

Unraveling the Twisted Case of Angie Dodge

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On June 13, 1996, 18-year-old Angie Dodge was raped and murdered in her apartment in Idaho Falls, ID. In the 23 years since that day, the case has gone through numerous twists and turns while Angie's family has never stopped searching for justice.

DNA was collected from the crime scene, but it did not match CODIS or any of the over 100 samples tested. One of the suspects, Chris Tapp, confessed. He was convicted and sentenced to life in prison, although his DNA did not match the crime scene sample. However, Tapp's conviction did not sit right with many people, including Carol Dodge, Angie's mother. The Idaho Innocence Project began looking into Tapp's case, and he was released in 2017.

Meanwhile, the search continued for the identity of the individual who had left DNA at the crime scene. Comparison of the sample's Y chromosome to a database yielded a highly similar Y profile from a man with the last name of Usry. Investigators identified a man in New Orleans, Michael Usry Jr., who had made a film about the killing of a young girl and had traveled to Idaho in 1996. He was questioned but was later cleared through DNA testing.

In 2017, some of the remaining crime scene DNA was sent to Parabon NanoLabs for DNA phenotyping, which predicted the individual was of Northern European descent with fair skin, brown eyes, and brown hair. A kinship comparison to Michael Usry concluded that he was not related to the crime scene sample within 6 degrees of relatedness.

In 2018, Parabon uploaded the data to GEDmatch for genetic genealogy analysis. The matches were distant, and the analysis was further complicated by the highly degraded nature of the DNA sample, which resulted in a large proportion of missing data. While the case did not look promising, Carol Dodge asked Parabon to try. Through intensive genetic genealogy research and kinship testing, the individual's identity was narrowed to a small number of descendants of a particular ancestral couple. However, kinship testing of one of those individuals indicated that the known individuals could be excluded.

Additional combing through public records eventually revealed that there was another, unacknowledged descendant of that ancestral couple, Brian Leigh Dripps. His phenotypes matched the predictions, and further research by Idaho Falls detectives revealed that he had lived across the street from Angie Dodge in 1996. Detectives collected a surreptitious DNA sample from Dripps, and STR analysis directly matched it to the crime scene sample. After decades of searching, Dripps was arrested, and he is currently awaiting trial.