

**BROWN COUNTY CORONER
DR. JUDITH VARNAU**

**AMENDED 10/10/14
EVALUATION & SUMMARY
IN THE DETERMINATION
OF THE CAUSE AND
MANNER OF DEATH
FOR:**

**ZACHARY GOLDSON
OCTOBER 5, 2013**

CORONER'S LEGAL AUTHORITY AND DUTY:

- 1.) The coroner has total authority and control only over the dead body and everything found within the immediate surrounding area typically described as being within arm's reach of the body.**
- 2.) The coroner is NOT a law enforcement (LE) officer. The coroner cooperates with yet operates totally independent of LE, as a separate "check and balance" entity.**
- 3.) The coroner operates specifically to preserve the legal rights and interests of deceased individuals.**
- 4.) The coroner's duty and authority to investigate is limited solely to that necessary to determine the CAUSE and MANNER of death.**
- 5.) The coroner has no authority or duty to investigate "who done it," and cannot prevent LE from performing their own investigative tasks to determine whether any criminality may be involved in a death.**
- 6.) The next-of-kin has a legal right to a complete copy of the coroner's files, including autopsy photographs, but not LE investigative material. The media has a right to only view certain coroner information by law.**
- 7.) A coroner's preliminary determination of cause and manner of death at any scene is tentative at best, with a final finding pending autopsy and toxicology results (which typically take two months or more to complete) and LE criminal investigative results that may take longer.**

**CORONER'S DETERMINATION OF
ZACHARY GOLDSON'S
CAUSE AND MANNER OF DEATH
IN THE BROWN COUNTY JAIL
OCTOBER 5, 2013**

Arrived on scene \approx 0355 hrs.

Entered holding cell with
BCI agent \approx 0500 hrs.

Found Zachary Goldson on
the floor as pictured:

**NOTE: the sheet noose
around his neck as
compared to autopsy
photos (Re: CPR).**

CAUSE: Strangulation

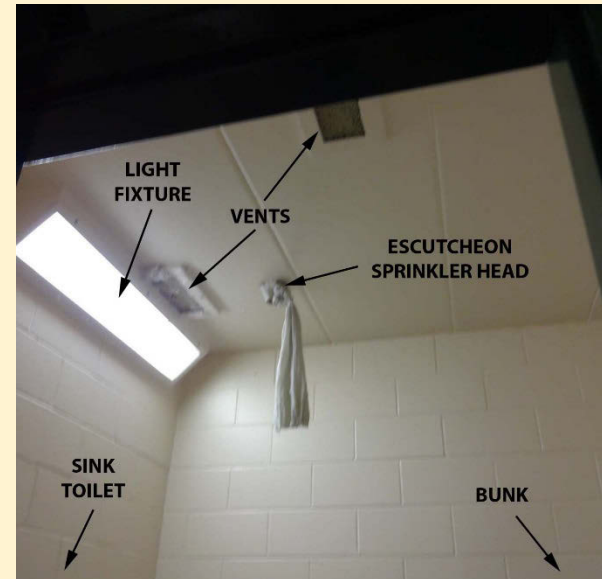
MANNER: Homicide



OFFICIAL STORY OF EVENTS FROM JAIL PERSONNEL WHILE PROCESSING THE DEATH SCENE

Sheriff's Office (SO) officers (COs Zane Schadle, George Dunning, Deps. Ryan Wedmore, Jason Huff) put Zachary Goldson into the holding cell around 0231 hrs., October 5, 2013. They took off all restraints and left him in the holding cell with a sheet that was overlooked by all about 0240 hrs. After a smoke break, CO Schadle found Goldson hanging in his cell about 0255 hrs. from a noose in the sheet that was fixed around the fire sprinkler head located in the ceiling of the cell. CO Sarah McKenzie said she found Goldson hanging in his cell around 0258 hrs. and she helped cut Goldson down from hanging by the sheet noose. CO Schadle immediately started chest compressions after first handcuffing Goldson in case he came to and started to fight after resuscitation.

HOLDING CELL FIXTURES AND LAYOUT



MAJOR TIMELINE DISCREPANCY NOTED BETWEEN OFFICIAL STORY AND COMMUNICATIONS

Official Story:

1. Goldson in cell at 0231 hrs.
 2. Goldson left in cell at 0240 hrs.
 3. Goldson found hanged at 0255 hrs.
- Time to tie sheet and hang = 15 minutes.

