



INDIANAPOLIS METROPOLITAN POLICE DEPARTMENT



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 3, 2024

Contact: IMPD Public Affairs Office

IMPD.PublicAffairs@Indy.gov

IMPD Unsolved Homicide Unit Arrests Suspect 31 Years After Murder of Carmen Van Huss

Decades old investigation demonstrates commitment of investigators and power of genetic genealogy

On Friday August 20, 2024, the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department and Boone County Sheriff's Office (Missouri) arrested 52-year-old Dana Shepherd in Columbia Missouri for the 1993 murder of Carmen Van Huss.

"This arrest, more than 30 years after the senseless murder of Carmen Van Huss, demonstrates the dedication and perseverance of IMPD detectives, the Marion County Forensic Services Agency, and the Marion County Prosecutor's Office. It also is a testament to the power of genetic genealogy and analytic capability," said Deputy Chief Kendale Adams of the Criminal Investigations Division of IMPD.

"For 31 years, the family of Carmen Van Huss has been searching for answers and justice. While nothing can ever replace their loved one, we hope that today's arrest brings them some measure of peace. We remain dedicated to bringing justice to all victims and will continue to pursue every lead, no matter how much time has passed," Adams said.

On March 24, 1993, Marion County Sheriff Deputies responded to an apartment in the 8200 block of Harcourt Road in Indianapolis, where they found Van Huss deceased. Her cause of death was later determined to be a homicide from stab wounds.

Over the years, detectives interviewed dozens of individuals and followed up on hundreds of leads, however, eventually the case went cold.

In 2018, an IMPD detective submitted a DNA sample from evidence to Parabon, a DNA technology company. Parabon conducted a Snapshot Advanced DNA Analysis, which included DNA phenotyping and genetic genealogy, which are technologies used for lead generation purposes.

In the summer of 2023, detectives used various investigative methods and lead information from the genetic genealogy analysis and were able to identify Shepherd as a suspect. After obtaining DNA samples for traditional forensic testing in June of 2024, the Marion County Forensic Services Agency notified Unsolved Homicide Unit detectives that Shepherd's DNA profile matched DNA samples found at the scene and on the victim's body.

When told about the recent developments in this case, Dr. Ellen Greytak, Parabon's scientific leader for the Snapshot division said, "IMPD's efforts to bring justice for Carmen and her family are truly commendable. Their proactive approach in utilizing advanced technologies for lead generation reflects their dedication and innovative mindset. We're pleased our work was able to support their investigative efforts," said Greytak.

On Thursday, August 29, 2024, detectives sought and were granted an arrest warrant for Shepherd for criminal charges of murder, felony murder, and rape. IMPD detectives coordinated with the Boone County Sheriff's Office in Missouri to apprehend the suspect on the morning of Friday, August 30, 2024.

IMPD detectives traveled to Boone County, Missouri to speak with the suspect, but he invoked his constitutional right to legal representation without speaking with detectives.

A hearing will be scheduled for Shepherd to be extradited back to Indianapolis in the coming days.

Funding for the testing in this case was provided by Season of Justice, a nonprofit dedicated to providing financial support to investigative agencies through grant funding for advanced DNA testing and analysis in cold cases. Seasons of Justice was founded in 2020 by Ashley Flowers.

"Season of Justice would like to extend our deepest gratitude to the IMPD detectives who never gave up on this investigation," said Season of Justice Founder Ashley Flowers. "Their dedication is admirable and we're humbled Season of Justice was able to support IMPD's efforts in bringing Carmen's murderer to justice. This outcome demonstrates how the power of persistence, evolving forensic technology, and collaboration can impact long-standing cold cases like Carmen's. We hope this news brings some measure of peace to those who love and miss her," said Flowers.

Shepherd should be considered innocent unless and until proven guilty in a court of law.

###