On the early evening of January 3, 1980, with the cold night wind just beginning to rise off the Cape Cod Canal, a man named David Mello went out to buy some drugs. He met with his regular connection, Richard Grebauski, and the two drove in one car to a remote spot on Head of the Bay Road in Buzzards Bay to conduct their business. After selling Mello the drugs, Grebauski told him to wait in the car. He would be right back. Grebauski disappeared down the road in the dark.

Some time shortly after 6 o’clock that night, a neighbor heard a car pull up to 9 Head of the Bay Road, where Frances Carriere lived. Her husband, Edmond Carriere Jr., was no longer living with her;
she had obtained a court order barring him from the house and was seeking to divorce him. Frances shared the home with their only son, 22-year-old Edmond Carriere III, and 14-year-old Ginger Carriere, the youngest of their three daughters. Not long after the neighbor had heard the car pull up, Rodney Burrill arrived to visit Frances, whom he had been dating for some time. Aways down Head of the Bay Road, Grebauski was just getting back to his car. He rejoined Mello, and the two of them drove away.

Burrill thought something about the white two-story house looked wrong. He noticed the porch door was unlocked and the door leading to the living room was ajar. Burrill returned to his car, retrieved a shotgun from the trunk, and went inside the house. He called out to Frances a few times and then went upstairs. He found her dead in the bathroom, lying between the bathtub and radiator. She was nude, having apparently been surprised as she was preparing to enter the tub. There were bruises on her neck and a V-shaped wound in the center of her forehead. She had been stabbed repeatedly in the chest, the wounds puncturing her heart and one of her lungs and severing several of her ribs. No weapon was visible, and Edmond III and Ginger weren’t home. Burrill called Bourne police. I knew it would happen, Burrill told the cops, who looked at him suspiciously, the way that cops look at anyone who calls them to a murder scene while holding a shotgun. The police took pictures, and in them 44-year-old Frances looked like something made of alabaster in the strange, yellow light.

The police contacted Edmond Carriere Jr. in Florida, where he and Ginger were staying for the Christmas holidays with his second daughter, 24-year-old Linda McCraney, who lived there year-round. When the police told Edmond his wife had been murdered, he said little. Edmond and a friend found Linda at a bar and told her that something had happened to her mother. Linda decided to take her sister back home to Massachusetts. Edmond wound up in the hospital that night, claiming a heart attack. At her funeral, for which he refused to pay, he stayed outside the church, sitting on the hood of his car smoking a cigarette.

On July 11, 2010, more than 30 years after the crime was committed, Edmond Carriere Jr. was arrested in the house in which his wife had been killed, charged with buying her murder. In the decades since the murder,
two other men – allegedly those hired by Edmond – had been charged with the crime. Grebauski had been indicted for it twice. A man named Steven Stewart actually had been convicted of the murder, but that conviction was thrown out because of bizarre testimony by one of the key witnesses against him. Another man, David Phinney, had been indicted for lying to a grand jury but was never prosecuted for it.

Both of the assistant district attorneys who had first responded to the scene of the killing are judges now. On the day of the murder, one of the eventual key witnesses was an infant. And Paul White, who would later spend years investigating the case as part of the Massachusetts State Police’s cold-case squad, was an industrial arts teacher at Silver Lake Regional High School in Kingston, having moved there from Turkey Hill Middle School in Lunenburg, from which graduated a young man named Brian Glenny. When Edmond finally does go to trial for the murder of his wife, Glenny will be the prosecutor.

It was Glenny who had prosecuted Grebauski, too, back in the summer of 2003, as well as Stewart, whom the state claimed actually had done the killing that cold night in January after meeting up with Grebauski on Head of the Bay Road while Mello waited, unknowing, back in the car. Nobody had made bail for Stewart back then, but Grebauski was released when his family showed up with $200,000 in cash. What people who were there remember is how the money smelled, as though it had been buried somewhere. It reeked of dirt and earth, of endless corruption and old death.

Nobody ever commits the perfect crime. And cold cases lie dormant, but they’re never truly dead. There’s always a witness, somewhere. There is a name in a file, and someone has overlooked the name or the file. There is a lead that has gone unpursued, a bit of evidence tucked away in a box in the corner, which is now sitting under the other boxes that contain bits of evidence, leads unfollowed, witnesses forgotten, from newer cases that have gone unsolved. Something is in there, in the files or in the boxes. Someone is out there, because no crime goes unpeopled. Every crime is an imperfect crime.

