

Case Number
MG1700827

Date
07/01/17

Deputy
M.CHARMAN

Primary Narrative

CORONER'S INVESTIGATION NARRATIVE

Coroner Case #: 17-075

Synopsis:

On July 1, 2017 at approximately 1207 hours, dispatch advised me that they received a call on 911 that someone had found a body in the Merced River but the reporting party lost cell service and we were unable to get any more information. I drove to the Briceburg area to check but was advised that the reporting party called back and said that it was near Bagby Recreation Area. Deputy Atkinson checked the area and located the body at the following coordinates: N 37* 35.731' x W -120* 04.716'. I responded along with SAR Units and was given a ride to the location. We found what appeared to be a male subject face down on the surface of the water that had obviously been submerged for an extended period of time as the body was very bloated and decomposing. The body was naked except for 1 Vans shoe. The shoe was consistent with the description of Ronnie Cole who had gone missing in the river 8 days prior(refer to report number MG1700802). We were able to collect the body in a coroner bag designed for water recoveries before transporting it back to the Bagby Recreation area. The family of Ronnie Cole was waiting at the ramp. I informed them that we had located a subject that could not be confirmed as Ronnie but that I believed it to be him. They advised me that Ronnie had gotten a new tattoo on his forearm that read "Cole" in cursive writing. The body was transported to the Mariposa County Sheriff's Office to wait for transport. I was able to then do a more thorough check of the body and found a tattoo matching the one described by the family. The deceased was turned over to A&R Mortuary Services to be transported to the Stanislaus County Coroner's Office.

Details: *(Witness Statement(s), Terminal Event, Medical History):*

On July 1, 2017 at approximately 1207 hours, I was dispatched to a report of a body found in the river. Dispatch reported that they were called on 911 and told that the reporting party had found a body in the river but the call disconnected and they were not able to get any more information. Ronnie Cole had gone missing in the Merced River on June 23, 2017 so I assumed that this could be related and responded to the Briceburg area of the Merced River. I got to the Railroad Flat area when dispatch advised that the reporting party called back and said that they would meet at Bagby. Deputy Atkinson responded to the area and was told that the body was marked with a flag. He located the body and confirmed that the person was deceased at 1306 hours. I was informed that the body was located by Jesse Cole and Bill Long, who had been searching the area for Ronnie Cole.

I responded to Bagby along with Search and Rescue Units. We boarded Deputy Atkinson's boat and were taken to the body. I was able to observe what appeared to be a white male subject that was face down at the surface of the water, being pushed against an underwater tree by the current. On top of the subject, I could see that there was a thick layer of mud/soot and the body was very bloated and decomposing. The deceased was naked except for one shoe, which was a dark colored Vans shoe. The shoe, body size, location, and state of the body were consistent with the missing subject, Ronnie Cole.

The deceased was pulled to the boat by a Search and Rescue Swimmer and put in a Coroner Bag designed for water recoveries as it lets water escape from the corners of the bag. The deceased was secured on the boat and taken to the Bagby Boat Launch where it was then also secured in another Coroner bag.

Ronnie Cole's family was waiting at the launch as they had heard that Ronnie was found. I informed the family, which included Ronnie's father, Frank Cole, that a subject was recovered and that I believed it to be Ronnie but could not give a positive identification due to the circumstances. They informed me that Ronnie was wearing Vans shoes and that he had recently got a new tattoo of the name "Cole" in cursive writing across his upper forearm. I told them that I would attempt to check further but had not been able to see that initially.

The deceased was transported to the Mariposa County Sheriff's Office to await transport and so a proper preliminary examination could be done. Upon arrival at the office, both bags were opened and I was able to roll the deceased over to inspect the front side. I was able to wipe some of the mud/soot away and located a tattoo consistent with the one described by Ronnie's family. The face was too disfigured for me to identify as Ronnie. No further evidence was able to be identified.

The deceased, believed to be Ronnie Cole, was turned over to driver Matt Mejia of A&R Mortuary Services where he was transferred to the Stanislaus County Coroner's Office. I spoke with Frank Cole again and informed him that I was able to locate a tattoo on the deceased that matches Ronnie's.

Preliminary Exam: *(Coroner, Date, Time, Location of Exam, Clothing, Marks, Scars, Tattoos.):*

The exam was conducted by me, Detective Mike Charman. This occurred both in the Bagby Lake/Merced River area as well as at the Mariposa County Sheriff's Office. The deceased had only one Vans shoe on the right foot. I was also able to identify a tattoo depicting "Cole" on his left upper forearm. Nothing else was identified due to the bloated and decomposed state of the body.

Scene Examination/Where Death Confirmed: *(Inside/Outside, Weather Condition, Temperature, Evidence/Property Collection):*

The deceased was located and confirmed dead in the water up-river from the Bagby Recreation Area. The water temperature was approximately 60 degrees with a slight current.

Decedent Position/Condition: *(Supine, Prone, etc./ Lividity, Rigor Mortis, Cyanosis, Wounds, IV's, Catheters, Medications Given, etc.):*

The deceased was located floating on the surface of the water and facing down with the face underwater. The body was severely bloated and beginning to decompose. There was a thick layer of mud/soot on top of the body. No life saving measures were taken due to the obvious signs of being dead for an extended period of time.

Symptoms Prior To Death:

Ronnie Cole was swimming in the river with friends when he was observed by some un-involved subjects to get pulled under the water by the current and swept downstream.

Special Conditions: *(CPR, Life Saving Attempts):*

No measures were taken due to the fact that the body had already begun to decompose.

Method of Decedent Identification: *(Photo, Relative/Acquaintance, other):*

The deceased is believed to be Ronnie Ray Cole due to the fact that the deceased matches the physical descriptions of Cole, was wearing a shoe that matches the pair supposedly worn by Cole when he was swept downriver, and the tattoo of "Cole" on his upper forearm.

Decedent Personal Info: *(Physical Description, Marital Status, Spouse, DDL, SSN, Clothing, Marks, etc.):*

The deceased is believed to be Ronnie Ray Cole who is 19 years old (02/16/1998) and unmarried. Ronnie is described as being approximately 6 foot tall and weighing 150 pounds. The deceased was found to have only one shoe on and a tattoo of "Cole" on his forearm.

Primary Occupation Info: *(Type of Work, Years in Occupation, Employer):*

Ronnie Cole worked for his father doing tree work.

Medical History: *(Doctor, Address, Phone Number, Last Seen, Diagnosis / Last Hospitalized, Hospital Name, Hospital Phone Number, Hospital Doctor, Hospital Diagnosis):*

Unknown prior health issues.

Death Certificate Information:

1. **Date/Time Last Seen Alive:** June 23, 2017 around 1500 hours
 - a.) By Whom: Brandy Willey
2. **Date/Time Discovered:** July 1, 2017 around 1230 hours
 - a.) By Whom: Jessie Cole and Bill Long
3. **Date/Time Pronounced Dead:** July 1, 2017 at 1306 hours

MARIPOSA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

P.O. Box 276
Mariposa, CA 95338

CA0220000

Phone (209) 966-3615
Fax (209) 742-5090

- a.) By Whom: Deputy Atkinson
- 4. **Date/Time of Death Confirmation:** July 1, 2017 at 1306 hours
- a.) By Whom: Deputy Atkinson

Terminal Event Information:

- 1. **Event Occurred at Work:** *(Yes/No):* No
- 2. **Estimated Date/Time of Event:** June 23, 2017 around 1500 hours
- 3. **Location of Event Causing Death:** *(Number, Street, City, Zip):* Cable Rock of the Merced River near Briceburg
- 4. **Describe How Event Occurred:** *(Auto Collision, Hanging, etc.):* Swimming in river when the current swept him under water and downstream

Requested: *(Autopsy, B/A, Narcotic, Other):* Full autopsy, Abuse Screen, Blood test

Transportation/Mortuary Info: *(Date/Time, By Whom, Location):* July 1, 2017 at approximately 1600 hours, the deceased was turned over to A&R Mortuary Services to be transported to the Stanislaus County Coroner's Office.

