

**WHATCOM COUNTY
SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

BILL ELFO
SHERIFF



PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING
311 Grand Avenue
Bellingham, WA 98225-4038
(360) 778-6600

September 6th, 2019

Mr. Kevin Coyne
Sons of the American Revolution

Dear Mr. Coyne,

The purpose of this communication is to nominate Whatcom County Sheriff's Office Detective Kevin Bowhay for the Law Enforcement Commendation Medal.

Detective Bowhay has served with the Whatcom County Sheriff's Office as a Deputy Sheriff since January of 1989 and is the most senior investigator in our major crimes unit. His primary duties include assisting the Prosecuting Attorney's Office on pending prosecutions, investigating "cold case" murders and conducting polygraph examinations.

Detective Bowhay's file is replete with numerous commendations recognizing his skill and passion for solving crimes, helping the public and assisting other law enforcement agencies. For many years, he has also chaired "Project Santa Clause," which raises funds for providing food for needy families and taking their kids shopping during the Christmas Season.

While Detective Bowhay is an exemplary deputy and works countless hours of service to the community, the primary focus of this commendation is for his involvement in a 1989 murder investigation.

On November 24th, 1989 at about 1:50 p.m., the day after Thanksgiving, 18 year old Mandy Stavik left her home on Strand Road near Deming, Washington to go jogging with the family dog. The dog returned home several hours later, but Mandy did not. Following an exhaustive search, Mandy's naked body was found in the South Fork of the Nooksack River. Her brutal murder rocked our community and she is still well remembered by many.

In 1989, a young and newly minted Deputy Bowhay was assigned to search for Mandy and evidence. Decades later, I assigned him to solve Mandy's murder. Working as a team, Detective Bowhay and members of our crime analysis unit organized files and coordinated the flow of information. Several public outreaches were conducted to solicit new information.

Detective Bowhay doggedly chased down hundreds of leads that took him as far as Cambodia. He collected DNA samples from over 80 males who lived near where Mandy went missing. He systematically explored evidence and eliminated suspects.

Citizens came forward to report suspicions regarding then 50 year old Timothy Bass who lived in Mandy's neighborhood at the time of her disappearance. Bass refused to provide DNA samples, was not cooperative with law enforcement and became a suspect. A private citizen obtained a sample of Bass' DNA and turned it over to Detective Bowhay. The result was a DNA match with semen obtained from Mandy's body reflecting a one in 14 quadrillion probability.

Bass was arrested, prosecuted and convicted following a jury trial for murdering Mandy Stavik along with special findings that he had raped and kidnapped her. He was sentenced to the maximum sentence possible applying the law as it existed in 1989. He is currently in the custody of the Washington Department of Corrections.

As a result of Detective Bowhay's tenacity and the teamwork of other detectives, the crime analysis unit and Prosecuting Attorney Dave McEachran at least some form of justice was obtained. I was glad that Mandy's families, including her 82 year old mother, were able to attend the trial.

While I selected to nominate Detective Bowhay as the lead investigator, I cannot overly emphasize the importance teamwork and the involvement of many law enforcement personnel, active and retired, had in the successful resolution of this case.

Thank you for considering this nomination and all that the Sons of the American Revolution do for our community and nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Elfo". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bill Elfo, Sheriff