Following a recent Eye Witness News report, various individuals and media representatives have contacted the City of La Crosse Police Department. The Eye Witness News Report involved two retired New York police detectives who say they’ve discovered a link between a Minnesota death and the drownings of at least 40 other men in 25 cities in 11 different states according to the news report. The report claims that “city after city, when they’d find the spot where the body went into the water, they would find something else: the symbol of a smiley face.” The news report goes on to indicate that the detectives are convinced that it’s a sick signature the killers leave behind.

I would like to take this opportunity to once again remind and assure our community that the eight river drownings which occurred between 1997 and 2006 have been thoroughly investigated. The La Crosse Police Department requested the assistance of the Wisconsin Division of Criminal Investigation who participated in the investigations and conducted an in-depth review of all the drownings. The La Crosse Police department further requested that the Federal Bureau of Investigation, National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime, Behavioral Analysis Unit also conduct a thorough review of the drownings. Following the investigations by the La Crosse Police Detective Bureau, the FBI and DCI, no link between the drownings was discovered. The investigations concur with the findings of the FBI, “it is not unusual that many of the victims died of accidental drowning with alcohol intoxication as a contributing factor.” It is also important to note that no symbols of a smiley face were discovered at any of the La Crosse drowning cases.

It is also important to note that drowning is the third leading cause of unintentional death in the U.S. Drowning is the second leading cause of unintentional death for person’s age 5 to 44 years. Males represent 81% of all drowning victims. Males make up 90% of drowning victims aged 15 to 24 years.

The La Crosse area river drownings are tragic and unfortunate accidents. The lowest blood alcohol content of the drowning victims was .20 with the highest being .44.
Edward N. Kondracki
Chief of Police