Notification of Next of Kin: *(Name, Address, Phone, Date/Time of Notification, By Whom/Agency):*

Frank Cole, father of Ronnie Cole, and many other family members, were present when Cole was recovered in the river and notified by me.

Property Sealed by Coroner: *(Residence/Vehicle, Date/Time):* N/A

Fingerprints: *(Taken By, Date/Time):* None

Photographs: *(Taken By, Date/Time):* Photographs were taken by me throughout the recovery

Disposition of Personal Effects: None

Follow-up:

Attachments

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Phone (209) 966-3615
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Approved by : SGT.TOTTEN Date : 07/01/2017 10:28 PM



STANISLAUS COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT
CORONER'S DIVISION
921 OAKDALE ROAD
MODESTO, CA 95355
(209)567-4480

CONTROLLED DOCUMENT
DUPLICATION OR REISSUANCE
CONTROLLED BY LAW

RECEIVED Reanalyne Cho (209)567-4480
BY A. Stewart DATE 10/13/2020
MARIPOSA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

CORRECTED REPORT

MARIPOSA COUNTY CORONER'S OFFICE

CORONER CASE NUMBER:	C17-001455/17-075
NAME:	COLE, Ronnie
AGE:	19 years
RACE/ETHNICITY:	Caucasian
SEX:	Male
HEIGHT:	72 inches
WEIGHT:	180 pounds
DATE AND TIME FOUND:	07/01/2017 @ 1306
PLACE FOUND:	Merced River
DATE AND TIME OF AUTOPSY:	07/05/2017 @ 1330
PLACE OF AUTOPSY:	STANISLAUS COUNTY CORONER'S OFFICE
PROSECTOR:	SUNG-OOK BAIK, M.D.

IDENTIFICATION:

The body is identified by body bag and body tag.

WITNESSES:

Officer Hendricks from the Mariposa County Sheriff's Department was present at the time of autopsy.

EXTERNAL EXAMINATION:

The body is that of a well-developed, well-nourished, extremely decomposed, and known as 19-year-old Caucasian male, measuring 72 inches in length and weighing 180 pounds. Rigor mortis and lividity are completely disappeared due to the development of severe decomposition. The scalp is covered by a large amount of medium to short brown hair. The skin of the entire face, eyes, nose, ears, and lips is decomposed. The oral cavity contains decomposition fluid. The upper and lower jaws show natural teeth. There is no evidence of injury in the oral cavity. The neck is short, thin, and decomposed. There is a silver-colored metallic necklace encircling the neck. There is no evidence of injury around the neck. The chest is symmetrical and decomposed. The abdomen is soft, flat, and decomposed. The pubic hair is well-distributed and is that of an adult male type. The penis is circumcised. Both testicles are present in the scrotum. The genital area is markedly decomposed. The upper extremities are symmetrical and decomposed. The fingernails

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DUPLICATION OR REISSUANCE
CONTROLLED BY LAW**

RECEIVED R. Cho
BY [Signature] DATE 10/13/2020
MARIPOSA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Coroner's Case Number: C17-001455/17-075
Completed Date: 07/20/2017

are not unusual. The skin of both hands is washer-woman skin in appearance. The lower extremities are symmetrical and decomposed.

There is a tattoo: Letters "COLE" on the left forearm.

The body is clothed in black and green socks, and a black shoe on the right foot only.

INTERNAL EXAMINATION:

The body is opened by the usual Y-shaped incision. The great vessels of the thorax and abdomen are identified and are unremarkable. Both pleural cavities, the pericardial sac, and abdominal cavity are not unusual except for decomposition.

CARDIOVASCULAR SYSTEM:

The heart weighs 350 grams. On opening the heart, both sides of the heart are markedly dilated. The valve leaflets are not unusual. The heart measurements are within normal limits. On sectioning, the cut surfaces are brown to black, smooth, and the consistency is extremely soft due to decomposition. The coronary arteries and aorta are unremarkable.

RESPIRATORY SYSTEM:

The right lung weighs 550 grams. The left lung weighs 500 grams. On sectioning, the cut surfaces are black, smooth, and the consistency is extremely soft due to decomposition. The cut surfaces exude a large amount of decomposition fluid. The mucosa of the bronchi, bronchioles, and trachea is decomposed. The pulmonary arteries are patent.

GASTROINTESTINAL TRACT:

The esophagus is intact. The stomach contains a small amount of mucoid material. The mucosa of the stomach is not unusual except for decomposition. The small and large intestines are unremarkable except for decomposition.

LIVER:

The liver weighs 1500 grams. The external surface is black to brown, smooth, and the anterior margin is sharp. On sectioning, the cut surfaces are black-brown, smooth, and the consistency is extremely soft due to decomposition. The gallbladder contains a small amount of bile.

SPLEEN:

The spleen weighs 190 grams. The external surface and the cut surfaces are unremarkable except for decomposition.

PANCREAS:

The organ is markedly decomposed.

GENITOURINARY SYSTEM:

Each kidney weighs 150 grams. They are covered by thin fibrous capsules which are stripped away easily leaving black to brown, smooth cortical surfaces. On sectioning, the cut surfaces are black to brown, smooth, and the consistency is extremely soft due to decomposition. The ureters and urinary bladder are unremarkable.

NECK ORGANS:

The larynx, pharynx, hyoid bone, and neck muscles are unremarkable except for decomposition. There is no evidence of injuries in the neck organs.

ENDOCRINE SYSTEM:

The adrenal gland, thyroid gland, and pituitary gland are not remarkable.

MUSCULOSKELETAL SYSTEM:

There are no abnormalities except for decomposition.

HEAD:

The scalp is reflected and is natural. The skull is intact. On opening the skull, there is no evidence of fracture or hemorrhage in the cranial cavity. The brain is extremely decomposed and weighs 1400 grams. On sectioning, the cut surfaces are smooth, and semi-liquefied. There is no evidence of injury.

AUTOPSY FINDINGS:

1. Advanced decomposition.
2. Pulmonary edema.
3. Cerebral edema.



CAUSE OF DEATH: Drowning.

TOXICOLOGY:

Liver and bile.

OPINION:

This 19-year-old Caucasian male, Ronnie Cole, died of a drowning. There were no other injuries. He had been consuming d-methamphetamine prior to death, but had not been drinking alcoholic beverage prior to his death.

CORRECTED REPORT (08/30/2017):

A corrected report is being issued to correct the date and time found noted on the first page of this report.


Sung-Ook Baik, M.D.

9-1-2017
DATE



Case Name: Cole,

TOXICOLOGY NUMBER: CVT-17-7091

Specimen Description:

Ronnie
6 ml bile & liver tissue each labeled "Cole, Ronnie; C17-001455; Mariposa Co; 17-075; Dr Baik; 07/05/2017"

Delivered by Tricor

Date 06-Jul-17

Received by Bill Posey

Date 06-Jul-17

Request: Routine Drug Screen

Agency Case # C17-001455/17-075

Requesting Agency

Mariposa County Sheriff/Coroner
P.O. Box 276
Mariposa CA 95338

Report To

Stanislaus County Sheriff/Coroner
Attn: Dr. Baik
921 Oakdale Rd.
Modesto CA 95355

Specimen: Liver Tissue Sample

RESULTS

Routine Drug Screen: Ethyl Alcohol and Methamphetamine detected in liver tissue homogenate. No Cocaine, Opiates, PCP, Barbiturates, Benzodiazepines, Methadone, Fentanyl, Tricyclic Antidepressants or Carisoprodol detected in extract of liver tissue homogenate. No Acetone detected in liver tissue homogenate.

