



## Odontology Section – 2003

### F18 Problems in an Identification

*Susan D. McMillen, DDS, MS\*, University of Missouri School of Dentistry, 650 East 25th Street, Kansas City, MO; Ronald E. Gier, DMD, MSD, Consultant, 5600 West 95th Street, Suite 315, Overland Park, KS; and Thomas W. Young, MD, Office of the Jackson County Medical Examiner, 6600 East 24th Street, Kansas City, MO*

The goals of this presentation are to provide the forensic community an opportunity to view a case with problems with age identification.

The decapitated body of a small African-American girl was found in a wooded area of Kansas City, MO, in April 2001. A few days later a volunteer helping the police found the decomposed head in a trash bag nearby in the woods. This began an exhaustive search and investigation by the Kansas City Missouri Police Department, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and forensic experts in several fields to identify the child who came to be known as Precious Doe. The case has been covered extensively in the press, both locally and nationally. The case has been aired on "America's Most Wanted" and in the U.S. news. Public watches and memorials were held. A memorial site was set up, and hundreds of stuffed animals and flowers were placed there in remembrance. The Kansas City community was and still is upset over the fact someone could do such a monstrous thing to a child, and that no one has come forward to identify or claim the body. Despite an excellent response and over 600 solid leads called in and investigated, the identity of Precious Doe remains a mystery.

The girl is described as about three feet tall and 41 pounds with a small, brown crescent-shaped birthmark on her left shoulder.

A reconstruction of the head was done which characterized Precious Doe as a cherubic little girl four to six years of age with mahogany skin, short neat cornrows and bright brown eyes.

A standard dental evaluation was done. This showed a complete primary dentition. There were no caries or restorations. The mandibular left primary central incisor was missing and the socket healed. The permanent first molars and incisors were formed, and the crowns partially calcified. The premolars showed only noncalcified tooth formation. The dental age was estimated at three, plus or minus six months.

As already noted this case received nationwide attention. A claim from a Florida woman was made that Precious Doe was her daughter. This woman's daughter had disappeared when she was five years of age. The woman identified the birthmark on Precious Doe as similar to one on her daughter. The Florida child had been missing for about a year, and the time frame fit that of Precious Doe; however, DNA testing proved this identity was not possible. However, as a fall out of this publicity the Florida foster childcare system is being investigated.

The poster presenting this case will include pertinent newspaper articles, photographs, radiographs and explanations of the age determinations.

There are several theories as to why Precious Doe has not been claimed or identified: the parents may be involved in her murder; the child's mother may also have been murdered; or she and her family may be from another state.

If anyone has a missing person in your files that fits this description, please contact Sgt. David Bernard of the Kansas City Missouri Police Department.

**Identification, Dental, Precious Doe**