On May 16, 1996, after a jury trial in the Ninth Judicial Circuit in Orange County, Florida, onetime journeyman heavyweight Tim “Doc” Anderson, who had fought the likes of George Foreman and Larry Holmes in compiling a 27-16-1 (13 KOs) record, was convicted of first degree murder and sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Anderson never denied shooting his former promoter, the 6’4”, 343-pound Rick Parker – who was generally regarded in boxing circles, and beyond, as being disreputable, corrupt and dangerous – nine times in Room 250 of the Embassy Suites Hotel in Orlando on April 28, 1995. But his reasons for doing so have raised an array of questions related to his being found guilty of such a serious offense.

At least two jurors have publicly expressed outrage over the fact that they were never told that mandatory sentencing guidelines would keep Anderson in prison forever. If they had known that, they said, their verdict would have been altogether different.

“Immediately after reaching our verdict, another unanimous decision was made,” wrote jury foreman Vincent Runfola in a letter to the Judge Richard Conrad. “We were all going to write you a letter during the pre-sentence investigation requesting leniency for Mr. Anderson. We now know that we never had that chance. Most of the jury members walked out of the courtroom feeling blindsided and misled.”

“Once we agreed on the verdict, many of us cried and silence filled the room for what seemed like an eternity,” wrote juror Felicia Walters. “It was then that we all decided to write you a letter, prior to Mr. Anderson’s sentencing, to request leniency. At the time, we had no idea that upon returning to the courtroom that Mr. Anderson would be sentenced to life in prison with no chance for parole. Most of us left that evening feeling shocked and misled.”

Anderson is currently serving his sentence at the Hardee Correctional Facility in Bowling Green, Florida. Although imprisoned now for over a decade, he has made the best of a bad situation and refuses to have his always buoyant personality stymied by such an unpleasant predicament.

“He’s just amazing,” said Anderson’s father George, a retired Chicago city administrator who now lives about two hours from the prison. “Many times when family members visit, we’ll be depressed. But after spending a few hours with Tim, we all feel better. He is very adaptable and always upbeat and happy, regardless of his circumstances. He’s always been like that.”

Besides his immediate family, which includes a quadriplegic sister who is integral to the case, Anderson has some other unlikely allies. The most compelling is Parker’s half-sister, Diane McVey of Orlando, who visits him regularly and professes her love for him. Her support of Anderson throughout the entire ordeal has resulted in her being ostracized by many of her family members, but she has steadfastly refused to turn her back on him.

“Over the years there were so many people who might have wanted Rick dead,” said McVey. “He wasn’t a very nice person, and took advantage of a lot of people. I’m not surprised someone killed him. I’m just surprised that Tim did.”

Although all of Anderson’s appeals have been exhausted, Marcia Silvers, a Miami appeals attorney who was referred to Anderson’s case by prominent Florida defense lawyer Roy Black, is working pro bono to get either executive clemency granted by Governor Jeb Bush or a retrial based on newly discovered evidence. While she admits that it is an uphill battle, she is holding out hope that others will also realize what she perceives to be the injustice of Anderson’s incarceration.

“There are a lot of inmates who deserve to be in jail a lot more than Tim Anderson does,” she said. “The facts of this case are so unique, and Tim has the support of so many solid citizens. Several jurors have stated that they would not have convicted Tim of such a serious crime if they knew he’d be sentenced to life in prison.”

Moreover, she adds, “There are the mitigating factors of the alleged poisoning. This case just doesn’t add up to premeditated murder. I firmly believe that this act was committed in the heat of the moment, which amounts to, at most, second degree murder, but most likely manslaughter. I work on a lot of high-profile murder cases, for lots of money. I’m not even being paid for my expenses in this case. The reasons are simple: I feel an injustice was done, and that Tim was more of a victim in this case than Rick Parker.”

From all accounts, the 46-year-old Anderson is an unlikely killer. He grew up in a solid two-parent, four-child home in Chicago. A standout athlete as a youngster, no one could ever have imagined that he was afflicted with Crohn’s disease, which causes incessant diarrhea. Although outwardly he was a child that others looked up to, he often had to wear a diaper up until he was eight or nine years old.

This secret was shared with his mother, to whom he was very close. When she died of a lung disease when Anderson was still a teenager, he was devastated. Anderson is the first to admit that that his childhood malady, coupled with his mother’s love and understanding, as well as her untimely death, made him a lot more sensitive than he would have liked.

Engaging in sports was Anderson’s great equalizer, and he was equally adept on the pitching mound as he was with his fists and his feet. After some teenage success in kickboxing, as well as an abundance of high school honors for baseball, he was selected, in 1981, to play minor league baseball for the Chicago Cubs’ Class A farm team in Boca Raton, Florida.

Always a fitness fanatic, he began training at a local boxing gym, and also moonlighted as a bouncer at the Agora Ballroom, where he met Jim Murphy, a fellow bouncer who was into holistic healing.

