

## Metro



Gene and Gayle Hogland of Springfield, Mo., listen Friday as police officials in Troy, Mo., describe evidence linking a suspect to the 1991 rape and killing of the Hoglands' daughter, Stephanie Hogland. Dawn Majors | Post-Dispatch

# DNA leads to arrest in 1991 killing

By Valerie Schremp Hahn  
ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

**LINCOLN COUNTY** • Almost 16 years ago, a worker clearing ice from Highway W found the partly clothed body of 18-year-old Stephanie Hogland face-down in a ditch. She had been bludgeoned to death.

On Friday, investigators announced an arrest in the case — saying it is the oldest case matched by DNA in the state lab.

Michael Edward Dowell, 44, of the 9700 block of Newton Drive in Ferguson, was charged Friday with first-degree murder, armed criminal action and forcible rape. He had submitted a DNA sample on Oct. 30 as part of his probation for an unrelated assault case in St. Louis.

On Nov. 30, the Missouri Highway Patrol's crime lab reported it had a match. The DNA sample taken from Hogland's underwear in 1991 was the first to be submitted to the crime lab, patrol spokeswoman Julie Scerine said Friday.

"Never give up," said Maryland Heights Police Capt. Bill Carson, commander of the Major Case Squad of Greater St. Louis. "There are cases that are going to be solved in the future because of technology like this."

Hogland, a 1990 graduate of Fort Zumwalt North High School who lived in Wentzville, was last seen in the early morning of Jan. 6, 1991, after attending a wedding



**Hogland**  
Victim was raped and beaten

**Dowell**  
Suspect denies involvement

reception with friends in Old Monroe. At some point on her way home, she got a flat tire and pulled her 1977 Pontiac Firebird into a driveway along Highway W north of Highway 47.

The owner of a nearby house found the car later that morning and called the Sheriff's Department, but deputies found no sign of Hogland. More than a day passed, and the highway worker found her body about 15 miles away from her car in a ditch along Highway W north of Highway B. She had been raped and beaten on the head.

Investigators interviewed hundreds of people. They did not interview or suspect Dowell, who lived off Highway Y, east of where the car was found.

"This appears to be a crime of opportunity," Carson explained. "It would appear she had car problems, and the wrong person stopped to help her."

Police went to Dowell's home Thursday afternoon and interviewed him at the Sheriff's Department. Detectives took Dow-

ell, an unemployed painter, to the spot where Hogland's body was found and showed him pictures of Hogland, but he denied involvement in the case and denied knowing or seeing her, authorities said.

Lincoln County prosecutor John Richards said police have additional evidence against Dowell but would not elaborate. He said prosecutors would consider seeking the death penalty because of the brutality of the crime. Dowell was being held in the Lincoln County Jail without bail. Police said he has a long criminal record that includes arrests for rape, assault against a law enforcement officer and unlawful use of a weapon.

Hogland's parents, Gene and Gayle Hogland of Springfield, Mo., and her two younger sisters stood by at the Lincoln County Justice Center in Troy on Friday as investigators announced the arrest, but they declined to comment.

Friends had described Hogland as cheerful, caring and enthusiastic. At the time of her death, she worked as an inspector at an electronics plant in O'Fallon and was saving money for community college classes.

Investigators said they continue to interview people about Hogland's death. They are asking anyone who has information about the case or Dowell to call the Lincoln County Sheriff's Department at 636-528-8546.

vschremp@post-dispatch.com | 636-255-7211