

INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

2025

Incident Type: Homicide
Incident Location: Johnston, RI
Offense Date: August 29, 1984
Police Dept: Narragansett Police Department



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I. Introduction

In August of 1984, 24-year-old Debra A. Stone (“Debra”) was murdered at Simmons Village, Building #351, Apartment #314 in Johnston, Rhode Island. Debra’s body was found in the Narrow River in Narragansett on September 2, 1984, several days after her murder. Following an investigation by the Narragansett Police Department (“NPD”) and the Rhode Island Attorney General’s Cold Case Unit (“RIAG CCU”), with the assistance of the Rhode Island State Police (“RISP”), the perpetrator of this crime has been identified as Robert D. Geremia (“Geremia”). Geremia died of natural causes on May 23, 1995, at the age of 43.

The findings and conclusions in this report are based upon information gathered during both the original police investigation and the investigation of the RIAG CCU, including police reports, witness statements and interviews, physical evidence, DNA reports, autopsy reports, as well as new and existing forensic examinations.

II. Summary of the Facts

A. Review of the Scene

On the afternoon of September 2, 1984, a group of juveniles were boating down the Narrow River in Narragansett, RI. Just north of the bridge on Middlebridge Road, they spotted an object in the water and pulled it to shore. They quickly realized that the object was a human body, wrapped in a floral sleeping bag, tied with rope, and anchored with a cement cinderblock. NPD immediately responded to the scene and met the juveniles at the end of Mitchell Avenue, where the body had been pulled ashore.



Figure 1 – Photo of Debra Stone, provided by family.

Upon arrival, police examined the wrapped body and noticed a “white-ish” cotton work glove caught in the ropes. Police also observed a small number of mussels attached to the cinderblock. The wrapped body was transported to the Rhode Island Medical Examiner’s Office (“ME”) for identification.



Once at the ME's Office, the examiner and detectives carefully removed the wrapping and noted the following observations:

- The blanket appeared to be a sleeping bag, described as tan with small floral designs, with snaps near the victim's head.
- The rope appeared to be common household clothesline rope.
- The victim was wearing only a bra, which was unclasped at the time of discovery. She also had a tattoo of a marijuana leaf on her right wrist.
- The examiner noted a suspicious mark on the right side of the victim's neck, described as 1 inch long and ¼ inch wide.

Using the victim's fingerprints, police identified her as Debra Stone.



Figure 2 - Photo of the Narrow River taken by police upon arrival.

The ME performed an autopsy the following day on September 3, 1984, and determined the cause of death to be asphyxia due to strangulation and the manner of death to be homicide. The ME noted that the body showed a moderate degree of decomposition, and that there were contusions about the neck area with corresponding soft tissue hemorrhages of the deep tissue of the neck. Additionally, the ME discovered a fracture of the hyoid bone with corresponding hemorrhage at the fracture site.¹ The postmortem toxicology report showed no evidence of drug ingestion.

1. The hyoid bone is a horseshoe-shaped bone that is attached to ligaments in the neck.

When police located Debra's friends and family members, they confirmed that Debra had been living at 200 Hoffman Avenue, Cranston, near Garden City and that she had not been seen or heard from since the evening of Wednesday, August 29, 1984.

B. Subsequent Investigation

In the days and weeks following the discovery of Debra's body, investigators learned a great deal of information about her final days and the individuals with whom she associated. Police learned that Debra had recently moved into a new apartment with a male friend, Witness 1.² Witness 1 was a relatively new acquaintance to Debra, and he allowed her to live in his apartment and use his vehicle, a white Mercedes convertible with New York plates.



Figure 3 - White Mercedes that victim was driving at the time of her death, loaned by a male acquaintance.

Debra grew up in Providence and Warwick. She obtained her GED in 1979 and then worked as a bartender at a Providence nightclub called "Rooster's." By the early 1980s, she became addicted to drugs and began to associate with individuals involved with drug distribution. Friends told police that Debra had recently broken up with her long-time boyfriend, Witness 2,³ whom they described as possibly abusive towards Debra. Witnesses told police that they often saw her with bruises during their relationship.

2. Names have been redacted in public version to protect the identity of uninvolved subjects.

On September 3, 1984, NPD interviewed Witness 3, a close female friend of Debra. Witness 3 stated that, at around 8 p.m. on Wednesday, August 29, 1984, she spoke to Debra by phone. On the call, Debra mentioned she planned to visit a male friend in the Johnston area to “get high” and that the man arranged for a cab to bring Debra from her apartment to his apartment/location. Debra told Witness 3 that she would meet Witness 3 at Debra’s mother’s apartment, located at 157 Manton Avenue in Providence later that night, around 11 p.m. But Debra never showed up at her mother’s apartment. The phone call between Debra and Witness 3 was the last time any of Debra’s close friends or family members heard from her.⁴

Witness 3 told investigators that after learning of Debra’s death, she tried to identify the man Debra met that night. She learned from an unnamed friend that he went by the nickname of “Bobby Myers” and lived in an apartment on Simmonsville Avenue in Johnston. While Witness 3 never revealed to police the identity of the unnamed friend, months later she told police that someone showed up at her apartment to ask her what she told police about Debra’s death and warned her not to cooperate.

The NPD contacted the Johnston Police Department (“Johnston PD”) regarding the nickname “Bobby Myers.” Johnston PD said that “Bobby Myers”⁵ was known to them as Robert D. Geremia and confirmed his date of birth and address. Johnston PD knew Geremia due to his prior drug possession and distribution arrests.⁶ Johnston PD noted that Geremia lived in the Simmons Village area and that he “bounced back and forth” between his mother’s and his sister’s apartments in that complex. Police went to the apartment complex to locate Geremia, but could not find him at that time.

Additionally, police sought to determine which cab company drove Debra from her apartment in Cranston to the Simmons Village Apartments in Johnston.

4. In police interviews with friends and other associates of the victim, several of them believed they had seen Debra on Friday 8/31/1984 at various places and locations. These accounts were later determined to be inaccurate; they confused Friday 8/24/1984 with Friday 8/31/1984, the last weekend in August.

5. Robert Geremia’s nickname has an alternative spelling in law enforcement records as “Bobby Mias[,]” also as seen on his obituary.

6. Robert Geremia’s criminal history includes contact with law enforcement in Rhode Island, New Jersey, and Florida spanning from 1971 to 1991.



