

LAST DAY

By Casey Grove

From meeting at McDonald's, until parting minutes before his fatal beating, John Hartman spent his final waking hours hanging out with Chris Stone, a friend of eight years. Pieces of that day are covered elsewhere in this site, particularly in [The Trials](#) and [Wild Night](#). Here is the full story, with added details.

During West Valley High School's 40-minute midday break beginning around 10:40 a.m., Hartman and his girlfriend, Sheva Corning, met for lunch. They had been together for only three weeks but met for lunch regularly. Chris Stone said in court that he had done some crystal meth before meeting them at McDonald's, a hangout across the street from the school. According to Stone, Hartman was wearing blue corduroy pants at the time that belonged to Stone.

"He commented to me about them, and I laughed," Stone said in court. "And I joked around: 'Dude, like you're going to give me those back, right, and you know, you better.' "



©UAF Journalism Department
Hartman met Chris Stone at this
McDonald's the morning before his
murder

He and Hartman were not in school that day. Stone was enrolled at West Valley and skipping, but Hartman was still trying to finish junior high. When Corning left McDonald's to go back to class, the two boys began their journey through the day.

After going to the public library, a hangout across the street from another Fairbanks high school, Hartman and Stone went to a pull-tab parlor called Lucky Aces around 2 p.m. (pull tabs are like scratch-off tickets and one of few legal forms of gambling in Alaska). Hartman's mother Evalyn Thomas worked there.



©UAF Journalism Department
West Valley High School after a
remodel in 2001

"I was busy," she told the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner in 1997, "I had like eight or nine customers." She gave her son \$5 or \$10 for food, and he told her he would probably be spending the night at a friend's. She remembers seeing Hartman wearing a camouflage jacket and camouflage pants, not Stone's blue corduroy pants.

At the Bentley Mall, Stone said he and Hartman talked to other kids. They ate at McDonald's again and bought some snacks at about 4 p.m. before heading back toward West Valley to Noah's Rainbow Inn, where their 17-year-old friend E.J. Stevens was babysitting a toddler and a 5-year-old.

Getting a ride with 15-year-old Jessica Wyman, they arrived at the inn around 5 p.m. Stone said that Michael Mulcahy, the father of the two kids, was there and knew that they would be helping E.J. While there, the boys found a bottle of Wellbutrin, a prescription antidepressant, and took a few of the pills around 8 p.m. Stone testified that he took between eight and 10 pills, and that Hartman took less. About 15 minutes later, friends Trent Mueller and Eric Wright showed up with a box of wine.

"And me and Eric went to the room," Mueller told the police the next day. "And as soon as we got in there, and we saw John, and he was sitting in a chair no more than 15 to 20 seconds after we got in there, he hit the ground and started going into convulsions." Stone admitted on the stand that he, Stevens and Hartman had stolen some anti-depressant pills, Welbutrin, from the room and taken a few. Welbutin was blamed for the seizure.

In a 2003 interview with UAF journalism student Gary Moore, E.J. Stevens said, "I remember John getting sick, but what I remember is that at that time he was wearing a camo shirt and camo pants." Stevens said Hartman was not wearing the blue corduroy pants that he (Stevens) claimed to have bought for Stone earlier that week.

Mueller told this reporter in 2004 that he had asked Hartman some questions, and Stone was answering them. Mueller told Stone, "Shut the f--- up!" Mueller and Wright tried to calm Hartman down after the seizure, and they took him outside for a cigarette.



©Kelly Moore
Formerly Noah's Rainbow Inn, the College Inn is across the street from West Valley High School and about one block from McDonald's

"We asked what kind of drugs he'd done," Mueller told the police. "And he [Hartman] said, 'Oh, I just took one hit of acid [LSD],' and I was like, 'Shut up, man, you had to be doing something more than just acid to go into convulsions.' And he just kept on lying to us and said that he had it from one of his good friends."

A forensic test did not detect LSD in Hartman's lung tissue. However, examiners failed to find any Wellbutrin either, and test comments read, "Specimens must be kept frozen to preserve the stability of this analyte. This specimen was received thawed."

Mueller's belief that Hartman was lying would seem to be corroborated by a forensic test that did not detect LSD in his lung tissue. However, examiners failed to find any Wellbutrin either, and test comments read, "Specimens must be kept frozen to preserve the stability of this analyte. This specimen was received thawed."

After returning to the room, Mueller, who had planned to be the drummer in a band called the Sentinels, with Hartman on the bass, tried to convince his best friend to come play music with them.

"And John was just sitting there with Chris and E.J. just dazed, just like he was a robot and they were controlling his body," Mueller told the police. "Every time I'd ask him, [Hartman], 'Hey, man, you wanna' come with us,' he'd like look up, pale faced, and just like, 'No, I don't wanna' go. I want to sit here,' And I was like, 'OK, well, I can't force him. So me and Eric took off about 10 and that was the last time we saw him."

In 2004 Mueller told this reporter that Stone had his friend Hartman on "a drug cocktail" or "some mind control drug" and he said that Hartman had been wearing the camouflage pants when he and Eric Wright left. Mueller thought those pants belonged to Wright.

Michael Mulcahy arrived home after work. Stone and Hartman were not supposed to be there, he said. He was not happy and gave the three boys \$10 or \$15 and asked them to leave. They left to wait for a cab downstairs.

Thomas Waterman, a driver for King Cab, vaguely remembers Chris Stone, E.J. Stevens and John Hartman getting in his taxi at Noah's Rainbow Inn. He recorded his arrival at 1:12 a.m. and delivered the boys to E.J.'s house [downtown](#) shortly thereafter.

E.J. said he asked them if they wanted to stay the night.

"Chris could have stayed at my house, and John, he could have stayed at my house too, but he said he had a house just down the street," said E.J. The two declined the offer and started down the street.

"Airport Access Way and Laurene," said Stone in court, describing where he and Hartman split up, "and he went left towards I believe it's Gaffney, and I went right towards South Cushman." Stone said he was headed to the El Sombrero, a Mexican restaurant where his mother sometimes tended bar.



©UAF Journalism Department
The El Sombrero restaurant, where Stone said he went after splitting up Hartman



©Kelly Moore
The corner of 9th and Barnette, where Hartman's
beaten body was found

Fairbanks Memorial Hospital.

Melissa Stevens, E.J.'s mother, disagreed, saying that Hartman and Stone turned right together. "That's what I didn't understand. I don't think John had plans to go home," she said. "Yeah, they were going the other way. I just seen 'em turn towards the El Som [El Sombrero]."

"Something happened, with Chris," she told Gary Moore in 2003. "Chris knows. I know he know -- more."

No one claimed to see Hartman for the next hour and a half. A passerby noticed Hartman's body lying half in the street and called 911 at 2:50 a.m. Paramedics were at the scene at 2:53 a.m.

"Patient supine with leg pants around knees up on sidewalk, upper torso in street," reads the prehospital report.

"Approximately 20cc blood under patient's head. Pupils bilaterally dilated, unreactive to light. Patient displaying decerbrate posturing."

Hartman died the next day at