

May 4, 2009

# *The Jessica Baggen Murder*

a cold case gripping Sitka



**This photo of Jessica Baggen was taken during her birthday celebration. A short time later, she disappeared while walking home.**

On May 4, 1996 at 1:30 in the morning, 17 year old Jessica Baggen left her sister's place to walk home. She and a few of her close friends had gathered to celebrate her 17th Birthday. Jessica chose to walk down a familiar bike trail that winds alongside a wooded area parallel to Sawmill Creek Road near Totem Park in Sitka, Alaska.

Later that morning, her father called the Sitka Police Department. Jessica didn't come home after the party at her sister's place. The night Jessica went missing, she was wearing a dark hunter green letterman jacket with brown sleeves. It had her dad's company's logo on it— Samson Tug and Barge. She wore a white short sleeve blouse under the jacket and a pair of jeans.

By early morning of the 6th, searchers were scouring the area surrounding the bike trail. Jessica's white blouse was found on the ground. It was a bad sign. More searchers were called in; the cadaver dogs were also summoned.

A few hours later, a searcher saw a foot sticking out from underneath a fallen tree. It was Jessica, deliberately buried in dirt, leaves and brush. The only piece of clothing she had on was a sock. Investigation revealed that someone had sexually assaulted her before strangling her. Jessica died from asphyxiation.

The police diligently collected evidence. The killer's blood was found on Jessica's shirt. Some other physical evidence was also located. Nearly everything Jessica had with her that night was found—including her expensive jewelry. The only items miss-

ing were a little green drawstring pouch and the handmade teakwood marijuana pipe that it carried inside.

Police believe Jessica was killed that night, but the possibility remains that she was taken from the bike trail, sexually assaulted, killed then returned to the area and buried.

During the initial investigation, a man came forward claiming to be Jessica's killer. He knew details about the case that made him a believable suspect; however, there wasn't any physical evidence to connect him to the actual crime. The DA pressed forward and charged the man with Jessica's murder. A jury found him not guilty as the evidence pointed to someone other than the self-proclaimed murderer. The police continued their search for the elusive killer. Over time, it turned into a cold case that haunted the small town of Sitka.

The Alaska State Troopers' Cold Case Unit was given the Baggen's case in September of 2007. Coincidentally, the original investigator on the case with Sitka Police is now the Lieutenant that oversees the Cold Case Unit— Lieutenant Dave Tugmon.

From the beginning, the case was a "who done it." There weren't any solid suspects and the possibilities were endless. Time doesn't make the cases any easier but Tugmon is hopeful that even after 13 years the case will move forward.

"If you had told me back then that we'd be sitting here today and her killer hadn't been found, I wouldn't have believed you," Tugmon said.

The trail Jessica walked down the night she went missing is one that is frequented by college students, transients and seasonal workers living in a nearby camp that come to Sitka to work for canneries, fishing vessels and tour outfits.

"We're hoping that someone with new information will come forward," said Lt. Tugmon. "Someone who maybe knows where the bag and pipe are, someone who may have seen Jessica walking that night, or someone who overheard someone bragging about it in a bar somewhere."

If you have new information regarding the Jessica Baggen's case, please call and report it to the Alaska State Troopers. The lead investigator is Tim Hunyor. He can be reached at 907-269-5677.

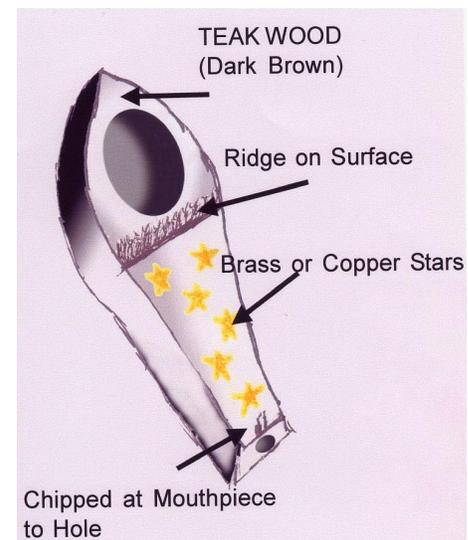
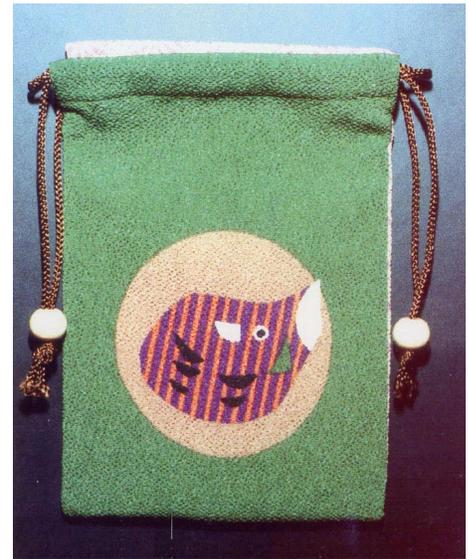
Below are other investigators you can contact.

Investigator Jim Gallen:  
907-269-5078

Investigator Jim Stogsdill:  
907-260-2716

Investigator Lindy Minnick:  
907-260-2710

Lt. Dave Tugmon: 907-269-5409  
Sitka Police Department: 907-747-3245



**These items of Jessica's have never been accounted for. Investigators are looking for any information regarding them.**

