

Human Remains Found in 1982 Have Been Identified



Jack Clawson, circa 1981. Photo courtesy of the Clawson family

SWEETWATER COUNTY — Human remains found near Granger in 1982 have been identified as belonging to a man who disappeared in 1981 while traveling back to his home in Missouri after visiting family in California.

The Sweetwater County Sheriff's Office (SCSO) announced today that the remains, known to investigators over the years only as "Pipeline Pete," have now been identified through DNA testing as those of Jack Clawson, of Sedalia, Missouri.

Family members lost contact with Clawson after a visit with him in Fremont, California, in July of 1981. Clawson was supposed to return home to Missouri for a hunting trip with friends, but days later when he never showed up, Clawson's family reported him missing.

Over a year later, in August of 1982, Clawson's remains were discovered by a group of pipeline surveyors in the remote desert near Granger, south of Interstate 80. Though his identity was unknown and indeterminable at the time, an investigation and autopsy revealed no signs of foul play, and it was believed Clawson likely died months earlier (during the winter months) from exposure.



This is an original Sweetwater County Sheriff's Office photo of the scene where Jack Clawson's remains were recovered.

With no way to positively identify Clawson's remains or otherwise connect the missing person report from California to the discovery a year later of unidentified human remains in southwest Wyoming, for Sweetwater County detectives, the case of "Pipeline Pete" soon grew cold.

In May of 2011, in an ongoing effort to solve a handful of historical cases involving unidentified human remains (including the case of Christine Thornton, 28, of San Antonio, Texas who was killed by the infamous Dating Game Killer, Rodney Alcala), sheriff's detectives, with the help of forensic analysts at the state crime lab, submitted biological samples to the University of Northern Texas Health Science Center in Fort Worth, Texas for possible identification through mitochondrial DNA analysis. In March of 2023, they finally received a positive match to Clawson.

"A final resolution of this case for Mr. Clawson's family would not have been possible without the incredible technological advancements in forensic analysis and the outstanding teamwork of everyone involved including our lead detective, Stephanie Cassidy, the University of Wyoming Department of Anthropology, the Wyoming State Crime Lab, and the University of Northern Texas Health Science Center," Sheriff John Grossnickle said.