

WHO KILLED HER?

DNA leads Victoria police to reopen 34-year-old cold case

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Detective Melissa Rendon with the Victoria Police Department talks about coming across this photo of Linda Singh. Cold case detective Rendon and her partner, Amy Grothe, have reopened the investigation surrounding the disappearance of Linda Singh and have now classified it as a homicide. Singh's remains were recently identified in Harris County. Singh went missing in April 1984.

Victoria Police Department detective Amy Grothe thumbed through a cabinet while detective Melissa Rendon sat on the floor as they pored through file after file in search of answers.

When they found a 34-year-old photo, a new question emerged.

“We were digging through files, and a picture just fell out,” Rendon said. “It immediately caught our attention.”

The photo was of Linda Mae Singh, a 37-year-old woman who went missing April 4, 1984. After the case ran cold for more than three decades, investigators changed it to a murder investigation in June 2017.

After the photo fell into Rendon's lap, the detectives put the case file back together and set it aside. A month later, the detectives received calls that Singh was the missing person in a photo published in a Refugio County newspaper.

However, that lead proved to be false.

Reminded of the case again, the detectives looked at the file once more and came away with a new perspective.

“It was one of those things where we felt like there was something more here,” Rendon said recently. “She's pushing us for something to be done.”

Singh is thought to have been seen last by her husband, Gurkirat Singh, who worked at the Dow Chemical Plant in Seadrift, on the morning of April 6, 1984. Five years later, he moved to California with their two sons after a company transfer. Her children were 6 and 2 at the time of the disappearance. They would be about 41 and 36 now.

Missing Person Sought

Police Monday said that a missing person's report has been filed concerning a Victoria woman who they said



was last seen at a downtown office on the afternoon of April 9.

Detective Gary Henrichs said the report was filed April 13 concerning Linda Mae Singh, 37, of 201 Woodglenn.

APR 24 1984
"There are unusual circumstances surrounding her disappearance that are still under investigation," Henrichs said.

The detective would not elaborate on the "unusual circumstances" aspect.

Henrichs described her as being 4 feet 10 inches tall, weighing 112 pounds, with green eyes and dark brown hair.

Henrichs requested people having any information as to the whereabouts of Mrs. Singh to contact him at the police department at

Gurkirat Singh told investigators he dropped off his wife at the Trailways Bus Station at 407 E. Rio Grande St. so she could catch a bus to Houston. Once in Houston, she was supposed to fly to Kansas City, Mo., to visit relatives. However, she never made it.

Relatives there contacted Victoria police six days after Linda Singh, who was a homemaker, failed to arrive. Her family had not been expecting her but began to worry when they didn't hear from her.

An attorney representing Singh in divorce proceedings against her husband formally reported her missing seven days after her husband was to have dropped her off at the bus terminal. Her divorce would have been final April 5, 1984, the day before she went missing. She had filed for divorce Oct. 21, 1983.

More than three decades later, advances in forensic technology led detectives Rendon and Grothe to reopen the case.

DNA matched Singh's identity to a body that was found in Harris County by a passerby 19 days after she disappeared, Grothe said. Her body had been buried in an unmarked pauper's grave in Houston for 34 years.

When she disappeared, there was not a match, she said. However, the detectives submitted a new sample from a family member in June 2017 and found a match to the Jane Doe body buried in Houston in 1984.

DNA in the early 80s could identify minimal information, such as whether a person is male or female, Grothe said.

"DNA now can tell who you are," she said.

Grothe and Rendon are the detectives who work on cold case murders for the Victoria Police Department's crime reduction unit, which is made of detectives from different divisions, including violent crimes, gang violence, assault crimes, property crimes and auto theft.

The detectives started the case completely over. Singh's manila files grew into two heavy-duty D-Ring white binders filled with two reams of paper worth of information organized chronologically.

As stories were retold by witnesses, family members and previous investigators since Singh was identified, old wounds reopened for all involved, Rendon said.

“We take the cases personal because we kind of go along this journey with the family,” she said. “We go home with that, too, and that’s kind of emotional sometimes.”

Singh was removed as a missing person in June 2017 from the National Crime Information Center, an electronic clearinghouse of crime data, and The Texas Crime Information Center.

Grothe said they are working to issue Singh a death certificate that will list the cause of death as homicidal violence.

“It was a homicide,” she said. “She didn’t just leave. Being a parent, she didn’t just leave.”

The detectives said they are hopeful the investigation will bring justice for the family. They are asking the public to come forward with any information.

“After 35 years, I don’t know a lot of cases where you get this much information this late in the game,” Grothe said.

“We don’t just forget them because they are cold cases.”

Source:

https://www.victoriaadvocate.com/news/crime/dna-leads-victoria-police-to-reopen--year-old-cold/article_341143c4-731e-11e8-b2c3-93eed6162128.html