Eventually, they identified a driver from the Laurel Sweeney cab company who recalled picking up a fare at 200 Hoffman Avenue on the evening of Wednesday, August 29, 1984, between 9:30 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. This cab driver identified Debra from a photo pack and recalled dropping her off at the Simmons Village Apartment Complex in front of Building #349. He did not know who had placed the call for service.

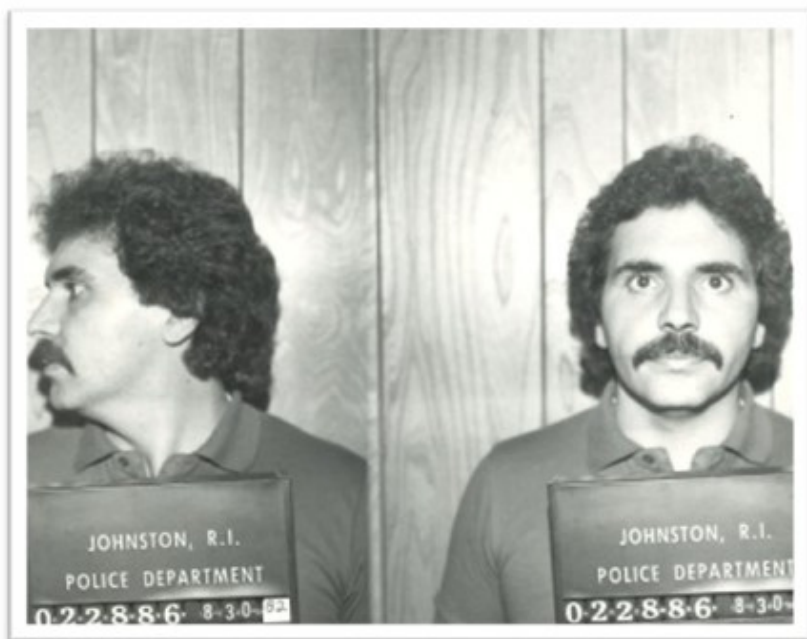


Figure 4 - Robert D. Geremia photographed by Johnston PD during an unrelated arrest.

C. Police Interviews

On September 6, 1984, NPD located Geremia and interviewed him over the phone. This call was recorded and later transcribed. According to Geremia, on Wednesday, August 29, 1984, around 9:45 p.m., a taxi carrying Debra arrived outside of his mother's apartment in Simmons Village (Building 349, Apt. 207).⁷ After arriving, Debra did not go into Geremia's mother's apartment, but to his sister's apartment where he had been staying, which is in a different building in the same complex - Building 351, Apartment 314. He claimed that Debra had with her a black watch, which she was either trying to sell or trade for drugs. Geremia later learned that the watch had been stolen from a male acquaintance

7. This is corroborated by the cab driver from the Laurel Sweeney Cab Company who stated that he dropped off a woman matching Debra's description at Simmons Village Apartments in front of building #349 on August 29, 1984.

of Debra. According to Geremia, when Debra asked to either buy or trade the watch for drugs, he informed her that he had none. After this interaction, Geremia claimed that his mother did not want Debra there, so he finished dressing and took her back to her Cranston apartment in his car, a bronze Monte Carlo. He stated that she asked him to drop her off a little distance away from her apartment. He claimed this drop-off occurred around 11:00 p.m.

During Geremia's police interview, he sought to cast suspicion on both the man from whom Debra allegedly stole the watch and the man with whom she was living. Geremia also suggested that, because of her drug addiction, Debra likely would have headed back out to try and obtain more narcotics after he dropped her off. He claimed that the evening of August 29 was the last time he saw Debra.



Figure 5 - Exterior of Geremia's Apartment Building 351, as photographed in 1986.

During the early stages of the investigation, police also obtained statements from witnesses unrelated to Geremia who claimed to have seen Debra alive on Friday, August 31, 1984. As further explained below, later in the investigation police determined these accounts to be erroneous. None of those witnesses actually saw Debra after she left Geremia. However, because of these supposed later sightings of Debra—and because investigators were able to corroborate Geremia's statements that (1) Debra took a cab to his apartment and (2) she had a stolen watch with her—they did not consider Geremia to be a suspect at the time. Instead, they focused on Debra's housemate, Witness 1.

Investigators found that Witness 1 worked and lived out of state, traveled to Rhode Island frequently, and allowed Debra to reside in his apartment and drive his car. Throughout the investigation, Witness 1 maintained that he had nothing to do with Debra's death. He cooperated with law enforcement, and despite the extensive investigation, police could not place him in Rhode Island during the days just prior to Debra's body being discovered. Ultimately, he was cleared as a suspect.

Police also extensively investigated Debra's ex-boyfriend, Witness 2. At the time of her death, he managed the nightclub "Rooster's" which Debra frequented. Witnesses close to the two described their relationship as rocky and volatile. However, they had broken up months prior to Debra's murder and there was no evidence of significant issues between the two at the time of her death. Witness 2 also cooperated with law enforcement and provided information regarding additional witnesses and an account of Debra's whereabouts to help police with a timeline of her final days. There was no evidence to implicate Witness 2 in Debra's death, and he was eliminated as a suspect.

By the end of 1984, with no clear suspects or productive leads, the investigation went cold.

D. Development of an Informant

During the original investigation, police interviewed a long-time acquaintance of Debra's who they thought may have seen her in the weeks before her death (Witness 4). On September 17, 1984, police spoke with Witness 4 at his Providence home. He had known Debra since 1977 and had worked with her brother for a few years. Witness 4 said that he was quite fond of Debra, but they had never formally dated. Witness 4 told police that he last saw Debra alive while she was driving her car sometime around August 23 or August 24.⁸ He also informed police that on the morning of August 30, he went to Geremia's apartment on Simmonsville Avenue with another man. This person, unbeknownst to Witness 4, would later become an informant for the police (the Informant).⁹ He stated that the Informant went up to Germania's apartment

8. He stated to police that he last saw Stone driving in her car around August 24th or so. However, friends of his mistakenly believed he saw her alive on August 31st and reported that information to police. This was one of the numerous accounts that erroneously documented her as alive on August 31st.

9. Name has been redacted in public version to protect identity of a cooperating witness.



while Witness 4 waited in the car. When the Informant came back to the car, he told Witness 4 that Debra had “stayed overnight with Bobby Geremia.” Police noted this inconsistency, documenting that this was contradictory to Geremia’s statement that he had driven Debra home to her apartment in Cranston around 11 p.m. on August 29. Police tracked down the Informant at an in-patient drug treatment program. However, because he was in treatment, he was unavailable to speak to the police at that time.

