

Blue Mountain County Sheriff's Office

Incident Report

Case Number: FA-19-074	Incident Type: Homicide
Date of Incident: May 3, 1990	Incident Address: Blue Mountain Hiking Trail, OR
Victim: Jessica Black (DOB: 03/21/1960)	Victim Address: 527 Wheaton Place, Blue Mountain, OR 97000
Complainant: Allen Cole (DOB: 09/28/1963)	Complainant Address: 832 Preston Ave, Blue Mountain, OR 97000
Time of Arrival: May 3, 1990, 1525 hours	Time of Departure: May 3, 1990, 2000 hours

On May 3, 1990, at approximately 1525 hours, Deputy Hank Jones and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) personnel arrived at the trailhead parking lot of the Blue Mountain Hiking Trail responding to a 911 call about a female decedent off the trail. The Complainant (Allen Cole) led Deputy Hank Jones and the paramedics approximately 2.2 miles to the body behind a large rock formation about 50 feet from the main trail path. Deputy Hank Jones approached the body and determined that it appeared to be that of a young white female, and she appeared to be deceased. EMS paramedics evaluated the woman and pronounced her death. Deputy Jones requested detectives along with the Medical Examiner, then roped off the area with crime scene tape. Detectives Ray Smith and Bruce Jensen arrived at the scene around 1630 hours. The Medical Examiner also arrived around 1630 hours and advised that the estimated time of death of Jessica Black was 1330 hours.

Initial Observations

Detective Ray Smith observed the trailhead parking lot was vacant except for emergency personnel, a park maintenance vehicle, the victim's (Jessica Black) vehicle, and the vehicle belonging to Allen Cole (Complainant). The responding officer, Deputy Hank Jones, recounted his initial interactions with the Complainant, describing him as awkward, fidgety, a little uneasy, and generally uncomfortable, but that he navigated the path easily and with familiarity.

At the crime scene, Detective Bruce Jensen observed the decedent to be lying supine at the base of the large rock formation approximately 50 feet from the main trail. Her head was tilted laterally (left cheek towards the ground), left and right arms extending inferiorly towards feet. The responding officer observed the decedent's left and right legs to be slightly bent at the knees and rolled away from midline. The body was clothed in a green tank top, tan cargo shorts, white socks and brown hiking boots. Upon closer inspection of the body, a thin piece of rope was observed around the victim's neck. It was noted that the button was undone, and the zipper was down on the victim's shorts. Her underwear appeared undisturbed. Reddish abrasions were observed on the victim's right knee and right shin and what appeared to be dirt or debris was observed under several of the victim's fingernails on both hands. The soil underneath her legs and feet was disturbed. The body's location was not visible from the main trail due to large rock formation and other foliage.

A backpack and a glass water bottle were located on the ground near the body. The backpack contained miscellaneous hiking supplies including a first aid kit, compass, insect repellent, black tarp, box of granola bars, sunglasses, a yellow windbreaker jacket, a pocketknife, a box of matches, a key ring with a car key and several other keys, and a package of wet wipes. Inside one of the backpack pockets was a driver's license belonging to 30-year-old Jessica Black. The photo on the ID card was consistent with the deceased. The initial investigation revealed Jessica was last seen alive in the parking lot of the Blue Mountain trailhead on May 3rd around 1200 hours. Witnesses who reported seeing Jessica indicated she was alone and seemed to be in good spirits. She had a small backpack with her and conversed with another female hiker in the parking lot prior to heading out onto the trail alone.

Initial Witness Statements***Allen Cole (Complainant, Reported Finding the Victim):***

On 5/3/1990 at 1700 hours, I interviewed Allen Cole in the Blue Mountain trailhead parking lot. Cole's behavior was unremarkable except in the matter of fact and apathetic way he spoke. Cole stated he hikes in this area on a weekly basis. Today, he began his hike around 1300 hours and after about an hour, he needed to use the bathroom, so he stepped off the path and headed into a wooded area to relieve himself. After walking for a minute or so, Cole saw what he thought was a mannequin in the brush. As he got closer, he realized it was a woman and that she wasn't moving. He said that she had something around her neck, and she looked dead. Cole said he did not touch the body and decided to walk back to the parking lot. Cole stated he passed a group of hikers on his way back down the trail. He got into his truck and drove to a payphone at a nearby convenience store and called police. Cole said he did not recognize the woman and did not see anyone else around. When asked if he's ever noticed anyone or anything suspicious on the trail, Cole stated he sometimes crossed paths with a young white male in a blue jumpsuit that he and other hikers have found to be a bit strange and antisocial. When asked if he would be able to provide a description of the man, he said he could, and I requested that he come into the station to help create a composite sketch. Nothing further.

