

DECOMPOSITION AND CONFUSING INTERPRETATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

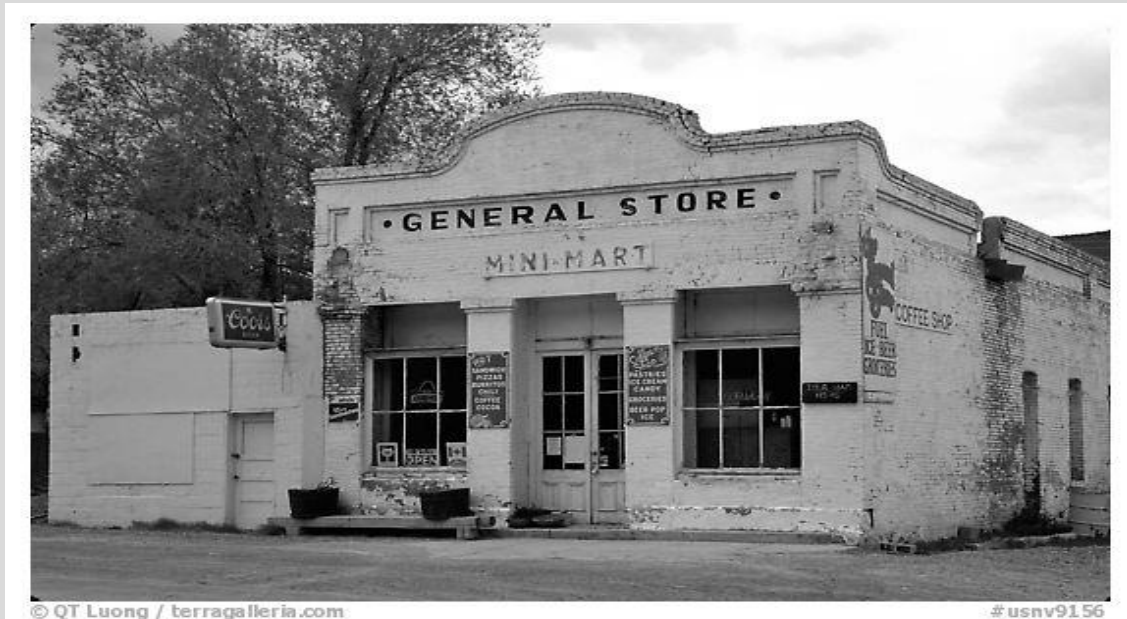


- In July 1933, seven-year-old Delbert a POSH a.m. and his nine-year-old friend Jackie Confar were playing near downtown San Diego, and both of their parents were at work.
- Later that day when something terrible happened, Jackie panicked and ran home alone, afraid to tell his parents what he had seen.
- Delbert's body was found six days later, floating in the San Diego Bay.
- The coroner determined that Delbert had been murdered, but no killer was ever found, and a later examination disputed the original findings.
- Fortunately, most records and images related to the keys were maintained, enabling insights from new research and technology to be applied more than 70 years later.

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF DELBERT APOSHIEN



- Delbert's parents –a Protestant minister and his wife were worried when they returned home one evening in July 1933.
- They reported the boy's disappearance to authorities.
- Police questioned Delbert's friend Jackie Confar, who nervously reported that the pair have been playing together early in the day, but they had later left Delbert at a local store.





- Six days later, four sailors found Alberts body floating in the waters of San Diego Bay.
- Dr. Frank of the San Diego corners office released a result of the boys autopsy: Delbert's have been sodomized, murdered, and mutilate.
- The medical examiner said that no water was found in the lungs, which meant of the boy could not have drowned but was dumped in the bay.
- Reported traces of semen were present on the victim.

The San Diego Union-Tribune



- The press ran with the story, and the community was up in arms, insisting that police find a vicious killer before he strikes again.
- Reporters, not the police, identified Delbert as the sixth victim in history of crimes they were trying to link to a suspect a sexual predator believed to be operating in the San Diego area.
- There was at least one false confession.



