

## **Summary of the Death Investigation of Bethany Lynn Stephens**

Goochland Sheriff's Office

February 20, 2018

The last time Bethany Stephens was seen alive was at her father's residence at 15:48 on Wednesday, December 13, 2017. A neighbor to her father was in front of her house talking on her cellphone. The neighbor observed Stephens leaning in her jeep which was parked in front of her father's residence. Bethany waved to the neighbor who waved back. The neighbor used her cell phone call history to determine the time she saw Bethany.

At approximately 16:30 on Wednesday, December 13, 2017, another neighbor heard a lot of screaming. The screaming lasted a little less than five minutes and came from the same area Bethany's body was found a day later. The neighbor said it sounded like someone was hurt, indicated it could have been a coyote, but said it sounded more human.

On Thursday, December 14, 2017, at approximately 20:30, Sgt. J. Warren, Deputy's R. O'Shaughnessy, W. Beatley, and M. Carrier, from the Goochland County Sheriff's Office responded to a call for an unconscious female with trauma to her body. Officers arrived at 2204 Manakin Road, Manakin Sabot, Virginia, 23103, and were directed to an adjacent property directly west of 2204 Manakin Road. Once at the scene, officers observed the body of Bethany Stephens (deceased), as identified by her father.

The body was located just east of a pond inside a wood-line near the edge of a field on the south end of the property. Two Pitbull dogs, Tonka (gray with large white markings on the chest), and Pacman (gray with small white markings on the chest) appeared to be guarding the body. Tonka and Pacman were identified as Bethany Stephens pets.

The dogs would not permit anyone to get closer than approximately 20 feet from Bethany before they would lunge and bark. Animal Control responded at approximately 20:43 but could not get close enough to the dogs to contain them.

Lt Henley (investigator), arrived at approximately 21:23. Sheriff Agnew arrived at approximately 21:25. Sheriff Agnew made a request to Henrico Police for a tranquilizer gun, so the animals could be captured. While waiting for approval from Henrico Police, Sheriff Agnew, Lt Henley, and Deputy Carrier attempted to move closer to the body to obtain a better look. At that time, they observed one of the dogs eating a portion of the body of Bethany Stephens.

Officers commenced yelling at the dogs to keep them distracted and away from the body. Bethany Stephens boyfriend was located at 2204 Manakin Road. He indicated he would be able to help contain the animals. With the boyfriend's help, Animal Control was able to secure the animals at approximately 22:35 and remove them from the area. They were transported to the Goochland Animal Protection Shelter at 1900 Hidden Rock Lane, Goochland, Virginia, 23063. They were secured in Bay 6 and 7. Lt. Henley requested that Animal Control collect the feces

from each dog and maintain them in separate containers for future analysis. At approximately 11 a.m. on December 16, 2017, the two dogs were euthanized pursuant to the approval of family members. The dogs were then frozen to preserve them.

At 9 a.m. on December 15, 2017, Investigator Whitlock, Sgt. J. Warren, and Investigator John Lancaster attended the autopsy of Bethany Stephens at the Medical Examiner’s Office in Richmond, Virginia.

The Medical Examiner made the following observations in the presence of the investigators:

It appeared this was a violent attack initiated by Stephens dogs upon Stephens. She had defensive wounds on her hands and arms from trying to keep the dogs away from her. It appeared the first traumatic injury was to the face and throat. Most likely Stephens was taken to the ground, lost consciousness, and then mauled to death. There were no strangulation marks, but there were puncture wounds to the skull in keeping with animal bites. Stephens was not raped, and this was not a homicide.

At approximately 8:30 a.m. on December 21, 2017, Deputy R. Leabough and recruit Ryan Condrey transported the two canines and their feces to the Warrenton Regional Animal Laboratory operated by the Virginia Department of Agriculture, 272 Academy Hill Road, Warrenton, Virginia, 20186. On December 27, 2017, Dr. Jaime Weisman D.V.M., M.S., performed a full Necropsy with microscope analysis.