In January 1986, NPD interviewed the Informant after he was taken into custody by another police department for unrelated charges. During this interview, the Informant admitted that he had information about Debra’s homicide and that he believed Geremia killed her. He told detectives that he was extremely afraid of Geremia and was concerned about retribution if he spoke with police. The Informant referenced Geremia’s potential mob ties (which were ultimately corroborated in part by investigators) as well as violent behavior that he personally witnessed. The Informant admitted that he and Geremia were both involved in drug distribution which required them to travel to New York.

According to the Informant, on August 29, 1984, he went to Geremia’s apartment to pick up heroin for distribution, as Geremia stored heroin at both of his Simmons Village apartments. The Informant arrived around midnight and when he entered, he saw Debra inside. He left and returned the next morning, at which time he saw Debra lying still in Geremia’s bed. Once he returned to the car, he told Witness 4 that Debra was with Geremia and he teased Witness 4 that Debra had stayed the night, knowing that Witness 4 was attracted to Debra.¹⁰ The Informant said that when he heard Debra was dead, he figured that Geremia may have been responsible. He also told police that he heard a second person was “dragged into it” in order to transport and dispose of Debra’s body. He described this person as a “friend” and claimed that the friend had details about the disposal of the body. Those details included that, upon moving the body, an unknown fluid leaked onto the carpet inside Geremia’s apartment, which was cleaned up a short while later. The Informant would not disclose or name the friend at that time, and he claimed that this friend had since passed away. Further, the Informant admitted that he saw Geremia throw a woman’s handbag into the East River in New York shortly after Debra’s death. He also said that he witnessed Geremia selling a watch to a drug dealer in New York.¹¹

10. The above account of the 8/30/1984 morning visit was corroborated by Witness 4.

11. Later believed by investigators to be the stolen watch that Debra had been trying to trade or sell.



He told police that he later heard Geremia killed Debra when he woke-up and found her stealing from him, but when the Informant asked, Geremia maintained that Debra had overdosed. The Informant told police that he believed Geremia's mother covered up for her son, noting that the trunk of Geremia's Monte Carlo was washed right after Debra's death and that the carpet from the trunk was removed. The Informant would not cooperate any further at that time. In the months following this interview, police attempted to corroborate the information provided by the Informant.

On August 5, 1986, police interviewed the Informant for a second time following his arrest in Scituate for a series of breaking and entering offenses. During the second interview, the Informant confirmed that he saw Debra inside Geremia's apartment on both Wednesday night and Thursday morning. Police pressed the Informant about the identity of the "friend" who helped dispose of the body, asking if that person knew both the Informant and Geremia, and had recently passed away. The Informant confirmed that name to police. He told police that Geremia came looking for him recently, asking him if he or anyone else had spoken with or been approached by Narragansett PD. The Informant said that he denied having spoken with police to Geremia, but he felt that Geremia was "feeling him out." Despite providing this information, the Informant declined to provide a formal statement.

On September 11, 1986, police interviewed the Informant for the third time.¹² The Informant requested the meeting and agreed to talk to law enforcement without an attorney present. He was not in custody at the time. During this conversation he told the police that when he saw Debra at Geremia's apartment on the morning of August 30, she was motionless. The Informant stated that he could provide more detailed information in future talks with police, including the origin of the cement block and how Geremia disposed of Debra's body. At that time, he agreed to a future interview with police with an attorney present.

On September 22, 1986, the Informant returned to the Intake Center at the Adult Correctional Institutions (ACI) on new charges and was interviewed by the police once again. He stated that he still wanted to help police and would testify against Geremia if necessary, but that he and his family were concerned

12. Informant had been arrested on new charges of Breaking and Entering but was released on bail and was willing to speak with police in the hopes that his cooperation would earn him a less-than-jail sentence and a referral to a rehabilitation program for his ongoing substance abuse issues.



about their safety. This time, he admitted that the story about a “friend” assisting Geremia dispose of the body was a smokescreen, and that he was the one who helped Geremia. The Informant said that when he saw Debra at Geremia’s apartment on the night of August 29, she seemed to be “choking or gagging” and that she appeared to have “nodded out.” He told police that he asked Geremia to help Debra, but that Geremia responded that she would be alright. The Informant then left Geremia’s house with some drugs.

The Informant stated that when he returned the next morning, Geremia refused to open the door, but yelled that the Informant should get the drugs from his mother’s apartment. The Informant did so and returned home. Approximately an hour later, Geremia came to the Informant’s house and asked him to return to Simmons Village saying that he needed the Informant’s help. The Informant accompanied Geremia back to his apartment at Simmons Village. Geremia told him that the “problem” was in the bathroom. The Informant went into the bathroom and, at first, did not see anything amiss. Then Geremia told him to go back inside and open the shower curtain. When he did so, the Informant saw Debra’s lifeless body in the tub. According to the Informant, Geremia told him that he (the Informant) was also responsible for Debra’s death as she had died of an overdose after consuming drugs that both Geremia and the Informant were distributing.

According to the Informant, both he and Geremia spent the day gathering supplies necessary to get rid of Debra’s body. The Informant described Geremia as using drugs throughout that day. Later that night, on August 30, they wrapped Debra’s body in a sleeping bag and placed her in the trunk of Geremia’s car. They transported the body to Narragansett and dumped the body over the bridge on Middlebridge Road. The Informant recounted that it was very foggy that night. After dumping the body, they left the area. A few days later, on a trip to New York to buy more heroin, the Informant saw Geremia throw Debra’s belongings into the East River. The Informant stated that at this point, he still believed that Debra died of an overdose, as he had seen her overdose before. Later, when he read in the newspaper that Debra had been strangled, he confronted Geremia, but Geremia maintained that she had overdosed.

On September 29, 1986, police interviewed the Informant again with his attorney present. The Informant reiterated the information he previously disclosed and provided a detailed description of Geremia’s Johnston apartment. The Informant also recounted that it was his idea to dispose of the body in the water because he had seen a TV show, “Quincy,” which led him to



believe water would make forensic examination of the body more difficult.¹³ The Informant told investigators that when they arrived at the bridge, they waited for someone to finish fishing before they could dispose of the body. They then tied a cinderblock to Debra's body and threw the body over the south side of the bridge. The Informant said there was a strong current moving south to north that evening.¹⁴ At the conclusion of this interview, he offered to take investigators to any of the locations involved.

