

Body found in Kentucky River believed to be one of three people killed in 1973 crash

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LEXINGTON, Ky. (WKYT) - The identity of a body found in the Kentucky River five years ago has been released.

Coroner Gary Ginn says the body has been identified as Martha Smith Helmick, of Bridgewater, Va. The remains are connected to a decades-old missing person case:

The Fayette County Coroner's Office says Martha's remains were found inside a car in the river, near the Kentucky River Valley Ferry, back in October 2016, by the Lexington Fire Department's dive team during a training dive.

"It was a pile of rubble. you could not tell that was a car," Ginn said.

According to the coroner, Martha is one of three people believed to have been killed in a crash into the river back in 1973.

We're told Martha was traveling from Virginia to Kentucky for a family reunion in Jackson County with her sister, Flora Helmick, and John Keyton, who was driving, but the trio never arrived.

"What we think probably happened was, he drove down there, it was dark, the water was glistening, the water was probably black," Ginn said.

Flora's and John's remains have still not been found/identified.

Martha's remains will be returned home to Virginia where she will be laid to rest next to her husband. Helmick's family requested Ginn and Warren escort her body home.

Ginn credits modern technology, the resources of our fire and police departments, and the hard work of Lexington Fire Dept. Capt. Chris Warren for the positive identification of Martha.

source: <https://www.wkyt.com/2021/12/22/live-coroner-identify-body-pulled-kentucky-river-2016/>