D32   The Green River Murders

Robert D. Keppel, PhD*, Center for Crime Assessment & Profiling, 11831 SE 66th Street, Bellevue, WA 98006; and Katherine M. Brown, MA, Sam Houston State University, Criminal Justice Center, PO Box 2296, Huntsville, TX 77341-2296

Attendees will learn the motive, victim selection, methods of operation, body disposal techniques, and forensic evidence from the murders of the most prolific serial killer in American History, to date, Gary L. Ridgway. The presentation will consist of crime scene photos and video clips of Ridgway interviews.

This presentation will demonstrate the motive, victim selection, methods of operation, body disposal techniques, and forensic evidence from the murders of the most prolific serial killer in American History, to date, Gary L. Ridgway.

The 48 murders eventually connected to Gary L. Ridgway were part of the largest unsolved serial murder case in the United States. Ridgway was identified as a suspect in the Green River murders in 1984, but was not charged until a DNA test in 2001 linked Ridgway to four of the victims. Subsequently, forensic paint analysis was used to connect two of the victim's to Ridgway. Ridgway eventually pled guilty to 48 murders.

The presentation will focus on the modus operandi, victim selection and body disposal techniques Ridgway used in the first murders of the Green River Murder series. Video clips of Ridgway discussing the murders and a review of forensic evidence in the case will also be presented.

An overview of the Microtrace laboratory findings of tiny spheres of spray paint on the clothing of two of the Green River murder victims will be given. The spray paint formed small spheres which became embedded in the weave of fabric when dried while airborne. The particles, invisible to the naked eye, were easily transferable from killer to victim.

The paint samples were connected to Ridgway because they were identical to a highly specialized DuPont Imron paint used at the Kenworth truck plant which employed Gary L. Ridgway. In March 2003, Microtrace laboratory connected the spheres from the jeans which formed the ligature around victim Wendy Coffield's neck to the spheres found at the Kenworth truck plant. Microtrace was also able to identify the paint spheres on the clothing found with Debra Este's body. Again, the spheres were determined to be identical to the highly specialized paint used only at Kenworth truck plants and which happened to be in use at the factory in which Ridgway worked. Fortunately, because Ridgway was a carrier of the particles, five of the victims were connected to Ridgway through forensic paint analysis. Ridgway pled guilty to 48 counts of aggravated first-degree murder; including six that police had not initially connected to the case.

Green River Murders, Gary L. Ridgway, Serial Killer