

MC LEAN, STELLA  
1932-February 7, 1978

The headless, nude body of a woman, found near Wheatland five years ago, has been positively identified by law enforcement officers, as a former Gering, Nebr. elementary school teacher.

A spokesman for the Nebraska State Patrol in Scottsbluff, Nebr. identified the woman as 45-year-old Stella McLean. He said McLean died of an apparent homicide and the identification of her body has reopened investigation into the case.

Mrs. McLean's body was discovered April 15, 1978 near the banks of the South Laramie River off the west side of I-25 about two miles north of Wheatland.

The body was reported to have been laying face down and decomposition had already begun, including the area of the hands, making identification difficult.

The Wyoming state crime lab finally made a positive identification by matching fingerprint samples with those taken from the body. The identification took so long, a spokesman said, because of the discrepancies in blood type.

McClean disappeared from her Gering home on the night of Feb. 7, 1978. Her husband Tom reported her missing the following day and local law enforcement officials investigated the disappearance.

Her car was discovered a couple days later in the parking lot of Grampy's Pancake House & Restaurant in Scottsbluff.

Jim K. Lawson, a chief deputy for administrative services at the Scotts Bluff County Sheriff's Department said last Friday "Due to recent developments by Wyoming authorities, the scope of the investigation has widened and intensified".

"We have never considered the case closed," Lawson said.

Lawson said the sheriff's department never ruled out foul play in the case.

McLean's body has been interred in the Wheatland Cemetery in an unmarked grave.

NEWS ITEM-April 21, 1978

Still visibly disturbed by the experience, Platte County Sheriff Einer Mickelsen said no further information as to the identity of a nude, white, decapitated female body found about 1:30 p.m. Saturday, April 15, about two miles north of Wheatland had been established.

The body was discovered near the banks of the South Laramie River off the west side of Interstate 25 by a driver for an area truck line to retrieve a wheel and tire he saw in the valley. The driver went back to the area where he had brought the items and noticed something about 200 yards away partially covered with rocks beneath a ledge. Upon investigation, he immediately called authorities.

"I thought it was some gruesome practical joke at first," Sheriff Mickelsen said. "Even at the sight of it, I believed it to be a mannequin. I could not fathom something like this happening here."

When the fact of discovery was established Platte County Coroner Harley Prell was called and then the Wyoming Bureau of Investigation was informed.