

## **Arrest made in Central Kitsap Homicide**

**Port Orchard, Wash.** – Kitsap County Sheriff's detectives have made an arrest in the homicide case involving a 20 year old Bremerton man, who was found dead on a hiking/riding trail Saturday (08/09/2003) in a wooded area off of Old Military Road, NE, in the Central Valley area of the county (east central Kitsap).

Michael Lloyd Derr, 27, of Bremerton, was taken into custody last night at his residence in West Bremerton. The arrest occurred at approximately 11:00 p.m.

The victim, Zachary James Fitz, 20, also of Bremerton, was found deceased on the trail by equestrians shortly after 2:00 p.m. Saturday.

“Autopsy findings released by the Kitsap County Coroner showed that the victim died of a loss of blood, sometime within 24 hours of the discovery of his body,” said Detective Lt. Earl Smith. “He had wounds typically sustained by a sharp instrument and we believe that the crime was committed where he was found.”

Derr was taken into custody pursuant to a search warrant that was served at his residence.

“Our detectives have worked steadily since this past weekend developing leads, interviewing people and obtaining evidence,” stated Lt. Smith. “The totality of all of this work led us to develop enough probable cause to obtain a search warrant for Mr. Derr's residence. During the execution of the warrant, additional evidence was obtained and Mr. Derr was arrested.”

“At the time of his arrest he was cooperative,” added Lt. Smith, “he was taken into custody without incident. Mr. Derr and the victim knew each other; however the motive for the crime is unknown right now.”

Derr was booked into Kitsap County Jail on an initial charge of Murder, First Degree. Bail was set at \$1 million dollars. He will be arraigned at 3:00 p.m. today in Kitsap County Superior Court.

Fitz' vehicle, a 1989 Ford Bronco, was found some 90 minutes after the discovery of the body, engulfed in flames off of NW Holly Road near Wildcat Lake. The Bronco has been impounded and is being examined for any possible evidence related to Fitz' death.

Derr's past criminal record contains convictions for:

Class C Felony: Attempting to elude a pursuing police vehicle; 03/04/2003

Gross misdemeanor offenses:

Assault, 4<sup>th</sup> degree; 04/11/2002

Driving under the influence of intoxicants or drugs; 04/09/2002

Driving while license suspended/revoked – habitual offender; 05/18/1994 & 04/09/2002

Theft, 3<sup>rd</sup> degree; 10/30/1996

Detectives indicate that the arrest of Derr does not conclude the investigation. “This case is not closed by any means,” stressed Lt. Smith. “There is still a lot of work to accomplish. Detectives are following-up on all leads generated during this investigation. We have reason to believe that there could be others involved in the death of Mr. Fitz.”

Anyone who may have information concerning this case is requested to contact Detective Mike Rodrigue, Kitsap County Sheriff's Office, at (360) 337-4479.

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