

ARKANSAS STATE CRIME LABORATORY



MEDICAL EXAMINER DIVISION

Case No.: ME-330-93

Date of Examination: May 7, 1993

Name: BRANCH, Steve Edward

Age: 8 years

Race: White

Sex: Male

Place of Death: West Memphis, Arkansas

County: Crittenden

CONCLUSIONS

CAUSE OF DEATH: Multiple Injuries with Drowning.

MANNER OF DEATH: Homicide.

LABORATORY RESULTS

TOXICOLOGY:

Ethyl Alcohol: None detected in Blood.

Acid and Neutral Drugs: None detected in Blood.

Basic Drugs: None detected in Blood.

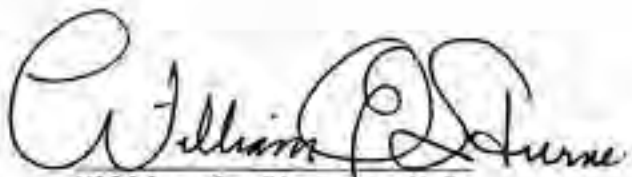
SEROLOGY:

Blood Type: A+


Frank J. Peretti, M.D.*
Assoc. Medical Examiner

* Pathologist of Record

05-24-93/tjg


William Q. Sturmer, M.D.
Chief Medical Examiner

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NAME: BRANCH, Steve E.

DATE: May 7, 1993

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EXTERNAL DESCRIPTION: The body was that of a well developed, well nourished nude white male. The body was covered with mud, leaves and debris. The right hand was bound to the right ankle with a black shoe lace, the left hand was bound to the left ankle with a white shoe lace. Both hands and feet showed washerwoman wrinkling. The body weighed 65 pounds, was 50 inches in height and appeared compatible with the reported age of 8 years. The body was cold. Rigor was present and fixed to an equal degree in all extremities. Lividity was present, minimal and fixed on the anterior posterior surfaces of the body. There were multiple injuries situated on the body which are described further below in detail. The scalp hair was blond and bloody. The irides were blue-gray. The corneae were clear. Bilateral transverse drying was present. The conjunctivae and sclerae were congested. There was one petechial hemorrhage involving the left sclera. The teeth were natural and in good condition. Examination of the neck revealed no evidence of injury. The chest and abdomen were unremarkable, except for the injuries to be described further below. The penis showed injuries as described below. The upper and lower extremities showed no abnormalities except for the injuries. The fingernails were short and intact. There was no evidence of breakage and the nail beds were dirty. Injuries are described below. Posterior torso showed injuries as described below. A cloth friendship bracelet was present around the right wrist.

DESCRIPTION OF INJURIES:Head injuries:

The right ear showed multiple confluent contusions and abrasions. Scattered abrasions were present over the right eye. A 1/2 inch contusion was present in the right medial periorbital region. A 2 inch scratch was present below the right eye. Multiple scratches were present over the right mandible. Situated on the right mandible was a bell-shaped type abrasion which showed a central area of pallor and abrasion. The lips were abraded, with multiple superficial lacerations. The mucosal surfaces showed multiple contusions, lacerations and hemorrhage. The gums were hemorrhagic. Extending above and below the left eyebrow was a bell-shaped patterned abrasion. The base measured 3/4 inch. The distance between the base and the dome was 1 1/4 inch. A 1/4 inch laceration was present immediately adjacent to the superior medial margin.

The left parietal scalp showed multiple superficial cuts and abrasions. The entire left ear was contused with overlying finely linear abrasions.

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The entire left side of the face to include the left ear and an area measuring 5 1/2 by 5 inches, showed multiple confluent red abrasions with multiple gouging type irregular cutting wounds and overlying abrasions. The cutting wounds measure from 1/8 to 1 3/4 inches. Many of these wounds terminated into the oral cavity.

The left occipital scalp was edematous and showed a contusion with overlying abrasions measuring about 4 inches in greatest dimension.

Subsequent examination of posterior neck muscles showed extravasated hemorrhage in the posterior neck muscles. Reflection of the scalp showed multifocal subgaleal contusions. There were no fractures noted to the calvarium. The base of the skull showed a 3 1/2 inch fracture with multiple extension fractures which terminate in the foramen magnum which measured 3 1/2 inches. The left posterior cerebral hemisphere showed multifocal subarachnoid hemorrhage. There were fracture contusions involving the posterior surface of the left cerebellar hemisphere. The right frontal lobe showed focal subarachnoid hemorrhage.

