

Body Found 33 Years Ago Identified as Missing Florida Man

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AP

MACON, Ga. (AP) — The body of a man shot in the head and left on a remote dirt road between Forsyth and Gray 33 years ago has been identified as a missing [Florida](#) man.

The Telegraph reported that a DNA analysis of the man's remains, completed earlier this year, matched that of William Maholland, who was reported missing from Fort Lauderdale, Florida, in June 1984.

Maholland, who was 28, is thought to have been killed a month earlier and dumped in Jones County, nearly 600 miles north of his hometown. A fisherman found the body in the Oconee National Forest.

Investigators suspected that the man was from out of town because of his Bermuda shorts and a belt with swordfish on it. Authorities estimated that he had been dead about a week.

The case went cold in 1987. Jones County sheriff's investigator Earl Humphries thought the chances of identifying the slain man were slim.

"You don't ever give up hope," Humphries said.

In 2006, the [Georgia](#) Bureau of Investigation exhumed the man's body and collected DNA.

At some point, Fort Lauderdale police took a DNA sample from Maholland's mother and entered it into the National DNA Index System.

In November, forensic scientists at the University of North [Texas](#) matched the deceased man's DNA with the sample from his mother.

In March, a GBI agent called Humphries and gave him the news.

"It's still a cold case," Humphries said. "We've just gotten one step further now that we know who the victim is."

Phil Schultz knew something terrible had happened to his best friend when he found Maholland's parrot dead, starved to death inside Maholland's apartment.

"That poor bird," Schultz recalled in a recent phone conversation. "He opened every kitchen cabinet, went through the garbage. He ate every chicken bone scrap he could find, drank all the water out of the toilet."

A safe in Maholland's bedroom had been pried open, then thrown in a trash bin.

Maholland had been dealing cocaine at a time when massive amounts of the drug were being smuggled into Florida from South America.

Schultz said Maholland peddled small amounts of cocaine to supplement income he made working for fishing companies. Sometime in May 1984, Schultz talked to Maholland by phone for the last time. Maholland had said he was going to make "a perfect deal" and would call when he returned.

"I said, 'Dude, you promised you wouldn't sell anything more than a gram,'" Schultz recalled. "He goes, 'I know, but this is a perfect deal.' He said, 'I'll call you when I get back tonight.' But I never heard from him."

What became of Maholland remained a mystery to Schultz for 33 years until earlier this week, when a reporter called his electrical wiring business in Pompano Beach to talk about his friend.

"You guys found Billy?" he said. "That's awesome."

Over the next couple of decades, Diana Maholland, a Venezuelan national, hired more than a dozen private detectives to search for her son. The last time she spoke to him was May 13, when he called her in London to wish her happy Mother's Day. She moved back to Florida to look for answers and come to terms with what police were saying about his involvement with drugs.

Diana Maholland died at age 86, never knowing what happened to her son.

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Information from: The Telegraph, <http://www.macontelegraph.com>

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