

Georgia Bureau of Investigation Teams with Othram to Identify a 2019 John Doe

The remains of an unidentified man who drowned in 2019 have now been identified as 36-year-old Jeremiah Garretson of Nashville, Berrien County, Georgia.

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Summary

In March 2019, Cook County 911 received a call about a human body found in a pond on Ed Lindsey Road in Lenox, Georgia. Deputies arrived on the scene and found the partially decomposed body of a white male in the pond. Department of Natural Resources rangers assisted in recovering the body. The GBI Medical Examiner's Office conducted an autopsy and determined the cause of death was drowning and the manner of death was accidental.

At the time of discovery, the man was wearing multiple layers of clothing and white tennis shoes with a black trim. One of the outer layers of clothing was a pair of Georgia Tech pajama pants and the man also had on a yellow metal angel pin and a green and tan "Soldier of God" plastic bracelet. There were not enough clues at the scene to identify the man, however.



DNA and fingerprints were obtained from the remains in an effort to identify the man. Scientists then compared the DNA and fingerprints in the CODIS and AFIS databases but there were no matches to anyone. A GBI forensic artist created a sketch of what the man may have looked like. The sketch provided multiple leads, however the man's identity remained elusive. The case was also entered into the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) as UP58209.

In late 2022, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation teamed with Othram to determine if advanced DNA testing could assist in the identification of the unidentified homicide victim. Forensic evidence was submitted to Othram, a private DNA lab in The Woodlands, Texas. Othram developed a DNA extract from the evidence and then used Forensic-Grade Genome Sequencing® to develop a comprehensive DNA profile for the unknown man. A successful profile was obtained and then Othram's in-house genealogy team used the profile in genetic genealogy search to identify new investigative leads. These leads were returned to the GBI investigators, who then continued the investigation.

The follow up investigation, led GBI to a potential relative of the unknown man and additional confirmation DNA testing with the potential relative then confirmed that the unknown man was in fact **Jeremiah Garretson**, born April 29, 1982.

GBI wants to acknowledge the Alapaha Judicial Circuit District Attorney's Office, which was instrumental in this case. They contributed a significant portion of funding for the testing, supplying resources that eventually helped GBI agents close this unsolved case.