Liver Ethyl Alcohol = 0.09 grams/100g

d-Methamphetamine = 0.9 mg/kg

d-Amphetamine = 0.6 mg/kg

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RECEIVED P. Cho
BY AS DATE 10/13/15
MARIPOSA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Note: Ranges concerning levels and effects for the above compounds in liver is not known.

Alan D Barbour

B. L. Posey

Alan D Barbour & B. L. Posey

July 17, 2017

CONTROLLED DOCUMENT

DUPLICATION OR REISSUANCE
CONTROLLED BY LAW

Released to Mariposa Co

By W Date 8/28/17

B.L. POSEY
S.N. KIMBLE
Directors

1580 Tollhouse Road
Clovis, California 93611
Phone (559) 323-9940
Fax (559) 323-7502

MARIPOSA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

P.O. Box 276
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Phone (209) 966-3615
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Case Number
MG1700802

Date
06/23/17

Deputy
M.CANTER

CASE NARRATIVE

Elements:

Missing Persons

Synopsis:

On 06/23/2017, at approximately 1546 hours, I was dispatched to the Briceburg area (at Cable Rock) in Mariposa County for a missing person. Upon arrival I met with the reporting party Brandi Willey. Brandi stated Ronnie Cole jumped into the river and never made it back to shore. Search and Rescue (SAR) was dispatched to the scene. At approximately 2030 hours, search efforts were called off due to poor lighting and swift water conditions and will resume the morning of 06/24/2017. Ronnie Cole was entered MUPS NCIC#3291717400350. Search and Rescue incident #17-007.

Details:

On 06/23/2017, at approximately 1546 hours, I was dispatched to Briceburg area of Cable Rock in Mariposa County for a missing person. Upon arrival I met with the reporting party Brandi Willey and Debi' Jean Congdon.

Brandi stated she and Debi' Jean picked up Ronnie Cole at Highway 49S and Ashworth, because Ronnie vehicle was disabled. Brandi stated the three of them went down to Briceburg area of Cable Rock to cool off in the river while waiting for the tow-truck to arrive to tow Ronnie's truck. Brandi stated at approximately 1430 hours Ronnie jumped into the river approximately 50 yards east of Cable Rock. Brandi Stated Ronnie was swimming towards shore and then Brandi stated she lost sight of Ronnie at around Cable Rock. Brandi stated she got into her vehicle to try to find Ronnie along the bank and he was nowhere to be found. I asked Brandi if there was any alcohol or drugs involved, and she stated no. I asked Brandi what Ronnie was wearing; she stated blue jeans, black shoes and no shirt. Brandi was clearly upset and stated her and Ronnie where down at Cable Rock two weeks ago, and Ronnie jumped in the water then.

It should be noted; Brandi informed me that she had contacted some of Ronnie's family members prior to my arrival.

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CHP Officer D. Hoff was on scene. Officer Hoff informed me at approximately 1330 hours she contacted Ronnie Cole at Highway 49S and Ashworth due to Ronnie's vehicle being disabled. Officer Hoff stated it looked like Ronnie was driving too fast and tried to make the turn off the Highway and hit the curb. Officer Hoff stated Ronnie informed her that he contacted the tow company already, and Officer Hoff stated she didn't make a report since Ronnie had already made arrangements for his vehicle to be towed. Officer Hoff stated Ronnie did not show any signs of being impaired nor did she smell any alcohol emitting from his person at that time.

Dispatch was advised to call out Chaplain Von Reader and Chaplin Horst to the scene. They arrived at approximately 1820 hours.

Ronnie's Father, Franklin (Frank) Cole, arrived at approximately 1900 hours. I informed Frank of the situation and the efforts that are taking place to locate his son Ronnie.

Frank appeared angry with the family members that were already present on scene and stated "know you care". Frank seemed in disbelief, and said Ronnie's probably at their property on the back side of Telegraph because he's trying to get away from Brandi. Frank took off walking west towards the first campground, stating he was going to look for Ronnie.

Due to the large crowd forming at the scene, family members we informed to move to the visitor's center located at the entrance of Briceburg.

At approximately 2030 hours I advised Frank, that the search efforts are being called off due to poor lighting and swift water conditions. I informed Frank the search efforts would resume in the morning. Frank became very upset, stating "I pay my taxes; you know how many homes I own in this town". Frank stated he was going to get his Husqvarna and go up on the back side of Telegraph and continue looking for Ronnie.

It should be noted as Frank was about to leave the scene Frank stated approximately 2 weeks ago Ronnie told his father he didn't want to live anymore. Frank stated Ronnie told him "this life is fucked and I can't get ahead". I asked Frank if he thought Ronnie would ever commit suicide, and Frank stated no, Ronnie was just feeling depressed.

I entered Ronnie into MUPS (NCIC#3291717400350), due to the scanner being down I was unable to attach a copy to this report.

Recommendations:

Remain active.

Follow-up:

Attachments:

MARIPOSA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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Phone (209) 966-3615
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Approved by : J.BOBMAN Date : 06/24/2017 06:54 AM

Case Number
MG1700802

Date
06/24/17

Deputy
J.TOTTEN

Supplement 01

On June 23, 2017 at approximately 1546 hours, I received a report of a missing swimmer in the Merced River near Cable Rock in the area of Briceburg Recreational Area. I had dispatch callout the Search and Rescue (SAR) team and I responded to the point last seen.

I arrived and observed the BLM River Ranger was on scene and was speaking to possible witnesses. I started a down river search from the point last seen.

Search and Rescue Volunteer David Thorpe arrived at approximately 1648 hours and spoke to potential witnesses. He spoke with two females that I was not aware of and did not identify. The two females were not part of the group that was with the missing swimmer.

They told Thorpe that one of the females observed the swimmer, later identified as Ronnie Cole, go into the water above Cable Rock and swim around the rock. She believed he was going to come around the rock and come out on the other side. She lost sight of him and he did not come out.

The other female was on top of Cable Rock and observed him swim by struggling and going under water a couple of times and she lost sight of him.

Witnesses said that he was last seen wearing blue jeans, tennis shoes and no shirt.

SAR volunteers, BLM River Ranger and Deputies did a hasty search down river from the point last seen. We checked near the bank in eddies and strainers looking for any signs.

CHP helicopter H-40 arrived at approximately 1700 hours and started searching down river.

Units actively searched from Cable Rock to Willow Placer Campground, checking areas that we have recovered other drowning victims.

We searched until sundown with negative results.

I advised patrol units to frequently check the area until the search could resume in the morning.

Per Dreamflows website the Merced River flow below Briceburg at noon on Friday June 23, 2017 was 7.750 cubic feet per second and the water temperature was estimated in the low 50's Fahrenheit.

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Approved by : SGT.TOTTEN Date : 06/24/2017 11:56 PM

MARIPOSA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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Phone (209) 966-3615
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Case Number

MG1700802

Date

06/24/17

Deputy

C.RAMIREZ

Supplement 02

On 06-24-2017 Detective Charman and I led the SAR effort for Ronnie Cole. SAR members walked the bank on the river right side from Cable Rock to North Fork Falls. BLM Rangers, along with SAR members took a raft and kayak from Briceburg to the rafting take-out, which is 2.9 miles downriver from Cable Rock. SAR members utilized a UAV to visually check calm areas of water from Cable Rock to the gate at the end of River Road. CHP Helicopter 40 searched from Cable Rock to Railroad Flat. Deputy Atkinson used his patrol boat to check upstream from Bagby, along with SAR Member Jim Bishop on a personal watercraft approximately 3 miles upstream. Dive team members checked eddies and calm water on river right in several places. In addition, BLM Rangers briefed the commercial rafting companies and guides. It should be noted, approximately 20 rafts floated the area during the afternoon hours.