Timeline provided by Detective Buddy Moore at 0355 hrs.:

1. Goldson in cell at 0231 hrs.
 2. Goldson left in cell at 0240 hrs.
 3. Goldson hanged by 0246 hrs.
- Time to tie sheet and hang = 6 minutes.

NOTE: Information provided by Det. Moore is verified by audio recording and phone records obtained from Verizon between Det. Moore and Dep. Larry Meyer.

TYING A SHEET AROUND THE SPRINKLER HEAD

In order to tie the sheet around the sprinkler head the following had to happen:

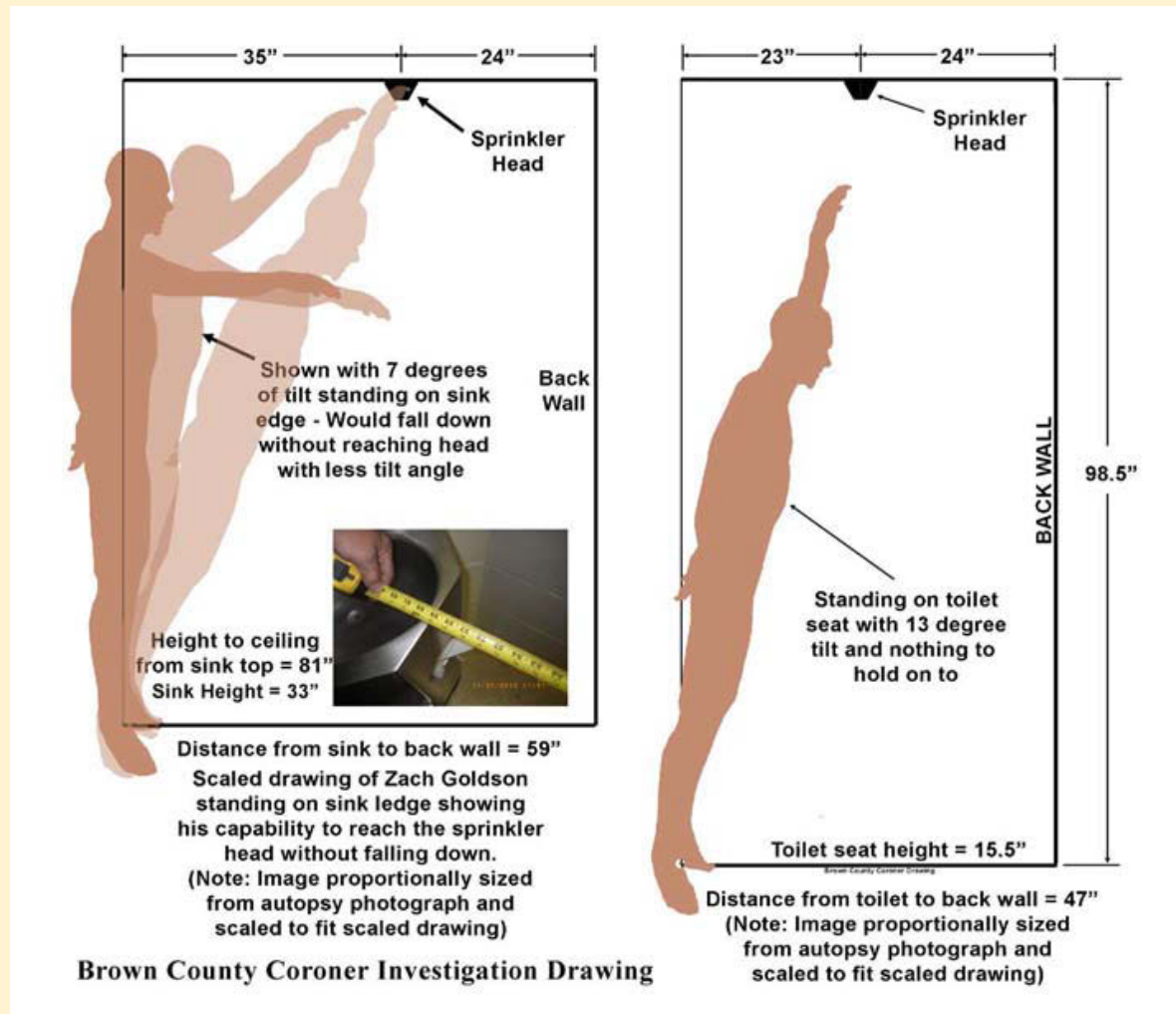
Step 1: Zachary had to be able to reach the sprinkler head and fix the sheet around it and hang himself in less than 6 minutes (or 15 minutes official story) using both hands without falling down.