**Virginia Department of Agriculture Results:**

The Virginia Department of Agriculture completed their review on January 4, 2018. The following information is taken directly from the report.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Taxonomy</u>	<u>Animal Information</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Age</u>
Tonka	Dog / canine -	American pit bull terrier	Male	2.5 Years
Pacman	Dog / canine -	American pit bull terrier	Male	2.5 Years

Unable to definitively confirm the reported history that the two submitted dogs ingested human tissues. There were variably sized hairs/fur observed in the provided samples of feces, and feces within “Pacman.” Some of the hairs/fur are long and often wavy which is more consistent with human hair than animal fur, but further evaluation by an expert in hair/fur would be required to confirm suspicions. There is no evidence of bone or clothing material observed in the gastrointestinal tract. However, gastrointestinal emptying time in dogs is typically 2-2.5 days from ingestion, and the submitted dogs were euthanized approximately 2-days after being found.

There was a small amount of blood along the ventral thorax and medial right front leg of “Tonka.” Unable to determine the source of that blood since there is no evidence of external

wounds. The blood exuding from the mouth of “Pacman” may represent postmortem artifact but unable to definitively rule out an external source.

Samples available:

- Hair/fur from the fecal samples, and feces from “Pacman”
- Swabs from the blood spots on “Tonka” and blood from the mouth of “Pacman”
- Toe nails from front paws of “Tonka” and “Pacman”
- Collars

*Item 3955 “Tonka”*

There is a Harley Davidson collar around the neck. The dog is neutered and in fair to good body condition. There are multifocal areas of mild skin reddening along the ventrum. Along the ventral thorax/chest and medial aspect of the right front leg are areas of blood. There are no external wounds observed. There is moderate fecal staining around the anus. There is freeze artifact of all tissues resulting in red discoloration of the organs and blood tinged fluid in the body cavities. The spleen is enlarged and congested (euthanasia artifact). The stomach and intestinal tract contains small amounts of ingesta. There is no evidence of foreign material within the gastrointestinal tract. All other tissues are within normal limits grossly.

*Item 3956 “Pacman”*

There is a Harley Davidson collar with a name tag (“Pacman”) around the neck. The dog is unneutered and in fair to good body condition. There are moderate amounts of bloody fluid exuding from the mouth, but no wounds were observed within the mouth or externally. There are multifocal areas of mild skin reddening along the ventrum. There is a freeze artifact of all tissues resulting in red discoloration of the organs and blood tinged fluid in the body cavities. The spleen is enlarged and congested (euthanasia artifact). The stomach contains small amounts of ingesta. There are moderate numbers of roundworms (ascarids) within the small intestines. The feces are soft and contain abundant plant material with rare, variably sized (1-5 cm long) hairs/fur. There is no other evidence of foreign material within the gastrointestinal tract. All other tissues are within normal limits grossly. A rabies test was negative on both animals.

On January 8, 2018, Collected Items Number 69 and 70 from the necropsy (minus nail clippings), were submitted to the Virginia Department of Forensic Science for a DNA analysis/comparison to Bethany Stephens. Item number 71, a sample of Stephens blood from the morgue, was also submitted.

### **Department of Forensic Science Results:**

The Department of Forensic Science completed their review on February 2, 2018. The following information is taken directly from the report.

Three below listed items were submitted to the lab for testing on 01/08/2018.

Item 69: Swabs taken from the ventral thorax of “Tonka”

Item 70: Two Harley Davidson dog collars, one collar with “Pacman” blue tag

Item 71: DNA card from Bethany Stephens

#### **Item 69-Swabs taken from ventral thorax of “Tonka”**

- Blood was indicated.
- Human DNA was detected.
- DNA types of no value were developed.
  - Due to the limited information obtained, these types are not suitable for comparison.

#### **Item 70-Two Harley Davidson dog collars, one collar with “Pacman” blue tag**

(Presumed to be) Tonka’s collar

- Blood was indicated in random areas of the inside, outside, and buckle areas of the collar.
- No human DNA was detected and no DNA typing results were obtained from samples collected from the inside, outside, or buckle areas of the collar.
  - The results indicate either human DNA had degraded beyond testing detection limits or these samples are not of human origin.

#### **Pacman’s collar**

- Blood was indicated in random areas of the inside, outside, and buckle areas of the collar.
- The same DNA profile was developed (on) two of the aforementioned samples.
  - Bethany Stephens cannot be eliminated as a contributor of the DNA profile.
  - The probability of randomly selecting an unrelated individual with a DNA profile matching that developed from the samples collected from the collar is 1 in greater than 7.2 billion (which is approximately the world population).

