

NEW HAVEN

East Haven police identify victim of 1975 cold case homicide

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EAST HAVEN, Conn. (WTNH) — East Haven police announced a major breakthrough Monday in a 1975 cold case homicide.

A woman found bound, gagged and wrapped in a tarp in a drainage ditch along Frontage Road on Aug. 16, 1975, was known as Jane Doe for 48 years.

East Haven Police Capt. Joe Murgo said the woman was positively identified as Patricia Meleady Newsom last week.

“We can finally give Jane Doe her name back,” Murgo said at a press conference Monday.

Murgo said Newsom was born in Idaho Falls, Idaho, in June 1957. She moved to the east coast in the late 1960s with her family. In 1972, police said Newsom attended a boarding school in the Monticello, New York, area but ran away from the school with a friend with the goal of reaching Maine. The friends likely hitchhiked, but Murgo said it’s unclear if they ever made it to Maine.

Murgo said Newsom was never seen or heard from again. Investigators want to speak with the friend she allegedly ran off with and identify the boarding school Newsom attended in Sullivan County, New York.

Mary Ann Newsom Collette was just 9 years old when her sister ran away from school. Newsom was found dead just after her 18th birthday.

Last June, crews exhumed a body from the State Street Cemetery in Hamden, thinking that it was Jane Doe, but it turned out to be the remains of a man.

After receiving better information on where she was buried, crews exhumed her body in July 2022. Murgio said new DNA technology linked Jane Doe to Newsom Collette's DNA in a nationwide database.

"Relief. The relief. Just, just tremendous," Newsom Collette said. "I always knew in my heart she was gone. I always knew and just knowing other people care. There was another side looking, and I can bring her home. She will be put with my mom. It would mean everything."

Investigators are still searching for Newsom's killer.