



SAN DIEGO COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT
HOMICIDE TEAM II

DEATH INVESTIGATION
CASE NUMBER 11133835
JULY 13, 2011
1043 OCEAN BOULEVARD
CORONADO, CA

Rebecca Zahau (Nalepa)

- AFA , 5' 3 ½", 100 pounds
- 03-15-79, 32 years
- Girlfriend of Jonah Shacknai



July 13th, 2011

- Coronado Police requested assistance from the Sheriff's Department regarding a suspicious death at 1043 Ocean Blvd.
- Sheriff's Personnel arrived at about 0920 hours to begin the investigation.

Briefing

- Investigators and support personnel from the Sheriff's Department, Coronado Police Department and the California Department of Justice (BJI)
- Learned a nude and bound female was found hanging from a balcony in the courtyard by the homeowner's brother at about 0648 hours.

Briefing

- Also learned the homeowner's 6 year old son was in a coma at Children's Hospital due to injuries resulting from a fall



Main Residence

Courtyard

Guest House

Caretaker Living Quarters

Preliminary Information

- The last outgoing call from Rebecca's phone was to her voice mail at about 0050 hours
- The investigation revealed that message was left to inform Rebecca of Max's grave condition and imminent death
- This was in contradiction to previous, more positive reports regarding his condition

Outside Scene

- Rebecca was found laying on the lawn in the courtyard
- Her wrists and ankles were bound with red rope, hands behind her back
- The same red rope and a t-shirt were around her neck
- The same red rope was hanging over the balcony railing

Outside Scene

- There was a table below the balcony, and a kitchen knife on the ground near Rebecca
- The investigation revealed the knife and table had been used by the reporting party to cut her down
- Adam Shacknai, the homeowner's brother, was the reporting party and had been staying in the guest house

Inside Scene

- Message painted in black paint on door leading to guest bedroom



Inside Scene

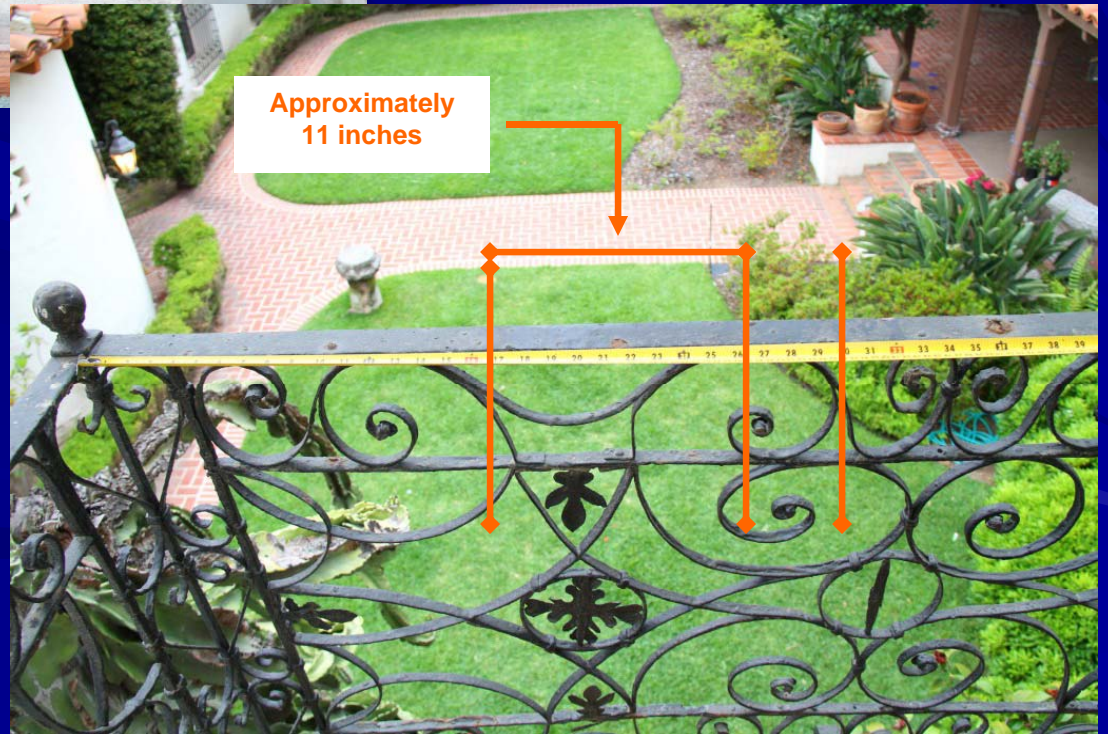
- Red rope secured to the footboard of the bed
- Two paint brushes, one with black paint on the floor near the bed
- Tube of black paint under a plastic bag on the floor near the bed
- Two kitchen knives, one large and one small on the floor near the bed
- One side of the bed pulled away from wall

