



GRESHAM POLICE DEPARTMENT

1333 NW Eastman Parkway

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News Release

Travis Gullberg, Chief of Police

Detective Adam Wright, Public Information Officer

Robert Plympton convicted for cold-case murder of Barbara Tucker

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CONTACT PERSON: On Duty PIO
CASE NUMBER: 80-146

Gresham, Ore.— After a three-week trial, a Multnomah County judge found Robert Plympton guilty of the murder of Barbara Tucker, bringing to a close a 44-year investigation.

The case began in January 1980, when Barbra Tucker’s body was found in a wooded area near Mt. Hood Community College. Several witnesses reported seeing a young woman waving at traffic on NE Kane Dr., before a man emerged from some nearby bushes and led her back towards campus. Investigators determined Ms. Tucker had been sexually assaulted and beaten to death.

In 2000, the Oregon State Police Crime Lab was able to develop a DNA profile from swabs collected during Ms. Tucker’s autopsy. The DNA profile was compared to DNA databases available at the time, but the search did not produce any matches.

The case remained open and was assigned to several detectives over the decades, before being assigned to Detective Aaron Turnage in 2015. Criminalist Deanna Grossi continued reviewing the physical evidence and researching advances in forensic investigative techniques.

The DNA profile was sent to Parabon NanoLabs for genetic genealogy testing. In 2021, that testing showed a likely connection to Robert Plympton. With this new lead, Gresham detectives surveilled Plympton and saw him spit out a piece of gum. The gum was collected for DNA testing, which confirmed Plympton’s DNA was a match to the DNA from Ms. Tucker’s body.

On June 8, 2021, Robert Plympton was arrested and charged with the murder of Barbara Tucker. Plympton requested a trial in front of a judge rather than a jury. The case was prosecuted by Chief Deputy District Attorney Kirsten Snowden and Senior Deputy District Attorney Todd Jackson with the Multnomah County District Attorney’s Office. The trial began in late February and continued into mid-March. On March 15, 2024, Judge Baggio found Plympton guilty of Murder in the First Degree and four counts of Murder in the Second Degree.

“Barbara’s murder was shocking, and the pain, grief, and loss were felt for generations. I hope the conviction of Mr. Plympton can bring some closure and peace to her family and friends, and to the Gresham community,” said Chief Travis Gullberg. “I also want to acknowledge the challenges investigators faced along the way. This case was impacted not just by the passage of time, but by budget

constraints and staffing shortages. Our detectives and criminalists showed incredible determination and resourcefulness solving Barbara's murder while still investigating new cases. Though this case is closing, our mission continues: seeking justice in other unsolved homicides."

From 2002 to 2004, an average of 19 officers were assigned to the Investigations Division. At that time, the city averaged two homicides per year. Today, there are 20 officers assigned to the Investigations Division. Over the past three years, Gresham has averaged over 10 homicides per year. "The Department's resources no longer match the needs of the community," added Chief Gullberg.

If you have information about any unsolved homicide, you can contact an investigator through the Gresham Police Department tip line at 503-618-2719 or toll-free at 1-888-989-3505.



Barbara Tucker, courtesy of family.

###GPD###

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