

Missing for 30 years, Michigan man was John Doe in Arkansas

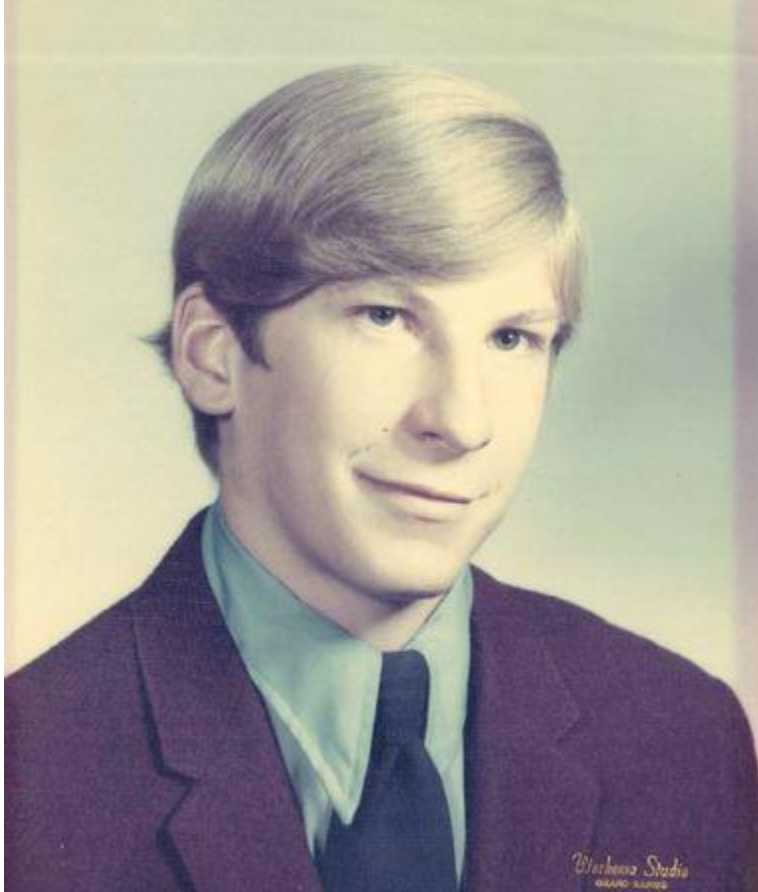
[Print Email](#)



By [Al Jones | ajones5@mlive.com](#)

[Follow on Twitter](#)

on December 27, 2016 at 9:45 PM, updated December 28, 2016 at 1:16 PM



Chuck Cornell was last seen by his mother and sister in April of 1986. Courtesy of Michigan State Police

BATTLE CREEK, MI - The family of a Michigan man who has been searching for him for 30 years is finding some closure Tuesday after DNA from a cold case investigation in Arkansas matched DNA provided recently by them.

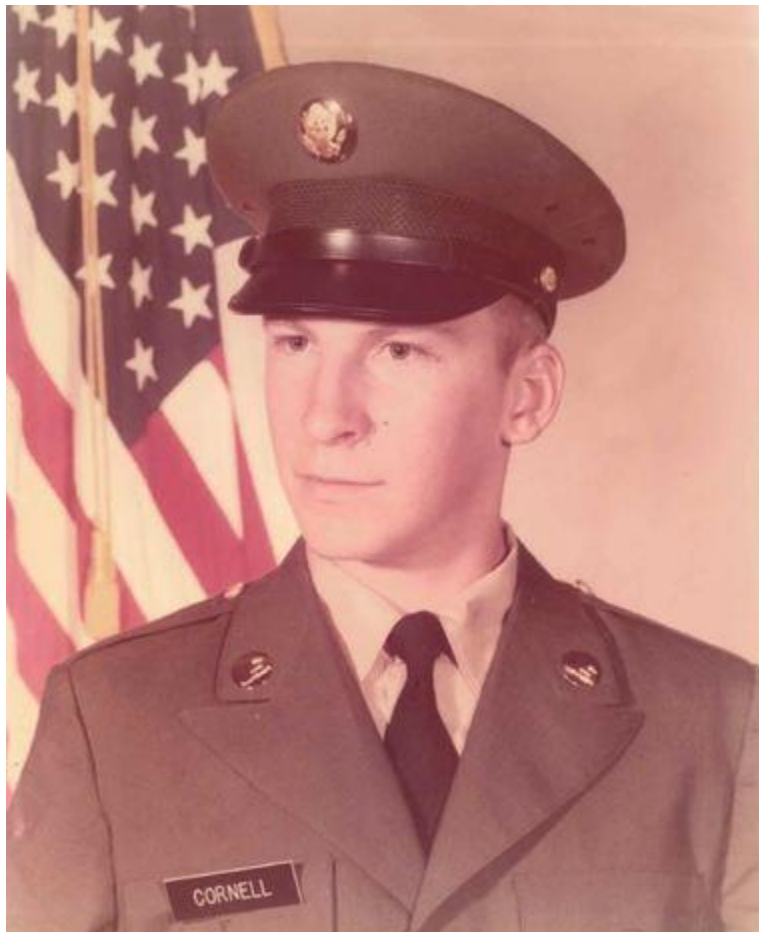
Investigators working with lab analysts were able to match DNA obtained from the family of Charles Raymond Cornell in Michigan to that of a man who Arkansas police had not been able to identify since he was killed in a traffic accident more than 27 years ago.

