

She was not trash': Boone County officials identify teen dumped along I-65 in May 1992

Lenny Sniegowski has spent the past 30 years wondering what happened to his sister. During that time, his family has held out hope that "Maggie" was alive somewhere.

"We're not quitters," Lenny Sniegowski said. "We did not have a funeral. I travel all over the world now and I always thought maybe I would run into my sister."

Using advances in DNA technology, the Boone County Sheriff's Office announced Wednesday that a teen whose body was found on the side of a highway in 1992 was identified as Margaret Ann Sniegowski Jr.

"He found my little sister on the side of the highway discarded like a piece of trash," said Lenny Sniegowski through tears. "She's no longer that. My family is grateful for everyone that looked, worried, searched, cared and cried for my little sister over these years as if she was your own little sister."

Margaret Ann Sniegowski Jr., who went by Maggie, was found at the bottom of an embankment near an on ramp to I-65 northbound from State Road 47 by a local farmer on May 3, 1992, in Boone County.

At the time she was 17 years old, still in high school and lived with her family in Toledo, Ohio. Margaret Ann Sniegowski Jr. was the youngest of eight siblings.

Lenny Sniegowski said he is not sure how his sister ended up in Central Indiana. She never took any of her things from the family's home before she went missing, he said.

The investigation has now turned from attempting to identify the teen to finding her killer or killers, said Boone County Sheriff Mike Nielsen.

“Anybody that knows my family, knows we don't forget,” Lenny Sniegowski said. “These guys (the Boone County Sheriff's Office) are coming after you. She was not trash. She was a beautiful, loving, funny, upbeat person who didn't deserve this.”

How was Margaret Ann Sniegowski identified?

One of Margaret Ann Sniegowski Jr.'s sisters submitted her DNA to the biotechnology company 23andMe for ancestry testing because she was curious about her family tree, Lenny Sniegowski said.

This was key for investigators when it came to using new DNA technology to identify Margaret Ann Sniegowski Jr.

In November 2021, a potential identification was established using DNA from the body. The sheriff's office spent weeks researching the identity and possible family members to create a family tree.

A potential brother and sister of the teen were contacted to obtain DNA for kinship testing. The results came back in January and the teen was positively identified.

“If you think there's a possibility that someone is still alive or maybe died a long time ago and you just don't know about it then do this,” Nielsen said. “Go submit your DNA, put it into that database and help solve these crimes.”

Nielsen thanked two Boone County residents who assisted in the case and made a monetary donation so that it could be solved.

“The cost of running an investigation like this and sending testing to multiple places gets very expensive,” Nielsen said. “We've done it with very limited tax dollar funds, but we couldn't have done it without their help.”

How was the teen killed?

Decades later, Margaret Ann Sniegowski Jr.'s cause of death is still unknown.

The original autopsy was conducted by forensic pathologist from Indiana University and her original cause of death was undetermined, said Boone County Coroner Justin Sparks.

The coroner's office still has all the documents, evidence and photos from when Margaret Ann Sniegowski Jr. was found dead and will conduct a forensic review to see if new technology can determine her cause of death, Sparks said.

The Boone County Sheriff's Office continues to work with the Toledo Police Department and other agencies across the state and country to solve the case, Nielsen said.

Investigators believe Margaret Ann Sniegowski Jr. was dead for around three days before her body was found. There was indication she may have been strangled, Nielsen said.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

VIOLENT CRIMINAL APPREHENSION PROGRAM

VICAP ALERT
UNIDENTIFIED VICTIM - BOONE COUNTY, INDIANA
Attention: Homicide, Missing Persons and Crime Analysis Units



Unidentified Female
Recovered: May 3, 1992
Race: White
Sex: Female
Age: 17 - 22 years-old
Height: 5'6"
Weight: 130 pounds
Hair: Brown, Red, Reddish Brown, Auburn (Shorter than collar length)
Eyes: Unknown
Clothing: Light green tank top and anklet socks.
Features: Tattoo - "MOM" upper right arm; Tattoo - A cross and "LOVE" on right breast; Cross on webbing between the index finger and thumb on right hand.
NamUs: UP#10749
Agency Case #:

On Sunday, May 3, 1992, the victim's remains were discovered laying along the eastside of the northbound entrance ramp from Indiana State Road 47 to Interstate 65. The victim was only wearing a light green tank top and light green anklet socks. The victim is believed to have died three to five days prior; however, the cause of death could not be determined. Foul play is suspected due to the condition of her recovery. For additional information and photographs regarding this victim, refer to the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) database, case report number UP# 10749.

At this point, investigators are not sure if Margaret Ann Sniegowski Jr.'s death could be linked to other cases.

“We don't know but we are looking into all of those,” Nielsen said. “We have been for many, many years so that is not something new. We've been looking into a lot of those possibly related cases.”

At a press conference earlier this month, the Indiana State Police identified the man dubbed the “I-65 Killer” as Harry Edward Greenwell and linked him to the murders of three women who worked at hotels in Indiana and Kentucky in the late 1980s.

“We made a promise 30 years ago that we would find out who she (Margaret Ann Sniegowski Jr.) was,” Nielsen said. “We kept that promise and we will keep the promise moving forward. We will find out who is responsible (for her death) and we will bring them to justice.”

Donnie Lawson, who is now a Boone County commissioner, was the farmer who found the teenager's body.

“At that point when I found her and called the sheriff and all the crew to come in, I knew there was another point to this, but I didn't know what it was,” Lawson said. “Now I do. It's (Margaret Ann Sniegowski Jr.'s) family here.”

Lenny Sniegowski thanked investigators and said it was a happy day for his family to finally know what happened to his sister, despite his tears.

“The thing that stings the most about this... other than the fact that she's not here, is that my parents didn't get the closure while they were alive,” Lenny Sniegowski said. “My mother lived with it for the rest of her life.”

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