

Vacaville police's only 'Jane Doe' identified after nearly 28 years

[BY CASSIE DICKMAN](#)

MARCH 11, 2019 10:51 AM, UPDATED MARCH 11, 2019 01:43 PM

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Cynthia Merkley. VACAVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT

Cynthia Merkley was 38 years old when she died in 1991. After her body was found in an open field, police were unable to identify her for nearly 28 years.

But updated fingerprint technology has finally allowed Vacaville police to make a positive identification in the department's only "Jane Doe" case.

In April of 1991, contractors found a body while grading a field near Nut Tree Road and Burton Drive during construction of the Vacaville Premium Outlets, according to a Vacaville Police Department [Facebook post](#).

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Detectives determined the woman had been dead for two to three weeks and found no apparent signs of foul play or trauma to the body, police said. However, the coroner could not make an identification because of the condition of the body or determine cause of death.

In 1998, the woman's body was exhumed so a law enforcement expert could conduct facial reconstruction, police said.

Police sent out an artist's sketch and the reconstruction model to the public in hopes that someone would recognize her, but it was to no avail, police said

She remained a "Jane Doe" until the end of last year when detectives were notified that the California Department of Justice Missing Person's Unit had used fingerprints to identify her as Merkley, police said.

Police say Merkley, also known as Cynthia Bilardi, had been living between Santa Cruz and Santa Rosa. Merkley was estranged from her family for several years by the time she died and had not been reported missing at the time of her death, police said.

Police are asking anyone who knew Merkley at the time of her death to contact Detective Andy Polik at (707) 469-4814 or email at Andrew.Polik@cityofvacaville.com. Police said tips can remain anonymous.

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