

# The MessengerNEWS

## Police say remains belong to student who went missing in 1994

BY JEFF MORRIS

The remains unearthed at an estate home near Prince of Wales and First Line Road in May belong to a 19-year-old South Carleton High School student who went missing in 1994.

On May 30 1994, South Carleton High School student Shafiq Visram went missing. Visram, who had turned 19 that week, arrived home from school and went back out between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. He was last seen sitting on the bank of Mud Creek. His backpack was found in a nearby ravine.

Now, the emphasis of the investigation switches from whose bones they were to how the young man died.

"It's not a murder investigation, it's a coroner's inquest," said Ottawa Police Detective Krista Hill. The Ottawa Major Crimes Unit is seeking information that can assist investigators in determining the events that led to Visram's disappearance.

The mystery started out as a routine deck installation on a home on Cabrelle Place in Manotick Estates, Phase 6. Tim Carver and Jason Pink were digging in front of the house on Cabrelle Place to install fence posts. When they went to take a break, Pink stepped on something hard. He looked, down, and saw what appeared to be a human jaw bone.

When the police were called in they agreed with the two contractors that the bone was likely human. A forensics expert was called in, and for the next few days, the home's front yard turned into an archaeological dig site. Vertebrae were found, which would help experts determine the age

and origin of the bones.

The vertebrae found contained DNA that solved the mystery of the remains. The land where the homes are being built was farmland for generations.

Manotick Office Pro owner Jim Stewart was the Mayor of Rideau Township during the time of Visram's disappearance.

"When I heard there was a human bone found in Manotick Estates, that's the first thing I thought of," said Stewart. "This boy had been missing for more than 20 years and the case was never solved. It's also not far from where he went missing."

According to the June 8, 1994 Manotick Messenger, Visram had last been seen on Monday, May 30, 1994, returning home from school. His backpack was found in a ravine. He had been seen in the Mud Creek area after school that day. His wallet, his passport, his bank card and his social insurance card were all left behind.

"We're not sure what happened," Manotick OPP Const. Ian McCurdie said at the time. "He is a good student but his marks had slipped a bit. That's all we know."

"Ordinarily, we would not search for a 19-year-old, but from some of the information we had, we decided to look into it."

The Visram family arrived in Manotick from Kenya two years earlier. Shafiq's father has passed away, and most of his family is now living in the Greater Toronto Area. He has a brother living in England.

"What I remember about that case was how the community got together," said Mike Williscraft, who publishes a



Ottawa Police has revealed that these human remains that were recovered in Manotick Estates Phase 6 in May belong to Shafiq Visram, a South Carleton High School student who went missing in 1994. PHOTO COURTESY OF MISTY DWYER

newspaper in Grimsby but was the editor of the Messenger at that time. "It was an interesting time because community policing was just becoming popular, and people wanted to get involved and volunteer to help. There were people from Manotick, Kars, North Gower, Osgoode and Richmond all coming together to look for that boy."

Hundreds of volunteers linked arms and walked through farm fields and through the woods looking for Visram. Police dogs were brought in, and helicopters flew overhead during the search.

"Eventually, the search was called off," recalled Williscraft. "There were no clues. It was like he vanished."

Visram was described by everyone as a good

kid. He lived a clean life. He was not a kid who was into drugs, or any kind of trouble for that matter. Yet his disappearance remains an ongoing mystery in the community.

As the search was called off, South Carleton High School would endure another tragedy less than a week later. Scott Whittle, a student at South Carleton who played in the Osgoode Rideau Minor Hockey Association, was killed in a car accident. The Kars youth volunteered with the ORMHA initiation hockey program.

While Whittle's death turned some of the focus in the community away from Visram, there were other factors at play.

"Right around that time, there were changes in policing in the area," said Williscraft. "The local OPP detachments like

Manotick's were being closed in favour of larger, regional police departments. While the Visram disappearance showed no clues or evidence, a lot of the police officers were preoccupied with what was going to happen to their own careers. Since they turned up nothing, the Visram file eventually became a cold case."

### A second body?

Confusing the situation is that there is believed to be a second body that was buried in the same area.

After the Messenger's original story of the bones being found in May, nearby resident John Nuthers came forward with another theory.

Nuthers, who lived on the farm where the development now stands,

recalled a story that his grandfather would tell him and his siblings about a body that was buried on the property.

The farmland where the development now stands, at one time, belonged to the Scharf brothers.

"My grandfather, Albert Scharf, had about 200 acres, and his brothers each had about the same," he said. "He would tell us this story about a travelling man that came to visit Dr. Potter, who had the farm next door. The man died, but nobody ever knew his name, and back in those days, nobody had any ID."

According to Nuthers, the story dates back about a century, to the 1910s.

