

## Body of woman reported missing in 1990 found in pond

*Posted: Jul 23, 2015 4:21 PM CST Updated: Jul 23, 2015 5:26 PM CST*

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NORTH FORT MYERS, FL -

A family finally knows what happened to their loved one 25 years ago.

Rita Sue Zul was reported missing on January 15, 1990. Zul left the restaurant she worked at driving her boyfriend's red Datsun, but never made it home.

On Monday, that car was pulled from the bottom of a pond near Bayshore Road and State Road 31.

The car was barely recognizable after years of being underwater. The Lee County Sheriff's Office spent three days working to confirm the connection between the car, the remains and the missing 1990 missing person case.

A man searching for another missing person's vehicle made the discovery.

"I used a fishing pole with a magnet. [It's] one way to locate any kind of metal objects in the pond," said Scott Dunlap of Cape Coral.

When Dunlap found one in the water, he sent his friend David McCauley down to check it out.

"His eyes were about as big as quarters. He came up and said it really is a car," said Dunlap.

Once a tow truck pulled it out, they found human skeletal remains inside. That quickly made it a Major Crimes investigation -- one with its own major challenges.

"With this vehicle here, it's been in there for so long the metal's degraded," said Sergeant John Desrosier with the Lee County Sheriff's Office.

The VIN numbers are missing, the license plate deteriorated and all of the major identifiers are impossible to make out.

"We actually had to tear this car apart, find unique numbers on the engine block and other numbers we were able to verify," said Sgt. Desrosier.

While the sheriff's office worked to confirm the car was the one Rita Sue Zul was last seen in, the Medical Examiner was tasked with confirming the identity of the remains.

"We're using x-rays from 25 years old dental x-rays to compare to what we found to say this is that person we've been looking for," said Sgt. Desrosier.

It's bringing an end to a case and an answer to a family who waited so long to know what happened.

"It's good for us to be able to provide that type of closure for them. It's been a long time coming," said Sgt. Desrosier.

"We're sad about the outcome for both families obviously. But closure is closure," said Dunlap.

Dunlap, who made the discovery, is planning to create a team to search other waterways in Southwest Florida in an effort to bring closure to other families.

As for this case, the sheriff's office says foul play is not suspected in Zul's death. But they do hope to figure out how she ended up in the water.

Source: <http://www.nbc-2.com/story/29619967/body-of-woman-reported-missing-in-1990-found-in-pond#.VbFmP-hVhHw>

Doe Network Case File 2620DFFL