

# Knox County Regional Forensic Center & Tennessee Bureau of Investigation Team with Othram to Identify a 1993 John Doe

After being unidentified for three decades, a man who died in a pedestrian accident in Knoxville, Tennessee has been identified as **Elbert Louis Brown** 3481, born July 1, 1940.

Solved



## Summary

In May 1993, the Knox County Sheriff's Office responded to a report of a pedestrian being struck by a vehicle along Cedar Bluff Road in Knoxville, Tennessee. The adult male, who had no identification on him, was pronounced deceased at the scene, and his body was sent for an autopsy. Forensic pathologists determined that the man was likely between the ages of 51 and 60, but were unable to identify him.

Investigators with the Knox County Sheriff's Office and the Knox County Regional Forensic Center continued to work to determine the identity of the victim using technology available in 1993, but their efforts were not successful. After exhausting all leads, the man was classified as a John Doe.

Attempts to identify Knox County John Doe continued with the University of Tennessee Forensic Anthropology Center submitting a sample of his remains to the Federal Bureau of Investigation. A DNA profile was developed and entered into the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) and the National Missing and Unidentified

Persons System (NamUs), as UP1553, in hopes that the man would eventually be identified, but no developments occurred.

In December 2022, the Knox County Regional Forensic Science Center submitted skeletal remains from the unknown man to Othram in The Woodlands, Texas to determine if advanced DNA testing could help to generate new leads in the case. Later, in May 2023, Tennessee Bureau of Investigation (TBI) agents partnered with the Knox County Regional Forensic Science Center on the case as part of the TBI Unidentified Human Remains DNA Initiative. Using the submitted skeletal evidence, Othram scientists developed a suitable DNA extract and then used Forensic-Grade Genome Sequencing® to build a comprehensive DNA profile for the man. Othram's in-house forensic genetic genealogy team used the DNA profile in a genetic genealogy search to produce new investigative leads that were returned to TBI agents.

Armed with these new leads, TBI agents launched a follow-up investigation that led to potential relatives of the unknown man. A reference DNA sample was collected from the relative and compared to the DNA profile of the unknown man. The investigation paired with the results of the comparison test have confirmed the identity of the man as Elbert Louis Brown, born July 1, 1940. Brown was originally from the York, South Carolina area. It was further determined that Brown was last seen by family members in 1992.

Forensic genetic genealogical testing on this case was made possible by funding approved by the Tennessee General Assembly in 2022. You can read more about other cases submitted for FGG testing as part of the TBI Unidentified Human Remains DNA Initiative by clicking [here](#). The identification of Elbert Louis Brown represents the seventh case where Tennessee Bureau of Investigation officials have publicly identified an individual, through this grant program, using technology developed by Othram.