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Tape recorded January 23, 1980

Location: Allegheny County Morgue

Speakers: Floyd C. Coles, Chief Autopsy Technician  
Glen M. Larkin, Forensic Pathologist  
Dwight Schmuck, Reporter

Materials speakers are referring to: photographs at scene of discovery of Jennifer Hill, photographs at autopsy of Jennifer Hill, pathologist report of autopsy of Jennifer Hill, embalmer's report on Jennifer Hill, funeral director's report on Jennifer Hill.

Attention: words in parentheses ( ) are unintelligible, typist entered an approximation of what is heard

Typist: Brenda J. Sumner

Dwight Schmuck: January 19, 1980

Floyd Coles: January 23

Dwight Schmuck: January 23, 1980, we're at the Allegheny County Morgue with Floyd

Floyd Coles: Coles

Dwight Schmuck: Coles, ah, what's your middle initial?

Floyd Coles: Floyd C. Coles

Dwight Schmuck: Chief Autopsy

Floyd Coles: Chief Autopsy Technician

Dwight Schmuck: And Glen M. Larkin

Glen Larkin: Forensic Pathologist

Floyd Coles: This is Floyd Cole, Floyd Coles speaking, um, speaking as an embalmer of the licensed Pennsylvania Funeral Directory, I would like to state , in looking at the picture of the girl laying beside the mortuary table that her belly wall is flat and this is very inconsistent with a person being dead over even a two day period because the gas formation would have happened there. You know, the (tikima core) was in the intestinal tract, the food was in the stomach, it would have caused gas formation and caused a marked distention of that belly wall. Plus a green, you know, a green, green color from the, from the putrifactive process, this is completely inconsistent with anything other than a fresh body.

Dwight Schmuck: Dr. Larkin, you were just speaking of a process, if the body had been refrigerated, what would have happened as it warmed to the air?

Glen Larkin: The refrigeration is usually done in a moist atmosphere. When a body is thawed, especially with, ah, clothing on, moisture condenses on the clothing and with this moisture also condenses a numerous number of various molds, most of which would be visible and will let off an odor. Secondly, a frozen body or a refrigerated body, rather, would decompose at an alarming rate as it starts to thaw. A frozen body will be decomposed by the time it's completely thawed. This casts certain doubts. Furthermore, although the report here does not state whether rigor was absent or present, it mentions on here early post-mortem decomposition of body. The early decomposition is what, ah, we would call here up to maybe 24 hours. At the, approximately 24 hour mark, give or take maybe six hours, certain changes occur in the body which enable you to make a diagnosis of a 24 hour interval with some degree of certainty. For example, there is usually a greenish discoloration on the abdominal wall caused by the breakdown of sulfur compounds in the body which stain with iron to form a pigment which looks green on the external surface. This is not present according to this protocol.

Glen Larkin: There is no gaseous distention which is almost inevitable after a, ah, minimum of maybe two days or a maximum of five. It is not present. Ah, there is, ah, numerous, there are numerous, ah, maggots, which is certainly compatible with a 48 hour or 24 hour, depending upon the particular maggot at that interval. Given a statement that the temperature of the environment of this area was in the sixties at the time this occurred and making the assumption that

Dwight Schmuck: Well, the average temperature was 50.3

Glen Larkin: Okay, it was 50.3, okay, even on that basis, considering that and considering the body temperature dropping to approximately ambient temperature in, ah, 18 to 24 hours, it is unlikely that this body could have been at that spot without being attacked by, ah, various animals in the field, without having more ravages of post-mortem feeding.

Floyd Coles: Blowflies

Glen Larkin: The, ah, last item here pertains to the stomach contents. Stomach contents, here, were easily identifiable and they're described with a great deal of detail. In a body, dead for nine days, most of this material would be one of moribund junky mess.

Dwight Schmuck: Mr. Cole, would you say from your experience of, how many years in the business do you have?

Floyd Coles: 32, 32 years

Dwight Schmuck: And as the Chief Autopsy Technician?

Floyd Coles: For 14 years

Dwight Schmuck: For 14 years, would you say that this body had been in that field for nine days?

Floyd Coles: Absolutely not.

Dwight Schmuck: Would you say that this body had been dead for nine days?

Floyd Cole: Only if it were under refrigeration.

Dwight Schmuck: If it was under refrigeration, would there not be marks of some sort?

Floyd Coles: Ah, you would probably find a mildew, a mildew around the nostrils and around, around the liquid areas. You know, the mouth and eyes and places.