Cornell, better known as Chuck, was from the Cedar Springs area of Kent County and relocated to Battle Creek after graduating from Cedar Springs High School and serving four years in the U.S. Army.

"He moved to the Battle Creek area," said Michigan State Police Detective Sgt. Denise Bentley. "He just chose to be on his own and we don't know why he ended up in Arkansas."

He fell out of touch with his family, she said, and his mother and sister said they last saw him in 1986 at a family gathering on his 30th birthday.

"He lost touch with his family and they didn't have any idea where he was," Bentley said. "He's basically been a missing person for 30 years."



[Police start painstaking search for man who disappeared 30 years ago](#)

He vanished without a trace.

She said that after months and no word from him, Cornell's mother Hattie Cornell, of Rockford, and his sister Susan Ward, who lives on the east side of the state, drove to Battle Creek but found no sign of him at his apartment.

To them, the apartment appeared to have been vandalized, which they reported to police. Officers apparently looked into the vandalism without ever creating an official missing person report, however. That matter did not surface until May, when Hattie Cornell and Ward discovered a missing person complaint had never officially been filed.

The case found its way to detective Bentley's desk in June. She took DNA samples from Cornell's sister and mother and sent them to the University of North Texas, which processes DNA for the national DNA database CODIS (the Combined DNA Index System). It is the FBI's support program for criminal justice DNA databases.

She spent the last few months searching databases and records to find the missing man. That ended on Dec. 23, when the results of the DNA database search were returned and indicated a match with those of a man killed in a truck-pedestrian accident on May 24, 1989, in Ashley County, Ark.

Police there said the man was walking along Arkansas Highway 52 when he was struck and killed by a tractor-semitrailer truck.

"The semi driver never saw him," Bentley said. And, "He had no ID on him. He has been a 'John Doe' all these years."

Ashley County is in the southeast corner of Arkansas, about as close to Shreveport, La., and Jackson, Miss., as it is to Little Rock, Ark.

Police were not able to enter the crash victim's DNA into the national database until DNA technology evolved and such resources became available in 2009.

Guy Hughes, a retired forensic investigator for the Ashley County Sheriff's Office in Arkansas, who has been working on the case since 2009, tweeted his delight at having the John Doe case resolved. He wrote: "Over the Christmas holiday, I received one of the most heartwarming and rewarding gifts an investigator could ever ask for. ... I received notification on Friday, Dec. 23, 2016, that John Doe has been positively identified through Mitochondrial DNA to his biological mother and sister as Charles Raymond Cornell, age 33, from Cedar Springs, Mich. Mr. Charles Cornell's family has a been notified by Michigan State Police."

He thanked several investigators and researchers from organizations in Arkansas, Texas and Michigan, including Bentley.

Based at the Michigan State Police Post at Rockford, she drove to Cedar Springs on Tuesday to report the results to Cornell's mother.

"It brought closure to the family," Bentley said. "It didn't bring the closure I wanted. I was just hoping to find him."

Source:

http://www.mlive.com/news/kalamazoo/index.ssf/2016/12/missing_for_30_years_michigan.html

Doe Network Case: 1890UMAR