



Snohomish County Sheriff's Office **News Release**



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John R. Lovick, Sheriff

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Thirty-three year old cold case solved

Perseverance and advances in forensic science paired up to solve one of Snohomish County's oldest unsolved homicides.

Marsha Sitton was just 24-years old when her partially-clothed body was discovered June 24, 1977 in the back seat of her Chevrolet Nova just south of Penny Creek Road on Seattle Hill Road (then just a gravel road).

She had been sexually assaulted and strangled. A small 12-inch piece of rope was found behind her neck.

Detectives believed she had been killed elsewhere and her car and body placed there to make it look like that was the original crime scene. They suspected her husband, Kerry Sitton, and investigated him, but in the end there wasn't enough evidence to prosecute him – and the case went cold.

In early 2003, sheriff's detectives sent evidence to the Washington State Patrol Crime Lab for DNA analysis. In 2004, detectives visited Kerry Sitton, who had since remarried, and interviewed him. They also got a DNA sample from him. Sitton agreed to take a polygraph test, but had to cancel as he was suffering from seizures caused by a brain tumor. Kerry Sitton died in December 2004, never having taken the polygraph.

Detectives also learned in 2004 that semen samples recovered from Marsha Sitton's body matched Kerry Sitton's DNA profile – but that wasn't enough to close the case since the two were married at the time of her death, and Mr. Sitton had told detectives he and his wife had sex before she was killed.

Detectives also wanted to submit the piece of rope found at the crime scene. But that evidence required special testing that would need to be conducted at a private lab.

By 2010, the state crime lab had the technology to perform the advanced DNA testing on the ligature. Results showed the ends of the ligature had DNA on them that matched Kerry Sitton's DNA.

Snohomish County Prosecutor Mark Roe has reviewed the case and determined that were Kerry Sitton alive today he would charge him with the murder of Marsha Sitton.

Cold case detectives believe the Sitton marriage was in turmoil and that Marsha Sitton was planning to divorce her husband. They believe he killed her in their home, took her car and body to the location where it was discovered and walked less than three miles back to his house where he cleaned up and disposed of any trace of evidence. The one piece of evidence he forgot to get rid of was that 12-inch piece of rope he used to strangle her. When he cut the ligature off her neck, he left that small piece behind – along with his DNA.

"This office is committed to solving cold cases," Sheriff John Lovick said. "We never give up hope, even if it takes 33 years."

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