

Legal Memorandum

To: [REDACTED], Supervising Attorney

From: Shannan Epps-Lever, Paralegal

Date: March 17, 2025

Re: Herman Fripp Case, Witness Interviews
File No. W25-055

As a follow-up to our previous witness interviews, I interviewed the five witnesses identified in the attached Witness Plan: Jack Gates, Detective Willy Parker, Linda Goods, Kaden Choot, and Suzie Carmichael.

Detective Parker was the responding officer and the first on the scene of Ms. Donaldson's murder. When he arrived at the scene, he noticed that Ms. Donaldson's apartment door had been jimmied open and was ajar. Ms. Donaldson lay face down in her nightgown, and it appeared that there had been a struggle. Detective Parker found a hammer very close to the body. After further investigation, he called in Dr. Melody, who concluded that the hammer was the murder weapon. Detective Parker sent photos to Dr. Melody to assist him. He stated that he did not know if Dr. Melody was an expert, just that he trusted him.

He also stated that Mr. Fripp confessed while walking by his jail cell. He reports that Mr. Fripp said, "I guess I've done it now." He did not write this down, and there is no recording of this, but he claims that it is still a direct confession. He never followed up with Mr. Fripp about this "hallway confession," nor was a report ever completed. There is no evidence that this "confession" ever took place.

Detective Parker has been with the Tukwila Police Department for 20 years. His handling of the case from the beginning has been shady at best. He considered only the hammer that a doctor who is not an expert in this matter had inspected remotely, simply because he trusted him. I believe Detective Parker could be a good witness for our side, as I don't see any reason the Prosecution could impeach him, but we can use his testimony to show the holes in this case.

Mr. Jack Gates is a childhood friend of Mr. Fripp. Jack currently works for Fripp as an internal insurance agent. They were also in the Army together, but Mr. Gates was discharged. Although Mr. Gates doesn't disclose this, Mr. Fripp previously told us that he believed Jack was discharged due to drug use. Jack mentioned that he had a drug problem and that he and Mr. Fripp had a falling out over it, but after he got clean, they reconnected. Jack said that he invited Fripp to a BBQ to introduce him to a potential client, hoping that Mr. Fripp would give him a job if he secured the client. Mr. Fripp did get the contract but did not offer Jack a job, which he clearly resented.

There was somewhat of a love triangle occurring. Jack had previously dated Ms. Carmichael-Fripp several years before she married Mr. Fripp. Jack claims he was fine with it but wished Mr. Fripp had asked him first. Ms. Carmichael still has interest in Jack, but at the time of her death, Jack was dating Ms. Donaldson.

Jack also called the police after hearing about the murder to inform them that he was supposed to have dinner with Mr. Fripp the night of the murder to discuss insurance policies, but Mr. Fripp never showed up. Jack reported that he waited at the restaurant until 11 pm and then went home.

I don't believe Jack would make a good witness to testify on Mr. Fripp's behalf. He seems to hold a grudge against Mr. Fripp and, frankly, should be under suspicion himself. If the prosecution were to call him as a witness, many details could emerge in cross-examination that might be helpful to us.

Linda Goods is the next-door neighbor and sister of Ms. Donaldson. They recently discovered they are half-sisters after being informed by their father. Ms. Goods is younger than Ms. Donaldson and admires her job, seeming somewhat envious of it. She moved into the apartment next to Ms. Donaldson because she wanted to spend more time with her, and they had been getting along well. At one point, she began dating Mr. Fripp casually but never mentioned it to her sister. She had asked Mr. Fripp about a job at his company, and afterwards, he started drifting away from her. She tried calling him several times, but he never answered, and she regretted asking him in the first place.

Ms. Goods is a valuable witness for us for several reasons. She witnessed the killer emerging from Ms. Donaldson's apartment, at least from the back. Although she describes the individual as wearing construction gear, she also mentioned that the person had a slight build. Additionally, she can testify that Ms. Donaldson was involved with Jack, which could cast suspicion on Ms. Carmichael.

Kaden Choot is a good friend of Mr. Fripp and credits him with saving his life after recovering from a drug addiction. Mr. Choot has been working for Mr. Fripp for a few years as his laborer and spends a lot of time with him, including after hours. Mr. Choot states that they often drink and smoke marijuana together, and that on the night of the murder, he and Mr. Fripp were out drinking until around 4 am. He would make a great character witness for Mr. Fripp, but the heavy drinking and marijuana use would need to be addressed.

Another reason Mr. Choot would be an excellent witness for us is that he saw Ms. Carmichael call Jack and scream at him, expressing hope that he wasn't seeing that 'witch,' referring to Ms. Donaldson.

Ms. Carmichael was very abrupt and rude during our interview. She had many negative things to say about Mr. Fripp, including that he never loved her and was involved in multiple affairs. She also willingly confirmed that the hammer in question was Mr. Fripp's and that she had bought it for him as a wedding gift.

Ms. Carmichael is not a good witness for us because she would portray Mr. Fripp in a negative light. However, under cross-examination, we could present her as a primary suspect.

I believe Mr. Choot is our best witness. Although he was quite drunk the night of the murder, he has a roommate who can testify that he didn't get home until after 4 am, providing an alibi for Mr. Fripp as well as serving as a character witness. Additionally, Mr. Choot can explain the love triangle that was occurring and how Ms. Carmichael appeared to be the most angry person involved.

Encl.