Step 2: He would have had to use a tool to pry down the escutcheon to form a GAP between the escutcheon and the ceiling for the sheet.

Step 3: He would have applied somewhere between 154 lbs. to over 600 lbs. of tension force on the escutcheon and sprinkler head, depending on the position and location from which he hanged.

NOTE: Sprinkler heads in institutional settings (e.g., jails) are designed to break away when a load of 40 lbs. or greater is applied to the sprinkler head in tension. Also the thickness of the escutcheon plate material is very thin, typically .61mm thick mild steel.

TYING SHEET AROUND SPRINKLER HEAD – STEP 1



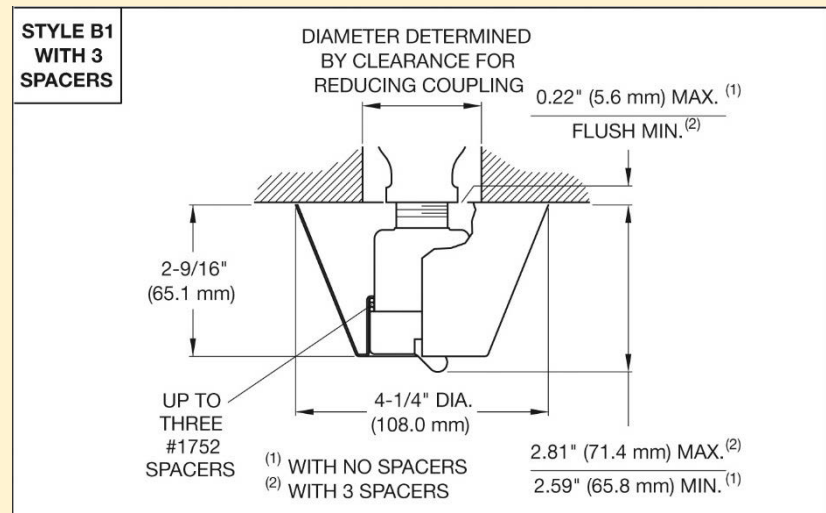
Zachary could reach the sprinkler head with both hands but not use both hands simultaneously to perform all the tasks required to secure the sheet to the sprinkler head in photo.

TYING SHEET AROUND SPRINKLER HEAD – STEP 2

NOTE: The sprinkler head in the cell the morning of October 5, 2013, was removed, replaced, and discarded November 7, 2013, upon request by Chief Deputy John Schadle to D&W Fire Safety (Georgetown, OH) without BCI or Coroner knowledge or permission to do so while both investigations were still ongoing.

Since it would be forever impossible now to prove exactly what sprinkler head was in place that morning, the best estimate would be one similar to a TYCO with a similar protective escutcheon cone enclosure (see below).

NOTE: In order to create a GAP between the escutcheon and ceiling, some tool other than fingernails would be necessary to pry down the escutcheon cone along with the connected piping above the ceiling that holds the escutcheon cone tight up against the ceiling.



TYING SHEET AROUND SPRINKLER HEAD – STEP 3

Zachary was 6'2" tall. The closest fixture to the sprinkler head was the sink/toilet. The bunk was farther away.

Chief Bryan Mount (Mount Orab PD consultant to coroner) is 6'7" tall with a long sleeve shirt length of 37". He personally attempted to reach the sprinkler head location with duty boots on, standing on the sink, but could only do so with one hand, using his left hand to hold onto the light fixture to keep from falling down. He could not use two hands simultaneously without falling down.

