

# GAME OVER

## Alma Lake and Michelle Dawson

Sergeant Mickey Casper & Sergeant John Thompson

# Initial Report

On Monday June 3rd, 1991, at 10:01am, Detectives from the Franklin County Sheriff's Office responded to the scene of a dead body located at the northwest corner of Olive St and Craig Dr in Urbancrest, Ohio. The victim was observed to be a black female lying on her back, unclothed except for a pair of grey socks, a rubber band on her wrist, and a ring on her finger. There was also unknown liquid found on her chest. Visible marks were noted on her neck. Her body was transported to the county morgue.

Later that day at 2:38pm, Detectives received a phone call from a CPD Tech at their Identification Bureau. She identified the victim as Alma Renee Lake from fingerprints provided.

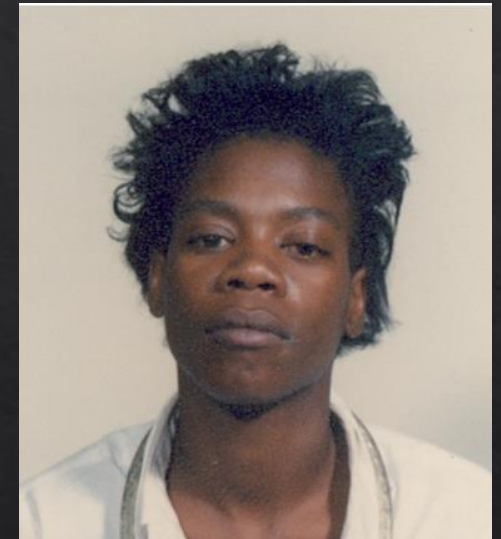
# Victim – Alma Renee Lake

DOB: 5/28/1961

- 30 years old at time of murder
- Street name of “Georgia”
- History of substance abuse

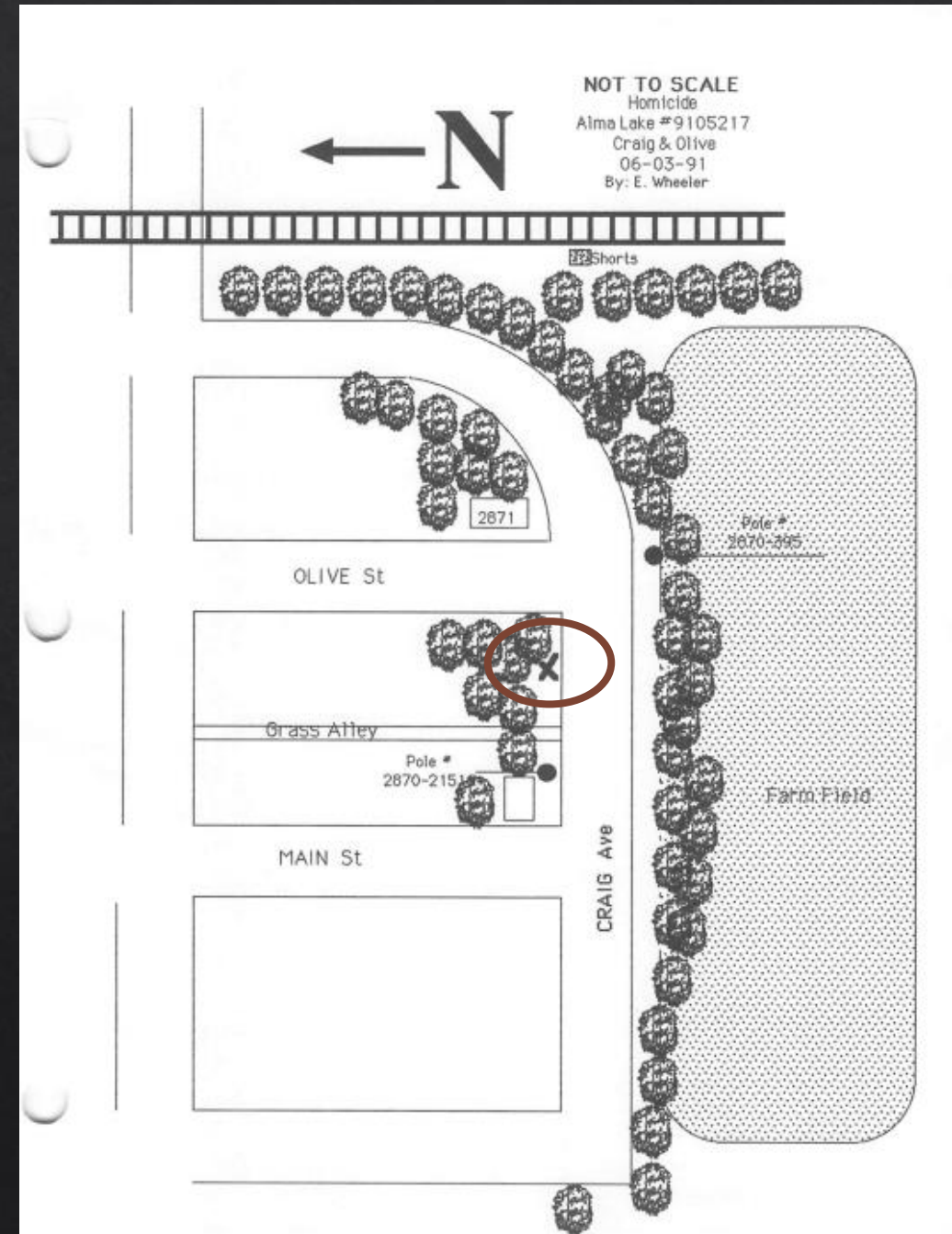
## Criminal History:

