

Will County Coroner's Office Teams up with Othram to Identify a 1974 John Doe

After nearly a half century, the unknown man, found in a wooded area near Channahon, has been identified as Army vet Donald M. Rozek of Harvey, Illinois

Solved



Summary

In November 1974 hunters stumbled upon the discovery of skeletal remains in the creekhead of a partially wooded area in Channahon, IL. There was a crop field in the area and a motel near I-55 and I-80. Based on the advanced stage of decomposition, investigators estimate that that the unknown man's death could have occurred up to two years prior to his discovery.

Investigators estimated that the unknown man was Caucasian and likely 35-55 years old (at time of death) and around 5'10" tall. He was found wearing a black sweater, size 31 blue jeans, and brown Builtrite size 9 work boots. The man had extensive dental work performed likely within weeks of his death. Few other details are known about the man and the circumstances of his death.



Over the years many tools were utilized to attempt and identify the unknown man. This includes anthropological analysis, CODIS testing, and forensic facial reconstructions. The case was also entered into the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) as UP5212.

In June 2021, the Will County Coroner's Office, as part of an ongoing collaboration with Othram, submitted skeletal remains to Othram's lab. Othram's scientists used Forensic-Grade Genome Sequencing® to build a comprehensive DNA profile. Othram's in-house genealogy team used this profile to conduct genealogical research and develop investigative leads. The costs associated with Othram's laboratory testing and genealogical research were funded through a DNASolves crowdfund.

Othram returned leads to the Coroner's Office and the investigation continued. Discussions with potential family members and confirmation DNA testing eventually revealed that the unknown man was Donald M. Rozek of Harvey, Illinois. Rozek would have been in his early 30s at the time of his death. He also appears to have been an Army veteran.

Donald's cause of death is still unclear and the Coroner's and Sheriff's Office are continuing the investigation into what has happened. If anyone has information that could aid this investigation, they are encouraged to contact the Will County Coroner's Office at [815-727-8455](tel:815-727-8455). Please refer to medical exam case number UN 74-01, Sheriff's case number 74-313-03, or NamUs ID UP5212.

Othram expresses gratitude to everyone that helped support the DNASolves crowdfund campaign for this case.