



Man's body located 19 years after slaying

Text: By ELIZABETH MELVILLE

Human remains believed to be those of Charles W. Eagle were excavated Tuesday from the spot where they were buried 19 years ago.

The remains located Tuesday morning were exhumed from the woods off Charlie B. Johnson Road, near the Powers' Crossroads festival grounds on Highway 34 West.

Investigators with the Coweta County Sheriff's Office, Georgia Bureau of Investigation Crime Scene Specialist Lanny Cox, and two authorities from Connecticut arrived on the scene at approximately 9 a.m. to begin digging in the area where Jerry Weyman Still, 62, had indicated on Monday that Eagle's remains would be found.

Still pleaded guilty to manslaughter on Sept. 28 in New London Superior Court for his role in Eagle's death. Still admitted to shooting Eagle to death while in Connecticut in 1988. The two had traveled there to find work as boilermakers and were rooming together at the Starlight Motor Inn. On Nov. 18, 1988, in a crime Connecticut authorities call the "mattress murder," police discovered blood-stained walls, a blood-soaked mattress and spent shell casings. Until Tuesday, Eagle's body had never been recovered.

Still told authorities in Connecticut that after killing Eagle, then 47, he drove the body to Georgia, which is where Still's aunt lived.

On Monday, Still led local law enforcement nearly straight to the location where he was "pretty confident" Eagle's remains could be found.

Tuesday morning, members of the sheriff's office began digging in the spot Still had indicated. When they reached the depth of 3 feet and did not discover anything, they decided to dig elsewhere.

Lt. John Lewis of the sheriff's office used a metal probe to test the earth in search of an area of softer soil that might indicate a shallow grave. He was able to find a likely area that was approximately 10 feet from the area Still pointed out. Investigators dug to a depth just shy of 20 inches when they found a layer of strategically placed rocks. Still had told police he'd placed a layer of rocks over Eagle's body so that wild animals couldn't disturb the shallow grave.

Underneath the rocks, investigators discovered a small piece of red fabric that appeared to be some type of shorts or undergarments. Inside the article of clothing, investigators discovered a long bone believed to be part of Eagle's skeletal remains. Cox positively identified the remains as human at approximately 11:30 a.m.

Law enforcement worked until late in the afternoon Tuesday, carefully removing and sifting dirt from around the skeletal remains, which were discovered face down.

They discovered two bullets and a piece of fabric tied around the victim's ankles. The investigators believe Still may have used the fabric to drag the body into the woods.

"We are surprised that we were able to locate the body after 19 years, and that we were able to find two bullets from that crime at this burial site," said Major James Yarbrough of the Coweta Sheriff's Office.

The body will be transported to the GBI crime lab. Scientists will use forensic testing in order to positively identify the remains and to determine the exact cause of death — including the total number of gunshots the victim suffered.

The victim was discovered with an upper plate of false teeth. Yarbrough is encouraged that the distinguishing characteristic will help the GBI make a positive identification.

Eagle's wife still resides in Georgia. Connecticut authorities said Tuesday they would notify her of the discovery.

Local law enforcement picked up Still and the two Connecticut authorities from Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport early Monday morning. Still was transported to the Coweta County Jail. Now that the remains have been located, Still will be returned to the Bostick State Prison in Georgia where he was already serving a life sentence for a separate murder that occurred in Clayton County in 1988.

Since Still cooperated with law enforcement to find Eagle's body, his plea negotiation indicates his sentence will be reduced from 20 years to 15.

Connecticut authorities remain unsure as to why, after 19 years, Still finally felt compelled to reveal the location of Eagle's body. They also refused to speculate about what led to the fatal confrontation between the two men. They do believe, however, that Still and Eagle may have traveled to Connecticut to deal in drugs.

According to Yarbrough, the evidence obtained during this investigation will be compared with the evidence gathered during the Connecticut investigation in 1988, and to the Clayton County shooting death that Still committed that same year.

"We hope to get closure all the way around," said Yarbrough.