

# St. Johns County Sheriff's Office Teams with Othram to Identify a 1985 Homicide Victim

After nearly four decades, a murdered woman, whose remains were found in a shallow grave in Crescent Beach, Florida, has been identified as **Mary Alice Pultz of Maryland**.

Solved



## Summary

In April 1985, the remains of an unidentified individual were discovered in St. Johns County, Florida. Deputies with the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office responded to the scene in Crescent Beach and located human remains buried in a shallow grave. Evidence collected at the burial site suggested that the remains had been buried for several years. It was determined that the remains were that of a white female between the ages of 30 and 50 years at the time of her death. The circumstances surrounding the discovery suggested that the woman's manner of death was homicide.



Between 2011 and 2012, renewed efforts on the case resulted in the University of South Florida developing a forensic composite of how the victim may have looked like during her life. Traditional DNA testing was performed and details of the case were entered into the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) as UP3036. These efforts resulted in several leads over the years, however the woman could not be identified.

In 2022, investigators with the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office attended a cold case homicide class in Orange County, FL where forensic genetic genealogy (FGG) was discussed. Believing this case may be a candidate for FGG, investigators secured funding in hopes that advanced DNA testing could help develop new leads about the woman's identity.

In 2023, the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office submitted evidence to Othram in The Woodlands, Texas. Othram scientists successfully developed a DNA extract from the forensic evidence and utilized Forensic-Grade Genome Sequencing® to build a comprehensive DNA profile for the homicide victim. Othram's in-house forensic genetic genealogy team then used the profile in a genealogical search to produce investigative leads in the case.

Equipped with these new leads, St. Johns County Sheriff's Office investigators launched a follow-up investigation. This investigation led to possible relatives of the woman. Reference samples were collected and compared to the unknown woman's DNA profile. This investigation and reference DNA test led to the identification of the woman as Mary Alice Pultz of Maryland. Mary Alice's family revealed to investigators that they lost contact with her around 1968 and rumors had spread

over the years that she may have been killed by her boyfriend in either Florida or Georgia. Mary Alice's loved ones finally know the whereabouts of their loved one after all these years. Mary Alice's only surviving sibling, who is now 72 years old, told investigators that she thought she would die without knowing what became of her older sister.

An investigation into Mary Alice's murder is ongoing. Anyone with information about Mary Alice Pultz should contact St. Johns County Sheriff's Office at 888.277.TIPS or send a text message to Tip231.