

Davie Police identify woman in 1984 cold case after body found in canal



DAVIE, FLA. (WSVN) - Davie Police made a break in a cold case after a woman was identified decades after her body was found in a South Florida canal. Now, the victim's daughter is finally getting some answers.

On Tuesday, the victim's daughter flew from Massachusetts to see her mother's remains.

The case started on Feb. 18, 1984 after a blond woman was found face down in a canal in Davie. The body was about 5 feet, 4 inches tall and weighed 120 pounds.

"The Davie Police Department discovered the body of a woman, white female, floating in the canal near the 2600 block of 130th Avenue, which is our West Davie area," said Davie Police Sgt. Kevin Urbaez.

The victim would go unidentified for 40 years, until Davie Police investigators reopened the cold case.

"Investigators used several resources to assist with forensic digital imaging, DNA extraction and identification of a potential family tree," Urbaez said. "Using all those resources, investigators were able to locate the victim's daughter."

Using DNA from bone fragments, investigators were able to find a match with Maehgan Smith, who lives in Gloucester, Massachusetts.

“I was so overwhelmed because I resigned myself to the fact that I thought I’d probably never know what happened to her,” Smith said.

Smith was a small child when her mother, **Lori Jane Kearsley**, went missing. At the time, her parents were divorced.

“She had dropped me off on the weekend and just didn’t go back,” Smith said. “I think, ‘What was she doing down here,’ like she didn’t feel like, call anybody, and I just can’t even imagine what that feeling was like for her and it’s heartbreaking.”

Kearsley was 23 years old and had re-married.

“She re-married into a pretty infamous crime family in Boston,” Smith said.

It is unclear what she was doing in Davie, but she was strangled. Now, after 40 years, her daughter will finally lay her to rest.

“And I think the feeling of even picking up her remains, thinking I probably haven’t touched any part of her in 41 years, is just a little surreal feeling,” Smith said.

Police are still looking for clues to find Kearsley’s murderer.

“And so that’s our goal in this case, bring additional closure, but to also bring those who were involved in this criminal case to justice,” Urbaez said.

Davie Police said they are following up on some leads, however, they still need some help.

If you have any information on this crime, call Broward County Crime Stoppers at 954-493-TIPS. Remember, you can always remain anonymous, and you may be eligible for a reward of up to \$5,000.