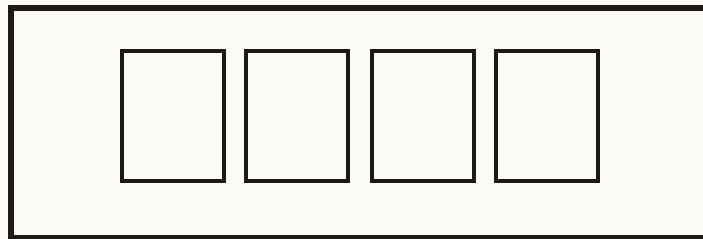


LAST CRUSH

ENVELOPE 1

THE SHERIFF'S FILE



Sealed. Do not open until you have the four-digit combination from Envelope 0.

Inside: Dolores's second letter, Blanco County Sheriff's Office case 89-1013-A (incident report, eight statements, evidence inventory, three photographs, preliminary autopsy), the Tank 4 log, the vineyard phone directory, and the party guest list.

San Antonio
October 30, 1989

Dear Detectives,

Sheriff Purcell taught school with my late husband's brother for eleven years, and I reminded him of it politely, and then less politely, and on Friday he handed me a copy of the file. It is thinner than I expected. Read the statements twice. Somebody in there is not telling it straight, and I have my suspicions, but I am his sister and I am not to be trusted on the subject.

Some things I noticed that you may make more of than I can. The deputy says the fan was running when Cal found him. Marisol says the fan had been acting up. Both cannot be simply true. The decanter was clean. Ruth will tell you what that means. And Walt's watch stopped, which is the only mercy in the whole business, because it tells us when.

Ruth has let me into the house and the cellar. Walt's office has a steel cabinet with a four-number lock that Ruth never knew. She says Walt told her once that it was "his tank and his number, tank first," and that "his number" was on the label of the '85 Reserve, and then she cried and I stopped asking. You have the label. The log in this envelope will tell you which tank was his. I worked it out myself, eventually, sitting at his desk with the label in one hand and the clipboard in the other, and the cabinet opened. What was inside is in the next envelope, sealed with that same number. I will not write it down. Walt would not have.

Marisol has been a great help. She found the clipboard with the tank log and gave it to the deputy herself. She has run that vineyard for fifteen years and she is running it now with a dead man's harvest in the tanks and I do not know how she is standing up.

One more thing. Cal is not himself. He was short with me on the telephone and he has not been to the house since the funeral. Ruth says he is sleeping at the Icehouse. Grief takes people differently, but I taught boys like Cal for thirty-eight years and short with his aunt is not grief. It is something else.

Sincerely,

Dolores

BLANCO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

L.D. Purcell, Sheriff · 101 E. Cypress St., Blanco, Texas 78606 · (512) 833-4141

BLANCO
COUNTY
SHERIFF
TEXAS

INCIDENT / OFFENSE REPORT

CASE NO.	DATE OF REPORT	TIME DISPATCHED	TIME ON SCENE
89-1013-A	10/14/89	0641	0658
LOCATION	CLASSIFICATION	REPORTING OFFICER	
Cypress Hollow Vineyard, 4410 RR 165, Blanco	Death - unattended	Dep. R. Kimbrough #14	
DECEDENT	RACE/SEX	DOB	AGE
BRANNOCK, Walter Dean	W / M	03/02/1928	61
COMPLAINANT	NEXT OF KIN NOTIFIED		
BRANNOCK, Calvin W. (son)	BRANNOCK, Ruth C. (wife) - on scene		

NARRATIVE

At 0641 hrs dispatch received a call from Calvin BRANNOCK reporting his father unresponsive inside a fermentation tank at the above location. R/O arrived 0658 with Blanco VFD (Unit 2). R/O was directed by Calvin BRANNOCK to the tank room on the north end of the cellar building.

Decedent was observed submerged to the chest in grape must inside Tank 4, an open-top stainless steel fermenter approx. 8 ft tall and 6 ft dia. A rolling steel platform ladder was positioned against the tank with wheel brakes set. A wall-mounted exhaust fan on the east wall was operating on arrival. A steel chain was found hooked across the tank room doorway with a cardboard sign reading "NO ENTRY - CO2 - FERMENTATION IN PROGRESS." Calvin BRANNOCK stated he unhooked the chain to enter at approx. 0635 to perform the morning punch-down, observed a flashlight lying lit on the platform, climbed the platform and saw his father in the tank. He stated he attempted to pull the decedent out and could not.

