

‘Strangled at O’Hare:’ Kenosha County officials identify John Doe

from 1988 homicide investigation

POSTED 10:32 AM, JULY 17, 2019, BY [KASEY CHRONIS](#), UPDATED AT 05:34PM, JULY 17, 2019

KENOSHA COUNTY -- After going unsolved for more than three decades, state-of-the-art technology helped Kenosha County authorities break the case involving a John Doe homicide victim from 1988. Authorities announced during a new conference on Wednesday, July 17, that the man was positively identified as Robert Lyle Schwartz -- born Jan. 16, 1944.

When a highway survey crew discovered his decomposed body in a shallow grave in Pleasant Prairie, there was no way of knowing his identity would take decades to uncover.

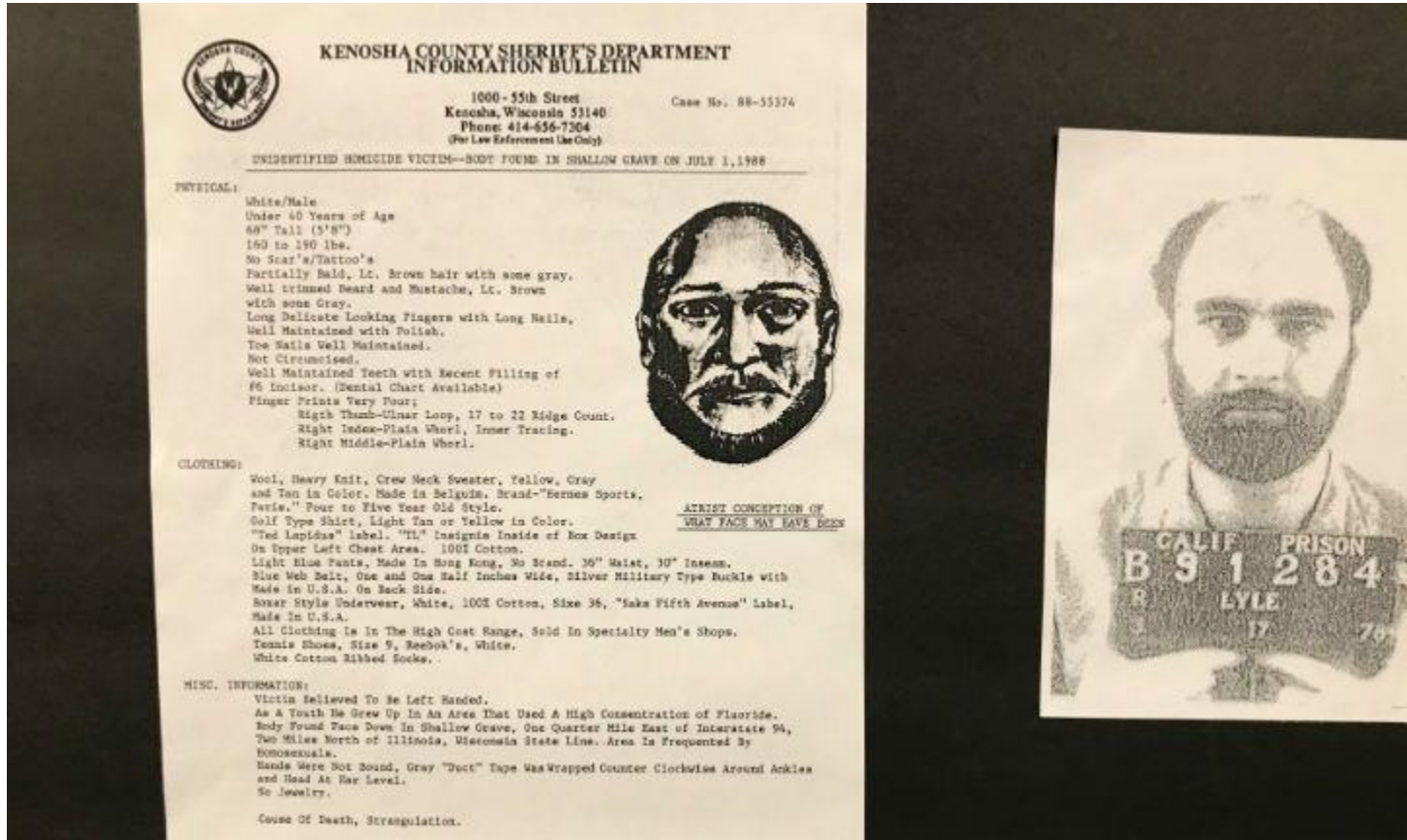
"It bothered me," said Larry Lapoint, original case detective.

In July of 1988, "John Doe's" body was discovered near I-94 East Frontage Road -- and the present day Highway 165. His death was ruled a homicide by strangulation.

"We just kept hitting the bricks, trying to find out what happened," said Lapoint.

Detectives produced a sketch of what they believed he looked like, but with no missing person's report ever filed -- and tips that didn't pan out

-- the case went cold. That's until 2017, when new fingerprint technology became available.



Robert Lyle Schwartz

"The Wisconsin State Crime Lab then analyzed those prints, and made the positive identification of Robert Lyle Schwartz," said Kenosha County Medical Examiner Patrice Hall.

Authorities spent two more years putting the rest of the pieces together. The only picture they located of Schwartz alive is a California booking photo, where he served time for grand theft.

Relatives confirmed to authorities Schwartz went missing in the late 80s, but "believed his lifestyle had caught up to him."

"When I spoke with the family, they described him as a con artist," said Hall.

Relatives said Schwartz sold shares of silver bullion for phony certificates.

The day Schwartz was killed, authorities say he had flown into Chicago O'Hare International Airport.

"We believe he was strangled in one of the parking structures at O'Hare and transported up here and buried," said Kenosha County Sheriff David Beth.

It is believed Schwartz didn't have any ties to the area. Still, after all these years, the case was important to close.

"Being able to give somebody their name back is beyond gratifying for me," Hall said.

Authorities said they identified a suspect in the case, but he died during the investigation. They are not releasing his name yet.

Meantime, the Kenosha County Medical Examiner said she was optimistic the technology used to crack this case would help solve others.

"The sheriff's department makes every effort to investigate all crimes, but these cold case unsolved homicides are particularly significant to the victim's families and our department," said Sheriff David Beth. We

continue to look for new technology and techniques to resolve these cases. The sheriff's department will continue to strive for the closure of the remaining cold cases.”