

HUNTSVILLE

Huntsville Police identify remains found in 2008 as Texas native, Vietnam vet

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HUNTSVILLE, Ala. (WHNT) — The Huntsville Police Department’s Cold Case Unit has identified human remains found in 2008 as a Texas man, who was a Vietnam War veteran.

According to the Huntsville Police Department (HPD), the remains were identified as **Ralph Eric Hatcher** of Texas. Hatcher reportedly last contacted his family in 2002, when he was 52 years old.

The remains were found by a team of surveyors in a thickly wooded area off Old Highway 20 in Huntsville-annexed Limestone County in 2008. At that time, HPD shared information with the public about personal belongings found in the area, including a lighter, binoculars, pocketknife, prescription glasses and a fleece jacket in hopes of identifying the remains.

HPD’s Cold Case Unit began using advanced technology in its attempt to identify the remains in May 2021.

Cristy Kissel, a forensic genealogist with Ceartas Forensic Services, conducted genealogy and familial searches to help investigators obtain a “more robust” DNA profile.

On July 17, 2023, the unit received confirmation from the FBI DNA lab that the remains matched Hatcher. HPD said his relatives were contacted and they are now coordinating the returns of his remains.

Authorities say no foul play is suspected in the case, and it is now closed.