



## County of Los Angeles, Department of Coroner Investigator's Narrative



Case Number: 2003-07948

Decedent: SMITH, STEVEN PAUL

### Information Sources:

1. Det. King, LAPD NE, (213) 847-4261.
2. Medical records, MR #696-21-29, LAC/USC, (213) 226-7161.
3. Jennifer Chiba, Girlfriend.
4. Felice Eaker, Publicist, (212) 989-2222 x110.
5. Dr. Stanton, Psychiatrist, (818) 543-1214.

### Investigation:

On 10/21/03 at 2355 hours, Det. King, LAPD NE, placed a call to this office reporting the stabbing death of an adult male. The mode of death was believed to be a possible suicide versus homicide. The death occurred at a hospital facility on 10/21/03 at 1336 hours and the decedent was transported to FSC on 10/22/03 at 1130 hours. Lt. Arbuthnot assigned this case to me for investigation.

### Location:

Injury: Residence- 1857 ½ Lemoyne Street, Los Angeles, 90026.

Death: Hospital- LAC/USC, 1200 North State Street, Los Angeles, 90033.

### Witness Statements:

Detective King stated that, on 10/21/03 at 1218 hours, a 911 call was placed requesting medical assistance at the above injury location. LAFD paramedics arrived on scene and transported the decedent to the hospital emergency room where he was admitted with two stab wounds to the chest; he was pronounced shortly after arrival. Police officers and detectives learned that the decedent lived with his girlfriend Jennifer and that on the afternoon of 10/21/03 they were having an argument. Jennifer told police that she locked herself in the bathroom during this argument and when she came out of the bathroom she found the decedent with a knife in his chest. She pulled the knife out of his chest and called 911. Detectives were able to recover a suicide note, a journal writing, and the knife used in the stabbing from the scene. No further pertinent information is available at this time. Detectives believe that this death is possibly suspicious, however, the circumstances are unclear at this time.

Medical records indicate that, on 10/21/03 at 1310 hours, the decedent was admitted to the above hospital emergency room with two stab wounds to the chest. He was diagnosed with two lacerations to the heart, which were surgically repaired. Despite medical intervention, the decedent coded and was pronounced by Dr. Kimbrell at 1336 hours. No further information is available.

Jennifer stated that she has known the decedent for four years and has been dating him for over one year. She and the decedent were living together at the above injury address. On the afternoon of 10/21/03, she and the decedent were having an argument and during the argument Jennifer locked herself in the bathroom. While she was in the bathroom, she heard the decedent scream and she came out and found the decedent standing with his back to her. When he turned around Jennifer saw a knife sticking out of his chest. The decedent was standing up, conscious, and gasping for breath. Jennifer pulled the knife out of the decedent's chest and saw "two cuts" on his chest. At this time the decedent walked away and Jennifer followed him to where he collapsed; she called 911 immediately and performed citizen CPR and first aid with operator assistance until paramedics arrived. Once the decedent was taken to the hospital, police officers arrived and questioned Jennifer about this incident. During this questioning, she was seated at the kitchen table and noted for the first time a 'Post-It' note that appeared to be a suicide note left by the decedent. Jennifer recognized the handwriting on the note as that of the decedent and



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had not seen the note before that moment. The knife the decedent used to stab himself was a regular kitchen knife that immediately prior to this incident had been sitting out on a cutting board in the kitchen.

Jennifer further stated that the decedent has suffered from depression all of his life. He had a history of multiple narcotics addiction (heroin and crack) and alcohol abuse although he had been "clean" for over one year. He engaged in self-mutilating behavior and would burn himself with cigarettes. He has a history of one possible suicide attempt (unknown details/time frame/circumstances) and a consistent history of verbal suicidal ideations and planning. The decedent sought treatment for his depression from several psychiatrists and was being treated with multiple prescription drugs.

