Cold case: Skeletal remains identified 32 years after discovery in Hernando County

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HERNANDO COUNTY, Fla. (WFLA) — Thirty-two years after skeletal remains were found near an intersection in Hernando County, family members finally learned what happened to their missing loved one.

On Nov. 6, 1990, an employee with Withlacoochee River Electric discovered the remains in the area of Centralia Road and Commercial Way. A subsequent investigation determined the remains were not the result of a homicide, nor were they reported missing from any jurisdiction.

In an effort to identify the individual, the remains were sent to several labs where a DNA profile could be created. University of North Texas's

On April 4, 2019, a profile from the University of North Texas was finally completed and entered into the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS). But the investigation would go on as no associations were found.

On Jan. 24, 2022, the evidence was shipped to Hudson Alpha Institute for Biotechnology, an associated company with Parabon NanoLabs with further hopes of identifying the remains. Six months later, a positive identification was made.

Researchers said the remains belonged to Robert McReynolds, who was born on Jan. 6, 1927. McReynolds would have been 63 years old at the time his remains were discovered.

Researchers also provided the name of a possible family member of McReynolds.

Detectives later confirmed the family member was in fact related to McReynolds, whose cremated remains were turned over to family.

Hernando County Sheriff Al Nienhuis said although there was no evidence of foul play, "this new information shows that law enforcement never forgets."

"We never stop working behind the scenes to identify remains and, if a crime can be proven, hold criminals accountable," Nienhuis said. "We know that it is important to give family members answers whenever possible, even if their relative went missing decades ago."