

CNN's NANCY GRACE

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Yale Lab Technician Named Person of Interest in Le Murder

NANCY GRACE, HOST: Breaking news tonight. Live to Connecticut and the sudden disappearance of a gorgeous young Ivy League doctoral student just before she's set to walk down the aisle, the 24-year-old's beauty last spotted on grainy surveillance video walking into a Yale research building. A false fire alarm mysteriously goes off in the building. People rush out. Annie Le is never seen again. At nearly the exact hour Le set to walk down the aisle -- wedding dress on a hanger in the closet, flowers ordered -- the girl's body found stuffed in a wall there in a Yale University research building, bloody clothes found high over investigators' heads, hidden behind ceiling tiles.

Bombshell tonight. In the last hours, police storm the tiny apartment of a 24-year-old Yale lab technician, Raymond Clark. Clark, in handcuffs escorted to police headquarters for questioning, spends his workdays in the research basement cleaning cages, cages that house experimental mice. Multiple search warrants, 250 pieces of evidence, DNA samples, Clark's Ford Mustang, all seized as evidence.

As we go to air, we learn Le's

official cause of death, traumatic asphyxiation due to neck compression, Le brutally strangled to death. But tonight, 24-year-old Raymond Clark walks free from police headquarters. That's right, he is free, free to go back to the tiny apartment he shares with his fiancée and three cats. Why? With a community and a university reeling, a family grieving and a young groom left at the altar with a broken heart, we want justice for 24-year-old bride-to-be Annie Le.

GRACE: And joining me right now is a special guest, **renowned forensic scientist, distinguished professor at University of New Haven. Dr. Henry Lee.**

Dr. Lee, thank you for being with us. I want to speak to you about your expertise and in your experience, in all the years that you have done experiments, have you ever known the state crime lab to open up in the middle of the night for DNA testing?

HENRY LEE, PH.D., FORENSIC SCIENTIST, DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAVEN:

Yes. In the past we did numerous times. Not only open up in the middle of the night, sometimes we work on the New

Year's eve and Christmas and just like a law enforcement officer, police officer, every day they seek just working 9:00 to 5:00 shift. No, it's not. We work all hours.

GRACE: Good to know. Dr. Henry Lee, when they say that they took DNA from him, would that only be a buccal swab, an oral swab that you do with a Q-tip like object?

LEE: Actually -- yes. Actually we have three different types of applicator to collect buccal swab evidence. You're absolutely right, and they're right, some of the media report saliva sample. We are actually not looking at the saliva, we're looking at the cheek cell, looking for nuclear DNA, try to extract the DNA as a known control.

Then we have to compare those samples. You know there are reports that 250 items of evidence, actually that's 250 items, not necessarily have evidential value. The crime laboratory people have to -- scientists have to go through those 250 items, item by item, separate them, any have evidential value such as, hair, fibers which can provide a linkage to the victim and try to solve the case.

GRACE: Dr. Henry Lee, if the buccal swab, which of course you're absolutely correct, it is not the saliva that the scientist is trying to obtain, it's the cells off the inside of the gum.

LEE: Right. Yes.

GRACE: If you obtain DNA from an oral swab, why would you also take blood?

LEE: Well, sometimes you want a control just in case the oral swab may have contaminations. I'm sure they probably also take the fingernail scraping and also take the hair sample.

GRACE: Yes, and Dr. Lee, as far as clipping his nails, do you really believe that this many days later that there would still be evidence under his nails or the killer's nails, not necessarily him, he's not a suspect, he's a person of interest, but the killer, would he still have evidence under his nails, do you believe?

LEE: You know, as time goes by, the chances to recover the victim's DNA under fingernail has become less and become very remote. However, you cannot just say five days go by, we don't take the fingernail. You still have to try.

GRACE: Yes, you still have to try.

LEE: Maybe not necessarily finding anything, but definitely have to try.

GRACE: Right. You must try because that's the first thing they'll say at trial as a defense, you didn't take his fingernails. You're absolutely right, Dr. Lee.

Joining men now, Dr. Kent E. Harshbarger, medical examiner, forensic pathologist, joining us out of Dayton, Ohio. Esteemed in his field.

Dr. Harshbarger, thank you for being with us. Dr. Harshbarger, what do you make of the official cause of death?

DR. KENT E. HARSHBARGER, M.D., MEDICAL EXAMINER, FORENSIC PATHOLOGIST:

It's kind of a long stretch to get to strangulation, they have used a lot of generic terms. Asphyxia really just means a lack of oxygen of the cell. And then neck abrasion is very broad. So it tells me it's one, it's convention that the office uses or two, they're hiding something from the public record. Now that typically becomes public. So neck compression could be from a ligature. Maybe they're looking for something. Maybe they know it's manual strangulation.

GRACE: It said traumatic. It said traumatic asphyxiation. Of course every strangulation is going to be traumatic. Why do they add that?

HARSHBARGER: Yes. I assume it's office convention. Traumatic asphyxia can also be -- some people use the same term as mechanical asphyxiation, they're interchangeable.

GRACE: Yes.

HARSHBARGER: It really applies more to a mechanism that the chest not being able to expand. So traumatic asphyxia is really just putting in to a category that do, too, is the key part, due to neck compression.

GRACE: We're going to a break. But when we get back I want to ask Dr. Harshbarger about how an entire human body could be folded into a two-foot cable box space, which is what happened in this case.