

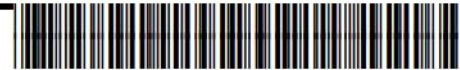
**Official Report**

**Division of Forensic Sciences**  
**Georgia Bureau of Investigation**  
**State of Georgia**

**Headquarters****DOFS Case #:** 2007-1014483**Report Date:** 8/27/2007

George Herrin  
Deputy Director

\* NAME Accredited \*

**Requested Service:** Autopsy

Agency: Fayette Co. Coroner

Agency Ref#:

Requested by: B. HUDDLESTON

**Case Individuals:**

Victim: NANCY BENOIT

**Evidence:**

001 DECEDENT

**Results and Conclusions:**

## FINAL DIAGNOSIS:

- I. Strangulation, with:
  - A. Ligature furrow around neck.
  - B. Hemorrhage, soft tissues of anterior and posterior neck, thyroid gland, upper mid back, upper mid chest and tongue.
  - C. Ligatures recovered.
- II. Blunt impact of head, with:
  - A. Subscalpular soft tissue hemorrhage, right side.
- III. Blunt impact of lower extremities, with:
  - A. Contusions and abrasions.
- IV. See toxicology report.
- V. Status post remote cervical spine fusion.
- VI. Marked decompositional changes.

## CAUSE OF DEATH:

Strangulation.

## MANNER OF DEATH:

Homicide (ligature strangulation).

I hereby certify that I, Jonathan Eisenstat, M.D., in accordance with the Georgia Death Investigation Act, have performed an autopsy on the body of Nancy Benoit on the 26th day of June, 2007, commencing at 2:00 PM in the morgue of the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, Division of Forensic Sciences.

## EXTERNAL EXAMINATION:

The body is of a well developed, well nourished, 5 foot 5 inch, 138 pound, tan skinned woman whose age cannot be assessed due to postmortem changes.

The scalp hair is coarse, brown, and up to 14 inches.

The eyes have brown irides and the corneas are cloudy. The conjunctivae are unable to be assessed for petechiae, hemorrhage or jaundice due to postmortem changes.

The oral cavity has natural teeth, in good repair, and an atraumatic mucosa.

The nose and facial bones are palpably intact.

The extremities show no scars overlying subcutaneous vessels. The ends of the nails are painted white.

The external genitalia are atraumatic and of a normal adult.

A 4 inch vertical scar is in the mid lower back.

A polychromatic tattoo of a heart is on the posterior neck.

#### POSTMORTEM CHANGES:

There is no rigor or livor mortis appreciated. The body is cold (refrigerated).

Marked decompositional changes include the foul odor of decomposition, green discoloration of the face, torso, arms and thighs, skin slippage of the torso and extremities, and blister formation and bloating of the face, external genitalia, and anus. The green discoloration of the arms extends to the wrists, where ligatures are tied, but is not present on the hands. There are fly eggs in the right axilla.

The internal organs are soft.

#### CLOTHING:

On the body are one white tank top, one tan bra, one multicolored pair of pants, and one pair of white underpants; these are submitted as evidence.

Two yellow metal rings, one with a clear stone, is on the left 4th finger and two yellow metal earrings with clear stones are in the ears; these are submitted as personal effects and released with the body.

#### INJURIES , EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL:

A ¼ inch wide ligature furrow surrounds the entire neck. It remains horizontal around the entire circumference of the neck. The skin within the furrow is pale and red.

Around the neck are two tight ligatures. One of the ligatures is a tan rope which is ¼ inch wide and 54 inches long. It is looped twice around the neck and there are two knots at one of the ends of the rope. The rope is tied at the mid posterior neck. The rope is intertwined with the other ligature which is a 5/16 inch wide and 54 inch long co-axial cable. The co-axial cable is looped around the entire neck once with one end extending along the upper left back and the other end extending along the upper right back. The two ends are tied around the left wrist and right hand with a knot positioned between both hands. There are ligature compression marks on both wrists and the right palm.

An S cable is tied three times around both wrists and knotted on the left wrist. It is 1/8 inch wide and 48 inches long. There are ligature furrows around both wrists.

There is black tape and a black electrical charger looped multiple times around both ankles.

The electrical charger, black tape, S cable, rope, co-axial cable and a multicolored blanket are submitted as evidence.

Internally, there are no fractures of the hyoid bone, thyroid or cricoid cartilages or vertebrae. Focal hemorrhage is in the right side of the tongue. There is hemorrhage throughout the soft tissues of the upper chest and anterior inferior neck as well as focal hemorrhage within the thyroid gland. Hemorrhage is within the soft tissues of the inferior aspect of the posterior neck and upper portion of the back.

#### Blunt Impact of Head:

There is marked hemorrhage in the right side subscalpular soft tissues.



There are no skull fractures.

Blunt Impact of Extremities:

Multiple purple contusions are on the legs and right buttock as follows:

- 1/2 inch in diameter on proximal right thigh.
- 1/2 inch in diameter on lateral right thigh.
- Multiple 1/4 to 2 inch on right knee.
- 1/4 inch in diameter on anterior mid right leg.
- Two 1 1/2 inch in diameter on inferior right buttock.
- 1 x 3/4 inch on medial left thigh.
- 1 1/2 x 1/4 inch on medial mid left thigh.
- 1 inch in diameter on medial left knee.
- 3/4 x 1/4 inch on left popliteal fossa.

There is a 1/8 inch in diameter pink contusion on the anterior lateral right leg and a 1/4 x 1/8 inch pink contusion on the anterior mid right leg.

