

After 18 years, Grants Pass woman finds sister was murdered in 1999 cold case

by Genevieve Grippo
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A Grants Pass woman is left with unanswered questions after her sister was identified as the victim in an 18 year old cold case. (Chastity Pinedo)

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GRANTS PASS, Ore. — It was eight months ago that a Chastity Pinedo received a mysterious message from an Arizona detective about a cold case dating back to 1999.

A DNA revealed the victim in the case was her sister.

The case dates back almost two decades when a woman's body was found in Yuma, Arizona.

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Her face had been shot at close range, leaving few distinguishing characteristics. That's except for an unfinished tattoo on her right ankle that read, "Angel Baby."

For the next 18 years, detectives would use that phrase when referring to the Jane Doe-- not knowing it contained a significant clue to her identity.

Thanks to advancements in forensic technology, law enforcement reopened the case. That's when Angel Baby's fingerprints led them to Pinedo.

"It was through Messenger on Facebook, so I thought it was a hoax," said Pinedo, remembering the first contact she received from Yuma Police. "I thought somebody was messing with me. They just said I needed to contact them about a case they were working."

After Pinedo called the department, investigators asked if she knew someone named Angel McAlister.

"I said, 'Yes, that's my older sister and she's been missing for 18 years.'"

Shortly after, Pinedo, her younger sister, and her mother underwent a DNA test to confirm that the body belonged to McAlister. Six months later, the test came back with a 100 percent match-- a revelation that brought nearly two decades of searching to a halt.

"I knew in my heart, my grandma knew in her heart, that something bad had happened," said Pinedo. "We just didn't know where to look."

McAlister's body currently lies in an unmarked grave in an unfamiliar city. Pinedo says the family had no ties to Arizona, and it's unclear why McAlister was there at the time of her death.

Now, her family is seeking justice for the missing person case turned to murder.

"It would give me peace," said Pinedo. "Just to be able to look the person in the face and just see them, and let them know what they took from me and me family. It would give me peace."

Pinedo and her two sisters grew up part-time in Grants Pass before they foster care separated them as teenagers. The two younger siblings stayed in Oregon, while McAlister was relocated to southern California.

"She was spunky, she was beautiful. She was just amazing all around," said Pinedo. "We all had our issues from the things that happened in our childhood, and we all had to make it through that. But she was the strong one that held us together."

After turning 18, Pinedo says McAlister left her foster home to find her sisters. The murder happened just two months later and has yet to be solved.

Pinedo says detectives advised her against moving the 18-year-old grave back to Oregon, but she wants to do what she can to say her goodbyes.

"I just want to be able to go there and sit there for a minute, even if it's just to cry," said Pinedo. "Most people get to go to their siblings' or family members' graves and put flowers on them and stuff. I'm over 900 miles away. I don't get that luxury."

Pinedo says she's on a low income, and can't afford an immediate trip. She plans on traveling to Yuma on McAlister's birthday in August. She wants to honor her sister's memory with a candlelight vigil and proper headstone-- a goal she says is dependent on whether or not she can find the money.

A GoFundMe has been created to help with the expenses.

If you would like to donate, you can reach Pinedo's GoFundMe by clicking [here](#).