

# Generations Impacted Over a Two-Dollar Bet

by Dr. Terry M. Turner, Genealogist

*This research explores the impact of family trauma associated with an ancestor's senseless act that led to separation and dysfunction in the family's structures. According to family therapists, the theory of multi-generational transmission can create a trickle-down of emotional trauma for three to four generations. Consequently, untreated and unaddressed traumas can result in mental and physical illness among the descendants. The first step to healing generational scars is knowing the truth about one's family history, good and bad. For example, countless stories circulated for fifty-six years regarding the murder of Will Turner; but until now, no factual evidence had surfaced for his family.*

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## DGS 2022 Writing Contest Submission



Figure 1: Leonard Washington/Murder Weapon

The second smallest pistol ever made, the 25 Caliber Czechoslovakian Z Automatic Pistol, would be the instrument used to impact the lives of two families through two men: Will Turner and Leonard Washington. Unfortunately, one man was dead, and the other was confined

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<sup>1</sup> Enid Man Slain Over \$2 Bet, *The Enid Daily Eagle*, Enid Oklahoma, Saturday, Jan. 22 & 23, 1966. P. 8. *Enid Daily Eagle County*: Garfield Town: Enid Roll No.: 5688-265 01/01/1966 02/28/1966 Film ID: C0014874.

to an insane asylum and later a jail cell. As a result, the families of Will Turner, age 46, and Leonard Washington, age 29, would be subject to the emotional trauma caused by this senseless act for at least four generations. Both men were residents of Enid, Oklahoma (Garfield County).

Will, the casualty in the incident, was the father of ten children by six mothers: two adults, one infant, four toddlers, and two preschoolers, with another to be born four months after his murder. He was my father's last living full-blooded brother. While growing up, I only had the opportunity to meet one of his children; the others I did not know existed, although they were my first cousins. In my adult life, I eventually met two others. Many of the other cousins died at young ages, after living in the same town during most of their lives, under the shadow of this tragic event.

On August 9, 1919, Will was born in Seward, Oklahoma (Logan County), to Levi, age 31, and Ida, age 28. He enlisted in the United States Army on June 30, 1944, at Fort Sill in Lawton, Oklahoma (Comanche County). His enlistment was one year after his youngest sibling Hazel died (May 28, 1943) while stationed in the Solomon Islands, Guadalcanal. The military never provided the family with an explanation of how Hazel died. After his murder, Will was buried in the family cemetery at Seward. If he were still alive, Will would be 102 years old and a great-great-great-grandfather.



Figure 2: Will Turner WWII

I started my genealogical research with the employees of the Enid Public Library. They were beneficial in researching the microfilm of archived Enid, Oklahoma newspapers located only in their library system. The initial email read, “Dear Theria Ray, I appreciate your help as I uncover the murder of my Uncle Will Turner. I am attaching the article I found on my subscription to Ancestry’s Newspapers.com written in *The Daily Oklahoman*, Oklahoma, on Tue, January 25, 1966, Page 53. The incident occurred Friday, January 21, 1966. Thank you again, Terry.”

Sarah Cariker, a researcher with the Enid Public Library, responded the same day. “Looking through both Enid newspapers through the end of January and early February, this is what I could find. I didn’t find any article about Leonard Washington’s charges in either paper. I also couldn’t find anything about it going to court via [oscn.net](http://oscn.net). I was trying to find a date to search the newspapers because sometimes it can take a while to go to trial, but I couldn’t find anything. If you need articles about the trial, do you know when it occurred so I can search the microfilm?” Attached to this email were two newspaper articles from Saturday, January 22, and

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<sup>2</sup> Terry Turner Family Photo Album.

Sunday, January 23, 1966. These newspaper attachments would provide great insight into the tragic event of a Dice game.

The commentary in the *Enid Morning News* on Sunday, January 23, 1966, stated, “Washington reportedly told officers he and Turner made a side bet. Turner betting \$2 the player would not make nine as a point and Washington betting he would. Officers said Washington said the player made his point, but Turner picked up the money.

There was no argument at the time and another bet was made, the officers said they were told. Turner was said to have won this bet.

