

Police launch online appeals in York Region's cold cases

By Brock Weir and Mark Pavilons

Over 50 years ago, the body of St. Andrew's College employee Geraldine Pickford was found on the banks of Tannery Creek at the school, choked to death.

Her naked body was found on September 20, 1965.

According to York Regional Police, Ms. Pickford clocked out at St. Andrew's college for the last time the previous evening, leaving the school's women's quarters around 9 p.m. and was never seen alive again.

The 40-year-old was discovered by a group of students at the all-boys' boarding school, say York Regional Police. At that time, the creek ran through the college grounds near the rugby and cricket fields. She was found completely nude, her clothes strewn about nearby among pieces of garbage.

Working as a server in the college's dining areas, Geraldine would clock in and out repeatedly throughout the day, as the boys came and went to eat their meals.

Despite photographs of Ms. Pickford being made available, as well as a sizable reward for information leading to an arrest in her murder, Ms. Pickford's case remains unsolved and is, sadly, one of many cold cases in the files of York Regional Police (YRP).

The York Regional Police hope to spur public awareness of and more information about this and many other cases through the launch of an online database The Cold Cases of York Region.

The interactive website, organized by name and decade, and featuring photographs of victims, crime scene photos, contemporary media reports of the cases, and many other resources, went live on Friday.

The new website is designed to inform and engage citizens about unsolved homicides and missing person investigations in York Region, said Constable Andy Pattenden in a statement. Each of the incidents profiled, the oldest of which dates back to 1956, features an overview of the case, as well as previously unseen photographs mapping key points related to the investigation. The website further provides an email link that will directly connect people who have information with cold case investigators or Crime Stoppers, and also give them the ability to submit a tip online.

Despite the passage of time, investigators in our Cold Case Unit remain actively committed to solving these cases. With the advent of new forensic techniques and new information brought forward from members of the public, investigators are hopeful that they will be able to move these cold case investigations forward.

The website can be reached at: www.yrp.ca/coldcases.

The launch of the website comes on the heels of the York Region Police Services Board increasing the reward for any information in relation to another cold case offering a \$50,000 reward in the 1972 murder of Yvonne Leroux.

On Thursday, November 30, 1972, the body of 16-year-old Yvonne Leroux of Weston (Toronto), was located in King Township, on the 16th Sideroad, between Jane Street and Keele Street.

It was determined that blunt force trauma was the cause of death.

The investigation revealed that Yvonne was last seen in the evening on November 29, 1972, near the York Finch General Hospital (known today as the Humber River Hospital), located at Finch Avenue and Norfinch Drive in North York.

She was a student at Toronto's Emery Collegiate and had been involved in the city's drug scene for about a year and a half. At

roughly 7 p.m. that night, she left her parents' home on Topeka Road to attend a group therapy session. She left the clinic at roughly 10 p.m. and was expected home within half an hour, but never arrived.

Her body was found the next morning.

Yvonne's killer has never been found. She's buried at Beechwood Cemetery in Vaughan.

At the time of the murder, officers conducted interviews and investigated information supplied by the public.

At the time, Yvonne was described as approximately 5'3" with a medium build; long, dark brown wavy hair; last seen wearing a navy-blue wool coat, a white shirt, blue jeans, a metal chain around her neck, and three-quarter-length tan boots with zippers and carrying a brown purse.

The reward will be in effect until March 26, 2017.

Anyone with information on this case is asked to contact the York Regional Police Homicide Bureau at 1-866-876-5423, ext. 7865, or call Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS, or leave an anonymous tip online at www.1800222tips.com or text a tip by sending TIPYORK and a message to CRIMES (274637).