

Butte County Sheriff's Office exhumes body, positively identifies man in 1969 cold case

OROVILLE — The body of a man who died in Butte County in 1969 has been positively identified through DNA samples, the Butte County Sheriff's Office announced in a press release Thursday.

After a citizen contacted the Sheriff's Office in November 2019 regarding a 1969 cold case, detectives researched the case and determined that an unidentified male died in 1969 as a result of a collision involving a train. Detectives in 1969 were unable to identify the man.

Through the Doe Network, a volunteer organization that assists investigating agencies worldwide in bringing closure to cold cases involving missing and unidentified persons, the citizen obtained information about this particular missing person case.

Through the detectives' research, they determined the body of the unidentified man buried was likely Marvin Price McMullen, of Florida, who was born in 1931 and was believed to be traveling around California in 1969. Through communications with McMullen's family, detectives were able to obtain DNA samples from one of McMullen's relatives.

On May 2, after receiving a permit from Butte County Public Health two weeks earlier, the Sheriff's Office, along with forensic anthropology professors from Chico State and Butte County Public Works personnel, exhumed the body of the unidentified man.

The body was transported to a local funeral home and DNA samples were collected for testing and comparison to other DNA sample.

DNA from McMullen's family and from the unidentified male were transported and processed at the California Department of Justice DNA lab in Richmond. The Sheriff's Office received the results in July, and based on the analysis, confirmed and positively identified the man as McMullen.

McMullen's remains were subsequently released to his family.

The release also noted that the Butte County Public Guardian's Office assisted McMullen's family with expenses for the burial.