**REMAINS**  
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The remains found in May resulted in a full dig in front of a new home on Cabrelle Place. JEFF MORRIS PHOTO

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# The MessengerNEWS

**REMAINS** continues from page 2

"My grandfather was a preacher, and he wasn't the type to make up stories," Nutthers said. "He would talk about how the man came to visit Dr. Potter, and he died of an ailment. The was nothing violent or no foul play. They didn't want to put him in a cemetery, and they had no idea who he was or where he came from. They decided to bury him on the farm. I imagine my grandfather and his brothers probably helped dig the grave."

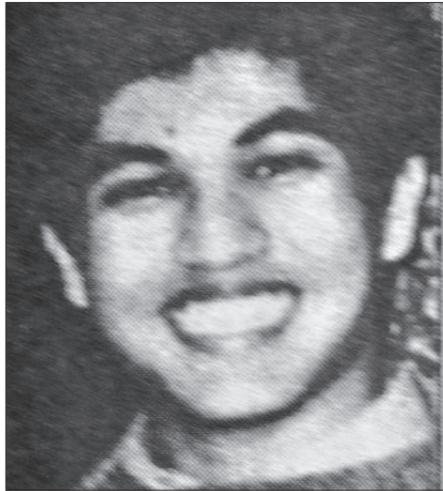
The Scharf brothers never did find out how the man died. There was an influenza outbreak around that time, but there were no other cases in the area. Whatever ailment the traveller had, he said, did not spread to any families in the area.

Nutthers said that when he heard about the bones surfacing in the development, he was sure it was the man from the story his grandfather would tell.

"In the report the CBC did, the one thing that they said that was wrong was that fill was brought into that area," said Nutthers. "That's not the case. In fact, about four or five feet from that exact area were excavated away. That part of the land was a gravel pit. It was land that was no good for growing vegetables or anything like that."

Nutthers said the excavation would have brought the remains closer to the surface.

"Back then, they did everything the right way," he said. "They would have buried him six feet deep, because they wouldn't want a dog digging up the remains and bringing a human skull home or anything like that."



Shafiq Visram was "a good kid" whose grades had recently slipped.

If they scraped about five feet away, and I know they did excavate because I watched them do it, the bones would have been near the ground surface."

Nutthers said that before the development was built, he raised concerns to city officials about the body.

"I came to the public meeting that they have before they do these developments, and I told them that there was a body buried there," Nutthers said. "The representative from the city rolled his eyes, and I was dismissed by the staff. He said that if there actually was a body buried there, the chances of finding it were zero."

## Artists of Stonebridge hosting 7th Annual Art Show and Sale

The Artists of Stonebridge have had a busy year. They are a group of 27 members from the various communities who have displayed their art at various venues such as the Chapman Mills Recreation Center, Minto Recreation Center in Barrhaven and the Vietnamese Restaurant Barrhaven. The group is excited about the continuing support and recognition from the local City Councilors Jan Harder and Michael Qaqish and, the Member of Parliament Chandra Arya for featuring the group's art in their City Hall, Constituency and Parliament Hill offices.

This group of artists believes in "Giving Back" to the community and supporting local charities. In the past they have donated art for silent auctions at the Gala Dinners in support of the Barrhaven Food Cup-

board, and this year, three members have stepped forward with art work to help raise money for the cause. Over the years, through the Artists of Stonebridge's annual Art Show and Sale, over \$3000 has been raised for the Barrhaven Food Cupboard.

On November 12th and 13th weekend, the Artists of Stonebridge are holding their 7th Annual Art Show and Sale, featuring new works from your local favorite artists plus a number of new members who will be sharing their love of art. The Artists Of Stonebridge are very thankful for all the recognition, encouragement and support that they have received over the years from the community by not only purchasing local art but, by the overwhelming enthusiasm from the public while attending the shows. The

much appreciated sponsorship from Kent Brown (broker) Royal LePage Team Realty, Alexanian Carpets & Flooring, Marianne's Boutique, Color by Design, Deb & Dave Royal LePage, Capital City Heating & Cooling and Broadway Bar & Grill, will enable the group to provide another impressive art show.

You are invited to come out on November 12th & 13th between 10am and 5pm, at the Stonebridge Golf Club to meet your local artists, enjoy the stories behind their creations and treat yourselves to beautiful pieces of original art. The much anticipated Art Show will feature a variety of works from landscapes, seascapes, contemporary pieces to modern and abstract art in various mediums. There is plenty of free parking and daily draws for prizes.



## Nifty Knitters

Gayle Stanley, Marjorie Robinson, Karen Ashton (Lifestyle Director), Dorothy Condie, and Dora Nooyen of Orchard View on the Rideau have knitted all hand crafted goods for shipment to "Warm Hands Network" for distribution to Northern Communities. This organization supplies hats, mittens, neckwarmers, socks, blankets and lapghans for elders. GARY COULOMBE PHOTO

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