VFD removed decedent from the tank with a rope sling. Pronounced 0712 by VFD Capt. Ochoa. No pulse, rigor beginning in jaw. Decedent clothed in denim shirt, khaki trousers, work boots. Punch-down tool (stainless plunger, 5 ft) recovered from inside tank. Decedent's flashlight (Eveready, on, batteries weak) recovered from platform. Reading glasses on office desk. Wristwatch on decedent's left wrist not running (see inventory).

Dep. Ortiz photographed the scene, two rolls. R/O walked the residence and outbuildings with Mrs. Ruth BRANNOCK. At the request of the Travis County ME (Dr. Castellano, by phone 0805) R/O inventoried the medicine cabinet in the master bath of the main residence for the decedent's medications (see inventory). Decedent transported to Travis County ME under county contract, 0850.

Statements taken 10/14 and 10/15 from family, employees and guests of a private party held on the premises the evening of 10/13 (approx. 40 guests; list attached). Last known contact with decedent by any witness: 11:05 PM 10/13 (see PRUITT).

Vineyard manager Marisol REYES advised R/O that fermenting must produces carbon dioxide which pools in open tanks and that the decedent performed a nightly punch-down of Tank 4 alone, and further that the tank room exhaust fan "had been acting up." R/O notes the 1984 fatality at a Gruene winery under similar circumstances.

PRELIMINARY: Accidental death, CO2 asphyxia with fall into tank. Case to remain open pending ME

BLANCO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE · WITNESS STATEMENT

Case 89-1013-A · Statements taken by Dep. R. Kimbrough #14 · Page 1 of 4

STATEMENT OF: BRANNOCK, RUTH CAVANAUGH (WIFE), AGE 58

10/14/89 · 0940 HRS · MAIN RESIDENCE

The party broke up when the rain came. The last of them were gone by five till eleven. Walt walked the Teagues out at half past ten and then stood on the porch with me saying goodnights. He said, "I'll check on Four and be up," which is what he said every night of every harvest for ten years. I called my sister Joanne in Amarillo a little after eleven, which I do on Fridays, and we talked a good while. I was asleep by midnight. Walt often slept on the cot in the office during fermentation, so I did not think anything when he was not in the bed. Cal woke me.



Yes, I take a Seconal every night. I have since 1987. Dr. Whitfield. Walt took a heart pill and Motrin for his back and nothing else, and he would not have taken one of mine if you paid him, he said they were for weak people.

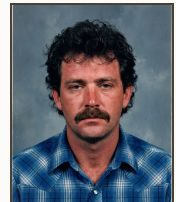
The decanter? He rinsed that decanter once a month if I nagged him. He said the port seasoned it. If it is clean somebody cleaned it. Marisol, probably. She cleans up after him. She has been a blessing.

Ruth C. Brannock

STATEMENT OF: BRANNOCK, CALVIN WALTER (SON), AGE 34

10/14/89 · 0725 HRS · CELLAR OFFICE

I went down at half past six to do the morning punch-down like always. The chain was up, which is normal at night. I unhooked it. I saw his flashlight first, lying on the platform, still on. Then I saw him. I tried to get him out. I couldn't.



Yes, Dad and I had words last night. About half past nine, by the equipment barn. Family business. It's got nothing to do with this. I left around twenty after ten and went to the Icehouse in town and drank beer till they closed and came home and slept in the truck because I didn't want to wake Mama. I don't know what time. Late.

You want to know who's a thief on this place, you ask Denny Pruitt about six cases of '86 Reserve that walked out of the cellar in September. Dad wouldn't hear it. Dad hired a convict and wouldn't hear it.

Cal Brannock

BLANCO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE • WITNESS STATEMENT

Case 89-1013-A • Statements taken by Dep. R. Kimbrough #14 • Page 2 of 4

STATEMENT OF: REYES, MARISOL (VINEYARD MANAGER), AGE 41

10/14/89 • 0810 HRS • CRUSH PAD

I have worked for Walt Brannock since 1974. I run the vineyard. I live in the manager's cottage.

The rain started about a quarter past ten. I went back to the cottage at half past to get out of it. I made tea and I was in bed by eleven. I did not hear anything but rain, and then nothing. I did not see Walt after the party. The last I spoke to him was around ten, at the crush pad. Vineyard business.

