

# Mecklenburg County M E Office

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## REPORT OF AUTOPSY EXAMINATION

### DECEDENT

**Document Identifier** B201803915

**Autopsy Type** ME Autopsy

**Name** Maddox Scott Ritch

**Age** 6 yrs

**Race** White

**Sex** M

### AUTHORIZATION

**Authorized By** Connie M. Foster RN

**Received From** Gaston

### ENVIRONMENT

**Date of Exam** 09/28/2018

**Time of Exam** 09:00

**Autopsy Facility** Mecklenburg County M E Office **Persons Present** Mr. Jacob May

### CERTIFICATION

#### Cause of Death

Probable drowning

**The facts stated herein are correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.**

#### Digitally signed by

J. Michael Sullivan MD 15 November 2018 16:34

### DIAGNOSES

1. Decomposition
2. Multiple facial/upper neck wounds, probable result of postmortem animal predation
  - Two superficial penetrating cutaneous wounds, left infraorbital
  - Three superficial and one shallow penetrating cutaneous wounds, left lower facial
  - One superficial linear abrasion, right facial
  - One shallow penetrating intra-oral wound, left upper buccal mucosa
  - One deep wound/complex of contiguous wounds, lower facial and upper neck
    - Extensive loss of soft tissues, oral/perioral, pharyngeal and hypopharyngeal
3. Multiple lower abdominal and pelvic cutaneous superficial/shallow penetrating wounds, probable result of postmortem animal predation
4. One superficial cutaneous wound, right upper arm, probable result of postmortem animal predation
5. Pulmonary vascular congestion

### IDENTIFICATION

#### Body Identified By

Papers/ID Tag

### EXTERNAL DESCRIPTION

**Length** 49 inches

**Weight** 44 pounds

**Body Condition** Decomposed

**Rigor** Decomposed

**Livor** Decomposed

**Hair** Blonde

**Eyes** Indeterminate

**Teeth** Present

The body is that of a white male child appearing the stated age, normally developed and nourished, clothed in the following: wet and mud stained clothing including red tee shirt (with white letters "I'M THE", and blue letters "MAN"), dark blue short pants with white and red stripes on the side, pull-up disposable diaper, blue sandal type shoes with straps with yellow and white colored soles. The shorts and top of diaper and pulled down to the level of the hip on the right and to the upper leg on the left. There is partial tearing of the side of the diaper on the left. There is a brown cord necklace with bead around the neck. There is patchy leaf and vegetation debris over the face and clothing. There is patchy mud staining of the skin. There is dirt/mud sediment in the diaper. The body is in a state of decomposition with diffuse bloating, green and red patchy discoloration, extensive skin slippage, early maggot infestation over the posterior head. There is mild prolapse of the rectum at the anus due to decomposition, no evidence of trauma. Two upper central incisors are absent postmortem. Mandibular and maxillary first molar teeth are erupted.

## **INJURIES**

There are multiple facial and upper neck wounds which are likely the result of postmortem animal predation. There are two linear, shallow penetrating cutaneous wounds left infraorbital, each measuring 1" in length. More inferior of the two wounds shows sharp angled wound margins medial and lateral.

Over the left lower face a short distance above the left corner of the mouth are three superficial cutaneous wounds including a 5/16" linear, shallow "V" shaped, superficial wound and an adjacent 3/16" linear, shallow "V" shaped, superficial wound. Lateral to these wounds is an irregular, complex sharp margined superficial wound measuring 1/4" x 1/4".

Immediately above the left corner of the mouth and extending in near horizontal fashion across the mid anterior left cheek is a linear, shallow penetrating cutaneous wound measuring 1-5/8" in length which gapes to a width of approximately 5/16" and shows irregular sharp pointed margin lateral and sharp pointed margin medial.

Over the right cheek just below the right eye extending in oblique fashion is an interrupted superficial curvilinear abrasion measuring 1/4" and 5/8".

On internal examination of the mouth, above the left corner of the mouth, the buccal mucosa shows a shallow penetrating wound, diamond shaped, measuring 3/8" x 3/8".

There is a large area of soft tissue loss over the lower face and upper neck, a large wound (or more likely a complex of contiguous wounds) covering an area measuring approximately 6" medial-to-lateral and 2 1/4" superior/inferior. Superiorly over the lower face right and left lateral margins of the wounds show a rounded "U" shaped and the margins over the lower face both right and left show sharp angled margins. The wounds show extensive excavation with loss of soft tissues of the lower face, through-and-through, exposing upper teeth and mandible. Mandible shows no cutting injuries or tool marks. There is extensive loss of soft tissues oral and perioral anterior and posterior to the mandible, loss of tongue, loss of greater portion of lateral oral and pharyngeal tissues, as well as loss of hypopharyngeal tissues to the level of the hyoid bone.

Over the superior to mid neck, there is a horizontally oriented, superficial, linear cutaneous wound measuring 1" in length which shows fine jagged edge at its inferior margin.

As noted in the internal description below, there are no obvious injuries to the larynx, or to major vessels of the upper neck.

There are multiple superficial and shallow cutaneous wounds of the lower abdomen and pelvis, also likely the result of postmortem animal predation.

There is a cluster of 8 superficial cutaneous wounds all of which show sharp margins over the midline lower abdomen, measuring 1/4" to 3/4" in length. In the right groin is a 1" linear to crescentic, shallow penetrating wound which shows a hooked sharp medial margin and shows shallow penetrating injury to subcutaneous tissues, to a depth of 5/8", in a direction downward. Over the left groin is a 5/8" x 3/8" ovoid, superficial cutaneous wound which shows sharp margins medially. Over the left upper leg is a 1 1/2" x 3/4" elliptical, superficially penetrating wound which shows sharp margins superiorly and a double "V" shaped sharp margin inferiorly.

