



TEXAS CRIME NEWS

APRIL 2012

29TH MASS MURDER VICTIM NAMED

By Barbara Gibson

New DNA test results have confirmed that Mark Steven Scott was, in fact, misidentified. Jeff Scott, Mark's younger brother, was stunned by the news. "How did this happen? My father (Walter Scott) was adamant in not accepting the victims Dr. Joseph Jachimczyk kept trying to convince him was my brother. I recall on one occasion in which Dr. Joe tried to get my dad to claim a victim that had a broken collarbone. We all knew Mark never had a broken collar bone and my father told the ME's office that there was no way Mark could have endured the pain without us knowing."

Walter Scott knew Mark was a victim of the Houston Mass Murders but refused to accept one of the remaining victims without being 100% certain it was Mark. The Scott family endured 20 years of not knowing which victim was their son until a new type of DNA test was developed by the ME's office.

On December 27, 1993, [Dr. Elizabeth A. Johnson, Ph.D.](#), of the Harris County Medical Examiner's Office, released her "Final Report of DNA Analysis" pertaining to Case #ML73-3355 (Mark Scott).

This report stated there was a maternal relationship between the victim and Mary Scott (mother) and indicated a 98.5% probability that the remains were Mark Steven Scott. Based on this report, the Scott family accepted the remains, which were cremated and interred in a columbarium at Brookside Memorial Park. The new DNA tests have concluded that this information was inaccurate.

According to Scott, Dr. Sharon Derrick, Ph.D., of the Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences, (formerly Harris County Medical Examiner's Office) stated that the remains known as Case #ML73-3355 have now been positively identified as Steven Sickman. Sickman was 17 years old when he vanished on Wednesday, July 19, 1972. He lived in the 600 block of Jim Street, which was within blocks of Henley's father's home. Henley's father lived on the corner of Lodge Street & Lang Road located near W. 43rd & 290 in northwest Houston. During our interview with Henley, he said he did not recognize Steven Sickman's name.

According to the autopsy report, Sickman's body was recovered from the southwest Houston boat shed and had suffered three fractured ribs indicating a fierce struggle with his attacker(s). In the end he was strangled with a nylon cord. At the time of Sickman's disappearance, Corll lived at the Westcott Towers apartments located near the Heights. There were at least three more victims murdered at this location; Richard Hembree, 13, and Wally Simoneux, 14, both had vanished from the Heights on October 3, 1972, and were found buried in the boat shed. Richard Kepner, 19, a carpenter, was last seen in the Spring Branch area on November 10, 1972. Kepner's remains were recovered from High Island.

In an exclusive interview with Texas Crime News, Sickman's younger sister, Sandy Sickman, described the last day she saw her brother. "Steven and I had a fight and he came into my room to apologize and to cheer me up he said he would take me with him and his friends to Astroworld and the beach the next time they

"I never thought that would be the last time I would see my brother and that moment is burned into my memory like it was yesterday." Sickman said her brother left around 2 or 3 o'clock that afternoon in his 1970 sky blue Mustang that his parents had bought him. "My brother was a big strappin' good looking guy. He was 6'1, dark brown hair, had broad shoulders and strong as an ox."

"After he went missing, we received a series of phone calls after that, but the person on the other end wouldn't say a word and hang up. So, we thought it was Steven calling and we would tell him everything was ok and to come home, but he never did." Texas Crime News also spoke with Steven's mother, Erma Sickman of Kansas City, Missouri. Mrs. Sickman, now in her 70's, is a devout Catholic who attends Mass every morning at 6:30 a.m. Steven is always included in her prayers each morning.

"When I received the phone call from the ME's office about Steven being positively identified, I cried" stated Mrs. Sickman, who drove many miles throughout the years searching for Steven in Houston. "It's starting all over the misery, the pain, reliving it again, I'll never forget it and there's never closure. But, in a way, I feel better that I do know that he's not some place suffering."

Mrs. Sickman recounted that her ordeal began at 4am on July 20, 1972, when she was disturbed by the sound of silence. "I always heard Steven when he came in at night but this time there was no sound at all and I got up and checked his room and then outside for his car. When I saw that his car was still gone, I got dressed and drove around the neighborhood looking for him. I found his car parked in front of his friend's house on Granite Street, a few blocks away. I returned home and helped my husband get ready for work and then went back to the friend's house where Steven's car was parked. His friends told me that he had ridden with them to a party off Ella & W. 34th Street that night but Steven didn't ride back with them. I contacted the boy that had the party and found out that Steven left at midnight and was last seen walking down W. 34th Street. No one knew why he had left.

Next, I called the Houston Police Department and they were absolutely no help and extremely rude. They told me that he was 17 and considered an adult and unless they find a body they couldn't do anything and hung up on me. I called them several more times the rest of the month for help and they continued to hang up on me each time. After that treatment, I didn't go in person to file a missing person's report since they kept telling me there was nothing they could do."

"A year later, when I saw the news reports of bodies being recovered from the boat shed, I knew in my heart that Steven was a victim. I went to the ME's office and filled out paper work that described my son's physical characteristics and the date he disappeared. I never heard a word from the ME's office until 1991 when they called needing a DNA sample to run a test." This DNA test was performed by HPD's laboratory and compared with the remains of victim #73-3356, known as "swimsuit boy" who is still unidentified. The results were inconclusive.

Mrs. Sickman continued "I didn't hear from the ME's office again until a year and a half ago when they called and asked me to submit a new DNA sample." Again, there were no hits to the remaining unidentified Houston Mass Murder victims.

If not for Henley's adamant claim, in October 2010 to Texas Crime News, that Mark Scott was also misidentified (prompting new DNA tests) Mrs. Sickman may have never found her son.

When asked if she was glad to have her son back, she paused and replied; "no Hon, my son is in Heaven, those are just ashes."