

November 7, 2006

CONFIDENTIAL

Dear Dad (and Chris and Mark),

[REDACTED]

I was disturbed by the letter and documents Jack Kalbfleisch sent you. I contacted Jack via email to ask him to give me a call. He called me right away and we spoke about the contents of the letter. I wanted Chris and Mark to hear what he had to say, so we arranged for and had a conference call so Jack could repeat the information to them, rather than simply hearing it second-hand from me. After that, Jack sent me various documents, including what he sent you, as well as some others. I then sent copies to Chris and Mark.

[REDACTED]

After reviewing the documents sent by Jack and considering what Don told Chris, here are my impressions for whatever they are worth.

A document dated September 7, 1978 and approved by Assistant District Commander Robert Robertson, indicates the following information was released. (Document attached.) A witness saw a shiny, small Pontiac or Buick at a relevant time near the scene where Mark Stebbins was found. Another witness described a light blue 1967 Pontiac Tempest with primer spots on the left side of the shoulder of I-75 at 3:30 a.m. near where Jill Robinson was found hours later. "After hundreds of hours of research," it was determined that impressions in the snow by a car turning around at the Mihelich crime scene were made by a 1964-67 Pontiac Tempest or Buick Skylark. The document mentions the ubiquitous blue Gremlin associated with Tim's kidnapping and then explains: "It is reasonable to believe that we are looking for a person that has intermediate size cars available to him and probably a blue Pontiac Tempest during the period of February, 1976, to January, 1977; but in March of 1977, he had a blue Gremlin available to him."

An article in the Detroit Free Press the following day (also attached) reported much of this information and ended with Robertson's request that anyone knowing of a person who had access to BOTH a blue Gremlin and a Pontiac Tempest or Buick Skylark call the task force.

I add the following based upon my conversations with Jack Kalbfleisch, documents he sent, as well as my own thoughts. The guy who saw the car on I-75 said it was a LeMans and he knew the car because he had owned a LeMans. Not only were there primer spots, the left taillight was broken. In other words, there was clear rear end damage.

The MSP processed the crime scene where Kristine Mihelich was found. They did not measure the bumper impressions in the snow, but instead photographed them. Jack Kalbfleisch and FBI Agent Mort Nickel later worked with a photo interpreter, car manufacturers and engineers to try to determine the kind of car that left the impressions in the snow banks.

As I understand it, there were two reports on this vehicle. The first report was more general and probably contained basic information after the GM proving grounds initially responded that the vehicle was a GM model. A second report was made after the photo interpreter actually calculated measurements of the impressions and this information was sent to GM Headquarters. According to Jack Kalbfleisch, the car was determined to be a 1971 or 1972 Pontiac LeMans with a V8 engine and a trailer hitch, with damage to the left rear end (as well as to the hitch, which was pulled over an inch off of center to the left).

There is no explanation for the September 7, 1978, information given by Robertson about a Pontiac Tempest (similar to a LeMans, according to Mark) or Buick Skylark. No mention was made of rear end damage. I do not know if the second, more detailed report came out after this date, but it does not appear that this much more specific vehicle information was ever made public. This was not just any LeMans, but one with a trailer hitch and damage to the rear end, as well as the trailer hitch. The information given by the Task Force on September 7, 1978 and reported in the Detroit Free Press was therefore inaccurate and incomplete and as far as I can tell, never updated.

Because the bumper impressions were photographed rather than actually measured at the scene, this necessitated the hundreds of hours of work to determine car make and model. This information reached the task force well over a year after the all-out effort was made on the blue Gremlin information. The task force leaders may have at that point still put much faith in the Gremlin lead, or they could have been impacted by the potential embarrassment of coming out with this information after so much had been said and done on the Gremlin angle. At any rate, this information apparently never makes it out to the public. Ask anyone who remembers these cases (including retired law enforcement outside of Oakland County) about them, and I bet in the first few sentences they mention the blue Gremlin.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] I am sure that once a suspect was being looked at seriously that the lack of a Gremlin connection would mean nothing. But the fact of the matter is that it really doesn't matter if the police considered the LeMans information. The only way that information was really going to help was if it was made public. Someone would have recognized that car. Someone still might.

This leads to Jack Kalbfleisch and Det. Ray Anger (Berkely PD) contacting Det. Gray at the MSP about releasing this information. In the fall of 2005, Anger called Kalbfleisch, asking if he had copies of correspondence they had over the years about the LeMans. Jack sent copies and Anger forwarded these to the MSP. No doubt the thought was, with the new computer system set up in Oak Park, perhaps this information could be cross-referenced with suspects.

In December 2005, Kalbfleisch called Gray, who allegedly stated the information was too old, would generate too many useless leads, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Jack suggested releasing the information based on a "confidential source" (him), [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

In desperation, Kalbfleisch contacts Mike Martindale to try to get this information out. Apparently, Martindale contacted Gray who told him that they did not have any such information about a LeMans (the information contained in the second report). I was very curious when I read the documents at your house about why the press had not "taken the bait," [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I did not ask, nor did Jack offer a reason as to why he did not "press harder" about this information. I did not ask because I knew the answer—it wasn't his call, he wasn't "in charge" [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

releasing this LeMans vehicle information? They can look at 55,000 Gremlins, but not a LeMans with a V8 engine, a trailer hitch and obvious rear end damage?!

I think you should ask Det. Gray if you can see this second report. He will say it is missing, never was filed, you couldn't see it anyway because it is part of an "open" investigation, whatever. Well then, maybe will have some success if he, rather than Jack Kalbfleisch or one of us, contacts the FBI to have them search Mort Nickel's old files for this information.

[REDACTED]
perhaps he could be persuaded by a victim's relative to release this information. The 30th anniversary is coming up, I'm sure he could find a way to weave this information into comments to the press. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I don't care if the information didn't come out back then, there is a chance to do it now, before absolutely every last person who may have some information drops dead.

Maybe, and most likely, it gets us nowhere. When you think of it, that could actually be the universal response to any possible lead in these 29 and 30-year-old cases. But why not try, for god's sake? Do we have anything more to lose? I will contact Gray if you would rather that I do it.

I have long felt that this case would never be solved (or maybe I just gave up decades ago), but I am willing to admit that I could be wrong. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I also think (and I realize I have no expertise and no one cares what I think about his) that if for some reason the killer's name bubbles up to the surface, he will have owned or had access to a LeMans and had no involvement in the child pornography industry. Maybe someday we'll find out how far off-base I am. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I will leave you with one final thought. Don Studt and Tim Gracey were two police officers who treated Chris, Mark and me with total respect and kindness. They looked us in the eye and did not avoid us, like the majority of adults and law enforcement who were around us during that horrible time. The only other law enforcement person who did that was Jack Kalbfleisch, who suggested to Mom and ultimately gave us a tour of the task force headquarters. Of course we had no questions and we were basically mute, but he offered us information and offered to answer any of our questions. I still distinctly remember the pain in his eyes as he gave us that tour, but he looked us in the eyes and treated us with respect. That's why I took an extra interest in his letter when I read it at your house—because I will never forget how he treated us.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] It doesn't unduly upset me, but I am not going to pretend I never knew this information. I hope you understand. Maybe I am crazy, but I think we owe it to Tim to convince Gray to release this information. If he won't do it, I will consider a way to do it myself. I sincerely hope it doesn't come to that, not only because I would prefer to keep my anonymity, but also because we have never asked for anything from law enforcement, not even so much as an update on what was going on. At a minimum, the cops owe Tim, Kristine, Jill and Mark, and their family and friends this much—to find a way to release that information and effectively deal with it, whether anything comes of it or not.