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IN COMMUNITY JOURNALISM

Distorting the Facts

By Record Editor/Publisher Laurie Ezzell Brown

ON SUNDAY, APRIL 10, Klein Investigations and Consulting posted a copy of a report from *The Canadian Record*, headlined, "HCSO, Rangers investigate home for clues to Brown case."

Philip Klein is the private investigator hired by Penny Meek following the November 2016 disappearance and subsequent death of her son, Thomas Brown. He loves to talk about FACTS.

KIC offered the page as proof that the Hemphill County Sheriff's Office and Texas Rangers had, in FACT, conducted a search of Thomas Brown's home following his disappearance on Nov. 24, 2016. The image that was posted was blurry and difficult to read. The only thing legible was the headline, and the name under the photo of missing CHS senior Thomas Brown, as we believe Klein intended.

The report was first published in the July 20, 2017, edition of *The Record*, and is on file in our digital archives for anyone to read. A copy of that report is also published here (at left). The report has nothing to do with a search of the home of Brown's mother and stepfather, Penny and Chris Meek following his disappearance. Rather, it involves the search—months later—of a then-vacant home on Summit Avenue, which was reported by an unidentified individual who found what they believed were signs of human blood in the carpet.

In FACT, this search's only bearing on the Brown case is that the individual who discovered the "suspicious markings" believed they may offer some clue to Brown's disappearance. That was only natural, given that in July 2017, most of Canadian's residents—and probably most of those in the Texas Panhandle—were aware of Tom's disappearance and spent a good part of every waking hour either thinking about, hearing about, speculating about, or talking about his disappearance.

When the "suspicious markings" were discovered, the Texas Rangers were alerted and brought in to conduct a series of forensics tests, collecting any evidence that might be linked to Brown's disappearance. The test results proved negative for human blood, and the Rangers ruled it out as a crime scene.

The real question here is why in hell Philip Klein Investigations posted a blurry image of *The Record* report on their Facebook page, and then explained—somewhat incoherently—that the purpose of doing so was to "show you the public...that the theme was pushed that no law enforcement was in the Meek home the night of, or, the next day."

"Obviously that was not true," KIC continued, "as the Rangers,

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to be a small, black, zippered pistol case, and the search halted. Chief Deputy Brent Clapp carefully documented and packaged the evidence.

Bones were found under trees, and in one case, in a bush hidden inside a culvert under the road. Each discovery was "released" after inspection by the specially-trained cadaver dog, Chance, making his second appearance here along side owner, Tracy Sargent, who is with Georgia's K9 Search and Rescue Specialists.

An earlier search with Chance, in an undisclosed location near Lake Marvin, had yielded a positive hit, Klein said, adding that his team would return to follow up on that.

At the end of a long day, during which a volunteer struggled with temperatures that rose to a high of 90 degrees, 31 bags of evidence had been collected and sent to the Hemphill County Sheriff's Office for further analysis. The clothing will be forensic analyzed. The clothing will be forensic analyzed. The clothing will be forensic analyzed.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The caller reported that something had been found on the edge of the road, though what exactly he said that object was, and what was found, are both in dispute. Klein told searchers last week that a broken cellphone had been found by someone unfamiliar with the Brown case, and then tossed over the fence. When contacted by *The Canadian Record* on Tuesday, the contact vouched that he described as a "broken" object was a cellphone, and that it was a tape recorder, which they described as a "broken" object. In response, Klein provided "The Record" his notes from a meeting with a broken screen. In response, Klein provided "The Record" his notes from a meeting with a broken screen. In response, Klein provided "The Record" his notes from a meeting with a broken screen.

THURSDAY 19 OCTOBER 2017 5

'Being the good . . .'

FROM THE FAMILY OF THOMAS BROWN

We would like to thank everyone involved in the search. Klein Investigations did a great job putting the search together, with a list of over 300 volunteers that was narrowed down to around 100.

Of the 100 who did search, I have heard stories of some literally being on their hands and knees, sifting through dirt to find any clue that would shed light on Thomas' disappearance. Many volunteers were local, but people were involved from the surrounding communities, and Oklahoma, Kansas, and Colorado.

