

Riverside County Sheriff Coroner and Riverside County District Attorney Leverage Othram's Technology to Identify a 1980 Homicide Victim

After 46 years, a woman, whose remains were found in Riverside County, California has been identified as **Victoria Jean Hargrove**.



Summary

In February 1980, motorists discovered the body of an unidentified female at the bottom of a ravine off Highway 74, south of Cahuilla, in an unincorporated area of Riverside County, California near Palm Desert. The Riverside County Sheriff's Office responded and began collecting evidence and investigating. They determined the woman was a White adult between 20 and 25 years old, approximately 5 feet 4 inches tall and weighing about 115 pounds, with short, wavy, light brown hair, measuring 3-4 inches long. She had hazel eyes, manicured fingernails, a well-healed scar on right forearm and a well-healed scar on upper right arm. She was wearing a long-sleeved tan-colored velour blouse, royal blue pants and tan sandals. Her cause of death could not be determined, but the case is being investigated as a homicide.

Despite a lengthy investigation that included fingerprint and dental record comparisons, the woman could not be identified and became known as Riverside County Jane Doe (1980). Details of the case were entered into the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) as UP7139.

In 2025, investigators teamed with Othram to leverage identity inference, a process that enables investigators to identify individuals from DNA evidence, even when there is no known reference sample to initially compare against. Officials with the Riverside County Coroner's Office, in conjunction with Regional Cold Case Homicide Team (RCCHT) worked together to submit forensic evidence to Othram's laboratory headquartered in The Woodlands, Texas.

At Othram, scientists reviewed details of the case, determining that advanced DNA testing could help to identify the woman. Othram scientists worked to develop a DNA extract from the provided forensic evidence, using Forensic-Grade Genome Sequencing® to build a comprehensive SNP profile for the woman which was used by a Riverside County Regional Cold Case Homicide Team forensic genetic genealogist, resulting in new investigative leads about the woman's identity.

Using this new information, a follow-up investigation was conducted leading investigators to potential relatives of the woman. Reference DNA samples were collected from a relative and compared to the DNA profile of the unidentified woman. The California Department of Justice lab was able to confirm the identity of the woman, who is now known to be Victoria Jean Hargrove, who was 29 years old when she went missing from her home in Opelika, Alabama. She was reported missing on January 28, 1980, just three weeks before she was found dead in California.

Investigators are now seeking additional information regarding Victoria Jean Hargrove's disappearance in 1980, the circumstances surrounding her death, and what may have brought her to California.

The Riverside County Regional Cold Case Homicide Team is asking the community to contact investigators with any information about the homicide or the victim that could assist with this investigation. Any leads, no matter how insignificant they may seem, can be reported to the Supervising Investigator Billy Hester (951)955-0070, or by emailing coldcaseunit@rivcoda.org.

Individuals who have taken a consumer DNA test can aid ongoing forensic investigations by joining the [DNASolves database](#). Expanding the pool of available DNA data increases the likelihood of successful identifications, helping to reunite families with their missing loved ones and resolve cases that have remained unsolved for years.

This is the 81st publicly announced case in the State of California where officials leveraged Othram's identity inference pipeline. Explore other cases on [Othram's website](#).