

INVESTIGATIVE SUMMARY

80-0144-01-74

JOEL POLSON

SPECIAL AGENT S. L. THOMPSON

5/11/74

5/15/74

At approximately 1:32 a.m. Case Agent received a request from the White County Sheriff's Office to assist in a death investigation in White County, Ga. Case Agent was advised to come to the White County Sheriff's Office and contact the deputy at the jail. Case Agent was advised that a body had been found on the Appalachian Trail in the Low Gap Area, White County, Ga. The information had been received from Captain Snipes of the Columbia, South Carolina Police Department.

SPECIAL AGENT S. L. THOMPSON *SLT*

hpc:5/15/74

ROM

END

INVESTIGATIVE SUMMARY

80-0144-01-74

JOEL POLSON

SPECIAL AGENT S. L. THOMPSON

5/11/74

5/15/74

Case Agent arrived at the White County Sheriff's Office at approximately 2:00 a.m., Saturday, May 11, 1974, and there met with Ex-Deputy Kenneth Richards at the Jail. Kenneth advised Case Agent that the Sheriff had received information from Captain Snipes of the Columbia, S. C. Police Department that a murder had been committed in the Low Gap Area on the Appalachian Trail in White County, Ga. Sheriff Baker received the call at approximately 11:15 p.m. on 5/10/74. The Sheriff had gone to Helen and contacted Hugh Elrod of the Game and Fish Department, and in turn, had also contacted Ranger Abernathy of the Game and Fish Department. They then proceeded to the Low Gap Area to check out the information and by the directions given to them by Captain Snipes, they went directly to the body.

At this time, Case Agent and Kenneth Richards traveled to the scene in a pickup truck and there met with Sheriff Baker, and Rangers Elrod and Abernathy of Game and Fish Department. They then showed Case Agent the body. The body was at a rest shelter just off the Appalachian Trail and across the creek from the rest area. The body had been placed beside a fallen tree and then was covered with leaves, sticks and stones. The buttocks of the victim was visible and photographs were made of the crime scene by Case Agent. After the photographs had been made, then the rest of the body was uncovered. Once it was uncovered, Case Agent saw the dead body of a white male, approximately 26 years of age, being

about six foot, weighing approximately 185 lbs. The body was clad in a pair of brown hiking boots, grey flannel sox, a pair of green athletic shorts, a yellow knit undershirt and a blue flannel shirt. The athletic shorts were down around the knees of the victim and the shirts were rolled up around his shoulders. The subject's head was in a plastic bag and the bag had been tied around his head with a piece of string. This was done apparently to keep the blood from being strewn around the area. Case Agent then cut the string with a knife and pulled the plastic bag partially off the head in order to see the victim. The victim was lying face down, and then the body was turned. Case Agent made an attempt to locate the wound in the subject's head, but was unable to do so.

After the photographs had been made, the body was removed from the scene and carried a distance of approximately 150 yards where it was loaded into a truck and transported back down the mountain. Once down the mountain it was placed in an ambulance and transported to Ward's Funeral Home in Cleveland, Ga. During the course of the crime scene search, Case Agent was advised by Sheriff Baker that a female suspect was at the Columbia, S.C. Police Department. She had advised Captain Snipes that she was present when the shooting occurred. The female's name is Margaret Harritt. Miss Harritt is a student at the University of South Carolina in Columbia, S.C. She had stated she was on a hiking trip with a guy named Joel Polson, whose address is Hartsfield, S.C. He also is a student of the University of South Carolina. Polson is the victim. She advised they were on a hiking trip on the Appalachian Trail when they met up with a guy named Ralph. She described Ralph as being a white male, approximately 5'4", 125 to 130 lbs., blond hair with a receding hairline. She advised that this was all that she knew about the suspect. She advised that she had gone down to the creek and while she was down there, she heard a shot and then saw Joel fall. She went back up to rest area and was taken by Ralph and tied to a tree. She advised then that Ralph

