

Fairfax County Police Department Partners with Othram to Identify 1993 Jane Doe

Sharon Kay Abbott Lane was last seen in 1987, but her remains were not found until 1993 and she was not identified until 2022

Solved

Summary



In December 1993, landscape workers in Centreville, Virginia discovered a woman's skeletal remains in a shallow grave. Detectives gathered evidence from the scene they believed belonged to the victim, including jewelry, deteriorated clothing, a red comb and a yellow barrette. The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner determined she suffered several stab and knife wounds to the upper body. Investigators were able to determine that the unknown woman was between 28 and 39 years old and stood between 5' and 5'3" in height. Her hair was described as fairly thick, and dark blonde to light brown in color. Investigators also noted that the dental care that the woman had received was relatively poor, as many of her teeth were in an advanced state of decay. Additionally, several discs in her back were herniated.

There has been strong national and local interest in identifying the woman over the decades since her remains were discovered. Many news outlets covered the grisly finding and subsequent investigation. The case was featured on the inaugural episode of *The New Detectives*, which aired in 1996. The forensic reconstruction was also shown on display in the Fairfax County Sheriff's Office on *Cold Case Files* in the episode titled "A Knock at the Door."

For decades, law enforcement diligently pursued various leads about the woman's identity. Her body was examined by Smithsonian anthropologists, and in 2011, the

case was entered into the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) as UP8493. Despite exhaustive efforts, the woman's identity has remained a mystery. With few leads for investigators to pursue, the case eventually went cold.

In 2022, the Fairfax County Police Department, as part of an ongoing collaboration, partnered with Othram to use advanced DNA testing to generate new leads in the case. Skeletal remains were sent to Othram's lab and a DNA extract was developed. Forensic-Grade Genome Sequencing® was utilized to build a comprehensive DNA profile. Othram's in-house genealogy team used genetic genealogy to produce investigative leads, which were returned to law enforcement. Detectives from Major Crimes Bureau Cold Case Squad pursued the leads, found potential relatives, and used confirmation DNA testing to determine that the unidentified woman was Sharon Kay Abbott Lane. The casework was funded by a DNASolves Crowdfund and the Othram team is grateful to everyone that contributed much needed resources.

Sharon was last heard from around 1987 and was believed to be living in Fairfax County. Approximately 3-4 years later, her late father received an anonymous phone call from a woman stating his daughter was dead. Sharon would have been 34 at the time her remains were found.

"The tragic death of Sharon Kay Abbott Lane is now closer to being solved with the help of advanced DNA testing," said Major Ed O'Carroll of the Major Crimes, Cyber and Forensics Bureau. "Our detectives will use this new information to continue to seek justice for the victim in this case. We encourage anyone who may have known Sharon or her associates to contact our detectives."

Detectives continue to ask for help in solving this murder. If you knew Sharon, our detectives would like to hear from you. Tips can be submitted anonymously through Crime Solvers by phone – 1-866-411-TIPS ([866-411-8477](tel:866-411-8477)), and by web – Click www.fairfaxcrimesolvers.org. Download the 'P3 Tips' App "Fairfax Co Crime Solvers".

Victim specialists from our Major Crimes Bureau's Victim Services Division have been assigned to this case to ensure Sharon's family is receiving appropriate resources and assistance.