We appreciate the landowners for allowing searches on their property to look for evidence. We want to thank Chief Deputy Brent Clapp and Lieutenant Jay Mosley for their participation in the search. Thank you Alexander, for providing water, and Milton Cooke for feeding the searchers for their continued coverage. *The Canadian Record* and Amarillo news outlets for their continued coverage. Genesis 35:20 "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done."

The people of Hemphill County and the surrounding area showed up on Saturday to be the good in a situation that was meant to do harm. Our family cannot say thank you enough.

Chris and Penny Meek (in photo above)
Tucker Brown
Kelly Brown

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THE CANADIAN RECORD NEWS PAGE

THURSDAY 20 JULY 2017 7

HCSO, Rangers investigate home for clues to Brown case

Investigators with both the Texas Rangers and Hemphill County Sheriff's Office searched a home here in Canadian around 8 pm Tuesday evening, and conducted a series of forensics tests, collecting evidence that they thought might be linked to the disappearance of Canadian teenager, Thomas Brown, last November.

However, late yesterday afternoon, Sheriff Nathan Lewis reported that all test results proved negative for human blood, and that the Texas Rangers had ruled it out as a crime scene.

The investigation resulted from a tip the Sheriff's Office received Tuesday, that led them to the home and launched the investigation for possible clues to the Brown case. That investigation concluded abruptly on Wednesday, however, when the results of those tests were reported.

In early reports, Sheriff Lewis said that "suspicious markings" had been found in the carpet. Lewis said that all test results proved negative for human blood, and that the Texas Rangers had ruled it out as a crime scene.

Investigators continued to comb the house for any other clues Wednesday morning, using black lights, blood lights, lasers (LIDAR)—anything, Lewis said, that could help determine the presence of human blood, and terminal tests conducted by Texas Rangers on Wednesday led them to call off the investigation.

Lewis said that the location of the home served the residence and placed a had no indication of any criminal activity, the home was released Wednesday afternoon.

"We appreciate the help of people here in town. It will continue to follow any tips we receive."

Nov. 24, 2016, a CHS senior, disappeared on with friends. He has not been seen since, nor has he communicated with his family. Investigations into his disappearance are being conducted by the local Sheriff's Office, the FBI, and Texas Rangers, and, at the request of Brown's family, by the private investigative firm of Philip Klein Investigations.

Sheriff Lewis said that, having a break in the case, he plans to turn the investigation over to a cold case review team on the scene. "That way, we can get fresh eyes on it," Lewis said, "and we can get fresh eyes on it."

A reward is being offered for any information that might be helpful in finding or recovering Brown. That fund has quadrupled since the initial contribution, and now totals \$40,000. Anyone with information that might help find or recover Tom Brown is urged to contact the HCSO at 806.323.6529 and speak with Sheriff Nathan Lewis or Chief Deputy Brent Clapp.

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HCSO, and the Texas Department of Corrections officers and dog handlers came into the home, searched, got articles of Tom's clothes and interviewed each family member."

After pulling the unreadable image, KIC promised they would try and get a better copy of the article and post it. We have waited 10 days to see if KIC would post a better copy of *The Record* report. They have not...nor have they asked for one. Instead, they just let their Facebook followers believe the conclusions they had already drawn for them from an illegible copy of a very real and accurate report in *The Record*, whose content they completely misrepresented.

If, at any point, we had received any indication that such a thorough search and investigation had been conducted at the Meek home, we would have been happy to report it. Instead, we criticized then-Sheriff Nathan Lewis and his lead investigator, then-Chief Deputy Brent Clapp, for that failure, as we have for their other missteps in the earliest days of Brown's disappearance.

But that doesn't really matter. KIC's FACTS had been planted and the conclusions drawn, and the subject abruptly changed to the usual praise for Klein's unimpeachable character and devotion to FACTS.

We have refrained from participating in the ongoing mudslinging that has become commonplace on Klein's page and on any number of other pages that have preyed on Thomas Brown's disappearance. We have also refrained from rebutting the nasty attacks by Klein and others on both our character and our professional credibility. We even shrugged off Klein's and his associate Jane Holmes' repeated taunts that we had failed to follow up on a tip they had thrown our way, regarding a cellphone found on Lake Marvin Road by TxDOT contractors.