On October 24, 1986, members of the RISP and the Narragansett PD took a formal statement from the Informant after advising him of his constitutional rights. He claimed that he was ready to speak with police fully and again admitted that the story about the "friend" was a "smoke screen." He confirmed that he was the person who assisted Geremia with disposal of Debra's body. The Informant recounted the same details he had previously told the police. During the interview, he further described what he observed on the night of August 29, and stated that she was "gagging, breathing kinda funny" and that she had "a gurgling sound coming from her." The Informant told police that he had observed Debra overdose once before at Geremia's mother's apartment, about two weeks prior to her death, so he assumed she was overdosing again. The Informant said that when Debra overdosed the previous time, she similarly "nodded out" with her lips turning blue and her breathing getting "very slow." During that overdose, the Informant and other witnesses put ice on Debra and she recovered soon thereafter.

In 2024, the RIAG CCU asked Dr. Alexander Chirkov, Chief Medical Examiner, his opinion of the Informant's description of Debra's appearance on the night she was killed. Dr. Chirkov explained that choking or gagging can be a response to both an overdose and a fractured hyoid bone due to the resulting edema and ultimate asphyxiation. Therefore, in Dr. Chirkov's opinion, it would have been difficult for a casual observer to discern whether Debra was overdosing or suffocating after being strangled. Dr. Chirkov further explained that while they may produce similar symptoms, a broken hyoid bone can only be attributable to the application of significant force, most often through a squeezing motion, which conclusively indicates strangulation, and more specifically suggests manual strangulation.

13. Quincy M.E. was a popular television crime mystery series that ran from 1976 to 1983 on NBC starring Jack Klugman as a medical examiner at the L.A. County Coroner's Office who helped solve murders and other mysteries.

14. The group of juveniles did, in fact, find Debra's body partially floating on the northern side of the bridge, consistent with Informant's description of the current that night.



During his October 24, 1986, interview, the Informant provided new, previously undisclosed details. He stated that at some point on August 30, 1984, he returned to his apartment and told his girlfriend (Witness 5) what was happening. He asked her to call Johnston PD and report a death at Simmons Village, hoping that police would intervene and he would not have to continue to help Geremia. Witness 5 later corroborated the Informant's account of this conversation. However, she told the police that she considered making the call, but decided against it because she was afraid of retaliation by Geremia. The Informant was likely unaware that his girlfriend did not make the call as requested.

The Informant also told investigators that he got the clothesline used to bind the body from his shared apartment with his girlfriend. She later corroborated this and claimed that it was her idea to use their clothesline. The Informant also stated that Geremia obtained the sleeping bag used to wrap the body from a relative. He stated that Geremia's relative and their significant other were both present when they asked for the sleeping bag.¹⁵ The Informant also stated that he purchased two pairs of gardening gloves from an unknown hardware store—gloves that both he and Geremia would later wear while handling Debra's body. The Informant told police that they waited until late in the evening on Thursday, August 30, 1984, to dispose of her body. They placed her wrapped body into the trunk of Geremia's Monte Carlo, obtained a cinderblock that was weighing down a nearby business' curbside advertising sign, drove to Narragansett, and eventually threw her body over the bridge into the Narrow River.¹⁶

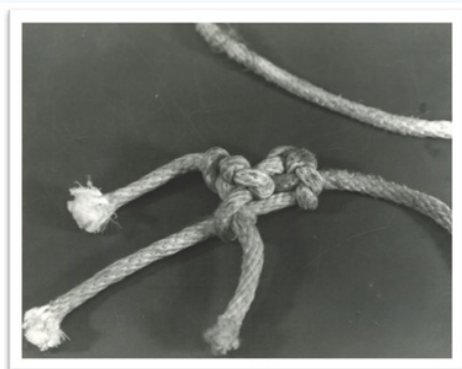


Figure 6 - Rope found tying the body.



Figure 7 - Cinderblock used to weigh down the body.

15. Police followed up with these witnesses. They were unsuccessful in locating the significant other, but Geremia's relative was located in Providence; the witness did not provide a substantive statement at that time.

16. Informant said that, even after dumping the body, he was still under the belief that Debra had overdosed. He later admitted to his girlfriend that he had some suspicions, however, after noticing a mark on Debra's neck while moving the body.

Narragansett PD worked diligently to either corroborate or contradict the Informant's various statements to police by interviewing witnesses, visiting pertinent locations and businesses, and seizing physical evidence. This included tracking down the business the Informant had identified as the possible source for the cinderblock, Kingstown Tool Co. on Quaker Lane. Investigators confirmed that the business had a portable sign, which was weighed down by cinderblocks containing similar rust stains to the cinderblock found with Debra. However, the owner could not verify whether a block was missing and was not cooperative with police. Additionally, police located Geremia's Chevy Monte Carlo at Mal's Auto Body in Clinton, Connecticut, and eventually obtained a search warrant for the vehicle. Police also attempted to identify the hardware store from which the gloves were purchased, but could not pin down an exact location.

Ultimately, conversations with the Informant broke down after he failed a polygraph examination conducted by RISP. Investigators felt that he was withholding information and they confronted him about his failed polygraph, at which time the Informant admitted that he did not want to implicate his girlfriend. The polygrapher concluded that the only area of "deception" on the test came from his answer to the question of whether or not he witnessed Debra's death.

The RIAG CCU's investigation determined that the Informant was credibly unsure about whether he witnessed Debra's death based on his observation of her "choking and gagging." The Informant's uncertainty on this point may have accounted for abnormalities in his response to the polygrapher's question as to whether he was present for Debra's death. The Informant agreed to undergo a second polygraph examination; ultimately, police chose not to conduct a second polygraph.

In 1986, police placed significant weight on the results of polygraph examinations. Today, courts and experts disagree as to their reliability and accuracy. As such, they are not admissible into evidence during court proceedings in Rhode Island. See *State v. Dery*, 545 A.2d 1014 (R.I. 1988).

E. Forensic Evidence

In the 1984 autopsy report, Chief Medical Examiner William Sturner concluded that Debra's official cause of death was "asphyxia due to strangulation" and classified the manner of death as a homicide. Consistent with strangulation, the examiner noted four small abrasions and contusions to the skin of Debra's neck,



in addition to observing soft tissue hemorrhaging of the strap muscles and subcutaneous tissues. Additionally, an internal examination revealed that Debra had sustained a fracture of the hyoid bone with corresponding hemorrhage. In 2024, the CCU asked Dr. Chirkov, Chief Medical Examiner, to review the autopsy report. Dr. Chirkov explained to investigators that a fractured hyoid bone is a clear sign of not only strangulation, but more often manual strangulation. The hyoid bone is a horseshoe-shaped bone that is free floating in the neck. According to Dr. Chirkov, it takes a significant amount of force to fracture or break a hyoid bone. It is often correlated with manual strangulation, as force needs to be applied simultaneously to both sides of the neck to fracture the bone. As a result, a person suffering from a fractured hyoid bone would have only moments to live as subdural tissues begin to hemorrhage and the brain is cut off from oxygen.

