



MEDIA RELEASE

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY
Sheriff-Coroner

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Jim Hart
Sheriff-Coroner

COLD CASE HOMICIDE SOLVED

Date/Time of Incident/Event: March 29, 1983
Location of Incident: San Lorenzo River, Ben Lomond
Case Number: 8302231
Type of Incident: Homicide – 187 PC
Suspect(s): Eric David Drummond
Photo(s) Available: Yes No

Description of Incident:

On March 29th, 1983, Sheriff's Deputies responded to a deceased female found in the San Lorenzo River in Ben Lomond, CA. The female was identified as 33 year-old Joette Marie Smith, a Ben Lomond resident and owner of the Buffalo Galls restaurant in Ben Lomond. The Sheriff's Office determined Smith's death to be a homicide. Smith was last seen on the night of March 27th, 1983, leaving Henflings Bar. Numerous items of evidence were located at the crime scene. For the next several years, Sheriff's Detectives interviewed dozens of people and investigated several leads and tips, but no viable suspect was identified.

In 1988, the Sheriff's Office developed a suspect in the case, Eric David Drummond. Drummond had an extensive history of violent crimes that included sexual assault convictions in California and Nevada. Detectives learned Drummond had asked Smith for a date while at her restaurant and she declined. Drummond left California abruptly after her murder. While there was circumstantial information tying Drummond to the crime, no criminal case could be brought against Drummond without further physical evidence.

In 2022, Smith's clothing was reexamined using new technologies and established a suspect DNA profile. In late August 2022, a DNA sample was collected from the 64-year-old Drummond for comparison. Drummond's DNA was determined to be a match.

Unfortunately, while the final investigative steps were being taken to obtain an arrest warrant, Drummond chose to end his own life in the hills of Sierra County. While Drummond will never face criminal charges or a jury of his peers, the Sheriff's Office is confident that the evidence in this case would support a conviction of Drummond for the murder of Joette Smith.

The Sheriff's Office extends our condolences to the family and friends of Joette Smith. We wish to remind the community of Santa Cruz County that the Sheriff's Office will continue to investigate each of our homicides.

Prepared by: Lt. Patrick Dimick 9/14/22