A 1/2 inch in diameter purple-blue contusion is on the left knee, a 1 x 3/4 inch purple-blue contusion is on the anterior proximal left leg, and a 3/4 inch in diameter purple-blue contusion is on the mid anterior left leg.

There are areas of green - purple discoloration on the right buttock and left leg that are unable to be determined if they are injuries or postmortem changes.

There is a patterned abrasion over a 1 1/2 inch area on the anterior right ankle and a 1/4 inch in diameter abrasion on the proximal right big toe.

There are no fractures of the extremities.

These injuries, having been described above, will not be repeated.

INTERNAL EXAMINATION:

Head:

There is no epidural, subdural or subarachnoid hemorrhage. The brain weighs 1170 grams and has a normal distribution of unremarkable cranial nerves and cerebral vessels. The leptomeninges are thin and delicate. The brain is soft. The brain is symmetrical with normal distributions of white and gray matter, deep nuclei, and ventricles. There are no focal lesions.

Neck:

The upper airway is not obstructed.

Body Cavities:

10 ml of decomposition fluid is in the right pleural cavity and 10 ml of decomposition fluid is in the left pleural cavity. No abnormal fluid accumulation is in the pericardial or peritoneal cavities. The organs are in their normal situs without fibrous adhesions.

Cardiovascular System:

The heart weighs 250 grams and has a normal distribution of widely patent, right dominant coronary arteries. The myocardium is uniformly tan-red without pallor, hemorrhage, or fibrosis. The heart is diffusely soft. The left ventricle wall is 1.2 cm thick and the right is 0.2 cm thick. The endocardial surfaces and four cardiac valves are unremarkable. The aorta is without atherosclerosis. The venae cavae and pulmonary arteries are without thrombus or embolus.

Respiratory System:

The right lung weighs 420 grams and the left weighs 290 grams. The parenchyma is red-purple without focal consolidation, hemorrhage, obstruction or cavitory lesion. The bronchial distribution and vasculature are unremarkable. The bronchi are unremarkable.

Liver, Gallbladder, Pancreas:

The liver weighs 1200 grams, has an intact smooth capsule, and soft tan brown parenchyma without slippery or nodular texture or masses. The gallbladder contains approximately 5 ml of dark green bile without stones or sludge. The extrahepatic biliary system is unremarkable. The pancreas is without hemorrhage or mineralization.

Hemic and Lymphatic Systems:

The spleen weighs 60 grams, has an intact smooth capsule, and dark purple parenchyma. There are no major lymph node enlargements.

Genitourinary System:

The right kidney weighs 130 grams and the left weighs 120 grams. Each kidney has a smooth subcapsular surface and unremarkable architecture and vasculature. The ureters maintain uniform caliber into an unremarkable empty bladder. The vagina is atraumatic. The cervical os is round. The uterus, fallopian tubes, and ovaries are unremarkable.

Endocrine System:

The adrenal glands are normal color and size.

Gastrointestinal System:

The esophagus and gastroesophageal junction are unremarkable. The stomach contains approximately 75 ml of tan watery fluid without recognizable fragments of pills, tablets, or solid food. The gastric mucosa, small intestine, appendix, and large intestine are unremarkable.

Musculoskeletal System:

There is metallic hardware on the anterior surface of the cervical spine. The clavicles, sternum, ribs, and pelvis are without fracture. The musculature is normally distributed.

TOXICOLOGY:

Submitted for toxicological analysis are samples of heart / decomposition fluid, gastric contents, and liver; a separate report will be submitted.

PHOTOGRAPHY:

Postmortem photographs are taken and retained.

EVIDENCE:

Submitted as evidence are the clothing, scalp hair, ligatures, blanket, and a bloodstain card.

OPINION:


This woman, Nancy Benoit, died as a result of ligature strangulation. There are two ligatures that were tightly looped around the decedent's neck as well as ligatures holding her wrists together and her ankles together. There is also evidence of blunt impact injuries to the head, with resultant subscalpular soft tissue hemorrhage, and the lower extremities, consisting of multiple contusions.



Hemorrhage in the soft tissues of the upper back and mid chest are consistent with some form of blunt impact or applied pressure to either the back or the chest. Postmortem toxicology revealed a blood alcohol level of 0.184 grams per 100 ml. Due to decomposition, blood alcohol test results may be unreliable. Also found in her system were hydrocodone at 0.12 mg/L, hydromorphone at 28.0 micrograms/L and alprazolam at 23.0 micrograms/L. The hydrocodone is within the therapeutic range in a chronic user and the hydromorphone most likely represents a metabolite of the hydrocodone. The alprazolam, in addition to the other drugs, is at a low enough level that none of these drugs contributed to her cause of death. The manner of death is homicide.

Only those items discussed in the results above were analyzed for this report. The above represents the interpretations/opinions of the undersigned analyst. Evidence analyzed in this report will be returned to the submitting agency. Biological evidence (body fluids and tissues) and fire debris extracts will be destroyed after one year. This report may not be reproduced except in full without written permission of the laboratory.

This case may contain evidence that must be preserved in accordance with O.C.G.A. § 17-5-56.



Jonathan Eisenstat  
Associate Medical Examiner

CC:

**Related Agencies:**

Griffin Judicial Circuit  
Fayette Co. Sheriff's Department  
GBI-Medical Examiner-HQ DOFS  
Fayette Co. District Attorney

ACN: 0705855  
ACN: DR. J. EISENSTAT

**End of Official Report**