PAGE 3

drug the body off and she didn't see where he went. She stated he was gone approximately 5 or 10 minutes and then came back. He told her, at this time, that she could either stay tied to the tree or she could pack with him. She advised him she would go with him. They then left and proceeded on down the mountain to Helen. When they got to Helen, they rented a motel room at the Chattahoochee Motel where they spent Thursday night. On Friday morning the two traveled on to Cornelia, Ga. and she advised that from there she took a bus to Columbia and that the subject named Ralph took a bus to Atlanta. Once she got to Columbia then she notified the police department and advised them that she had witnessed a killing in Georgia and that it was unknown to the authorities. She wanted to talk to somebody. At this time Captain Snipes went to the bus station in Columbia and picked the subject up and carried her to the Columbia Police Department where he interviewed the subject and notified Sheriff Baker about the killing. She also advised that while in Helen that Ralph, at the time of the killing, had taken a pack and all identification off the victim, and had carried it away with him. When they got to Helen, she advised that subject Ralph had taken a book of traveler's checks and had cashed one at the Wurst House in Helen and about four or five doors down from the motel at a service station.

She advised that she arrived in Columbia at approximately 8:30 p.m. on May 10, 1974, which was Friday night.

SPECIAL AGENT S. L. THOMPSON *SLT*

hpc:5/15/74

RCM

END

INVESTIGATIVE SUMMARY

80-0144-01-74

JOEL POLSON

SPECIAL AGENT S. L. THOMPSON

5/11/74

5/15/74

At approximately 6:00 a.m. Saturday morning the victim reached Ward's Funeral Home in Cleveland.

At approximately 7:00 a.m. Case Agent called Reaction Center in Atlanta and requested that a member from the State Crime Lab be notified to come to Cleveland to Ward's Funeral Home to perform an autopsy on the victim.

At approximately 12:00 noon Dr. Byron Dawson, State Crime Lab, arrived at the White County Jail and met with Case Agent and Sheriff Baker. Dr. Dawson was filled in with the details and then he proceeded to Ward's Funeral Home where he performed the autopsy. A copy of his report will be made a part of this report as soon as it is received.

During the course of the autopsy it was learned that the subject died of a .38 caliber bullet wound to the left side of the head, above and to the rear of the left ear. The bullet did not exit but came to rest under the skin on the right side of the head above and to the rear of the right ear.

SPECIAL AGENT S. L. THOMPSON *SLT*

hpc:5/15/74

DM

END



STATE OF GEORGIA
DIVISION OF INVESTIGATION
CRIME LABORATORY
OFFICIAL REPORT

74-10446
CASE NUMBER

DATE May 30, 1974

NAME	CITY	COUNTY	STATE
VICTIM: Joel Polson			
SUSPECT:			
OFFICERS: Sheriff Frank Baker Agt. Stanley Thompson, GBI Region 8	Cleveland Gainesville	White Hall	Georgia "

On May 13, 1974, Dr. J. Byron Dawson brought into the Laboratory via autopsy the following items:

- (1) pill box containing one .38 caliber lead bullet
- (2) glass vial with black plastic screw cap containing blood
- (3) green plastic bag containing clothing of victim
- (4) two post mortem fingerprint cards of right and left hands of victim

Dr. Dawson received on May 11, 1974, at the White County Sheriff's Department from Agt.

W. T. Stowe, GBI, the following:

- (5) brown paper bag containing contents of trash can at Chattahoochee Motel
- (6) evidence bag sealed with tape containing cigarette butts
- (7) evidence bag sealed with tape containing cigarette butt
- (8) sealed white envelope containing motel registration slip

On May 11, 1974, Dr. Dawson received at the White County Sheriff's Department:

- (9) X-ray of victim's brain

On May 16, 1974, we received in the Laboratory from Agt. C. S. Stone, GBI, the following:

- (10) evidence bag sealed with staples containing socks and underwear identified as coming from the suspect
- (11) two evidence bags sealed with staples containing brown backpack and contents identified as found on the Appalachian Trail

On May 21, 1974, we received in the Laboratory from Lou Cuendet, GCIC, the following:

- (12) evidence bag sealed with staples containing plastic bag containing .38 Special caliber

EXHIBIT #

Page 2

Rossi revolver, serial No. 214198, four Browning .38 Special caliber cartridges and one Browning .38 Special caliber cartridge case

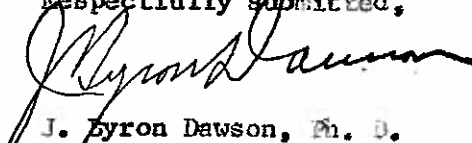
SERVICES REQUESTED: Test for blood alcohol; check for hair and trace evidence; firearms identification.


