

McLEAN, STELLA ELLEN (JOSIASSEN)  
May 31, 1932-February 7, 1978

NEWS ITEM: April 15, 1978: Information released by Platte County Sheriff Einer Mickelson and the State Criminal Investigation Division reported the decapitated female body found Saturday, April 15, approximately two miles north of Wheatland still has not been identified.

The victim was about 5 feet 6 inches tall and weight 120-125 pounds pathology reports revealed. The first indications were that the woman was 22-25 years of age but further study is being done and the age factor may be found to be different according to a CID spokesman.

Other information reported there were no significant identify scars on the body, that the person had never given birth to a child, but did suffer from numerous gall stones. The victim was reported to also have a small foot and wore a 5-C shoe size.

Schrader-Prell Funeral Home provided a graveside service in the Wheatland Cemetery Monday afternoon with the Rev. Dan Barcus in attendance. The town of Wheatland contributed the grave and the personnel for the burial. Staff members from the funeral home were also preset for the service.

Investigation in the case is still continuing to establish the woman's identity and clues to her murder.

Platte County Record-Times, April 21, 1978

### **Womans Body Found North Of Wheatland**

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 who had stopped to retrieve a wheel and tire he saw in the valley. The driver had gone back to the area where he had brought the items from and noticed something about 200 yards away partially covered with rocks beneath a ledge. Upon investigation he immediately called the 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 the discovery was established Platte County Coroner Harley Prell was called and then the Wyoming Buereau of investigation was informed.

The body was taken to the state crime lab in Cheyenne for examination by a pathologist to try to determine an identity from finger prints.

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

Where the body had been placed was shielded from view of the highway and protected somewhat from the weather and sunlight. Only late afternoon rays of the sun reached the area making it hard to determine how long the body had been there.

"Because of the lack of blood or evidence of any scuffle or footprints in the area, we know the crime was committed elsewhere and the body placed there later," Mickelsen said.

A search by law enforcement officers for the rest of the body had not brought any results by Wednesday. The head had been severed at a joint in the neck with what was evidently a knife rather than a cleaver or saw. The only other marks the sheriff reported as being on the body were some lower on the neck which he believed could have been made by animals.

The first indications are that the victim was under five feet tall, weighed between 120 to 140 pounds and could have been anywhere from 20 to 40 years of age. An autopsy is being performed.

Anyone who may have seen unusual activity in this area in recent weeks that believes it is worth investigation should contact the Platte County Sheriff's Department or the state crime bureau.

No missing person has been reported from Wheatland, a description of the victim is still too vague to be linked with missing persons from elsewhere.

Platte County Record-Times. April 20, 1983

### **Five-year-old mystery solved; police identify headless body**

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.

McLean 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 had 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 interned in the Wheatland Cemetery in an unmarked grave.