Over the left anterior lateral pelvis are two superficial linear to triangular superficial cutaneous wounds measuring 3/4" and 3/8".

There is an injury to the right upper arm which is also consistent with postmortem animal predation. This is a 9/16" linear superficial penetrating cutaneous wound which shows a sharp hooked inferior margin.

## **DISPOSITION OF PERSONAL EFFECTS AND EVIDENCE**

### **The following items are released with the body**

None

### **The following items are preserved as evidence**

Clothing, cord necklace

## **PROCEDURES**

### **Radiographs**

X-rays show no bony injuries.

### **Microbiology**

None

### **Chemistry**

None

### **Identification**

Identification is based on circumstances, physical characteristics and dental exam consistent with age.

### **Special Evidence Collection**

Clothing, necklace, fingernail swabs, sexual assault kit

## **INTERNAL EXAMINATION**

### **Body Cavities**

Organs and tissues show dark discoloration and softening of decomposition, with decompositional marked distention with air of bowel loops.

### **Cardiovascular System**

**Heart Weight** 96 grams

Aorta and great vessels show a normal configuration. Ductus arteriosus closed. Foramen ovale closed. Coronary arteries proximally show a normal configuration and are of normal caliber. Valves and chambers show normal configuration. Myocardium unremarkable on serial section.

### **Respiratory System**

**Right Lung Weight** 127 grams

**Left Lung Weight** 119 grams

Larynx and trachea clear. Proximal bronchial branches clear. Lungs on section show moderate vascular congestion.

Dissection of the neck shows no hemorrhage within strap musculature. Right and left internal jugular veins and right and left carotid arteries appear intact. Hyoid bone is intact. There is non-fusion of the synchondrosis of left body/greater horn. Larynx shows no hemorrhages.

### **Gastrointestinal System**

The esophagus contains a small amount of dark brown/black fluid with fine particulate matter, apparent dirt sediment and vegetation particulate matter. Stomach contains 3 cc of similar fluid with fine particulate matter/sediment. Duodenum unremarkable. Remainder of small bowel and large bowel unremarkable on external examination and palpation. The appendix is present.

### **Liver**

**Liver Weight** 440 grams

Capsule smooth and intact. Parenchyma soft and brown. Gallbladder present.

## **Spleen**

**Spleen Weight** 36 grams

Capsule smooth and intact. Parenchyma soft and red.

## **Pancreas**

Tan and unremarkable on section.

## **Urinary**

**Right Kidney Weight** 44 grams

**Left Kidney Weight** 46 grams

Subcapsular surfaces smooth. Cortices not narrowed. Pelves and ureters not dilated. Bladder empty of urine.

## **Reproductive**

Male genitalia. Prostate unremarkable.

## **Endocrine**

THYROID: Unremarkable

ADRENALS: Unremarkable, autolyzed

## **Neurologic**

**Brain Weight** 1210 grams

Meninges clear. The brain is in a semi-liquefied to liquefied condition and shows no evidence of gross hemorrhage.

## **Musculoskeletal System**

Unfused superior coronal suture. Laxity at posterior Atlanto-occipital juncture due to decomposition.

## **MICROSCOPIC EXAMINATION**

### **Microscopic Comment**

All sections show autolysis and no pathologic diagnosis.

## **SUMMARY AND INTERPRETATION**

This is a 6-year-old white male whose body was recovered from a creek in Gaston County on the afternoon of 9/27/2018. His body was recovered after an extensive search operation for many days which began after the child disappeared from the sight of his father and a companion while walking in a nearby park on the afternoon of 9/22/2018. The discovery location was described as an eddy pool in the creek. The body was reportedly submerged with overlying vegetation debris. An available medical record lists a medical history of autism spectrum disorder and indicates the child was nonverbal.

Autopsy showed the body of a white male child in a state of decomposition with numerous wounds consistent with postmortem animal predation. These wounds included several superficial facial wounds, as well as one large wound, or a complex of wounds, over the lower face and upper neck with deep excavation and loss of soft tissues of lower face and upper neck including oral, pharyngeal and hypopharyngeal areas. Additionally there were multiple superficial/shallow penetrating wounds of lower abdomen and pelvis and a single superficial wound of the right upper arm, all consistent with postmortem animal predation. Findings included pulmonary vascular congestion.

Toxicologic analysis of blood sample taken at the time of autopsy showed an ethanol content of 50 mg/dl, and isopropanol of 7 mg/dl. This is very likely the result of decomposition.

Due to the limits placed on postmortem examination by decomposition and the loss of soft tissues around the lower face and neck, the exam itself cannot be conclusive. The findings are not inconsistent with drowning. In conjunction with investigative information at this time, which gives no indication of other than an accidental drowning, it seems reasonable to conclude that the likely cause of death is drowning. Should future investigative findings impact this determination of cause or manner of death an addendum will be made.

## **DIAGRAMS**

1. BODY DIAGRAM: CHILD HEAD (FRONT/BACK)

2. BODY DIAGRAM: CHILD NECK & SHOULDERS
  3. BODY DIAGRAM: CHILD HEAD (FRONT/BACK)
  4. BODY DIAGRAM: CHILD (FRONT/BACK)
- BODY DIAGRAM: CHILD HEAD (FRONT/BACK)  
BODY DIAGRAM: CHILD NECK & SHOULDERS  
BODY DIAGRAM: CHILD HEAD (FRONT/BACK)  
BODY DIAGRAM: CHILD (FRONT/BACK)