

# Bullhead City Jane Doe 1989

Success Stories

## DNA Doe Project helps to identify Jane Doe found in Arizona in 1989 Woman found on vacant lot identified as **Sonya Alice Langan**

For nearly four decades, investigators have searched for the identity of a young woman whose remains were discovered buried in a vacant lot. Today, the Bullhead City Police Department, the Mohave County Sheriff's Office, and the DNA Doe Project have announced that she has finally been positively identified as Sonya Alice Langan.



Sonya Alice Langan

On May 15, 1989, a construction crew discovered skeletal remains buried in a vacant lot on Castleberry Lane in Bullhead City, Arizona. Investigators determined the victim was a young woman between 17 and 19 years old, and evidence indicated she had been deceased for two to ten years prior to her discovery, placing her date of death as early as 1979. A bullet recovered from her skull confirmed the case as a homicide.

The young woman had shoulder-length brown hair that may have been partially bleached, and she wore a distinctive multicolored owl earring. She had also received extensive dental work in her life; two of her upper teeth were missing and had been replaced by a partial denture plate. Despite decades of extensive investigative efforts, her identity remained a mystery and the case went unsolved.

The turning point came in 2024, when the Mohave County Sheriff's Office Special Investigations Unit approached the Bullhead City Police Department with the opportunity to secure federal grant funding for forensic genealogy testing. Once approved, the funds allowed evidence to be submitted to the DNA Doe Project, a non-profit organization whose expert investigative genetic genealogists work to identify John and Jane Does. In late 2025, researchers successfully developed a 99% match, finally restoring Ms. Langan's name.

"This case came with its own complexities," said team leader Eryk Jan Grzeszkowiak. "Sonya Alice Langan's ancestry included French Canadian endogamy, and one of her grandparents was recorded as having 17 children. We are truly honored to have been able to restore her name through IGG."

The DNA Doe Project is profoundly grateful to the groups and individuals who helped solve this case: the Bullhead City Police Department, and the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC), who entrusted them with the case; SIU Investigator Lori Miller with the Mohave County Sheriff's Office; Anthropologist Dr. Bruce Anderson with the Pima County Medical Examiner's Office; GEDmatch Pro and FamilyTreeDNA for providing their databases; the generous donors who supported this initiative; and the DNA Doe Project's dedicated teams of volunteer investigative genetic genealogists who work tirelessly to bring all Jane and John Does home.

### **Description:**

On May 15, 1989, a construction crew discovered skeletal remains buried in a vacant lot on Castleberry Lane in Bullhead City, Arizona. Authorities believe the young woman was between 17 and 19 years old, and could have died as early as 1979. She had shoulder length brown hair that may have been partially bleached. Jane Doe had extensive dental work; two of her upper teeth were missing prior to her death and had been replaced by a partial denture plate. She wore a multicolored owl earring.

**NamUs ID:**

UP11987

**Date Body Found:**

May 15, 1989

**Race:**

White/Caucasian

**Sex:**

Female

**Estimated Age:**

17-19

**Estimated PMI:**

Years

**Agency of Jurisdiction:**

Bullhead Police Department

Investigator Christina Cortese

928-763-9200

ccortese@bullheadcityaz.gov

**More Information:**

<https://www.doenetwork.org/cases/software/main.html?id=1329ufaz>

<https://websleuths.com/threads/az-bullhead-city-whtfem-up11087-17-19-shallow-grave-vacant-lot-purse-clothes-may89.204960/>

[https://unidentified-awareness.fandom.com/wiki/Castleberry\\_Kate](https://unidentified-awareness.fandom.com/wiki/Castleberry_Kate)

<https://storiesoftheunsolved.com/2020/03/29/castleberry-kate/>