RESULTS: Blood positive for ethyl alcohol, .11 g% (110 mg%). (Putrified sample)

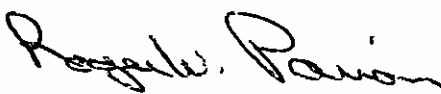
Examination of the pack and clothing, Items (10) and (11), reveals the presence of several light brown Caucasian head and body hairs but fails to reveal the presence of any significant trace evidence or laundry marks.

Microscopic examination and comparison of test bullets fired from Item (12) with the evidence bullet, Item (1), revealed sufficient evidence to conclude that Item (1) was fired from Item (12).

Respectfully submitted,


J. Byron Dawson, Ph. D.
Assistant Director


J. Steven Ellis, B. A.
Forensic Chemist


Roger W. Parian, M. S.
Microanalyst


Kelly M. Fite, B. S.
Microanalyst

INVESTIGATIVE SUMMARY

80-0144-01-74

JOEL POLSON

SPECIAL AGENT S. L. THOMPSON

5/12/74

5/20/74

At approximately 6:05 p.m. Reporting Agent interviewed Mr. Bennie Chitwood, 137 Maple St., Cornelia, Ga., home phone 778-6455. Mr. Chitwood can also be reached at his mother-in-law's home at 207 Summit St., Cornelia, Ga., phone 778-6530. Mr. Chitwood operates the bus station at 19 Larkin St., Cornelia, Ga., phone 778-2721. Mr. Chitwood related that the bus station is open Monday through Saturday from approximately 8:00 a.m. until approximately 6:30 p.m. He is closed from 12:15 p.m. until 2:00 p.m. for lunch. All the above times are approximately and vary daily.

Mr. Chitwood related that on 5/10/74 he came back to the bus station after lunch at approximately 2:20 p.m. He related that two subjects were standing by the door and came in when he unlocked the door. Mr. Chitwood described the subjects as follows:

#1 subject: W/F approximately 18-25 years, 5'1", light build, brown hair that was extremely fuzzy, wavy and/or kinky, wearing glasses, dressed in white or yellow "T" shirt, unknown color pants, possibly carrying a jacket, possibly parka type, believed to be carrying a reddish-gold backpack.

#2 subject: W/M approximately 20-30 years, approximately 5'8", medium build, hair over ears, believed to be dressed in blue jeans, and carrying backpack with metal frame.

EXHIBIT # 006

Mr. Chitwood related that the girl wasn't feminine (i.e., flat chested, etc.) and could possibly be mistaken for a man. Mr. Chitwood stated that the girl did most of the talking. She asked Mr. Chitwood if they could buy some bus tickets with travelers checks. Mr. Chitwood stated yes, if they had the proper identification. The girl stated they had lost all their identification while in the mountains hiking. Mr. Chitwood then said he couldn't cash a check, but they might get one cashed at the First National Bank in Cornelia. The girl then bought a ticket to Columbia, S.C. She stated that she was going to go on to Sumter, S.C., but would transfer and buy her ticket in Columbia, S.C. The male subject then bought a ticket to Atlanta, Ga. and had his back pack checked to Atlanta. After getting their tickets, both subjects left the bus station for approximately 15 or 20 minutes. They left walking in the general direction of the First National Bank of Cornelia.

Mr. Chitwood stated that the male subject's bus arrived first and that he boarded and checked his back pack. The female subject's bus then arrived a few minutes later and she boarded with her back pack. Mr. Chitwood placed the baggage check on the male's pack. Both buses were of the Greyhound line. Mr. Chitwood related that both buses were late due to the fact they had student drivers. He stated that Reporting Agent might be able to get more information through the Greyhound office in Atlanta, Ga. The male subject's bus is known as the "2:53 p.m. Cornelia going south." Mr. Chitwood related that neither the female or male subject appeared to be emotionally upset or under any type strain or duress.