Limited searching will continue until Cole is located.

Approved by : SGT.TOTTEN Date : 06/24/2017 11:52 PM

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Case Number

MG1700802

Date

06/24/17

Deputy

M.CHARMAN

Supplement 03

On June 24, 2017, I assisted with Search and Rescue Operations for this investigation. During the operations, I continually briefed multiple family members on what was occurring and any other questions they had. I informed the family, including Ronnie's father, Frank Cole, that due to the lack of leads in locating Ronnie and low likelihood of a rescue, that search efforts would be decreased before ceasing altogether for this time. I explained that we had done all that we could do and that anything further would endanger the lives of the SAR Volunteers until the water receded. The family was understanding and thanked us for our efforts.

Recommendations:

Attach to main report.

Approved by : SGT.TOTTEN Date : 06/24/2017 11:57 PM

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Case Number

MG1700802

Date

06/27/17

Deputy

C.RAMIREZ

Supplement 04

On 06-27-2017 at approximately 0830 hours. Deputy A. Carroll and I conducted a helicopter overflight of the Merced River from Bagby to Cable Rock, then back downstream from Cable Rock to Bagby. The helicopter was approximately 30 feet above the water and we were unable to see anything of significance. At approximately 1300 hours, we returned and repeated the same search pattern. On the second flight, we also did not see anything of significance.

Approved by : SGT.RAMIREZ Date : 06/27/2017 03:46 PM

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Phone (209) 966-3615
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Case Number
MG1700802

Date
07/01/17

Deputy
J.TOTTEN

Supplement 05

On July 1, 2017 at approximately 1207 hours, dispatch advised Detective Charman that they received a call on 911 that someone had found a body in the Merced River but the reporting party lost cell service and they were unable to get any more information. Detective Charman drove to the Briceburg area to check but was advised that the reporting party called back and said that it was near Bagby Recreation Area. Deputy Atkinson checked the area and located the body at the following coordinates: N 37* 35.731' x W -120* 04.716'. Detective Charman responded along with SAR Units and was given a ride to the location. They found what appeared to be a male subject face down on the surface of the water that had obviously been submerged for an extended period of time as the body was very bloated and decomposing. The body was naked except for 1 Vans shoe. The shoe was consistent with the description of Ronnie Cole who had gone missing in the river 8 days prior. They were able to collect the body in a coroner bag designed for water recoveries before transporting it back to the Bagby Recreation area. The family of Ronnie Cole was waiting at the ramp. Detective Charman informed them that they had located a subject that could not be confirmed as Ronnie but they believed it to be him. They advised Detective Charman that Ronnie had gotten a new tattoo on his forearm that read "Cole" in cursive writing. The body was transported to the Mariposa County Sheriff's Office to wait for transport. Detective Charman was able to then do a more thorough check of the body and found a tattoo matching the one described by the family. The deceased was turned over to A&R Mortuary Services to be transported to the Stanislaus County Coroner's Office. See Detective Charman's Coroner's Report MG1700827.

Approved by : SGT.TOTTEN Date : 07/01/2017 10:37 PM

MARIPOSA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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Phone (209) 966-3615
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Case Number
MG1700802

Date
07/03/17

Deputy
S.HENDRICKS

Supplement 06

On July 1, 2017 I was contacted by Sergeant Land who stated Ronnie's body had been pulled from the water and that his family said they believed he was murdered. I was advised that due to Frank's frame of mind at this time that it would be better that I contact him tomorrow. I was also advised that Frank had been informed that there were witnesses from out of town that saw Ronnie jump in the water but he was in denial. From having previously reading this report I knew that SAR had made contact with someone but did not get a name or contact information. I checked Facebook and read any comments or posts related to this incident. I found that someone named Juliana Thomason had made a comment on the Sheriff's Office press release that stated "my friend literally saw the young man jump off the rock". I sent her a Facebook message but she did not respond. I was later able to obtain her contact information from the Modesto Police Department. I contacted Juliana and advised her the reason for my call. She said she was not at the river, but her friend Mandy (unknown last) was the one who had seen Ronnie jump in to the river. I asked if she knew if Mandy knew Ronnie and she said Mandy told her she did not know him. Juliana told me that she did not have Mandy's contact information but would be able to get it to me on Monday when she goes to work.

On July 2, 2017 I contacted Frank at his residence. I told Frank that it was my understanding he had been advised that I would be contacting him today. He said he was not told. I told him I was there to speak to him in regards to some comments he had made about not believing that Ronnie had drown. He wanted to know what I was told he was saying. I told him that I just explained that to him and asked if he had told anyone that he believed Ronnie's death was a homicide. Frank became defensive and asked what the Sheriff's Office thinks happened and who I believed. I again explained to him that I wanted to hear what he had to say.

Frank told me that Ronnie called him on the Friday he went missing and said he was coming over to his house. Frank said he never showed up and the next thing he knew he was missing in the river. Frank stated Luke Willie killed Ronnie and Brandi Willie was also involved. Frank said Ronnie had been "slinging dope" for Brandi for the past three months and did not want to do it anymore so Brandi was mad. Frank said Ronnie was also dating Brandi for a couple of weeks at some point and didn't want to be with her anymore. Frank said Brandi was not willing to let Ronnie go and that if she could not have him, no one could. Frank said Ronnie had been hiding from Brandi for three days and he told Frank he didn't want to see her anymore. Frank started talking about how Brandi would always come over and was not welcome there and would laugh at him when he would tell her to leave. He then became very agitated and said that Brandi did a "home invasion" on his house. I asked if he ever reported it and he said he did not. He began rambling about Luke and Brandi and they fight all of the time and that Luke threatens her and the beats her up. Frank said Luke was mad at Brandi for hanging out with Ronnie and did not like it. I asked Frank if he ever called to report Brandi being at his house of the home

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invasion incident and he said he did not. I told him that without documentation I have not history that shows this had been occurring.

Frank then started talking about how he knows exactly what happened. He said Brandi had someone chase Ronnie in a vehicle and run him off the road, causing him to wreck his car. Frank said it was previously arranged that once Ronnie's car was wrecked that someone would pick Ronnie up and take him to the river where Luke was waiting to kill him. I asked him how he knew this and he said Ronnie told him. I advised Frank that a CHP officer and stopped and spoke to Ronnie while he was waiting with his vehicle and he did not tell them anything about being ran off of the road or chased by anyone. I asked Frank why Ronnie would not have reported that and he laughed and said he was scared. I asked Frank what Ronnie called and told him about being chased and ran off the road. Frank said Ronnie never called him and that he just knows that is what happened. After then trying to tell me he knows someone that saw it happen, he admitted that he did not know of anyone who did.

