

Office of the Chesapeake County Coroner

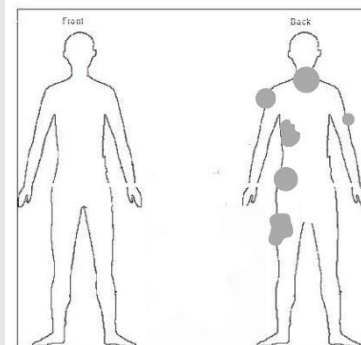
DATE and HOUR AUTOPSY PERFORMED:

4/20/2020; 8:30 A.M. by

Manish Agarwala, M.D.
555 Elm Avenue
Chesapeake, MD 28655
667-234-5432 (FAX 667-234-5433)

Assistant: Victoria
Witte, M.D.

**Full Autopsy
Performed**

**SUMMARY REPORT OF AUTOPSY**

Name: GRIGGS, Aaron	Coroner's Case #: 2020-277
Date of Birth: 3/23/01	Age: 19
	Sex: Male
Date of Death: 4/18/2020	Body Identified by: Jess Leonard, friend of the deceased
Case # 001294-23E-2020	Investigative Agency: Maryland State Police

EXTERNAL EXAMINATION:

The autopsy is begun at 8:30 A.M. on April 20. The body is presented in a black body bag.

The body is that of a normally developed male measuring 67 inches and weighing 160 pounds, and appearing generally consistent with the stated age of nineteen years. The body is cold and unembalmed. The eyes are open. The irises are brown and corneas are cloudy. Petechial hemorrhaging is present in the conjunctival surfaces of the eyes. The pupils measure 0.3 cm. Multiple contusions present on arms and torso. The fingernails are short in length and fingernail beds are blue. There are no residual scars, markings or tattoos.

INTERNAL EXAMINATION:

HEAD--CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM: The brain weighs 1,303 grams and within normal limits.

SKELETAL SYSTEM: Spinal cord injury at cervical vertebrae C2 likely cause of immediate death. The craniovertebral junction (CVJ) including atlas (C1) and axis (C2) are shattered.

RESPIRATORY SYSTEM--THROAT STRUCTURES: The oral cavity shows no lesions. Otherwise, the mucosa is intact and there are no injuries to the lips, teeth or gums.

There is no obstruction of the airway. The mucosa of the epiglottis, glottis, piriform sinuses, trachea and major bronchi are anatomic. No injuries are seen and there are no mucosal lesions.

The lungs weigh: right, 355 grams; left 362 grams. The lungs are unremarkable.

CARDIOVASCULAR SYSTEM: The heart weighs 253 grams, and has a normal size and configuration. No evidence of atherosclerosis is present.

GASTROINTESTINAL SYSTEM: The mucosa and wall of the esophagus are intact and gray-pink, without lesions or injuries. The gastric mucosa is intact and pink without injury. Approximately 125 ml of partially digested semisolid food is found in the stomach. The mucosa of the duodenum, jejunum, ileum, colon and rectum are intact.

URINARY SYSTEM: The kidneys weigh: left, 115 grams; right, 113 grams. The kidneys are anatomic in size, shape and location and are without lesions.

TOXICOLOGY: Sample of right pleural blood and bile are submitted for toxicologic analysis. Stomach contents are saved.

SEROLOGY: A sample of right pleural blood is submitted in the EDTA tube. Routine toxicologic studies were ordered.

Drug Screen Results:

Urine screen: 2.0 ng/mL, tetrahydrocannabinol carboxylic acid (THC-COOH)
Ethanol: 0 gm/dl, Blood (Heart)
Ethanol: 0 gm/dl, Vitreous

Millicent Schmidt, Ph.D.
Chief Toxicologist
April 23, 2020

EVIDENCE COLLECTED:

1. Samples of Blood (type O+), Bile, and Tissue (heart, lung, brain, kidney, liver, spleen).
2. Eleven (11) autopsy photographs.
3. One postmortem CT scan.
4. One postmortem MRI.

OPINION

Time of Death: Body temperature, rigor and livor mortis, and stomach contents approximate the time of death between 6:30 and 8:30 P.M. on 4/18/2020.

