

# Police Arrest Two Louisiana Men in 39-Year-Old Cold Case Murder of Teen



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Rapides Parish Sheriff's Office

After nearly four decades, Louisiana police have charged two men they believe brutally raped and murdered an 18-year-old girl before disposing of her body in the woods.

Leo Laird, 64, and Gary Haymon, 54, were both charged on Monday in the death of 18-year-old Donna Gayle Brazzell, according to the Rapides Parish Sheriff's Office.

The young woman's skeletal remains were found near Nichols Cemetery Road in 1980, but authorities were unable to identify them until last month.

### [The Daring DNA Hunt That Cracked France's Gruesome Cold Case](#)

"These cases never, ever leave a policeman's mind," Officer William Earl Hilton, who was first assigned the case, [told KBLA](#). "They prey on you all the time. Especially cases like this that you never solve."

Authorities declined to elaborate on what evidence led to Laird and Haymon's arrest, but said "sufficient probable cause was established." Both men have been charged with first-degree murder, first-degree rape, and aggravated kidnapping.

The mystery began on November 5, 1980, when the sheriff's office responded to a call about "skeletal remains found in a wooded area" near Nichols Cemetery Road. Working alongside Louisiana State University's Repository for Missing and Unidentified Persons, investigators were able to determine that the remains, which were likely in the woods for at least two months, belonged to a female victim between the ages of 16 and 21.

The lab also created a DNA profile and a facial sketch of the victim but were still unable to make a positive identification.

In 2014, the sheriff's office "received information in reference to the case" that led them to name Laird and Haymon as suspects. It remains unclear what new evidence pointed to the two men.

The sketch of the victim proved key to cracking the case five years later, when a woman contacted authorities claiming the picture resembled her long lost granddaughter. After a DNA comparison last month, authorities confirmed the remains belonged to the woman's relative, Donna Gayle Brazzell.

Laird, who would have been in his 20s at the time of the alleged murder, was arrested on August 14 and booked into the Rapides Parish Detention Center. He is currently being held on a \$1 million bond. Haymon is already serving a 49-year prison sentence for second-degree kidnapping, first-degree robbery, and public bribery, authorities said.

While he was originally set for release in 2047, authorities said arrangements “are in place to have Haymon booked into the Rapides Parish Detention Center in reference to his new charges.”