The murder of Frances Carriere shook Cape Cod because, when it happened, it seemed random and senseless. Now, though, the people who have lived with the case say that it all began with attempts at divorce and the rumor of a road. Somehow, back in the late 1970s, Edmond Carriere
In August 2003, Steven Stewart was in court in Barnstable to answer to the charge of murdering Frances.

Jr. got wind of the notion that the reconstruction of Route 25 was going to bring it close to the house on Head of the Bay Road. This would increase the value of the property considerably, and Edmond could smell money on the faintest breeze. One of his friends eventually would testify that, if you took a dime from him, Edmond would spend $10,000 just to get the dime back. But Frances was trying to divorce Edmond and might well end up with the house as part of the settlement.

Their marriage had been volatile, violent. When she and her siblings were young, daughter Linda recalls, there were parties in which Edmond would end up brawling with someone. Linda remembers her father returning at night with the signs of a fight on him. “I knew my mother was trying to divorce him,” Linda says. “And I remember my mother telling me that if anything happened to her, that he did it.” After the murder, Burrill, the man who discovered Frances’s body, would tell the police that she had told him the same thing. According to State Police documents, she also told her divorce attorney that her husband had threatened to have her killed by two unknown men.

In the two years after her mother’s murder, Linda was haunted by what happened. She increasingly suspected her father, a suspicion she was not shy about sharing. Then, in 1982, the district attorney’s office indicted Grebauski, and she felt relieved. A year later, however, the case was dropped because it didn’t seem possible to sustain the burden of proving it beyond a reasonable doubt. Investigators were now hearing something about Stewart, but they had yet to draw any connection between Stewart and either Grebauski or Edmond.

“I was a young prosecutor in the office then, and I remember the machinations behind the decision not to go forward [with the Grebauski case],” says Cape and Islands District Attorney Michael O’Keefe. “You don’t want to go forward and have one opportunity [for a conviction] and see it squandered.” From her home in Florida, Linda bombarded police and prosecutors connected with her mother’s case with letters. Frances’s mother and stepfather, Minnie and Jim Dearnley, stayed in touch with the Massachusetts State Police. Edmond moved into his old house in Buzzards Bay. The case lay fallow for nearly 11 years.

In 1979, when the state’s voters overwhelmingly passed Proposition 2 ½, Paul White, like many government employees, found himself out of a job. He’d been laid off from teaching industrial arts at Silver Lake Regional High School. “I needed a job, so I took the exam for the State Police,” says White, whose two brothers were cops. By 1982, he had joined the State Police, but injuries from a traffic accident he was involved in just after he joined the force eliminated him from uniformed
It was not entirely comfortable duty. White got the feeling that many of the cops with whom he was dealing would rather leave a case unsolved than admit that they might have missed something that White and his colleagues would later find. “When someone else comes in and says, ‘Well, what’s the story with that case there?’ ” the answer is usually “Well, we followed the leads all the way out, and there was nothing there,” he says. “I heard that over and over again.

“Sometimes, the circumstances were that the case was originally worked by a young trooper. Now it’s 10 or 12 years later, and that trooper is probably one of the bosses. So there was resistance.”

In 1997, Frances’s mother and stepfather contacted White at the cold-case squad. When he began looking into the murder, White thought that the original investigators had wasted too much time trying to pin the crime on Burrill, the boyfriend who’d found Frances’s body. After the 1982 indictment against Grebauski was dropped, there was no break in the case until February 1994, when a convict, Robert Hoeg, reached out to a state trooper named Robert Whelden.

Hoeg, who was serving a life sentence for first-degree murder of his own wife, told Whelden that, while he and Steven Stewart had been working construction jobs together, Stewart had told Hoeg that he had killed Frances and that Edmond had paid him and Grebauski $10,000 for the hit. Stewart’s alleged description of the crime, which Hoeg passed along, was detailed and graphic: He told of how he had snuck into the house through a sliding glass door, how he had surprised Frances before she got into the bathtub, how he had beaten her, how she had slipped and smashed her head on the radiator, and how he had stabbed her until he could “hear her blood pumping out” in the silent house. Hoeg added that Stewart had told him that Edmond Carriere III was also supposed to have been killed that night, but that he hadn’t been home when Stewart broke in. (Subsequently, investigators say, they learned that the younger Carriere had earned his father’s wrath by siding with his mother in the divorce attempt.) Whelden then spoke to the man for whom Hoeg and Stewart had been working at the time, and he said that Stewart had told him roughly the same thing, adding that Stewart had bought new furniture for his Brockton home at about the same time that he was alleged to have received $5,000 for killing Frances.