Chest Injuries:

Multiple scattered abrasions were present on the front of the chest.

Genital/Anal Area Injuries:

The anus was dilated. No injuries were noted. The anal and rectal mucosa showed mild hyperemia, but no evidence of injury.

The mid shaft of the penis to include the glans was diffusely red-purple with overlying very fine superficial scratches. There was a clear band of demarcation at the mid shaft which showed that the proximal portion was uninvolved. There were no injuries noted to the testes or internal aspect of the scrotal sac.

Lower Extremity Injuries:

Multiple scratches and contusions were present on the lower extremities. On the left thigh there was a 1 inch yellow scratch. Also, there was a patterned grid-like impression. The margins were diagonally oriented and measured respectively 3 inches laterally and 3 1/2 inches medially. There was evidence of binding abrasions and contusions involving the ankles. The binding abrasions were yellow tan with abraded margins.

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Upper Extremity Injuries:

On the back of the hands were multiple scattered contusions. Scattered contusions were also present on the thenar eminence bilaterally.

Binding abrasions with surrounding red contusion were present on the wrists.

Back Injuries:

Present over the left upper back were two contusions measuring approximately 2 inches and 1 by 1 1/2 inches.

Terminal Submersion:

Both hands and feet showed washerwoman wrinkling. There was pulmonary edema and congestion with bloody, frothy fluid in the airways. Bloody watery fluid was present in the sphenoid sinus.

INTERNAL EXAMINATION

BODY CAVITIES: The body was opened by the usual thoraco-abdominal incision and the chest plate was removed. No adhesions or abnormal collections of fluid were present in any of the body cavities. Petechial hemorrhages were present on the epicardium and pleura. All body organs were present in normal anatomical position. The lungs slightly overdistended the midline. The subcutaneous fat layer of the abdominal wall was 1/2 inches thick. There was no internal evidence of blunt force or penetrating injury to the thoraco-abdominal region.

WEIGHTS OF ORGANS:

Brain - 1450 grams
Right lung - 180
Left lung - 170
Heart - 140
Liver - 920
Spleen - 60
Pancreas - 55
Thymus - 15

HEAD: (CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM) Injuries to the head were previously described. Sections through the cerebral hemispheres, brain stem and cerebellum, revealed no nontraumatic lesions.

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NECK: Examination of the soft tissues of the neck, including strap muscles, thyroid gland and large vessels, revealed no abnormalities. The thyroid bone and larynx were intact, with no evidence of fracture or hemorrhage.

CARDIOVASCULAR SYSTEM: The pericardial surfaces were smooth, glistening and unremarkable; the pericardial sac was free of significant fluid or adhesions. The coronary arteries arose normally, followed the usual distribution and were widely patent, without evidence of significant atherosclerosis or thrombosis. The chambers and valves exhibited the usual size-position relationship and were unremarkable. The myocardium was dark red-brown, firm and unremarkable; the atrial and ventricular septa were intact. The aorta and its major branches arose normally, followed the usual course and were widely patent, free of significant atherosclerosis and other abnormality. The vena cava and its major tributaries returned to the heart in the usual distribution and were free of thrombi.

RESPIRATORY SYSTEM: The upper and lower airways contained bloody, frothy material with a slight amount of vomitus. The mucosal surfaces were smooth, yellow-tan and unremarkable. The pleural surfaces were smooth, glistening and unremarkable bilaterally. The pulmonary parenchyma was salmon pink, exuding slight to moderate amounts of blood and frothy fluid; no focal lesions were noted. The pulmonary arteries were normally developed, patent and without thrombus or embolus.

LIVER AND BILIARY SYSTEM: The hepatic capsule was smooth, glistening and intact, covering dark red-brown, moderately congested parenchyma with no focal lesions noted. The gallbladder contained 15 ml. of green, mucoid bile. The mucosa was velvety and unremarkable. The extrahepatic biliary tree was patent, without evidence of calculi.

ALIMENTARY TRACT: The tongue was without evident recent injury. The esophagus was lined by gray-white, smooth mucosa. The gastric mucosa was arranged in the usual rugal folds and the lumen contained 2 ounces of partially digested fluid and remnants of green vegetable-like material. The small and large bowel were unremarkable. The anus and rectum showed mild hyperemia. No abrasions, contusions or lacerations were present. The pancreas had a normal pink-tan lobulated appearance and the ducts were patent. The appendix was present.