You should know that fan in the tank room has been acting up for weeks. I told Walt twice. He would have said it was fine. He always said it was fine. Fermenting must makes carbon dioxide, it sits on the wine like a blanket, and if the fan is not pulling it out and a man leans over that tank he is gone before he knows it. That is what happened. He was tired and he leaned in.

Fifteen years. He was like family. I am not going to say any more right now.

M. Reyes



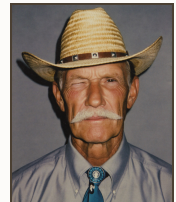
STATEMENT OF: TEAGUE, HOLLIS (NEIGHBOR, TEAGUE RANCH), AGE 63

10/15/89 • 1400 HRS • TEAGUE RANCH

Bettye and I went to the party at half past six. We left at half past ten when it started raining. Bettye drove. We were home by ten till eleven. I did not see Walt again after he walked us to the car.

Walt and I had our differences. That is a matter of public record and of my attorney's, and I will not discuss it with you or anybody. Ask Jim Haskell or ask Walt's man Baird. I will say he was a fair man at the end and I am sorry he is dead, and that is all I will say.

Hollis Teague



BLANCO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE · WITNESS STATEMENT

Case 89-1013-A · Statements taken by Dep. R. Kimbrough #14 · Page 3 of 4

STATEMENT OF: SATO, EVELYN, PH.D. (CONSULTING
ENOLOGIST), AGE 46

10/15/89 · 1030 HRS · BY TELEPHONE,
FREDERICKSBURG

I consult for Cypress Hollow and three other Hill Country wineries on fermentation management and laboratory analysis. I had been on site most of the week for harvest. I attended the party as a guest.

Walt and I had a misunderstanding in September about some fruit from Block C and we cleared it up that evening. He apologized, in fact, which was not like him. He was in good spirits. I left at ten to eleven, when the rain let up, and drove home to Fredericksburg. I arrived about a quarter to twelve. I live alone.

I did not go into the tank room that night. I had no reason to. The punch-down was Walt's and he did not like company for it.

E. Sato



STATEMENT OF: PRUITT, DENNIS RAY (CELLAR HAND), AGE 29

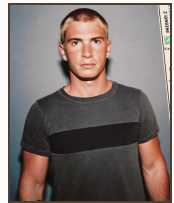
10/14/89 · 0850 HRS · BUNKHOUSE

I was on the bunkhouse porch most of the night smoking. I don't drink. You can see the whole yard and the cellar door from that porch.

Cal's truck left about twenty after ten, fast. Mad. The rain started right after that. The Teagues left in the Buick at half past. Dr. Sato's white Volvo about ten till eleven, when it quit raining. Mr. Brannock came out of the house at five after eleven with a flashlight, whistling, and went in the cellar door like he does every night. I went inside around midnight. I didn't see nobody else.

Yes, I did time in Hays County. Burglary, 1985, eighteen months. Mr. Brannock knew that when he hired me. He's the only one who ever did.

Denny Pruitt



BLANCO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE · WITNESS STATEMENT

Case 89-1013-A · Statements taken by Dep. R. Kimbrough #14 · Page 4 of 4

STATEMENT OF: CANTU, LUPE (BARTENDER, BLANCO ICEHOUSE), AGE 10/15/89 · 1615 HRS · BLANCO
52 ICEHOUSE

Cal Brannock came in about twenty till eleven Friday. He had four or five Lone Stars. He was upset about something with his daddy and I didn't ask. He left a little after eleven. He did not close the place. I close at midnight on Fridays and he was long gone. He did not say where he was going.

Lupe Cantu

STATEMENT OF: TEAGUE, BETTYE (NEIGHBOR, GUEST), AGE 60 10/15/89 · 1415 HRS · TEAGUE RANCH

It was a lovely party until the rain. Walt made a toast about the harvest and about his son and everybody clapped. I did see Walt and Marisol having words down by the crush pad around ten o'clock. She walked off toward her little house. I did not think anything of it. They squabbled like an old married couple, those two, for fifteen years. We left at half past ten. Hollis will have told you. He does not want to talk about the lawsuit and I would not push him on it if I were you.

