



Physical Anthropology Section – 2007

H49 Putting It All Together: Recovery, Assembly, and Analysis of Multiple Body Parts

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The goal of this presentation is to present a unique example of human butchering. The attendees will learn some protocol adaptations that were necessary for recovery and assembly of 57 separate parts. Attendees will see how professionals in anthropology, pathology, search and rescue, and law enforcement worked together as a team.

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity presenting a unique example of human butchering. It will also inject some effective ways to recover, process, and analyze multiple widely-scattered bones and body parts. These methods may be used in any case where recovery and identification of large numbers of disrupted human remains is problematic.

This case report presents a unique example of human butchering and explains to attendees some protocol adaptations necessary for recovery and assembly of 57 separate parts. It highlights a successful outcome resulting from teamwork between anthropology, pathology, search teams, and law enforcement officers.

A young female victim was beaten to death and her body cut to pieces inside the bedroom of her boyfriend's mobile home. The dissected tissues were then taken to two different and widely separated rural locations where some were randomly scattered and others were hidden. A chance discovery shortly after the crime allowed investigators to recover a significant amount of material from one site on the first day. The suspect directed investigators to a second site two days later.

Because many of the dissected parts involved bare bone fragments, a forensic anthropologist was called to both scenes to assist in the recovery and identification of the scattered tissues. A field inventory of identified pieces assisted in the overall scope of the investigation, and almost complete recovery of the victim. At one site, many of the pieces had simply been tucked under branches and logs, but others had been covered with leaves, stones, and loose dirt. At the other site, it appeared as if the suspect had stood at the edge of a rural road and thrown individual pieces into a ravine. The pattern of dissection and concealment reflected the suspect's previous history of illegal killing and butchering of white tail deer. For example, the viscera were removed *en bloc* and covered with a slab of limestone. Muscles and skin were cut cleanly from the extremities and then the underlying bone was serially sectioned. The flesh over the abdomen was removed as if it were a cut of brisket, before a distinctive tattoo was cut off and hidden in a different location.

Although there was only one victim, the scene recovery protocol was typical of one that would be employed in a mass fatality incident. The initial recovery scene covered approximately 5 acres and included dense woods, overgrown meadows, a fire pit, a railroad track and tunnel. (The suspect initially told investigators that he had stood over the tunnel and tossed body parts onto numerous moving trains, so trains up and down the East Coast had to be detained and searched). The second scene was several miles from the first, and included a steep bank along a winding rural road. At both scenes, individual numbers were assigned to each specimen and the location of each one documented with the "total station" mapping system. The initial numbering system was maintained throughout the investigation by the use of indelible markers, strips of plastic, and digital photography.

At autopsy, as the medical examiner described each individual piece of bone and tissue, the anthropologist assembled the body. This had to be done in layers with the skeleton assembled first, and then sections of soft tissue matched by muscle groups and cut-marks. The posterior side of the body was re-assembled and documented first. Then the pieces of flesh were removed, each bone and bone fragment turned over, and then the anterior half of the body was reassembled and documented. The left breast of the victim was the only body part not recovered.

Human Butchering, Crime Scene, Teamwork