

Services begin today for woman killed on trail

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By Katie Fallon

Marietta Daily Journal Staff Writer

ATLANTA - Memorial services for a Sandy Springs woman killed while riding her bicycle along the Silver Comet Trail last week are scheduled for this morning in Buckhead.

A funeral service for Jennifer Ewing, a 54-year-old mother of three, will be at 11 a.m. at Buckhead Community Church on Roswell Road. Mrs. Ewing was killed in Paulding County on the Silver Comet Trail on Tuesday. Her body has been cremated.

Accused killer and convicted rapist Michael Ledford, 43, of Hiram, will appear at 9 a.m. in Paulding County Magistrate Court for a first-appearance hearing. His public defender, Tom Driggers, said his client will plead innocent to kidnapping and murder charges.

Meanwhile, recreation on the Silver Comet Trail has remained steady since the trail's first murder just six days ago.

On Sunday, a steady stream of visitors took to the trail near where Mrs. Ewing's body was found.

At the trail parking lot in downtown Hiram near mile marker 15, visitors braved the more than 90-degree heat to make use of daylight hours on the trail. Some set off on bikes, while many walked briskly and others enjoyed some much-needed shade while enjoying a cool drink of water.

Atlanta resident Tony Williams said he normally visits the Silver Comet Trail several times a month for a bike ride. He said he comes to the Hiram location to set off either further into Paulding County or to Cobb County. Sunday was his first visit to the trail since Mrs. Ewing's murder.

"Although it doesn't take away from the horrific nature of the crime or the sadness of the family, this to me seems like a random act of violence," Williams said. "I know it is a different situation for everybody and maybe women might not feel safe, and I can understand that. I think as with any tragedy, you don't want to forget what happened, but you don't want to let it rule or take over your life."

Williams said he has always thought, and still does, that the Silver Comet Trail in Cobb and Paulding is quite safe, despite its areas of wooded isolation and lack of lighting.

"I wouldn't come here at night, but nobody has ever had a reason to hesitate coming here during broad daylight," Williams said. "If this was a random crime, what happened to Jennifer Ewing probably could have happened to any woman using the trail."

Ledford's sex offender registry file reports his address as a residence on Mill Creek Lane, about eight miles from the trail. The address belongs to Michelle Turner, and the phone number for the house had been disconnected. Paulding County officials, however, last confirmed Ledford living at the address July 7, less than three weeks before he is alleged to

have murdered Mrs. Ewing.

Paulding Sheriff's Department Lt. Col. Jim Walker said Ledford reported to the Dallas police department Tuesday after a family member called police about Ledford being in some sort of fight. Walker said Ledford was injured when he arrived at the police station.

"He was claiming to have been assaulted," Walker said. "For some reason, he reported an altercation with a prostitute. I think they had to take him to the hospital"

Mrs. Ewing left from the Smyrna outpost of the Silver Comet Trail sometime after 1 p.m. Tuesday when she was last seen by her son at their Sandy Springs home. Her family reported her missing at 8 p.m. after she failed to come home for dinner. Police found her body around 10:45 a.m. on Wednesday after a multi-agency search along the trail.

Mrs. Ewing's body was found about 40 feet off the trail near mile marker 17 in Paulding County. The cause of death has been determined as blunt force to the head and chest. At the time her body was found, Mrs. Ewing's black, spandex biking shorts had been removed, but neither Paulding investigators nor the Georgia Bureau of Investigation have confirmed that a sexual assault took place. Forensic test results are not expected in for another week.

Walker said Ledford was taken into custody on a probation violation for being under the influence of alcohol. Ledford was held in the Paulding County Jail on that charge until Friday when authorities issued an arrest warrant charging him with murder during the commission of felony kidnapping.

When sheriff's department investigators began questioning Ledford about the Ewing murder, Walker said, he immediately put an end to the questioning and requested a lawyer.

A Dallas Police Department representative who answered the main number Sunday said no one there could comment on Ledford's condition. Dallas Mayor Boyd Austin also was unavailable for comment Sunday.

Contacted by phone at his Powder Springs home on Sunday, Driggers said he has spoken with several of his client's family members, none of whom are speaking with the media.

"They have indicated they do not want to speak to any press," said Driggers, who has both defended and prosecuted brothers of Ledford's in Paulding County courts in the past.

Driggers said he has spoken with Ledford's parents, sister and two of his brothers. He said it would not be appropriate for him to characterize the family's emotional state as Ledford heads to his first appearance hearing today.

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NANCY GRACE

Georgia Mother Found Murdered

Aired July 27, 2006 - 20:00:00 ET

THIS IS A RUSH TRANSCRIPT. THIS COPY MAY NOT BE IN ITS FINAL FORM AND MAY BE UPDATED.

NANCY GRACE, HOST: Tonight, breaking news. Police bear down on a person of interesting in the murder of a gorgeous Georgia mom out on her routine bike ride on a highly popular bike path called the Silver Comet trail. And guess what? The POI, person of interest, has several prior convictions, including rape. We examine the evidence left behind. And tonight, live to Phoenix. Another shooting victim. Is it the work of a Phoenix serial killer?