Nope. Not a FACT, at all...as you will see if you read the second copy of a report—this one published in the Oct. 19, 2017, edition of *The Record*—noting that an object found by contract workers on the edge of Lake Marvin Road, and identified by Klein as a broken cellphone, was instead clearly described as a tape recorder—1-1/2 inches wide by 5-6 inches long—with play, record, and rewind buttons, and a busted screen. That report followed a lengthy interview we conducted with the crew foreman and with his father, who had found the object and described it clearly in Spanish to the bilingual interpreter we had asked to assist with our communication that day.

It wasn't much of a story, but we reported it. We also sent it to Holmes, though she never responded.

Why are we bothering our readers with all of this now? Because you depend on us for accurate and factual reporting, and because beyond the dollars you pitch into the collection plate each week to read this newspaper, about the only thing we have that's worth much is our credibility.

Just because Philip Klein says he's presenting FACTS, doesn't mean he is. But it's up to each of you to figure that out. Same with us, I guess, which is why we can't just sit by and let Philip Klein lie about what we have reported, while using a fuzzy image of our newspaper to prove that it is FACT.

This is yet another example of Philip Klein's efforts to misrepresent and distort the truth, and to use our credible reporting as a foundation for the lies he so frequently promotes.

NOTE: Full-size copies of the two articles referenced on this page follow.



Search teams collect possible evidence on Lake Marvin Road, find cell phone, gun case

A team of 135 volunteers searched along a 10-mile stretch of Lake Marvin Road Saturday morning, looking for evidence related to the Thanksgiving Day disappearance of Canadian High School student Thomas Brown nearly a year ago.

In the several hours-long search that ensued, over 30 bags of potential evidence—including an iPhone 6 and a small zippered gun case—were collected by law enforcement authorities who had also volunteered to help. Those bags were turned over to the Hemphill County Sheriff's Office, along with documentation showing the date, time, description and GPS coordinates of the location in which the objects inside were found.

The objective, as private investigator Philip Klein told the crowd that gathered near the entrance to Lake Marvin Road that morning, was to perform a line walk along the right-of-way from the edge of the road, across the fenceline, and onto the adjacent property. The road had been divided into 1-mile sectors. Team leaders were named, and teams of 10 searchers per sector—five on each side of the road—were assembled.

Klein is the lead investigator for Klein Investigations and Consulting, in Nederland, hired by the family to find the missing teenager. Since ruling out several other theories about Tom's disappearance, Klein and his team have pursued the case believing that a crime was committed, and have conducted several searches and interviews in the Canadian area, seeking information and following

up on leads.

Saturday's search was organized after Klein received a call in August about potential evidence having been found by a contract crew working to clear trees on Lake Marvin Road.

The call followed an interview with KXDJ Radio's Chris Samples, during which Klein said his team had narrowed its focus to a 3 square-mile area along Lake Marvin Road, where Tom's school-issued backpack and laptop were found about two months after his disappearance. Referring to it as "a hot area," Klein urged anyone working or traveling regularly on that road to report if they had seen anything unusual.

That report—the exact content of which is in dispute (*see editor's note below)—coupled with the discovery of Brown's backpack in the same vicinity, and the results of a time/distance study and map developed based on video recordings and fuel readings of Tom's vehicle, warranted renewed interest in a more thorough search of Lake Marvin Road. Klein said he immediately flew up here and met with members of the contract crew, to pinpoint the area in which the object was found.

After conducting searches in the area with his own team, Klein concluded that he needed more people to comb through the

rough terrain and wooded area along Lake Marvin Road, and began making preparations for Saturday's search.

Speaking from the back of a pickup truck to the assembled search teams, early Saturday morning, Klein revealed that they would be looking for two specific items: a cellphone and a .25-caliber pistol. The phone, he said, could be Tom's, which was with him the last time he was seen by friends the night before

articles of clothing, including shirts and a pair of socks that he believed were Tom's.

After saying a prayer, Klein introduced Tom's mother and stepfather, Penny and Chris Meek, who spoke a few quiet and tear-choked words, thanking all who volunteered to help in the search. Klein then instructed the searchers to perform a five-on-five search, staying within an arm's length of the person next to them.

He urged the volunteers to move slowly and deliberately, to dig through leaves and nudge piles of dirt with their boots.

"This is not a race," he said. "It is a marathon."

