

Man identified nearly 55 years after his death when Cass County officials exhume body

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PAGE, N.D. (Valley News Live) - Nearly 55 years after his suspicious death, the victim of a 1970 homicide investigation has been identified.

The Cass County Coroner's office exhumed the body from St. James Cemetery in Page North Dakota, with a headstone marked "unknown male" on July 1, 2025 in an effort to identify the body, according to a release from Cass County officials.

During that exhumation, a denture plate was recovered from the skeletal remains, which was labeled "Tate W. H" with a number "20506932" printed underneath.

With the help of genealogical and archival resources, investigators traced the denture back to a World War II enlistment record for **William Howard Tate**. They were able to positively identify the victim as Tate based on that record and subsequent analysis.

Tate's body was found on October 27, 1970 near the railroad tracks outside of Page, North Dakota. The Cass County Sheriff's office investigated the case as a possible homicide, with evidence suggesting that he had been assaulted, robbed, and either thrown from the train or had fallen off of it.

The cause of his death was fractures of the ribs, cervical vertebrae, maxilla, and mandible. No suspects or persons of interest were ever identified. He was buried in the St. James Cemetery with no identification.

The Coroner's Office is working with Cass County Veteran Services to have a new headstone with the decedent's identification placed on the grave.

Additional analysis of the remains is being conducted by Dr. Jennifer Bengtson, a professor overseeing the project at Southeast Missouri State University. The effort is funded by private donors who support the university's anthropology department.