I then spoke with Donna Cole, Frank's mother, who he had called to come talk to me. Donna told me that she was at the river when this happened. Frank told me he was there too. I told them I believed they were not there when it happened but arrived later after they were contacted and advised of the situation, Frank continually argued that he was there. Donna said she was the first family member to arrive. I asked both of them if they were actually there at the time Ronnie went in to the water and they agreed that they were not. Donna said when she arrived, she was approached by Debra. Donna said she saw some other people and she asked Debra who they were. Donna said Debra told her that it was Brandi and thought she said Luke but she could not remember. While she was speaking with me, it appeared that Frank was attempting to influence her to say Luke was there. Donna then told me that she thought Luke was there but did not know. I asked her if she knows Luke and she said she does not. She then said she thinks he was there but did not know if he was or not. She then said maybe he was there at some time but did not recall when. She said she recalled there being a man there and thought it might have been Luke. She said she thought she recalled Brandi state to her that her "ex" was coming and thought that she was talking about Luke but that might have been two days later. I asked Donna if she knows what Luke looks like and she said she does not. Donna then said she would not be able to pick him out if he was standing in front of her because she does not know him. Donna said she did not get a good look at the man she thought she had seen in the area. Donna said all of the things that she is hearing about what happened is third party information and she had heard nothing first hand.

Frank then said if anyone comes on his property uninvited that he will kill them. I advised Frank that was not a good idea and that if anyone showed to his residence that was not welcome, that he needed to contact the Sheriff's Office and let us handle it for him. Frank agreed that he did not need any trouble and he is just in fear for his safety. Frank would not elaborate and said he was just going to stay home. Frank asked me if I had ever seen Luke punch the machine at the Pizza Factory. I told him I had not. He said Luke punches very hard and he believes he punched Ronnie in the face with a very powerful punch, causing Ronnie to fall in to the water. Frank then said he might have even strangled him. Frank said he knows Luke was there but was nowhere to be found. He said he knows that Luke always camps at the River and was

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more than likely in the area. Frank told me that people need to go to jail for killing Ronnie. I advised Frank that I would request to be present at Ronnie's autopsy to see if he had any of the injuries that he thinks Luke inflicted on him. Frank told me that he no longer wanted assistance from the Sheriff's Office and was going to contact the FBI. He said he was going to request that the FBI attend the autopsy instead of me. I advised him that was not going to happen but he could call whoever he thought he needed to call. Frank told me he knows that they would investigate Ronnie's death because they investigated the Cary Stayner case. I explained to Frank that this was not the same and that the Stayner case was an actual murder case, not a possible drowning. I explained to Frank that it would be best that I re-contact him after the autopsy when I could provide him with what the pathologist finds to be the cause of death. Frank agreed that would be best and told me that I will find out that Ronnie had been punched in the face or strangled. I told Frank that I would be in contact with him tomorrow, per his request, regarding what day the autopsy might be. I provided him with my business card and thanked him for his time.

On July 3, 2017 I contacted Frank to advise him the autopsy would be sometime this week but I could not get confirmation of the actual day. I again told him I will be in contact with him after the autopsy had been completed. Frank told me he had information for me. He said that he has had several people coming to his house and telling him what actually happened. Frank said that I need to start arresting people and that I would then get the real story of what happened to Ronnie. Frank told me he has been told that Ronnie should be tied up or has bailing wire or rope around his neck because that was how he was killed. I asked who told him this and he said that it was someone who knows someone who was involved in the murder. I asked Frank why people are withholding information and not contacting law enforcement. I asked why this person would come to him and not the Sheriff's Office. Frank continued telling me that a guy named "Daryl" who is related to Toni Southwood is involved as well as Luke and Brandi. Frank said I needed to contact Toni Southwood because she is the one that provided him with this information. Frank said she had proof and an email conversation as well as a recorded voice conversation that speaks about Ronnie being murdered. He said Ronnie had also recently had a knife pulled on him by a guy named "Andrew" who dated Taylor Redding. Frank said Ronnie was dating Taylor also and Andrew didn't like it. Frank then said that one of the days he went to the river he saw four people sitting at "that" campsite while he was searching for Ronnie and they turned their heads when he walked by. Frank asked me if it was possible that he was going crazy and I told him that's always a possibility. I told him I understand he is upset right now and looking for answers. I told Frank that there were other people at the river that day that are not affiliated with Ronnie and do not live here, that witnessed Ronnie jump off of the rock and in to the river. Frank said that was not true and there was no one else there who would have seen anything. I told him I spoke with someone from out of the area and he said he was making that up. Frank told me that there is so much more to this than what I think happened and I need to arrest people to make other people safe. I advised Frank I could not arrest, nor can I falsely accuse people of murder without proof. I told Frank I would need time to conduct my investigation but was not going to continue any further until the autopsy is completed.

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I re-contacted Juliana and asked if she was able to get Mandy's last name. She said she does not go to school until 1300 hours and would contact me later. I asked if there was anyone else that would know Mandy's last name or contact information and she said she did not know who would. As of 1500 hours I have not yet heard back from Juliana.

Recommendations:

Attach to main.

Approved by : SGT.SMITH Date : 07/04/2017 12:12 AM

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Case Number
MG1700802

Date
07/06/17

Deputy
S.HENDRICKS

Supplement 07

On July 5, 2017 at about 1330 hours, I attended Ronnie's autopsy at the Stanislaus County Coroner's Office in Modesto. The autopsy was performed by Dr. Sung Baik. Dr. Baik concluded the cause of death was due to drowning. There were no injuries or trauma found on the body. A silver colored necklace was collected from Ronnie's neck and later entered in to evidence for safe keeping.

Recommendations:

Case to be closed.

Approved by : J.BOBMAN Date : 07/06/2017 11:37 AM

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CA0220000

Phone (209) 966-3615
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MG1700802

Date

10/30/17

Deputy

J.LOBAUGH

Supplement 08

On 10/30/2017, Debi-Jean Congdon arrived at the Mariposa County Sheriff's Dispatch Lobby to provide information regarding Ronnie Cole's death. I met with Debi-Jean at the lobby at approximately 1114 hours; my contact with Debi-Jean was recorded and has been attached to this report. The following is a synopsis of our conversation; for full details, please refer to the full recording.

Debi-Jean reported to me that there are some things which were left out of the reports. Debi-Jean stated that she was with Ronnie the day he jumped into the river. Debi stated Ronnie, Brandi Willey and she were driving through town when Ronnie saw Daryl Hutchins. Debi-Jean stated Ronnie was selling methamphetamines and Daryl owed him money.

Ronnie saw Daryl at Grizzly Gas so he turned around and parked at YARTS to confront Daryl. Daryl left the scene and started driving eastbound on Highway 140. Ronnie believed Daryl was heading to the river (Briceburg) so they drove there so Ronnie could confront Daryl. Deb-Jean stated Ronnie's words were "I'm gonna go scrap him real quick". Which she explained Ronnie meant he was going to beat Daryl up and get his money.

Debi-Jean stated they could not find Daryl so they started to leave the river. Brandi then asked if they could stop at cable rock. Deb-Jean stated Ronnie was reluctant to stop there due to needing to meet a tow truck driver to repair his vehicle which had an issue with the tire. Debi-Jean stated Brandi kept asking until Ronnie did stop.

Debi-Jean stated Brandi went down into the water and was conversing with 2 female subjects while Debbi-Jean sat at cable rock. Debi-Jean stated Ronnie was on a smaller rock near cable rock and started yelling to get Debi-Jean and Brandi's attention. Debi-Jean stated Ronnie removed his shirt and threw it toward Brandi. Debi-Jean stated she and Brandi yelled at Ronnie not to jump into the river but he did anyway. Debi-Jean stated after Ronnie jumped in, he surfaced and was almost celebrating and acting excited as if he was showing off.

Debi-Jean then saw Ronnie swim around the rock as if he were going to return to shore but she then lost sight of him. Debi-Jean waited a few moments and when Ronnie did not return out of the water, she and Brandi got into the vehicle and started to search the area for Ronnie. Debi-Jean stated they eventually ran into a ranger and relayed what happened and the ranger assisted with the search.

