

Live Oak County cold case solved after nearly 42 years

- Janet Cunningham
- Jul 16, 2026

LIVE OAK COUNTY — A 42-year-old cold case has been solved through the efforts of Sheriff Larry Busby, the Live Oak County Sheriff's Office and the University of North Texas Center for Human Identification.

The case began on Nov. 6, 1984, when the Live Oak County Sheriff's Department received a report of human remains found on a ranch about 12½ miles south of George West near U.S. Highway 281. The skull had a large hole, indicating severe trauma and suggesting the case was a probable homicide.

The individual had been dead for several weeks. The only evidence recovered included pieces of clothing and a gold Bulova Accutron Railroad Approved wristwatch. After an extensive investigation by Sheriff Busby, Chief Deputy David Brice and Texas Ranger Glenn Krueger, investigators were unable to identify the victim, and no leads emerged regarding the death.

Nearly five years later, in hopes that forensic analysis would provide additional clues, the sheriff and Texas Ranger Kasey King transported the remains to Southwest Texas State University in San Marcos. Dr. David M. Glassman, associate professor of physical anthropology, conducted the study and submitted a forensic report on Nov. 1, 1989. His findings concluded that the cause of death was either a gunshot wound or blunt-force trauma to the head. Investigators suspected the victim may have been involved in a drug deal gone bad.

The remains were returned to evidence storage, and the case remained unsolved for nearly 35 more years.

With advances in technology and grant funding to support additional testing, Sheriff Busby took the remains to the University of North Texas Center for Human Identification in July 2024. There, DNA and anthropological analyses were conducted. The DNA profile was then entered into the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS), the FBI's nationwide DNA database used to solve crimes, identify suspects and link cases across jurisdictions. Although the new testing offered hope, Busby was advised that results would take time because of the number of cases awaiting analysis.

As the new year began in 2026, the sheriff's office was contacted by the Fort Worth Police Department. Live Oak County Investigator Dan Caddell was informed that the University of North Texas had identified the remains as Thomas Frank Scott Jr., who had been living in Fort Worth in 1984. Scott had been reported missing on Nov. 29, 1984, by his sister, Sheryl Byerley, also of Fort Worth.

Shortly afterward, Sheryl (Byerley) Boynton contacted Sheriff Busby, initially uncertain whether the remains truly belonged to her brother. "We discussed at length how and where we discovered the remains," Busby said. "She gave me details of her knowledge of his disappearance."

Still not completely convinced, she asked Busby to describe the watch found with the remains.

"I advised her it was a gold Bulova Accutron Railroad Approved wristwatch with a gold Twist-O-Flex band," Busby said.

That detail confirmed for her the remains were her brother's. Busby said, "His father worked for the railroad and had given the watch to him." Busby also learned that Thomas Frank Scott Jr. had been living with his sister's family in Fort Worth after being released from reform school.

Boynton and her daughter, who now live in Florida, retrieved Scott's remains in Fort Worth before visiting Busby on May 27, 2026. He took them to the location where the remains had been discovered, and they expressed their gratitude for his persistence in identifying her brother.

With the victim now identified, the case officially becomes a murder investigation. This leaves only one unidentified victim in Live Oak County's cold-case files.

Sheriff Busby continues to investigate the case known as "Jane Doe," whose body was discovered in 1980. Henry Lee Lucas, who claimed to have killed hundreds of people, may have been responsible for her death. Although DNA testing has not produced a match in that case, Busby remains committed to finding answers as forensic technology continues to advance.

https://www.southtexasnews.com/the_progress/live-oak-county-cold-case-solved-after-nearly-42-years/article_00f08622-26eb-4a88-a0ef-e8f088daa3bb.html