

Detectives ID man who was swept over the falls in 1990

- [BY RICK PFEIFFER rick.pfeiffer@niagara-gazette.com](mailto:rick.pfeiffer@niagara-gazette.com)
- Apr 3, 2024



A view of Niagara Falls from Prospect Point.
Matt Winterhalter

SCRIBA — A more than 23-year-old mystery has now been solved by a group of determined cold case law enforcement investigators and the ever-evolving capabilities of DNA analysis.

The mystery began on April 8, 1992, when a man walking his dog in the town of Scriba, near the city of Oswego, discovered the decomposed body of what appeared to be a man, washed on the Lake Ontario shoreline. The skeletal

remains offered few clues for investigators from the Oswego County Sheriff's Office.

A county medical examiner determined that the person had died between six months and five years earlier.

The investigators searched through local missing persons cases but found no leads from them. The investigation went cold.

Two years before the remains were found, Brian Nisbet had joined the New York State Park Police as a parole officer. By 2008, he had risen through the ranks and become a detective assigned to the Niagara Falls State Parks barracks.

As a detective, Nisbet, now retired after more than a 30-year career, would spend much of his time investigating the fate of people believed to have entered the Niagara River rapids and then been swept over the falls.

In 2008, a DNA profile of the remains discovered in 1992 was uploaded to the national Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) database, but it generated no known connections. The case remained cold.

In 2018, Nisbet said he reopened an investigation into the disappearance of a Buffalo man, Vincent C. Stack, who was believed to have gone missing from the Falls State Park, on or around December 4, 1990.

Nisbet also began work with the Niagara Regional Police Service in Ontario as he worked through his missing persons cases. By April 2022, Nisbet said he

had begun working with Regional Police Detective Constable Sara Mummery on a number of disappearances, including the Stack case.

At that same time, the Oswego County Sheriff's Office's investigators renewed their efforts to identify the 1992 remains, and contacted Mummery to compare their case with unsolved cases in Canada.

Just before he retired, Nisbet said he and Mummery obtained a DNA sample from family members of Stack and entered the sample analysis into the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NAMUS) database.

"I remember going down to their repair shop in Buffalo and taking the (DNA) swabs and submitting them into NAMUS," Nisbet said.

In February, that new DNA sample was found to be what is known as "a familial match" to Stack's DNA.

"There was no way to solve this case other than DNA," Nisbet said.

Investigators now believe that Vincent Stack went into the rapids in the Falls State Park on or around December 4, 1990, and his body was then swept over the falls. Over the course of the next 16 months, his remains traveled approximately 15 miles to the mouth of the Niagara River and then more than 130 miles across Lake Ontario, before being discovered by the dog walker on the shoreline outside of Oswego.

Oswego County Sheriff's Office investigators said they traveled to Buffalo to personally tell Stack's family that his remains had been identified. The

investigators also expressed their thanks to Nisbet and Mummery for obtaining the additional DNA samples and for being “a driving force in bringing closure in this case.”