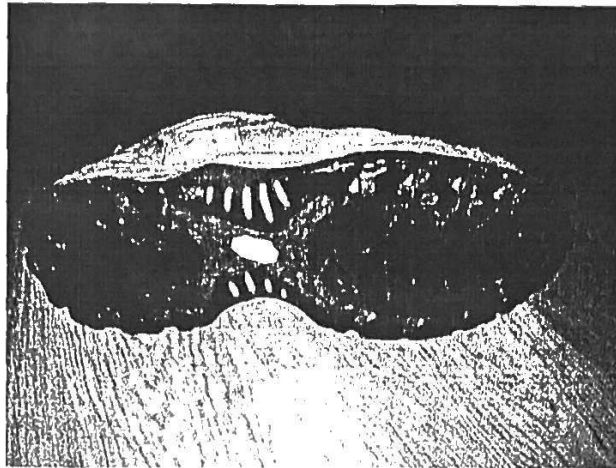


The Last Dance



Introduction

In the summer of 2002, 18-year-old Catherine Woods, a classically trained dancer, left her home in Ohio, to find fame on Broadway in New York City. However, three and a half years later, instead of making it big, Catherine was working in topless bars to cover her living expenses. Sadly, Catherine never found fame in New York City. Instead, she was brutally attacked and murdered. Included in the many pieces of evidence found in this investigation were two bloody shoe prints that helped to convict the person responsible for Woods' murder.

Night of the Murder

Catherine Woods lived with her roommate and sometimes boyfriend David Haughn, 23, who was also from Ohio. Haughn worked as a doorman at an apartment building, but he was an aspiring rap singer. On the evening of November 27, 2005, Catherine was alone in her apartment getting ready for work, while David went to run some errands and get his car to give Catherine a ride. Haughn was apparently away from the apartment for less than 30 minutes. When he returned, he parked his car in front of their apartment building and phoned Catherine to let her know he was back. When she didn't answer, David buzzed their apartment. Because there was still no response he went upstairs.

When David entered the apartment, he saw blood everywhere. At first, he thought that Catherine might have had an accident, but he soon changed his mind when he saw her face down in a pool of blood on the bedroom floor. Her entire body lay drenched in blood from wounds to her throat, many of which were so deep that she had nearly been decapitated. When David saw a shoe print in the pool of blood on the floor he phoned 911 and told them somebody had murdered Catherine.

When police investigators arrived it was obvious to them that the lack of any signs of forced entry and the ferocity of the attack suggested that a random burglar had not committed the crime. They suspected that she had been murdered by somebody who knew her, and who had possessed an intense rage towards her at the time of her death.

The Suspects

Not surprisingly, the prime suspect in the Catherine Woods murder investigation was David Haughn, since he was the last person who admitted to seeing her alive. When Haughn was questioned the day after the murder he was said to be "distracted, shaken, unnerved, and sad", but he never cried. Interestingly, Haughn never asked for a lawyer and he did not invoke his right to remain silent during questioning; he voluntarily gave a DNA sample.

Police soon began turning their attention to another suspect in the Woods murder investigation; yoga instructor/personal trainer Paul Cortez, 25. Ten months prior to the murder, Cortez was having an on-again, off-again relationship with Woods. The two met at an upscale workout center where they practiced ballroom dancing together. Cortez had tried to stop Catherine from working as a topless dancer. He even went so far as to contact her father, telling him what Catherine had been involved in.

The Search for Clues

Just as David Haughn had initially observed, the first major piece of evidence found by investigators was a bloody shoe print in the living room. Two more bloody shoe prints matching the print in the living room were found on Catherine Wood's bed and upon the back of the shirt she was wearing. Wood's killer likely kept his foot planted on her upper torso as he stabbed her to death. William Bodziak, a former FBI special agent and world-renowned expert in foot and tire imprint analysis, was able to determine that the prints came from a size 10.5 *Sketchers* boot. Ironically, each of the prime suspects, David Haughn and Paul Cortez, both wore had a 10.5 shoe size. Despite this fact, these boot prints are valuable as they confirm to investigators that they are likely on the right track and they help to build their case against one of the two suspects.

The next major piece of physical evidence found at the crime scene was a single fingerprint smeared in Catherine Wood's blood on the bedroom wall near where her body lay. When investigators ran through the print through their database they failed to find a match, meaning the killer had no prior arrests and had never been fingerprinted. This was disappointing but not that surprising to investigators as neither David Haughn nor Paul Cortez had criminal records.

The piece of evidence that broke the case wide open was a victim's confession. A woman Paul Cortez once dated told police that he had sexually assaulted her on New Year's Eve. The woman came forward after seeing news reports of Woods' death that included pictures of Cortez. The victim waited to report the assault because she was embarrassed and feared she would not be believed. This information led to the arrest of Cortez and opened the door for detectives to obtain Cortez's fingerprints and compare them to the single bloody print in Woods' apartment. One of Paul Cortez's fingerprints matched the print from the crime scene.

When police questioned Paul Cortez he denied any involvement in the murder of Catherine Woods. Investigators then determined that Cortez had used his cell phone to call Catherine seven times in succession shortly before she was murdered. Cortez told detectives he had made these calls from his apartment 23 blocks away from the crime scene. However, they were able to determine from surveillance video from a camera posted on a building down the block from the murder scene that Paul Cortez actually made the calls from this location and not from his apartment.

This information led police to obtain a search warrant for Paul Cortez's apartment. They did not find any 10.5 sized *Sketchers* boots, but they did find a diary that alluded to the murder of Catherine Woods, and how bad he felt afterwards. Cortez had also written about how he thought about killing Woods because she would not consider giving up her part-time job as a topless dancer.

Conclusion

Paul Cortez was charged with second-degree murder, and entered a plea of not guilty. After a two-week trial, the jury deliberated for three days before finding Cortez guilty. He was sentenced to 25 years to life in prison for the brutal murder of Catherine Woods.

"Shoes are fascinating items of clothing. They are made in a variety of ways and in thousands of designs. In turn, each design is made in many distinguishable sizes. As the sole wears, their design and other characteristics steadily change. They acquire cuts, scratches, nicks, and other characteristics of a random nature. These traits serve to give them a tremendous degree of individuality."

- William J. Bodziak (Supervisory Special Agent, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington, D.C.)

The Last Dance: Related Assignment

You will need to read the related crime case study to answer the following questions.

Please write answers in complete sentences on a separate sheet of paper. Thank you.

1. What led to David Haughn phoning 911 to report that Catherine Woods had been murdered?

2. Why were police investigators suspicious of David Haughn early in the investigation?

3. What did Paul Cortez tell Catherine Wood's parents she should stop doing?

4. Where were bloody shoe prints found at the crime scene?

5. Where was Paul Cortez when he placed a series of phone calls to Catherine just minutes before her murder?

6. a) What specific information was determined from the bloody shoe prints left at the Catherine Woods crime scene?

b) Did this information help determine the identity of the killer? Explain.

7. How did police end up collecting fingerprints from¹⁶²