First tonight, live to the scene of a murder on the Silver Comet trail.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: You called it a crime scene. Is foul play suspected here?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: We're not sure yet. We're not sure yet. We have Paulding County working on that, along with the GBI crime lab. And of course, it's going to be their baby from that point on.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

GRACE: A Georgia mom found dead about 40 feet off the bike trail she went on every single day. Now, this is a world-class biker -- 25 miles out, 25 miles back. That's 50 miles every day. She knew where she was going. She was used to the trail. Her body found.

Let's go out to crime reporter with "The Marietta Daily Journal" Katie Fallon. Katie, what can you tell us?

KATIE FALLON, "MARIETTA DAILY JOURNAL": Well, we know that she was last seen at 1:00 o'clock by her son at her home in Sandy Springs. And they called police around 8:00 PM. She -- the family had not expected her -- or had not seen her home for dinner. **And the search started then, and then they found her around 10:45 AM yesterday morning.**

GRACE: Katie, how often would Jennifer ride the trail?

FALLON: **About three to four times a week, that same 50-mile ride, 25 out and 25 back.**

GRACE: And the breaking news tonight, a person of interest under questioning by local police. Katie, what can you tell us about that?

FALLON: The person of interest has indeed been confirmed. His name is Michael Ledford. He does have a prior conviction for rape in the same county in which the crime has been committed. But at this point, Fulton County Sheriff's Department is saying that he is just a person of interest and not a suspect.

GRACE: We are talking about a man who has a prior rape conviction. Katie -- Katie Fallon with us from "The Marietta Daily Journal" -- I've been taking a very careful look at these documents, and if you look very closely at them -- of course, first there's the indictment on the rape, for which he did 10 years, he served his time, he got out. But if you take a look at the consent order in the probation revocation, Katie, I found out that there are additional convictions, specifically false imprisonment out of Tennessee, a 2002 conviction. Also, I see in October 2002, guilty plea in that. I mean, this guy has quite a record.

What concerns me most is the rape conviction. What do we know about that, Katie?

FALLON: We know that he was convicted in 1991, served 10 years. Again, it was in the same county in which the crime was committed. As recently as July 6th this month, he re-registered his address in the county. So we know he was registered where he was -- where he was supposed to be.

GRACE: Let's talk about the evidence, the evidence that we know of right now. Again, this gentleman not an official suspect. He has been called a person of interest. We know he's under questioning. In fact, the governor of Georgia spoke out, Governor Sonny Perdue, regarding Jennifer Ewing's murder. He states, "I'm very proud of Georgia's law enforcement, who apprehended a suspect already. I'm proud Georgia has some of the toughest penalties for convicted violent sex offenders in the U.S." That's from the governor. This has got the entire city on edge.

I want to go out to Jerry Dingmore, senior pastor with Revival North Baptist Church. He has been ministering to Jennifer's parents and family. Pastor, how is the family tonight?

JERRY DINGMORE, SENIOR PASTOR, MINISTERED TO EWING FAMILY YESTERDAY: Well, as you can imagine, it's a tough time for them, and we all can kind of relate to that. At the same time, I think it's difficult to know, unless you went through this, what it's like.

But the family is amazing. I think to understand a little bit about Jenny, you've got to understand her family, the one she came out of. You called her a world-class bike rider. She's a world-class lady out of a world-

class family. And part of that is because of -- this family's large. She has four brothers, a sister, but they function like a small family. I mean, it's amazing. You hang around with them, and you want to -- you want to say, I want my family to be like that. And it's an amazing support system. They have amazing character. This is the kind of family you'd want to live next door to you, the kind of family that if you had a business dealing with them and even a contract, they would honor it to the point of bankruptcy because the character, the faith in Christ is awesome.

And she, by her family's definition, is the golden one out of this. And she was a lady who sacrificed and home-schooled her children. She helped home-school other children. She was one that her brothers said, I had a big business deal, I had my wife call her and say, Call Jenny, get her praying. I mean, she -- her family looked at her as the cream of a family that's the top cream family. And so when you hear a story like this about a murder, it makes you sad. When you hear one about a world-class lady like Jenny, it makes you mad.

GRACE: Pastor, I've got to tell you, it just hurts me so much to hear you say what I've heard so many victims' families say in the past when someone goes missing. Everybody immediately just says, Pray. This was so out of the ordinary for her, not to be home for dinner, to be gone that day. When they got home -- I saw it was late in the day when they reported her missing. I can't even imagine what went through their minds when they realized Mom isn't here. Where is she? Why is the house quiet? Why aren't the lights on? Where's her bike? Where's Mother?

When did the family first hear that a body had been found?

DINGMORE: I was on -- I don't know when they heard. I was on my way up there when -- on the day, to just be moral support, prayer support for the search. And I got the call on the way up there that afternoon.