- In the mist of all the publicity, police question Jackie again, but now, the boys change the story.
- They told them that the boy had snuck onto the San Diego pier to try to fish, but Albert slipped and fell into the water.
- Jackie said he had been too afraid to tell anyone what really happened because the boys had gone beyond their designated play area.
- Some of the investigators believe this version of the story, but the medical examiner stuck by his autopsy findings.



- Two years later, when the crime was still unresolved, a Los Angeles pathologist performed a second autopsy on Delbert's body.
- This pathologist disputed the original findings and believed the cause of death to be drowning.
- More than 70 years later, the San Diego Police Department received a grant to open called cases using DNA technology.
- Although there were no DNA left from the original case, the San Diego medical examiner read the conflicting autopsy reports and examined numerous photos.

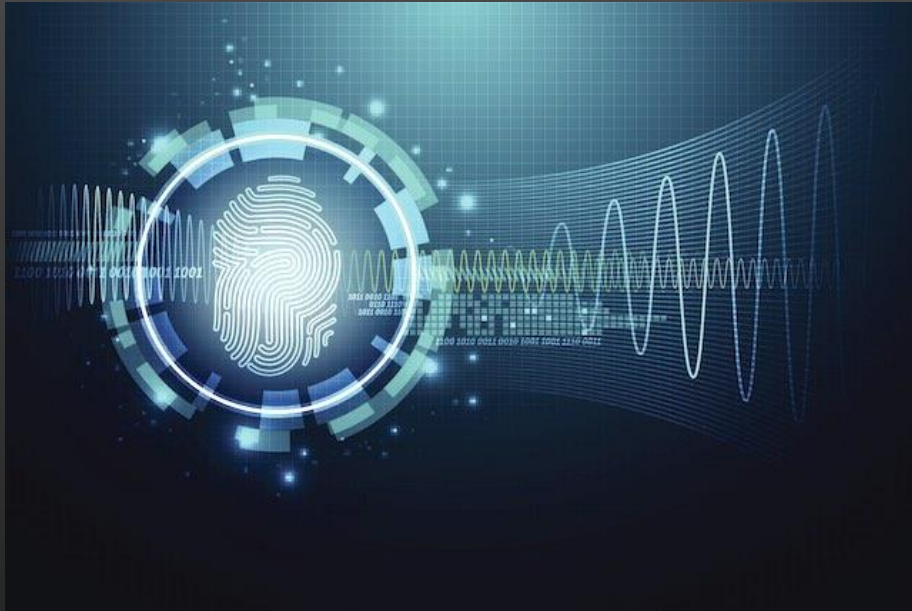




- The medical examiner determined the death to be the result of drowning and the mutilation of the boys body had been caused by marine life.
- He also noted that it was highly unlikely that sperm could survive in open water for six days.
- No one knows why the original autopsy report concluded that there was semen found present in/on the victim.
- As a result of this examination, the case was officially closed as an accidental death in December 2005.



- The San Diego medical examiners office claims that it never discarded anything from open homicide cases, which means that the new researching technology can be applied to all cases sometimes resulting in fresh conclusions.
- For instance through modern studies, we know that much more about the decomposition process and the effects of animal activity that was understood or documented in the time of Delberts death.
- The knowledge is what allowed the medical examiner to reach a new conclusion.



- Surprisingly, even in the 1930s, it was a couple completely unheard of to use experimentation to access what might have happened in a forensic case.
- At the time of the second autopsy, two years after Delbert's death, an experiment used rabbits to attempt to show that sperm cannot survive in water as the medical examiner first reported.
- Their results documented the unlikelihood of finding semen after six days, but apparently, no one paid attention to this conclusion.



