

Body buried in North Carolina yard identified as man who vanished in 2016, cops say

[BY SIMONE JASPER](#)

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Billy Gene Hammonds *Robeson County Sheriff's Office*

A body found buried behind a North Carolina home has been identified as a man who vanished in 2016, officials said.

Billy Gene Hammonds was 36 years old when his sister said she last talked to him on the phone. He [was reported missing](#) about a week later on Dec. 9, 2016.

Now, more than five years after Hammond disappeared, an interview led deputies to his [remains in a backyard](#), according to the Robeson County Sheriff's Office.

"I can only imagine the pain the family and friends must feel but I hope that this does bring some sort of closure to them," Sheriff Burnis Wilkins said in a May 3 news release. "At least now the family can give Mr. Hammonds a proper final resting place."

Deputies said Hammonds' body was discovered outside a home on Lewis McNeill Road. The street is in Red Springs, roughly 95 miles southwest of Raleigh.

Here are a few tips on how to file a report if a loved one or friend has gone missing. BY [KELSEY GREY](#)

Hammonds was reported missing from his nearby hometown, Lumberton. Officials said he was last known to be in the Warwick Mill Road area on Dec. 1, 2016, and may have gotten in the car with four people.

In the years [after he went missing](#), Hammonds' loved ones [searched for answers](#) as deputies worked to solve the mystery.

"I want justice and closure," his wife, Pamela Hammonds, told The Robesonian in 2017.

The sheriff's office said it searched Lewis McNeill Road in 2018 but didn't find Hammonds' body. His remains were discovered last week after deputies reported receiving a "more specific location."

"The remains were sent to the North Carolina Medical Examiner's Office for the purposes of identification and cause of death," officials said in their news release.

Witnessing a crime and reporting it can be just as frightening as being the victim of a crime. Here's what you should do if you witness illegal activity. BY [NICOLE L. CVETNIC](#)

As of May 3, the sheriff's office said a homicide investigation was ongoing and that the next steps would be to "follow up on multiple leads and revisit information and facts provided in 2016 when he was reported missing."

Robeson County is home to the seat of the [Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina](#), which is the largest tribe on this side of the country.

The deaths of three people — including two Lumbee women — went unsolved in 2017, sparking speculation about a possible serial killer. [Other disappearances](#) have been reported in the area since 1998, The News & Observer and McClatchy News reported.

The Robeson County Sheriff's Office in its news release didn't say whether Hammonds' disappearance was tied to other cases. Officials ask people with information about his death to call them at 910-671-3100 or 910-671-3170.

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