Reading Whelden’s account of his interview with Hoeg, White felt that some of the ice around the case was beginning to crack. A State Police detective named Christopher Mason was assigned to the case on behalf of
the Cape Cod and Islands DA, and more and more, both Mason and White focused on the group of men from Southeastern Massachusetts loosely associated with Edmond. Many of these men had criminal records and were suspected of a number of other crimes from the mid- to late 1970s, including the theft of catalytic converters from an auto junkyard and a huge heist from a Middleborough lumberyard, one that descended into slapstick when one of the getaway drivers – rumored to be Stewart – flipped his rig, scattering the lumber over the road. A tractor-trailer and a flatbed descended on the scene and scooped up the lumber, some of which, police believe, ended up in a house Edmond was building in Maine. This was crime. And it was organized. But it was not organized crime. Some of Edmond’s associates believed that Frances might have talked to the police about the lumber heist.

Years passed, and investigators were still picking at the case and the information gleaned from Hoeg. In August 2000, while going through the old case files, White noticed the name of Charles Berryman, a peripheral figure in this group around Edmond, a construction worker who didn’t live far from where White was working in Middleborough. “His name was mentioned, and there didn’t seem to be any kind of follow-up interview with him,” White recalls. “I thought, well, if he knew these people when, relationships will change, and maybe his attitude will change.” White left a business card in Berryman’s door, and Berryman called him the next morning. He invited White to come out and talk to him the next evening, when he got home from work.

“First thing he says is ‘I know why you’re here,’” White recalls. Berryman told White that, in the fall of 1979, Edmond had come to his house and offered a group of men that included Berryman and Phinney a few thousand to kill his wife. Though Phinney denies Berryman’s account, Berryman said that he’d called Phinney on the eve of the murder, that Phinney insisted on staying in Florida despite the sided job that he and Berryman were supposed to be starting that week in Massachusetts, and that Phinney told him to watch TV the next day. Berryman maintained that Phinney was supposed to be Edmond’s alibi in Florida. Says White: “When I’m talking to this guy, I need to think, ‘Hey, is this guy full of [expletive] or does he know what he’s talking about?’ I said, ‘Here it is, X number of years later. How come you never told this to the police before?’

“And he says, ‘They didn’t ask.’”

White was now pointed in the direction of the circle of men around Edmond, including Stewart, although White still didn’t know that Stewart and Edmond knew each other. Several months later, in November, he interviewed Timothy Blanchette, Stewart’s son, who had been an infant when the crime occurred. According to court records and testimony given
by Blanchette, Stewart and his son were estranged until Blanchette was 18, whereupon Blanchette sought out his father. The reconciliation did not go well. On one occasion, Stewart failed to pay back a debt that he owed to a friend of his son’s. Things escalated to the point where someone brought out a baseball bat. Blanchette beat his father so severely that he ended up serving six months for assault with a deadly weapon.

Blanchette told White that one night while he and his father had been drinking, Stewart had told him that he’d been paid to stab a woman to death in Buzzards Bay and that he said it had been some of the easiest money he’d ever made. Blanchette added that his father had laughed about it. “We reached out to him because he had this dynamic situation going on with his father,” White says. “Their relationship changed, and as an investigator, you have to be aware of those things.”

White kept in touch with Mason, and they kept prodding the case forward with the DA’s office. On August 13, 2003, almost 24 years after the murder, Grebauskis and Stewart were indicted for the murder-for-hire of Frances Carriere. Grebauskis was bailed out, the money all reeking and foul. Stewart stayed in jail. The case would take two years to come to trial. And it was not yet anywhere near as strange as it was going to get.

Terry O’Connell works in a sunny, second-floor office in the center of Barnstable. You can see a sweeping tidal estuary from his rickety back porch. From the front steps, you can see almost all the legal institutions that have been entangled in the murder of Frances Carriere. The district attorney is across the street. Up on the hill is Barnstable District Court, where presides Judge James O’Neill, who, in 1980, had responded to the crime scene as an assistant DA. Across a parking lot is Barnstable Superior Court, where presides Judge Gary Nickerson, who, as another assistant DA, had gone with him. It’s a small community, and after a trial is over, it’s not unusual to see both sides buying rounds at the Dolphin Inn or the Barnstable Tavern. “Everybody knows everybody else,” Terry O’Connell says.

O’Connell was a lifer on the Cape. Born in Wareham, he came home after college and joined the Sandwich Police Department. He did 8½ years undercover as part of an interdepartmental task force investigating drug smuggling. One of the state troopers he worked with was White. O’Connell retired in 2001, got a law degree, and set himself up as a defense attorney and private investigator. In October 2001, Frances and Edmond’s daughter Linda walked into his office and asked for his help. “She was frustrated,” O’Connell recalls. “She asked if I could liaison between the family and the DA’s office, and if I would investigate.”