“I gave Tim an herbal mix for his problems, and the results came quickly,” said Murphy laughingly. “Tim was so proud; he even called me into the bathroom to show me what he did. When he’d go to the beach, he would put suntan lotion on himself, then spend five minutes in

one position, move his body a few degrees for another five minutes, and on and on. He was a wonderful guy, so innocent and naïve with a quirky personality and a witty sense of humor.”

The management of Anderson’s baseball team was not happy with his boxing, and forced him to choose between the two. Having grown hooked on the sweet science, he chose to pursue that sport full time as a professional.

From the day he turned pro, in June 1983, Anderson was an enigma. He had dyed blond hair, a buff body, wore garish attire, was a vegetarian, and had studied kiniesology (muscular movement), which earned him the nickname Doc.

The rough and rugged former title challenger Randall “Tex” Cobb, with whom Anderson often trained, once commented: “I know you can fight because the way you dress you’d embarrass the Puerto Ricans and the faggots.”

One person who did not approve of Anderson fighting was his sister Erin, who was rendered quadriplegic at the age of 16 in a 1976 diving accident. Those feelings were only exacerbated years later when her brother hooked up with Parker, whom he met in California. Parker, who was admittedly determined to become the white Don King, was amassing a fortune by assembling disenfranchised youngsters to go door to door across the country selling a cleaning concoction called Sun-Sensational.

His half-sister Diane was involved in the business, and even had her own territories until her brother cheated her out of her earnings. In many cases, said McVey, the salespeople would knock on the door of a prospective customer, purposely drop some dirt on the carpet, and then show how easy it was to clean with the cleaning compound.

“Tim isn’t stupid, but he trusted a lot of people he shouldn’t trust,” said Erin. “Parker was very flashy and addicted to drugs, which couldn’t have been more different than Tim. I don’t think Tim was ever high on anything, except life and exercise.”

Saying Parker was flashy is an understatement. He was a born conman who could talk the chrome off a bumper. McVey says that he displayed great entrepreneurial zeal as early as ten-years-old when they were growing up in both Missouri and Lakeland, Florida. Parker, she says, would contract to cut the lawns of neighbors for a certain price, and then hire children even younger than him to do the work at less than half the price. Many times, he refused to pay them at all.

Anderson bought into Parker’s hyperbole, and agreed to not only fight for him but also act as his bodyguard. His $750 a week paycheck, he was told, was being held in escrow for him. According to Anderson, things were moving along fine until he learned that Parker had a fierce cocaine habit. Anderson had such an aversion to drugs, he wouldn’t even take pain killers prescribed to him when Larry Holmes broke two of his ribs in 1991.

While in Fort Myers, Florida, for a 1990 match, Parker had made plans for Anderson to give several anti-drug speeches at local schools. When they arrived at one location in separate

limousines, Anderson opened Parker’s door and saw him inhaling a mountain of cocaine. Outraged, he demanded the $150,000 he believed he was owed to him by Parker and went off on his own. In the coming months he made no secret of his plan to write a book on boxing to be called “Liars, Cheats and Whores.”

Anderson, who was once 9-1 as a pro, had limited success as a free agent. In the meantime, Parker took over the promotional reins of Mark Gastineau, a former football star with a long history of drug abuse and erratic behavior. Supposedly Parker had a handshake agreement for Gastineau to fight George Foreman for millions at Madison Square Garden if he could somehow get the lumbering former gridiron great to 12-0. Many of the setups Parker had arranged for Gastineau would eventually be splashed across the news and onto the television show “60 Minutes” under the guise of a federal probe called the “Dirty Gloves Investigation.”

According to Anderson, Parker contacted him and promised him the money he owed him, plus interest, if he took a dive against Gastineau. Their fight was to be televised from San Francisco on “USA’s Tuesday Night Fights” in June 1992. Referee Marty Sammon said talk of a fix was rife, and he warned both boxers beforehand that there better be no monkey business.

“I told them if there was anything suspicious, they weren’t getting paid,” said Sammon. “Anderson then went out and beat the crap out of Gastineau. It was no contest: man against boy.”

“I never saw my brother so mad,” said McVey, who was watching the fight on television. “I knew there’d be trouble. His nostrils were flaring.”

Anderson never made the big score he was promised, but six months later agreed to a rematch with Gastineau, this time in Oklahoma City, where there was no state commission. Anderson says he was once again asked to take a dive, but chose not to. He also says he was forced to wait in the ring for 45 minutes until Gastineau arrived. It was then, he believes, that he was given tainted water. Although no official video was taken of the rematch, Silvers was recently informed that a video taken by a spectator has surfaced that might support some of Anderson’s contentions.

By the third round Anderson was lightheaded, nauseous and hallucinatory. Unable to defend himself, he was stopped in the sixth round. The referee later testified at the trial that he never saw Anderson get hit with a solid punch. Carried into the dressing room, Anderson was found there hours later by the janitor, lying in his own vomit. Taken to a local hospital, a doctor suggested he was drugged but could not offer ironclad proof. Anderson went back to Florida to live with Murphy, a broken man.