Bettye Teague

Guests contacted by phone 10/15-10/16 (31 of 34 remaining): none report contact with decedent after 10:55 PM. None report entering cellar bldg. - RK

**BLANCO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE · EVIDENCE / PROPERTY
INVENTORY**

Case 89-1013-A · Dep. R. Kimbrough #14 · 10/14/89

#	ITEM	LOCATION RECOVERED	DISPOSITION
1	Wristwatch, Timex, analog, brown leather band, not running, hands at 11:41 . Crystal fogged, must inside case.	Decedent, L wrist	To ME w/ body
2	Flashlight, Eveready 2-D cell, switch ON, batteries weak	Platform, Tank 4	Released to family
3	Punch-down tool, stainless, 5 ft	Inside Tank 4	Released to family
4	Wallet, brown leather, \$63 cash, TX DL, Farm Bureau card, misc.	Decedent, R rear pocket	Released to family
5	Key ring, 9 keys, brass tag "WB"	Decedent, R front pocket	Released to family
6	Notebook, pocket, spiral, saturated, illegible	Decedent, shirt pocket	Released to family
7	Reading glasses, half-frame	Office desk	Left in place
8	Decanter, cut crystal, approx. 1 qt, empty, clean, inverted on folded white dish towel	Office shelf	Photographed, left in place
9	Wine glass, small (4 oz), clean, in dish rack	Office sink	Photographed, left in place
10	Bottle, "Cypress Hollow Cellar Port," 750 ml, approx. 1/3 full, corked	Office cabinet, lower	Left in place
11	Tank 4 log sheet, clipboard (copied, original left in place)	Tank room wall hook - produced by M. Reyes	Copy to file
12	Cardboard sign "NO ENTRY - CO2 - FERMENTATION IN PROGRESS," black marker, on steel chain	Tank room doorway	Photographed, left in place
MEDICINE CABINET, MASTER BATH, MAIN RESIDENCE - inventoried at request of Travis Co. ME (Dr. Castellano) for decedent's medications. Counted in presence of Mrs. Brannock.			
13a	LANOXIN 0.25 mg tabs, Rx 4460930, W. Brannock, Blanco Drug, filled 09/30/89, qty 30 - 17 present	Med. cabinet	To ME
13b	MOTRIN 600 mg tabs, Rx 4412207, W. Brannock, Blanco Drug, filled 08/29/89, qty 60 - 41 present	Med. cabinet	To ME
13c	SECONAL 100 mg caps, Rx 4471186, R. Brannock, Blanco Drug, filled 10/03/89, qty 30 - 11 present	Med. cabinet	Noted, left in place (not decedent's)
13d	Assorted OTC: Bayer aspirin, Pepto-Bismol, Ben-Gay, Visine	Med. cabinet	Noted

Photo log: Roll 1 (24 exp) printed, 3 frames attached. Roll 2 (24 exp) exposed by Ortiz, not printed - accidental, no need. Negatives in file. - RK



89-1013-A · Roll 1 Fr. 4 · Tank room, Tank 4 and platform, looking N. Fan on E wall running.
0705 hrs. - Ortiz



89-1013-A · Roll 1 Fr. 11 · Cellar office, shelf above sink. Decanter inverted on towel. 0740 hrs.
- Ortiz



89-1013-A · Roll 1 Fr. 2 · Tank room doorway from yard, chain re-hung for photo per C. Brannock's description. 0700 hrs. - Ortiz

CYPRESS HOLLOW VINEYARD · FERMENTATION LOG · HARVEST 1989

One line per reading. Punch down twice daily minimum. Initial every line. Tanks 1-3, 5: CB. Tank 4: WB only. - W

DATE	TIME	TANK	TEMP °F	BRIX	CAP PUNCHED	INITIALS	NOTES
10/11	7:10 AM	1	78	16.4	Y	CB	
10/11	7:20 AM	2	79	17.0	Y	CB	
10/11	7:30 AM	3	77	18.8	Y	CB	
10/11	7:45 AM	5	72	21.2	Y	CB	just started - Block D
10/11	7:00 PM	4	80	16.5	Y	WB	
10/11	11:20 PM	4	81	15.8	Y	WB	smells right
10/12	7:05 AM	1	80	14.9	Y	CB	
10/12	7:15 AM	2	81	15.2	Y	CB	
10/12	7:25 AM	3	79	17.1	Y	CB	
10/12	7:35 AM	5	75	20.0	Y	CB	
10/12	7:00 PM	4	82	14.6	Y	WB	
10/12	11:10 PM	4	83	13.9	Y	WB	
10/13	7:00 AM	1	81	13.0	Y	CB	
10/13	7:10 AM	2	82	13.4	Y	CB	
10/13	7:20 AM	3	80	15.2	Y	CB	
10/13	7:30 AM	5	77	18.6	Y	CB	
10/13	7:00 PM	4	82	13.0	Y	WB	party - back at 11
10/13	11:15 PM	4	84	11.2			
10/14	7:50 AM	1	82	11.1	Y	MR	Cal can't. Doing all tanks today. MR
10/14	8:00 AM	2	83	11.6	Y	MR	
10/14	8:10 AM	3	81	13.4	Y	MR	
10/14	8:20 AM	5	79	16.8	Y	MR	

