

# Attacker sought

AKRON, Ohio (AP) -- After inter-

viewing friends and family of a slain woman and canvassing the neighborhood where she was last seen alive, Akron police are without a suspect.

What police have determined is that

Rachael Johnson, 23, of Tallmadge,

spent Friday night drinking in two Akron

bars, El Cid and the Brooklands Cafe.

After leaving the latter bar, Ms.

Johnson and her girlfriend, whose iden-

tity was not released, got into the girl-

friend's car and began driving home,

but the car got a flat tire, detectives told

The Akron Beacon Journal.

The woman continued driving on

the flat tire, which became hot, filling

the car with the smell of burning rubber,

police said.

Police said Ms. Johnson panicked

and tried to jump out of the car, but was

stopped by the driver.

The two women argued, with Ms.

Johnson yelling, "Let me out of this

car. I'm not burning up in any car."

Police said the driver told them.

Ms. Johnson got out of the car about

2:30 a.m. Saturday and said she would

find a way home. Ms. Johnson's girl-

friend drove home on the flat tire. That

was the last time Ms. Johnson was seen

alive, detectives said.

# Stabbing, burning victim is identified

## Woman was 24, a mother

By Katherine Spitz

Beacon Journal Staff Writer

A woman fatally stabbed and

set ablaze in North Akron was a

24-year-old Tallmadge mother,

authorities said Sunday. Police

had no suspects and were "just

out there shaking the bushes"

looking for leads.

Police and the Summit County

coroner's office were almost cer-

tain who the victim was. But an

Akron dentist may have held the

final key to a positive identifica-

tion of the victim, whose burning

body was found Saturday morn-

ing.

A coroner's investigator con-

tacted the woman's dentist Sun-

day evening and was to meet  
with him later to go over records.  
Dental records were needed to  
make the positive identification  
because of the charred and trau-  
matized condition of the victim's  
body, a coroner's investigator  
said.

The victim had a 3-year-old

daughter and was believed to

have been unemployed and either

living alone or with her child.

She was last seen Friday eve-

ning, possibly in the Goodyear

Heights area, said Akron police.

The woman's baby sitter and a

friend recognized the description

from news reports and contacted

police Sunday. Detectives then

talked to the victim's family and

close friends.

Callers providing what they

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# Akron police have long wait for lab results in homicide

Sunday, August 25, 1991, Page B3

• DNA tests on suspect in brutal rape-slaying may take till year's end

BY ROBERT HOUJIS

*Evening Journal staff writer*

Results of DNA comparison tests — the key to whether Akron detectives charge Daniel Wilson with the March 30 rape-slaying of a 23-year-old Tallmadge woman — may not be available until the end of the year.

Akron's chief of detectives said investigators won't have any good suspects in the heinous killing of Rachel M. Johnson, 23, if the DNA test does not link Wilson to the case.

"Our case will rise or fall with the DNA test," Maj. Leonard Strawderman said. "Wilson is our only good suspect. If it is not him, we are back to square one."

Johnson was raped, stabbed 10 times in the chest, beaten and slashed across the neck; her body was dumped March 30 on Weller Street in North Akron and set on fire.

The crime is similar to a killing Wilson is accused of committing in Elyria. Wilson, who is in the Lo-

rain County Jail, is accused of murdering a woman whose body was found in her burning car.

In an attempt to link Wilson to Johnson's death, semen taken from Johnson's body during an autopsy will be compared with a blood sample taken from Wilson to see whether the DNA — genetic material unique to each individual — matches.

The Akron Police Department's request for a DNA test is one of more than 1,000 such requests from U.S. law enforcement agencies pending with the FBI's Scientific Analysis Section in Washington, D.C.

Because of the tests' complexity and the fact that only 10 analysts are trained to do DNA comparisons, it can take up to six months before the FBI sends a final report to local police, said Kenneth W. Nimmich, chief of the

Scientific Analysis Section of the FBI Laboratory.

Akron police sent a DNA sample to the FBI on May 21, Straw-

derman said.

Detectives said Johnson was last seen alive about 2 a.m. March 30 at Fouse and Dan streets in North Akron after she got out of a girlfriend's car. She got out of the car seeking another ride because the girlfriend's car had a flat tire, police said.

Wilson, 21, was arrested by Elyria police on May 9 for the killing of Carol L. Lutz, 24, of Amherst in Lorain County. He is charged with aggravated murder and is in jail in lieu of a \$200,000 bond.

Wilson, who had been living in Portage County, moved back to Elyria the day after Johnson was killed, Akron detectives said.

**QUOTE**  
 "Our case will rise or fall with the DNA test. Wilson is our only good suspect. If it is not him, we are back to square one."  
 MAJ. LEONARD STRAWDERMAN

# Murder victim found burning

## Police say woman was raped, stabbed, then body dumped

By Phillip E. Canuto  
Beacon Journal staff writer

A small patch of charred pavement and melted asphalt on Weller Street in North Akron is the only public reminder of a gruesome murder.

The real remnant is mystery:

Who was the young woman who was raped and stabbed, and had her throat slashed and her body

set on fire early Saturday?

And who killed her?

So far, Akron police don't know.

Just before 8 a.m., a scavenger driving on Weller one block east of Home Avenue saw a burning object. He thought it was a dummy, police said.

When he got closer, he saw it was a burning body of a young white woman.