And I think you hit a good point Nancy. Knowing this family -- and you hear a story like this, as Americans tend to do, when we have troubled times, we want to do something. We hear a tragic story in someone's life, we want to do something. And I know this family well, and what they would say is, Hey, pray for us. People of faith out there, pray for us.

And don't just pray when she was missing but continue to pray for this family because, Nancy, in the legal work you've come across this in victims' families, and I deal a lot with it, it is -- it's -- you cannot describe the process of healing here. And if people watching will pray for this family, that would be a tremendous comfort, to know that people would do that for her.

GRACE: Well, I saw them reaching out on the airwaves, trying to get help in finding her. And then how sad, I believe it was the son, when he said, We had hoped so much for a happy ending. That just was not meant to be. How did they find out that a body had been found?

DINGMORE: I -- again, I was on the way up there, so I don't exactly know how they found out.

GRACE: Right.

DINGMORE: I will tell you that when I came to the house, to give you one example, her mother was inside the house, and word was sent out to me -- she had seen me walking around, talking to people outside. And word was sent out to me that she was worried about me because she hadn't seen me eat lunch that day. I mean, these are the kind of character people they are. They're going through something so traumatic and so painful, and yet, as you talked about, her oldest son giving that statement, it was not a statement full of bitterness. It wasn't a statement full of anger.

GRACE: Not at all.

DINGMORE: That would be easy to do. But it's a testimony that Jenny and her life, the quality of children that she had.

GRACE: Well, speaking of what her son said, let's show that to the viewers, Rosie (ph).

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: My family would like to extend our warmest thanks to the public safety professionals and many volunteers who endured the heat and other obstacles in locating our loved one. We realize that

without the efforts of those involved and the lengthy and difficult search, we may never have known what happened to her. We had hoped and prayed for a happy outcome, but instead, we're faced with this tragedy.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

GRACE: Pastor, I just hate it. I hate it so bad for that family. With us, Pastor Jerry Dingmore from Revival North Baptist Church in Georgia.

Let's go out to the lines, Rosie. Joining us, Angela, Pennsylvania. Hi, Angela.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Hi, Nancy. My question, Nancy, is why do we continue to let these rapists and these child molesters back out onto the street? It just behooves (SIC) me how they can do that. First of all, a woman is no match in physical strength for a man. Why don't we just build an island and put them all on the island? Because they say these people do not change. And what is wrong with these judges?

GRACE: Well, out to Bethany Marshall, psychoanalyst. I agree with Angela. You know, you can hear shrinks and social workers tell you all day long until they're blue in the face that you can rehab sex offenders. But look, I've seen it in the trenches for 10 years, prosecuting rapes and child molestations. I do not believe that they are ever cured. And I agree with Angela. This guy just got out after doing 10 years behind bars. According to these documents, already in trouble twice. Now, again, he's not a suspect. He is a person of interest.

Can they be healed, Bethany Marshall? If it is him, what's he doing crouching out by a bike path?

BETHANY MARSHALL, PSYCHOANALYST: Well, I think you want to distinguish, I mean, in a rape case like this, that the guy uses rape and extreme cruelty to enhance his sexual arousal because 5 percent to 6 percent of rapists do. And in a case like that, they really don't get better because research shows that what happens is they look for one more act of cruelty and then one more act and then one more act, and that is the only way they can achieve sexual satisfaction, and they become really addicted to that sexual satisfaction. They keep chasing that sexual high. And so it becomes a pattern of offending throughout their entire life.

But I think one of the reasons that they're let out, child molesters especially, is that we want to focus on the mental health problems and we lose sight of the fact that they really commit crimes, and that's really what we have to place as a priority when setting sentencing.

GRACE: And again, we just put up the POI, person of interest's, record. But according to the indictment that I've got right here -- and we're going to go to his lawyer in just one moment -- it also refers to a false imprisonment and -- out of Hickman (ph) County, Tennessee. And that's in April 2002. Now, does that make him guilty here? No, it does not. Again, person of interest, being questioned.

Speaking of, let's go out to his former lawyer, a veteran trial lawyer, Gary Jones. He represented Ledford. Sir, thank you for being with us.

GARY W. JONES, PERSON OF INTEREST'S ATTORNEY: Good evening, Nancy.

GRACE: Now assistant, Cobb County solicitor's office. You know, it's interesting. If I've got this right -- and you know the facts better than me. I'm just looking at the indictment. Was the MO in his last rape case in '91 similar to Jennifer's murder?

JONES: Well, I don't know all the facts about Jennifer's murder, but in the case that I represented the man, he attacked the young woman in the woods on her way home. Now, he had made a preliminary contact with her before that. He struck up a conversation with her, more or less kind of casing her out, and then followed her and then attacked her in the woods. Now, his defense was that he met her in the woods later on and they had consensual sex, and the jury didn't buy that.

GRACE: Was there -- oh, so it's not a guilty plea, it was a jury trial?

JONES: It was a jury trial. It was a knock-down, drag-out affair. And any time you have a defense where it's consensual, the jury's going to be out a while. In this particular case, the young woman did not give the hue and cry, and reported the rape later on. Nevertheless, the jury came back and found him guilty.

