

# Hammond/Fiancé ruled out as suspect

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le of a lead there ...

"Now it's not uncommon for us to get two or three new and different leads on this case every single week."

## MOTHER WANTS CLOSURE

Initially linked to two other kidnappings in early 1991, Hammond's abduction preceded Springfield's three missing women case by 14 months.

Although unrelated to the June 7, 1992 disappearance of Stacy McCall, Suzie Streeter and Sherill Levitt, Hammond's abduction had a similar effect on the Clinton community.

"This is apple pie America. Things like that just don't happen here," said Hammond's mother, Marsha Cook.

Cook — who befriended Stacy McCall's mother, Janis, and appeared with the Springfield woman on a 1992 episode of Oprah Winfrey's television show — said she just wants to find out what happened to her daughter "and bring her home, one way or the other."

"I realize that after 18 years it's not very hopeful that she'd still be alive," Cook said. " ... At least I would know what happened to her and maybe have some closure. That not knowing is what kills you."

## MANY DETAILS FROM SCENE

Throughout the years, some of the best information detectives received came from Hammond herself.

"That information came from her and was relayed to her fiancé at the time," Abbott said.

Hammond described a two-tone green truck — similar to an early '70s model Ford — that circled the block several times before pulling into the lot near her car.

The truck had a mural in its back window of a fish jumping out of water, she noted, and the driver, a white man, was "scruffy" looking.

The bearded man was wearing overalls and glasses when he got out of the truck and approached the pay phone next to Hammond.

He picked up the phone, then hung it up a moment later. Hammond

## Tips

Anyone with information about the abduction of Angela Hammond is asked to contact the Clinton Police Department at (660) 885-2679 or by e-mail at tips@clintonmopd.com. Tipsters may remain anonymous.

asked him if he needed to use the phone she was using, but he said he'd try again later.

Hammond told her fiancé, Rob Shafer, that the man then returned to his truck walking back toward her.

Then she screamed. The line went dead.

Shafer, an 18-year-old high school senior, told police he jumped in his own truck and raced toward the grocery store a few blocks away.

On the way, he passed a truck and heard Hammond shout his name.

"When she screamed at me out the window, I put it in reverse and started chasing him," Shafer told the News-Leader in 1991.

After only a mile, his transmission gave out — it had been damaged when he frantically turned around.

The truck carrying Hammond disappeared into the night.

## AUTHORITIES HOPEFUL

Searches by Clinton police and members of the Missouri Rural Crime Squad turned up no sign of the young woman or her assailant.

Reward funds totaling \$16,000 were set up. In addition to Hammond's mother's appearance on "Oprah," the case was featured on "Unsolved Mysteries" in February 1992.

More than 600 tips poured in, but none of the leads panned out.

Shafer, the last person to speak with Hammond, was investigated "extensively" and ruled out as a suspect, Abbott said. "We still feel that way."

Although they believe the basic description of Hammond's kidnapping is accurate, detectives are open to the possibility that details — such as the make or model of the suspect's truck — could have been miscommunicated in the couple's conversation.

"There can always be discrepancies ... it can be like playing the old telephone game," Abbott said.

The truck, which Hammond described as a Ford like the one Shafer drove, might have been a Dodge or a Chevrolet, for example. Or Shafer might have misinterpreted her description of the mural on the back window.

"We've considered that," Abbott said. "We've looked at a lot of older trucks."

It's unlikely the suspect is still driving the vehicle, but it might jog someone's memory, he said.

One new development, Abbott said, is that detectives no longer think Hammond's abduction was related to others that occurred nearby in 1991.

"Initially we always looked at this case from the viewpoint that it was probably associated with the Cheryl Ann Kenney case in Nevada and the Trudy Darby case in Macks Creek," he said.

Both women were convenience store clerks who disappeared a few months before Hammond was kidnapped. Darby's nude body was found in the Little Niangua River two days after she disappeared, shot twice in the head. Kenney has never been found.

"At this point we think it is unlikely that our case is related to those two cases," Abbott said, saying the investigation is now more focused on the Clinton area, with tips indicating a local suspect.

Police also hope technology may provide a break.

Abbott would not specifically describe what evidence has been preserved since Hammond was abducted, but said several items are being reprocessed. "We're hopeful that we may be able to develop some DNA profiles of a possible suspect in the future."

Hammond's mother, said Clinton police "have been wonderful" about keeping her updated about the case.

The recent activity is encouraging, Cook said. "As long as something's going on with it, you've got the hope that maybe they will find something ..."

"If anybody knows anything out there, we'd really like their help."