Ms. Eaker stated that she was the decedent's publicist and has worked with him since 1995. For the past several years, she and the decedent have not worked together and only recently, in the last several months, have they begun to work together again. She does not know if the decedent has a history of suicide attempts or suicidal ideations but did say that suicide was "what he wrote about" and that "he referenced it" in his songs. No further pertinent information is available.

Multiple attempts to reach Dr. Stanton have met with negative results.

### Scene Description:

The death occurred at the above hospital facility, therefore; no Coroner personnel responded to the scene.

A copy of a suicide note was provided by LAPD Detective King (original will be provided on 10/23/03). The note was handwritten on a Post-It and stated "I'm so sorry-love, Elliot God forgive me." The note is not dated.

### Evidence:

#### Physical Evidence:

F.A. Robles collected a nail and hair kit at FSC, on 10/22/03 at 1220 and 1222 hours respectively.

I collected one black T-shirt from Det. King who delivered the shirt to FSC on 10/22/03 at 1449 hours.

### Body Examination:

Initial body examination at FSC revealed an adult male Caucasian seen supine on a steel autopsy table. The decedent has brown hair, hazel eyes, all natural teeth, an unshaven face, multiple small circular scars on the posterior left forearm, a tattoo on the upper right arm-bull, and a tattoo on the upper left arm-state of Texas. Multiple medical appliances are seen in place including an ET tube, IV sites, and a chest tube. A loosely stitched thoracotomy incision is seen to the left side of the chest and a loosely stitched incision is also seen to the midline abdomen. Two apparent single-edged stab wounds are noted to the center of the chest. The thoracotomy incision intersects one of the two wounds. No hesitation marks are seen surrounding these wounds. A small slight laceration is noted to the palm of the left and right hand and another slight laceration is noted under the upper right arm as well. No additional external trauma is noted during the preliminary visual examination.

### Identification:

The decedent was positively identified by visual comparison to California Driver license #D6366443.



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### Next of Kin Notification:

The decedent was not married and had no children. The legal next of kin is Mother, who was notified of the death of her son by other family members on 10/21/03. I confirmed notification telephonically on 10/22/03.

### Tissue Donation:

None requested.

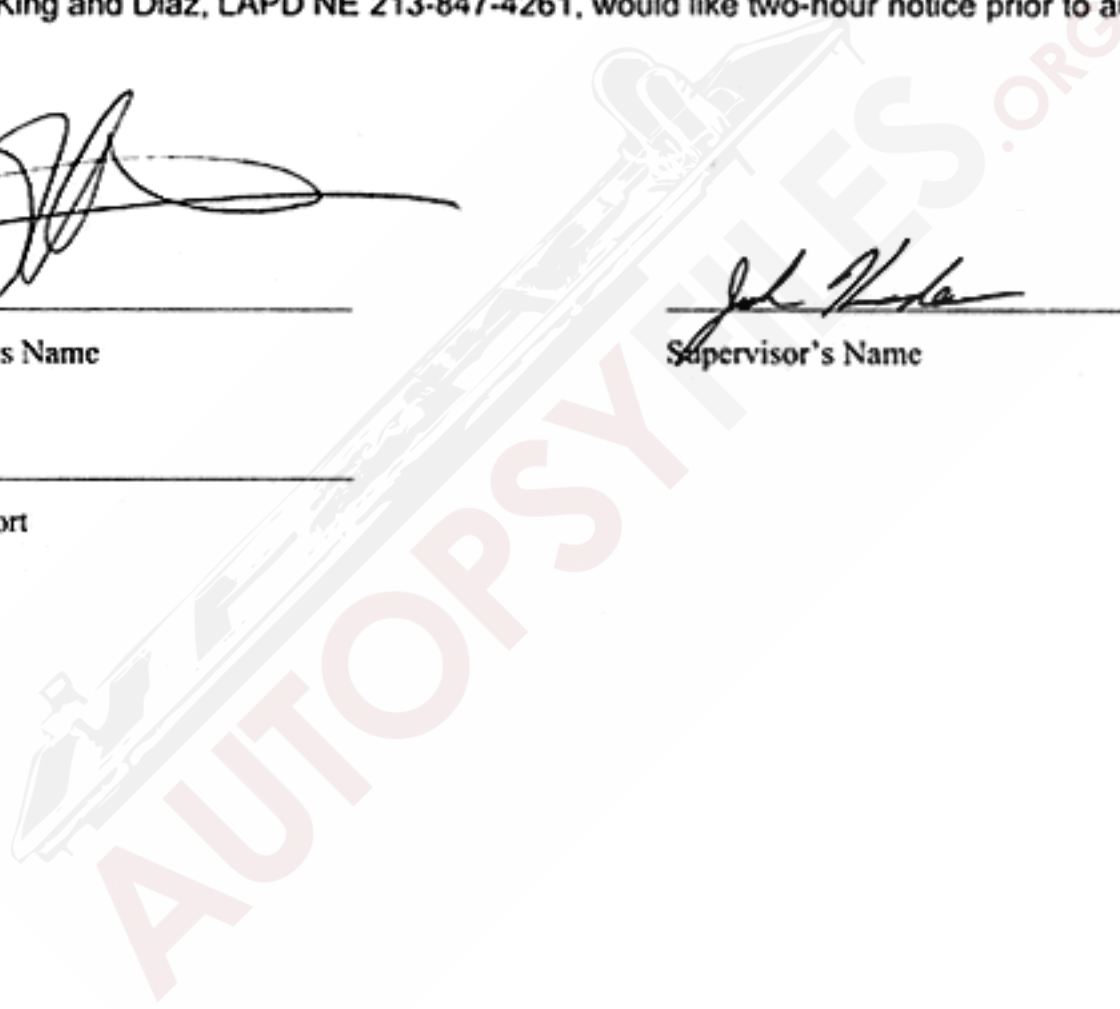
### Autopsy Notification:

Detectives King and Diaz, LAPD NE 213-847-4261, would like two-hour notice prior to autopsy.

Investigator's Name

Supervisor's Name

Date of Report



**12****AUTOPSY REPORT**

No.

2003-07948

SMITH, STEVEN PAUL

Page 13**WITNESSES:**

LAPD-Northeast Division Detectives King and Carrillo were present at the autopsy.

**OPINION:**

The cause of death is stab wounds of the chest. Each stab wound is considered fatal per se, since each entered the chest cavity; additionally, there is a perforating wound to the heart associated with stab wound #2. Toxicology tests revealed no illicit substances. All medications were therapeutic or subtherapeutic.

The mode of death is undetermined at this time. While his history of depression is compatible with suicide, and the location and direction of the stab wounds are consistent with self-infliction, several aspects of the circumstances (as are known at this time) are atypical of suicide and raise the possibility of homicide. These include the absence of hesitation wounds, stabbing through clothing, and the presence of small incised wounds on the right arm and left hand (possible defensive wounds). Additionally, the girlfriend's reported removal of the knife and subsequent refusal to speak with detectives are all of concern. Since a complete knowledge of the circumstances surrounding the stabbing is lacking, the mode will remain undetermined until such time as sufficient additional information becomes available.



LISA SCHEININ, M.D.  
DEPUTY MEDICAL EXAMINER

DATE

1-6-04

LS:am/dv:c/f  
D-10/23/03  
T-10/28/03

20

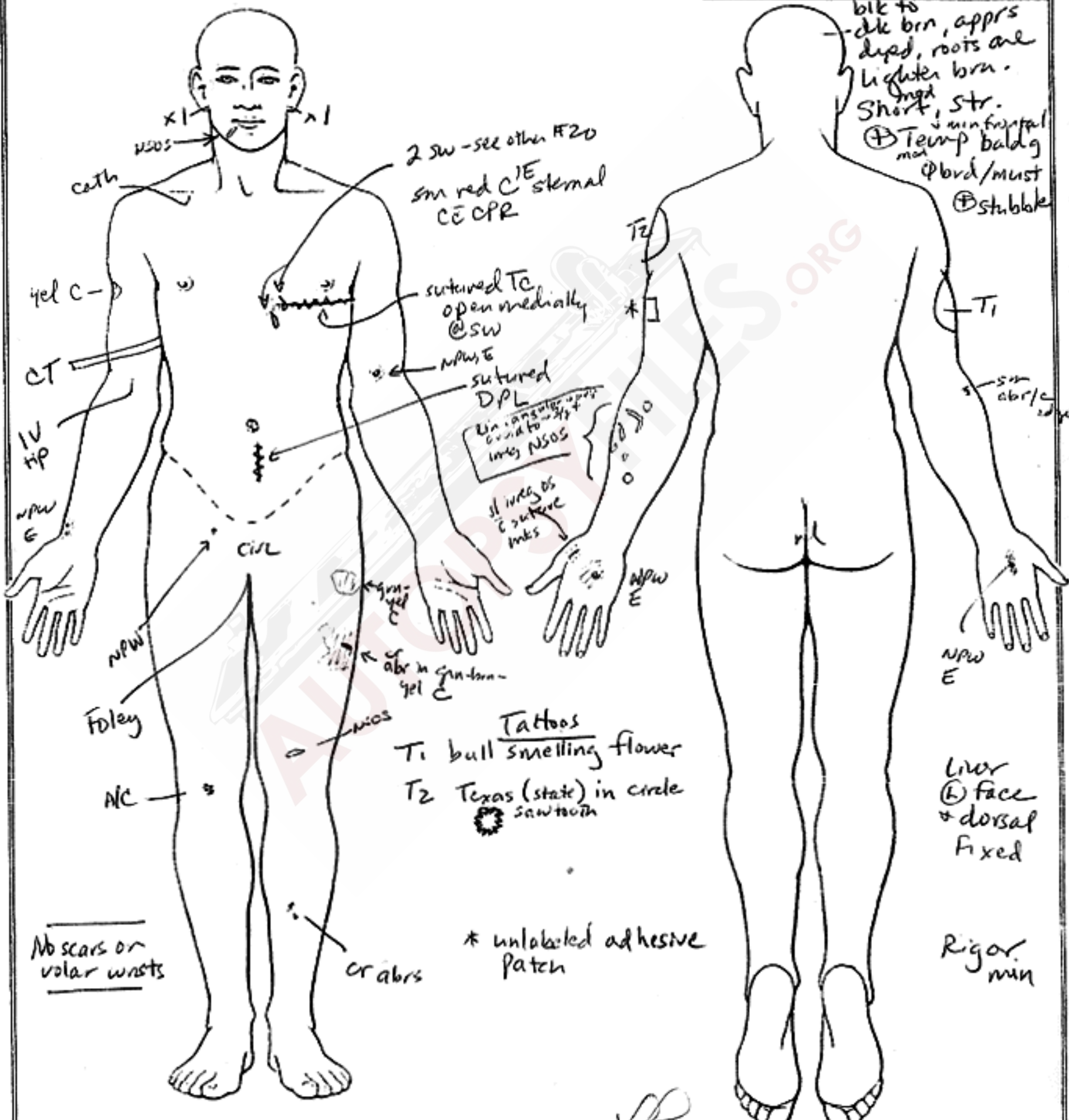
1 of 2

WD WN CM slim

Own teeth  
ETT present  
Eyes - green/gray, PER dil, sl injec R,  
med-ser injec L (in liver)  $\phi$  PH

03-07948

SMITH, STEVEN



blk to  
-dk brn, apprs  
dyed, roots are  
lighter brn.  
Short, str.  
min frontal  
Temp balding  
mod  
 $\phi$  brd/must  
 $\phi$  stubble

Uninsulated wires  
connected to NSOS

Tattoos  
T1 bull smelling flower  
T2 Texas (state) in circle  
sawtooth

\* unlabeled adhesive  
Patch

*Signature*

M.D.