

Murder of Brenda Gerow

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Brenda Gerow



Gerow as she appeared in the photograph in possession of John Kalhauser

Born	Brenda Marie Gerow February 18, 1960 [cite source] Nashua, New Hampshire, United States
Disappeared	July 20, 1980
Status	Identified after 34 years
Died	c. April 6, 1981 (aged 21) Tucson, Pima County, Arizona, United States
Cause of death	Homicide by ligature strangulation
Body discovered	April 8, 1981
Other names	Pima County Jane Doe
Known for	Formerly unidentified victim of homicide

Height	5 ft 2 in (1.57 m) (minimum) and 5 ft 3 in (1.60 m) (maximum)
Weight	100 lb (45 kg) (minimum) 110 lb (50 kg) (maximum)

Brenda Marie Gerow (/dʒɜːroʊ/), previously known as **Pima County Jane Doe**, was a formerly unidentified **American** murder victim who was found on April 8, 1981. In late 2014, a photograph of a facial reconstruction of the victim was made public.^[3] She was buried under a headstone with the placeholder name of "Jane Doe" with the phrase "UNK - 1981"^[4] Gerow's body remained unidentified for thirty-four years until it was announced that her remains had positively been identified.^{[5][6][7][8][9]}

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Disappearance and murder[edit]

Gerow, the oldest of her siblings, disappeared in July 1980 after leaving with John "Jack" Kalhauser, her boyfriend at the time. She had worked at a convenience store as well as a bartender at an establishment in Dracut, Massachusetts, often frequented by bikers. She remained in contact with family and had at one time called home stating she would be returning, yet she never did.^[10]

The body of a white female was found in the desert on April 8, 1981 in **Tucson, Pima County, Arizona**, near Houghton Road and **Interstate 10**.^[11] Her remains were found by hunters driving in the desert who saw a jacket hanging from a tree and then looked through the area and discovered her body lying on the ground.^{[4][12]}

The victim was a young adult, between eighteen and twenty-two years of age.^[13] The autopsy determined she died one-and-a-half to two days before her body was discovered and cause of death was strangulation by **ligature**. She had been severely beaten in addition to being sexually assaulted.^{[3][4][12][14]} When found, her body was in an advanced state of decomposition rendering her facially unrecognizable and her eye color undetermined. The pathologist who examined her was able to determine she had a light skin complexion as well as long, light brown to blond hair. The victim also had a noticeable white spot on one of her upper front teeth.^{[11][15]} She was approximately five feet two to five feet three inches and weighed around 100 to 110 pounds at the time of her death.^{[4][13]} Additional evidence at the scene may have been blown away due to winds.^[10]

Her body was clothed in denim jeans, white socks with pink **pom poms**, a white bra, blue underwear, brown suede shoes and unique blouse that was a dark blue and had "puffy reddish-colored sleeves" with a flower design.^[11] A denim jacket was found hanging in brush near the body.^[12]

Investigation[edit]



Forensic facial reconstruction of the victim created by the [National Center for Missing & Exploited Children](#)

The crime scene was photographed and law enforcement flew over the area to take further photographs and to find any additional clues.^[4] Body decomposition was not advanced enough to completely alter her fingerprints, which were eventually taken. Dental information was obtained along with, years later, her DNA.^[11] A DNA profile from another individual was extracted from her clothing in 2006 which allowed for a DNA profile of a potential suspect to be created after the sample analysis was completed in 2007.^[3] At the time the victim was found, authorities in Tucson were unable to obtain fingerprints. In an effort to obtain her fingerprints, the victim's hands were removed from the body and sent to the [FBI](#). While the FBI had been successful in getting fingerprints from the victim, they were not a match to any missing persons on file or to anyone arrested for a crime. The case was compared to several missing person cases but all were ruled out.^{[4][11]}

