

Milwaukee cold case solved; police now seek help identifying 1982 Jane Doe

By [Bria Jones](#) and [FOX6 News Digital Team](#)

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[FOX6 News Milwaukee](#)

The Brief

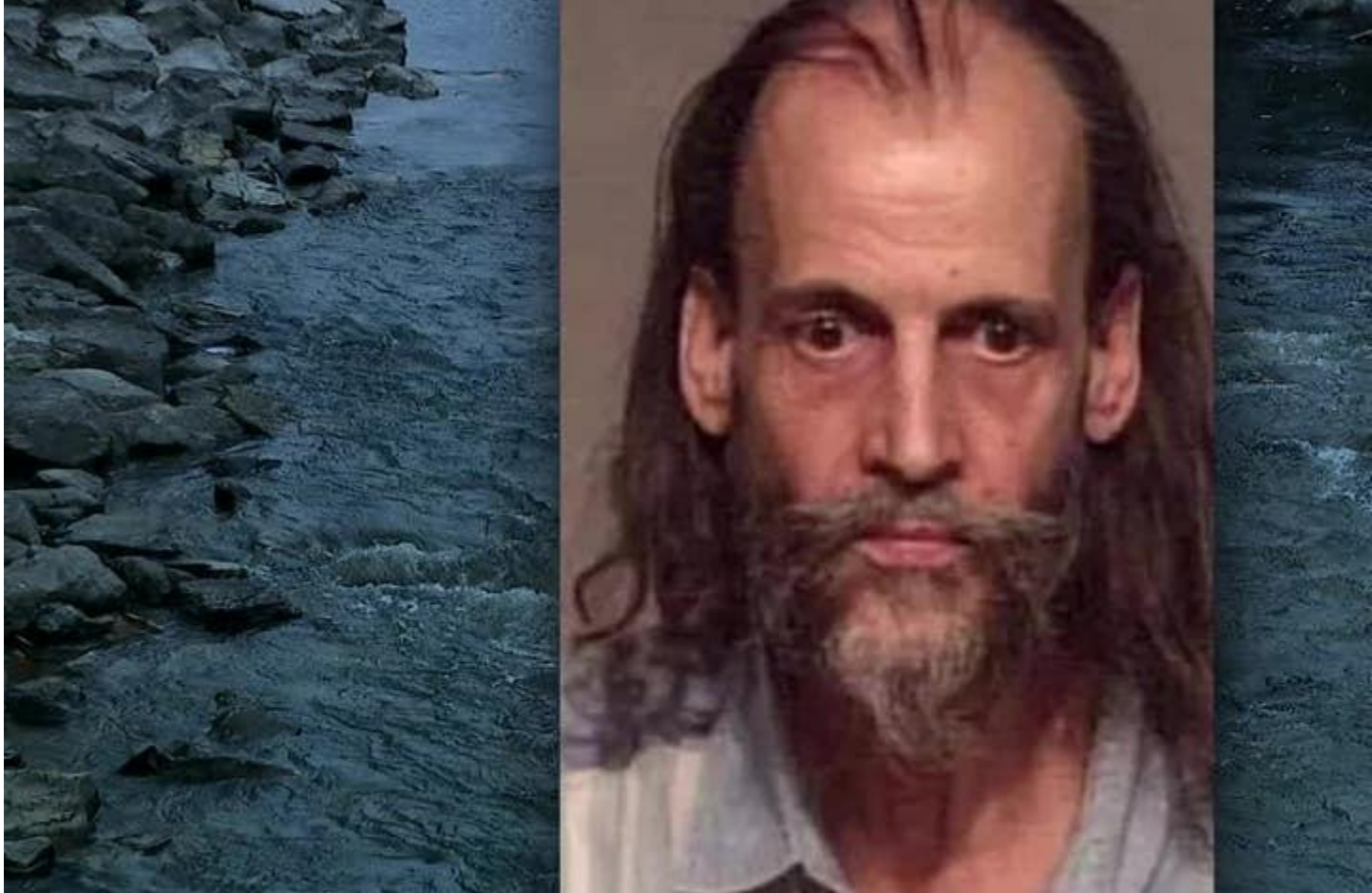
- - Milwaukee police identified the remains as Thomas Schaffer, who had been missing since 2005.
 - Investigators used X-rays and a distinctive skull feature to positively identify Schaffer.
 - Authorities are now asking for help identifying a young woman found in the Milwaukee River in 1982.

