



FOR PUBLIC RELEASE: Coroner Judgement of Inquiry and Inquest Inquisition and Recommendations

Department of Justice, Legal Services
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Yukon Coroners Service: Judgement of Inquiry into the death of: Archibald Graham

Coroner Investigative File No.: 45202013019

Name: Archibald "Archie" Graham Date of Birth: 1934/10/16 Date of Death: 2013/07/13
YYYY/MM/DD YYYY/MM/DD
Address: 123 Otter Crescent, Haines Junction, Yukon
Street Address Province/Territory Postal Code
Ethnic Origin: Caucasian Location of Death: GPS 61.59233 139.35390

Cause of Death

Unascertained

Manner of Death

Undetermined

Autopsy Findings

Mr. Graham was suffering from severe and potentially fatal heart disease, with focus pronounced atherosclerotic narrowing of the coronary arteries. His lungs were congested with fluid and blood, in keeping with the effects of terminal cardiac pump failure, and were also noted to be somewhat emphysematous. There were multiple fine shallow "erosions" over the lining of the stomach. There was a presumed recurrent malignant tumor within the soft tissue of the pelvis. The kidneys and liver showed features which have been described in association with a biochemical disturbance known as ketoacidosis. Ketoacidosis can develop in association with poor nutritional intake, diabetes mellitus, or following the ingestion of alcohol.

The pathologist ruled the death Unascertained. The pathologist expanded on this saying that the autopsy failed to pinpoint the specific cause of death. The pathologist identified various possible factors in the death of Mr. Graham to be: exposure (as identified by the changes in the stomach lining), ketoacidosis (evidenced by the biochemical analyses and microscopic changes in the kidneys and liver), coronary artery atherosclerosis (a recognized cause of sudden death), malignancy in the pelvis, and emphysema.

Toxicological Findings

Toxicology testing detected the presence of the antihistamine medication diphenhydramine only. No other drugs, prescription medication or alcohol was detected. Glucose levels in a vitreous sample was not elevated (though the glucose level typically diminishes after death, this finding is of uncertain significance).

Circumstances of Death

Mr. Graham was last seen on July 8, 2013 when he was dropped off at Mile 1118 on the Old Alaska Highway. Mr. Graham was going gold prospecting across the Kluane River to a location he had been to several times and was very familiar with. Mr. Graham had a SPOT device with him and had received training in how to use the SPOT. He had practiced using the device. Mr. Graham told a friend that he would check-in via the SPOT every evening. The SPOT device was not tripped on the first night Mr. Graham was in the bush (July 8, 2013) but was tripped on the second evening of July 9, 2013. There was no contact July 10, 2013 or July 11, 2013. The friend noted from the GPS tracking of the SPOT that Mr. Graham was headed in a direction opposite to where he had planned to go. On July 12, 2013 at 06:47hrs, RCMP were contacted regarding the well-being of Mr. Graham. On July 13, 2013 RCMP made contact with local search and rescue. A "Search Urgency Determination" form was completed by RCMP on July 13, 2013. This form is an operational tool to evaluate the urgency of a search. It considers factors related to the profile of the individual as well as environmental and other applicable factors. The urgency determination indicated a measured response, while gathering more information. Mr. Graham was not scheduled to return until July 14, 2013. It was decided that Search and Rescue would go out after 13:00hrs on July 14, 2013, at which time, Mr. Graham would be deemed to be overdue. A private citizen and friend of Mr. Graham decided to charter a helicopter on July 13, 2013 to search for Mr. Graham. During an aerial search of the area, the body of Mr. Graham was located in a wooded location, laying on his right side.

Significant Factors/Conclusions

The decision whether or not to initiate a search was informed by multiple sources. RCMP consulted with local search and rescue experts, they determined the urgency of a search based on a multi-faceted standardized assessment tool which considered the level of experience and overall general health of Mr. Graham. They also considered that Mr. Graham was not due back until July 14, 2013. The decision for RCMP to initiate a search is considered on a case by case basis. Full scale searches are not necessary in all situations and the determination to initiate a search in Yukon includes a tiered approach to evaluating the level of urgency. Factors such as a person's knowledge of the area, their general health, age, experience, and comfort level in the outdoors are considered together with concerns by the family and whether or not the person is overdue to return.

The investigation was unable to determine the exact date of death. The pathologist felt that Mr. Graham likely died in the latter part of the week, but this is not conclusive. It cannot be concluded the exact cause of death or if a search initiated on July 12, 2013 would have changed the outcome of this case. Mr. Graham had a SPOT device with him that he was trained to use. We don't know why Mr. Graham didn't check in after July 9, 2013 or why he was off course from where he was supposed to be prospecting. We do know that Mr. Graham did not initiate the SOS distress button on the SPOT at any time, and he was not expected to return until July 14, 2013. Mr. Graham was experienced in the wilderness and was described to be in general good health. Healthy enough to embark on the prospecting journey on July 8, 2013.

Recommendations

No recommendations

Macdonald
Signature, Chief Coroner

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Feb. 18/14
Date

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