

Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office Teams with Othram to Identify a 1985 John Doe

After nearly forty years, an unidentified man whose remains were discovered in 1985 near Gibsonton, Florida has been identified as U.S. Navy veteran **Charles Allen Ray**, born in 1936.

Solved

Summary



In May 1985, the remains of an unidentified male were discovered in a vacant lot near Gibsonton, Florida. Gibsonton is located on the Tampa Bay in Hillsborough County. The Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office responded to the scene. It was determined that the man was between the ages of 40 and 60 years at the time of his death. He was likely 5'6" to 5'10" tall. Investigators also found several articles of clothing and other personal items at the scene.



A forensic composite was developed and released to the public in hopes that it would generate leads about the man's identity. Details of the case were entered into the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) as UP207. Despite investigators efforts, the man could not be identified, and the case went cold.

In 2023, the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office teamed with Othram to determine if advanced DNA testing could help to identify the man. Skeletal remains were sent to Othram's laboratory in The Woodlands, Texas. Othram scientists successfully developed a DNA extract from the skeletal evidence and used Forensic-Grade Genome Sequencing® to develop a comprehensive DNA profile. Othram's in-house forensic genetic genealogy team then used the profile in a genealogical search to generate new investigative leads.

Using these new leads, investigators initiated a follow-up investigation which led them to possible relatives of the unknown man who had left no digital footprint for the last forty years. The individual, discovered on May 24, 1985, near Adamsville Avenue, north of Big Bend Road, has now been identified as Mr. Charles Allen Ray, born in 1936 and an honorable veteran of the United States Navy. Investigators determined that Charles Allen Ray was missing since the mid-1980s and a established a possible link to the Ray family through meticulous genealogical research in partnership with Othram.

Grant funding provided by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement for the use of Forensic Investigative Genetic Genealogy in UHR cases was awarded to Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, allowing this case to be solved.

We would like to thank Senator Jennifer Bradley and her colleagues in the legislature for fighting for dollars for law enforcement agencies to help them solve these important cases.

