



## Memorandum of Interview

**Date:** August 16, 2015

**Time:** 10:45 - 12:00 hours

**Person Interviewed:** James E. Combs

**Interviewer:** Jack L. Barnhart

### **Details:**

On the above time and date, Reporting Investigator interviewed James E. Combs at Combs' residence. The purpose of the interview was to obtain detailed information regarding Combs' recall of the events of 02/05 and 02/06/1982 in Moraine, Ohio. Combs said that he resided at 2941 Schoolhouse Lane, Moraine, Ohio.

Combs said that he knew David Rowell and Mike Rowell, David's brother. Combs stated that he attended school with Mike Rowell. Combs described David Rowell as a "normal" kid and a "good" kid. Combs said that he often socialized with Mike and David Rowell at the Moraine Civic Center, which was located on Kreitzer Road. Combs said that he was closer to Mike Rowell than to David.

Combs stated that David Rowell's parents were strict with Mike and David. According to Combs, the parents were protective of the children. Combs said that they were religious people, possibly Pentecostal, but Combs was not sure what denomination. Combs described the parents as "strange."

Combs stated that he thought it was very strange that the Rowell family just up and left Moraine within days of David Rowell's murder. According to Combs, everything at Rowells' residence, 2970 Kreitzer

Road, was packed up and they were gone what he said appeared to be overnight.

Combs said that he never heard of any stories circulating in the neighborhood about threats against the Rowell children in New Carlisle. Combs stated that he did not know why the Rowell family moved to Moraine from New Carlisle and stated that the Rowell family was already living in the neighborhood when the Combs family moved into Gem City Estates Trailer Park.

Combs described Wampler as "strange at times" and as being the "new kid on the block." Combs explained what he meant as strange was Wampler always appearing to be a "loner". Combs said that all the kids in the neighborhood knew that if you wanted to smoke cigarettes or drink beer you went to Wampler's trailer because he shared both with visitors and Wampler's father was never home. Combs said that Mike Rowell and Mike Johnson were common visitors to Wampler's trailer.

Combs described Mike Johnson as being "all right." Combs stated that Johnson did not show any hostility towards Combs. Combs said that Johnson lived in a condemned house that was located in the Gordon Trailer Park. Combs confirmed that Johnson's cousin, Judy Tabor, did reside in the Gordon Trailer Park.

Combs stated that Andrew Choate was "weird". Combs further described Choate as being a heavy marijuana user. Combs said that Choate and Johnson were good friends.

Another person that Combs considered "weird" was James Shipman Jr. Combs said that Shipman's parents often left James Shipman Jr. and his little brother, Joey, alone. Combs said that James and Joey Shipman were always together. Combs said that he thought it was strange that the Shipmans left the neighborhood immediately after David Rowell's murder.

Combs does not recall knowing Ted Ritchie.

Combs said that the neighborhood was a rough area. According to Combs, the children in the neighborhood often fought amongst themselves. Combs described his parents, especially his father, as being strict. Combs said that he was often grounded for one reason or another.

Combs stated that several people in the neighborhood had hunting knives because they often trapped rabbits in the field where David Rowell was discovered. Combs said that field was used to trap rabbits, plant gardens and dump trash.

According to Combs, on 02/05/1982, he was grounded. Combs said that he was not permitted to have any visitors nor was he permitted to visit any of his friends. Combs stated that he did not have any visitors on 02/05/1982 and said that he was at home all evening.

Combs stated that on 02/06/1982, he did not have any visitors. Combs reiterated that when his father said no visitors, there were no visitors permitted. Combs said that he left his residence, with his parents, to attend a birthday party in Farmersville, Ohio. Combs believes he left around 11:00 hours. Combs said that he returned home, with his parents, in the late afternoon. Combs said that his father always parked on Kreitzer Road. Combs stated that he noticed the police cars on Kreitzer Road.

Combs said that as his parents went into the residence, he walked over the Wampler's trailer to find out what was happening. Combs believes that Wampler and his father were at the trailer, but could not recall if he saw anyone else. According to Combs, when he asked Wampler what was occurring, Wampler responded by saying either, "Someone killed David Rowell" or "Someone strangled David Rowell." Combs said that he cannot remember exactly what Wampler said. Combs

said that he was at Wampler's residence for about five minutes and was in trouble when he returned home. Combs claimed that because he went to Wampler's residence, his father grounded him for another week.

Combs said that he does not believe that Wampler committed this crime and believes that Wampler is not capable of committing such a crime. Combs said that he does not believe that Mike Johnson could have committed this crime, but does believe that Johnson knows more than he is telling. Combs stated that Andrew Choate would be capable of committing a crime like this. Combs, also, believes that the Shipmans are either involved or know more than they are willing to tell.

Combs said that he believes that the Rowell family was capable of committing this crime. Combs repeated that the Rowell family was strange. Combs stated that he always felt it was strange that the father searched the field for David and that the father was the one to discover the body. Combs believes that is simply too odd, especially after how quickly they left Moraine after David Rowell's body was discovered.

Combs said that he was contacted on 08/14/2015 by Randall Hendricks regarding this investigation.

Combs stated that if there is any doubt regarding Wampler's guilt, Wampler should not spend another day in prison. However, according to Combs, if Wampler did do this, then he needs to remain in prison. Combs repeated that he believes Wampler was not capable of doing this crime.

Combs said that he was interviewed by the Moraine Police a couple days after the murder. Combs described the neighborhood on edge and that he remembers being interviewed because he pulled a knife, that his father gave him, on Sergeant Joseph Wynne, Moraine Police, when

Wynne approached him. Combs said that Wynne startled him and that his father gave him a knife for protection after the murder.

Combs described Sergeant Joseph Wynne and Detective William Mullins as being "assholes" and further stated that Mullins did not have a good reputation in Moraine. Combs said that in general the Moraine Police did not have a good reputation.

Combs denied any meeting with the Montgomery County Prosecutor's Office prior to his testimony in court. Combs stated that there were preparatory sessions with the prosecutor. Combs said that he was not under pressure to testify.

The interview ended under favorable conditions.

**Investigator's Note: Combs' recall of the neighborhood and the events of 02/05/1982 and 02/06/1982 appear to be clear. Combs has knowledge of all of the major subjects in this investigation, with the exception of Ted Ritchie. Reporting Investigator believes Combs was honest and forthright during the interview.**