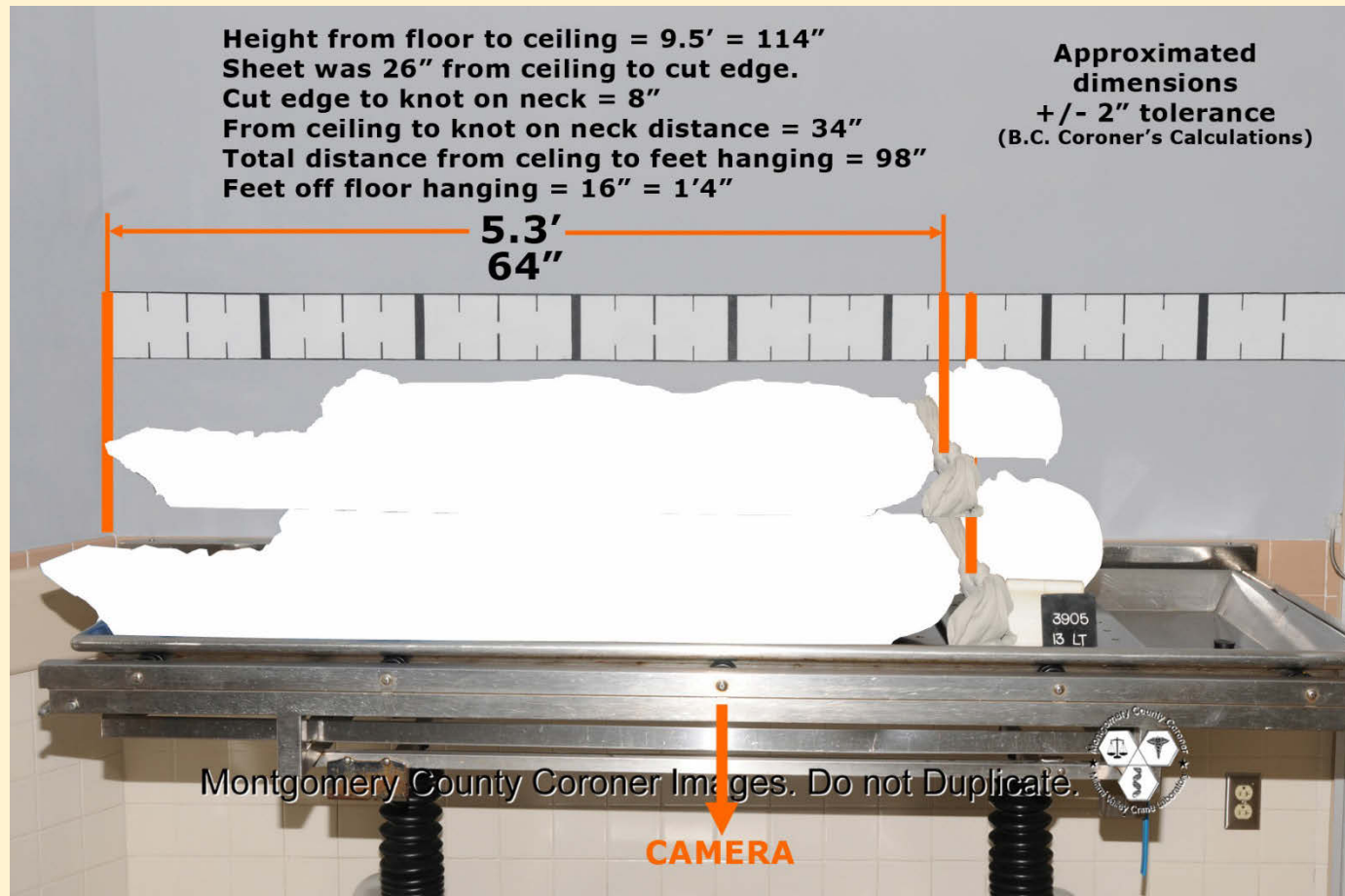
If you **ASSUME** Zachary somehow could reach the sprinkler head without falling down, he would have had to pry down the escutcheon cone with his fingers to create the GAP; get the sheet in between it and the ceiling; and, then tie the knot or knots (in less than six minutes).

NOTE: If he were doing this by standing on the sink the knots would be facing the sink/toilet, NOT the bunk.

If he hanged himself by the sheet, as claimed, the escutcheon would have immediately been crushed with the sheet loop slipping off of it and/or the sprinkler head would have failed, breaking away from the piping.

