

Kansas City Star, The (MO)
May 4, 2001
Edition: METROPOLITAN
Section: NATIONAL
Page: A1

Knife to be tested in girl's slaying

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Article Text:

Pine Bluff, Ark., police said Thursday they would send a bloody knife recovered from a dead man's rental car to Kansas City to test whether it was used to decapitate a girl whose body was found Saturday.

So far, Kansas City police have been unable to connect that man, Reginald P. Morrow, to the girl's death. Morrow, 34, killed himself Sunday in Pine Bluff. He was wanted in the death of Shanda Renae Wilson, 18, of Kansas City, who was reported missing in early March.

Wilson's decomposed body was found last Friday, about 10 blocks west of the wooded area where the girl's body was found the next day. A man stealing tires off a 1984 Mercedes-Benz called police to report finding a body in the car's trunk. He told police that although he might be a thief, he wasn't a murderer.

Meanwhile Thursday, community activists pressed efforts to generate leads in the case of the unidentified girl they now call Precious Doe. One official said the computer-generated image of the girl, released Wednesday, contained some inaccuracies that made her look older than the latest estimate of her age, now 3 or 4 years.

Police found the girl's headless body, bearing a crescent birthmark on her left shoulder, on Saturday while searching for an elderly man who had been reported missing in a wooded area near 59th Street and Kensington Avenue. The man later was found.

A volunteer searching the woods Tuesday discovered the girl's head in a black garbage bag about 100 yards from where police found her body. Police have not determined whether the girl was killed in the woods or somewhere else and then dumped there.

Wilson's killing, police think, took place in March or April.

Her body was found in Morrow's Mercedes-Benz, which was parked outside a house at 58th Terrace and College Avenue where he once lived. Wilson was a daughter of one of Morrow's girlfriends, police said.

The house, which has plywood over its door and windows, has been vacant for months, neighbors said.

On Saturday, Kansas City police sent a description of Morrow and the rented car he was driving to officials in Pine Bluff, where Morrow had a daughter.

Pine Bluff officers there noticed the car about 9 a.m. Sunday outside a motel. When they saw Morrow walking to the car a few hours later, he saw them and ran, police said. After leading officers on a foot chase, Morrow pulled a revolver and shot himself in the right temple, police said. He died instantly.

Police found a 16-year-old Kansas City girl in Morrow's hotel room. The girl said she had been

romantically involved with Morrow for more than a year, Pine Bluff Police Lt. Pete Dennis said. The girl, who was classified a runaway, was taken into juvenile custody until relatives from Kansas City could arrive to take her home, Dennis said.

While searching Morrow's rental car, police found a serrated knife with blood and hair on it. Pine Bluff police say it could have been used on the girl found dead in Kansas City.

They offered to send it to Kansas City for examination, but police here said there was no evidence to link Morrow to the dead girl.

"All children that have been identified by anybody as linked to Reginald Morrow have been accounted for," said Capt. Rick McLaughlin, a Kansas City police spokesman.

Morrow, who was unemployed, had lived at two different addresses within blocks of where the girl's body was found.

Also Thursday, Jackson County's medical examiner cited several errors in the computer-generated image of the girl that was distributed Wednesday in hopes someone would recognize her.

After consulting a dentist, authorities think the girl was 3 or 4 years old, or two or three years younger than image created by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children in Washington.

The picture also erred by showing earrings and black hair flowing behind the girl's neck, Medical Examiner Thomas Young said. She did not have pierced ears. She had shorter hair, very curly, with one cornrow, he said.

"Your readers need to think younger," Young said.

A new composite would not change much, according to Steve McBride, executive director of the Kansas City branch of the National Center for Missing or Exploited Children. The structure of the girl's face would remain much the same, he said.

"I think the composite is the most accurate thing we have," he said.

The girl weighed 35 to 40 pounds, was 43 to 45 inches tall and had a chipped tooth.

Community leaders continue to help identify the slain girl. Volunteers have been handing out fliers featuring the girl's likeness. Posters of the girl have been placed in convenience stores and taped to car windows.

Move Up, a community group, has received hundreds of calls, said Deputy Director Calvin Williford.

"We're just trying to get face of child in front of as many people as possible," he said.

Move Up is offering a \$5,500 reward for information leading to her identity.

Community activists will hold a rally 10 a.m. Saturday at 59th Street and Prospect Avenue and plan to go door to door handing out fliers with the girl's picture.

Anyone with information is asked to call Kansas City police at (816) 234-5043; the TIPS Hotline at (816) 474-TIPS (474-8477); or Move Up at (816) 753-1111.

- To reach Tanyanika Samuels, call (816) 234-4376 or send e-mail to tsamuels@kcstar.com.

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Caption:

Revised computer image- A second computer-made picture of a girl found slain in a wooded area was released by police Thursday. This one shows a chipped front tooth. Some features of the image are in dispute, including pierced ears and cornrows. If you have information about the

case, call police at (816) 234-5043
the TIPS Hotline at (816) 474-8477
or Move Up at (816) 753-1111.
Photo (color)
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