COLD CASE FILES: DNA helps identify suspect in 30-year-old murder case

EVERETT, Wash. – The television news story that started WA State Patrol Lab's July 25, 2023, DNA analysis played a vital role in cracking a 30-year-old cold case involving the murder of an Everett woman.

Firefighters responding to an apartment fire in early June of 1984 found a woman inside, tragically deceased. She was found wrapped in a telephone cord and pieces of fabric, but no evidence or items to be linked to the crime had been previously collected.

ASP Criminalist Judy Erickson aided in collecting evidence from the scene and performed serology testing. After that, the case did not go cold.

The case was assigned to Forensic Scientist Lisa Collins in late 2020. She was able to test a saliva and blood stain on the bedroom carpet from the apartment, which developed a mixture profile – a possible suspect.

Collins also tested the neck ligature from the victim and obtained a mixture profile consistent with the victim, the unknown male profile identified through the saliva stain, and trace amounts of a third person. After many years and numerous tests, genealogy helped pinpoint the unknown male profile likely was from the victim’s boyfriend, who was considered a possible suspect.

The detective assigned to the case asked for more items to be tested – ultimately resulting in Forensic Scientist Dorey Knowlton being assigned to conduct a DNA analysis.

As years have passed, DNA technology has increased in sensitivity, with new and improved interpretation methods now available. Knowlton performed tests from the victim’s wrist ligature and discovered a four-person mixture, consistent with the victim, her boyfriend, a second male, and a trace fourth component.

Knowlton obtained saliva positive stain on the victim’s phone cord and appeared to have been attacked. The case was assigned to Forensic Scientist 5 Lisa Collins who, after further testing, matched the DNA sample from the new suspect, a man, with the murder of the Everett woman.

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The unknown male’s profile was entered into the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) and received a hit to a suspect who had been convicted of raping two teenage girls in August 1984, months after the crime.

Detectives were able to obtain DNA from the new suspect, who after further testing, matched multiple pieces of evidence related to the Everett woman’s murder. The suspect was taken into custody on May 1 in relation to the murder, and is currently going through the court process.

Great job to all involved in the dedication to crime victims.

Vote in 2024 ‘Best Cruiser Contest’

The American Association of State Troopers (AAST) is hosting the 11th annual America’s Best Cruiser Contest. Log on and vote for the Washington State Patrol to take home the coveted title. The winner is presented the “Best Looking Cruiser Award” and is featured on the cover of the AAST’s “America’s Best Looking Trooper Cruisers” 2025 wall calendar. You can vote by visiting here.

VOTE NOW! – America’s Best Looking Trooper Cruisers Contest! Vote in 2024 ‘Best Cruiser Contest’

IN PHOTOS: 2024 Lakefair - Olympia

AGENCY AT A glance

5,189 impaired drivers arrested
17,747 collisions investigated
127 fatality collisions
18,201 distracted driving contacts
18,182 seatbelt violations
66,375 aggressive driver contacts
184,955 excessive speed contacts
38,797 CMV inspections

NEXT COURSE

Dora’s next long-form presentation set for July 25

Instructor Dora Gyarmati is hosting her next resilience topic – this time completely online – to discuss the truth about cholesterol (the good and bad fats), and discussing ways our minds trick us and how to self-correct.

WHERE: Via Zoom by visiting here

 HAVE A STORY TO SHARE? 

We want to hear from you! To have your words considered, please e-mail your submissions to chelsea.hodgson@wsp.wa.gov.

Ongoing Traffic Safety Campaign

IN PHOTOS: 2024 Lakefair - Olympia
Traffic stop leads to seizure of 45 lbs of meth

NORTH BEND, Wash. - Through coordinated efforts with allied agencies, Washington State Patrol (WSP) troopers conducted a traffic stop near North Bend earlier this month that led to the discovery of a trap in the vehicle concealing more than 45 pounds of methamphetamine. Great job to everyone involved for coordinating with our allied agencies, as well conducting a thorough investigation leading to dangerous narcotics being removed from our community.

WASHINGTON STATE PATROL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION
SECOND ANNUAL FAMILY HIKE
10 A.M. - AUGUST 25
TOLMIE STATE PARK FOUR CEDARS TRAIL

Meet at the trail head at 10 a.m. The WSPAA will purchase the discover pass that is required for your car if you do not have one. After the hike, WSPAA will provide sandwiches from Subway for all to enjoy. WSPAA members, their family and friends are welcome. Please RSVP by August 19 if you have any further questions or to RSVP, please contact Janna Cox at janna.cox@wsp.wa.gov.

Tolmie State Park Four Cedars Trail

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Tolmie State Park Four Cedars Trail
District 2 Chief Tour & Awards
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We still have more tours to share! Check future editions for the rest of the spring Chief Tours and award recipients.