ Inside the house, paramedics find Binion lying on his back in the den
- ▶ 5:29 p.m., Sandra is taken to emergency room for exam and interview
  - ▶ Gives “boo-hoo interview”
- ▶ Rick arrives at hospital shortly after



# SEPTEMBER 17, 1998 CONT.

- ▶ Rick and other associates go back to house
- ▶ Detective Pat Franks takes charge of scene
- ▶ Binion's body observed to be lying face up, head on a white pillow, arms to side, and legs straight
- ▶ Clothing, empty pill bottle, and various other objects next to body
- ▶ No weapons present
- ▶ Criminalists begin processing home throughout the night including bathroom and bedroom
- ▶ Scene said not to appear intentional
  - ▶ Many believe that not to be the case



# PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

- ▶ Marks found on body
  - ▶ chest
  - ▶ wrists
- ▶ Spots of gastric fluid found near entrance of den and in straight line to where body was found
- ▶ Body found in inconsistent manner
  - ▶ lividity on right side and back of body
- ▶ Rigor mortis only found in jaw
  - ▶ Time of death thought to be between 5:30 am and 10 am
- ▶ Answering machine tapes removed and missing
- ▶ Burglar alarm had been disabled

# TOXICOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

- ▶ Long-time heroin dependency
  - ▶ “Chase the dragon”
- ▶ Day before death received prescription for 120 tablets of 0.5 mg of Xanax
- ▶ Patchy, slightly red discoloration around mouth and lips
- ▶ Pulmonary edema present at autopsy
- ▶ Empty Xanax bottle found near body along with piece of foil

# TOXICOLOGY TESTING

- Various samples collected and submitted for toxicology analysis

	Heart Blood (ng/ml)	Peripheral Blood (ng/ml)	Gastric Contents (ng/ml)	Vitreous Fluid (ng/ml)	Liver (ng/g)
Morphine	75	88	1,755	67	189
6-Monoacetylmorphine			13,317	14	
Xanax	270 (sample site for Xanax not clear)				
Codeine			81		
Diazepam	Therapeutic levels detected				

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- ▶ Based on scene observations and toxicology results, manner of death changed
- ▶ Cause of death determined to be a result of alprazolam and opiate intoxication
- ▶ “Based upon observations that the body and death scene were tampered with,.....it is in my opinion that another person or persons were involved in the death of Ted Binion. The manner of death is therefore determined to be homicide.”
- ▶ Change of determination of death 6 months after body found
- ▶ Defense still claimed suicide

# CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE

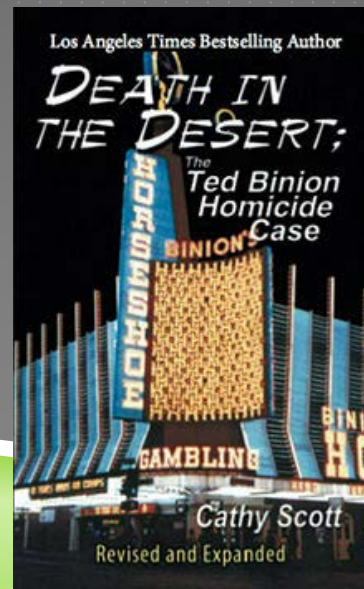
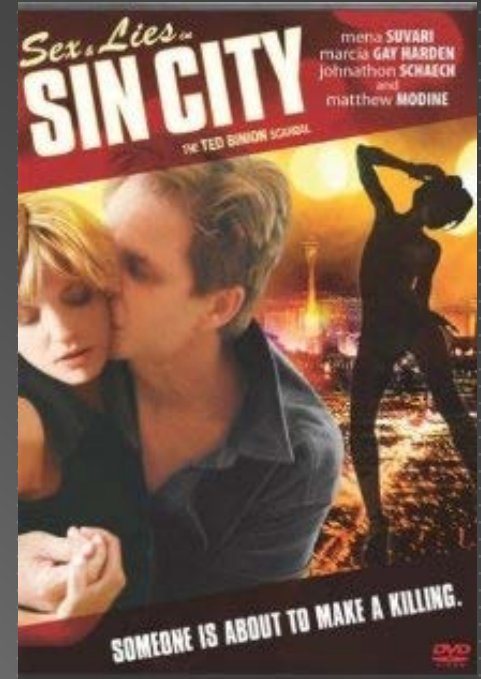
- ▶ Murphy and Tabish began affair in summer of 1998
- ▶ Sandra and Rick visited Ted's secretary day of death
- ▶ Day after death, Murphy taped pointing out items from estate she was wanting
- ▶ Two days after death, deputies catch Tabish and two assistants excavating Binion's silver worth \$7 million
- ▶ Tabish was cash strapped
- ▶ Murphy listed as beneficiary in Binion's Will
- ▶ "Get Sandy out of the Will if she doesn't kill me tonight."

# TRIAL

- ▶ Murphy and Tabish arrested June 24, 1999
- ▶ Trial began March 27, 2000
- ▶ May 19, 2000, jury convicts couple on all counts
- ▶ July 14, 2003, Nevada Supreme Court orders new trials
- ▶ October 11, 2004, retrial begins
- ▶ November 23, 2004, couple acquitted on all murder charges.
- ▶ Tabish released May 18, 2010

# MEDIA IMPACT

- ▶ September 27, 2001 -CSI episode titled “Burked”
  - ▶ CSI effect?
- ▶ 2008- *Sex and Lies in Sin City: the Ted Binion Scandal*
  - ▶ Lifetime movie starring Maria Gay Harden and Mena Suvari
- ▶ Books written about case

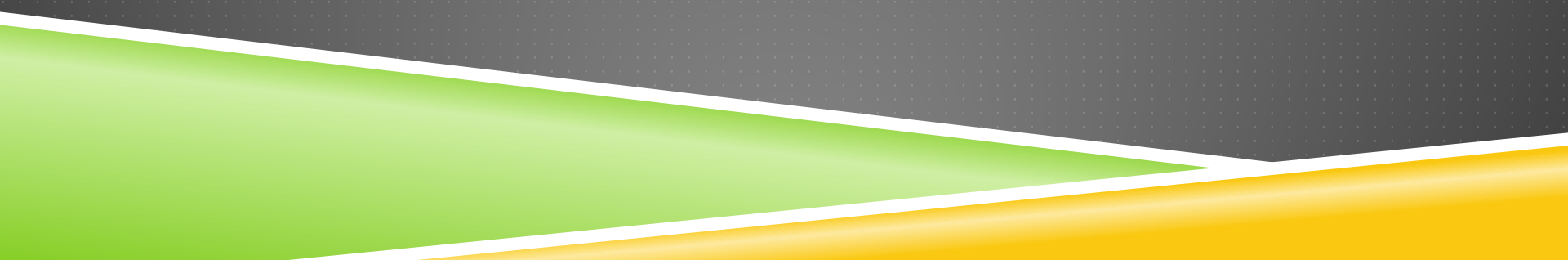




# CONCLUSIONS

- ▶ Don't judge a book by its cover
- ▶ Look at all evidence, physical and circumstantial before forming a final conclusion
- ▶ No DNA testing done
- ▶ What do you think the verdict should have been?

# THANK YOU!

- ▶ Nadine
  - ▶ Dr. Staton
  - ▶ The Parentals
  - ▶ Mrs. Rushton
  - ▶ KariAnna
  - ▶ AJ
  - ▶ MUFSC Staff and Students
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# QUESTIONS?