Two other witnesses that were in and out of the bus station during the time in question are Roy Chambers, Mt. Airy, Ga. and Dewey Burrell, Cornelia, Ga.

PAGE 3

Mr. Chitwood related that he would furnish photostatic copies of the tickets to Reporting Agent on 5/13/74, but would need court order to furnish originals due to company regulations. He also related that the date on the tickets would be incorrect due to his failure to advance date on ticket machine.

Mr. Chitwood related that he might possibly be able to identify both subjects again.

SPECIAL AGENT C. S. STONE *SLT*

hpc:5/21/74

RCM

END

EXHIBIT

INVESTIGATIVE SUMMARY

80-0144-01-74

JOEL POLSON

SPECIAL AGENT S. L. THOMPSON

5/13/74

5/15/74

At approximately 4:00 p.m. Miss Harritt was asked if she would submit to a polygraph examination to verify the accuracy of her statements given to Case Agent, and also the statement to Special Agent Waldron. Miss Harritt agreed to take a polygraph examination and we then traveled to the SLED Office in Columbia, S. C., where the test was administered by Lt. Frank Faulk, who is a polygraph examiner for SLED.

The test was concluded at 5:15 p.m., and Case Agent was advised by Lt. Frank Faulk that Miss Harritt was truthful in the examination to the question that were posed to her. It has been determined by Lt. Faulk that Miss Harritt is truthful in all of the details and occurrences that she has given to the officers in the investigation.

Miss Harritt advised that she would return to SLED headquarters at approximately 9:00 a.m., next date, 5/14/74, then and there to sign the statement which had been given to Agent Waldron.

SPECIAL AGENT S. L. THOMPSON *ST*

hpc:5/16/74

RCM

END

EXHIBIT #008

INVESTIGATIVE SUMMARY

80-0144-01-74

JOEL POLSON

SPECIAL AGENT S. L. THOMPSON

5/16/74

5/17/74

Case Agent received information at approximately 11:30 a.m. from Lt. W. H. Byrd, Atlanta Police Department, Fugitive Squad, that he had received a phone call from an unknown female reference suspect in this case. A copy of this information is made part of this report.

SPECIAL AGENT S. L. THOMPSON *SLT*

hpc:5/20/74

DOM

END

EXHIBIT # 013

SUPPLEMENTARY OFFENSE REPORT

ATLANTA POLICE DEPARTMENT
175 DECATUR ST., S. E.
ATLANTA, GA.

OFFENSE _____ SERIAL NO. _____
COMPLAINANT _____
ADDRESS _____

ADDITIONAL DETAILS OF OFFENSE, PROGRESS OF INVESTIGATION, ETC.

5-16-74 received information by telephone at 11:10 AM this date from a female who refused to give her name that a subj. arrived in Atl. last Friday that fits the description of the subj. wanted for the murder of Joel Eugene Polson in White Co. on the Appalachian Trail on May 11, 1974, she stated that she and her boyfriend saw the subj. and that he tried to swap a pistol to her boyfriend and after her boyfriend he asked him if he would get him some bullets. I read the description of wanted subj. to her and she stated that he was about 31 yrs. old and was very drk. complexion and was wearing blue jeans and also boots also he was small build. She stated that she read the newspaper report and decided to call the information in. She states that subj. is living on the corner of Myrtle and 5th in a big white frame house. She did not know the number but described the house as having two front porches one up stairs and one downstairs and says there is a lot of potted flowers on the porch, either on the upper porch or lower porch. Also a subj. by the name of Sally runs the boarding house. She did not know the woman's last name. The suspected subj. is living in the first room on the right side of house as you go in the front door.