The body was still burning when police arrived minutes later.

Summit County Coroner Dr. William Cox estimated that the woman was aged 17 to 25 and may have given birth to at least one child.

She was stabbed 10 times in the chest and the left side of her throat was cut.

The official cause of death is the stab wounds and blunt trauma, perhaps a punch or kick, to the abdomen, a coroner's spokesman said.

She had a small, crude tattoo of a cross on the third finger of her left hand and a tattoo of a heart on her outer left ankle.

She carried a heart-shaped key chain with the inscription: "He who holds the key can unlock my heart."

"We suspect this (the rape and murder) occurred someplace else and her body was deposited there



and set on fire," Cox said.

Police thought they had identified the woman Saturday afternoon, but the dental records did not match the teeth of the victim.

"We don't have anything else," said Akron police detective Helmut Klemm.

Here are other details that police and the coroner know about the woman:

- Height: 5 feet-2.5 inches.
- Weight: 137 pounds.
- Hair and eyes: brown.
- Clothing: Black sweater with a predominantly red pattern and made from metallic thread.
- Gray herringbone blazer with purple and light blue lines.
- Jewelry: A single wire earring was found at the scene, with two small metal crosses dangling from it. A gold metallic chain bracelet on her right wrist and a large gold metallic chain necklace.

Some kind of chain around her waist.

Anyone who can identify the woman may call the Akron Police Department at 375-2490.

■ A laser may help find the North Akron victim's killer.

# Slain woman is identified

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believed to be clues to the slaying were still calling Akron police Sunday evening, Akron Detective Donald Gaines said.

"We're just out there shaking the bushes, trying to get something going," said Gaines.

The victim was stabbed 10 times in the chest and her throat was cut. Coroner William Cox said he believed she had been raped and killed in another location, and her body deposited on Weller Street in North Akron, where it was set on fire.

A motorist driving on Weller, a block east of Home Avenue, saw a burning object just before 8 a.m. Saturday, and discovered it was a body.



Beacon Journal photo by Ed Sobe Jr.

Detective Charles Snyder (left) watches coroner's investigator Pat Gillespie study body with laser

# High-tech laser helps solve crimes

By Phillip E. Canino

Beacon Journal staff writer

An Akron police detective and a coroner's investigator each wearing orange plastic goggles, hunched over the half-charred body in a darkened room of the coroner's building on Saturday afternoon.

A single shaft of blue-green light radiating from a 6-inch pointer illuminated the dead woman's hip.

At the center of the silver dollar-size beam was a small, glowing dot, like a grain of brilliant orange glass glistening in the noon sun.

That shimmering dot may not have been anything important, simply a fiber from the victim's sweater.

Or it could be an invaluable clue: a tiny piece of cloth from the killer's clothes.

The mysterious death of the woman whose body was found Saturday morning provided Akron investigators a chance to test the newest investigative tool in the coroner's office — an argon-ion laser.

"This is really our first opportunity to use the laser technology since it became available," said coroner's investigator David Turney.

The \$2,000 laser is only one of a battery of devices — including ultraviolet light and DNA testing — used by the coroner's office and police to analyze a body and crime scene for clues.

"All this technology is great," said Coroner William Cox. "It gives you more information, but it adds time."

Dr. Cox estimated that within all the high-tech equipment, it would have taken several hours to study the body for clues.

The analysis and autopsy of the victim took all day Saturday.

High-tech equipment like the argon-ion laser does not provide easy, quick answers to a crime. What it does reveal are clues that otherwise might have remained hidden.

Bruises stand out more clearly, giving a clearer indication of what weapon was used.

Some fibers and hair glow brightly in laser light, allowing them to be collected for analysis.

In the case of the Weller Street victim, the laser also revealed light patches on the woman's skin, possible traces of the flammable liquid used to set her body on fire. Coroner's investigators gathered a swab of the tell-tale fluid for analysis.

In fact, in the initial confused hours of a homicide investigation, the laser presents investigators with mysteries, not answers.

For instance, early Saturday afternoon, police thought they knew the identity of the victim. That woman had once attempted suicide by cutting her left wrist. But an examination by the laser revealed no scars.

"The more evidence you get, the longer it takes to decipher what it all means," Cox said.

# Slain woman had happy plans

## Job, new car in devoted mom's future, friend says

By Robert Holles

Beacon Journal staff writer

Just hours before she died, Rachael M. Johnson talked about coloring Easter eggs with her 3-year-old daughter and buying a new car.

The woman, who may have been the last person to see Johnson alive spoke publicly for the first time on Wednesday.

Johnson's body was found about 8 a.m. Saturday in northeast Akron. She had been raped, stabbed and beaten before her body was set on fire.

Johnson's friend, who was with her that night, said Johnson had been struggling as a single mother, but was proud of her devotion to her daughter, Katelyn.

Johnson was happy despite being injured in a car accident last fall and being laid off recently from her job at a rubber factory in Tallmadge.

"She was going to color Easter eggs with Katie on Sunday," the woman said. "She had a chance to go back to work and she was real happy because she was going to get her income tax refund and

buy a car, a Mustang."

She said she was stunned when she read about the slaying of an unidentified woman who matched Johnson's description in Sunday's newspaper.

"I read two lines in the paper and I started freaking out," said the woman, who requested anonymity because she may be called as a witness if police arrest a suspect.

"I prayed to God it wasn't her," the

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