

San Bernardino County Sheriff-Coroner Department Teams with Othram to Identify 1979 Homicide Victim

After 44 years, a murdered teen, whose remains were found in a Rancho Cucamonga, California vineyard, has been identified as 17-year-old **Karen Marie Heverly**.

Solved



Summary

In June 1979, the remains of an unidentified individual were discovered in Rancho Cucamonga, a city in San Bernardino County, California. While working in a vineyard near 8th Street and Rochester Avenue, a worker made the discovery at around 12:20 in the afternoon. Homicide investigators responded to the scene and found the body of what appeared to be a white female, between the ages of 18 and 30 years old. She had shoulder length light brown hair and brown eyes. No identifying marks, scars, or tattoos were noted. The woman was found to have sustained traumatic injuries and the manner of death was determined to be a homicide.



Details of the case were entered into National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) as UP2512. A forensic sketch depicting how the young woman appeared during her life was developed and released to the public in hopes that it would generate new leads about her identity. Investigators exhausted all leads attempting to identify the victim and the case went cold.

In 2023, San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department's Cold Case Homicide Team, with the assistance of the San Bernardino County Coroner Division, reopened the investigation in hopes of identifying the murdered woman. Funding for the advanced DNA testing and forensic genetic genealogy used in this case was provided by Roads to Justice (RTJ). We are grateful for the support funding this case and many other cases. DNA samples collected from the victim were sent to Othram in The Woodlands, Texas to determine if advanced DNA testing could help to identify the woman. Othram scientists developed a suitable DNA extract and used Forensic-Grade Genome Sequencing to build a comprehensive DNA profile. Othram's in-house forensic genetic genealogy team used the profile in a genealogical search to produce investigative leads.

Using these leads, the Sheriff's Cold Case Homicide Team and the Sheriff's Coroner Division conducted a follow up investigation. This investigation led to the positive identification of the victim as 17-year-old Karen Marie Heverly. Heverly was born January 27, 1962, and was originally from Jersey Shore, Pennsylvania. Heverly left her parents' home in 1979 under unknown circumstances at the age of 16 years old.

This is an active investigation, and anyone with information about this case is asked to contact Detective Justin Carty or Sergeant Justin Giles at the Specialized Investigations Division at [909-890-4904](tel:909-890-4904). Callers can remain anonymous and contact We-Tip at 800-78CRIME or www.wetip.com.