

Cold case break: Remains of woman missing since 1982 found in Monterey County

By Tommy Wright, Monterey Herald

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Monterey - Skeletal remains located in the yard of a Monterey residence have been identified as Sandra McGee, who went missing from Seaside in December 1982. The McGee case had been re-opened by a special cold case team in 2010.

A landscaper discovered the remains in the 1100 block of Third Street on Sept. 2 at 3:20 p.m. Monterey police officers responded and the remains were later identified by the Coroners Division of the Monterey County Sheriff's Office, police said.

The Coroners Division of the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office, the Monterey County District Attorney's Office, the Seaside Police Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation also worked on the case. The investigation is ongoing and anyone with information is asked to call the Monterey police Investigations Division at 646-3814 or the confidential tip line at 646-3840.

BACKGROUND

In 2010, the Herald did a story on several cold homicide cases that detectives from Peninsula police departments were working on. Here is the story of McGee's case, written by Daniel Lopez:

A cigarette butt, along with DNA testing and collection, could finally help investigators find answers in the disappearance of a Seaside woman.

Sandra McGee, 32, vanished Dec. 9, 1982. She was last seen pumping gas with a man about 9:45 p.m. at Quik Stop on North Fremont Street in Monterey.

At the time of her disappearance, there was speculation that McGee, the mother of three girls, was killed and buried under the foundation of the Hyatt Regency Monterey. The hotel was under construction and the car McGee was driving was found in the parking lot.

Police investigators have said there were no signs the ground was disturbed after it was compacted and the stories that McGee was buried under the hotel have been dismissed as rumors.

"You wouldn't be able to go in there with a hand shovel and accomplish a grave dig," said Mark Clark, a retired police sergeant who works for the Seaside Police Department. "That wouldn't be possible -- the crew would notice."

In 2008, Clark was hired to investigate cold cases. About nine months ago, he started looking into McGee 's disappearance.

On Tuesday, Clark and other investigators met to brainstorm possible leads as part of the Monterey Peninsula Cold Case investigation effort.

Clark said a cigarette butt found in the car McGee drove is being tested for DNA at a state Department of Justice lab.

If testing is successful and a match to the DNA is found, it could be the first fresh lead.

"All we can do is hope that whoever used this cigarette is in the database," Clark said.

McGee disappeared on a Thursday night after she had gone to the Brickhouse Bar on Fremont Street in Monterey. There she cashed a check and had two drinks, said Clark.

The bartender, who knew McGee , told police she left alone.

Somewhere along her way home to Seaside, McGee is believed to have met the man with whom she was last seen. She arrived with him at her residence.

McGee 's roommate and brother had never met the man, and they later described him as a hitchhiker when McGee was reported missing. Clark said a report was taken by police Dec. 16, 1982.

"It was out of character for her to take off and not call family," he said.

When McGee left home with the man, she said she was going to drop him off -- but didn't say where that would be, Clark said. She never arrived at Bourbon Street Bar in downtown Monterey, where she was supposed to meet a musician.

The clerk at the gas station thought McGee and her companion might be headed to a nightclub in Santa Cruz.

Clark said where they actually went is unknown.

The car McGee drove was spotted at the Hyatt Regency construction site by security guards Feb. 8, 1983.

When the car -- a faded red, late-1970s Pontiac Sunbird -- was still there about two weeks later, Monterey police were sent to investigate. A friend from whom McGee borrowed the car had reported it stolen when it wasn't returned, Clark said.

Officers didn't find blood in the car, he said.

A cigarette butt and other items were collected, but DNA testing was not available at the time.

The car's owner, who has since died, did not claim some property found in the car, Clark said.

The best chance for learning what happened to McGee, he said, is to identify and find the man she was with the night of her disappearance. The man would be about 60 years old today.

McGee's mother and father live in Seaside and have been informed that their daughter's case is being actively investigated.

"This is still a raw wound for Sandra's parents and children," Clark said.

McGee was separated from her husband at the time of her disappearance, and her daughters lived with him. He has since moved from California.

Clark said that in addition to the DNA testing, he hopes someone will come forward with information.

McGee was a regular at bars and nightclubs, Clark said, and it's possible someone in that circle knows what happened.

"There's going to be a chance out there that somebody heard something," he said

Source: http://www.contracostatimes.com/breaking-news/ci_28790488/cold-case-break-remains-woman-missing-since-1982

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