

Mesa County Sheriff's Office and Mesa County Coroner's Office Partner with Othram to Identify a 1992 John Doe

Thirty years later, the male homicide victim has positively been identified as 26-year-old Etus Thomas "ET" Romero.

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Summary

On November 28, 1992, unidentified human remains were discovered near the Walker Wildlife area, off River Road. These remains were missing the skull and were decomposed. The remains showed evidence that the unidentified male had been the victim of a homicide by stabbing.

For the nearly thirty years since the discovery of the man's remains, investigators diligently pursued various leads, in hopes of uncovering his identity. In January 2011, the case was entered into the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs). The case is logged as UP8361. However in spite the investigative effort, all leads were exhausted and the case went cold.

In 2022, the Mesa County Sheriff's Office collaborated with Othram to determine if advanced forensic DNA testing could help establish an identity for the man or a close relative. A DNASolves crowdfund was created to cover the costs associated

with laboratory testing and genetic genealogy research. Thank you to everyone that helped fund this case.

Skeletal evidence was sent to Othram's lab in The Woodlands, Texas, where forensic scientists developed a DNA extract and used Forensic-Grade Genome Sequencing® to build a comprehensive DNA profile for the unidentified man. Othram's in-house genealogy team used forensic genetic genealogy to produce investigative leads that were returned to the Mesa County Sheriff's Office. A further investigation by Mesa County Sheriff's Office Investigators found a potential sibling to the unknown man. The sibling agreed to share consumer DNA data that was then compared to the unknown profile using Othram's KinSNP® analysis, which confirmed a sibling relationship.

The male homicide victim has positively been identified as Etus Thomas "ET" Romero. ET was 26 years of age at the time of his death. ET Romero was a military veteran and had a tattoo of the initials "ET." Etus was a resident of New Iberia, Louisiana. In February 2023, Mesa County Sheriff's Office Investigators traveled to Louisiana and learned that Etus had reportedly traveled with two other persons from Louisiana to Grand Junction, CO around October 1991. He had lived in a home on 4th Street, between Ute and Pitkin Avenues; this house no longer exists. He also reportedly worked as a dishwasher at a local restaurant. Investigators believe Etus Romero was killed during the summer of 1992.

Anyone with any information regarding this case is encouraged to contact Investigator Pete Burg at [970-244-3263](tel:970-244-3263) or Investigator Anthony West at [970-244-3270](tel:970-244-3270).