Immediate Cause of Death: Fractures of the cervical vertebrae, C1 and C2.

Manner of Death: Accidental.

Remarks: Decedent originally presented to this office as fall victim. Autopsy findings support cause of death by serious fall. MSP detectives were notified of this finding immediately upon conclusion of examination.

//Manish Agarwala, M.D.
Chesapeake County Coroner's Office
April 20, 2020

**CHESAPEAKE POLICE DEPARTMENT
CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION DIVISION
INVESTIGATIVE REPORT**

<u>Incident</u> Accidental Death	<u>Victim Name</u> Aaron Griggs	<u>Incident Date</u> April 18, 2020
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INVESTIGATION

INCIDENT: Accidental Death

LOCATION: Cabin located on the Donahue Property, off Chapman Road, Chesapeake County, Maryland

VICTIM: Aaron Griggs

SUSPECT: Unknown

WITNESS:

Jodie Donahue	Owner of property where incident occurred
Elin Sanchez	Friend of Aaron Griggs
Jess Leonard	Friend of Aaron Griggs
Monroe Williams	Friend of Aaron Griggs

POLICE PERSONNEL:

Officer Karen Featherston	Chesapeake Police Department
Officer Charles Carmichael	Chesapeake Police Department
Officer Devin Woodcomb	Chesapeake Police Department

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF: Dr. Manish Agarwala

MEDICAL EXAMINER: Chesapeake County Coroner's Office

LEAD INVESTIGATOR: Officer Michael Sloat Chesapeake Police Department

CASE STATUS: Closed

Narrative:

On April 18, 2020, I was called to the scene of an accident at the property of Jodie Donahue located off of Chapman Road. There had been a 911 emergency call for service in relation to a

person who injured themselves by falling. I responded to an abandoned property at the location. By the time I arrived, other officers and EMTs were already on scene. I met with the first officer on scene, Officer Karen Featherston. Officer Featherston reported to me that the case was no longer a call for assistance as the person who fell, Aaron Griggs, had died on scene.

Officer Featherston relayed to me that the owner of property, Jodie Donahue, was contacted to be made aware of the situation, and was en route.

Officer Featherston also relayed to me that the deceased was not alone at the property. Officer Featherston introduced me to Elin Sanchez, Jess Leonard, and Monroe Williams. All 3 witnesses were very upset, as they had already been advised that their friend had been pronounced dead on scene.

I then attempted to interview the witnesses individually. I had Officer Featherston stay with each witness so that I could try to ascertain what took place.

First, I spoke with Monroe Williams. Williams explained that others saw the actual fall and only heard a loud sound at that the time that it happened. Williams additionally explained that the group of 4 had originally come onto the property to explore the area where *The Belair Witch Project* was filmed. Williams stated the four individuals met with Jodie Donahue earlier that day and Donahue advised them not to go into the cabin or to bypass the fence surrounding the cabin, but Williams told me they did not obey this warning and crossed over the fence to explore the cabin.

I next spoke with Jess Leonard. Leonard indicated they were the one who called 911. Leonard told me they were just inside the front entrance to the cabin at the time of the fall but did not see Griggs fall. I questioned Leonard about whether the individuals had permission to enter the cabin and Leonard indicated to me that they did. Leonard said they believed the cabin was safe to explore and that the impression they got from Donahue is that the cabin was part of the experience of exploring the land.

I then spoke with Elin Sanchez. Sanchez was next to Griggs when he stepped onto the first wooden stair to the basement and fell through that step and to the ground. Sanchez indicated that the deceased was immediately unresponsive. Sanchez told me they also believed based on their conversation with Donahue that the students were encouraged to explore the area around the cabin. Sanchez appeared to be in a state of shock for most of the interview and their statements were short and occasionally unintelligible.

After concluding these interviews, I inspected the property. The fence surrounding the cabin area was intact but in a state of disrepair at various points. It appeared to span a large perimeter around the cabin. I did locate one "No Trespassing" sign on the far side of the fenced area, which is the side opposite of the main entrance to the property. That sign was on an area of fence that was black and largely intact, while other areas of the fence were a lighter gray color and appeared in substantially worse condition.

