**The Girl Next Door**

**Will Forensic Reconstruction Help ID Nameless Murder Victim?**

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A teenager is found murdered in a relatively peaceful area of northern California, her body dumped behind a restaurant. A search for the victim's identity comes up empty but police won't give up in their quest to give the girl her name back.   
  
Will a forensic reconstruction of the victim's face lead investigators to a much-needed breakthrough?  
  
***48 Hours* correspondent Harold Dow** reports.

“It haunts me a lot. I think it haunts everybody that has worked on this case,” says Sgt. Scott Dudek of the Alameda County Sheriff's office. Like any good homicide detective, Sgt. Dudek can sometimes get a little obsessed with his cases. But there’s one case that troubles him more than any other. A 22-year veteran of the Alameda County Sheriff’s department in northern California, Dudek had solved his share of gruesome crimes. But murders are rare in the suburban community of Castro Valley. “It’s a beautiful community. It’s about 75,000 people, middle- to upper middle-class mostly. Not a lot of crime; not a lot of violent crime especially,” Sgt. Dudek explains.  
  
So what he saw the night of May 1, 2003, was especially shocking, even to a seasoned detective: the body of a young girl, murdered, stuffed into a trash bag, and discarded behind a restaurant. The body was left behind a tree by a cyclone fence. "She had been dead for about 10 days so it was fairly well decomposed," says Dudek. And the way she died, with a rag in her throat, suggests someone may have wanted to silence her. Asked if he thought she may have seen something, Dudek says, "There had to be something very, very terrible, obviously that went on for her ultimately to be killed. But maybe she was a witness to something.”  
  
There was an unknown killer on the loose and police needed to find him. But first they had to identify the young girl who lay unclaimed at the morgue. Without knowing her identity, it would be impossible to find out who wanted her dead or why. What usually happens when police find an unidentified murder victim?   
  
"Normally, for us, within the first 24 to 48 hours we know who they are either by looking at missing persons reports or having a parent contact us,” says Dudek. But sadly, no one seemed to be looking for her. Because her body was so badly decomposed, a local artist did the best she could to give her a face. They also gave her a name: "Jane Doe." Police had to rely on her autopsy for other clues. Police got ten perfect prints off both her hands. Investigators guessed the girl, 5'1" and 110 lbs., was in her early teens, in good health, and with perfect teeth. This Jane had all the appearances of a typical teenage girl next-door, from her painted nails to her choice of clothing. “We had a seamstress redo the exact clothing that she was wearing. We found out it’s a Tommy Hilfiger knockoff shirt," explains Dudek. "And this is a teenager’s outfit, it’s very common. This is what all the kids were wearing.”  
  
Sgt. Dudek released a sketch, hopeful it was good enough for someone to recognize this girl, once it was splashed all over the local media and posted on Web sites dedicated to finding missing children. “With this sketch being released, we probably had 150 possible clues or sightings of people that thought they knew who our Castro Valley Jane Doe was,” remembers Dudek. One clue seemed so promising that Dudek and his partner, Ed Chicoine, followed it all the way down to the Texas-Mexican border, where they collected DNA samples from several mothers of missing teenage girls, including a girl whose picture bore a remarkable resemblance to Jane. “And every single one of those were checked out and it wasn’t her,” says Dudek.

As the weeks turned to months, no one came forward to claim this young girl, but the people of Castro Valley began to feel a connection. “The whole community in this area has adopted her. She’s known as Castro Valley’s Jane Doe,” says Dudek. And perhaps no one was touched more than Dave Woolworth, a local landscaper. “Sometimes you’ll catch me out here talking to her,” says Woolworth.   
  