MORE OFFICIAL STORY POTENTIAL MISMATCHES

Two individuals supposedly cut down Zachary from a hanging position, CO Zane Schadle and CO Sarah McKenzie. Calculations dictate that in an “as hung” position, Zachary’s feet would have been over one foot off the floor. Whoever cut the sheet had to be taller or standing on something:



MORE OFFICIAL STORY MISMATCHES (cont'd)

Straight or curved cut on the sheet:

How many were involved in cutting down Zachary? If only two, who was holding Zachary up while the other cut the sheet with scissors? Both Zane and Sarah are not very tall. Either would have had his/her hands full holding up a limp 154 lbs., while the other had to reach high up and make a “straight edge” cut on the sheet shank 7.3’ above the floor. A cut across a sheet with any weight applied in tension would generate a parabolic curve cut on the sheet, not a straight line cut.

Zachary in “suicide watch” paper clothing:

Even though Zachary was wearing paper suicide watch clothing, he supposedly was not on suicide watch at the time of his death.

Hinged handcuffs applied when:

The hinged handcuffs in the autopsy photos appear to have been applied while Zachary was standing up, not lying on the floor after being cut down. Trying to get the wrists of a dead body on his back or side into cuffs would be very difficult with hinged handcuffs.



EVIDENCE AVAILABLE FROM AUTOPSY

The death position on the floor is consistent with the livor mortis seen in the autopsy photographs throughout his posterior back, neck, and head, and almost complete absence of any in his feet, legs, arms and hands. If Zachary died hanging in a vertical position, one would expect to see more liver mortis in his lower extremities. One would not expect blood to flow “up hill” lying dead on the floor without a beating heart to move it.



If he died while hanging, I would expect to see more blood pooled in his feet and legs than what is visible in these photos. Overall blood pooling is consistent with death occurring not while hanging, but either on his back or on his stomach and immediately turned over after his heart stopped.

EVIDENCE AVAILABLE FROM AUTOPSY (cont'd)



Things to pay particular attention to before viewing other autopsy photos:

- 1.) Note the sheet is tight around the neck almost perfectly perpendicular to the neck having a width of about 1.5 inches around the whole neck circumference. It is not pulled up on the left side, and no furrow under the jaw on the right. What caused the zigzag bloody scratch marks on the right anterior (front) part of the neck – the sheet or some other strap-like material causing the ligature marks and strangulation?
- 2.) Take note of the ½ inch wide red ligature mark below the left jaw bone under the ear. See where the sheet knot is located behind and below the left ear. Would you do CPR with this noose tight around the neck?

EVIDENCE AVAILABLE FROM AUTOPSY (cont'd)

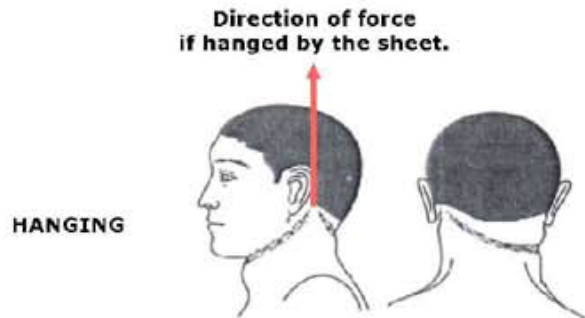


With the sheet noose removed, you see a ½” wide reddish ligature mark. There is no ligature mark or furrow from the sheet noose. Plus, it is obvious that the weight of his body was never hanging from the sheet as a hanging noose, for it would not be back in a “starting position” from a hanging position, where the sheet knot would have been much higher behind his left ear, not below it.

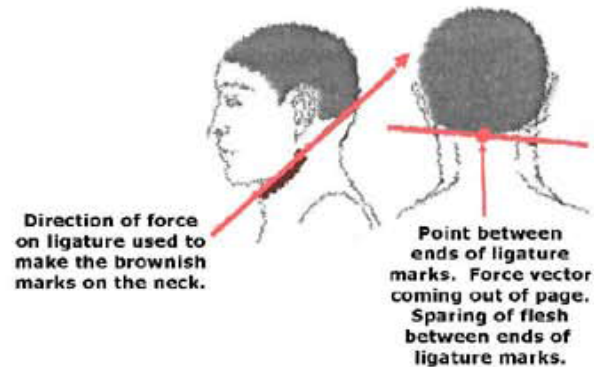
The ½” wide reddish ligature mark has almost perfect parallel edges and uniform width. This mark was not caused by the sheet noose. Typically sheets do not leave ligature marks when used in hangings. When the photos are enlarged, a uniform pattern that like a nylon fabric type weave appears with magnification.