The exterior of the cabin was built with wooden log beams, while the interior wall were a combination of stucco and brick. My understanding is that the cabin was built for filming of *The Belair Witch Project* and the exterior was built with cheap materials while the interior was staged more elaborately for filming purposes. The floorboards appeared older and there was considerable dust and debris built up on the floor. While the floor felt weak at points, none of the boards broke or cracked while I walked on them.

Once I had finished inspecting the area around the cabin, I came back out to finish my report. I was met by the parents of the deceased who were frantic. I explained that their child had been taken from the scene and gave them phone numbers for how to get more information about the location of their child. While concluding speaking with the deceased's parents, Jodie Donahue arrived on scene. I advised Donahue that someone had died on their property and that I would be following up. I got Jodie Donahue's contact information. I did see Jodie Donahue speak with the parents of the deceased before I left but did not hear what they were saying. Their conversation appeared to be animated but never to the point where I felt it was necessary to intervene.

Before leaving the property, I walked the perimeter of the Donahue land. The entire border of the land is marked by a well-maintained chain-link fence approximately six feet high. I did not locate anything additional during my time on the land that impacted my investigation.

On April 20, 2020, I contacted Jodie Donahue and asked about the possibility of doing a follow-up interview. The purpose of the interview was to establish Jodie Donahue's culpability in the death of Aaron Griggs. Donahue indicated this would be fine but that they were not able to talk right when I called and asked if I could call back in a couple of days.

Additionally, on April 20, 2020, the autopsy was completed by Dr. Manish Agarwala of the Chesapeake County Coroner's Office. The Manner of Death in the case was determined to be Accidental.

On April 24, 2020, I contacted Jodie Donahue again and asked if I could conduct an interview. Donahue advised they were very busy. Ultimately, Donahue agreed to come in on April 30, 2020.

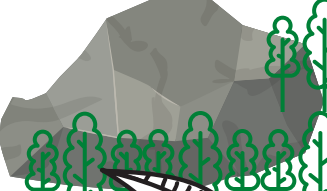
On April 29, 2020, I received a voicemail from Jodie Donahue indicated they were not available any longer for the April 30, 2020 meeting and wanted to reschedule. I called Jodie Donahue back and agreed to a new meeting date of May 6, 2020.

On May 6, 2020, I met with Jodie Donahue at the Chesapeake Police precinct. Present with me for this interview was Officer Featherston. I brought Jodie Donahue into Interview Room #2. I then conducted an interview of Jodie Donahue. The interview was recorded. I later transcribed the interview. The transcription was 7 pages in length. The interview was conducted with Jodie Donahue's consent, so I did not advise Jodie Donahue regarding their Miranda rights. I asked many questions of Jodie Donahue based on my investigation. At first, Jodie Donahue was very open with me and had a lot of sympathy for the deceased. When I pushed harder in

my questions, communication became more challenging. At no point did Jodie Donahue give any impression that they believed they acted in a reckless manner.

My impression based on this conversation is that Donahue believes that their actions indicated or should have indicated to the four students – Griggs, Sanchez, Leonard and Williams – that the cabin area and the cabin itself were off-limits to the public. Donahue provided numerous reasons for this belief including the fence around the cabin, No Trespassing signs that Donahue claimed to have hung, and conversations with the four individuals including Aaron Griggs where Donahue stated they made it clear the students were not to explore the cabin area.

At no time before, during or after my interview did I believe I had proof that Jodie Donahue expressly advised those involved in this case that they should explore the area in and around the cabin. Based on that information and upon that belief, I am closing this case as Accidental. No further action will be taken at this time.



Early in The Belair Witch Project the students visit Coffin Rock. Those scenes were filmed here at this large overgrown rock formation. It's a great spot to sit and relax before you find yourselves lost in the woods.

See the place where it all ended! The cabin from that final scene in The Belair Witch Project might not look like much, but if you look closely from outside you might catch a glimpse of the trap door to that infamous basement.

Come find Gaskins Creek where Mike, Heather and Josh realize they've lost their map. Hopefully you won't lose your map though, because who knows how long you might be stuck out in the woods if you do...