Best known around town for his signature tie-dyed T-shirts, Woolworth was an unlikely hero. But the case of this unclaimed child turned him into one. “It was eating at me. When I read the story, I started crying. And I looked at my wife and I told her, this girl will never be identified. No one will come and claim her,” he says. Once the forensic investigation was completed Jane was destined for cremation. But that was unacceptable to Woolworth, himself a father who had once been estranged from his own daughter. Woolworth decided to take the lead in raising donations and four months after her body was abandoned in a parking lot, Castro Valley’s adopted daughter was given a funeral befitting a dignitary.   
  
As several more months went by, this child was still nameless and her killer, faceless. But the community that adopted her in death refused to give up hope. "For the past two years, everything pertaining to her I’ve saved. This way, when the mother comes forward or is found, it belongs to her,” says Woolworth. Even after dozens of dead ends, Scott Dudek remained determined. Then investigators got a clue: an anonymous letter in the mail. The letter writer claimed to have seen someone get “something from the trunk” of a car and dump it into the very same bushes where the body was found. "We asked this person to come forward and we would keep him anonymous," says Dudek. "However unfortunately he chose not to come forward at that point.” This potential witness admitted in the letter that he was reluctant to come forward because he himself had been in that parking lot “waiting for a married girlfriend.” Dudek says the person is a huge witness. "He’s got to make the decision and do the right thing.”  
  
Dudek’s frustration was mounting. “I’m a father; everybody that works on this case is a father. It just pulls at you every single day as far as why can’t we just solve this?” So he made perhaps the most difficult decision of his career: to exhume the young girl’s body and search for clues that forensic investigators might have missed the first time around. “I can’t believe we’re actually doing this. I can’t believe we’re at this stage in the investigation where we have to go to such extreme measures,” says Dudek, speaking about the exhumation.

Dudek has assembled a team of forensic experts, including anthropologist Allison Galloway, who will examine Jane’s bones for clues that could provide a better estimate of her age. “The bones all suggest she’s pretty much finished growing; I think she’s probably much more, say like 14 to 17,” says Galloway.   
In another attempt to pinpoint Jane’s age, Dudek has turned to Dr. Duane Spencer, a dentist and forensic specialist. “This is the dental X-rays now of the maxilla and mandible of Jane Doe. Her wisdom tooth is just starting to get its roots," says Dr. Spencer. Comparing her X-rays to some his other teenage patients, Dr. Spencer says he is comfortable saying Jane Doe is in the age range of 14 to 17.   
  
But Dudek believes the most important key to unlocking this mystery is to get a better picture of what Jane looked like alive and for that, he calls in forensic artist Gloria Nusse, who will make a sculpture of Jane based on her bone structure. Nusse and Dr. Galloway studied Jane’s skull for clues to the girl’s facial features. It’s part science, part guesswork. How can she reconstruct a person's face based on a skull?   
  
"Well the information is in the bone," she explains. "It tells me that the width of the cheekbones is this; it tells me that you know, the slope of the forehead is this. Every skull is absolutely unique but the landmarks are the same." But Nusse also needs a sense of Jane’s ethnic background to create a sculpture that will hopefully resemble the dead girl closely enough for someone out there to recognize her. "Most of the features we’re seeing are European. But there are some features that suggest that she might have either Asian or Native American background,” says Galloway.  
  
The first step is to make a mold of the skull, so Jane’s body can be returned to the cemetery in the morning. Nusse will work all night long to make it. She’ll then bring the mold to her studio where she’ll work on it for weeks to bring Jane to life. “The next part is the fun part; putting the clay on; and finding her face; what she looks like,” explains Nusse. "These little markers are showing the depth of tissue at these specific points on the skull." Those markers tell Nusse how thick the clay should be over different parts of the face, to get an accurate and lifelike shape. “I’m going to put on her mouth. I know the measurement; the width of her lips because I measured that on her skull," says Nusse. "I just want to try to make her look like a person. I can see a sly little smile, there’s a softness to her eyes. All that she’s been through, this is her chance, and it just needs to be absolutely perfect.”  
  