GRACE: Didn't she -- with me is Gary Jones, a veteran trial lawyer, formerly a defense attorney, now an assistant solicitor in Cobb County. In the prior, the 1991 attack, Mr. Jones, was the victim beaten?

JONES: She wasn't beaten. She was, I'd say, roughly handled. You've got to remember, Michael's not a very big man. The best I can remember, he's about 5-8, 5-10, about 160 pounds. Therefore, it makes perfect sense for him to pick a smaller woman. And as I understand in this case, this lady was very petite. In the other case, the woman was rather small, too. I believe she was a teenager or maybe in her early 20s, and she did not put up a fight, a struggle. So it would make sense that he would pick on a smaller woman, since he's kind of a small man himself. I wouldn't go so far as to say he's wimpy, but he's certainly not very muscular.

GRACE: With us, the attorney for the person of interest in his last rape conviction.

Take a listen to what the sheriff had to say.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Michael Ledford is a person of interest. Currently, Mr. Ledford is in custody for violation of probation. No charges have been made or filed. A homicide -- or homicide investigation or any kind of murder charges have not been filed against Mr. Ledford. He's strictly there for probation. However, investigators believe that arrest is forthcoming in this case.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

GRACE: That is the sheriff working this case. We're talking about the brutal death of a lovely lady, a mother of three, a gorgeous Georgia mom, a world-class biker, 50 miles a day. We now learn more about her as the case widens, that she home-schooled all of her children, deeply involved in her church. Tonight, she is sorely missed. But don't worry, Lady Justice isn't resting.

Let's go to tonight's "Case Alert." A POI, person of interest, in the death of a 21-year-old judge's daughter, Meghan Kohl. She was found by her roommates last Friday in her Oregon apartment. Police tonight searching a van used by Kohl, Kohl, interestingly (ph), the daughter of a Washington County judge, Thomas Kohl. Was her death somehow connected to her father's job on the bench?

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Until the GBI has actually positively identified the body, we have not confirmation that it's actually what we believe to be Jennifer Ewing. I believe they found the bicycle. I'm not sure if it was in the near vicinity of her location or not.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Michael Ledford is a person of interest. Currently, Mr. Ledford is in custody for violation of probation. No charges have been made or filed. A homicide -- homicide investigations or any kind of murder charges have not been filed against Mr. Ledford. He's strictly there for probation. However, investigators believe that arrest is forthcoming in this case.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

GRACE: A Georgia mom found brutally murdered on a bike trail that she knew like the back of her hand. Ladies, do you hear me? **She rode this bike trail every day, 25 miles each way.**

I want to go back out to Gary Jones. He represented Ledford, the person of interest who is being questioned. Gary, again, thank you for being with us. We're talking about the POI, person of interest's, last rape conviction. You said that occurred in the woods. He had struck up a conversation with her on a previous occasion, and then the rape occurred. It was a jury trial. He got 10 years. Why didn't he get the max?

Gary, are you with me, Gary Jones? Rosie, let me know when we get Gary back.

Let's go out to the lines, Rose. Let's go to Jeff in Wisconsin. Hi, Jeff.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Hi, Nancy. Thank you. Great topic. And if Jennifer's family is following this this evening, let them know, please, that you're being bathed in prayers from all over the country.

GRACE: Will do. Will do.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: My question, Nancy, is how do you become a person of suspect? Can you be a person of suspect simply by living in that territory?

(CROSSTALK)

GRACE: Well, hold on. Let me get your question down, Jeff. There is a person of interest, which is someone cops are talking to. Then there is -- they graduate sometimes to suspect. Now, suspect -- once you're a suspect, a lot of constitutional rights attach to you. So are you asking about person of interest or suspect?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Actually, both. How do you go from being a person of interest to a suspect?

GRACE: OK.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Where is that line? Where do they (INAUDIBLE)

GRACE: This is the way I see it. This is the way I see it. And I'll throw this to you, Renee Rockwell, as well. Person of interest is someone that may be involved -- may be. It could be -- earlier, they said they had four persons of interest. A suspect, they're beginning to hone down on you that you are the likely perpetrator. Agree or disagree, Renee?

RENEE ROCKWELL, DEFENSE ATTORNEY: I agree. And Nancy, probably in this case, you have a situation where this guy is a registered sex offender, so they probably look for somebody in the area. He may have been seen. He may have some type of injury. He may have...

GRACE: There's got to be DNA all over this scene. She fought, Renee.

ROCKWELL: To the end. And I can assure you, he needs an attorney and he doesn't need to say anything.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: This is just really strange. She would always be home by dinnertime. She's always with us.

JIM EWING, MURDER VICTIM'S HUSBAND: It would help us to know if anyone saw her, to know what time she actually left. It would help us tremendously, if anyone saw her, to let the Cobb County police know.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

GRACE: That was Jennifer Ewing's husband, Jim Ewing, reaching out to the public, trying to get answers in his wife's disappearance. An avid biker, she biked 50 miles a day. They knew something was very wrong when they got home and she wasn't there.