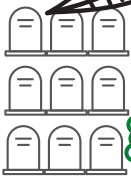


To preserve the original look of The Belair Witch Project, we haven't marked any walking paths on the property.

Please use your common sense when navigating the property, and follow all posted signs and instructions. You'll find fences at the edge of the property; please don't go beyond those fences.

As you explore, we encourage you to take pictures and videos and post them on social media. Make sure to tag your location so future explorers can find us here and experience the same thrills that you will!

Here on the edge of the property you'll find the cemetery where the students in The Belair Witch Project first started to realize that something might be wrong. These gravestones are from the original film but there's no one actually buried here... or is there?



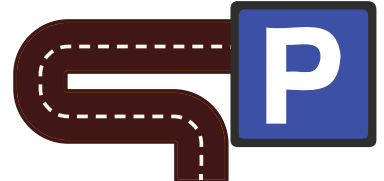
The campsite scenes were filmed in the same location each night, and the filmmakers deliberately chose the deepest, darkest part of the woods. We've set up some tents for you to find, but don't linger too long. You never know what's out there.



Come get your souvenirs and maps here! You need a map to explore the property.

Gift Shop

Owner's House (Private)



Grey lines on this map indicate the location of fences. You can use these fences as reference points to help you navigate your way around the property.



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Come find Gaskins Creek where Mike, Heather and Josh realize they've lost their map. Hopefully you won't lose your map though, because who knows how long you might be stuck out in the woods if you do...

Check this out! Looks just like the movie!



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Please use your common sense when navigating the property, and follow posted signs and instructions. You'll find fences at the edge of the property; please don't go beyond those fences.

As you explore, we encourage you to take pictures and videos and post them on social media. Make sure to tag the location so future explorers can find here and experience the same thrill you will!

On the edge of the property and the cemetery where the events in The Belair Witch Project first started to realize that things might be wrong. These tones are from the original but there's no one actually buried here... or is there?

The campsite scenes were filmed in the same location each night, and the filmmakers deliberately chose the deepest, darkest part of the woods. We've set up some tents for you to find, but don't linger too long. You never know what's out there.

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Owner's House (Private)



Grey lines on this map indicate the location of fences. You can use these fences as reference points to help you navigate your way around the property.

Aaron Griggs

11/13/19, 10:56 p.m.

Hey, remember Belair Witch?

Here's a website run by the person who owns the land where they filmed that movie.

It's like 20 miles from here!

And check out the site - they sell maps to find the actual cabin where the ending was filmed.

<https://www.TheBelairWitchExperience.com>



iMessage

95

Send

Elin Sanchez

11/13/19, 11:03 p.m.

aaron, how do you even find this stuff

go read a book or something

Monroe Williams

11/13/19, 11:06 p.m.

okay but that looks really cool, we definitely need to check that out

Jess Leonard

11/13/19, 11:07 p.m.

does anyone have the answers for our biology homework

and aaron if you try to drag me into that cabin I swear I'll haunt you

Aaron Griggs

11/13/19, 11:23 p.m.

lol don't worry none of you have to come inside



iMessage

96

Send

Aaron Griggs

02/14/20, 6:21 p.m.

guys we have got to get out and explore the Belair Witch filming spot asap

I went there the other night to scope it out and it is incredibly spooky

felt like I was really in the movie

but I couldn't really see much, so we need to go during the day when we have permission to be there

Elin Sanchez

02/14/20, 8:46 p.m.

I'm not sure that's a great idea



iMessage

97

Send

and I don't like that you went there by yourself at night

if you even did

Aaron Griggs

02/14/20, 8:46 p.m.

not sure what that's supposed to mean but we need to go there soon.

Jess Leonard

02/14/20, 8:48 p.m.

aaron, chill out, we get it. we all saw the movie too.

Monroe Williams

02/14/20, 8:50 p.m.

just tell me where and when, I'm there

Aaron Griggs

02/14/20, 8:59 p.m.

that's the spirit. the rest of you, I'll convince you this is worth the risk



iMessage

98

Send

Aaron Griggs

03/19/20, 1:45 a.m.

