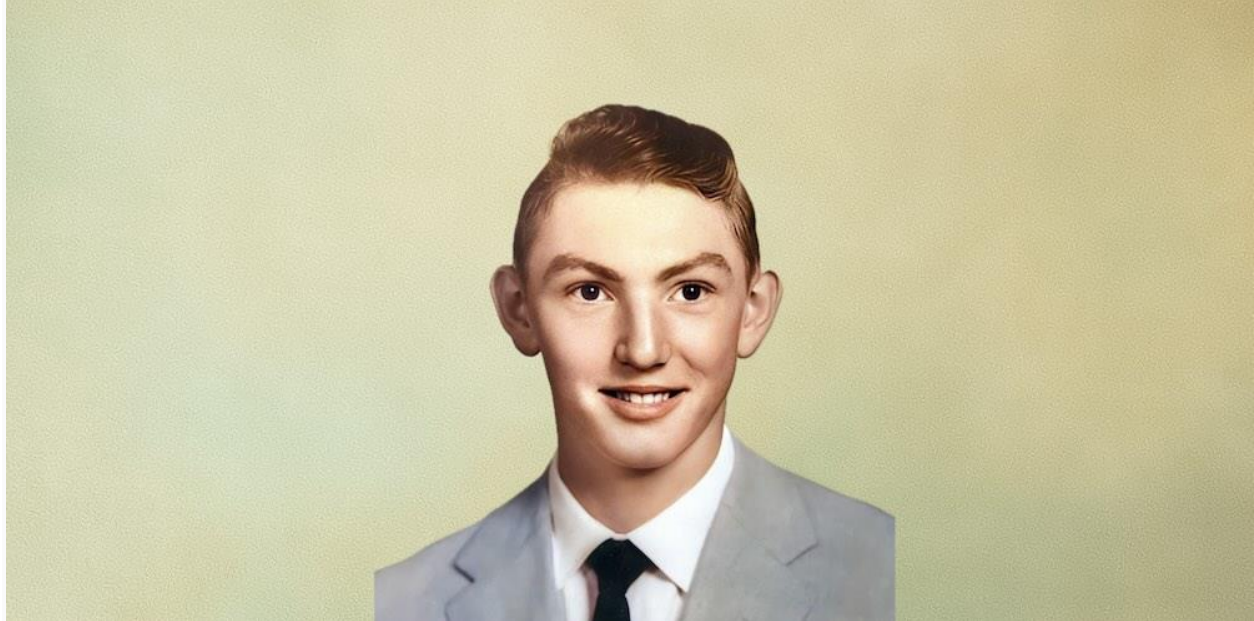


Tarrant County Medical Examiner's Office Teams with Othram To Identify a 1987 John Doe

After 38 years, a man whose remains were found in Tarrant County has been identified as **Shirlee Lewis Henkel**, born in 1942.

Solved



Summary

In October of 1987, the remains of an unknown individual were found in Fort Worth, Texas, a city in Tarrant County. Prior to his death, the man had been living in a night shelter, using a fake name to obtain food and medical treatment. He was 6'1" and was about 150 pounds. Investigators estimated that the man, who had died five days prior to his body being found, and was between 25 to 40 years old. He was found with a watch and a distinctive ring, but officials could not identify him.

Officials launched an investigation to determine the man's identity, including the release of a sketch of what he looked like while he was alive along with photos of the watch and ring. However, the man could not be identified and in 2008 the details of the man's unidentified person case were entered into the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) as UP4087.



In 2024, the Tarrant County Medical Examiner's Office sent forensic evidence to Othram's laboratory in The Woodlands, Texas in hopes that advanced DNA testing could help identify the man. Othram scientists produced a suitable DNA extract from the remains. A comprehensive DNA profile was then developed for the man using Forensic-Grade Genome Sequencing®. Othram's forensic genetic genealogy team then conducted a genealogical search that resulted in new leads, which were provided to law enforcement.

These leads enabled a follow-up investigation, allowing investigators to identify potential relatives of the man and it was determined that the unknown man was identified as Shirlee Lewis Henkel who was born on August 14, 1942. Henkel was a veteran of the U.S. Air Force who was born in Deloit, Iowa. In 1994, his family held a funeral for him with a gravestone in Saint Clair Cemetery in Ute, Iowa.

The name "Shirley" or "Shirlee" was among the top 1,000 names for newborn American boys between 1880 and 1957, although it was more commonly given to girls. As a name for males, its popularity peaked in 1935, less than a decade before Shirlee Henkel was born.

The identification of Shirlee Lewis is the 19th case in Texas where officials have publicly identified an individual using technology developed by Othram. Visit [DNASolves](https://www.dnasolves.com) to learn about other Texas cases.