- soliciting prostitution
- petty theft
- trespassing
- carrying a concealed weapon
- disorderly conduct



# Scene of the Incident

On Monday June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1991, Paul Quinchette was riding his bike back from a Shell gas station when he came across the body of a naked black female lying in the grass at the NW corner of Craig and Olive St. He then walked to the Mayor's house to report his sightings.





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# Initial Evidence Collected

The following items were recovered from the scene and impounded on 6/4/1991:

- Vile containing hair samples from vaginal area
- Vile containing hair samples from victim's back, legs, and neck
- Envelope containing head hair standards
- Envelope containing pubic hair standards
- Envelope containing pubic hair combings
- Bag containing socks of victim
- Bag containing 3 smears from victim
- Container with 2 rings from victim
- Bag with umbrella handle
- Bag containing red shorts

# Coroner's Report

- Final Diagnosis: "Ligature strangulation with abrasion and contusion of the neck, pulmonary edema. Anal erythema and superficial contusion of the pelvic diaphragm near the sigmoid colon."
- Immediate Cause of Death: Ligature strangulation
- Erosion of the anal margin noted



# Last Reported Sightings of Alma Lake

- On June 4th, 1991, Detectives met with Mr. Jacques Coleman. He stated he had last seen Alma on Sunday June 2nd around 9pm with a Gail Young.
- Gail Young was interviewed and stated she was introduced to Alma at Damian's house on the night of June 2nd around 7pm. Damian, Gail, and Alma were together until about 8:30pm at which time Alma asked Gail to drive her to the store to cash a money order. Gail drove Alma's mother's home to get a pair of sneakers. After Alma received her sneakers from her mother, Gail drove her to the store.
- As they approached the store Alma saw a police van and requested Gail pull around the corner and let her out of the car. Alma got out of the car and Gail headed home.

# Last Reported Sightings of Alma Lake

- On June 7<sup>th</sup>, 1991, Detective Robinson received a phone call from Paula Malone who stated that she worked at the BP Oil located at 5<sup>th</sup> Ave on I-71. She informed him that she had seen Alma between 3am-5am on Monday June 3<sup>rd</sup> while she was working. She said Alma was heavily intoxicated and attempted to buy beer but was denied due to Sunday sale laws.
- Malone stated that Alma was with a male black who appeared to be about 5'4"-5'6" and 140-150lbs.
- Paula Malone stated that on Friday June 7<sup>th</sup>, 1991, a black male had come into the gas station. She recognized that this was the same male Alma was with in the early hours of Monday June 3<sup>rd</sup>. She took note of his license plate and provided it to detectives.
- This male was later identified as Arstell Frank Washington.

# Possible Suspect

## Arstell Frank Washington

- Malone identified Mr. Washington as the man Alma was with early Monday June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1991.
- Alma's mother, reported seeing Washington and Alma together in April.
- Detectives interviewed Mr. Washington on June 10<sup>th</sup>, 1991. He denied being with Alma the night of the murder and stated he had not seen her in over a year.
- Washington was ultimately ruled out as a suspect



# Connection to a Licking County Case

- On February 27, 2003, Detectives re-submitted DNA evidence from Alma Lake to the BCI lab
- On April 23, 2003, Detectives met with Licking County Sheriff's Office in reference to Michelle Dawson's homicide on 11/7/1996. The DNA samples that were resubmitted in 2003 from Alma Lake's case had a CODIS hit with the DNA submitted from Michelle Dawson's case.