“He was never the same,” said Murphy. “He couldn’t get out of bed. And when he did, he would bump into things. He had vertigo, and all these doctors tried to pinpoint his problem, but couldn’t find anything.”

Anderson retained high profile Miami lawyer Ellis Rubin to sue Parker, as well as the fight venue in Oklahoma. Shortly afterwards he was attacked and seriously injured by two masked,

bat-wielding men. They showed him a photograph of his sister Erin, as well as her two small daughters, and told him to stop making trouble.

Believing he was dying, but determined to learn what was used to change his life so dramatically, Anderson used McVey to contact her brother under the pretense of paying him for an interview to be used in his book.

When the meeting was set for an Orlando hotel room, it was Murphy who insisted that Anderson go there with a gun. Murphy had listened in on numerous phone conversations where Parker threatened Anderson and his family, so he accompanied him to a gun store where Anderson purchased a .38 caliber revolver. On the day before the fateful meeting, Anderson told a friend, who was never called to testify at his trial, that he was determined to find out what toxins were used to poison him.

Anderson, who never told McVey about the gun, drove to meet Parker accompanied by both her and Parker’s 14-year-old son Chris, who had not seen his father for years. After a few minutes of getting reacquainted, Parker asked his sister and son to leave the room so he and Anderson could talk business.

Anderson says he demanded to know what drugs were used to poison him, but Parker disavowed any knowledge. Desperate, Anderson says he pointed the gun at Parker, but still got the same answer. Satisfied with the response, he put the gun by his side. At that time, says Anderson, Parker told him, “For that stunt you just pulled, your sister Erin is dead.”

The next thing I remember, said Anderson, is “rolling him over and counting the bullets. “I counted eight. He was sideways and I rolled him on his back. I counted the bullets in his thigh, his groin.”

Immediately afterwards, Anderson sat on the bed and said “‘Forgive me Lord,” and tried to take his own life. Much to his chagrin, the gun jammed. He then went to the front desk, told the clerk what happened, and calmly waited for the police to arrive. Later, while being questioned by detectives without the benefit of counsel, he told them he wanted no trial; just a quick date with the electric chair. He was obviously a man in great physical and emotional turmoil.

When news of his arrest circulated throughout the boxing community, no one was all that surprised that Parker was killed. But those who knew Anderson were shaken to their cores.

“There is nothing in Tim to suggest he’d be capable of something like this, without a lot of provocation,” said his father. “If he felt his sister was threatened, that would be enough. Not just for him, but for anybody.”

Erin was devastated, not just by her brother’s actions and the ramifications, but by what role she inadvertently played in the whole sordid saga. “I never heard about the threats until Rick was dead,” she said. “I wished he had told me earlier. There’s no way on earth my brother

would kill someone. At first I was angry at him. It’s just so hurtful that he’s not in our lives anymore.”

Oddly enough, he still is in their lives. Erin regularly takes her two teenage daughters, Kialey and Paige, to visit their uncle in prison. “He is a great person and a great uncle,” said Kialey. “I remember him waking up early and cooking us breakfast. He was always making us eat healthy. I have memories of him cutting up kiwis.”

Both girls say that their uncle’s dissertations on healthful living can often be annoying, but they know his heart is in the right place. While best known for writing annoyingly short notes to family members, he once wrote his nieces a long letter espousing the benefits of using a juicing machine. He also warns them of the pitfalls associated with dating certain types of boys.

Whether or not Anderson ever sees daylight again is anyone’s guess. However, there are still so many unanswered questions that are worthy of explanation.

Why did Murphy, or so many others who could have supported Anderson’s contentions, not testify at length at the trial, if at all? Why did Anderson’s public defenders not at least offer the possibility of temporary insanity? Why did his legal counsel feel it was prudent to go for all or nothing in a murder case that called for, at the very least, a mandatory life sentence without the possibility of parole?

Moreover, if the case was premeditated, as the state asserted, why did Anderson travel to the hotel with witnesses? Why did he not have an escape plan? Why did he tell the hotel desk clerk what he had done, and then wait calmly for the police?

According to Murphy the reasons are simple. He concedes that the Anderson he knows might be a killer, but he is in no way a murderer. However, Florida is a tough law and order state, so the prosecution was hell-bent on convicting a high profile client, regardless of the circumstances.

While Murphy believes some punishment might have been warranted, knowing his best friend will die in prison, barring a legal miracle by Silvers, is especially painful for him. He, and others, wholeheartedly believe that by granting clemency, Governor Bush, a strong proponent of the death penalty, would show he has a heart while not putting the community at any risk.

Anderson, he insists, was a tortured soul who truly believed he was close to death. Moreover, the fear of his sister and her children being killed was always at the forefront of his mind.

Asked if he could think of a less likely killer than Anderson, the burly Murphy took a moment to think about it before answering.

“Mother Teresa,” he finally answered as his eyes filled with tears.