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'Bossier Doe' cold case murder victim identified as 17-year-old Carol Ann Cole



BossierDoeandCarolAnnCole.jpg

Bossier Parish Sheriff's detectives on Thursday, March 5, 2015, announced that they have positively identified a teenage stabbing victim in a 34-year-old cold case. Carol Ann Cole, pictured right, was a young woman from Kalamazo, Mich, who went missing around the same time. Cole had been dead for four to six weeks when her body was located on Jan. 28, 1981 in the woods of Bossier Parish, investigators say. The picture on the left is a computer-generated likeness created by Louisiana State University FACES lab in an effort to try to put a name to the victim. Investigators learned of Cole in February after Lt. Shannon Mack, lead detective in the

cold case, created a Facebook profile for the then-unidentified victim in an effort to generate new leads. *(Photos courtesy Bossier Parish Sheriff's Office and Patty Thorington)*

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After 34 years, Carol Ann Cole is found.

The missing Michigan teen is a DNA match for a young woman found dead with stab wounds in the woods of north Louisiana on Jan. 28, 1981.

Bossier Parish Sheriff Julian Whittington **announced the news Thursday** (March 5), two weeks after Cole's parents submitted their DNA samples at a police station near Kalamazoo, Mich., in response to leads developed through Facebook.

"It's been a long 34 years, one month and five days of waiting for the Cole family, Whittington said. "I'm here to tell you the waiting is over and Carol Ann is coming home."

A few feet away stood Linda "Jeanie" Phelps, 48, Carol Ann's little sister who has spent decades searching for her blonde-haired, blue-eyed sibling -- the one she said loved Shaun Cassidy and always kept her out of trouble.

"All I can think right now is wow. I finally found Carol Ann," said Phelps, who traveled from her home in Kalamazoo to be present for the announcement. "Definitely not the way I wanted to find my sister...There was a sense of relief, but also a deep sadness."

Phelps said she never gave up on finding her sister and thanked those who didn't give up to find out who Bossier Doe was.

Linda "Jeanie" Phelps



Linda "Jeanie" Phelps

The case has perplexed Bossier Parish investigators for decades. But a detective's decision to create a **Facebook profile on Feb. 6** for the victim she named "Bossier Doe," generated the leads that brought them quickly to Carol Ann Cole.

During the press conference, the Sheriff's Office changed the name on Bossier Doe's Facebook page to "Carol Ann Cole" and replaced a computer-generated sketch of the unidentified woman with the teen's actual photograph. Immediately, many of the 2,613 people who'd friended the page began posting notes congratulating the family and law enforcement for finding Carol Ann.

Carol Ann went missing after she moved from Michigan to San Antonio, Texas, with her mother, Sue Cole in 1979 or 1980.

Cole said she was having difficulties with her daughter and decided to **place her in a girl's home outside of San Antonio**. Cole said she was informed Carol Ann ran away from the residence near her 17th birthday, Nov. 5, 1980 -- but Cole said she has no recollection of where the home was and what it was called.

The **last contact the teenager had** with her family, according to Phelps, was when she placed a collect call from a residence in Shreveport to her paternal grandmother in Kalamazoo. The family was later told that Carol Ann was babysitting there.

Phelps and longtime family friend Patty Thorington have been **searching for Carol Ann for decades**. And despite their efforts to file a missing persons report with various police agencies over the years, Phelps said they were only recently able to get information about Carol Ann formally entered into a national missing persons database. A formal missing persons report was made Feb. 4, according to Bossier Parish Sgt. Dave Faulk.

The young woman's body was found in a wooded area off Louisiana Highway 157 near Princeton in Bossier Parish.

For decades, investigators shared the few details they knew about her: She was in her late teens or early 20s. She was blonde, 5-foot-6, about 125 to 135 pounds. She appeared to be fully clothed, they said, wearing jeans, a Buffalo Nickle belt buckle, athletic socks with yellow stripes and shoes with scribbles on the outside and a name written on the inside: "D. Davies."

And there was this: She had a residue on her teeth used for bonding orthodontics. It appeared she might have removed her braces herself. It was something Phelps said she'd heard her sister had done. And in an interview with NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune, Sue Cole said that at some point after moving from Michigan her daughter had removed her braces.

Lt. Shannon Mack, lead detective in the cold case, less than four weeks ago **created a Facebook page in the name of "Bossier Doe"** and asked people to share it. Whittington said a 911 operator named Linda Erickson saw the Facebook page with Bossier Doe's image, then notified detectives when she came across **a Craigslist ad with a photo of Carol Ann**. It was an ad that Thorington had placed in an effort to find any information on the missing girl's whereabouts. By Feb. 13, Thorington said, someone at the Sheriff's Office emailed her regarding their Bossier Doe case.

Whittington said social media was essential in solving the cold case. "I had no idea people check these things daily," he said of Facebook, calling it a "too good of a tool not to" use it in future cases.

Detectives have called John R. Chesson, the Vinton man who found Bossier Doe while hunting in 1981, a "person of interest" in Bossier Doe's death. Chesson is now in prison after being **convicted in the 1997 murder** of his estranged wife's former mother-in-law.

Bossier Parish detectives also have been investigating whether their victim had **any ties to New Bethany Home for Girls**, a religious girls home roughly 40 miles from where the body was found. A **photo that surfaced** from New Bethany includes an image of a young woman who Phelps believed resembles Carol Ann. But until now, Phelps has said that without the results of the DNA tests in hand, **the possibility has brought only more questions and grief.**

Sgt. Faulk said the agency will be following all leads to gather information about who killed Carol Ann. He said that to date there is "no solid indication" that she was at New Bethany. Asked about Chesson's significance in the current investigation, Faulk said that anytime someone finds a body, they are a person of interest.

"We are still, of course, looking at all leads coming in," he said.

Thorington has created a Facebook page for **Carol Ann Cole called "Bring Carol Ann Home"** as well as a **GoFundMe fundraising site** to raise money to enable Phelps and her family retrieve her remains and commemorate her life.

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