# Michelle Dawson Pass

On November 7<sup>th</sup>, 1996, Michelle Dawson's nude body was found near a field in a remote area of Granville, Ohio. She suffered from deep hemorrhaging in the left side of her neck as well as minor injuries to the forehead, face and scalp. Her final diagnosis was toxic levels of cocaine and ethylbenzoylecgonine, compression of the neck, and rectal trauma.



# Possible Suspect Identified

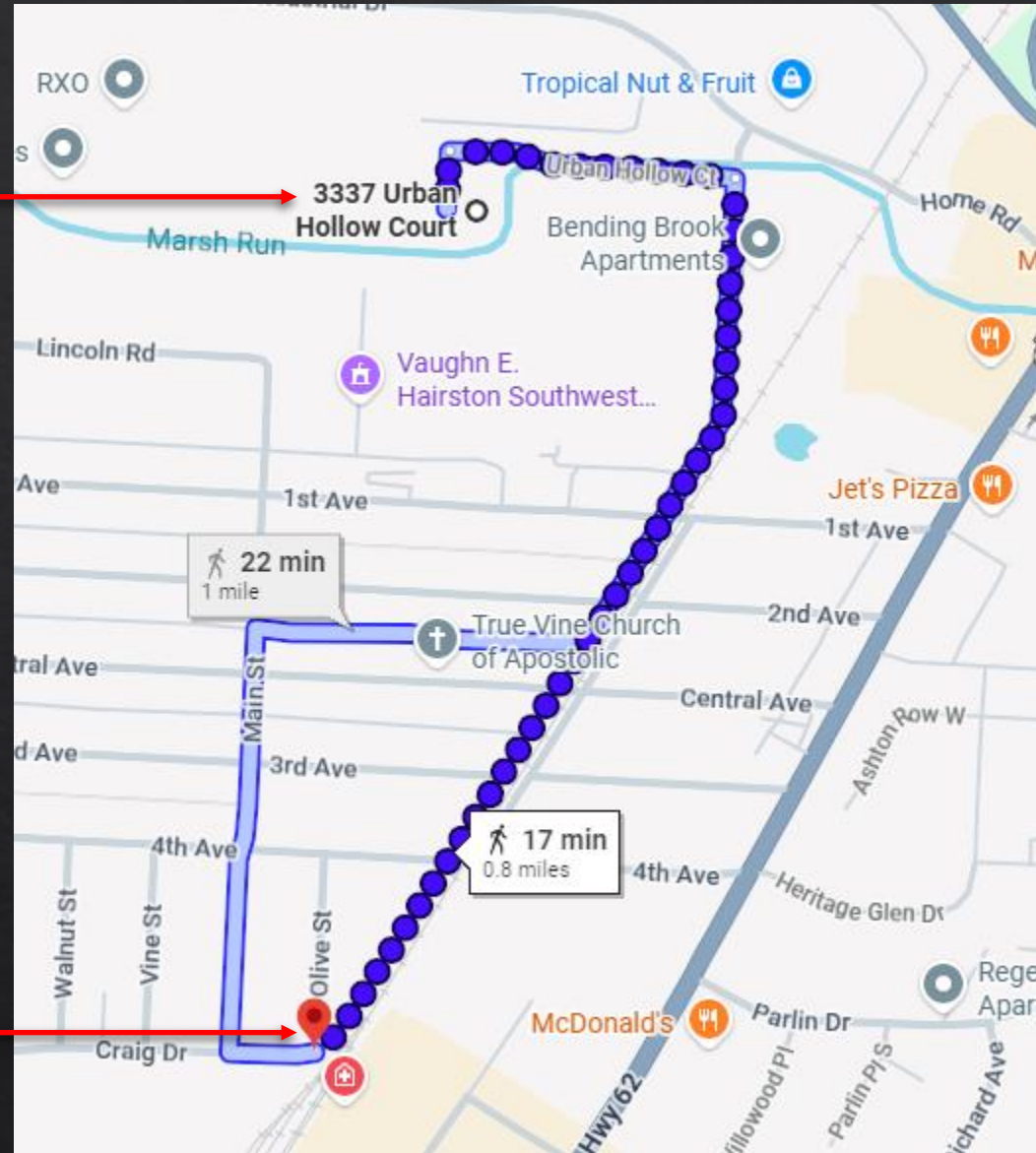
- The DNA samples from the Lake and Dawson case were submitted to the BCI crime lab for processing and to obtain a standard. On March 23, 2021, a Familial DNA hit was obtained. Robert Edwards was identified through several partial hits through his incarcerated children.
- BCI Analyst Lori Braunschweiger contacted the Franklin County Sheriff's Office and advised **Robert Edwards** as a possible suspect.