Rosie, do I have the lawyer with me again, Gary Jones? OK, great. Gary, question. After a full-blown rape trial in '91, why didn't this guy get the maximum for rape? Why did he only get 10 years?

JONES: Well, Nancy, the maximum would have been, of course, life in prison.

GRACE: Yes.

JONES: In Georgia, especially back in '91, no one was getting life imprisonment for rape. Back in '91, 10 years...

GRACE: Really? Because I surely got some lifes on rape. I don't know what happened between...

JONES: Maybe you had some priors, priors on the guy.

GRACE: Who was the judge? What judge was it heard that case?

JONES: I don't remember the judge. But I can tell you, back in '91, 10 years, in Paulding (ph) County was about a standard sentence for something like that. As I recall, this was probably his first serious felony.

But now let me say this. I'm not surprised that this crime occurred on the Silver Comet trail. I'm not surprised that Michael Ledford is a person of interest. His family -- he comes from a very strange family. His brother...

GRACE: Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. I don't want to get into anything about his brothers. That's a whole 'nother can of worms, Gary. I'm familiar with what you're talking about.

Hey, Gary, what was your reaction when you found out one of your clients is now a POI, person of interest, in a murder?

JONES: Well, again, I'm not surprised, based on what happened in '91 and from...

GRACE: Gotcha.

JONES: ... what I've heard you say on the program. But let me just say this. My law office was about 100 yards away from that Silver Comet trail, and that thing is a perfect set-up for a sexual predator. It's only about 12 feet wide. And it's patrolled fairly well in Cobb County, but once you get out -- it goes all the way to the Alabama line. Once you get out in that rural area, it's a perfect set-up for a mountain lion or a sexual predator. They can see you coming from a mile away. And he lived out that way.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE (voice-over): When Jennifer didn't come home for dinner, her family became worried. She had told her son around noon she was heading out to do errands and ride her bike. Relatives say she rode on the Silver Comet Trail four days a week.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: She never failed to check in or come home.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Relatives found her silver minivan near the trail off Cooper Lake Road. Jennifer Ewing is a mother of three who has been married for 29 years.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

GRACE: Tonight, a person of interest under questioning in the death of Jennifer Ewing.

Back out to Katie Fallon, crime reporter with the "Marietta Daily Journal." What can you tell me about the crime scene? I want to go through the evidence that we know of right now. Was there a struggle, Katie?

FALLON: Yes. Police have said that there were definite signs of struggle.

GRACE: OK. That means, if she fought back, there should be some of his DNA somewhere on that scene. Was she sexually assaulted, Katie?

FALLON: Police have not mentioned that yet. They haven't mentioned anything as far as her condition, except for the blunt force trauma.

GRACE: OK, to Richard Herman, defense attorney, let's read the evidence that we know about. We know her bike shorts were removed from her body and they were there on the scene, as well. That says sex assault to me. Agree, disagree?

RICHARD HERMAN, DEFENSE ATTORNEY: Absolutely, Nancy. You've got to believe she was raped, sexually molested here. And I just hope that law enforcement is not banking all their evidence on the fact that this guy was convicted of a rape of some 15, 16 years ago. I mean, he's a good place to start with the

registry of sex offenders, but they've got to keep this investigation open. They can't just focus on this one guy.

GRACE: And, P.S., speaking of the '91 conviction, I've been studying the documents. I found out the name of the judge, Gary. I know you were covering the lawyer, Gary Jones, Judge Marion Cummings, Marion Cummings.

And FYI, yes, I thought I might jar your memory when I started reading these documents. FYI, for a long time in Georgia law you could actually get the death penalty for rape. That, of course, was ruled unconstitutional. But the maximum, as Gary accurately pointed out, is life. Now, I'm very interested in why Judge Cummings thought 10 years was appropriate for a violent rape.

Back to these facts, to crime reporter Katie Fallon with the "Marietta Daily Journal," was anything stolen, Katie?

FALLON: We have not heard any reports of anything stolen. The bike was found near where Mrs. Ewing's body was found, so that has not come up, no.

GRACE: Has there ever been another serious crime along the Silver Comet?

FALLON: There really hasn't. Smyrna police, the municipality that has the jurisdiction over where the trail head is, that goes about 12 miles to the county line with Paulding County, they have said that it's really a low-crime area. They haven't seen any problems. And if anything, maybe the biggest problem was breaking into cars and vandalism, that type of thing.

GRACE: And I understand, to the executive director of the Path Foundation, Ed McBrayer, this is a very popular path. And the reason I say that is, whenever there's a crime on a woman, it seems as if everybody wants to blame the victim somehow. I think it's psychological. And I'll go to our shrink on that, because you think, "Oh, I would never have gone on this path by myself for 25 miles out, 25 miles back." In reality, this had a very low crime rate, Ed.

