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STATE OF ALASKA



Department of
Public Safety

Anchorage, Alaska

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DPS PR# 19-005

Arrest Made in Fairbanks Cold Case

Sophie Sergie case solved utilizing Genetic Genealogy and years of investigation

February 15, 2019 (ANCHORAGE, Alaska) – After nearly 26 years, the Alaska State Troopers is finally able to help an Alaskan family get one step closer to Justice. On February 15, 2019, Steven H. Downs, 44 of Auburn, Maine, was arrested and charged for the sexual assault and murder of Sophie Sergie.



On April 24, 1993, Sophie Sergie, 20 years of age of Pitkas Point, flew to Fairbanks for an appointment and to visit friends. Even though she wasn't currently enrolled as a student, she was staying with a friend at Bartlett Hall on the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) campus. Sophie was scheduled to fly home to Pitkas Point following her appointment on April 26. She never made it to her appointment or home. Sophie was last seen alive shortly after midnight when she left the dorm to smoke a cigarette. She was found dead in a bathtub at Bartlett hall at

the University of Alaska-Fairbanks (UAF) that afternoon when a janitor showed up to clean. Initial investigation was determined that Sophie had been sexually assaulted and murdered.

Despite the arduous and meticulous effort done by a variety of investigators over the years, a suspect had not been identified. However, in April of 2018, the Golden State Serial Killer was arrested following identification through Genetic Genealogy. Encouraged by the new investigative method, the Cold Case Unit (CCU) submitted the unknown DNA profile from Sophie's case in July of 2018 to Parabon Nanolabs, a Virginia-based company which utilizes extracted DNA to perform the genetic genealogy testing.

Finally, after a little over a quarter of a century, CCU had a likely suspect, identified through the same method that lead to the Golden State Killer, that was alive and living on the opposite end of the country. Armed with the new information, the CCU was able to conduct follow up investigation to determine that Downs (18 at the time of the killing) had been a student at UAF at the time Sophie was killed. Furthermore, Downs lived in Bartlett Hall at UAF. From there, CCU worked with Maine authorities to bring the case to fruition. Steven H. Downs was taken into custody at a local business in Maine. He will be extradited to Alaska to face charges in connection to the murder and sexual assault of Sophie Sergie.

"While an arrest doesn't bring Sophie back, we are relieved to provide this closure. This case has haunted and frustrated Sophie's family and friends, the investigators and beyond. However, we did it. Investigators never gave up on Sophie," said Colonel Barry Wilson, Director of the Alaska State Troopers. "Moving forward, AST will continue to work our cold cases until all feasible leads are exhausted. We hope that we can provide this same closure to other families that have long waited for justice."

The Alaska State Troopers would like to thank the multitude of other agencies that have assisted us with this investigation, to include the Auburn Maine Police Department, the Maine State Police (MSP) Unsolved Homicide Unit, the MSP Evidence Response Team and the MSP Tactical Team.

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