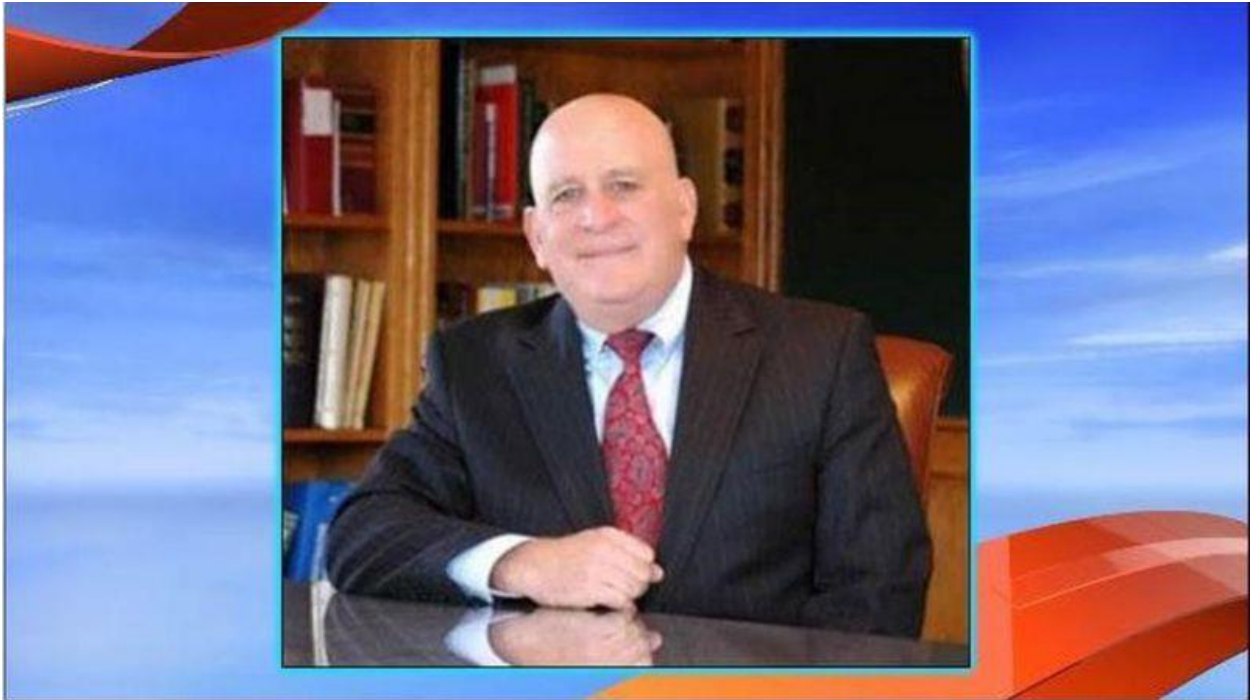


# Murder was elaborately staged suicide, police say

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After a six-month investigation, Palm Beach Gardens police have concluded that Alan Jay Abrahamson, 71, killed himself but made it look like he'd been murdered. (Palm Beach Gardens Police Department)

At first it appeared to be a murder case when a 71-year-old Palm Beach Gardens man was found dead in a field next to his country club home with a bullet wound to his chest.

But on Thursday, after a six-month investigation, police released a report that concluded Alan Jay Abrahamson killed himself and staged it as a homicide.

The prevailing theory, backed by emails, receipts, computer-search histories and phone records, far-fetched as it may seem, is that Abrahamson tied a string to a gun, attached it to a weather balloon, shot himself and let go, allowing the balloon and gun to float far away from the crime scene. According to the report, the balloon could have taken the gun 105,000 feet up — nearly 20 miles — and then exploded somewhere out over the Atlantic Ocean, north of the Bahamas.

“To be honest with you, it’s just a bizarre situation,” clinical psychologist Doctor Raphi Wald **told WPEC-CBS 12** while reviewing the case. “I can honestly say that in my practice, I’ve never had anyone fake a homicide and commit suicide.”

Abrahamson was found dead Jan. 25 in a vacant lot near his BallenIsles Country Club home. Police found no weapon or shell casings.



Police found no weapon or shell casings near Alan Jay Abrahamson's body when it was discovered Jan. 25. (WPEC-Ch. 12)

Surveillance video recorded early that morning showed Abrahamson walk from the country club while carrying something in his left hand. At 6:30 a.m., “the sound of an apparent single gunshot can clearly be heard,” the report said.

A \$3,000 reward was posted for tips leading to Abrahamson's killer but it drew no leads.

Born in West Hartford, Conn., Abrahamson graduated from Syracuse University, and, according to a friend, had money from a family flooring business in Connecticut. He was married to his second wife and recently had worked for five years as a developer for the Washington state-based LED lighting company Every Watt Matters, **the Palm Beach Post reported.**

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An investigation of Abrahamson's computer and phone revealed receipts and emails for weather balloons, helium tanks and rubber bands. The same bands were found in the field near the body.

Detectives, during the course of their investigation, came across a 2003 episode of the television show "CSI" in which a person used a gun tied to a weather balloon to make a suicide appear to be a murder. They also found a real-life 2008 New Mexico suicide in which the subject, a restaurant chain executive, tried to copy the "CSI" plot, **according to the Palm Beach Post.** Searches on Abrahamson's phone revealed that he had researched suicide methods online and asked the question: "Can life insurance companies deny payment for suicide?"

Investigators found that Abrahamson had depleted his retirement account and made large payments into his life insurance account before his death. Some say it was perhaps Abrahamson's way of ensuring his family stayed financially sound.

Police have closed the case and the State Attorney has officially ruled the case as a suicide.