

Romeoville Woman's Body Identified After 43 Years

Six months after Delores Griffin vanished, her husband took his own life.

By [Shannon Antinori](#), Patch National Staff | Mar 11, 2019 12:41 pm ET | Updated Mar 11, 2019 1:15 pm ET



Delores Griffin's disappearance remained a mystery for more than 40 years. (Photo via Shutterstock)

ROMEOVILLE, IL —A family's search for answers is over more than four decades after Romeoville mother Delores Griffin vanished from her Hillcrest Drive home. Remains

found in a Michigan pond shortly after Griffin, 34, disappeared have been positively identified as the missing woman. The discovery comes nearly six years after Griffin's daughter reached out to Will County officials to learn more about what happened to her mother.

"I always knew somehow I would find her," daughter Sheila Henson told the Herald-News. "I wanted justice for my mom."

Henson was [13 when her mother vanished](#). Her sister was 10 and her brother just 7 when they came home that Friday to find that their home in the 700 block of Hillcrest Drive was empty and their mother's brand-new car was gone.

That night, the three children stayed with a relative. Their father returned the next day, covered in mud, then showered and burned his clothing and shoes before he took the children to the Romeoville Police Department to report their mother missing, according to the report.

The children eventually moved to Kentucky to live with their grandparents. Six months after Henson's mother vanished, her father, Frank E. Griffin, was found dead in his car in the family's garage. The only suspect in his wife's disappearance, his death was ruled a suicide.

The Doe Network — an international volunteer organization devoted to assisting investigating agencies in bringing closure to national and international cold cases regarding missing and unidentified people— had this to say about Delores Griffin's disappearance:

Delores Raye Jones Griffin shared a home with her husband and three children in Chicago, Illinois. Her husband was extremely abusive and may have been selling drugs at the time of her disappearance. Griffin was not very social was very protective of her children. She made all of their clothes and rarely left the house, though she did have a job for a short time at *WESCOM* in Downer's Grove.

On the day of her disappearance, the children arrived home from school to find the doors locked and their mom's 1975 gold *Monte Carlo* with a creme-colored

top gone. The children went over to the neighbor's house to see what was going on, and the neighbors said that they had earlier saw the childrens' father carrying out a large metal trash can and putting it into the trunk of the car.

The father was gone for 22 hours, then came back home covered in mud and acting strangely. When the children asked him where their mother was, he told them to get inside the house.

Afterward, he burned all of the clothes he had been wearing that day.

In the following weeks, his behavior became more bizarre. He cried all the time and could not sleep in his own bedroom. He committed suicide six months later.

Henson reached out to the Will County coroner's office and Romeoville police in June 2012, looking for answers about her mother's disappearance. She and a relative also submitted DNA to their local authorities in Kentucky, hoping to link an unsolved case with Delores' disappearance.

In November 2013, a case was entered into the National Missing and Unidentified Missing Persons System (NamUs) regarding the remains of a woman found decades earlier in Monroe County, Michigan.

In October 1975, a body was found floating in a lagoon at Sterling State Park. Police in Michigan took fingerprints and other evidence, including fingernails, hair and a silver wedding band, according to Bedford Now. Police knew the woman had been murdered; she had been stabbed in the chest and severely beaten. Her fingerprints were taken to a lab in Detroit, but no match was found. The case remained cold for more than four decades.

That's until police in Michigan got a call from former Michigan State Police forensics expert Lori Bruski, who now works in the missing persons bureau at North Texas University. Bruski noticed that Delores Griffin's disappearance happened shortly before the body was found at Sterling State Park, some 300 miles from Romeoville.

DNA taken from the victim's hair was a match for the DNA collected from Henson and her relative. The match was confirmed on Jan. 18.

Henson, now 56, told Bedford Now she is relieved for herself and her grandmother — Delores' mother, who is now 99 years old.

"I wanted this for my grandmother," Henson told the outlet. "[I wanted this so badly](#). I wanted this for my whole family. My mother was my best friend."

Delores Griffin's body will be brought to Kentucky, where a service for her will be held March 16, according to the Herald-News.

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