Washington said he told Turner, ‘You won that bet, but you took the money on the first bet that you didn’t win.’

This is reportedly when the argument began.

Police said Washington told them he took the .25 caliber foreign-made automatic from his pocket and shot Turner in the chest. Turner then fell on the table, took the two dollars and handed them to Washington, stood up and walked to the front porch where he collapsed.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Murder Suspect Held In City Jail; Filing of Expected Charges Expected Monday: Argument Over Dice Game Bet. *The Enid Morning News*, Enid Oklahoma. Sunday, January 23, 1966. *The Enid Morning News*: Garfield Town: Enid Roll No.: 5688-265 01/01/1966 02/28/1966 Film ID: C0014874.



SCENE OF SHOOTING — This old house at 502 E. State was the scene Friday night of a shooting that resulted in the death of an Enid man. Police were called to the hospital shortly after midnight Saturday where they found Will Turner, 45, had died of a gunshot wound. They later arrested Leonard Washington, 29, who allegedly shot Turner over a \$2 gambling bet.

Figure 3: William B. Porter's Gambling House, 502 E. State, Enid, Oklahoma

Each time I have shared my minimal knowledge of our family history with others over the last fifty-six years, the look of disbelief always seems to accompany the statement “killed over a two-dollar bet.” However, this was my first time reading an in-depth article confirming a first-hand replay of the story by the assailant. Although the initial lead to this family history started on August 19, 2021, when researching Newspapers.com.

“Murder Charge Filed at Enid Man. Enid—An Enid man, Leonard (Doc) Washington, 29, was charged with murder Monday at an arraignment in Enid’s special sessions court before Judge W.E. Crowe.

Washington is charged with the shooting death of Will Turner, Enid. The shooting which officers say apparently followed an argument over a \$2 gambling debt occurred shortly before midnight Friday.

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<sup>4</sup> Argument over a Dice Game Bet.

Garfield County Sheriff Mason Hart said Washington was turned over to county authorities by Enid police.”<sup>5</sup>

As a result of this reporting, I discovered the date was Friday night, January 21, 1966, when this heartbreaking news came to our family. My dad, Roosevelt Turner Sr., owned a bucket/juke joint called “The Boone Dock” in Guthrie, Oklahoma, where they primarily gambled, and dad sold whiskey without a license. The place was a small, abandoned house across the railroad tracks in the community called “The Elbow.” The house was roughly thirty yards from the riverbed of Cottonwood Creek on the corner of Perkins and 5<sup>th</sup> street before crossing the Perkins Street bridge, two blocks east of our home. Weekends after hours were the busiest times at the Boone Dock—starting around 11 pm and remaining open until early mornings.

However, this night was different from all the others as news traveled from Enid of his brother’s murder over a two-dollar gambling bet. Fifty-six years later, the trauma remains engraved in my mind. It was about 2 am. Fear gripped my heart as I woke from sleep hearing my parents shouting; their loud voices were in conflict. I was only nine years old. The sound of my mother Julia’s tears and anxiety, along with my father’s pain and anger, has remained with me for over half a century. The memory of dad trying to leave at that moment and drive sixty miles to Enid to avenge his brother’s life created a sight my two sisters and I had never witnessed.

My parents were in a heated argument. In the past, their arguments were always low-key. However, after hearing the word *murder*, we were also in a frantic state. We watched our parents

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<sup>5</sup>Leonard Doc Washington. Murder Charge Filed at Enid Man. *The Daily Oklahoman*, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 25 Jan 1966, Tuesday, Page 53. <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/83769730/will-turner-murdered/>

struggle over many things that night, including a gun dad wanted to use to avenge his brother's murder.

Dad's laryngectomy and the removal of the vocal cords made the night more exasperating for him and us. My oldest brother Roosevelt, Jr., who lived in Oklahoma City, was called to drive dad to Enid. We stayed awake until they returned home the next day, hoping and praying they would stay safe. Consequently, the rule in our home was that adults did not discuss sensitive issues in the presence of children. Therefore, no information about his death went to us beyond the basic facts.

