

Franziska's parents relive day she was killed at Tokai Forest

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By Jenna Etheridge, News24

Cape Town – When Franziska Blöchliger did not return from her jog in Tokai Forest last year, it never crossed her mother's mind that something bad had happened to her, she told the Western Cape High Court on Wednesday.

The only possibilities that Shireen Blöchliger thought of that day was that her 16-year-old's phone battery had died, she had sprained her ankle, or had decided to walk instead of run.

"The last thing we thought of was someone had attacked Franziska. That is not the first thing anyone thinks," she testified.

She was called as the State's first witness in the trial of her daughter's alleged killer, 28-year-old Howard Oliver.

Wrapped in a shawl, she struggled to hold back tears as she spoke about her daughter, a responsible teen without a boyfriend who looked just like her, but younger.

Oliver had earlier pleaded not guilty to raping and killing her, saying he had only robbed her of her ring and phone in the forest, after smoking Mandrax.

Shireen said it had been Franziska's idea to have a quick jog that day, March 7, 2016, before picking up her younger sister. She had wanted to squeeze in exercise before leaving for Switzerland with her father Andreas, for a school exchange programme.

They arrived at the forest around 15:00 and agreed to meet at the car around 15:30.

"Her cellphone was in a pouch on her arm. She was listening to music, had white Apple earphones plugged in and was running. I had the dog with me so we went straight ahead."

When the teen did not return, she called and messaged her, but got no reply.

'She would have been in so much shock'

She eventually went to pick up her younger daughter and then returned to the forest. She called her husband and he arrived to help.

"We ran around, screaming her name," she said.

Her husband and younger daughter drove around the forest looking for her. They asked people if they had seen her, but no one had. They eventually phoned the police.

"Initially they said there is nothing we can do. We should try to track her iPhone. They didn't believe something had happened to her."

Andreas testified that her phone was still new, so it did not have a tracker activated. He asked the police to call for more officers to join the search and for a helicopter to look overhead.

Soon, neighbourhood watch members joined in the search.

During cross-examination, defence lawyer Ken Klopper asked how her daughter would have reacted when confronted.

"She was not used to any kind of violence or anything like that. That is not the way we brought up our children," she replied.

"I think she would have been in so much shock, she would have just given her phone."

'I saw it was a body'

Andreas said they had a moment of hope when he got a call from Franziska's number while he was driving on his Vespa.

"I heard small children noises. They were talking, but not talking to me. I said 'Hello, hello, can I speak to your mommy or daddy, where are you?' And then the phone was put down," he said.

"I phoned my wife and my stepfather said he also had a phone call from her."

Yvonne Elgar, a nurse walking her dogs that day, found Franziska's body.

Elgar said she asked a man in the forest whether they had found the teenager yet, and he said no. She then headed back to her car and stumbled upon the body.

"When I looked at her, she looked almost like a white plastic bag. I thought it was a garbage bag at first. When I looked again, I saw it was a body."

'Face stuck in the sand'

Warrant Officer Dumisa Dumako, who was with the False Bay CSI at the time, was called to the scene to take photos and a video.

The video, taken around 22:00 that night, was shown in court on Wednesday.

It shows the naked teen lying on her stomach in the fynbos. What appears to be a bloody plank is at her legs.

"The face of the deceased was stuck in the sand, so to speak. You couldn't take a picture of it," Dumako said.

The pathologist was on the scene as her body was rolled over onto a plastic bag.

Her hands were found tied together in front of her body. Her body was eventually removed after midnight.

The trial continues.

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