In the 1984 autopsy report, the medical examiner also noted a moderate level of decomposition. One of the examiners at the time, Dr. Burns, concluded that Debra had been placed in the sleeping bag not long after her death, but that she had been submerged in water “at least 24 hours and possibly as long as two or three days.” There were no signs of drowning; thus, examiners concluded that she had died prior to her submersion in the river. A toxicology examination was conducted, and results showed that there were no signs of overdose as a cause of death and that the small amount of ethanol in her body was consistent with her level of decomposition (naturally occurring). In 2024, Dr. Chirkov explained that the absence of drugs in the toxicology report was unsurprising. He explained that drugs such as cocaine, and even heroin, remain in the blood for only a limited amount of time. According to Dr. Chirkov, the presence of cocaine degrades significantly, such that he would not have expected, even with today’s technology, to be able to detect cocaine in her system two to three days after death. Although we cannot ultimately determine whether drugs were in Debra’s system at the time of her death, Dr. Chirkov confirmed that there was no evidence indicating that Debra had died of an overdose; rather, it was clear from her autopsy results that the cause of death was asphyxiation by strangulation, most likely manual strangulation.

Following the Informant’s statement in October 1986, Narragansett PD along with RISP obtained a search warrant for Geremia’s apartment and executed the warrant on October 22, 1986. Police spoke with the apartment complex manager and learned that there was a new tenant in Apartment 314. However, she confirmed that the carpet inside was the same carpet in place at the time



of Debra's death. According to records provided by the apartment complex, the carpet had not been changed or removed since Geremia moved out in November of 1984. However, the carpet had been previously cleaned, both by the apartment complex (after Geremia moved out) and by Geremia. The Informant told police that, after they had moved the body, he pointed out the stain to Geremia and told him to clean it up. He noticed some time later, during a different visit, that the stain had been cleaned.

Upon entering Apartment 314, police noted that the layout matched the Informant's description. Investigators photographed the area where the stain would have been, according to the Informant, and "detectives clearly observed a stain" underneath the carpet "in exactly the same location" as the Informant described. The carpet was photographed and then removed and held in evidence.



Figure 8 - Hallway inside Apt. 314 where stain was located.

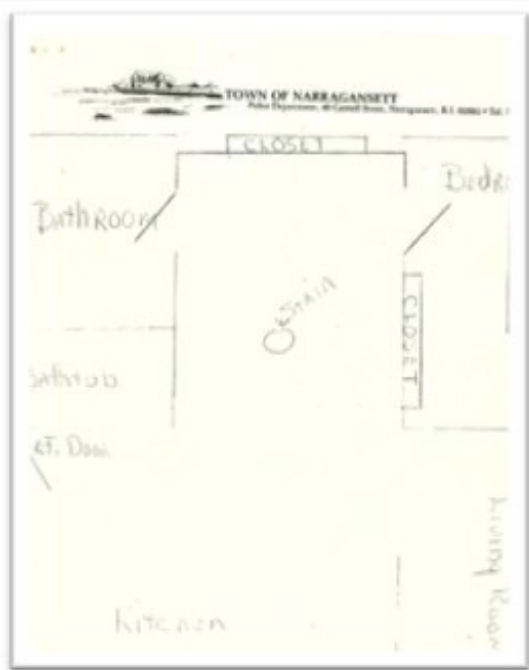


Figure 9 - Drawing by Informant of interior of Geremia's Johnston apartment where stain was observed.

Narragansett PD, in conjunction with RISP, also obtained a search warrant for Geremia's 1975 Chevrolet Monte Carlo, which was legally registered to Geremia's mother. Police removed carpet from the floor of both the front and rear seats of the vehicle, as well as floor mats that were located inside the vehicle. Consistent with the Informant's information, police noted that there was no carpet lining inside the trunk.

Both the carpets from the apartment and the carpets from Geremia's vehicle were sent to the FBI in 1987. A serological analysis was conducted, searching both sets of items for possible blood evidence as well as a hair/fiber/debris analysis. The FBI did



not find any evidence of blood on the items, nor did they find any hairs on the items that could have been linked to the victim. As described above, the Informant stated that a “fluid” leaked from the mouth area of Debra when she was placed on the floor of the apartment. Notably, he did not describe it as blood. In 2024, Dr. Chirkov explained that the fluid was the likely result of the early stages of decomposition, during which the body begins to produce fluid within three to four hours of death. In 1987, the FBI also examined the car mats for any concrete debris that could be linked to the cinderblock found tied to the body, but ultimately found none. At the time, DNA technology was not yet available to the FBI, thus no DNA analysis was conducted.

Earlier in the investigation, police attempted various forms of forensic examination, none of which produced any substantial results. In 1984, the ropes that bound Debra’s body were submitted to the FBI for an analysis of the knots. The FBI noted that they were not made by anyone particularly skilled, as they were not intricate or unique knots. Again, DNA analysis was not performed as it was not yet available in 1984. Police



Figure 10 - Section of carpet removed by RISF in 1986.

consulted with a local expert from URI, Biologist Sheldon Pratt, to obtain an opinion on how long Debra’s body had been in the water based on the mussels attached to the cinderblock. After checking the mussel beds under all bridges in Narragansett, Pratt determined that the mussels matched the location where the body was located and, based on the lack of accumulation of algae, the cinderblock was submerged for a relatively short period of time. Mr. Pratt could not estimate a more precise timeframe. The attached mussels, with a lack of algae, indicated that it was there for a “short time only,” but a day range could not be further determined.

When police recovered Debra’s body they noticed a single light-colored glove caught in the ropes. When NPD spoke with the Informant in September 1986, it became apparent that he had detailed knowledge of the physical orientation of the body within the sleeping bag. When he was shown a photo of the body, he recounted that a glove got stuck in the ropes. The Informant told police that as they were wrapping the body, the Informant’s hand got stuck in the rope after Geremia pulled the rope tight. The Informant pulled his hand out, but the glove



glove remained stuck. The Informant was able to accurately describe the glove's make and color. He was unsure about sure what happened to the remaining three gloves after the body was dumped. In 2019, the Rhode Island Department of Health ("RIDOH") tested the glove for DNA, but none was found.