Debi-Jean stated Ronnie had a black lockbox like a safe in the vehicle which Brandi removed and hid in the bushes next to cable rock. Debi-Jean stated the lockbox was in a Pizza Factory bag. Debi-Jean stated she does not know what the box contained but Frank Cole was later asking where "Ronnie's box" was.

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Debi-Jean stated Ronnie and Brandi were both utilizing methamphetamines when the incident occurred. Debi-Jean stated she does not know if Ronnie may have used more than he was used to as she would never be around him while he was ingesting the methamphetamine.

Debi-Jean stated Ronnie was unusually happy that day and seemed over-confident. Debi-Jean stated she did not see anyone near Ronnie nor did anyone push Ronnie into the river.

A supplement was also added in coroner case number MG1700827.

Recommendation:

Attach to main

Approved by : SGT.WILLIAMS Date : 10/30/2017 08:30 PM

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Case Number

MG1700802

Date

11/21/17

Deputy

J.LOBAUGH

Supplement 09

On 11/19/17, Frank Cole had an appointment to meet me at the Sheriff's Office to go over items he believes to be of evidentiary value to this case. Frank failed to appear for the scheduled appointment. It should be noted that this is the second scheduled appointment that has been made with Frank to meet with me; he has failed to appear for both appointments.

Recommendation:

Attach to main

Approved by : SGT.SMITH Date : 11/21/2017 12:05 PM

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Case Number

MG1700802

Date

11/21/17

Deputy

S.HENDRICKS

Supplement 10

On November 20, 2017 I listened to my department voicemail and there was a message from Frank Cole from November 19, 2017 stating he was told by Sergeant Bobman to meet with me on November 19, 2017 and wanted to know what time I would be in. On November 21, 2017 I listened to another message Frank had left on November 20, 2017 saying there may have been some miscommunication in regards to our meeting time.

On November 21, 2017 I returned Frank's call and advised him it was my understanding he was supposed to meet with Deputy Lobaugh on November 19, 2017 Frank told me that was incorrect and that he had never heard that name before. Frank told me he called three or four times on Sunday, November 19, 2017 asking to speak with "anyone" and no one ever returned his calls. I explained to Frank that I do not work on Sundays so it would not have been me he was supposed to meet with. Frank told me not to worry about it and that he had contacted the FBI in Fresno yesterday and they will be handling the case and ended the conversation.

Recommendations:

Attach to main.

Approved by : SGT.SMITH Date : 11/21/2017 12:06 PM

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Case Number

MG1700802

Date

11/21/17

Deputy

S.HENDRICKS

Supplement 11

On November 8, 2017 I re-contacted and spoke with Juliana via Facebook in hopes to obtain "Mandy's" contact information. Juliana said she did not have that information and would attempt to obtain it from the school she attends. Juliana called back and advised that the school would not release the information to her. Juliana said she provided the school with my contact information and they would get it to Mandy.

As of today, November 21, 2017, I have not received a call from Mandy. I contacted Brightwood College in Modesto and was told I had to contact the Director of Admissions to explain why I wanted to get Mandy's information. I called and left a message later received a call back and was provided with Mandy's phone number and last name, which I had not known prior to today. The message also stated that Mandy is no longer a student there and had graduated.

I called and left a voice message for Mandy at 1430 hours and asked that she return my call. I again called at 1520 hours and left a second message requesting she contact me on my cell phone.

Recommendations:

Attach to main.

Approved by : SGT.TOTTEN Date : 11/22/2017 06:48 AM

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Case Number
MG1700802

Date
11/27/17

Deputy
S.HENDRICKS

Supplement 12

On November 22, 2017 at about 0720 hours I received a phone call from Mandy Kitzberger. I asked Mandy if she was aware why I needed to speak with her and she said it was in regards to being at Briceburg. I asked her to tell me what she remembered about that day. Mandy said she and her friend Janae were at Cable Beach by the water. She said a Yukon type vehicle drove up and she recognized one of the people. She said she recognized the driver as someone she knew. She said there was also a younger girl and "that kid". She said she did not know them but did recognize the driver to be "Brandi". She said she met Brandi about six years ago through other friends. She said they did not hang out or anything and weren't actually friends. She said Brandi came down to where she was and they were talking. Mandy said her friend Janae was watching the boy while Mandy and Brandi were talking. She said she had not seen Brandi in six years and were "catching up". Mandy said he, referring to Ronnie, wanted Brandi to go over there to where he was. She said Brandi said something like "No, I don't want to have to jump in and get you". She said the other girl was already over by him. I asked who the other girl was and she said she was confused because she thought Brandi said Ronnie was her boyfriend, but she had later looked on Ronnie's Facebook page and saw a blond girl in pictures with him so she did not know if that was his girlfriend. Mandy said the girl at the river didn't have make up on but the girl with Ronnie on his Facebook page had a lot of make up on. Mandy said Ronnie threw his shirt to either Brandi or the other girl and then jumped in the water. Mandy said they could see him and then they could no longer see him because the big rocks were in the way. She said she didn't think much of it and was still talking to Brandi. Mandy estimated that maybe 30 seconds had passed when the other girl said "should we go check on him?" Mandy said she and Brandi and the others walked around the rocks and saw him but then he was gone. Mandy said Brandi and the other girl got in the truck and headed down the road to look for Ronnie. Mandy said she and Janae stayed behind. Mandy said a short time later, Brandi and the other girl came back and said they didn't see him. Mandy said that was when Brandi called the Sheriff's Office. (Looking at other supplements, the third person is believed to be Debi Jean Congdon)

I asked Mandy where Ronnie jumped from and she said he did not jump from the big rock but he jumped from some rocks that were further to the left. I asked where she was in relation to where Ronnie jumped from. Mandy said she and Brandi were on the sandy part of the beach to the left of the big rock. Mandy described having walked down the steps from the road and was in the middle of the sandy area. She said Ronnie was on top of the rocks to the left of them. Mandy said Ronnie jumped on top of the "white part" and described it as right on top of the rapids. I asked her where Janae was. Mandy said Janae was on the beach area also. She said Janae was actually watching him more than she was because she was busy talking to Brandi. Mandy said after it happened, Brandi was crying and saying that Ronnie's truck had broken down and they were not even planning on getting in the water. I asked if there were any other guys with Brandi and Ronnie and she said no. She said it was only the three from the

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vehicle, her and Janae. Mandy said there were some "hippie people" in the corner doing their own thing but she did not know if they saw him jump in or not. She said they may have been looking at him wondering what he was doing. I asked Mandy if anyone else was swimming in that area and she said no because the "water was too crazy". Mandy said she and Janae got in but they could only go in so far before you could feel not to go in any further. Mandy said the "hippie people" got in the water too but only as much as she and her friend did because the water was going so fast. I asked Mandy if Search and Rescue spoke to Janae and she said she did not think so.

Mandy was already at the river when Brandi drove up. I asked if she observed any one from Brandy's vehicle arguing and she said no. Mandy said she was confused because she thought she said Ronnie was her boyfriend. She said Brandi told her that she had known Ronnie forever. Mandy then said she thought the other girl was Ronnie's girlfriend. She said it was confusing. Mandy said the girl that was with Brandi and Ronnie looked young and had a tattoo. She guessed she may have been between the age of 16-20 years old and had a tattoo of Pooh Bear on her neck or a "trampstamp". I asked if there was anything else she remembered about the incident and she said no. She again said Ronnie did not jump from the big rocks on the right and that he jumped from some smaller ones to the left of the beach area. Mandy said the rocks were not very tall. I again asked Mandy if there was anyone else in the area and she no. I again asked when the last time she saw Brandi was prior to that day at the river and she said about 6 years. Mandy said she knew her from some parties she had been to. She said she probably had only seen Brandi on two different occasions. Mandy said she never hung out with Brandi but recognized her because she is good with faces. I asked Mandy if Brandi was married or had a boyfriend when she met her 6 years ago. She said she did not know. She said she was with a guy but she did not know his name or if he and Brandi were married.

