

Dredged well fails to shed light on missing woman's fate Ryan Poe (contact) December 22, 2010 11:31:00 AM Putting an end to 24-year-old rumors, Lowndes County sheriff's investigators emptied a well early today without finding the body of Madeline "Midge" Teresa Ponds. Ponds, of Pickens County, has been missing since Nov. 20, 1986, when she was 17. She was last seen at PJ's One-Stop, which has been renamed Country Village. The well under the store, near the Alabama state line on Highway 182, was drained within an hour by Hydrovac Industrial Services Inc. of Columbus at about 7 a.m., said Chief Deputy Greg Wright. The company is expected to give the sheriff's department a final quote for the work this afternoon, Wright said. Hydrovac used a camera system to observe the well's contents as they were drained, Wright said. After that, the company looked into the well for any other evidence. "We went all the way to the bottom and then some," Wright said. Investigators "felt confident" after watching the draining that Ponds was still missing, he added. Even though the well proved a false lead, Wright said this was a normal part of an investigation. "The only way to put a rumor or tip to rest is to investigate it," he said. "This is a rumor we can put to rest and we can move on to other areas." <http://unsolveditn.blogspot.com/2011/01/de...ssing-girl.htm>

Ryan Poe (contact)

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Following up on an urban legend, Lowndes County Sheriff's deputies are planning to drain a well in hopes of finding a girl who has been missing more than 24 years.

Madeline "Midge" Teresa Ponds, of Lowndes County, has been missing since Nov. 20, 1986, when she was 17. She was last seen alone at PJ's One-Stop, a state-line convenience store on Highway 182.

Investigators believe her body may have been hidden inside a well behind the store, which has been renamed Country Village. The capped well is now under a barbecue pit inside an addition to the building.

According to the missing persons report, a customer complained that the store was unattended about five minutes after Ponds' mother brought her food as she was working at the store.

About \$600 was missing from the cash register, and all of Ponds' personal belongings were still inside the store and her car, which was parked outside.

Chief Deputy Greg Wright said the department had not ruled out foul play at this point.

A dog with the Lowndes County K-9 unit partially alerted after sniffing fumes coming from the well, which could indicate a body, Wright said.

"We feel the need to drain the well at this point," he said.

Although other options are being considered, the sheriff's department will likely hire a private company to plumb the well soon after New Year's, he said.

Wright declined to release the name of the private company that has been contacted to drain the well or how much it would cost.

An investigative team sent a video camera down in the well Thursday, although the results were inconclusive.

When asked why the well had not been looked at before, Wright said the sheriff's department has resources now, like the K-9 unit, they did not have 24 years ago.

The cold case is one of several currently under investigation by the sheriff's department, Wright said.

"It's not easy working cases that have been there for years," he added.

<http://www.cdispatch.com/news/article.asp?aid=9269>