Five weeks after the exhumation and after some 40 hours of work, Gloria Nusse is putting the final touches on the forensic reconstruction. When the sculpture was finished, Sgt. Dudek was convinced he’s one giant step closer to finding out Jane’s real name and the identity of her killer. "This looks like a human being. She’s done such a fantastic, wonderful job,” he says. The sculpture of Jane Doe was revealed to the public in August 2005 at a press conference, and Sgt. Scott Dudek has never been so optimistic. He was also spreading the word to detectives from other police agencies, reaching out to more than 200 agencies. But he's also relying on arm-chair detectives like Ellen Leach, a Home Depot cashier from Mississippi.

Ellen Leach belongs to the DOE Network, a group of amateur gum shoes from all over the country who scour the Internet with one mission. "A group of 500 people. We’re dedicated to helping law enforcement solve cold cases," explains Leach. "Searching for missing persons and unidentified persons and matching them up." Ellen will try to match Jane's sculpture with reports of missing kids from around the world in hopes of reuniting Jane with her family. "We have so many unidentified out there. They need their name back. Their families need to know what happened to them," says Leach. But there's another case Leach is anxious to solve, where the family's anguish has haunted her for more than a year. It's the case of Greg May, a father of two who one day seemed to vanish into thin air. Why was she intrigued by the case?   
  
"He seemed like somebody that was decent, somebody I wanted to try to find," says Leach. As it turns out, the case of Greg May and Jane Doe would echo each other in ways no one could imagine. Each case would rely on forensic reconstruction to solve the mystery. Forensic artist Frank Bender would travel down the same road as Gloria Nusse to try to solve the case of Greg May.  
  
That case starts in Bellevue, Iowa, a historic, small town along the Mississippi River, where Greg May was an antique dealer with a passion for Civil War memorabilia. Although his children, Don and Shannon, settled in California, the three made sure to always keep in touch. "Always, we were a close family. Even with the distances between us," says Don May. So it was strange when weeks went by and they hadn’t heard from their father. "The more we reached out, the more we were realizing that nobody had heard from him. And he just wasn't turning up," says Don.  
  
May's children then discovered their father’s house was empty and his phone had been disconnected.   
Don and Shannon notified Bellevue police. Three months into the investigation, the first disturbing clue surfaced, when Greg May's car was discovered 141 miles away in a parking lot in Illinois. Greg May’s wallet was found inside. Days later, Don May received more ominous news. His father’s antiques were being sold at auction. "A friend of my father's gave me a call one day and said that he had a catalogue from an auction house and some of the items on the flyer appeared to be my father's," Don remembers.  
  
The auction house led police to Flagstaff, Ariz., where they found Doug DeBruin and his girlfriend Julie Miller. They were selling May’s collection and insisting it was theirs. Police arrested them on the spot.   
DeBruin had been Greg May's longtime friend and housemate who helped Greg buy and sell antiques.   
"I knew him as a hanger-on at my dad's place of business. And he just seemed to idolize my father," says Shannon. DeBruin told police, last he knew, Greg May was heading to Illinois.  
  
But Julie Miller told investigators a completely different story. She dropped a bombshell, saying Greg May was dead and DeBruin killed him. Miller insisted it was an accident, the result of a fist fight. She also told police she had no idea what DeBruin did with the body. But to investigators, the writing was on the wall. This was no accident. This was murder. Detectives informed Don and Shannon that their father Greg wasn’t coming home.  
  
But why would Doug DeBruin want to kill Greg May? According to police, the motivation was Greg May’s antique collection, worth a quarter of a million dollars. DeBruin was seen at a flea market, selling off everything his old friend once owned. "To see my father's property surrounded by him and him giving it away practically. It's hard to see that picture," says Don May.  
  
