

## Case Solve: Placer County, California, Jane Doe Identified as Melinda "Pip" Beardsley



The Placer County Sheriff's Office, in partnership with Moxxy Forensic Investigations, and the Reno Police Department, has confirmed the identity of the woman known for decades as the "Emigrant Gap Jane Doe."

Through advanced research by the Missing Persons Task Force at Moxxy and coordinated investigative efforts, the Jane Doe has been identified as Melinda "Pip" Beardsley, a mother who had been missing since the mid-1970s.

On December 17, 1977, the Jane Doe was found deceased in a snowbank in Emigrant Gap, Placer County, California. She had been the victim of homicide by strangulation and had remained unidentified for nearly five decades.

Melinda Beardsley was born in 1946 in rural Michigan, just north of Detroit. She was the youngest of six children and lovingly known by the nickname "Pip." As her sister Jill shared, "Melinda was always on the move, an energetic little girl with a dimpled smile and a great sense of humor."

Melinda was last known to be living in Carson City, Nevada. In 1976, she was arrested for driving under the influence in Reno, marking the last confirmed proof of life her family was able to locate. After that time, contact ceased, and for decades her loved ones were left without answers.

In June 2025, Melinda's family contacted **The Doe Network**, a volunteer organization devoted to assisting investigating agencies in bringing closure to national and international cold case concerning missing and unidentified persons. The Doe Network then contacted Moxxy Forensic Investigations to request their assistance in helping Melinda's family with research into her disappearance. Moxxy's Missing Persons Task Force conducted extensive research into her life and circumstances of her disappearance. Moxxy successfully worked with the Reno Police Department to ensure Melinda was formally reported missing, creating the opportunity for further investigative steps.

During continued research into potential unidentified human remains, Moxxy's team identified a possible match between Melinda and the Emigrant Gap Jane Doe. Moxxy then contacted the Placer County Coroner's Office, who coordinated the collection of a buccal swab from a close family member for DNA comparison.

In February 2026, DNA testing confirmed that the Emigrant Gap Jane Doe was Melinda Beardsley.

The Placer County Sheriff's Office is now actively investigating Melinda Beardsley's homicide.

"This identification represents decades of unanswered questions," said Sgt. Chris Carlton of the Placer County Sheriff's Office. "We are committed to pursuing justice in this case."

Moxxy Forensic Investigations is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that specializes in investigative genetic genealogy to identify unidentified human remains and assist in the identification of perpetrators in violent crimes. In addition to this work, Moxxy's Missing Persons Task Force works alongside law enforcement and partner organizations to conduct advanced research into missing persons cases to bring awareness to their case and provide answers to families.

"Every unidentified person is someone's child, sibling, or parent," said Katie Thomas/Co-Founder of Moxxy Forensic Investigations. "Restoring Melinda's name restores her dignity. We are honored to stand beside her family and our law enforcement partners in this work."

Most of Moxxy's cases are funded through private donations. Community support makes it possible for the organization to continue assisting families and agencies in complex cases like this one. Those wishing to support ongoing investigations can learn more at <https://www.moxxyforensics.com/donate>.

The Placer County Sheriff's Office is grateful for the support of the newly formed Placer County Cold Case Foundation, a nonprofit organization that helps fund cold case investigations. DNA testing and forensic analysis can be costly, and the foundation helps offset those expenses so investigators can continue pursuing answers in unsolved cases. You can learn more and donate through their website: [placercoldcase.org](http://placercoldcase.org).

Anyone with information related to the homicide of Melinda Beardsley is urged to contact the Placer County Sheriff's Office Investigation Tip Line at (530)889-7830.

For inquiries regarding Moxxy, contact Katie Thomas at [katie@moxxyforensics.com](mailto:katie@moxxyforensics.com).

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