

Enterprise man confession leads authorities to skeletal remains

By Jill Nolin / The Dothan Eagle
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(Picture: Investigators J.R. Ward, left, and Tim Rodgers dig as Dale County District Attorney Kirke Adams, left, and Deputy Wally Olson stand by the grave.)

OZARK - When Susie Phillips did not show up that Monday morning to take her two daughters to school, her mother knew something was wrong.

And when Phillips couldn't be found later that day, her mother felt certain Marcellous Evans was responsible. But it would take another two years for the Enterprise man to confess and then lead authorities to her skeletal remains in rural Dale County, according to Dale County District Attorney Kirke Adams.

"From day one, I had known he had killed her. I knew it in my heart. I just didn't know how he'd done it," Bonnie Jackson said the day after her daughter's remains were found in Level Plains.

Phillips had met Evans about eight months before her Feb. 24, 2003, death, Jackson said. Phillips was separated from her husband when she met Evans, who at the time was her neighbor at a New Brockton housing project.

And word of Evan's reputation reached Jackson quickly, leaving her displeased with her 37-year-old daughter's new love interest. When things became physical with the on-again, off-again couple, the frustrated mother was reduced to a vocal, but powerless looker-on.

"The only reason she stayed with him was because he furnished drugs for her. It's my youngin' and I love her dearly, but that was it. He kept her on pain killers and drugs," said Jackson, who lives in Lockhart.

"I kick myself every day. I should've done more. I don't know what, but I should've done more. I should've done more, instead of just walking away and saying I can't do anymore. I did more fussing with her than trying to understand her," she said. "I just wish I could've gotten through to him."

Phillips was last seen Friday, Feb. 21, 2003, in Opp, when Evans allegedly rammed his vehicle into hers in an attempt to stop her - an act for which he would later be arrested and charged with assault.

And until Monday night, when authorities said Evans, 47, confessed to accidentally killing Phillips, what happened after the two-vehicle collision has been shrouded with mystery.

"I believe he had a guilty conscience. When he was at the grave site, he appeared to be visibly shaken and he prayed that she would have peace," Adams said. "And at that point my prayers went out to her family."

As part of a plea agreement, Evans said he would serve 20 years for manslaughter in exchange for his confession and directions to Phillips' body, according to Adams.

Evans detailed what happened before and after Phillips' death in a deposition given to authorities.

On the Friday night before she disappeared, Evans met Phillips at the County Line Grocery Store on Alabama 134 and then traveled to his Daleville residence. The following day, the two went to a friend's house to purchase pain medications and crack cocaine, but when Phillips wanted to obtain more drugs around 3 a.m. Sunday morning, Evans told authorities his refusal led to a disagreement, according to his deposition.

Evans said he then hit Phillips four or five times with a closed fist and she fell to the floor, after which Evans left the room to calm down. Upon his return, however, he discovered Phillips was no longer breathing and his attempts at CPR were futile.

"Apparently, there had been drugs used, and he had hoped she was just passed out and not dead," Adams said. "He even drove her to the Enterprise hospital parking lot but changed his mind because he thought it was already too late."

Still hoping she would wake up on her own, Evans then dumped her body somewhere in between Daleville and Level Plains, about one mile away from his former residence. When he returned a week later, he buried the rest of her remains.

But between the time of her death and the time of her burial, the unemployed truck driver would spend time in both the Houston and Covington county jails. An outstanding warrant in Houston County led to his arrest one day after Phillips' death. Then he was transferred to Covington County for the Feb. 21 domestic assault charge, according to Adams. After making bond in Covington County, he buried Phillips.

At the time of his confession, Evans had already started serving an 11-year sentence.

The Opp Police Department, Covington County and Dale County district attorney offices, the Dale County Sheriffs Office and the Alabama Bureau of Investigation all contributed to the case.

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