For prosecutor John Kies, proving Doug DeBruin committed the murder wasn't going to be easy. Although police did find a small trace of May's blood on DeBruin's jacket, the rest of the case was thin. "Most of what we had at this point was circumstantial evidence. That Doug DeBruin got caught with Greg May's goods. That no one had heard from Gregory May," says Kies. "And that his car and wallet were abandoned in Aurora, Ill." But what troubled Kies most was that he couldn't even prove Greg May was dead. "The defense was going to come back with, 'How did you know he just didn't disappear somewhere? And if you believe he's dead, how do you know he was murdered?' That was a big burden that we had to overcome," says Kies.  
  
What Kies didn't know was that, seven months after Greg May's disappearance, a clue was found hundreds of miles from Bellevue. It was a clue that would test the talents of forensic artist Frank Bender and help solve the mystery of what happened to Greg May. After finding out their father was dead and that his one-time friend Doug DeBruin was suspected of killing him, Don and Shannon May traveled half way across the country to Iowa to search for their father’s body. Where DeBruin might have left Greg May’s body was anyone’s guess. And DeBruin wasn’t talking.   
  
So Don and Shannon blanketed the area with flyers. They offered a $15,000 reward, hoping someone could lead them to their father’s body. Why didn't they just let the police handle it? "We needed to feel like we were doing something, doing everything we could," says Don. But what Don and Shannon didn't know was that the remains of their father had already been found, 400 miles away in Kearney, Miss.   
  
To Kearney Det. Tom O’Leary, the discovery was as mysterious as it was chilling: a skull, left at a truck stop, imbedded in a block of concrete. O’Leary had no idea it was Greg May’s. "We’ve never worked a case like this. We started our investigation with only, you know, a human skull. No identity, no nothing," says O'Leary. So just as Scott Dudek had done in Castro Valley, Calif., Detective O’Leary turned to facial reconstruction. "People are pretty visual. I thought, you know, we’d have a better chance of identifying the victim if you could actually put a face to him," says O'Leary.

Detective O’Leary called on Philadelphia artist Frank Bender, who in his spare time helps solve crime. "Oh I call myself the re-composer of the decomposed in the classical fashion," says Bender, who has worked with law enforcement on more than 40 cases, sculpting faces from skulls of the unknown. "When you start looking at the forms of the skull, you start to just get a feel for what the person looks like," says Bender. What did this particular skull tell him? "That the individual was middle aged. A little on the heavy side. Balding. I just went with that feeling," says Bender, who created a bust. "I just felt that eventually he would be identified."

Tom O’Leary was just as confident. "The reconstruction sat on my file cabinet. He stared me in the face when I walked in the morning. He’s the last person I saw when I went home at night" he says. "One day, you know, the right lead would come in." Little did Det. O’Leary know that the right lead would come from Mississippi, from Ellen Leach, the Home Depot cashier and DOE Network volunteer. Ellen Leach had matched the sculpture to Greg May’s missing person’s photo. After dental records confirmed the skull was in fact Greg May’s, police notified Don and Shannon that their father had at last been found. But the news provided little relief. "I asked him, 'How were the remains found, in what condition?' And he said, 'Are you sure you want to know?'" remembers Don.   
  
For Don and Shannon, the sculpture has become a memorial of sorts to their father. "When you really study it, you see a lot of the features are there, the ears strike me the most. The jaw line, the forehead, the hair, the lips," says Don. That sculpture was an answer to their prayers and helped to prove their father was murdered. The next step was to bring Greg May's killer to justice. Back in Castro Valley, Calif., would another sculpture help bring justice for the girl they call Jane? “This work has been done and hopefully it’s enough that somebody will come forward that knew her,” says sculptor Gloria Nusse.  
  
But her identity is only one part of the mystery. Why, after two years, has no one claimed her? Detectives have a theory: that someone out there knows exactly who she is and what happened to her but the person is too afraid to come forward.  
  
