

# Human remains just identified as New Jersey teen who went missing in 1972



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NEW JERSEY (WABC) -- Human remains discovered decades ago have just been identified as a teenager who went missing in New Jersey after Easter Sunday in 1972.

Nancy Carol Fitzgerald, 16, disappeared on April 3 and was never seen or heard from again.

After an extensive investigation involving interviews and DNA analysis, it was announced Monday that remains found near the Henry Hudson Bike Trail in Atlantic Highlands in the '80s belonged to Fitzgerald.

"Today's announcement marks the culmination of decades of hard work by a network of individuals whose collective determination and ingenuity proved inexhaustible," Monmouth County Prosecutor Raymond S. Santiago said. "In addition to being a testament to their efforts, it's also reflective of our firm commitment to uncover the truth and serve the interests of justice, regardless of how much time has passed or what investigative obstacles might ever stand in the way."

The skeletal remains were found during a community cleanup event on Dec. 10, 1988, but officials were not able to determine the identity of the remains.

However, years later, the case started to come together when in 2020, Monmouth County officials contacted a DNA analysis firm in Virginia to conduct a forensic genealogical review of the Jane Doe case with more advanced technology than was previously available.

That resulted in the identification of a distant relative in Georgia. That relative agreed to an interview and uploaded DNA from her mother into a database which led officials to the identification of another lead: a woman living in Pennsylvania believed to be Jane Doe's younger sister.

Officials say that woman was interviewed in August and also agreed to provide a DNA sample. In November, the sample indicated a 99.9997% probability of an immediate family match to Jane Doe.

The new information was reviewed by the deputy medical examiner with the Middlesex Regional Medical Examiner's Office who made the official identification in the case.

Fitzgerald's known surviving relatives were notified and her remains will be transferred to them for burial.

"While we are certainly encouraged that the identification was made, solving a 50-year-old mystery, this is ultimately a puzzle that will remain unfinished until we locate the final missing piece: the circumstances behind Nancy's death," Prosecutor Santiago said. "To that end, we are urging anyone who may have any information about this matter whatsoever to come forward and tell us what they know. Ms. Fitzgerald's peers would all likely be in their 60s today, so we firmly believe that it is not too late to determine what happened to her and why - and, if possible, to hold any living person who may be responsible accountable for it."

Anyone with information about Fitzgerald is urged to contact MCPO Detective Raynor at 800-533-7443 or Atlantic Highlands Police Department Lt. Michael Zudonyi at 732-291-1212.