LT. W. BYRD

THIS OFFENSE IS DECLARED:

UNFOUNDED ☐
CLEARED BY ARREST ☐
EXCEPTIONALLY CLEARED ☐
INACTIVE (NOT CLEARED) ☐

SIGNED _____ DATE _____
INVESTIGATING OFFICER
SIGNED _____ DATE _____
CHIEF OR COMMANDING OFFICER

INVESTIGATIVE SUMMARY

80-0144-01-74

JOEL POLSON

SPECIAL AGENT S. L. THOMPSON

5/16/74

5/17/74

At approximately 1:00 p.m., Case Agent, Agent Pat Patterson, and Sheriff Frank Baker, White County Sheriff's Office, arrived at the Atlanta Police Department, Fugitive Squad, and there a search warrant was prepared by the Atlanta police officers for the described residence. The search warrant was executed by Atlanta Police Detective A. H. Shelton, J. W. Carlisle, Case Agent, Agent Pat Patterson, and Sheriff Frank Baker.

During the search of the apartment, numerous items identified as belonging to victim, Joel E. Polson, such as backpack, camping equipment, a light green work shirt with name patches removed, a book with the name, Margaret Harritt and her address, a .38 caliber Rosse revolver containing four live rounds and one expended round, numerous maps of the Appalachian Trail, a portion of a map of the State of Georgia with an "X" mark at the Appalachian Trail in White County, Ga. at the approximate location of the murder, were recovered.

The suspect was not at home at the time of the search and a stake-out was set up. Case Agent, along with Atlanta Detectives Shelton and Carlisle, remained at the apartment to wait for subject.

At approximately 5:45 p.m. Case Agent saw the suspect and one other subject approaching the apartment. The suspect entered the apartment and was placed under arrest and was advised of his rights by Case Agent. A search of his person

PAGE 2

revealed identification in the aname of Ralph Howard Fox, address given as 49250 Gratiot Apt. #8, Mt. Clemens, Mich. Description on subject's drivers license shows him to b 5'8", 150 lbs, collar-length sandy blond hair, DOB 1/26/43, blue eyes, Michigan drivers license #F-200730-313-070, SS # 373-42-6739. Subject also had a card from the Michigan Department of Corrections giving prisoner number 107044. Subject was then carried back to the Atlanta Police Department where he was finger-printed and processed and an NCIC check was run. NCIC revealed that subject was wanted in the State of Michigan for parole violation. It also revealed that he had served time for breaking and entering, escape and kidnapping.

After subject was processed at the Atlanta Police Department, he was then transported to the White County Jail where he is now being held.

SPECIAL AGENT S. L. THOMPSON *ST*

hpc:5/20/74

RCM

END

INVESTIGATIVE SUMMARY

80-0144-01-74

JOEL POLSON

SPECIAL AGENT S. L. THOMPSON

5/21/74

5/29/74

At approximately 1:00 p.m., a lineup was conducted at the White County Jail for Ralph Howard Fox. There were five people in the lineup:

1. Barry Fischer, w/m, 5'8", 140 lbs, Route 4, Cleveland, Ga.
2. Carl Lamar Black, w/m, 5'10", 190 lbs, Box 222, Cleveland, Ga.
3. Rondall Chastain, w/m, 5'9", 135 lbs, Route 4, Cleveland, Ga.
4. Ralph Howard Fox, 5'8", 150 lbs.
5. Charles Brown, w/m, 5'9", 180 lbs, POB 581, Cleveland, Ga.

The subjects were lined up and a numbered card was pinned on front of each person's shirt. The lineup was then photographed.

The witness, Margaret Harritt, was brought into an adjoining room where she viewed the lineup through a window. She was instructed to view the lineup carefully and as long as she wished and then she was to write down on a 3x5 card the number of the person she knew was the person who killed Joel E. Polson.

Miss Harritt viewed the lineup and wrote down the number "4" in the presence of Case Agent, Sheriff Frank Baker and the defendant's counsel, George Brown.

The members of the lineup were brought into the sheriff's office and placed in an adjoining room and they were not seen by anyone other than Case Agent until the lineup was in place.

PAGE 2

The numbered cards and also the card that Miss Harritt wrote the number "4" on, is in the possession of Case Agent.

SPECIAL AGENT S. L. THOMPSON *SLT*

hpc:5/29/74

RCM

END