So police have been keeping an eye on her grave to see who might be drawn to visit her. And one day it paid off: they found an intriguing clue. A necklace and a note were found on Jane Doe's headstone. "The note was actually strung through the necklace, so it was attached to it. 'God loves you, it’s OK, baby girl, Jim is paying for what he did to you,'" says Dudek. Sgt. Dudek hopes that DNA and fingerprint tests on those items will provide some answers. But it will take weeks, perhaps months, to find a match and he doesn’t want to waste any time. So he’s releasing new posters based on the sculpture of Jane. “We’ll go out to the businesses and get it out to the people and just make sure that our Jane Doe stays in everybody’s mind,” says Dudek.  
  
That’s certainly true for amateur sleuth Ellen Leach, who spent hour after hour of her own time, sifting through reports of missing teens in search of a match. Then late one night, the features of one little girl from California began to line up with Jane’s. "I like the way the face is shaped around the chin. It looks like she’s got a good smile to her,” says Leach. "She looks like a beautiful little girl.” Ellen has a gut feeling about this one: but only time will tell if she’ll have the same success as she did for the case of Greg May.

With Greg May’s skull now identified, prosecutor John Kies finally had the evidence he needed to take May’s killer, Doug DeBruin, to trial. "The chances of him getting away with this now were almost negligible," says Kies. But Kies wanted to make sure his case was iron clad. So he offered Doug DeBruin’s girlfriend, Julie Miller, immunity. In return, Miller agreed to testify against DeBruin. "The prosecutors feel that they had to make a deal with the devil, so to speak, in order to prosecute DeBruin," says Don May. Miller confessed that DeBruin had strangled May. Together they dismembered his body. Then they scattered him across 400 miles of the Midwest. Miller had given just enough detail for Don and Shannon to know where to search for their father. Volunteers helped them in the solemn task of sifting through leaves and debris.   
  
But it was Don himself who ultimately found what he and his sister had spent four years looking for: a fragment of their father’s remains. "This is where people put their trash. My father wasn’t trash," his sister Shannon tearfully adds. "He was a human being. Part of this makes me really angry and I’m still angry today. Because I know there are remains out here that will never be found." At Doug DeBruin’s murder trial, the jury took under an hour to come back with its verdict, finding him guilty. "I remember the May family, literally crying with joy. Don May hugging me. Shannon May hugging me. It felt pretty good," says Kies.  
  
Prosecutor Kies suspects Julie Miller knew DeBruin planned to kill Greg May and did nothing to stop him. Don and Shannon hold out hope that despite Miller’s immunity, Kies will somehow find a way to bring her to justice. "I’m not gonna stop. I’m not gonna forget. I’m not gonna go away. I don’t care what the legal system says right now about not prosecuting you, you’re gonna get prosecuted at some point, count on it," says Don.

Until then, they can find some peace of mind knowing their father has at long last been laid to rest. It's peace of mind that would not have been possible without Frank Bender and his sculpture. Does Bender have any words of wisdom for Jane Doe's investigators in Castro Valley, Calif.? "These things take time," says Bender. "It’s sort off like fishing. You have to just leave that line out until you get a nibble." Sgt. Dudek is still desperate to get that nibble. “You got a little girl out there that every single night her mom and dad must wonder when she’s coming home,” he says.  
  
Ellen Leach’s lead, a young girl missing since 2001, seemed promising. "We were very hopeful that it was going to be our little Jane Doe. We requested the dental records on this little girl,” recalls Dudek. But this girl's dental records do not match Jane’s perfect teeth. It’s another dead end. So Dudek is back to square one, manning the phones, and waiting for DNA tests on the necklace left on Jane’s grave. This is one mystery he is determined to solve – for the young girl who lost her life and the people like Dave Woolworth who have forever taken her to heart.   
  
"We’ve never lost hope in this and we’ll never lose hope in this," says Dudek. “Sooner or later, somebody’s going to make a connection and they will pick up the phone and they’ll call us and they’ll do the right thing.”

If you have any information on "Jane's" identity, please call Sgt. Scott Dudek of the Alameda County Sheriff's Office at **510-667-7478**.  
  
Greg May's children gave their $15,000.00 reward to Internet sleuth, Ellen Leach.