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On July 28, 1977, Audrey Marie Elizabeth Hurtado, a 17 year old girl, was reported missing to the Buena Vista Police Department. She had been visiting her sister in Buena Vista, from her home in Trinidad Colorado. Hurtado told her sister she was going for a walk with a young white male. She never returned. Two days later her body was discovered in a field south of the Cottonwood Creek Cabins at 351 Waters Avenue in Buena Vista Colorado. Audrey Hurtado had been stabbed to death.

The initial investigation was handled by then Buena Vista Police Chief, Chuck Campton. Other law enforcement agencies in the area also assisted in the investigation, including then Salida Police Chief, Leonard Post & also members of the Chaffee County Sheriff's Department. Every lead was exhausted. More than 80 possible suspects were investigated. One suspect, "C.K.", a 15 year old male from California, became the prime suspect (the suspect will not be further identified because he was a juvenile at the time the crime was committed). C.K. was visiting family in Buena Vista at the time of the homicide. C.K.'s family lived approximately one block from where the victim was staying with her sister.

The investigation revealed that C.K. had stolen a knife from a local gift & sports store a week prior to the murder. The knife was consistent with the type used to murder Hurtado. C.K.'s family discovered he had stolen the knife & made him return it prior to the homicide. It was later learned a similar knife had been stolen again from the local gift & sports store the day of the murder.

Although C.K. was questioned in Hurtado's death, there was never sufficient evidence to pursue criminal charges against him. In 1981 C.K. was killed in a motorcycle accident in California.

The case went cold and remained unsolved.

During the course of the initial investigation, Buena Vista Police Chief Campton collected biological samples from the victim & packaged them in a way that was exemplary, especially for 1977 protocols. DNA testing as it is known today simply did not exist at the time. Over the years the evidence in this unsolved murder was preserved in hopes that advances in technology might yield new results.

The Colorado Bureau of Investigation Cold Case Unit took on the case in May of 2009. CBI Agent Jeff Schierkolk met with Buena Vista Police Chief Jimmy Tidwell and offered assistance in reopening the case. Additional items of evidence were then resubmitted to CBI Forensic Laboratory for additional testing.

CBI Cold Case Investigator Russ Hoffman & Agent Schierkolk continued to work this case identifying & interviewing & re-interviewing witnesses. The biological samples taken from under the victims fingernails in 1977 were submitted to CBI Laboratory for analysis along with DNA samples from known relatives of C.K. The two samples were compared & the results indicated there was a match identifying C.K. as the murderer. The case was presented to the Office of the District Attorney and exceptionally cleared as solved.

Afterwards, Agents Schierkolk & Hoffman met with relatives of Audrey Hurtado to explain the investigation of Audrey's death & how the laboratory results ultimately identified her killer.