EVIDENCE AVAILABLE FROM AUTOPSY (cont'd)

HANGING LIGATURE



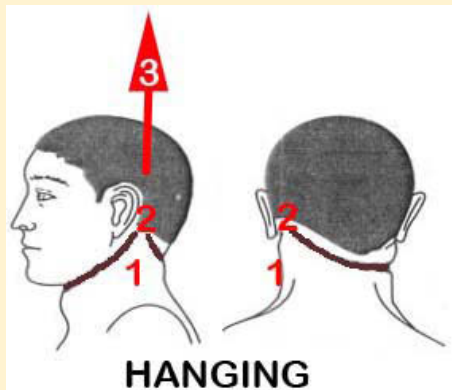
STRANGULATION LIGATURE



SOMEHOW, WITHOUT ANY FORCE BEING APPLIED, AFTER HANGING BY THE SHEET AND CUT DOWN, THE SHEET MAGICALLY MOVES BACK DOWN THE NECK AND SETTLES INTO A TIGHT LATERAL POSITION WITH A UNIFORM WIDTH OF ABOUT 1.5 INCHES AROUND THE WHOLE CIRCUMFERENCE OF THE NECK.

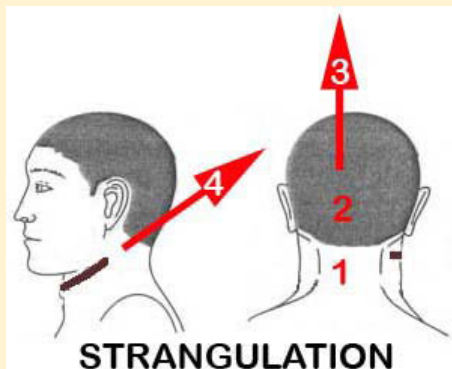
EVIDENCE AVAILABLE FROM AUTOPSY (cont'd)

FORENSICS, D. P. Lyle, M.D.: “The neck markings seen after hanging depend mainly on the nature of the noose used. Soft nooses such as sheets may leave little or no marking, and if the victim is discovered fairly quickly and cut down, the ME may not be able to find any marks at all. . . . The longer a body hangs, the deeper the furrow. . . . In hangings, the furrow has an inverted V pattern. The furrow tends to run diagonally across the neck with its high end at the knot. . . . Most ligature strangulations are homicides.”