ED MCBRAYER, EXEC. DIR., PATH FOUNDATION: We think the Silver Comet's a very safe place. A couple of million people a year use this trail. And the safety record is impeccable. This is the first major incident we've had of any kind.

You know, I want to express, by the way, my sincere condolences to the family of Jennifer on behalf of the Path Foundation. We're like a big family. All of us that use the Silver Comet Trail, we're really like a big family. We wave at each other. We talk about our trips out to the Silver Comet at the water cooler, and we feel that we've lost a family member. And it's really been a gut-wrenching couple of days for us.

GRACE: And actually, this was near an elementary school, the Nickajack Elementary School, Ed?

MCBRAYER: The start of the trail is near the Nickajack. The crime scene I think was about at mile marker 17, so it's 17 miles from Nickajack.

GRACE: We're talking about the death of a beautiful Georgia mom of three, Jennifer Ewing, her family begging for help from the public until they realized the news was bad.

To Dr. Michael Hunter, a forensic pathologist and medical examiner, Dr. Hunter, we've gotten confirmed by Colonel Walker from the Paulding County sheriff's department cause of death blunt force trauma to head and chest.

Doctor, initial reports were that they could not make an identification of this person because of the trauma to the head. I think - - this is anecdotal; you're the doctor -- he had to use a weapon, even if it was a tree branch. He used something to beat her to the point where they couldn't identify her.

DR. MICHAEL HUNTER, FORENSIC PATHOLOGIST: You know, I think you're right. I mean, one of the reasons why identification might be difficult is the issue of decomposition, but I don't think we're dealing with that here. I think you're right: It's probably going to be blunt force injuries to the face. And as far as a weapon, sure, I mean, you know, the sole of a shoe is a fantastic weapon, impacting the face.

GRACE: Well, Renee Rockwell, under the law, I mean, I've prosecuted aggravated assaults with a deadly

weapon where the deadly weapon was fists, or the deadly weapon was a branch, or a household item, a lamp that had been turned into a deadly weapon. So, you know, a deadly weapon doesn't necessarily mean a knife or a gun under the law, Renee.

ROCKWELL: No. And like you said, it could be a shoe. But you mentioned something that's interesting, because now you're talking about a potential death penalty in a situation like this. You've got a rape; you've got an ag assault; and here you have a murder. And it's in a conservative county, Nancy. I'll be looking for a death penalty.

GRACE: Paulding County.

And, of course, Pat Brown, criminal profiler, with us tonight, once you get the death penalty sentence here in Georgia, we do offer the perpetrator a choice of the electric chair or the needle. So that's something whoever killed Jennifer can look forward to.

Describe your take, Pat Brown. Profile it.

PAT BROWN, CRIMINAL PROFILER: Well, I think this is very interesting. When we talk about a safe trail, there's no such thing. Land is not safe.

GRACE: Oh so should I just stay at home and hide under my bed?

BROWN: Now, that's the real problem we have. This is what's so wrong about our sentencing system. You know the saying shame on -- fool me once, shame on you, fool me twice, shame on me? Well, this is the problem.

If we don't know that there's a perpetrator out there, we can't do anything about it, because he hasn't committed a crime yet. But once a guy's been in the system and does something horrific, we let him back out so he can have his rights. Then you take away the rights of everybody else.

So this poor woman who wants to have a life and do something fun and wonderful has to not be able to do things because, like you say, she can't go down a bike path? That's her right. But the problem is you get this creep sitting in the bushes -- and my guess is that she was flying by, because she was probably going pretty fast -- he just knocked her off the bike with something and then beat her to a pulp.

And mind you, if this is Ledford, he might have learned something from his first time around: Don't leave your victim alive because they rat you out.

GRACE: To Bethany Marshall, psychoanalyst, I believe Pat is correct, but I want to talk about something that veteran trial lawyer Gary Jones said earlier. He said that in the first rape of the person of interest, Ledford, that there wasn't a violent struggle.

MARSHALL: Right.

GRACE: You know, under the law across this country for many, many years, the woman had to be beaten to a pulp before you could show force, non-consensual sex under the law. That law has changed.

MARSHALL: Good.

GRACE: But I believe a lot of people, if the woman isn't beaten, then they don't think a violent crime has happened. Whenever there's a rape, even if it is a date rape, it's a violent crime.

MARSHALL: It's violent. Here is the big misunderstanding that the public has. We call these sex crimes, so the public thinks, "Oh, it's a sex act, it's a sex crime. That is the primary motivation." That is not the primary motivation.

It's a homicide crime. It's a cruelty crime. It's a hatred crime. It's "I'm going to seek revenge on you" crime. The primary motivation in all of these sex assaults is anger, aggression, the wish to kill, the wish to seek revenge. That is what is at the heart of it, and that's what you have to hold theoretically in your mind when you think about these cases.

The sex is only secondary. It's only a weapon. So in no way, shape or form is it the woman's fault. It's

easier to think it's the woman's fault, because we don't want to think that somebody could do such a heinous thing, but there are really disturbed people who can.

