

DNA confirms remains of Martin family missing since 1958 after car found in Columbia River

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The Christmas photo of the Ken Martin family, from left, Barbara, 7; Ken, Barbara, Sue, 4; Donald, 21; and Virginia, 6; in Portland, Ore., in

December 1952. (Ken Martin family via AP, File)AP

By

- [Douglas Perry | The Oregonian/OregonLive](#)

The Oregon State Medical Examiner's Office has [identified remains](#) from a car found in the Columbia River as those of Kenneth and Barbara Martin and their oldest daughter, also named Barbara, the Hood River Sheriff's Office said Thursday.

The identifications were made through DNA analysis, the sheriff's office said.

The Martin family vanished in December 1958 after driving from Portland to the gorge to collect Christmas greenery. Their disappearance [fueled decades of speculation](#), with some people coming to believe that evidence pointed to foul play.

The bodies of the family's two youngest daughters were discovered in the Columbia River months after the family disappeared. Their parents and older sister remained missing.

Local diver Archer Mayo became interested in the case in 2018 and began exploratory dives in the river, leading him to find the Martins' station wagon. Officials [raised part of the vehicle](#) last March.

After finding the car in the river, Mayo concluded Kenneth Martin likely misjudged space and distance while driving in the Cascade Locks parking lot, and the car toppled into the water.

The Hood River Sheriff's Office said Thursday it had "concluded its investigation, having found no evidence of a crime."

<https://www.oregonlive.com/history/2026/04/dna-confirms-remains-of-missing-martin-family-after-car-found-in-columbia-river.html>