To investigators, the style of some of her clothing suggested she could have been involved in the local county fair which had occurred at the time of her murder.^{[4][14]} Images of the victim's clothing have been featured on websites, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children posters, and in various news reports, in an effort to identify her.^[16] The victim had been walking or running through a wooded area before her death, as scratches on her body suggested.^{[4][14]}

A "crude" sketch was created of the victim at the time initially following her discovery. It was released to the public on television and in the newspapers, yet the victim was not recognized by anyone in the area.^[10] After a 2012 exhumation of the body, the victim's face was digitally [reconstructed](#) after her skull was examined via a [CT scan](#). The scan was sponsored by the [National Center for Missing & Exploited Children](#) in order to create an approximation of facial features and appearance when the victim was alive.^{[17][18]}

Different theories regarding the life and demise of the victim existed. Investigators theorized she was a runaway as a child before she became an adult, had possibly been estranged from family, had been murdered elsewhere and [dumped](#) at a new scene, or had hitchhiked to Tucson from another location.^{[4][14]}

Later efforts and identification[\[edit\]](#)

In 1995, while "building a case" against Kalhauser for assault charges, a photograph of a young woman with light hair holding a bouquet was found in his possession.^{[19][20]} In late 2014, police announced that they believed the photograph was connected to the case of Pima County Jane Doe and quickly released it to the public.^{[21][22]} The woman in the photo was stated to resemble the victim's reconstruction and her physical description. The photograph is believed to have been taken between

1979 and 1981, also fitting the time frame in which Jane Doe was found.^[22] Kalhauser refused requests from the authorities to identify the woman in the photograph.^{[23][24]}

The then-unidentified woman's photograph was circulated to the public in late 2014 after authorities made the connection between it and the reconstruction.^[23] Authorities noted that the background scenery appeared to be from somewhere in the Eastern part of the country, most notably at a former camping area in Tyngsboro, Massachusetts.^{[19][25]} On December 23, 2014, her brother, Bill Gerow, Jr, received a notification from police that the female in the picture could be his sister.^[26] Gerow hadn't been seen since 1980 after she left the state voluntarily with Kalhauser, with whom she was in a relationship at the approximate age of 20 years.^[20] She had reportedly met her accused killer while at a nightclub.^[23] She had never explained the reason for her departure, although her family did believe she had "run off."^[19] Her brother stated that she had called him around two to three weeks afterwards while residing in New Mexico. After this occasion, she was never heard from again, although her family continued efforts to locate her. The victim could not have officially been reported missing due to being over the age of 18 and that she had apparently left on her own accord.^[26]

Kalhauser has past ties to Arizona and is believed to have murdered his wife, Diane Van Reeth in 1995; he was living under an assumed name at the time of his wife's death.^[23] Van Reeth's body has never been found, yet he was later convicted in 1999.^{[5][20][23]} Other events in Kalhauser's criminal history includes being convicted for the 1974 murder of Paul Chapman and being indicted for the attempted murder of a man in 1979. Following his indictment for the 1979 case, Kalhauser [jumped bail](#) and fled after being released from jail.^[23] Kalhauser currently is serving twenty years in Massachusetts after his conviction of second-degree murder.^{[19][20][25]}

On September 28, 2015, information was released that the body of the unidentified victim was formally identified as Gerow in April 2015 and her body would be returned to family members.^{[5][25][27]} The identification was made through comparison of the family's DNA compared to that of the victim.^[16] Gerow's father, William Sr., stated he did not understand any possible motive for the death of his daughter.^[19] Kalhauser is considered a person of interest in the murder since the photograph was discovered and police have also asked for information regarding him as well as the victim during the two decades of her life.^{[23][25]} After the family received the remains of the victim, the body was cremated.^[26]

In 2017, Gerow's and Van Reeth's cases were featured on the second episode of *Who Killed Jane Doe* on [Investigation Discovery](#). Her brother and father provided interviews.^[10]

See also^[edit]

- [List of people who disappeared mysteriously](#)

References
