

Cold case murder victim identified as grandmother, DA officials hoping ID leads to suspect

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Using genealogy, the Santa Clara County District Attorney's Cold Case Unit has identified a woman whose dismembered torso and religious pendants were found in a San Jose field in 1981.

The woman is **Vivian Moss**. She was 54 years-old at the time of her murder.

Cold Case team members and Moss's surviving family are hoping the identification will lead them to Moss's killer. They are asking the public to come forward with any new information about Moss and her tragic fate.

The DA's Office [featured the case in a video](#) released in October 2023, hoping someone could identify her.

District Attorney Jeff Rosen said: "Vivian Moss was her name. My Office knows it. I know it. Her family knows it. And now our community knows it. One day soon, I hope we will know the depraved person who took her life

and left her in a field, hoping she would be forgotten. If her murderer is still alive, they will know that we don't forget in Santa Clara County."

The Cold Case Unit was established in 2011. Since that time, the DA's Office has solved over 30 cold case murders committed as early as 1969. More than half of those cases have been solved since 2018 due to advances in DNA analysis at the District Attorney Crime Lab. The DA's Office has solved six cold case homicides with the use of forensic genealogy.

On July 11, 1981, the dismembered torso of a woman was found by San Jose Police in an empty field where the VTA Berryessa Transit Center and BART Station parking structure is now located. She had no identification, but two religious pendants were found near her body. Her death was ruled a homicide from multiple stab wounds to the chest and dismemberment.

In 2023, the DA's Office partnered with forensic genealogists at Parabon NanoLabs to identify the woman. Last year, Parabon hypothesized that the victim was likely Moss, who was born in Arkansas in 1927. In 2024, DA investigators located and interviewed Vivian Moss' granddaughter. She told investigators that when she was a young girl in the early 1980s, Vivian was supposed to pick her up to stay the night at her home. Vivian didn't show and she never saw her grandmother again.

In 2024, the DA's Office concluded that the victim was Vivian Moss based on Parabon's genealogical testing comparing the granddaughter's DNA to crime scene evidence.

Vivian was a follower of the Mt. Zion Spiritual Church. Family members say she was close to the church's leader, Louis H. Narcisse, who died in 1989. She may have worked at an elementary school in Oakland at some point before she disappeared.

If anyone has any information about Moss or her murder, please call (408) 792-2466 or email coldcasetips@dao.sccgov.org.