MILWAUKEE - The Milwaukee Police Department says a missing persons cold case more than 20 years old has been solved after investigators connected unidentified human remains to a man reported missing in 2005.

Local perspective:

For Pam Schaffer, the identification brings long-awaited closure.

"It's a homecoming," she said, explaining she had hoped for years to place her father's remains beside her sister Aimee's ashes.

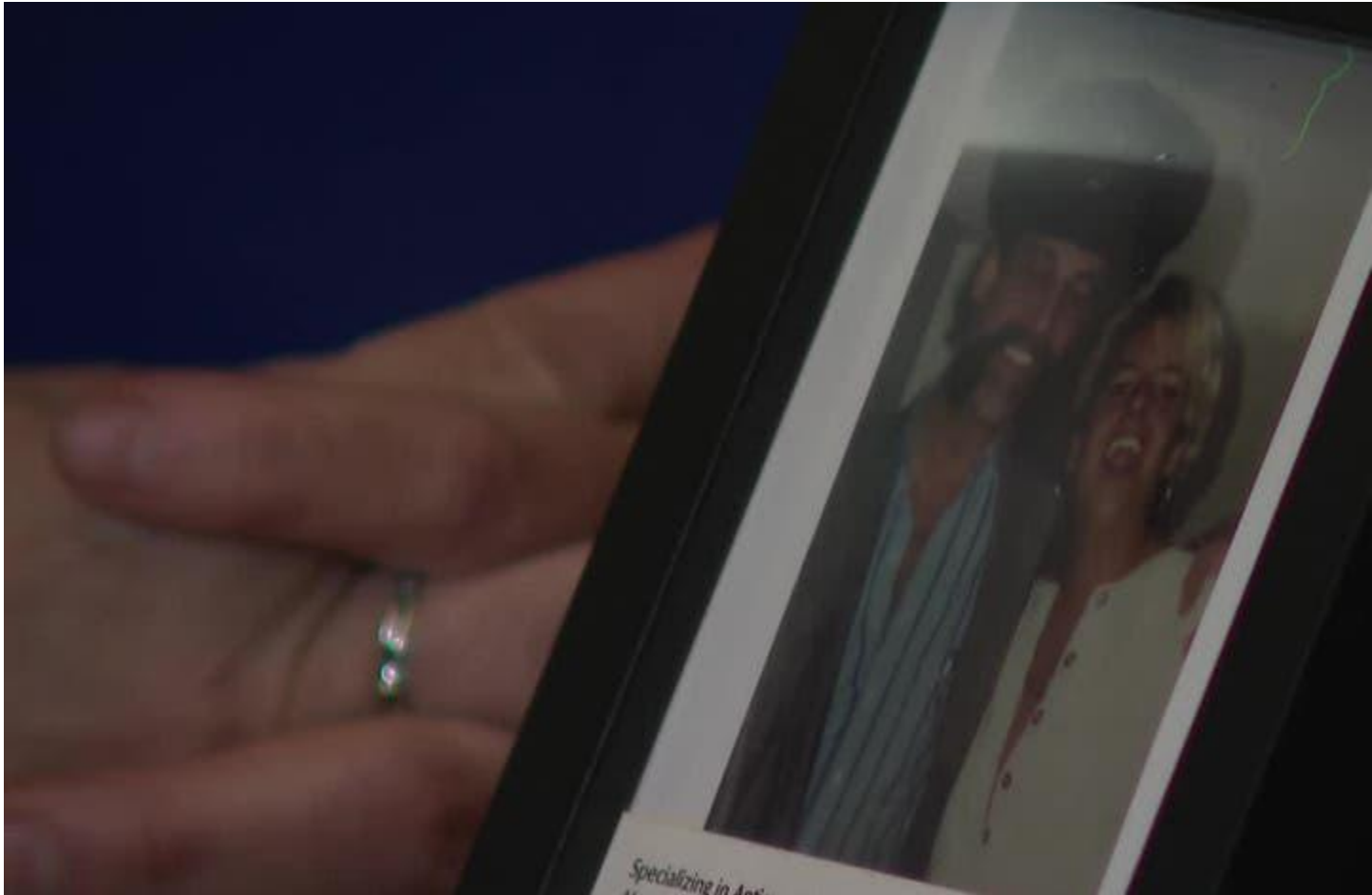


Her father, Thomas Schaffer, had been missing since 2005. Schaffer says he struggled with drug addiction and was unhoused, often staying near the Honey Creek Parkway area where she grew up.