In June of 2019, Narragansett PD submitted several items to RIDOH for DNA analysis, including the sleeping bag, two pieces of the rope, and the single glove. In a report dated August 2, 2019, RIDOH found that there was no human DNA located on the sleeping bag. Additionally, the two pieces of rope and the glove failed to produce a usable DNA profile. Similarly, in 2024, RIDOH performed an analysis of the victim's fingernail clippings and found that there was "insufficient human DNA

detected." Thus, the analysis could not proceed any further. The lack of DNA is likely attributable to the fact that the items were submerged in water for at least two to three days prior to their discovery, and possibly the lapse of time between their discovery and when DNA analysis became available.



Figure 10 - Section of carpet removed by RISP in 1986.

Overall, the RIAG CCU completed an extensive and thorough search for any and all forensic evidence that could be of value. Ultimately, the RIAG CCU concludes that all relevant items have been evaluated and tested, and that there is no further evidence where testing for serology or DNA would likely be productive.

F. Corroboration by Witnesses

With respect to the missing carpet inside the trunk of Geremia's car, police were able to locate a neighbor at Simmons Village with relevant information who wished to remain anonymous. This neighbor was considered a confidential informant and remained anonymous in original police reports. This neighbor told investigators that, at around the time of the homicide, they saw Geremia's mother "washing out the trunk of a large brown vehicle with temporary plates." The vehicle's description matched the Monte Carlo driven by Geremia at the time. Significantly, the neighbor observed this around 10:30 p.m. on September 2, 1984, right after Debra's body was discovered and her death was announced



to the public. The neighbor's account corroborated the Informant's report that Geremia had recently bought the car and was possibly using temporary plates. The Informant also told police that Geremia said he would clean the trunk of the car after disposing of Debra's body.

The Informant's girlfriend, Witness 5, spoke with members of the RISP and Narragansett PD on October 24, 1986, informing them that she believed Geremia killed Debra. She described the events of August 29 and 30, greatly corroborating the details provided by the Informant including his timeline of events, Geremia appearing at the apartment asking for Informant's help with a "problem," the Informant's request that she call Johnston PD, the Informant's claim that he originally believed Debra's death to be an overdose, and that he later became suspicious after seeing a mark on Debra's neck.

In her October 1986 statement to police, Witness 5 went into greater detail saying that not long after the Debra's death she ran into Geremia. She explained that Geremia was likely unaware that the Informant had shared information about Debra's death with her. She told police that during their encounter Geremia asked her if she had any "coke to sell." Witness 5 told the police that she did not want to answer Geremia and was "evasive." She believed it was apparent to Geremia that she did not want to speak with him. Witness 5 said that Geremia asked her, "oh, you know, don't you?" She responded that she was able to piece it all together based on their request for clothesline and a sleeping bag. Geremia responded with "well, you know, she was stealing my dope." Witness 5 responded with "well, you gotta do whatcha gotta do" (sic). Witness 5 explained to police that she played along and acted casual during the conversation, justifying Geremia's actions in killing Debra because she was afraid of him. Geremia then said, "well, I had to." Witness 5 told him that she did not want to speak about Debra ever again and she drove away.

Additionally, NPD interviewed a mutual friend of both the Informant and Geremia (Witness 6) in September 1988. The Informant previously told police that Witness 6 told him that Geremia told Witness 6 about a time when the Informant walked in on Geremia killing someone. The Informant provided this information to police so that investigators could follow-up with Witness 6 directly. On September 2, 1988, members of the Narragansett PD interviewed Witness 6 at the ACI. During that interview, he told police that he saw Debra pick up Geremia in her white Mercedes twice. Witness 6 described his own



history of substance abuse, Geremia's involvement in using and dealing narcotics, and Geremia's violent tendencies. He did not remember a specific conversation with Geremia, but states that the aforementioned conversation may have occurred. Due to his history of substance abuse, he had periods of time that he could not recall.¹⁷

On November 20, 1991, police re-interviewed Witness 4. As set forth above, Witness 4 gave his initial statement to police in 1984 during which he mentioned visiting Simmons Village with the Informant on the morning of August 30, 1984. According to Witness 4, the Informant visited Geremia while he remained in the vehicle. In his 1991 statement to police, Witness 4 stated that one year ago (in 1990), he was driving around with the Informant, still unaware of the circumstances surrounding Debra's death. Witness 4 casually mentioned that the anniversary of Debra's death was approaching, and that he was under the impression that Debra was possibly killed by a serial killer. At that point, the Informant abruptly corrected him, stating, "You still don't get it. You don't know how she died." According to Witness 4, the Informant reminded Witness 4 that he was with the Informant and Geremia at Geremia's Curtis Street apartment shortly after Debra had been killed. The Informant told Witness 4 that Debra spent the night with Geremia, that Geremia woke up to find Debra stealing from him, and that Geremia grabbed her by the throat and strangled her to death. According to Witness 4, the Informant also told him that Geremia placed Debra in the bathtub and that the Informant and Witness 4 had arrived afterwards and Witness 4 was told to wait in the kitchen while the Informant was called into the bathroom by Geremia.

Police noticed discrepancies between Witness 4's 1984 and 1991 statements. In 1984, Witness 4 stated that Geremia lived at Simmons Village in Johnston during the time of Debra's death, not Curtis Street. Police also reminded him that in his initial statement, he said he waited outside in the car. Witness 4 recalled that information after being prompted by police, but felt that the time he waited in the car was much earlier than August of 1984. Witness 4 finally conceded that he was using controlled substances at the time, that he never saw Debra's body in the bathtub, and that the information he was now providing was based off of his memory of what the Informant told him a year prior.

17. Witness 6 is now deceased. He died in 2005.



G. Recent Interviews & Investigation

Based on our reexamination of this case, it appears to us that, by the end of 1991, there was probable cause to charge Geremia with Debra's death based on the statements of witnesses, as corroborated by evidence from the scene. We cannot determine why no arrest was made, despite following up with investigators and prosecutors who were involved in the initial investigation. The CCU did find an internal NPD memo that discussed the Informant's failed polygraph examination as the primary reason that the prosecutor and investigators did not believe they had sufficient basis to proceed. Geremia died in 1995, and the case stalled as there were no other suspects.

