

Ventura County Medical Examiner's & Sheriff's Office Team with Othram to Identify 2001 John Doe

After 23 years, the remains of a man discovered in Los Padres National Forest in Ventura County, California have been identified as **Paul James Jepson**, born July 26, 1959.

Solved

Summary



In December 2001, the remains of an unidentified individual were discovered by hikers in Ventura County, California. The body of a man was found floating in the Sespe Creek located in the Los Padres National Forest near Fillmore. The man was between thirty and sixty years old at his time of death. He had a red-brown moustache, a six-inch-long red brown beard, and long, dark red-brown hair that was 20 to 24 inches long. The man was 6'4" tall and weighed 248 pounds. Several personal belongings were found alongside the man's remains including various articles of clothing and a pair of black, wire rim eyeglasses.



The man could not be identified, and his manner of death was listed as undetermined. It was estimated that only weeks had passed between the man's death and the time that his remains were found. In 2007, details of the case were entered into the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) as UP560. To help visualize the man's appearance during his life, a forensic composite was developed and released to the public. Despite efforts to identify the man, no leads yielded a match and the man's identity remained a mystery.

In 2023, the Ventura County Medical Examiner's Office, working with Ventura County Sheriff's Office, submitted forensic evidence to Othram, in The Woodlands, Texas, to determine if advanced DNA testing could help identify the man. Othram scientists successfully developed a DNA extract from the forensic evidence, and then used Forensic-Grade Genome Sequencing® to build a comprehensive genealogical profile for the unknown man. Othram's in-house forensic genetic genealogy team then used this profile to conduct extensive genetic genealogy research, ultimately providing new investigative leads to law enforcement.



Using this new information, a follow-up investigation was conducted leading investigators to potential relatives of the man. Follow-up DNA testing was performed, leading to the positive identification of the man as Paul James Jepson. Jepson was born July 26, 1959 and had not been in touch with his family since the mid-1980s. No further details regarding Jepson are available at this time.

Funding for the advanced DNA testing and forensic genetic genealogy used in this case was provided by NamUs, a national clearinghouse that assists the criminal justice community with the investigation and resolution of missing, unidentified, and unclaimed persons cases across the United States and its territories. NamUs is

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