Unfortunately, this event and others would lead to my father's heart attack and death a year later. I believe the many tragic events in his life became too much to handle. Consequently, my father did not live long enough to witness the outcome of this sad event. As a result, Uncle Will's death has been an open-ended book without closure for our family for over fifty-six years.

The previous commitment of support from the Enid Public Library became a reality, "If you need articles about the trial, do you know when it occurred so that I can search the microfilm?" So, I contacted the Garfield County District Attorney's office. They provided February 22, 1973, as the date when Leonard "Doc" Washington received four years at the Oklahoma State Penitentiary in McAlester, Oklahoma, for the murder of Will Turner. Something was strange that his conviction took six years, from January 21, 1966, to February 22, 1973.

I then called the Enid Public Library with the new date, and they produced a microfilm article dated Friday, February 23, 1973, in the *Enid Daily Eagle* titled, "Doc Washington Gets Four Years."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Doc Washington Gets Four Years. *Enid Daily Eagle*, Garfield, Enid. Friday February 23, 1973. P. 5. Micro-Film Roll No.:11890-489 01/01/1973-02/28/1973 ID:C0014916.

District Attorney Jim Smith agreed to a minimum sentence of four years after Washington waived his hearing and pleaded guilty to the reduced charge of first-degree manslaughter. The judge and attorneys in the case considered that the defendant had spent seven years in the maximum-security ward of the mental facility at Eastern State Hospital in Vinita, Oklahoma. He was evaluated and adjudicated insane precisely one month after the shooting incident. The court considered his hospitalization hard time for a severe crime, and Washington received a minimum sentence of eleven years, including his time in the hospital. During his hearing, the public defender negotiated that he should receive a reduced sentence because the offense involved illegal gambling.

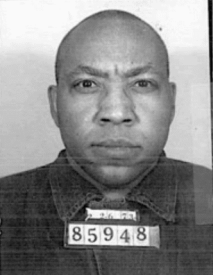
NO. 85 948	AGE 36	IB. 73		BIRTH PLACE Fort. Worth, Texas
NAME Leonard Doc Washington	RELIGION Cath.	EDUCATION 9th		
CRIME Mansl. 1st. Deg.	NEAREST RELATIVE Sherry Washington	Wife		
COUNTY Garfield	RESIDENCE Enid, Okla.	PREVIOUS TERMS (1) FED. Kans.		
TERM 4 yrs.	DATE 2-26-77	8-1-75		WANTED
RECEIVED 2-26-73	HAIR Black	COLORED		3-2-73 Negative
HAIR Black	EYES Brown	5' 6" 190		3-1-73 Tube-positive
HEALTH Normal	OCCUPATION Barber	PRISON WORK ASSIGNMENT		PUNISHMENT RECORD
Case No. CRF-3349	3-13-73--Moss Hall - Comm.	6-20-73--Trusty Building - Comm.		1-2-73 JANUARY 1974 DKT-in
1-2-74--Camp Hodgson - Minston	DISCHARGED			1/21/74 - Prison Rec
APR 22 1975			7	

Figure 4 Leonard Doc Washington Prison File

The Closed Records Department of Corrections, Oklahoma State Penitentiary McAlester, provided the following history revealing Doc Washington's time of incarceration. On February 26, 1973, Washington was received at the Oklahoma State Prison. He went to the Ouachita Correctional Center in Hodgens, Oklahoma, for vocational-technical training from May 6, 1974,

<sup>7</sup> Leonard Washington, Closed Records Department of Corrections, Oklahoma State Penitentiary McAlester, Oklahoma. Oklahoma.gov/DOC. June 10, 2022.



to August 28, 1974. He was then transferred to the Central State Mental Hospital in Norman, Oklahoma, and returned to Hodgens on December 13, 1974. After serving two years of his four-year prison sentence, Washington became a free man at age 38 on April 22, 1975, having spent only nine years in correctional institutions. Further genealogical investigation disclosed that “Doc” Washington spent the rest of his life in Jacksonville, Texas, and Tulsa, Oklahoma, where he changed his name to Leonard R. Washington. He died on December 30, 1989, at age 53.

This genealogical research has sought to bring awareness to generations who have lived in obscurity about the murder of our ancestor—my Uncle Will Turner.

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