

19-year Collier County mystery solved as drowned man's fingerprints match

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Collier County Sheriff's Office recovered a body 19 years ago and identified Edward L. Richard in November after his military fingerprints matched in November.

Nearly two decades after deputies pulled a man's body from the Gulf of Mexico, his family finally answers.

The Collier County Sheriff's Office announced Monday they have identified the man as Edward Lorenz Richard of Spencer, Mass. He was 49.

On May 3, 2002, deputies responded to reports of a body floating near shore about 1.5 miles north of Doctor's Pass.

The District 20 Medical Examiner had classified the death as undetermined and there was nothing to indicate any person contributed to Richard's death, a news release noted.

The body had no identification and detectives began the investigation.

Detectives compared fingerprints through the Florida Department of Law Enforcement database and the National Automated Fingerprint Identification System several times over the following years.

They also entered the man into a nationwide system for unidentified remains.

The National Missing and Unidentified Persons System eventually picked up the man's DNA profile and dental information along with fingerprints and a composite sketch.

The agency also added the case to its website detailing ongoing missing and unidentified persons investigations.

Then, on Nov. 23, Richard's Armed Forces fingerprint card from Nov. 15, 1972, matched.



An artist's rendition depicts Edward L. Richard. Collier County Sheriff's Office recovered a body 19 years ago and identified after his military fingerprints matched in November.

Richard's fingerprints had been placed into his military personnel file and maintained in the Department of Defense's National Archives.

Through a collaboration between the FBI Laboratory Latent Print Unit and the FBI CJIS Special Processing Center, unidentified persons record prints retained in the NamUs data base have been made available to the FBI for comparison to archived fingerprint cards.

Detectives found Richard's brother and adult son in Massachusetts the following day.

Family members said Richard left Massachusetts by bus and headed to Florida about 20 years before his 2002 death. Richard had given all of his identification cards to family and they had not heard from him since.

This article originally appeared on Naples Daily News: [19-year Collier mystery solved as drowned man's fingerprints match](#)