

Case Number
MG1700802

Date
12/01/17

Deputy
M.CHARMAN

Supplement 13

On November 29, 2017 at approximately 0900 hours, I met with members of the Cole family at Frank's residence to discuss concerns they had. They informed me about numerous emails that they have received and concerns that have been relayed to them from other people. Several of the emails/concerns were in regards to the fact that they believed Ronnie was involved in selling methamphetamine alongside Luke and Brandi Willey. They said that Luke had been upset with Ronnie leading up to Ronnie's death. They have also informed me that they have received numerous stories from people about Luke's temper and tendency for violence. They also said that Luke has made threats to people that they need to "keep their mouth shut about Ronnie". The Cole family believe that Luke must have killed Ronnie and dropped him in the river.

I spent a few hours meeting and discussing with them about these issues. I pointed out that the threats supposedly made by Luke seem to be more along the lines of threatening people who are insinuating he had anything to do with Ronnie's death then actually prevent witnesses from reporting. I agreed with them that it seems that there is overwhelming support to the belief that Luke is an angry and violent person but there was not any evidence presented at this time to support that he had any involvement with the death of Ronnie.

The Cole's also had a hard time believing the people who were interviewed by our agency either due to them being scared of Luke and/or involved with a cover-up. I explained to them that the information we are obtaining through interviews are consistent and appear to be accurate. I agreed with them that sometimes not all witnesses have perfect records but it does not mean that they are lying in this incident.

The Cole's also believed that the Coroner's Report can't be informative due to the fact that Ronnie's body had begun to deteriorate. They believe that Ronnie could have been beaten to death or similar and the autopsy would not reveal it. I explained that skin-deep external injuries could be hard to identify due to the state of Ronnie's body but that the autopsy focuses on internal injuries that would show despite Ronnie being in the water for an extended period of time. I pointed out (I had brought the Autopsy Report) the key points in the report in which the Pathologist had found that there were not any brain injuries or other internal injuries that would indicate being beaten, choked, stabbed, shot, or other means of murder. I pointed out that the Pathologist is the most independent person in this entire matter and they believe that the Ronnie died due to drowning.

Frank Cole asked me what my opinion was. I told him that there was a preponderance of evidence that shows that Ronnie died in a tragic accident after jumping into a very dangerous river and getting caught in the current. I explained to Frank and his family that if something comes up that directly supports that Ronnie was murdered to notify me directly. I explained that

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this must be directly related to a murder and not to the opinion that Luke has an angry and/or violent past. I told them that unless something else comes up that would cause it to change; this case would be closed at this time with the cause of death being ruled as an accidental drowning. The Cole family seemed to understand this and agreed that it was perhaps time for them to accept this information and begin to move on.

I told them that I would be heading to interview Luke and Brandy and would notify them if I learned anything new.

At approximately 1300 hours, I went to the Mariposa County Jail where Luke was in custody on another unrelated matter. I advised Luke of the Miranda Advisement to interview him about his cases and he chose to not provide a statement without his attorney regarding those matters. I asked him if he would be willing to talk with me about Ronnie. He replied, "I will talk to you all day about Ronnie".

Luke explained that under no circumstances did he have anything to do with Ronnie's death. Luke said that he liked Ronnie and that they got along except for one incident at the Bootjack Store. Luke said that he is tired of everyone saying these things about him and that he believes Ronnie would be pissed at his family for saying these things. Luke said that he was not at the river when Ronnie went missing but once he heard about it he got a ride there to help look. Luke was visibly upset at times and appeared to be telling the truth about this.

I then followed that with an interview with Brandy who was also in custody on an unrelated matter. Brandy waived her Miranda Rights and agreed to speak with me. Brandy told me that in no way did anybody have anything to do with Ronnie's death. Brandy had explained that they had gone to the river and while there Ronnie decided to jump in the river. Brandy said that Ronnie was on the rock when he tossed her his shirt. He then got off the rock and jumped in further up river. Brandy said that Ronnie had made a comment stating, "I could ride this mother fucker to whiskey flats". Ronnie was referring to a campground down river. Brandy said that Ronnie had jumped in and was smirking as he swam back but once he went downriver of the big rock she lost sight of him and never saw him again. Brandy said that they drove down river looking when they ran into Fish and Game and the ranger agreed to help look. They continued looking before it was agreed that Fish and Game would contact the Rangers to call 911. Brandy said that she was told to wait and while she did she was able to start making phone calls. Brandy said that Luke was not there when Ronnie went missing. Brandy was also visibly upset and appeared to be telling the truth.

Recommendations:

Attach to main report. Case be closed

Approved by : D.RUMFELT Date : 12/01/2017 09:49 PM