

Kentucky State Police Teams with Othram to Identify a 1980 John Doe

After 43 years, the remains of an unidentified man found on the north side of the Ohio River, is now known to be 40-year-old Kenneth Linville.

Solved



Summary

In September 1980, skeletal remains from an unidentified man were found on banks of the Ohio River, in Switzerland County, Indiana. A few month later, in November 1980, skeletal remains were found, again by the Ohio River, this time in Carroll County, Kentucky. Decades later in 2005, DNA testing would connect the cases, establishing that the recovered skeletal remains belonged to the same person.



Although DNA testing connected the remains to the same person, traditional forensic techniques did not enable investigators to determine who the person was. A forensic sketch was developed for the unknown man, in hopes that someone might recognize him. The case was added to the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) as UP104. There were few clues to work from and with leads exhausted, the case eventually went cold.

In 2023, the Kentucky State Police submitted skeletal remains to Othram in The Woodlands, Texas. Othram scientists successfully developed a DNA extract and then used Forensic-Grade Genome Sequencing® to build a comprehensive DNA profile for the man. Othram's in-house forensic genetic genealogy team used the profile in a genetic genealogy search to develop new investigative leads that were returned to investigators.

Using these new leads, Kentucky State Police investigators conducted a follow-up investigation and met with a potential relative of the unidentified man. The follow up investigation combined with additional DNA testing, established that the remains from 1980 belong to Kenneth Linville, born December 3, 1939.

Mr. Linville was from Bethal, Ohio. He was institutionalized for a number of years. Investigators believe he was in and out six times, beginning in 1969, and that he was last discharged on August 22, 1980, mere weeks before his remains were found. The cause and manner of death are unclear at this time and an investigation into the circumstances surrounding his death continues. This is an ongoing case and we will provide updates as they become available.

The casework costs associated with Othram's testing and investigative research were contributed by Project Justice, a philanthropic effort to reduce the backlog of unsolved cases. We are grateful for the funding which allowed us to assist law enforcement in working this case and many others.