

Benton County Sheriff's Office Teams with Othram to Identify a 1981 Homicide Victim

After four decades, the victim of a 1981 cold case homicide has finally been identified as 33-year-old Fred James Grow, better known to his family and friends as "Jamie"

Solved

Summary



On June 13, 1981, the remains of an unidentified homicide victim were located in the area of Garfield. After investigation by the Benton County Sheriff's Office, the case went cold and the identity of the victim has remained unsolved. On June 24, 2009, a case entry was created in the National Missing and Unidentified Persons Database (NAMUS) as UP5427.

In June 2016, Lieutenant Hunter Petray began a case review and determined with advancements in DNA technology and the hope of identifying the victim, evidence collected at the original crime scene should be resubmitted to the Arkansas Crime Lab. Evidence was sent to the Crime Lab. However, attempts to obtain a DNA profile from this resubmitted evidence was unsuccessful. In January 2019, Lieutenant Hunter Petray was able to determine, with help from Benton County Coroner Daniel Oxford, that the victim in this case was buried in an unmarked grave in Bentonville Cemetery. On January 9, 2019, Lieutenant Petray contacted the Arkansas Crime Lab in reference to resubmitting evidence in this case for further testing. The Crime Lab was willing to help if the remains were able to be located. On March 28, 2019, Lieutenant Petray contacted the Arkansas Crime Lab and inquired about using genealogy in cold cases. The Crime Lab advised they did not but that a private lab could possibly help.

In May 2019, Lieutenant Hunter Petray approached the Benton County Prosecutor's Office about the possibility of obtaining an order to exhume the grave of the victim. In October 2019, an Order for Exhumation was granted by a Circuit Judge. With the order, the Criminal Investigation Division, with assistance from cemetery officials and the Benton County Coroner's Office, exhumed the victim's remains. The remains were then transported to the Arkansas Crime Lab, in yet another attempt to obtain a DNA profile. This time, the Arkansas Crime Lab was able to obtain a partial DNA profile.

In March 2021, Captain Thomas See and Lieutenant Hunter Petray met with Othram. After meeting with Othram, the Benton County Sheriff's Office communicated with the Benton County Prosecutor's Office in an effort to help facilitate this advanced testing through Othram.

In April 2021, Lieutenant Petray requested the Arkansas the Arkansas Crime Lab to ship testable portions of the remains to Othram for testing.

In March 2022, Othram was finally able to develop a DNA profile for the victim using Forensic-Grade Genome Sequencing®. With the victim's DNA profile developed, the science known as "genetic genealogy" was implemented in hopes of finding a relative. In July 2022, Othram's in-house genealogy team was able to identify a close familial match in this case, along with the possible identity of the victim.

In August 2022, Lieutenant Petray was able to make contact with the identified relative. Upon speaking and gathering information from the relative, and confirming they in fact had a missing relative, it was evident that the missing relative and unidentified victim in this case were most likely the same individual. The DNA profile developed from the victim was then compared against the relative, and it was determined to be a genetic match.



For decades, the Benton County Sheriff's Office has pursued multiple leads in this case. Finally, after 41 years, the Benton County Sheriff's Office is pleased to announce, the victim of this 1981 cold case homicide has finally been identified as 33-year-old Fred James Grow, better known to his family and friends as "Jamie". The Benton County Sheriff's Office offers our sincere condolences to the family of Jamie. Jamie had been residing and working in Fayetteville, AR. On June 3, 1981, Jamie left on a planned trip that would have taken him to Kansas City, Wichita, and then on to Colorado to see family. Several other stops along the way were possible. Unfortunately, Jamie never arrived at any of those destinations.

With this new information, Lieutenant Petray has been able to determine that prior to leaving Fayetteville, Jamie had been approached by two females needing a ride to Oregon. According to witnesses, Jamie was willing to only offer them a ride part of the way to the Kansas City area. The two females who have been identified had been residing at the Sassafras and Rainbow Communes in Newton County, AR prior to coming to Fayetteville. Prior to leaving on his trip, a witness saw the two females loading their belongings into Jamie's 1965 Ford Econoline Camper Van.

While we are thankful to finally be able to give a small degree of closure to Jamie's family, the homicide investigation into Jamie's death continues and remains active

to date. If anyone has information regarding this case, please contact Lieutenant Hunter Petray at hunter.petray@bentoncountyar.gov or the Benton County Sheriff's Office Criminal Investigation Division at [479-271-1009](tel:479-271-1009)