



Athens-Clarke County Police Department

For Immediate Release

May 12, 2009

This news conference is being given to recap and finalize some of the details of the triple-murder investigation of Marie Bruce, Thomas Tanner, and Ben Teague, who were killed by George Zinkhan, III. We will take a few moments and recap several significant points of the investigation and then we will be glad to take questions concerning certain aspects of the investigation at the conclusion of the recap.

It should be noted that as with other investigations there are some questions that we will not answer and as consistent with other suicide investigations, there are some questions that we will never know the answer to. Also, of special note we would like to state that the children of George Zinkhan and Marie Bruce are presently located with family members and are doing as well as can be expected. However, we would like to honor the family members' request that the children's needs and privacy be respected and that media not make any attempt to contact the children.

This investigation began on Saturday, April 25, 2009, at approximately 12:25 p.m., when the Athens-Clarke County Police Department responded to reports of multiple gunshots and a shooting that had occurred at the Town and Gown Theatre located at 115 Grady Avenue in Athens, Georgia. Investigation revealed that George Zinkhan, III, age 57, shot Thomas Tanner, age 40, Marie Bruce, age 47, and Ben Teague, age 63, outside the front of the theatre.

Investigation revealed that Zinkhan used both a .38 caliber revolver and a .22 caliber semi-automatic pistol in the shootings. There were several eyewitnesses in close proximity to the shootings that saw what took place and positively identified George Zinkhan, III, as the shooter. Investigation revealed George Zinkhan and his wife, Marie Bruce, had been having marital difficulties. Investigation also revealed that Thomas Tanner appeared to be a specific target in the shootings and was shot first.

Immediately after the shootings, Zinkhan left the scene and travelled in his 2005 red Jeep Liberty Georgia Tag AIX1376 to his neighborhood on Chesterfield Road off Cleveland Road in Bogart, Georgia, where he left his children with a neighbor, advising them that he had an emergency and asking them to watch the children for approximately one hour. Zinkhan then made a short stop by his residence and was never seen alive after that point.

On Thursday, April 30, 2009, after several days of investigation, law enforcement officers located George Zinkhan's 2005 red Jeep Liberty with Georgia Tag AIX1376 in a ravine in a large wooded area off Cleveland Road behind the Cleveland Road Elementary School. This location was approximately 1.5 miles from Zinkhan's residence on Chesterfield Road. Inside the vehicle, officers located Zinkhan's cell phone, laptop, passport, wallet containing identification and cash, and other items. The vehicle was placed in the ravine in a way to conceal it as much as possible from being located.

After officers located the vehicle, numerous officers from multiple Federal, State and Local Departments, along with other volunteers, participated in a search of the wooded area directly around the vehicle in an attempt to determine if Zinkhan was located in the woods. After the searches on May 1, 2009, officers continued to conduct general searches in and around the area, on other properties and empty residences, in an attempt to locate Zinkhan.

On Saturday morning, May 9, 2009, at approximately 10:50 a.m., through the use of cadaver dogs, officers located the body of George Zinkhan in a thick, wooded area between Cleveland Road and Fowler Mill Road. The body was located in the same large tract of woods that the Jeep had been located but the body was outside the original area that was thoroughly searched on May 1, 2009. Zinkhan's body was found in a small dugout area in the ground, covered with leaves and debris and it was apparent that he took significant steps to try to conceal his body from being located.

In the ground beside the body, officers located a shovel and two firearms, a .38 caliber revolver and a .22 caliber semi-automatic pistol that were consistent with the types of guns used in the murders on April 25, 2009. Also, next to the body, officers located a grey Puma sports bag which was consistent with the bag that Zinkhan was seen with in his hands during the shooting. Zinkhan's clothing when he was found was consistent with the clothing that he wore during the murders.

An autopsy conducted on Zinkhan's body determined that he was killed by a single gunshot wound to the head. The manner of death was determined to be suicide. There is no evidence or information to indicate that anyone else was involved in the three murders other than George Zinkhan and there is no evidence or information to indicate that there was any type of foul play or other persons involved in George Zinkhan's death.

At this time, officers will be glad to take some questions from the media with the understanding that the officers are not going to talk about some specific aspects of the investigation and will not discuss any tactics, technology or other things used in trying to track or locate Zinkhan.

Authority: Joseph Lumpkin
Police Chief
Athens-Clarke Co. Police Dept.
Athens, Georgia
(706)613-3330

Jim Fullington
Special Agent in Charge
Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Athens, Georgia
(706) 542-7901

Mark Sizemore
Major
Athens-Clarke Co. Police Dept.
Athens, Georgia
(706) 613-3330

Carlton Peebles
Resident Agent in Charge
Federal Bureau Investigations
Macon/Athens GA
(478) 745-1271

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