



YAVAPAI COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE SOLVES MAN'S MURDER AFTER A SIMPLE WELFARE CHECK RAISES SUSPICIONS

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Director | YCSO



Photo: Firepit where human bone fragments were found

On April 7th, YCSO deputies received information from the post office in Ashfork that John McCabe age 67 had not picked up his mail in over a year. Deputies set out to do a routine welfare check on Mr. McCabe and instead found a much bigger mystery.

The deputies responded to a location in Juniper woods where they found Terry Welfenberg, age 76, living on Mr. McCabe's property. According to deputies Welfenberg stated that McCabe left approximately 2 years ago but could not provide a specific date. The suspect also told deputies that he broke into the victim's home, had stolen a few firearms that were left behind, and had been living in the victim's home for a while. Due to the suspicious circumstances, including no sign of the victim himself and some odd behavior displayed by Mr. Welfenberg, deputies left and contacted YCSO detectives in the Criminal Investigations Bureau (CIB) for their assistance.

CIB detectives were unable to determine if Mr. McCabe was still alive and living elsewhere, YCSO decided to search the property for any remains of the victim. In the meantime, Welfenberg was arrested and charged with Burglary and Theft of the Firearms.

While searching the property, a volunteer noticed what appeared to be a skull fragment in the fire pit near the trailer. After obtaining a search warrant, detectives found several other bones that were determined to be of human origin by three independent forensic testing agencies. A second search was conducted two days later, and a medical ID bracelet that belonged to Mr. McCabe as well as his wallet were located. Numerous additional bone fragments were also located within the fire pit.

"What could have been a simple welfare check on a man who may have simply left the area, was only discovered to be something far more nefarious because of the instincts of the responding deputies and the tenacity of the CIB detectives" said Sheriff David Rhodes. "Now a suspected murderer is in custody and there can be justice for a man whose tragic death may never have been discovered."

In addition to the original charges, additional charges including homicide are pending.