# Suspect - Robert Edwards

- At the time of the murder of Alma Lake, Robert Edwards lived at 3337 Urban Hollow Ct., approximately .5 miles from where Alma Lake was found.
- Michelle Dawson's body was found between Robert Edwards's home and employer MPW Industrial Services
- His residence was only 6.30 miles from where her body was found.



Robert Edward's residence at the time of Lake's homicide



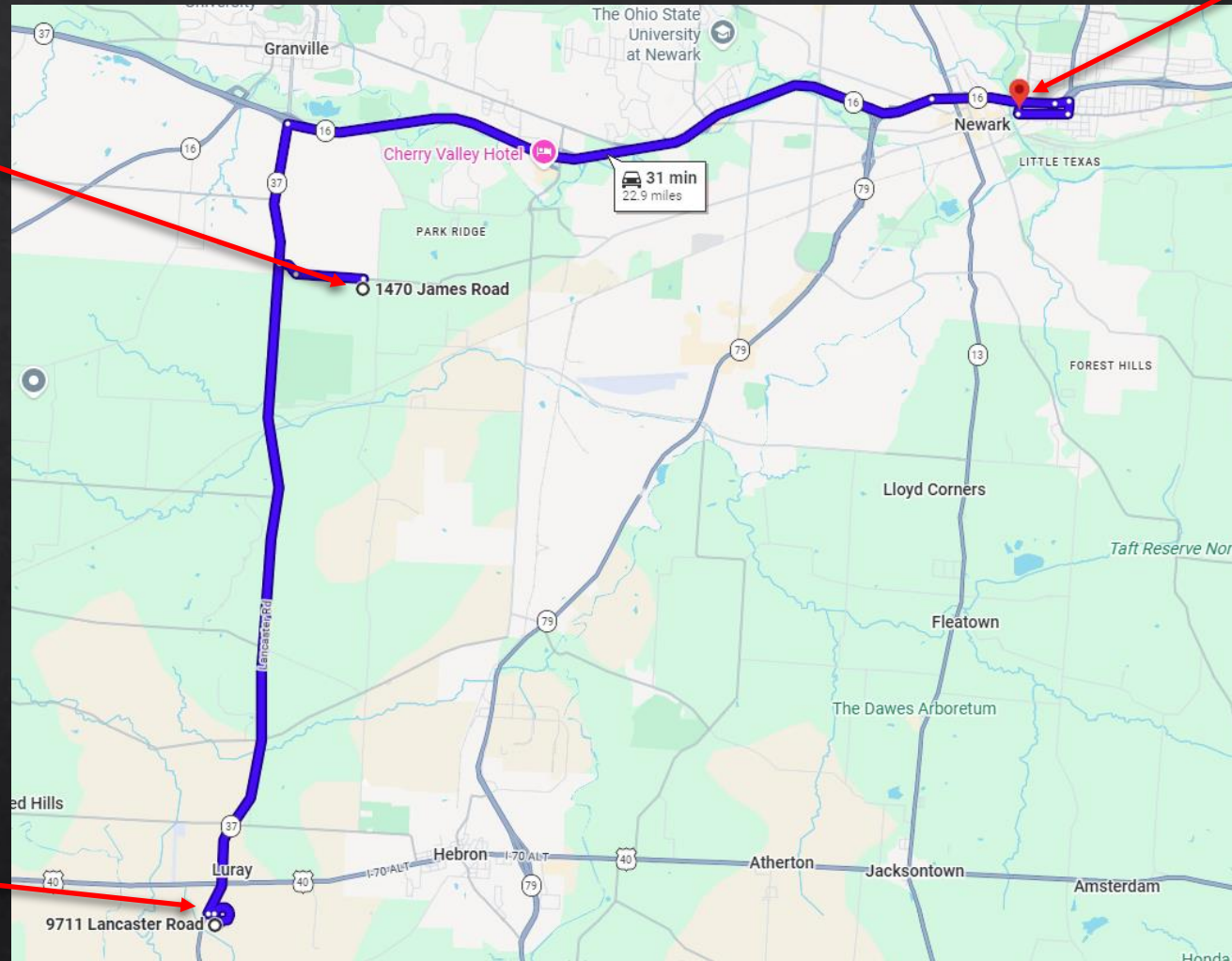
Dump location of Alma Lake's body



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Robert Edward's residence at the time