Each search group was transported to their sector by pickup. Within minutes of their dispersal, word came that an iPhone had been found in sector 1. Brightly-colored flags signaling the discovery of possible evidence began to appear along the roadside, as law enforcement officials and investigators drove from one sector to another, documenting, photographing and collecting the found items.

Some sections were cleared more quickly than others. Some were heavily wooded, and the searchers used sticks and other objects to poke and prod the ground. In the early afternoon, team members in one of the more rugged sectors discovered what turned out



he disappeared, and has not been seen since. The weapon could be the one that fired a .25 caliber bullet, the casing of which was discovered in Tom's Dodge Durango, which had been abandoned near the municipal wastewater treatment plant, on the edge of town.

Klein also announced that, in a previous search of the area, his team had recovered



A VOLUNTEER DIGS DEEP IN SEARCH FOR CLUES TO BROWN'S DISAPPEARANCE

to be a small, black, zippered pistol case, and the search halted while Chief Deputy Brent Clapp carefully documented and packaged the evidence.

Bones were found under trees, and in one case, in a bucket hidden inside a culvert under the road. Each discovery was "released," after inspection by the specially-trained cadaver dog, Chance, making his second appearance here alongside owner, Trace Sargent, who is with Georgia's K9 Search and Rescue Specialists.

An earlier search with Chance, in an undisclosed location near Lake Marvin, had yielded a positive hit, Klein said, adding that his team would return to follow up on that.

At the end of a long day, during which a few volunteers struggled with temperatures that rose to a high of 90 degrees, 31 bags of evidence had been collected and sent to the Hemphill County Sheriff's Office for further analysis. The clothing will be forensically-tested for blood, Klein said, adding that he had secured Tom's vehicle again, and planned to do a forensic analysis with lumi-

nol.

"That will show me if there's any blood spatter, or more blood in the car," he said. "We already know there's blood in the car."

Asked if it had been tested, Klein said flatly, "Yes. It is Tom Brown's. And, according to our experts, it is deep-venous blood. You can assume what that means."

"Today was a very hard, emotional day for my team when it was over," he said. "You always want to have hope, but I think it really sunk in, for the first time, where we really are."

However, Klein's goal is to help Thomas Brown's family find answers, and by that measure, he deemed the day a success. "Our first goal was to go out there and try to find a weapon or a gun. Well, we're 1.5.

We found a cellphone. We found a gun case—a .25 caliber or 380 gun case."

Though even with the help of metal detectors, searchers failed to find a weapon, Klein said, "I'm not done. We know the area. We're going to let the storms come in, let the foliage fall, let everything chill out a little bit, and we'll be back here."



A SMALL GUN CASE FOUND IN SEARCH



'Being the good . . .'

FROM THE FAMILY OF THOMAS BROWN

We would like to thank everyone involved in the search. Klein Investigations did a great job putting the search together, with a list of over 300 volunteers that was narrowed down to around 100.

Of the 100 who did search, I have heard stories of some literally being on their hands and knees, sifting through dirt to find any clue that would shed light on Thomas' disappearance. Many volunteers were local, but people were involved from the surrounding communities; and Oklahoma, Kansas, and Colorado.

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Genesis 50:20 "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done."

The people of Hemphill County and the surrounding area showed up on Saturday to be the good in a situation that was meant to do harm. Our family cannot say thank you enough.

Chris and Penny Meek (in photo above)
Tucker Brown
Kelly Brown

***EDITOR'S NOTE:** The caller reported that something had been found on the edge of the road, though what exactly he said that object was, and what was found, are both now in dispute. Klein told searchers last week that a broken cellphone had been found by someone unfamiliar with the Brown case, and then tossed over the fence. When contacted by *The Canadian Record* on Tuesday, the contract workers denied that the object was a cellphone, saying instead that it was a tape recorder, which they described as about 1-1/2 inches wide, 5-6 inches long, with play, record and rewind buttons on it, and with a broken screen. In response, Klein provided *The Record* his notes from a meeting on Lake Marvin Road with the contract crew shortly after receiving the call, during which the location of the found object was identified. Having received that documentation as we were preparing these pages for publication yesterday afternoon, we will review it more thoroughly this week, and attempt to interview others who were involved. Any additional findings will be reported here next week. —LEB



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