In 2019, NPD tasked Detective James Wass with re-examining the case. The RIAG CCU joined the investigation after the CCU's formation in 2023. The CCU spoke with thirty-two witnesses over the course of eleven months and reviewed all records from the original investigation.

The RIAG CCU re-interviewed Witness 5, the Informant's girlfriend, at the time of the murder. Though she had not been involved with the Informant for over 25 years, her account remained consistent. She told the CCU that she believed Geremia was responsible for Debra's death. She explained that people were very frightened of Geremia at the time, noting that he was a heroin addict and could become violent, angry, and paranoid. She confirmed that, at first, she and the Informant believed Debra had overdosed, but she later learned that Geremia had killed Debra. She stated to investigators that, despite the Informant requesting her to do so, she never placed a 911 call to Johnston PD to report Debra's death. This was consistent with her statement in 1986. Finally, Witness 5 told investigators that she shares children with the Informant, but that they separated in the 1990s and haven't spoken in years.

The CCU located and re-interviewed Debra's brother as well. He provided context regarding Debra's lifestyle and known associates, including her ex-boyfriends and her connection with Geremia. He explained that his family knew of the Informant from living in the Warwick area, but that there was no relationship between Debra and the Informant. He confirmed that Debra knew Geremia and spent time with him.

In 1989, Debra's brother told NPD that he knew an individual who was incarcerated with the Informant. According to Debra's brother, the Informant told others that he was upset with Geremia because Geremia would not bring him cigarettes while incarcerated, and that it was the least Geremia could do,



since the Informant helped him dispose of a body. In 2024, the RIAG CCU located and interviewed the individual who was incarcerated with the Informant (Witness 7). Witness 7 confirmed knowing the Informant after being incarcerated with him in the late 1980s. He did not remember the specific conversation with the Informant, but he did not deny that it was possible.

In June 2024, the RIAG CCU and NPD located and re-interviewed Witness 4, the mutual acquaintance of Geremia and the Informant. He stood by his 1991 statement to police, noting that he learned of Geremia's involvement in Debra's death from the Informant six years after she died. He was still under the impression that Debra's death occurred at a Curtis Street apartment, rather than Simmons Village. However, based on his personal knowledge of Geremia and the Informant, he believed that only Geremia would have had a reason to harm Debra and the Informant likely would have assisted in the disposal of her body at Geremia's direction.

Additionally, the RIAG CCU located the carpet removed from Geremia's Johnston apartment by RISP. Members of RISP originally observed a stain on this carpet in 1986, consistent with the Informant's account. The carpet was in the custody of RISP and their Forensic Services Unit ("FSU") after RISP had assisted with the execution of the search warrant in 1986. At the request of the RIAG CCU, RISP FSU shipped the carpet to BODE Technology, a private lab located in Virginia, for forensic analysis. This laboratory is accredited to ISO/IEC standards set for Forensic Testing and Calibration as established by ANSI National Accreditation Board (ANAB).

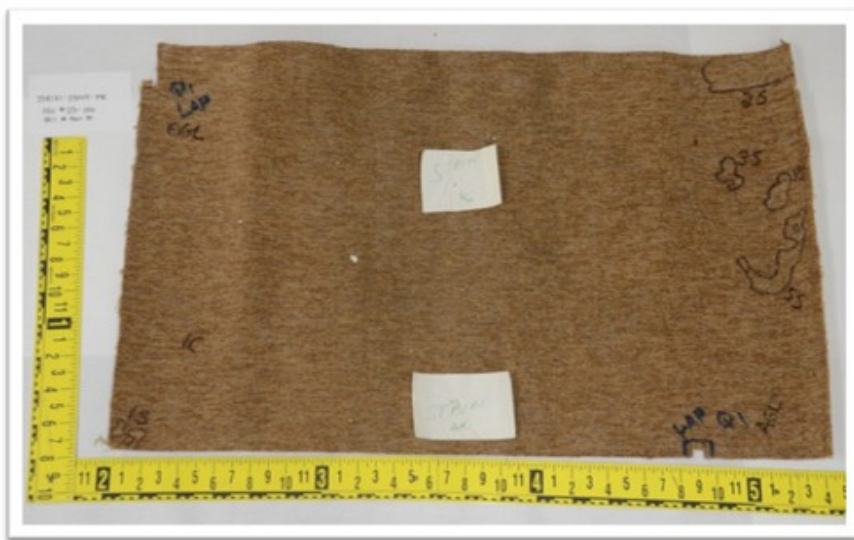


Figure 12 - Carpet removed from Geremia's Simmons Village Apartment, photographed in 2024 with stain area noted between white placards placed by original investigators in 1986.

On May 31, 2024, BODE issued a report indicating the “partial DNA profile” obtained from the carpet sample was “consistent with a mixture of two individuals, including at least one male contributor.” Only the male contributor was suitable for interpretation. With respect to the second contributor, the report indicated that “due to the limited data obtained, no conclusions can be made on the uninterpretable Contributor 2 alleles.” The analysts explained that this was likely due to the potential deterioration of DNA over nearly 40 years. Additionally, any washing or cleaning of the carpet would reduce the chance of obtaining a DNA profile from the sample. Analysts were able to develop a partial profile for Debra using a vial of blood from her autopsy in 1984 and stored with RISP FSU.

Finally, the RIAG CCU and NPD located and re-interviewed the Informant at his home on February 21, 2024. The Informant was 68 years old at the time. He remained consistent in his statements about the events of August 29-31, 1984, and recalled the details recounted above with specificity. The Informant further clarified for investigators that the fluid that leaked from Debra’s body came from her mouth area and that they put her head-first into the sleeping bag with her head towards the bottom of the bag. This description was consistent with the findings of the medical examiner as well as the position of Debra’s body inside the sleeping bag when it was recovered. As noted above, Dr. Chirkov explained that the fluid mentioned by the Informant is consistent with fluids created by the body during the early stages of decomposition.

The Informant remained steadfast in his assertion that Geremia killed Debra after she allegedly stole from him, and that the Informant only assisted because he believed that she overdosed on drugs supplied by himself and Geremia. The Informant added that sometime after the Informant’s cooperation with police, Geremia tried to shoot the Informant with a shotgun. The Informant dodged the assault by knocking the shotgun away from Geremia. After this incident, they had no further contact.

