
#26 City of Jacksonville Landfill

(Adam Walsh)

March 2, 1998

Investigative Assignment #96-02-262

INVESTIGATIVE REPORT #26

TO: RALPH J. RAY, JR.
Chief Assistant State Attorney

FROM: PHILIP J. MUNDY
Investigator

SUBJ: City of Jacksonville Landfill - 1981

RE: Homicide Investigation of Adam Walsh

On November 19, 1983 Ottis TOOLE told Det. J. HOFFMAN that he had not disposed of Adam Walsh's body near the Florida Turnpike but rather had returned with it to Jacksonville. He now claimed that he burned the body in the back yard of his mother's home, having placed the body in a junked refrigerator and then not being able to completely disintegrate the body put the remains in a blanket. He claims he then put the blanket and body in the trunk of the Cadillac. TOOLE also mentions that he watered down the blanket while in the trunk because it was still smoldering. The next day, July 28, 1981, he drove to the City of Jacksonville landfill and disposed of the remains. In addition, TOOLE told Det. HOFFMAN that the trunk liner was saturated and had evidence of blood and so he disposed of that material there as well.

Research revealed that Det. HOFFMAN did obtain the names of three City of Jacksonville employees who worked at the landfill on the date in question. The results of his inquiry could not be found in the report, although it is recalled that in discussing this case with Det. HOFFMAN he indicated they did investigate the possibility of a search of the landfill but that it would have been an impossibility.

On January 14, 1998 Mr. Dennis BEDWELL was contacted by telephone. Mr. BEDWELL in July, 1981 was in a supervisory position and knowledgeable of the operations of the City of Jacksonville landfill project.

Mr. BEDWELL explained that he had been questioned by a number of police investigators back in 1983, including Hollywood P.D., although he did not recall any names. He reiterated what he told them which was that the landfill was open to private citizens who paid one dollar for using the site. When the vehicles of private citizens came in they were weighed and then weighed again when they exited. The difference in the weight being of course what was dumped.

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There was no record kept of vehicles entering the premises either by type, tag number, or driver, as the only concern the city had was the amount of tonnage being dumped, which Mr. BEDWELL says at that time was between four to five hundred tons per day.

Mr. BEDWELL recalled that the police did come to him with the weight of a vehicle (Faye McNett's Cadillac) and with the date they were concerned with. He remembers researching the weight receipts for that day and it is his recollection that there were several vehicles of the same weight on the day in question.

The police also questioned Mr. BEDWELL as to where vehicles were dumping on the day they were concerned with. Mr. BEDWELL could only give them a general area, and by this time, 1983, there would have been a depth of about sixty feet to reach 1982 dumping material. Obviously excavation of the site was not feasible.

Philip J. Mundy
INV. PHILIP J. MUNDY

cc: Det. John Kerns, Hollywood P.D.

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March 24, 1998

Philip J. Mundy
Investigator
State Attorney's Office
Seventeenth Judicial Circuit of Florida
Broward County Courthouse
201 S.E. Sixth Street Room 630
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33301-3360

Dear Mr. Mundy,

Enclosed you will find the documents sent to me on January 28, 1998 concerning the Adam Walsh murder investigation. All items sent to this office have been returned and are itemized below:

1. Photographs #1-10 and scene notes.
2. Autopsy photographs 31,2,3,5,6, and 7.
3. Copy of autopsy report of Dr. Franklin Cox, Indian River, Florida Medical Examiner.
4. Copy of a report issued by Spectrum Laboratories.

As per your request, I examined the photographs for evidence of insect activity and reviewed all notes for any reference to such activity made by either the investigators or the Medical Examiner. I noticed no evidence of any insect activity in the photographs, nor was such activity referenced in any written reports submitted to this laboratory. The conspicuous lack of insect activity is worthy of note as it would indicate that only a short interval, probably 24 hours or less, existed between the time the remains were exposed to insect activity and discovery of the remains on August 10, 1981. Exposure to insect activity occurred once the remains surfaced in the canal, and there is no reason to expect that insect colonization would not have occurred during daylight hours on the first day of surfacing.

