

Massachusetts State Police ask for public's help in solving 44 year old case when 10-year old boy disappeared

That summer all those years ago, the Higgins Memorial Pool across the street was a popular spot for the kids who lived in the Stadium Housing Project in South Lawrence, a working class neighborhood not far from the Shawsheen River and Route 495, And on the afternoon of Aug. 21, 1976 – 44 years ago today – one of those kids at the city pool was Angelo Puglisi.

Andy, as Angelo was called by his family and the other children, was there with his siblings and friends on what seemed like a typical summer afternoon. But the day would become anything but typical for Andy, his friends and family, for the neighborhood, for the worst reasons imaginable.

Late that afternoon when Andy's siblings walked home from the pool, Andy, who was 10, was not with them. His family and others from the neighborhood began searching for him, canvassing the pool area, the municipal dump that abutted it in those days, the nearby woods that led to the highway, and the streets of the housing development. They yelled his name over and over.

They heard nothing back. Saw nothing.

Over the next week, Lawrence Police officers and Massachusetts State Troopers, United States military personnel, and volunteers, conducted intensive searches for Andy. The case got exhaustive media coverage. Leads were checked and ruled out. Appeals to the public were made. A psychic from Texas provided tantalizing tips and, according to at least one police officer, seemingly knew details about the crime scene

that later proved to be accurate.

But still nothing. Andy Puglisi had vanished.

As the weeks and months passed the investigation into Andy's disappearance continued. Months stretched into years, years into decades. Andy's case occasionally resurfaced in media coverage. Suspicion lingered on various suspects, including two pedophiles: One of them had been charged, a year after Andy went missing, with raping two boys he lured away from the same pool the year before Andy disappeared; another, who had killed a young teenage girl in Boxford a few years earlier, had claimed to have killed other children, and was familiar with Lawrence.

One of Andy's childhood friends, who had been at the pool that day, would return to Lawrence to make an award-winning documentary about the case, "Have You Seen Andy." The film uncovered disturbing revelations, among them that as many as five sex offenders had been around the municipal pool the day Andy went missing. What's more, a couple of years after Andy's disappearance, two boys in the woods came across a rectangular hole dug in the earth, only to return the next day and find that the hole had been filled in.

Local and State Police have returned to those woods frequently over the years, with specially-trained search teams, with dogs trained to sniff out human remains, at times with a forensic anthropologist. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children created an age-progressed image surmising what Andy might look like if, by some unlikely chance, he was not killed and was alive today. Detectives focused on the pedophiles who had become suspects. There were occasional promising leads – dogs alerting to specific areas; a patch of ground that looked like it might have once held some sort of wooden object that was once buried; and the imprisoned killer of the Boxford girl claiming, shortly before dying of cancer, to have once killed an unknown boy in Lawrence, albeit with inconsistencies in

terms of dates and places in regard to Andy's case.

And there was the other known pedophile who was a strong suspect in Andy's case, the one who had been imprisoned after being convicted of raping two boys in Lawrence in the 1970s. After completing his sentence that suspect, who has admitted to molesting dozens of children, served a long civil commitment as a sexually dangerous person.

In 2018, however, a psychiatric evaluation claimed he was no longer sexually dangerous and the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ordered him released, over objections of the victim advocacy community. He still faced a trial for open and gross lewdness for an act he allegedly committed while behind bars, but a jury last year found him not guilty on that charge and he was freed. Despite several factors that suggest he could have abducted and killed Andy, police to date have not been able to develop sufficient evidence to charge him.

Nor have investigators, despite painstaking efforts, ever been able to conclusively determine exactly what happened to Andy, or find any evidence or remains connected to him.

Today is August 21, 2020. Andy Puglisi would be 54 years old now. He has been gone – still officially a missing person but a suspected homicide victim – for a period of time more than four times as long as he was known to have lived. Andy's case remains open. He will not be forgotten by the Massachusetts State Police and Lawrence Police. A member of the State Police Detective Unit for Essex County, Trooper Matt Murphy, is assigned to the investigation. Anyone who has information about Andy's disappearance is urged to contact Trooper Murphy at 978-745-8908 or by email at matthew.t.murphy@state.ma.us.



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MISSING

HELP BRING ME HOME

NCMEC: 601871

Angelo Puglisi



Missing Aug 21, 1976
Since:
Missing From: Lawrence,
MA
DOB: Sep 2, 1965
Age Now: 54
Sex: Male
Race: White
Hair Color: Brown
Eye Color: Brown
Height: 4'0"
Weight: 65 lbs

Age Progressed



Angelo's photo is shown aged to 50 years. He was last seen swimming at a public pool about 100 yards from his home. He has 3 scars along his spine and a discoloration on his chest. His nickname is Andy. FOUL PLAY SUSPECTED.

DON'T HESITATE!

ANYONE HAVING INFORMATION SHOULD CONTACT

CALL 911 OR

1-800-8435678 (1-800-THE-LOST®)

Lawrence Police Department (Massachusetts) 1-978-794-5925 or 1-978-794-5900