Mandy said the incident happened quickly. She said she did not know Ronnie so she didn't think much about it. She said people don't usually jump in to the rapids like that. I asked what he was wearing when he got in. She said he took his shirt off but did not take his shoes off. Mandy said that made her think he had planned on getting back out or maybe he left them on because of the rocks. She could not remember if he was wearing shorts or pants and guessed he may have been wearing shorts because it was summer time. I asked if she saw anyone doing anything to him prior to him jumping in the water and she said no. I asked if he was pushed or thrown in and she said "no, he jumped in the water." She said she did not see anyone arguing while they were there. I thanked Mandy for her time and ended the phone call. It should be noted that the phone call was digitally recorded without Mandy's knowledge. I did have to change the batteries during the conversation and there were about 15-20 seconds that did not get recorded. The recorder was restarted once the new batteries were in. Both recordings are attached to this case.

At about 1730 hours, I attempted contact with Janae via the phone number Mandy provided. I left a message requesting she return my call. At about 1807 hours I received a call from Janae Elmasia. Janae said Mandy called her earlier in the day and advised her I would be calling to talk to her about the incident at Briceburg. I asked her to explain to me what she saw. Janae said she and Mandy were in a little cove area and that water was running very fast. She said a

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large SUV stopped and two ladies and a man got out. Janae said she did not know his name, but "the man who passed away" (Ronnie), went to the side away from them. She said Mandy started talking to one of the girls because she knew her and they were having a conversation. She said she did not recall what the other girl was doing and said she thought she may have been getting wet in the water. Janae said Ronnie was looking in to the water and went over and handed his shirt to the girl (Brandi) that Mandy was talking to. Janae said she was watching Ronnie the entire time wondering why he was going to jump in the water. She said she is not from the area and they were locals. Janae said Ronnie dove in. She said he came up one time and did not look or yell for help or anything. She said Ronnie did a couple of strokes like he was swimming and went back under water and that was that last time she saw him. Janae said it was a cove area and she couldn't see down the river. She said Mandy and Brandi were still talking and after a while, the other girl said they should go check for Ronnie because they had not seen him. Janae said she was just thinking he was going to swim further down and come back but he never did. Janae said the other girl and Brandi went to the top of the rocks where it was higher up and was looking for him. Janae said the two girls left in the vehicle to go look for him and then went to the Rangers station to report him missing. I asked Janae to describe where Ronnie jumped in the water from. Janae said it was a little cove area and he was standing to the left of the cove and said there were not tall rocks. Janae said the rocks were probably about three feet out of the water. Janae said Ronnie dove in with his hands over his head. I asked if she recalled what he was wearing and she said he was wearing jeans. Janae could not recall if Ronnie took off his shoes or not but she thought it was weird that he would swim with pants on. Janae said she knows for sure that Ronnie took his shirt off because he gave it to the other girl and she made a comment like "don't make me have to get in there and save you". Janae said she was not sure if the girl he handed his shirt to was his mom or his girlfriend due to their age difference. I asked her if Ronnie talked to anyone and she said he did not. I asked if he was upset and she said she didn't think so. Janae said she figured he was just being quiet because the girls were just doing girl talk.

I asked Janae if there was anyone else in the area. She said when her and Mandy got there, there were other people there but when Brandi showed up those people were no longer there. I asked if she saw any other men with Brandi or the other girl at any time and she said no. I asked Janae to describe the water at the time. She said there were rapids and a sign posted about not getting in the water without a life vest. She said the water was "really bad" and you could tell there was a strong current. Janae said that was why she was so surprised that Ronnie was going to get in. I asked if anyone else was swimming and she said no. I asked if there was anyone standing with Ronnie or encouraging him to jump in and she said no. Janae said he was by himself when he decided to get in the water. Janae said she wished she would have said something to him about not getting in the water but she figured he was a young guy and wasn't going to listen to her. Janae said she heard somehow that Ronnie lived there and she said it made it seem like Ronnie was familiar with the area. I asked if she knew the person that Mandy was talking to and she said she did not know any of them.

I asked Janae if there was anything else she could remember and she said no. She said she was curious why I was contacting her and that if it was because someone may have thought it was something other than him jumping in the water then that is not correct because he jumped

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in the water on his own. I asked if she had heard anything about Ronnie's death since that day and she said no. She said she Googled it later and read that he had been found later in Lake Mc Swain. I asked if she had heard anything about any type of foul play and she said she had not. I told her that it was being suggested by someone that Ronnie did not drown. She said Ronnie jumped in and she never saw him again once he passed the large rock. She again said when he jumped in, he came back up before he passed the large rocks, took a couple strokes and went back under. She said she saw his face and he did not look alarmed like he was scared and that he did not yell out to them. Janae said it was her understanding he and the girls did not plan on going swimming and were just going to get wet before they had to go to where ever they were going next. Janae said the most that she got in the water was only as deep as just below her knees and then was just getting her feet wet. She said she did not get in the water where Ronnie did because he was actually where the current was. She said the water in the cove was shallow and calmer. Janae said again that where Ronnie went in was the top of the U on the left hand side of the cove where the water was going fast. I asked how far she thought Ronnie was from where everyone else was and she estimated it to be about 20 feet. Janae said he was pretty sure of himself, and that was why she remembered that Ronnie had dived in. She said she figured Ronnie knew what he was doing. I thanked Janae for her time and ended the conversation. The conversation was digitally recorded without Janae's knowledge and attached to this case.

Approved by : J.BOBMAN Date : 11/28/2017 10:44 AM

Case Number
MG1700802

Date
12/01/17

Deputy
M.CHARMAN

Supplement 13

On November 29, 2017 at approximately 0900 hours, I met with members of the Cole family at Frank's residence to discuss concerns they had. They informed me about numerous emails that they have received and concerns that have been relayed to them from other people. Several of the emails/concerns were in regards to the fact that they believed Ronnie was involved in selling methamphetamine alongside Luke and Brandi Willey. They said that Luke had been upset with Ronnie leading up to Ronnie's death. They have also informed me that they have received numerous stories from people about Luke's temper and tendency for violence. They also said that Luke has made threats to people that they need to "keep their mouth shut about Ronnie". The Cole family believe that Luke must have killed Ronnie and dropped him in the river.

I spent a few hours meeting and discussing with them about these issues. I pointed out that the threats supposedly made by Luke seem to be more along the lines of threatening people who are insinuating he had anything to do with Ronnie's death then actually prevent witnesses from reporting. I agreed with them that it seems that there is overwhelming support to the belief that Luke is an angry and violent person but there was not any evidence presented at this time to support that he had any involvement with the death of Ronnie.

The Cole's also had a hard time believing the people who were interviewed by our agency either due to them being scared of Luke and/or involved with a cover-up. I explained to them that the information we are obtaining through interviews are consistent and appear to be accurate. I agreed with them that sometimes not all witnesses have perfect records but it does not mean that they are lying in this incident.

The Cole's also believed that the Coroner's Report can't be informative due to the fact that Ronnie's body had begun to deteriorate. They believe that Ronnie could have been beaten to death or similar and the autopsy would not reveal it. I explained that skin-deep external injuries could be hard to identify due to the state of Ronnie's body but that the autopsy focuses on internal injuries that would show despite Ronnie being in the water for an extended period of time. I pointed out (I had brought the Autopsy Report) the key points in the report in which the Pathologist had found that there were not any brain injuries or other internal injuries that would indicate being beaten, choked, stabbed, shot, or other means of murder. I pointed out that the Pathologist is the most independent person in this entire matter and they believe that the Ronnie died due to drowning.