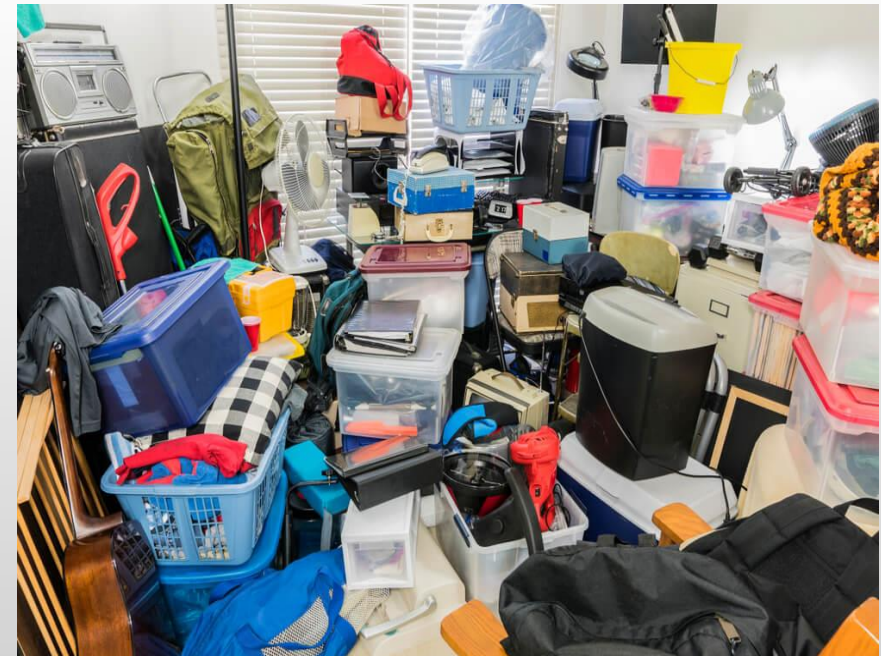
- Since that time there has been much groundbreaking and sometimes controversial research into the science known as **TAPHONOMY**, that is, the study of what happens to living organisms once they die and are deposited in the environment.
- This field studies everything from the effects of marine life to those of climate variables on bodies.
- The body farm, which started in the 1970s with the prototype for formal **TAPHONOMIC** studies on humans, but today, several research facilities devoted to human decomposition now exist around United States.
- **TAPHONOMIC** studies are often disturbing to members of the general public, but this kind of research can help demonstrate that initial appearances may be deceiving.

CASE STUDY: A MODERN DAY MUMMIFICATION



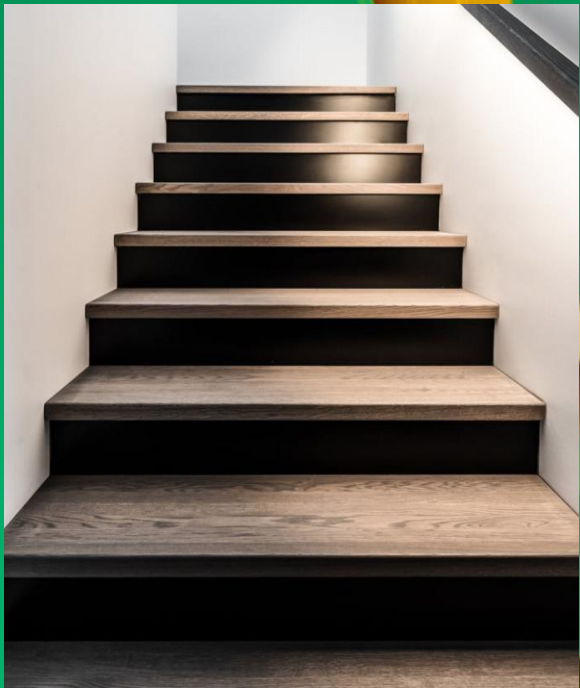
- Two women a mother, Susan in her 80s and a daughter, and in her 60s live together in an apartment in downtown Cincinnati.
- The landlord spoke with and when she brought the monthly rent check, but never saw Susan.
- Overtime the landlord became suspicious and finally talk and that he would except her rent check only if her mother delivered it in person.
- The next month, I am pretending to be her mother in walking to the landlords office with the rent check.
- The man accepted the payment, but as soon as he left, he called the police and told them his suspicions.

