

Tip May Provide Fresh Lead In Michelle Martinko Murder Case

CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa -- A December tip about a the 1979 murder case of Michelle Martinko has police optimistic about potentially closing the book on the decades old investigation.

“I feel good about this tip,” said Doug Larison, a Cedar Rapids Police Department detective.

But first, Larison said he needs to speak to the anonymous tipster to get more information.

“I think the tipster has information to specifically identify who the killer is, but they didn’t actually provide a name,” Larison said. “That’s why we want to talk to this person, so we can find out who the person is.”

The tip regarded 17-year-old Michelle Martinko's 1979 murder. Martinko died of multiple stab wounds to her head and chest in December 1979. Police said she went to Westdale Mall on Dec. 19, 1979 to shop for a coat after a school choir banquet. Her body was found at 4 a.m. Dec. 20 in her family’s 1972 Buick Elantra.

More than 80 potential suspects were developed during the initial investigation and more than 60 have been crossed off the list.

Police said the December 2013 tip contained information that led investigators to a potential suspect. Larison said they tracked that person down, but discovered the DNA did not match the suspect DNA.

However, police believe the tipster has credible information about the murder. Now, Larison said he’d like to speak with the tipster, though he couldn’t elaborate further.

“The problem is, if I give any more details, it’s probably going to identify to certain

people in the community who the tipster is,” he said. “I don’t want to jeopardize their anonymity.”

Police said the tipster can remain anonymous. They are asked to contact Larison at 319-286-5412 or 319-521-6003. The individual can also call Linn County Crime Stoppers at 1-800-CS-CRIME or text CRIMES and in the subject, type 5227 and the tip.