Hairs/fibers were observed on both collars but not examined at this time.

### **Medical Examiner Results:**

The Medical Examiner’s office completed its review on February 9, 2018. The following information is taken directly from the report.

Cause of Death: Combined multiple sharp and blunt force trauma due to mauling by animal(s).

Manner of Death: Accident.

### Summary:

The examination showed numerous combined sharp and blunt force injuries involving the head, neck, torso and extremities. These injuries were consistent with injuries associated with animal bite and claw marks. Many of the wounds were associated with skin and soft tissue hemorrhage consistent with antemortem trauma. Overall, the combination of wounds is consistent with mauling by an animal or animals, possibly dogs. Additionally, there was evidence of extensive postmortem animal predation at the face, torso and arms. There was no natural disease. Drug testing was negative for ethanol and drugs of abuse, barbiturates and benzodiazepines.

### Animal Information:

Name: Tonka

Breed: American pit bull terrier

Neutered

Birthdate: April 2015

Adopted: Shortly after weaned from mother from K-9 Connections

Owner: Bethany Stephens (deceased)

AKC Reunite Microchip number 956000005119759

Chip implanted at Manakin-Sabot Vet Clinic

Name: Pacman

Breed: American pit bull terrier

Unneutered

Birthday: April 2015

Adopted: July 1, 2016, from K-9 Connections after the previous owner gave Pacman up

Owner: Bethany Stephens (deceased)

No Microchip implanted

### Recovered Evidence

Item 1 Body of Bethany Stephens

Item 2 Black Clothing

Item 3 Black Clothing

Item 4 Black Clothing

Item 5 Black Clothing

Item 6 Black Clothing

Item 7 Black Clothing

Item 8 Black Clothing

Item 9 Black Clothing

Item 10 Black Clothing

Item 11 Black Clothing

Item 12 Black Clothing

Item 13 Black Coat

Item 14 Black Clothing

Item 15 Black Clothing

Item 16 Black Clothing

Item 17 ½ Pink Bra with Blood Stain

Item 18 Black Clothing  
Item 19 Black Clothing  
Item 20 Black Clothing  
Item 21 Black Clothing  
Item 22 Black Clothing  
Item 23 Red Stain  
Item 24 Black Clothing  
Item 25 Black Clothing  
Item 26 Black Clothing  
Item 27 Black Clothing  
Item 28 Black Clothing  
Item 29 Red Stain  
Item 30 Black Clothing  
Item 31 Black Clothing with Blood  
Item 32 Black Clothing  
Item 33 Flesh  
Item 34 Shirt Tag  
Item 35 Black Clothing  
Item 36 Red Stain  
Item 37 Flesh  
Item 38 Black Clothing  
Item 39 ½ Pink Bra  
Item 40 Black Hat  
Item 41 Black Clothing  
Item 42 Black Clothing  
Item 43 Blue Cloth  
Item 44 Red Stain  
Item 45 Red Stain  
Item 46 Truck (YUR-6497), Registered to John Stephens.  
Item 47 Blue Cloth  
Item 48 Black Clothing  
Item 49 Blue Clothing  
Item 50 Blue Clothing  
Item 51 Black Clothing  
Item 52 Mountain Dew Plastic Bottle  
Item 53 Steel Bar  
Item 54 Dog fecal matter  
Item 55 Blue Clothing  
Item 56 Red Stain on Left Tree  
Item 57 Red Stain on Right Tree  
Item 58 Boot  
Item 59 Cell Phone Case  
Item 60 Glove  
Item 61 Cell Phone Case  
Item 62 Cell Phone

- Item 63 Victim's jeans, belt, athletic pants, socks, left boot, left and right fingernail clippings with fingernail clipper
- Item 64 Dog fecal matter
- Item 65 Dog fecal matter
- Item 66 Specimen of Pacman fecal matter
- Item 67 Pacman mouth swab
- Item 68 Pacman right front leg swab
- Item 69 Pacman thorax swab
- Item 70 Dog collars and Pacman nail clippings
- Item 71 DNA blood sample of Bethany Stephens from the morgue