- Officers went to the apartment where the parents lived a question and asked if they could conduct a search.
- The apartment was horrendously filthy, suggesting a hoarding situation, but there where no signs of Foul-play.
- They told the officers that her mother was visiting relatives in Detroit.



- Back at the police station, officers contacted family members in Detroit, who said they haven't seen Susan for four years.
- Investigators returned to the apartment that same afternoon and knew that everything was exactly as it had been that morning with one exception: a large, freestanding metal cabinet that had been in the kitchen and was now thrown over a ravine in the backyard.
- The officers transported the cabinet and the cloth covered bundle inside it to the coroners office.





- The officers asked if the cabinet contained the remains of her mother, and she admitted it did.
- They said that Susan had fallen down the stairs and was barely hurt.
- She claimed that she had helped her mother into the bed and a temperature nursed her back to health but with no success.
- Eventually, she bathed her mothers body with bleach, wrapped the body in bed clothes, and stored it in the cabinet.
- When the police said a white man had reported the death or buried her mother, the woman said that they were descendants of the Blackfoot tribe, and burial was not their customer.



- The first step in examination at the morgue even before unwrapping the remains was to x-ray the bundle.
- The x-rays revealed a large number of small, round metallic objects scattered throughout the chest and neck area, and some embedded in the victim skull, possibly buckshot or bird shot.
- The next step was to unwrap the remains and perform an examination, with two main marks.
- The pathologists job was to try to establish manner of death, while the role of the anthropologist was to look at any anatomical features that might help significantly establish the persons identity.



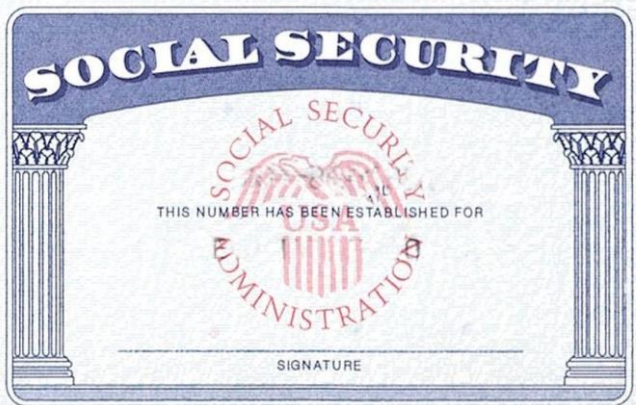
- **Removing the bed pose revealed a mummified corpse.**
- **All the soft tissue were completely desiccated.**
- **The wrapping, combined with the relative constant environment inside the cabinet – and something about the bleach had cost a man and a case of mummification.**
- **Such a typical decomposition is generally a part of circumstances in which the temperature is relatively constant and insect in other organisms have limited access to the remains.**



- Both the skillful features and external anatomy suggested that the body was that of a woman.
- The jaws lost teeth, and the findings are consistent with the identity of Susan.
- There seem to be no entrance or exit wounds on the surface of the body.
- The metallic highlights imbedded in the school were found to have an unusual consistency, almost like puddy and a birdshot was made of lead or some other compound.



The San Diego Union-Tribune



- When the police asked whether her mother had been shot, she replied at Susan Hannah back in 1926 in connection with a few among neighbors over the illegal distilling of alcohol.
- Investigators confirmed Ann's story through the 1926 newspaper account involving Susan's family and the neighbors.
- The authorities decided not to charge Ann with desecration of the corpse because she didn't seem to be of sound mind in many ways.
- But she was charged with Social Security fraud because she has been catching her mothers government checks for the four years she had heat in the body.



- What type of evidence is used to estimate time of death?
- What are some of the causes and variables of the decomposition process?
- What is your opinion of the use of human cadavers in the composition studies throughout the United States and elsewhere?



**THANK YOU
FOR YOUR
ATTENTION!**