GRACE: I'm just sick, not that who the victim is should matter -- it doesn't matter to me -- but such a fine lady. Out to the lines, Mindy in Texas. Hi, Mindy.

CALLER: Hi.

GRACE: What's your question, dear?

CALLER: I was just wondering, did she have like a cell phone on her?

GRACE: You know, that's a good question. Katie, did she have a cell phone with her?

FALLON: We haven't heard that she did have a cell phone on her, but we do know that cell phone calls can be made from that trail. There's no known interference, you know, with the foliage or the trees.

GRACE: Right, but here's the deal. If this woman, as Pat Brown, the criminal profiler -- and she usually pegs it right -- if this crime happened the way she imagines it went down, whether it's Ledford or not, that this woman was attacked while she was on the bike, if she was knocked down and she was going along on the trail, when's she going to reach for her phone? I mean, how's she going to -- "Oh, hold on just a moment, got to make a quick phone call." That's not going to work, Pat Brown.

BROWN: No, it isn't. I mean, that's always the problem: It's always too late.

A lot of times when we're out on a path, and I have to say I'm one of those and I do go jogging, and sometimes I'm out jogging and there's lots of people, and then all of a sudden I look around and there's nobody. The problem is you get hit over the back of the head, and it's too late, and you cannot do anything about it.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: All of you who knew mom know that she was responsible for every good thing our family has done or ever will do. She's an inspiration to all of us. We hope this person or persons responsible for her death will be caught and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE (voice-over): These days in Phoenix, cops descend on a crime scene with a bit more urgency than usual. Many people here are gripped by fear and constantly on the lookout.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: It scares me. I mean, I'm freaked out.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: I have dreams about it, so it's kind of creepy.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: I'm just looking around all the time, making sure that nobody's following me.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE (voice-over): Now, remember, these two killers are totally different in how they operate. The Baseline Killer is up close and personal, not afraid to lay his hands on his victims, even if other people are around.

But the Phoenix Serial Shooter uses a car to sneak around in the dark. He is quiet and anonymous as he goes target practicing on the innocent citizens of Phoenix.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

GRACE: Two more shootings in the Phoenix area have everyone on edge. Are the shootings connected to the serial killers, not one, but two serial killers stalking the desert town?

Out to Phoenix police department Sergeant Andy Hill. Sergeant, thank you for being with us. A lot of confusing facts here. This I know for sure: a shooting over the weekend, a shooting on Wednesday. Are they connected in your mind?

SGT. ANDY HILL, PHOENIX POLICE DEPARTMENT: Well, Nancy, as far as this case you're talking about, we have these two separate cases. The series of possibly related shootings, we're not calling that a serial killer case. That is a series of shootings that appear to be connected.

Of the 35 incidents, only four are forensically connected. The rest are connected by M.O., as we've talked about in the past. The recent case last night is not connected in the minds of investigators. However, this past Saturday there was a case in Mesa, Arizona, which we have added to our list of possibly related shootings.

GRACE: Now, you mentioned one perpetrator with 35 incidents; is that correct?

HILL: Right. We have these series of possibly related shootings. We believe it may be one lone perpetrator, but we still do not have a definitive suspect description to put out. We don't want to put out some of the general things that a couple of the victims have said because we want that information to keep coming into us.

GRACE: With us, Sergeant Andy Hill from the Phoenix police department. Sergeant, the perp with the 35 incidents, four of them you believe are connected, is that this Phoenix Serial Shooter?

HILL: Right. That is what we're saying is a serial shooter. The other cases have to do with who we call the Baseline Killer, which is a series of 21 incidents. Nine of those are forensically connected. Six homicides in that case.

GRACE: Now, with the Phoenix Serial Shooter, Sergeant, would the four that you believe are connected, were they all homicides?

HILL: No, they were not. There was a combination of shootings of animals and people, and we do have just four of those definitively connected. However, we do have some M.O. information we have not put out. But the general method of operation continues to be random victims, alone between the hours of about 10:00 that night and 4:30 in the morning, and no witnesses there.

GRACE: And what's the latest? To Ed Miller with "America's Most Wanted." Sergeant Hill just telling us the latest regarding the Phoenix Serial Shooter. What about the Baseline Killer, Ed?

ED MILLER, REPORTER, "AMERICA'S MOST WANTED": Well, the Baseline Killer has not struck again, fortunately, but part of the confusion about this is semantics. "America's Most Wanted" feels that there are two separate serial killers running around Phoenix.

Up close and personal, as we said, that's the Baseline Killer. The other, the serial shooter/killer, since he has killed, has killed several. Baseline six, Serial Shooter five. We're just trying to separate them so people have in their mind that we're talking about two separate serial killers on the loose in Phoenix.

GRACE: And, Ed, the Baseline Killer, does he typically rape and then started killing around August?

MILLER: Yes. As a matter of fact, I'm so glad you brought that up, because it's very distinct method of operation. Baseline Killer, a rapist, may very well do a series of crimes: rape, rob, carjack, and kidnap. Always arrives on foot, frequently will leave in his victim's car.