I can't just keep sitting in the house every day when I know the Belair Witch filming spot is out there

we are going as a group, no questions asked

(do any of you have peaches on your Animal Crossing island, I only have pears and apples)

but seriously imagine what we could find if we went and traced the steps of Belair Witch

might even find the real thing in that basement



iMessage

99

Send

ATLAS ENIGMA

The definitive guide to the globe's hidden treasures

THE BELAIR WITCH PROJECT FILM SITE

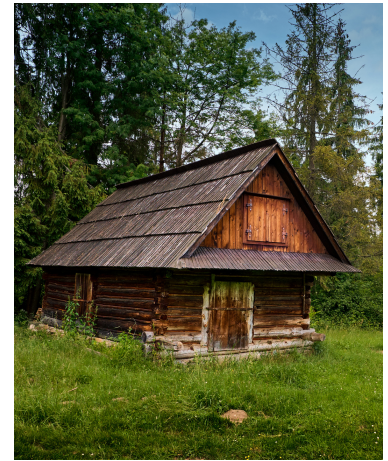
BRING A CAMERA IF YOU WANT TO BE FOUND...

October 14, 2019

Nestled in the deep woods of Chesapeake County, Maryland, not far from Catocin College is the original filming location for 1999's cult classic, *The Belair Witch Project*. New property owner Jodie Donahue tells us the entire property has been meticulously maintained to preserve the original filming locations, and says that any thrill seeker worth their weight in screams will move this spot to the top of their urban exploring bucket list.

Donahue tells us that explorers can visit all the famous locations from the film including the graveyard, several campsites, Coffin Rock, Gaskins Creek, and of course, the cabin where it all ended. According to Donahue, "the ultimate scare opportunity is to try and stand in the same corner as Josh did at the end of *Belair Witch*." We can't say for sure if the cabin is actually haunted, but you could have the chance to find out for yourself.

The filming location is open on weekends from 9 AM to dusk, and Donahue requires that all explorers stop by the gift shop first to buy a map (which will set you back \$20) and get a safety briefing on what they can and cannot do. It's rare to see a film site as iconic as this one that is preserved so many years later, so Donahue might be on to something here. We even hear rumors there's some discussion of filming a sequel...



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TOASTER"?

The Chesapeake Gazette

Natalie Swift

December 3, 2019

Some of you may have driven by the entrance to Jodie Donahue's property over the years and had no clue what was hiding just behind the tree line on Chapman Road. In 1999, those woods were home to one of horror's great cult classics: *The Belair Witch Project*. And just a few years ago, Chesapeake native Jodie Donahue decided to buy that land and turn it into a place where urban explorers and thrill seekers can come and live out those same moments of terror that we've all seen on the big screen.

Not every spot from the film is open to the public though. Donahue says the cabin where the final scenes were filmed isn't safe due to aging of the wooden floorboards, but Donahue emphasizes that you can still get that cinematic experience even without a trip into the iconic basement.

Says Donahue, "That entire basement area is still intact and it looks the same way it did the day they filmed that final scene." Asked what it was like the first time they stepped foot in a location some might consider to be the ultimate haunt, Donahue recounted how they were "instantly spooked" when they climbed down the stairs because the first thing they saw was "the corner of the basement where Josh stood at the end of *Belair Witch*."

Donahue does admit they've tried out what they call the "ultimate scare" - to stand in that corner and see how long they could last. They didn't give an exact time for how long they held out before making an escape, but Donahue certainly didn't sound like it was an extended stay. And who could blame them.

Visitors to the property should park in a small public lot on the right by the entrance, and should head to the gift shop before exploring. Donahue sells maps for the property and a few basic souvenirs including framed stills from the original film and replicas of the stick figures found by the students throughout the movie. Donahue even has a green screen photo opportunity so guests can still get that photo of them standing in the basement corner to freak out their friends.

Social media also seems to be a major part of Donahue's plan for spreading the word, and guests are encouraged to take as many photos as possible and share them on Twitter and Instagram. Donahue tells me they've considered making a TikTok to market their property tours to a younger audience, but admits "I just can't figure it out and I don't think I ever will." But in some ways that seems fitting; while the films might have used found footage to tell a story, the *Belair Witch* probably would prefer to stay off TikTok.