"Now we can be under the same roof, like when we were growing up altogether, and I will see you on the other side," said Schaffer. "Now I can put to rest that nightmare in my brain of him getting murdered."

What we know:

Police say he was last seen near 76th and Oklahoma.



Investigators say the case remained unsolved for years until new evidence helped move it forward.

"The case sat cold, unfortunately, until 2020 and at another point, there was a human humerus or upper arm found in the creek," said Michael Simley with the Milwaukee County Medical Examiner's Office.

Before that discovery, a partial skull had been found in the Menomonee River in 2008.

Dig deeper:

A key clue came when Dr. Jordan Karsten with the Wisconsin State Crime Lab reviewed photos of the remains and noticed a unique feature.

"In the picture I noticed that he had a bump on his forehead and that's called a button osteoma," Karsten said.

Investigators found the same feature on the recovered skull.

"I saw the exact same feature that was discovered on the skull," Karsten said. "We were able to take X-rays of the skull and compare them to the X-rays of Thomas Schaffer and make a positive ID."

Milwaukee police missing persons investigator Jamie Sromalla says the identification was the result of teamwork among multiple agencies.

"I think ultimately all of the end goals is just providing closure to the families we work with and giving names to the unidentified," Sromalla said.

Another case:

Investigators say they are now hoping the case brings renewed attention to other unidentified victims.

Sromalla is asking the public to take another look at a separate case involving a young Black woman whose body was found in the Milwaukee River near Plankinton Avenue in March 1982.

Investigators believe the female victim was between 15 and 25 years old and had been deceased for about one week to three months.

UNIDENTIFIED PERSON

Date Found: March 16, 1982



Location Found: Milwaukee River	Hair Color: Brown
Age: 15-25	Eye Color: Black
Sex: Female	Height: 5'4"
Race: Black	Weight: 137 lbs.

An unidentified female was found deceased, floating in the Milwaukee River in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on March 16, 1982. Her body was found in the river near docks around 420 N. Plankinton Avenue. She had been deceased between approximately 1 week to 3 months.

- Both of her earlobes were pierced but no earrings
- Several scars. One surgical scar, 4 1/2" long ran vertically from her navel to pubic area. A smaller scar was found on her right forearm and an old burn scar was on the outside of her right ankle. The female possibly had her appendix removed at one point in life.
- Extensive dental work completed in life. Several fillings were seen and a tooth on her lower left jaw and upper middle tooth had been extracted earlier in life. She also wore a fixed partial bridge on her upper jaw covering the extracted upper tooth making it appear she had a full set of teeth on top jaw.
- Fully clothed wearing a tan hip-length wool jacket that had buttons on the front, blue slacks, a brown striped long-sleeved shirt (size medium), brown blouse that was zippered, and black calf length vinyl boots that had a zipper on the side (size 8) with green knee-high socks. Wearing a knit cap that had a scarf attached that covered her head.
- Green BIC lighter and an empty Tic Tac candy box was found with her.

**ANYONE HAVING INFORMATION SHOULD CONTACT
Milwaukee Police Department
(844) 232-6262**



Clearinghouse for Missing & Exploited
Children & Adults
Wisconsin Department of Justice
1-800- THE-HOPE (1-800-443-4673)

Name/Us: U1P7640

"She wasn't a missing persons investigation with us. There's a possibility she could be missing locally and someone just hasn't reported her missing," Sromalla said.

Authorities say both of her earlobes were pierced, though she was not wearing earrings when she was found.

Investigators noted several scars on her body, including one surgical scar about four-and-a-half inches long, running vertically from her navel toward her pubic area. Another smaller scar was found on her right forearm, and she had a surgical scar on the outside of her right ankle.

Officials say the woman may have had her appendix removed at some point in her life.

Dental records show she had extensive dental work.

When her body was recovered, the woman was fully clothed. She was wearing a tan hip-length wool jacket with buttons on the front, blue slacks, a brown striped long-sleeve shirt with a medium brown blouse zipped underneath, and black calf-length vinyl boots with heel caps.

She also wore green knee-high socks and a knit cap that had a scarf attached.

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The Milwaukee County Medical Examiner's Office says it still needs help identifying 12 unidentified people in cases dating back to 1974.

What you can do:

More information about those cases can be found through the [Milwaukee County Medical Examiner's Office](#) and the [Wisconsin Clearinghouse for Missing & Exploited Children and Adults](#).

The Source: The Milwaukee Police Department provided information in this report.

<https://www.fox6now.com/news/milwaukee-cold-case-1982-jane-doe-found-river-still-unidentified.amp>