So we're talking about somebody who -- again, that's a pretty good, important clue to look for. Again, arrives on foot, but may very well kidnap and carjack the victim and escape.

The other one, the Serial Shooter, is sneaking around Phoenix and the Phoenix area in a car. He doesn't get out of his car. He stays in the car.

GRACE: I want to go back to Sergeant Andy Hill with the Phoenix police department. Again, Sergeant, thank you for being with us. So many questions surrounding these two perpetrators. Very unusual that they're both stalking the Phoenix area at the same time. Now, the two shootings, one over the weekend, one on

Wednesday, what were the characteristics of them?

HILL: Well, again, the Wednesday shooting is not related. It was a person that was riding a bicycle. It was at night, but earlier in the evening than we've associated with M.O., and it was simply a shot from a pellet rifle. We have eliminated that at this point as being part of that series.

Again, you know, Ed has hit on some very key points for us, that he's been a part of and learned from us in our investigations. But the key for us is that we do not have a suspect description that's definitive, and we need the information to come in from the public on the Serial Shooter, because the shooter, or if it's more than one, are in fact in a vehicle, going about randomly. And there are people out there who must have seen a suspicious vehicle during these hours of the night.

GRACE: Right. Now, just to throw another wrench in the works, Sergeant, you had the death of 19-year-old Georgia Thompson. Then you had a guy named Mullins confess. OK. Do you believe at this juncture it was a false confession?

HILL: Well, this is not our case, Nancy. That was a case for the Tempe police department. They were going on the information that they had at the time with their case. Subsequent to their arrest and their information, we developed information that tied cases together, and we developed forensic information that tied the cases together. We met with the Tempe police department. At this point in time, that suspect from that case is not a suspect in the series of Baseline Killing cases.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

GRACE: Whether two recent shootings in the Phoenix area are linked to serial killers stalking the desert city remains to be seen. Out to Dr. Michael Hunter, medical examiner. How are they linking the cases forensically? They're holding the case close to the vest.

HUNTER: Right. Well, with the Serial Shooter, you really have two ways to link that forensically, as far as gunshot wounds go. One way is ballistics, looking at the projectile itself recovered from the victim. Now, remember that a lot of these shootings, there is going to be through- and-through gunshot wounds, so you may not be able to recover the projectile.

GRACE: So possibly ballistics and maybe DNA in the rape cases.

HUNTER: That's correct.

GRACE: And now out jumps a guy who confesses to a case, could be a false confession, Renee. That just slows down the whole investigation, Renee.

ROCKWELL: Yes, absolutely, Nancy. And you have a situation where sometimes people will confess because they've been coerced. They may have a mental illness or they're covering up for somebody.

GRACE: Agree, Richard Herman?

HERMAN: ... you're prosecuting cases.

GRACE: OK. Hold on. Do I have Richard, Rosie? Richard, do you agree with Renee about a possible false confession?

HERMAN: Absolutely, Nancy, 100 percent. I'm sure you have experience with that with some cases when you were prosecuting.

GRACE: No, all the confessions that I took to trial were legit.

HERMAN: I'm sure they were.

GRACE: But thanks for the suggestion. I'll keep it in mind.

Everybody, very quickly, out to Headline's Glenn Beck. Glenn, what's one the line-up?

GLENN BECK, HOST: Thanks, Nancy. Tonight, we have a guy on the show who says that Israel is the

source of all of the problems in the Middle East, not so unusual unless it's coming from an orthodox Jew. Believe it or not, he says everything would be so much better if we just got rid of Israel. Weird, for sure.

We also have a guy who's got a hot new TV show on TV that, Nancy, you're going to love. It's called "Sex Offender Community Update." Must- see TV tonight, for sure. Back to you, Nancy.

GRACE: OK. Good to know, Glenn Beck.

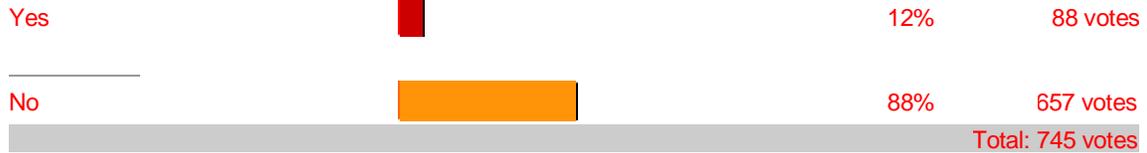
Everybody, let's stop for just one moment. Tonight, we remember Army Sergeant Jose Gomez, just 23, killed, Iraq, Queens, New York. Gomez on his second tour of duty, leaves behind a grieving family, including his only brother and fiancée. Favorite subject: math. Jose Gomez, American hero.

Thank you to all of our guests, and our prayers out to the family of Jennifer Ewing. Our biggest thank you tonight, to you. Nancy Grace signing off for tonight. See you tomorrow, 8:00 sharp Eastern. And until then, good night, friend.

END

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