III. Applicable Law and Legal Standards

A. Relevant Statutes

IAs enacted in 1980, Rhode Island General Law § 11-23-1 provided that, “[t]he unlawful killing of a human being with malice aforethought is murder.” R.I. Gen. Laws § 11-23-1. First-Degree Murder was defined as follows:



Every murder perpetrated by poison, lying in wait, or any other kind of willful, deliberate, malicious and premeditated killing, or committed in the perpetration of, or attempt to perpetrate an arson or any violation of section 11-4-2, 11-4-3, or 11-4-4 of the general laws, rape, burglary or robbery, or while resisting arrest by, or under arrest of, any state trooper or policeman in the performance of his duty; or perpetrated from a premeditated design unlawfully and maliciously to effect the death of any human being other than him who is killed is murder in the first degree. Any other murder is murder in the second degree. See § 11-23-1, Enactment 1980 P.L. ch. 247 §3.

Unlike First-Degree Murder, Second-Degree Murder does not require a “willful, deliberate, malicious and premeditated” killing; it requires only that the killing be committed with “malice aforethought” and that the “lag time” between the formation of intent to kill and the killing itself be minimal, with only a “momentary existence.” *State v. Clark*, 423 A.2d 1151, 1161 (R.I. 1980). “Malice aforethought” is defined as “an unjustified disregard for the possibility of death or great bodily harm and an extreme indifference to the sanctity of human life.” *State v. McGranahan*, 415 A.2d 1298, 1302 (R.I. 1980). One theory of Second-Degree Murder is that a defendant formed a momentary intent to kill contemporaneous with the homicide. See *Clark* at 1161. First-degree murder requires a defendant to harbor a more-than-momentary intent to kill prior to committing a homicide. See *id.* Both First-Degree and Second-Degree Murder are capital offenses in Rhode Island, punishable by up to a term of life imprisonment and, in some instances of First-Degree Murder, an offender may not be eligible for parole. See § 11-23-2, 1984 P.L. ch. 221 §1. There is no statute of limitations for capital offenses under Rhode Island law, nor was there a statute of limitations in 1984. See § 12-12-17.

In 1984, Rhode Island’s general law regarding the required reporting of certain deaths was substantially similar to today’s version. See §23-4-7, Enactment 1982 P.L. ch. 333 §1. Rhode Island General Law § 23-4-7 stated that, “where any person shall die in any manner to suggest the possibility of a criminal act or as a result of violence or apparent suicide...it shall be the duty of any person having knowledge of such deaths to immediately notify the police of the city or town where the body of the deceased person lies or to notify the office of state medical examiners.” The penalty for willfully neglecting to report such a death, or for “willfully touch[ing], remov[ing] or disturb[ing] the body of such dead person” is up to one year incarceration. See *id.* Because this offense is classified as a misdemeanor, the applicable statute of limitations is three years. See § 12-12-17.



IV. Analysis

The totality of the evidence set forth establishes beyond a reasonable doubt that Robert Geremia murdered Debra Stone. There is ample evidence that Geremia strangled Debra and thus committed First-Degree Murder. This evidence includes (1) the medical examiner's report which determined the cause of death to be asphyxia due to strangulation—most likely manual strangulation due to the fractured hyoid bone—thus undermining Geremia's claim that Debra had died as a result of an overdose; (2) the Informant's account of how he and Geremia disposed of Debra's body, which directly matched evidence at the scene, including the description of Debra's body and her partially dressed state; and (3) Geremia's admission to Witness 5 that he "had to" kill her because Debra stole drugs from him on the morning of Thursday, August 30, 1984.

The evidence in this case also supports a lesser charge of Second-Degree Murder. Specifically, that Geremia acted "with malice aforethought[,]” forming a "momentary intent to kill contemporaneous with the homicide.” See *State v. Gillespie*, 960 A.2d 969, 976 (R.I. 2008). Multiple witnesses told police that Geremia had violent tendencies and that he was angry and paranoid, perhaps due to his own drug use. Even if Geremia killed Debra in anger, without premeditation, that would be sufficient to support a Second-Degree Murder charge.

The Informant's account, both in the 1980s and in 2024, remained consistent and was corroborated by many other pieces of evidence including, most critically, Geremia's admission to police that Debra was at this house the last night she was seen alive by family and friends. Furthermore, the Informant's account was corroborated by: (1) the cab driver who told police that he picked up Debra and drove her to the Simmons Village apartments on Wednesday, August 29, 1984; (2) Witness 4's statement which corroborated the Informant's account regarding their mutual visit to Geremia's apartment on the morning of August 30, 1984; (3) the statement of Informant's girlfriend—which remained consistent even years after her relationship with the Informant ended, including Geremia's confession to her regarding Debra's death; (4) the neighbor's statement to police that he saw Geremia's mother clean the trunk of Geremia's car shortly after the discovery of Debra's body; and (5) the details of the location where Debra's body was found, the tides, and physical evidence found with Debra's body (sleeping bag, rope, glove, cement block) which were all consistent with the Informant's description and included details that were not



publicly known. Additionally, the Informant's statements to the police were, in large part, against his own penal interest and could have exposed him to legal jeopardy.

V. Conclusion

The RIAG CCU contends that there is sufficient evidence to find Geremia guilty beyond a reasonable doubt of the homicide of Debra Stone. During the course of its investigation, the CCU contacted and interviewed active and retired members of RISP, the Providence Police Department, NPD, and RIAG that might have first-hand knowledge of this case and its progress during the 1980s and 1990s. After contacting all available members of law enforcement involved in this investigation, the RIAG CCU cannot satisfactorily explain why Geremia was not charged with Debra's murder by the end of 1991. Geremia died in 1995.

The RIAG CCU concludes that there was then, and there is now, more than sufficient evidence to charge and convict Geremia of this offense. The Informant, notwithstanding his cooperation with police and the investigation as a whole, cannot be charged for his role in the disposal of Debra Stone's body due to the statute of limitations on the offense of RIGL § 23-4-7 "Reporting of Certain Deaths Required[,]" which was a misdemeanor offense in the State of Rhode Island in 1984, with a maximum penalty of 1 year to serve and a 3-year statute of limitations.¹⁸ There is no evidence that establishes that the Informant was responsible for Debra's death or even present for the act itself. Thus, there is no evidence to support charges of murder, aiding and abetting, or conspiracy to commit murder with respect to the Informant.

Since Geremia is deceased, this case cannot be resolved with criminal charges. Therefore, the Attorney General has concluded that, based upon the evidence, this case is now closed and identified as solved.

18. RIGL § 23-4-7 now includes a provision that escalates the offense to a felony charge if the person commits the described acts with the "intention of concealing a crime." This enhanced penalty did not exist in 1984. Regardless, the statute of limitations would have run in either case.