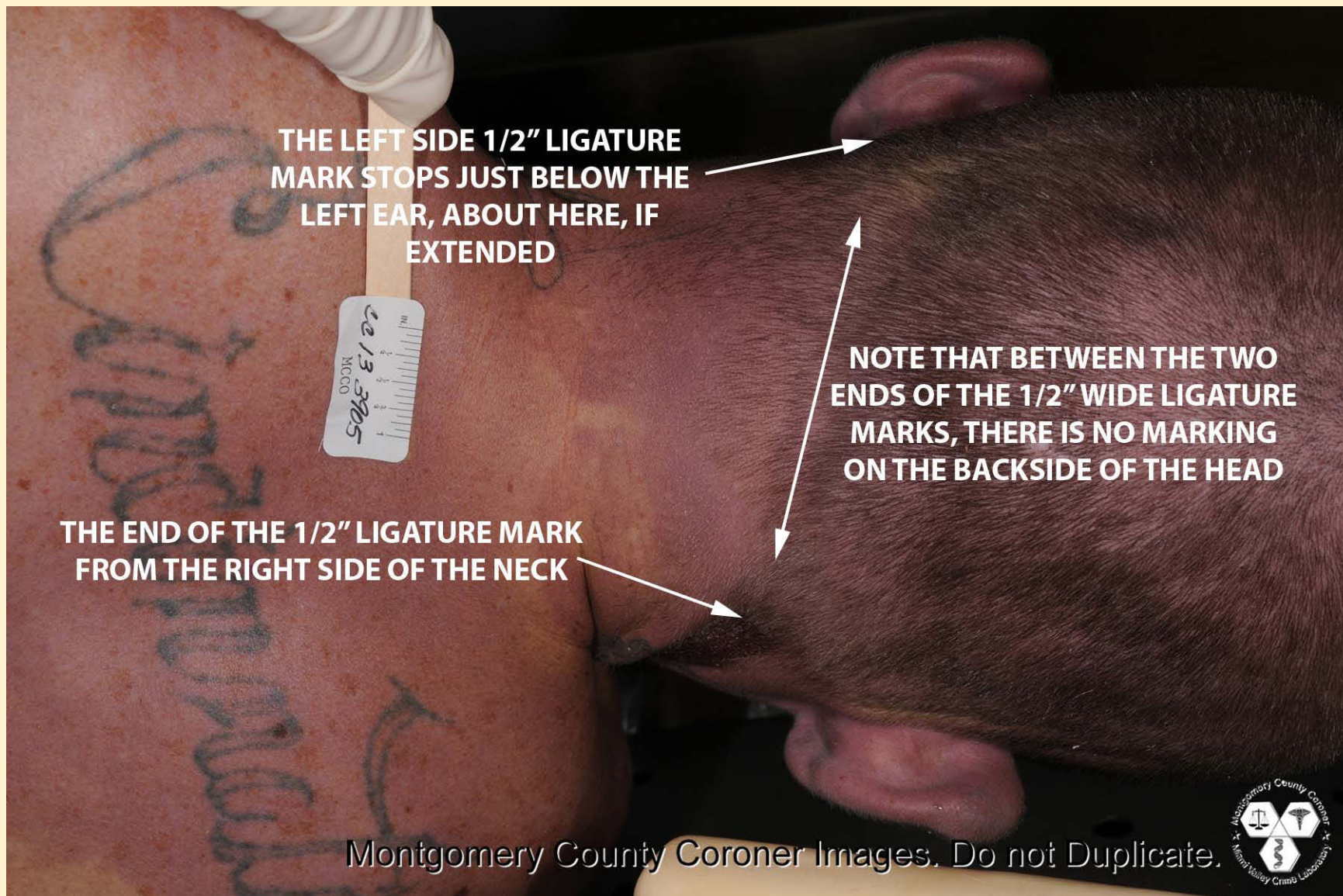
- 1** is where the knot is located in the autopsy photos.
- 2** is where it should have been if hanged by the sheet.
- 3** is the vector force direction on sheet.

NOTE: Every hanging I've seen where the feet do not touch the floor or ground, the tongue was protruding from the mouth. Every "hanging," off of a door knob, without full weight supported by the neck, the tongues did not protrude from the mouth. Also, I would expect the noose to be somewhat loose on the neck after having actually been hanged by it.



- 1** is where the knot should be located in the autopsy photos before hanging to cause the existing ligature marks on neck.
- 2** is where knot would have been if hanged by the sheet leaving a sparing of flesh on the back of the neck.
- 3** would be vector force direction on sheet if hanged by it.
- 4** is the actual vector force direction causing the marks.

EVIDENCE AVAILABLE FROM AUTOPSY (cont'd)



SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

(WHY THE OFFICIAL STORY DOES NOT MATCH THE DEATH SCENE)

- 1.) Zachary could reach the sprinkler head with both hands but not use both hands simultaneously; did not have any tool to pry down the escutcheon; could not have tied the sheet around the sprinkler head; knots were facing the wrong way.
- 2.) The escutcheon cone would have deformed if any significant weight had been applied to the sheet; the sprinkler head and escutcheon cone would have broken off the water supply piping filling the cell with water if his body weight hanged by the sheet.
- 3.) It would have taken three or more individuals to cut him down with one tall person operating the scissors to cut such a straight line across the sheet width.
- 4.) Lividity in the body suggests Mr. Goldson died either on his back or on his stomach and immediately turned over after his heart stopped beating, not hanging vertically from the sprinkler above; the tight (not loose) noose left around his neck at autopsy suggests no weight was applied to the sheet as the hanging instrument, much less allowing for effective CPR.
- 5.) The relatively wide sheet noose left no ligature marks around the neck as compared to the distinct uniform narrow width ligature marks on both sides of the neck from a ligature pulled from behind, not above the head by the sheet.

CAUSE: STRANGULATION – MANNER: HOMICIDE