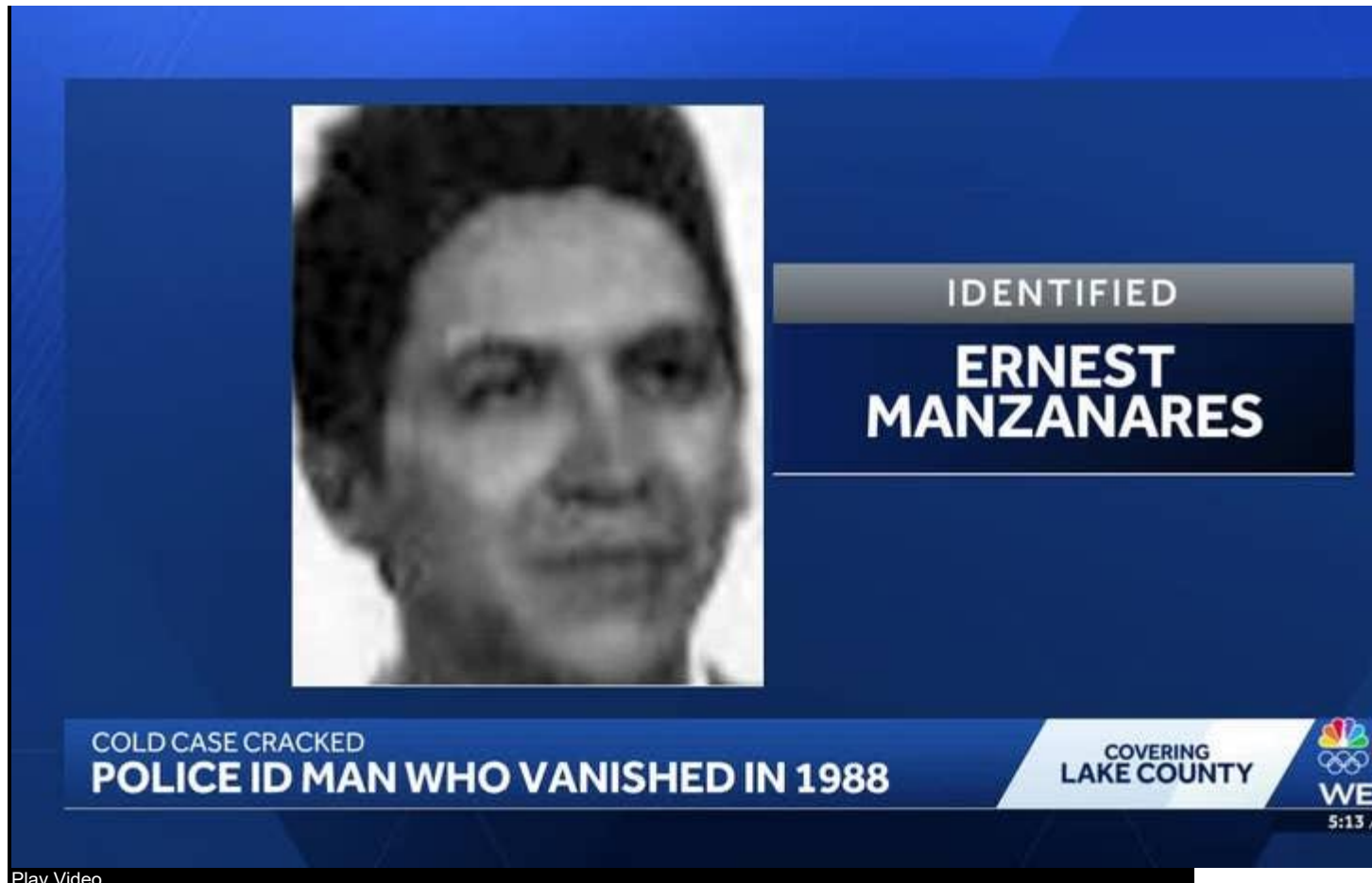


Man's remains ID'd in Clermont decades after confronting family about selling kids to motorcycle gang



IDENTIFIED

**ERNEST
MANZANARES**

COLD CASE CRACKED
POLICE ID MAN WHO VANISHED IN 1988

COVERING
LAKE COUNTY

WE
5:13

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Allison Petro

Digital Producer

CLERMONT, Fla. —

The remains of a man found in Clermont have been identified as a 23-year-old who went missing in 1988.

The man was identified as [Ernest Joe Manzanares](#), and officials on Friday described a twisted story involving some of his family selling children to a gang.

1988

Police said Manzanares, a Navajo man, left his family home in 1988 and never returned.

A retired Ocoee detective said the family was experiencing domestic violence and Manzanares had moved from Colorado to Ocoee to be with the family, convincing his dad to move out of the home.

His mother said Manzanares left to confront his dad and uncle after finding out they had a plan to sell his sister and niece, who were ages 7 and 8, to a motorcycle gang.

Manzanares was driving a red 1976 Chevrolet Monte Carlo and told his mother he would be back that night. He didn't take his wallet or jacket that night.

He was never seen again.

Detectives said both the uncle and father were involved in a motorcycle gang associated with prostitution, drugs and criminal activity. However, Manzanares was not involved with the gang.



Hearst Owned
Ernest Joe Manzanares

2009

In 2009, human remains were discovered while clearing land for a new park in Clermont.

A spent bullet was found near the remains.

Teeth, bone fragments and some clothing were found. However, the case went cold, officials said.

2025

In 2025, officials were contacted by the medical examiner's office.

Thanks to grant funding and new technology, the bones were analyzed using DNA genealogy through Othram.

"Othram combines laboratory science, software, and process to build a better and more robust infrastructure for justice," according to Othram's website.

His car was never located, according to officials.

Both Manzanares's uncle and father are deceased.

Officials said this was Ocoee's oldest missing persons case.

Manzanares was described as the oldest child and was the protector of the family.

<https://www.wesh.com/article/florida-man-remains-clermont-motorcycle-gang-confrontation/70347672>