

Skagit County Sheriff's Office and King County Medical Examiner Team with Othram to Identify a 1989 John Doe

The remains of a man known only as "Bow Doe" for 36 years have been identified through the collaborative efforts of law enforcement and advanced DNA testing.

Solved

Summary

In February 1989, the skeletal remains of an unidentified individual were found on Chuckanut Drive near Bow, Washington. Bow is a rural community between Seattle and the Canadian Border in Skagit County, Washington. The Skagit County Sheriff's Office responded and began collecting evidence and investigating. They determined the remains belonged to a man who was wearing a gray-blue-red plaid long sleeve shirt, Levi's blue jeans, a leather belt with a small silver buckle, and socks with red rings when he died. Near the man's body, investigators found a gray-blue jacket and an unknown brand of tennis shoes that were likely white with blue stripes. They also found a gold-colored Benrus watch. Investigators determined the man was likely White, about 5'9" tall and was likely 20 to 50 years-old. Foul play was ruled out in his death.

Despite a lengthy investigation, the man could not be identified and became known as "Bow Doe." Details of the case were entered into the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) as UP13903 in May 2015.

Recently, the Skagit County Sheriff's Office and the King County Medical Examiner collaborated to submit forensic evidence to Othram in The Woodlands, Texas to determine if advanced DNA testing could help identify the man. Othram scientists successfully developed a DNA extract from the provided evidence 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 profile in a genetic genealogy search to develop new investigative leads that were returned to law enforcement.

Using this new information, a follow-up investigation was conducted leading investigators to potential relatives of the man. Reference DNA samples were collected from a relative and compared to the DNA profile of the unidentified man.

This investigation led to the positive identification of the man, whose family has been notified. The man's name will not be released.

"This identification is the result of perseverance, community partnership, and incredible advances in forensic science," said Tobin Meyer, Chief Criminal Deputy at the Skagit County Sheriff's Office. "We are grateful to everyone, past and present, who played a role in giving this man back his name and bringing closure to his family."

Critical funding to enable forensic genetic genealogy testing in this case was made possible by Governor Ferguson, Attorney General Nick Brown, and the Washington State Legislature. We are so grateful for their support in providing this funding.

Individuals who have taken a consumer DNA test can aid ongoing forensic investigations by joining the [DNASolves database](#). Expanding the number of available DNA profiles increases the likelihood of successful identifications, helping to reunite families with their missing loved ones and resolve cases that have remained unsolved for years.

This identification represents the 40th case in the State of Washington where officials have publicly identified an individual using technology developed by Othram. Visit [DNASolves](#) to learn about other Washington cases where your support can help bring long-awaited answers to families.