Dump location of Dawson's body



Robert Edward's employer at the time



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# Other Victims Identified

- To establish a pattern of behavior, detectives wanted to locate other reports with the same unique offenses as Lake & Dawson's cases.
- BCI Analyst Lori Braunschweiger sorted through numerous records and located Carmen Skipper and Kathy Battle's police reports.

# Surviving Victim – Kathy (Battle) Butler

6/27/1991- Detectives interviewed Kathy Butler at the Franklin County Corrections Center Jackson Pike. She informed them she had been picked up by a male black driving a dark blue car around 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue. She was paid to perform fellatio for twenty dollars worth of crack. She said the male came back a second time and he instructed her to remove all her clothes besides her socks. He tied her arms behind her back & had both vaginal and anal intercourse with a knife at her neck. This suspect was later identified as Robert Edwards.



# Surviving Victim – Carmen (Skipper) McQueen

5/5/1991- officers were dispatched to Oak St and Rhoads Ave to a disturbance of a female crying. This female was identified as Carmen McQueen. When officers arrived on scene, they noticed her arms and hands had been tied with rope and tape. She stated she had been raped by a black man with a mustache. He anally penetrated her while holding a knife at her throat. He had been driving a dark blue vehicle (OL: BSS 027). This suspect was later identified as Robert Edwards.

6/5/1991 - Robert Edwards was arrested for the rape of Carmen McQueen (Skipper). The case was later issued a nolle prosequi by the prosecutor's office and he was released.



# Surveillance of Robert Edwards

- In April of 2021, Detective Clark observed surveillance video of Robert Edwards as he exited his apartment with a bag of trash to place into the dumpster. Detective Clark then drove to this dumpster and collected this bag of trash to be brought back for processing.
- Items collected from the trash included a Taco Bell Cup with the lid and straw, a syringe, a coke can, a plastic water bottle, and two cigarette butts.
- BCI confirmed the items submitted contained a possible DNA match to Edwards.

# Carmen (Skipper) McQueen Interview

- On May 5, 2021, Detectives traveled to Akron, Ohio and met with Carmen Skipper the survivor of the rape and assault by Robert Edwards. She provided vivid detail of what occurred that day in 1991.
- She advised Detectives she would testify and assist in any way she could.

# Suspect Interview

- On November 2, 2021, Detectives went to the residence of Robert Edwards at 81 E. 9th Ave in Columbus. Robert Edwards agreed he would be willing to voluntarily interview with detectives.
- During the consensual interview Robert Edwards was locked into several lies and at first, denied knowing either victim and referred to Ms. Skipper as a liar. At the end of the interview, he was served with a search warrant for his DNA and buccal swabs were obtained.
- On November 3, 2021, the buccal swabs from Robert Edwards were taken to BCI for comparison.



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# DNA Conclusions

Oral swabs from Robert Edwards were sent to BCI in 2021.

- Anal Swabs of Alma Lake - semen identified (resent to BCI in 2003)
- Vaginal Swabs of Alma Lake - semen identified (resent to BCI in 2003)
- Vaginal smear slides of Michelle Dawson – semen identified (retained from original case submission)

Conclusion (2021) :

- Lake's vaginal swabs had two contributors: Alma Lake and Robert Edwards
- Dawson's vaginal swabs had two contributors: Michelle Dawson and Robert Edwards

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# Arrest

- Robert Edwards was arrested by the FCSO on August 5, 2022, for Aggravated Murder.
- During his arrest, a baggie containing crack cocaine was found in his front left pocket.
- Edwards was held without bond



# Sentencing

- Trial began on July 6, 2023.
- On July 14, 2023, Robert Edwards was found guilty of two counts of murder, one count of aggravated murder and rape, related to the deaths of Alma Lake and Michelle Dawson.
- On August 9, 2023, Robert Edwards was sentenced to 60 years to life in prison without the possibility of parole for 45 years.
- Eligible for parole on 9/25/2067 (112 YO)

