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An Unusual Accidental Death

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ABSTRACT

A report of an investigation into an unusual death scene, and determination of cause of death.

Keywords: Death Investigation, Autopsy, Puncture Wound, Suspicious Circumstance

Case Report

In late 2001 Police responded to a home on a report of a dead male subject. Responding officers located the man on the floor in the kitchen area. They also located large quantities of blood in the bed room, dining room and kitchen areas. Investigators from the Police Department and Medical Examiners Office responded to the scene. Initial estimates placed the time of death at around a day prior to the discovery of the body.



Figure 1: Scene Overview



Figure 2: Victim

Records showed that there had been numerous calls for Police/Medical assistance at the residence, many due to a man coughing up blood. The resident was known to have an ulcer, and was suffering from depression. The resident was also known to have a drinking problem.

Investigators at the scene initially believed the death to be natural, and that the blood was related to the victims medical problems. The body was transported to the morgue for autopsy. On arrival at the morgue, the pathologist located a puncture wound to the victims neck.



Figure 3: Close-up of puncture wound

Investigators returned and re-examined the scene. In the bedroom closet a broken wicker basket was noted. There was blood on, in and around the basket. Several pieces of broken wicker stuck up from the basket. The basket was collected and transported to the morgue where the broken wicker was matched up to the wound in the victim's neck.



Figure 4: Overview of bedroom showing basket and bloodstains

It would appear that the victim fell on the basket while intoxicated and punctured his neck, nicking an artery. The victim attempted to clean himself up in the kitchen sink, passed out and died due to blood loss.

The match of the wound to the basket and the victim's high blood alcohol level led to the death being ruled accidental.



Figure 5: Close-up of broken wicker



Figure 6: Matching the basket to the wound



Figure 7: The basket

Photographs 1-3, 6-7 courtesy Mrs. Julianne Chan. Photographs 4-5 by the author.