

Body found 22 years ago along I-70 may have ID

By Doug Page, Staff Writer

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ENGLEWOOD — For 22 years Englewood police have been searching for the identity of the body of a young woman dumped along eastbound Interstate 70 at Hoke Road — and her killer.

Now they believe half the puzzle is solved.

A phone call Sunday, Oct. 25, gave police a detailed description of the clothing, physical appearance, tattoos. “That’s my sister,” the caller said.

Police Chief Mark Brownfield said Tuesday he would not release the identity until DNA tests confirm it. “We should know in several weeks. We have her DNA. Now we have the family’s DNA to compare.”

The woman, in her early 20s, is buried in a potters field at Westmont Cemetery. As soon as the DNA tests confirm her identity, the family plans to move the body “back where it belongs,” Brownfield said.

The body may have been buried, but not the case. Detectives have chased periodic leads for two decades. The woman’s description and information on the crime was posted on various Internet databases.

“We’d get tips every year, but they never led anywhere,” Brownfield.

Brownfield said the phone call came from a woman who was going through her mother’s things following her death when she found papers outlining the search for her sister. Using that information, the woman renewed the search using the Internet. Eventually, the search led to one of the many missing persons Web sites where she found the Englewood report. She called Englewood police.

Sgt. Mike Lang said Englewood officers never saw the missing person’s report on the victim because the last date of contact with the victim was after the victim’s body was found. “We still don’t know how that happened,” he said.

“We’re really confident we have an identification,” Brownfield said.

The victim was found Aug. 10, 1987, on a grassy slope near the Hoke Road entrance ramp to eastbound I-70. Published reports said the victim had two fresh tattoos — a rose and a unicorn above each breast. She appeared clean-cut and well-nourished, her brown curly hair was held back by a blue bandana.

The coroner's office ruled she died by ligature strangulation at the hands of another person.

Lang said the homicide did not occur in Englewood. The law enforcement agency that filed the missing person's report will now take over the investigation.

Englewood will still be involved. After 22 years of trying to put together the puzzle, both Lang and Brownfield said there is a lot invested in the case.

"The body was dumped here. There's a lot we still don't know," he said. "It's like you pick up a dusty 22-year-old puzzle piece, and it suddenly snaps right into place."

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