Frank Cole asked me what my opinion was. I told him that there was a preponderance of evidence that shows that Ronnie died in a tragic accident after jumping into a very dangerous river and getting caught in the current. I explained to Frank and his family that if something comes up that directly supports that Ronnie was murdered to notify me directly. I explained that

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this must be directly related to a murder and not to the opinion that Luke has an angry and/or violent past. I told them that unless something else comes up that would cause it to change; this case would be closed at this time with the cause of death being ruled as an accidental drowning. The Cole family seemed to understand this and agreed that it was perhaps time for them to accept this information and begin to move on.

I told them that I would be heading to interview Luke and Brandy and would notify them if I learned anything new.

At approximately 1300 hours, I went to the Mariposa County Jail where Luke was in custody on another unrelated matter. I advised Luke of the Miranda Advisement to interview him about his cases and he chose to not provide a statement without his attorney regarding those matters. I asked him if he would be willing to talk with me about Ronnie. He replied, "I will talk to you all day about Ronnie".

Luke explained that under no circumstances did he have anything to do with Ronnie's death. Luke said that he liked Ronnie and that they got along except for one incident at the Bootjack Store. Luke said that he is tired of everyone saying these things about him and that he believes Ronnie would be pissed at his family for saying these things. Luke said that he was not at the river when Ronnie went missing but once he heard about it he got a ride there to help look. Luke was visibly upset at times and appeared to be telling the truth about this.

I then followed that with an interview with Brandy who was also in custody on an unrelated matter. Brandy waived her Miranda Rights and agreed to speak with me. Brandy told me that in no way did anybody have anything to do with Ronnie's death. Brandy had explained that they had gone to the river and while there Ronnie decided to jump in the river. Brandy said that Ronnie was on the rock when he tossed her his shirt. He then got off the rock and jumped in further up river. Brandy said that Ronnie had made a comment stating, "I could ride this mother fucker to whiskey flats". Ronnie was referring to a campground down river. Brandy said that Ronnie had jumped in and was smirking as he swam back but once he went downriver of the big rock she lost sight of him and never saw him again. Brandy said that they drove down river looking when they ran into Fish and Game and the ranger agreed to help look. They continued looking before it was agreed that Fish and Game would contact the Rangers to call 911. Brandy said that she was told to wait and while she did she was able to start making phone calls. Brandy said that Luke was not there when Ronnie went missing. Brandy was also visibly upset and appeared to be telling the truth.

Recommendations:

Attach to main report. Case be closed

Approved by : D.RUMFELT Date : 12/01/2017 09:49 PM

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Case Number

MG1700802

Date

02/21/18

Deputy

J.SPONHALTZ

Supplement 14

On 02/21/2018 I was dispatched to contact David Thorpe regarding unsolicited contact from Frank Cole. David stated that he received notification from Facebook that he had been added on messenger by Frank Cole. David then received a message asking if he was the tourist that reported having seen Ronnie jump in the river. David stated that a short time later he received several messages from Frank Cole containing pictures of text messages from unknown phones and an unknown time frame. David stated that he was able to capture the images and would attempt to e-mail them to me and if that was unsuccessful he would print them and bring them to the office to be added to the report. David stated that he blocked Frank from Facebook and removed any telephone numbers associated with his account in an attempt to prevent any further contact. David stated that if he was contacted again by electronic communications or in person he would advise the Sheriff's Office.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Attach to main case / Remain active pending attachment of documents.

Follow Up: Review and attach documents once received.

Approved by : SGT.CHARMAN Date : 02/21/2018 05:56 PM

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Case Number

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Date

02/21/18

Deputy

J.SPONHALTZ

Supplement 14

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RECOMMENDATIONS: Attach to main case / Remain active pending attachment of documents.

Follow Up: Review and attach documents once received.

Approved by : SGT.CHARMAN Date : 02/21/2018 05:56 PM

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Phone (209) 966-3615
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Case Number

MG1700802

Date

02/21/18

Deputy

J.SPONHALTZ

Supplement 15

On 02/21/2018 David Thorpe hand delivered the documents that he was able to print from Facebook. The documents were scanned and attached to this report and will be reviewed for anything of evidentiary value.

The documents did not scan well and are illegible. A review of the hard copies will be done and if anything of evidentiary value is gleaned a different method of attaching them will be used.

RECOMMENDATIONS: attach to main case.

Approved by : SGT.CHARMAN Date : 02/21/2018 08:22 PM

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Case Number
MG1700802

Date
07/13/19

Deputy
M.CHARMAN

Supplement 16

On July 6, 2019 at approximately 1600 hours, I met with Brandon Hall and Tyler Cole in front of the Mariposa County Sheriff's Office. Two female subjects were also with them but I did not get their information. The following is a summary of our conversation but multiple subjects present also recorded our interaction on their cell phones.

Brandon told me that he was at some relatives property (Brooks Ranch off of Brooks Road) hanging out with a few subjects including Levi Brown, Luke and Brandi Willey, and some unknown female subjects. Brandon told me that Luke offered to fix his tattoo and he agreed. Brandon said that during the conversation, Luke introduced himself and then Brandon told him that he had heard of him and heard that he "did some stuff". Brandon said that Luke then bragged that he, Brandi, and Louis Botello beat up Ronnie Cole and threw him off a cliff into the river. I confirmed that Luke made this "admission to a murder" after Brandon had already told him that he didn't like him and Brandon confirmed.

Brandon was not certain of the exact date but stated that it was the end of August or beginning of September as it was after his child was born. I then went inside and checked Tracnet and found that Luke Willey was in custody from early August until he was sent to prison and remains there as of this date. Luke Willey could not have been present as he has been in custody since before the birth of Brandon's child. I walked back outside and confirmed again that it was definitely after the birth of his child and he said that it was. All other subjects then said that it must have been when Luke had bailed out of jail. I went back in and confirmed that Luke had bailed out of jail after an arrest in 2017 but not during this time.

I presented this information to everyone present. They then began to argue that Brandon must have his dates slightly mixed up. Brandon agreed that he could have the dates mixed up because he was busy being worried about "his girl" as she had a hard labor and he was having to help her out. I again pointed out that this "party" would have had to have been after his child was born near the end of August in order for him to have had to help her heal after a hard labor and therefore would have been impossible for Luke to have been present. It was around this time that all subject's phones had died and they were no longer recording.

All other subjects continued to argue that I was wrong and that nobody cared that Luke killed Ronnie. I spent awhile trying to convince them that if there was evidence that this was the case, we would absolutely file the report with the DA. I explained again (as I have with members of the Cole family on multiple occasions) that there was no evidence against Luke, let alone enough to file charges. I explained that the only true evidence we have is that of the Coroner Autopsy and that showed no evidence of injury to Ronnie and did not support their claims he was beaten up. I again explained that all that has been presented is evidence of Luke being a violent bully but that did not mean he committed murder.

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Brandon said that on the night that Luke allegedly admitted to murdering Ronnie, he became Facebook Friends with Luke. They attempted to get that info but their phones weren't working. Tyler and Brandon agreed to get the date that Brandon and Luke became Facebook Friends to me as well as speak to Levi Brown and have him come speak to me about a date that Luke may have been at his residence. Brandon said that Levi was not in the room when Luke made his admission but the unknown females were and Levi could at least identify who else was there.

As of July 13, 2019, I have not heard back from anybody regarding this matter.

Recommendations:

Case remain suspended pending evidence of a crime.

Approved by : SGT.CHARMAN Date : 07/13/2019 11:35 AM