O’Connell managed to get access to all the boxes in all the corners of all
the rooms. He also focused on the activities of Edmond and his cronies, what he came to jokingly call “the den of thieves.” By 2003, when Stewart and Grebauski were finally indicted, O’Connell was working on verifying the details of the story that Hoeg had told about Stewart’s accounting of the night of the crime. O’Connell noticed that Stewart allegedly had told Hoeg that, in addition to his throttling Frances and stabbing her, she had smashed her head on the radiator in the bathroom. He looked again at the crime-scene photos, Frances lying there bone-white in the weird yellow light. He saw a V-shaped wound in the center of her forehead.

“I couldn’t figure out how she got a knife wound in her forehead,” O’Connell recalls. “The more I looked at it, the more I wondered if the radiator had caused that.”

He was interested in whether the same radiator was still in the house, which Edmond had partly rented out, since he was shuttling between Buzzards Bay and Florida. One afternoon in February 2003, O’Connell drove up to 9 Head of the Bay Road and knocked on the door. When Edmond’s tenant answered, O’Connell deployed the great modern weapon of American persuasion – he told the guy he was going to be on television. “I said to him that a woman had been murdered in the house, and that Unsolved Mysteries was thinking of doing an episode on it and I’d like to look around if I could.” The man let O’Connell in. Upstairs in the bathroom, O’Connell saw that the radiator from the night of the crime was still there and that a corner of it seemed to conform to the wound in Frances’s forehead. He came back with the original crime scene investigator, whose findings confirmed that the mysterious wound was consistent with the woman’s head having struck the corner of the radiator. What Stewart allegedly had told Hoeg about the victim hitting her head on the radiator appeared to be true, and it was something that had not been reported in press accounts of the crime.

“That’s the kind of circumstantial evidence that can really help,” O’Connell explains. “I did a report, and I went to Brian Glenny and I said that this was something only the killer would know.” O’Connell also took his discovery to Mason, the trooper pulling together all the vast and disparate material in preparation for the trials of Grebauski and Stewart. Contacted by the Cape Cod Times in March 2003, Edmond denied any involvement in the crime. “Do I care about that murder?” he asked the reporter. “Hell, no. Why should I care? Why should you care?”

Steven Stewart’s son said that his father told him that he’d been paid to stab a woman to death and that it had been some of the easiest money he’d ever made. The son added that his father had laughed about it.
In April 2005 — with Grebauski’s and Stewart’s trial still pending and Grebauski out on bail — O’Connell was in his office when he got a call from Mason. Grebauski had been visiting Edmond in Florida and now he was dead, killed in what was described as a motorcycle accident not far from Edmond’s home.

“Surprise, surprise,” O’Connell said. And then he called Linda.

“That was unbelievable,” she says. “I thought, ‘Oh, my good God. What goes around comes around.’”

Everyone was suspicious. Assistant District Attorney Brian Glenny contacted the Polk County, Florida, prosecutor’s office and the local police, telling them that Grebauski had been indicted for the murder of the wife of the man at whose place he’d been staying at the time of the accident. The police investigated, but they found no evidence that Grebauski’s death was anything but an accident, albeit a convenient one for several parties in Massachusetts.

In May 2005, Glenny finally went to trial against Stewart for the murder of Frances Carriere. Berryman testified about the evening on which he said Edmond had come to his house with another man, offering money to anyone who would murder his wife. Blanchette testified as to what he said his father, Stewart, had told him, and how his father had laughed when he talked about “the easiest $10,000 he’d ever made.” And then Robert Hoeg, who was still in prison, took the stand, and things began to unravel. It started when Hoeg refused to be sworn in. Hoeg answered “no” to a few of Glenny’s questions. Then, as Glenny attempted to elicit the details of the events that Hoeg had recounted to Whelden back in 1994, Hoeg adopted a method of reply usually employed only by embarrassed politicians, scandalized celebrities, and diffident outfielders.

“No comment,” he said.

Thirty-two times.

