

AP

# After 20 years, police link dead mother and son; boy's remains were found in Mebane in 1998

- By JEFFREY COLLINS Associated Press
- Feb 5, 2019



Whitt

- Courtesy of Center for Missing and Exploited Children

## UNIDENTIFIED

NCMEC: 1104001 - NCIC: U174662253 - NamUS: 5971

### John Doe 1998



Date Found: **Sep 25, 1998**  
 Location Found: **Mebane, NC**  
 Estimated Age: **10-12**  
 Sex: **Male**  
 Race: **White**  
 Hair Color: **Brown**  
 Eye Color: **Unknown**  
 Estimated Height: **4'11"**  
 Estimated Weight: **50 lbs**

Extra Photo



This unidentified boy was found on September 25, 1998 in Mebane, Orange County, NC. He was found near a billboard sign along Industrial Drive which is a service road adjacent to Interstate 85 and Interstate 40. It is estimated that he had been deceased at this location for several months. The child's race is either White or Hispanic. He is estimated to be 10-12 years old and around 4'11" tall. He had straight brown hair. The boy had no dental fillings but some teeth had preventative sealant placed on them to help prevent cavities and decay. He had a slight overbite and his upper canine teeth were high erupting canines, which are commonly referred to as "fang teeth." These teeth may have been noticeable to others when he smiled or spoke. The child was wearing khaki shorts (size 13). Cash was found inside his pockets. He was also wearing black and white sneakers (size 3). The shoes showed almost no wear as if they were relatively new. He was also wearing white tube socks and brief underwear. No shirt was found with the body. The above three images are of a facial reconstruction completed by a NCMEC Forensic Artist. The image to the far right is a photograph of the sneakers the boy was found wearing.

ANYONE HAVING INFORMATION SHOULD CONTACT  
**1-800-843-5678 (1-800-THE-LOST®)**

Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (North Carolina) 1-919-966-2253 or Orange County Sheriff's

Updated *at 1:22 p.m.*

More than 20 years after the unidentified bodies of a woman and a 10-year-old boy were found 215 miles apart in separate states beside Interstate 85, investigators now say they were a mother and son and the boy's father has confessed to killing them.

The case was cracked thanks to an online DNA database, help from international police and a consultant whose work led to an arrest in the Golden State Killer case, authorities in North Carolina and South Carolina said Tuesday.

But investigators in both states said they had never stopped trying to solve the cases that they never knew were related.

"I always kept the case file box under my desk, where it was purposefully in my way. Every time I turned, I hit it with my leg. I did this so the little boy couldn't be forgotten," said Orange County Sheriff's Maj. Tim Horne, who worked the case from the beginning.

The boy's body was found in Mebane.

North Carolina authorities even enlisted experts to create a sketch and a bust reconstructing the appearance of the child. But despite wide-spread dissemination, no one was able to identify him.

Investigators had no idea the cases were linked until December 2018, when consultant Dr. Barbara Rae-Venter reviewed the latest DNA tests on the boy's body, Orange County Sheriff Charles Blackwood said in a statement. Rae-Venter's work with online DNA databases had earlier helped lead to an arrest of a man in California charged with 26 counts of murder and kidnapping in California in the 1970s and 1980s.

The boy's remains were found in September 1998 by workers mowing grass on a frontage road near I-85, Blackwood said.

Rae-Venter matched the child's DNA to DNA from a close relative who had submitted the information to an online database. After contacting the relative, investigators learned the boy's name was Robert "Bobby" Adam Whitt, and were given strong evidence his mother — who had disappeared the same year as her son — was also dead, Blackwood said.

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Meanwhile, deputies in South Carolina had found an unidentified woman whose nude body was dumped in the woods beside I-85 in May 1998, Spartanburg County Sheriff's Lt. Kevin Bobo said. Her hands had been bound and she had been suffocated.

After DNA testing confirmed the victims were mother and son, investigators in the U.S. enlisted the help of Korean authorities and international police to identify the woman as Myoung Hwa Cho.

Cho's husband, the boy's father, is serving time in federal prison on unrelated charges. After being questioned several times he confessed to killing his wife and son, Bobo said.

Authorities aren't releasing his name because he hasn't been charged in the killings yet. Charges may not be filed until investigators figure out exactly where the two victims were killed, Bobo said. Investigators think the woman and her son were killed someone else and dumped beside the interstate.