Last entry in decedent's hand 10/13 11:15 PM (temp & Brix only, no punch-down mark, no initial). Copied 10/14 - RK

CYPRESS HOLLOW VINEYARD - TELEPHONE

Dial 4 digits from any set. Outside line: dial 9.

Main House 2201

Cellar Office 2202

Manager's Cottage 2203

Bunkhouse 2204

Tasting Room 2205

Residence line (512) 833-2201 • Business line (512) 833-2202

HARVEST PARTY - FRIDAY OCT. 13, 1989 - GUEST LIST (departure times per witnesses - RK)

GUEST	OF	LEFT	GUEST	OF	LEFT
Ruth & Walt Brannock	hosts		Bob & Nancy Lindley	Farm Bureau, Blanco	~10:40
Cal Brannock	family	10:20 (Pruitt)	Pastor Gene & Carol Ashby	First Baptist	10:15
Marisol Reyes	staff	10:30 to cottage (self)	Dale & Kay Ferris	Commissioner, Pct 2	10:45
Denny Pruitt	staff	on site	Carolyn Mabry	Blanco Co. News	10:50
Hollis & Bettye Teague	neighbor	10:30 (Pruitt, Teague)	Tom & Ana Herrera	Herrera's, San Marcos	10:35
Dr. Evelyn Sato	consultant	10:50 (Pruitt, self)	Ray Ozuna	Blanco	left early ~9:00
Gerald Kemp	Austin	did not attend	Lupe Cantu	Blanco Icehouse	did not attend (working)
Tom Baird	Austin, attorney	did not attend	Bill & Jo Ann Haskell	Johnson City	10:45
Doc & Marge Whitfield	Blanco	10:20	the Ochoa family (4)	Blanco VFD	10:30
Pedernales Ridge crew (6)	Fredericksburg	~10:40 in two trucks	Blanco Panthers boosters (8)	Blanco	10:15-10:50

Approx. 40 total. No guest reports seeing decedent after 10:55 except PRUITT (11:05). No guest reports entering cellar bldg after 9 PM. - RK

OFFICE OF THE MEDICAL EXAMINER • TRAVIS COUNTY, TEXAS

1213 Sabine Street, Austin, Texas 78701 • Anne Castellano, M.D., Deputy Chief Medical Examiner

PRELIMINARY REPORT OF AUTOPSY

ME CASE

ME-89-2210

AGENCY CASE

Blanco SO 89-1013-A

DATE OF EXAM

10/16/89

DECEDENT

BRANNOCK, Walter D.,
61

EXTERNAL. Well-developed, well-nourished white male, 71 in., 188 lb. Clothing saturated with red-purple liquid consistent with fermenting grape must; same material in hair, ears, nares and mouth. Contusion 3 x 2 cm right temple with underlying scalp hemorrhage, consistent with impact against the rim or interior wall of a tank. Abrasions dorsal hands. No defensive injuries. Rigor full, lividity posterior, consistent with recovery position.

INTERNAL. Pulmonary edema and congestion, bilateral. Frothy fluid and red-purple particulate matter in trachea and mainstem bronchi. Approx. 250 ml red-purple liquid in stomach with a strong sweet odor of fortified wine; no solid food. Cardiomegaly, mild (480 g), with moderate coronary atherosclerosis. No acute cardiac lesion identified grossly. Liver mildly fatty. Remaining organs unremarkable.

PRELIMINARY OPINION. Findings are consistent with asphyxia due to displacement of oxygen by carbon dioxide in a confined space, with terminal aspiration of liquid. The temporal contusion is consistent with a fall. The distribution of findings does not exclude contributing factors. Blood, vitreous, urine and gastric contents have been submitted for comprehensive toxicology, including ethanol and a sedative-hypnotic screen. Results expected in two to three weeks.

CAUSE OF DEATH: Pending toxicology. **MANNER OF DEATH:** Pending.

SIGNATURE

Anne Castellano, M.D.

DATE

10/17/89

PRELIMINARY