Glenny asked him about the detailed description of the crime that Hoeg previously had said Stewart had given him – sneaking into the house, stabbing the victim, hearing the blood pumping out of her body – basing all his questions on testimony that Hoeg had given to the grand jury that had handed down the indictment. He even asked him whether Stewart had been the best man at Hoeg’s wedding. No comment, replied Hoeg, to all of it. (Hoeg had not really invoked his privilege against self-incrimination, since he had answered some questions prior to going on his
Edmond had been subpoenaed to testify at Stewart’s trial but didn’t appear. He was arrested on default of a witness summons but was released, after which he returned to Florida. Edmond’s name was a constant, whispered presence behind all the bombast of the trial. At the end, O’Connell thought that Glenny gave one of the best closing arguments he’d ever heard. On June 6, 2005, Stewart was convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced to life in prison without the chance of parole. There was some hope that, facing that possibility, Stewart might finally roll on who had hired him to murder Frances. Instead, it turned out, Stewart ultimately was rescued, for the moment, by Hoeg’s bizarre performance on the witness stand.

Stewart appealed. John Thompson, a Springfield attorney, took the case. The appeal rested on two elements – Hoeg’s refusal to be sworn and the questions that Glenny had asked based on Hoeg’s grand jury testimony to which Hoeg had replied “no comment” – and it was based on Douglas v. Alabama, a unanimous 1965 US Supreme Court decision that overturned a murder conviction on the grounds that the defendant’s confession had been read aloud in the courtroom without being entered into evidence. “The [Stewart] trial,” says Thompson, “was a farce. He didn’t have the opportunity to defend himself.” On April 14, 2009, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court overturned Stewart’s conviction and ordered a new trial.

There was some hope that, facing the possibility of life in prison without the chance of parole, Stewart might finally roll on who had hired him to murder Frances.

One question Brian’s heard me ask a number of times,” says DA Michael O’Keefe of Glenny, “is are we going – through the passage of time – to at least have the potential of getting something else, or is the passage of time hurting us?”

After the SJC ruling, Glenny and other prosecutors hauled out all the old files from all the old boxes in all the corners of all the offices and began slogging through the details of a case that was now going on 30 years old. Stewart was now represented by Kevin Reddington, a Brockton attorney with a bulldog reputation for never representing anyone who would cut a deal with the government. Reddington did everything with a swagger; at one point, while reviewing the file, he asked Glenny if the prosecution had engaged a psychic from upstate New York.

“I know the government recognizes it has a weak case,” Reddington gibed at Glenny, “but a psychic?”

O’KEEFE PHOTOGRAPH BY VINCENT DEWITT/GLOBE FILE

NOVEMBER 14, 2010
Last July, Reddington withdrew from Stewart’s case. Stewart’s new lawyer, Jeffrey Clifford, got in touch with O’Keefe’s office. Rather than face a new trial, his client was willing to talk in exchange for a plea to a reduced charge of voluntary manslaughter with a sentence recommendation of time already served, which in Stewart’s case would be the seven years he spent in prison after his arrest. It was a brutal call for O’Keefe, every bit as tough as the one he’d witnessed as a young prosecutor back in 1983, when the office had dropped the charges against Grebauski. The DA took the deal. Mason went to see Stewart and, according to an affidavit filed by Mason, Stewart gave up the store.

He confirmed that he’d told Hoeg and another man about how he’d killed Frances. He talked about why he’d done it, for half of the $10,000 that he said Edmond had been offering for someone to do the job. He talked about how he’d met Grebauski on the night of the crime, how he’d been given “a fishing knife” that he later threw into the sea, and how he’d gone to Grebauski’s to get paid, and how Edmond arrived at Grebauski’s and complained that Stewart had failed to move the body out of the house and had not killed Edmond III. Armed with this confession, Mason went to 9 Head of the Bay Road, where Edmond was once again living, and arrested him. He was 75 years old. It was July 11, 2010.

White and O’Connell both got word that the arrest was coming. Everybody on the Cape knows everyone else, after all.

After all these years, Linda, who continues to live in Florida, worries about what could come next. “I’m the one who talked to WBZ. I’m the only child that’s been talking. I’m afraid for me and my family,” she says. “It’s been a cloud hanging over our lives for a long, long time.”

It’s anticipated that Edmond will come to trial early next summer. While declining, through his attorney, Jack Atwood, to comment on the case, he is out on bail and can’t leave his Buzzards Bay house. Very likely, he will maintain that Stewart bargained him away for the deal he got from the district attorney’s office.

Meanwhile, all the files will come out of all the boxes in all the corners of all the offices. Some of the witnesses are dead. Others are even older than they were the last time they testified. The case is what it has been for the last 30 years, only more so – an amalgam of accusation and denial, of sworn testimony and old memory, of faded fact and corroded theory, all of it closer to crumbling under the freighted passage of time, but moving still and still moving, because no crime is unpeopled and all crimes are imperfect.