Detective Ray Smith #076

Mr. & Mrs. Black (Victim's Parents):

On 5/4/1990 at 0900 hours, Detective Smith and I interviewed Jessica's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Black. They last spoke to their daughter on the morning of May 3rd around 0900 hours. She seemed to be in good spirits and told her parents she planned to take a hike later in the day. Mr. and Mrs. Black stated their daughter was an avid hiker and outdoor enthusiast. I asked if Jessica was having problems with anyone, and the Blacks said no. She had no enemies to their knowledge. Asked if it was normal for Jessica to hike alone, Mr. Black said it was. He said that he didn't like it, but she insisted it was safe and that there were always other hikers around if she ever ran into trouble. Mr. Black said Jessica was not married and lived alone with her cat, Romeo. Jessica worked for a local advertising agency and had been dating a man named Mike Averil for the past few months. When asked about Jessica's relationship with Mike Averil, Mrs. Black hesitated before answering. "Well...he's a really nice guy and he showers Jess with flowers and gifts. But...he can be a little possessive. He seems to want to move things along really fast." When I tried to get more out of Mrs. Black, she began to cry and said she needed to lie down.

Detective Bruce Jensen #034

Mike Averil (Victim's Boyfriend):

On 5/4/90 at 1100 HRS, Detective Smith and I interviewed Mike Averil at his home. Averil's appearance was somewhat disheveled, and his eyes were red and swollen. Averil stated he and Jessica had been dating for six months and that they met through a mutual friend. Averil said Jessica was an outgoing person and loved the outdoors. Averil said it was common for Jessica to hike by herself. He indicated he didn't enjoy hiking, so she would go with friends or alone if no one was available to go with her. Averil said he last saw Jessica the night before she went hiking, they had dinner at her apartment and saw a movie at the local theatre. Averil said he dropped Jessica off after the movie around 2300 hours. When asked about their relationship, Averil said it was great, in fact, he planned to ask Jessica to marry him. Averil denied any problems and indicated he was not the jealous type, contrary to what Mrs. Black indicated. Averil said that on May 3rd he was fishing alone on his boat all day at Bass Lake which is about an hour from Blue Mountain. Asked what he does for work, Averil stated he is employed as a manager at a local hardware store. I ran a criminal history check on Mike Averil and found that he was listed as a suspect in two stalking/harassment reports from 1986 and 1988 but was never arrested or charged in either case.

Detective Bruce Jensen #034

Crime Scene Map



Figure 1: A 911 call came from the payphone at the convenience store bus stop. Law enforcement and emergency personnel responded to the scene and arrived at the trailhead parking lot. The body of the decedent was found about 2.2 miles along the main path (red dotted line) of the Blue Mountain Hiking Trail, OR.

Items Collected

The following items were collected from the crime scene:

Agency Item Number	Description	Disciplines Requested
BMSO-001	Reusable glass water bottle	Latent Prints
BMSO-002	Tan hiking backpack	N/A
BMSO-002-01	Driver's license	N/A
BMSO-002-02	First aid kit pouch and contents	N/A
BMSO-002-03	Compass	N/A
BMSO-002-04	Insect repellent	N/A
BMSO-002-05	Black tarp	N/A
BMSO-002-06	Box of granola bars	N/A
BMSO-002-07	Sunglasses	N/A
BMSO-002-08	Yellow windbreaker jacket	N/A
BMSO-002-09	Pocketknife	N/A
BMSO-002-10	Key ring with car keys and several other keys	N/A
BMSO-002-11	Box of matches	N/A
BMSO-002-12	Package of wet wipes	N/A

Detective Bruce Jensen transported the items to the Blue Mountain Crime Laboratory for forensic testing with each item's associated forensic testing request forms on May 12, 1990, at 0900 hours.

No further action taken.

First Responding Officers: Deputy Hank Jones, Detective Ray Smith, and Detective Bruce Jensen	Date of Report: May 5, 1990
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