Dwight Schmuck: Would the blood have settled even under refrigeration, I'm not talking about freezing, I'm talking about just refrigeration.

Floyd Coles: Under refrigeration it's possible that we could have got a good embalming like this, but, reading the embalmers report, Mr. McCune's report, I would say that what he says is consistent with a fresh body, because there's no, evidently he reported no trouble in the embalming process. Evidently he had very good circulation, indicating that the body had not gone through the clotting process. I say, in going over the, in going over the funeral director's report, the embalmer's report of Mr. McCune, the pathology report as put out by the pathologist, and my years of experience

Dwight Schmuck: And the photos

Floyd Coles: And the photographs, the condition of the body in the photographs, I would say it's completely inconsistent with a body being dead over 24 to 48 hours at the most. And in looking at the photographs under a , under a magnifying glass, I noticed almost a complete lack of, ah, fly larvae, which would certainly have been there within a matter of six or eight hours. Now, there's a few larvae around the eyes, just a very few, but in that period of time, and given, given the vegetation surrounding this body, I would say that within, within a 24 hour period the flies would have really have attacked this body along with the other ground larvae and insects.

Dwight Schmuck: Mr. Larkin, Mr. Coles, you knew, you did know that this was being taped, correct?

Glen Larkin: Yes, 'we did

Floyd Coles: Correct

Dwight Schmuck: And we have your permission to use statements on this tape?

Floyd Coles: Yes

Glen Larkin: Yes, you did

Dwight Schmuck: Thank you sirs.

Glen Larkin: Okay, with regard to the post-mortem report on my desk, following points of question are raised.

Dwight Schmuck: This post-mortem report is by Dr. Robert Catherman, forensic pathologist from Philadelphia

Glen Larkin: That is correct, ah. One, he mentions an early post-mortem decomposition. Two, Insect anthropophagia in his pathological diagnoses, then he states in his comment " There is nothing inconsistent with the decedent's death occurring on or about 10/19/73", however, in the remaining part of the autopsy, ah, page two, referring to external examination he states "Tips of the thumbs and fingers of the right hand show desiccation and mummification" certainly compatible with that time compatible with an earlier time. He mentions there are maggots along the

right side of the mouth which are 2.5 millimeters which, if I'm not mistaken and this you check on, responds to a particular type of maggot but takes 48 hours to hatch. Ah, he talks about a stippled pink petechiae along the thyroid providence certainly compatible with strangulation and other (pairs) which he does not go into any further. The emphysema is also certainly compatible with a strangulation death. On page five in referring to the pancreas, he states that the parenchyma shows hemorrhagic discoloration, softening and autolysis, but no other lesions. The pancreas is one of the first organs to autolyse after death. In describing the digestive system

Dwight Schmuck: What is autolysis?

Glen Larkin: It's the decomposition

Floyd Coles: Self-digestion is what it literally means.

Glen Larkin: Pancreas has all the enzymes in it, it decomposes the food.

Floyd Coles: It starts to liquify.

Glen Larkin: He describes in great detail certain food particles in the stomach that appears unremarkable, again a stomach containing acid with loss of protection and with loss of blood will not be maintained, it will tend to leak, it will tend to perforate. The food in here is free of all bacteriological menaces as indicated here and the rugal pattern, etcetera, is most unusual for a stomach, lasting that time after death. Now, go further still on page six, he states "sections of cerebrum, cerebellum, brain stem," etcetera, and "adrenal are taken for microscopic examination", then he goes further and states "except for autolysis in the gut, all the tissue are well-preserved." It is most improbable for a brain in the temperatures indicated by you, 50 degrees average, will remain in good condition so that slides can be taken for nine days. Most unlikely.

Floyd Coles: It'd be almost liquid, it would just run out when you open the head, it would run out.

Glen Larkin: Same would hold for the adrenals, so based upon the fact that these tissues appear well-preserved based upon this report, the time of death being ten days before discovery of the body does not reconcile what is found, with what is found.

Floyd Coles: Addendum to Dr. Larkins previous statement, 23 January, 1980, it is now 12:57 p.m., review of the pictures associated with this case reveal that although the victim was photographed with her bra off at the scene, the bra is back on the body in it's appropriate place when the pathologist is examining. This implies strongly that there was tampering of the body between the time of discovery and the time the body was examined by the pathologist. Because of this, any statement relative to the condition of the clothing is suspect.