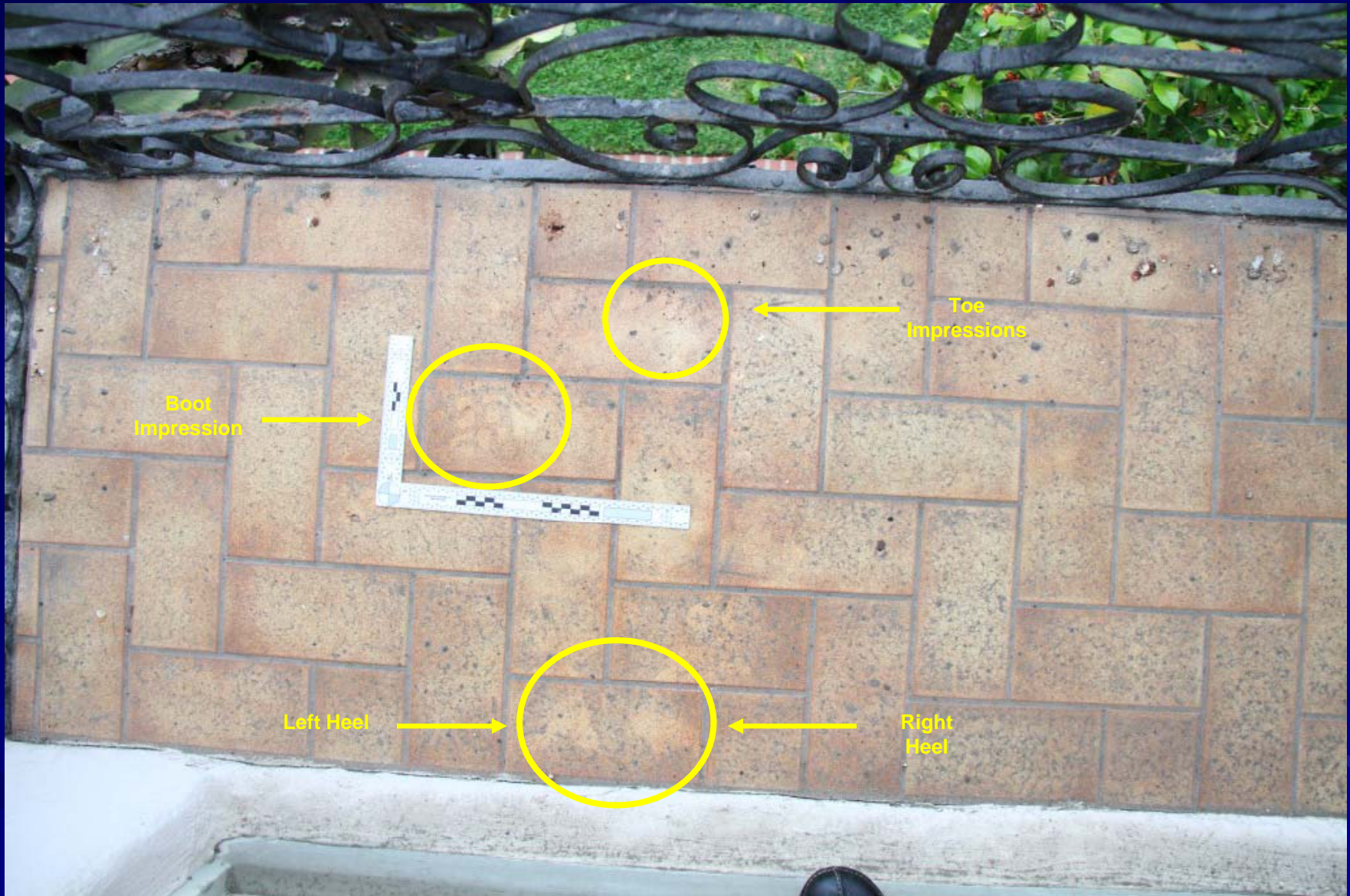


Inside Scene

- Red rope went out double doors leading to the balcony, and over the railing
- Foot and toe impressions found on the balcony tile, dust on the railing had been disturbed
- Boot impression also found on the balcony tile, source identified as a Police Officer's boot, boot recovered
- No other disturbances found







Boot Impression

Toe Impressions

Left Heel

Right Heel

Evidence Examined

- Black paint from door, brush, paint tube, victim's hand and torso, and the rope around the victim's neck all matched
- Fingerprints from the guest room entry door jamb, balcony door, the large knife, and the bed leg next to the rope were from Rebecca
- DNA profiles from the victim's bindings (hands and feet), the rope around her neck, the rope attached to the footboard of the bed, and the small knife were only from Rebecca

Evidence Examined

- Foot impressions from the balcony were consistent with the size of Rebecca's feet, and consistent with her ankles being bound
- Disturbances on the railing were consistent with the width of Rebecca's torso and the rope
- Toe impressions on the balcony were consistent with a person leaning forward over the railing

Additional Information

- No additional evidence or information was received leading investigators to believe foul play was involved
- Numerous witnesses were interviewed. All were cooperative, and we are confident in their truthfulness
- Autopsy results supported the findings of investigators

Additional Information

- A witness reported contact with Rebecca in January, having observed Rebecca had lost weight, seemed stressed, was not sleeping well and was not exercising. She had also engaged in conversations with Rebecca regarding problems she was having
- A journal found on Rebecca's phone supported this information

Additional Information

- Rebecca was distraught over Max's injury

Conclusions

- Rebecca received the news regarding Max's grave condition
- She made the decision to take her own life
- She located a rope (possibly from the garage)
- She removed her clothing, painted the message, cut the rope into sections, secured the rope to the bed

Conclusions

- She bound her feet, placed the rope and shirt around her neck, fashioned her wrist bindings, and secured her hands behind her back
- Rebecca moved out to the balcony, leaned forward over the rail, and fell

Conclusions

- Experiment conducted to determine if it is possible for a person to secure their hands behind their back in a similar fashion
- Video

SAN DIEGO SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT HOMICIDE DETAIL

