

## Authorities Identify Victim, Suspect In 1968 Huntington Beach Rape, Murder

By [CBSLA Staff](#) July 22, 2020 at 10:40 pm

Filed Under: [1968 Cold Case](#), [Anita Piteau](#), [Cold Case](#), [huntington beach](#), [Johnny Chrisco](#), [KCAL 9](#), [Orange County](#), [Rape and Murder](#)

**HUNTINGTON BEACH (CBSLA)** — After 52 years, the Huntington Beach police have closed the oldest unsolved murder in Orange County history, the department announced Wednesday.



FILE: Detectives investigate the field where Anita Piteau's body was found in 1968. (Credit: Huntington Beach Police Department)

“They thought she was still alive,” Chief Robert Handy, of the Huntington Beach Police Department, said. “They didn’t know she was deceased.”

The young woman, recently identified as Anita Piteau, died after being left for dead in a Huntington Beach field in 1968.

“Our detectives went last weekend and took remains back to Maine and had a private burial service with the family so that they could properly say goodbye to their sister they hadn’t seen in 52 years,” Handy said.

Four years ago, detectives asked for the public's help in identifying the woman — showing photos of the ring and shoes she was wearing the night she was killed.



For the past 52 years, investigators have searched for the identity of a woman who was killed at the age of 26. (Credit: Huntington Beach PD)

Detectives didn't know it then, but the woman's suspected killer, Johnny Chrisco, died in 2015. They also didn't yet know that the items belonged to a 26-year-old woman who wrote her parents daily, or that when the letters stopped, the family hired a private investigator — though answers remained elusive.

“The family was very grateful, obviously, that we didn't give up,” Handy said. “There's been generations in our department that have worked this case and taken the evidence that those original detectives processed from the crime scene in 1968 and used today's technology.”

But detectives could only get so far using familial DNA since the system they use does not have genealogical information. So, in an effort to close the case, the

Orange County District Attorney's Office hired Colleen Fitzpatrick, a forensic genealogy expert.



Anita Piteau was finally laid to rest in Maine, 52 years after her murder. (Credit: Huntington Beach PD)

“I’ve worked the unknown child in the Titanic,” she said. “I’ve worked Amelia Earhart, I’ve worked Abraham Lincoln.”

It took Fitzpatrick one week to track the victim’s family tree to a relative in Maine.

“We contacted him, his name was Steve, and we asked him about his family,” she said. “He had found an obituary that listed a cousin that died and listed this deceased woman’s brothers and sisters, and the last one was Anita Piteau who hasn’t been seen since 1970. I was like, ‘Oh my God.’”

Detectives said Piteau came out to Southern California with friends to see if she could make it in Hollywood.

“I think the message it sends to criminals is, you’re not going to get away,” Hardy said. “It might not be today, but we are not going to give up, and you are not going to get away.”