GENITOURINARY SYSTEM: The renal capsules were smooth and thin, semi-transparent and stripped with ease from the underlying smooth, red-brown cortical surface. The cortex was slightly congested and sharply delineated from the medullary pyramids, which were red-purple to tan and unremarkable. The calyces, pelves and ureters were unremarkable. The urinary bladder was contracted and empty. The mucosa was gray-tan and smooth. Testes, prostate and seminal vesicles were free of injury.

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RETICULOENDOTHELIAL SYSTEM: The spleen had a smooth, intact capsule covering red-purple, moderately firm parenchyma; the lymphoid follicles were unremarkable. The regional lymph nodes appeared normal.

ENDOCRINE SYSTEM: The pituitary, thyroid and adrenal glands were unremarkable.

MUSCULOSKELETAL SYSTEM: Muscle development was normal. No atraumatic bone or joint abnormalities were noted.

MICROSCOPIC:

Skin - right ankle - intact epithelium. No hemorrhage.

Skin - right wrist - intact epithelium. No hemorrhage.

Skin - left ankle - disruption of epithelium. No hemorrhage.

Skin - left wrist - intact epithelium. No hemorrhage.

Head of penis - intact epithelium. Blood vessel engorgement.

Shaft of penis - intact epithelium. Blood vessel engorgement.

Head and shaft of penis - disruption of epithelium. Blood vessel engorgement.

Anus and Rectum - no hemorrhage identified.

Testes - no hemorrhage identified.

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PATHOLOGIC DIAGNOSES:

- I. Multiple Injuries:
 - a. Multiple facial abrasions, contusions and lacerations.
 - b. Subgaleal contusions.
 - c. Fractures of base of skull.
 - d. Subarachnoid hemorrhage of cerebral and cerebellar hemispheres.
- II. Bindings of hands and feet.
- III. Contusion of penis with superficial scratches.
- IV. Dilatation of anus.
- V. Multiple contusions, abrasions, and lacerations of torso and extremities.
- VI. Terminal submerging.
 - a. Wrinkling of hands and feet.
 - b. Water in sphenoid sinus.
 - c. Pulmonary edema and congestion with bloody, frothy fluid in airways.
- VII. Terminal aspiration.
- VIII. No evidence of disease.

LABORATORY RESULTS

TOXICOLOGY:

Ethyl Alcohol: None detected in Blood.
Acid and Neutral Drugs: None detected in Blood.
Basic Drugs: None detected in Blood.

SEROLOGY:

Blood Type: A+

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NAME: BRANCH, Steve E.

DATE: May 7, 1993

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OPINION:

This 8 year old, white male, Steve Branch, died of multiple injuries with drowning.


Investigation of the circumstances of death revealed that the decedent was one of three children (see related cases MEA-329-93 and MEA-331-93) that were found in a ditch which contained approximately 2 to 2 1/2 feet of water, approximately 150 yards southwest of Blue Beacon Truck Wash on the south service road at Interstate 40 and 55, West Memphis, Arkansas. The decedent was reported missing at approximately 6:00 PM on May 5, 1993, and his body was found the afternoon of May 6, 1993. When found the body was nude and the wrists were bound to the ankles bilaterally.

Autopsy demonstrated multiple cutting and gouging wounds and abrasions involving the facies. There were fractures of the base of the skull and hemorrhage involving the brain. There were multiple contusions, abrasions, and lacerations involving the torso and extremities. The penis showed injuries consisting of segmental intense hyperemia involving the mid shaft, glans and head of the penis with overlying very fine scratches. There was evidence also of terminal submersion consistent with "washerwoman" wrinkling of the hands and feet. There was pulmonary edema and congestion, along with bloody, frothy fluid, in the air passages and water in the sphenoid sinus. Petechial hemorrhages were present on the epicardium and pleura. The anus was dilated, with no external evidence of injury. The anal and rectal mucosae were slightly hyperemic and showed no injuries. Spermatozoa were not identified on the oral and anal smears. No drugs or alcohol were detected in the body fluids.

MANNER OF DEATH: Homicide.


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* Pathologist of Record


 William Q. Sturner, M.D.,
 Chief Medical Examiner

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