The question that remains is how long it would take the decomposing remains to surface. I found the soft tissues in this case to be rather well preserved in comparison to my other experiences with decomposing human remains. Typically, human remains exposed to the environment for a maximum duration of 14 days (as suspected in this case) have undergone extensive decomposition. However submersion in an aquatic environment

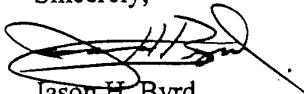
will slow the decompositional process, and the salt content of the water can further affect the rate of decomposition. As a general rule, submersion in an aquatic environment will slow decomposition to a rate only half that which would occur in a terrestrial environment. Therefore, there are periodic reports of human remains being rather well preserved after prolonged submersion intervals.

My area of expertise does not lie within forensic taphonomy or pathology, but in dealing with decomposing remains almost daily with my work in forensic entomology I would like to offer the follow information for your reference.

After my examination of this case I believe that a submersion interval of 6-14 days could have occurred. This interval can be further refined to encompass a 12-14 day interval based on the statements of Dr. Cox and the amount of skin slippage visible in the scene photographs. This conclusion is based on the amount of skin and hair slippage visible on the face and scalp in the photographs provided and the written comment (by Dr. Cox) of skin slippage being almost "total. In my cases I have found that skin and hair slippage usually begins on days 3-4 and is complete by days 6-7 under the typical climate for Florida during the months of July and August. Dr. Bill Bass, Forensic Anthropologist and Director of the Anthropological Research Facility at the University of Tennessee agrees with this statement, and has found similar time intervals for human research subjects in Tennessee. Given the fact that these remains were submerged, and that submergence slows decomposition by a factor of two, you have a possible total submergence interval of 6-14 days. With Dr. Cox's statement of nearly total skin slippage, the possible submergence interval would probably be a full 12-14 days in order for skin slippage to become so advanced and total in coverage. It is also widely known that once a submerged body is removed from its aquatic environment, decomposition proceeds at an increased rate. This rapidity of change was noted by the investigators on scene who remarked that the tissues were changing color during the course of scene processing.

In conclusion it is my opinion that the remains were submerged for a maximum range of 6-14 days, with a 12-14 day interval being a distinct possibility when factoring for skin slippage. It is also my opinion that the remains were discovered 24 hours or less from the time of surfacing.

Sincerely,



Jason H. Byrd
Department of Entomology
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences
University of Florida

BEDWELL, Dennis
Former City of Jacksonville employee
904-608-9501

Inv. Phil Mundy

On Jan. 14, 1998 finally made contact via cellular phone with Mr. Bedwell.

Mr. Bedwell in July 1981 was in a supervisory/management position and knowledgeable of the operations of the City of Jacksonville landfill project that TOOLE claimed he dumped Adam Walsh's body in.

Mr. Bedwell explained that he had been questioned by a number of police investigators back in 1983 including Hollywood P. D. although he did not recall any names. He reiterated what he told them which was that the landfill was open to private citizens who paid one dollar for using the fill. When the vehicles of private citizens came in they were weighed and then weighed when they exited. The difference being of course what was dumped. The only concern was the amount that was being dumped each day, which at that time was between four to five hundred tons per day.

There was no record kept of vehicles entering the premises either by type vehicle, tag number, or driver. He does remember that the police came to him with the weight of the vehicle (McNett's Cadillac) and the date they were concerned with. He does not remember what the date was. He researched the weight receipts and it is his recollection that there were several vehicles of the same weight on that day.

He was also questioned as to where vehicles would have been dumping that day. He states that he recalls telling the police that he might be able to give them a general area but that by this time, 1983, there would be a depth of about sixty feet to reach 1981 dumping material. This avenue was not pursued any further for the obvious restraints as well as the uncertainty that the body was indeed there.