

DNA solves 1988 Shasta County missing persons cold case

- Meghan Estes
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REDDING, Calif. - The Shasta County Sheriff's Office says they have solved a decades-old missing persons case through DNA testing and a mother's recognition of her son's shoes.

In September 2025, the Sheriff's Office Major Crimes Unit reopened the disappearance of James Homer Wright Jr., a case dating back to 1988. James' mother recognized a pair of Nike high-top shoes associated with unidentified remains recovered in a 1990 Shasta County Coroner's case.

The Redding Police Department worked jointly with the Shasta County Sheriff's Office to pursue the lead. In the fall of 1990, unidentified remains were found on a small island on the Sacramento River south of Bonnyview.

A second search was conducted on the island in 1991 with additional remains found. DNA testing was not available in California until approximately 2004, with the Department of Justice being the sole agency capable of testing.

The remains were sent for testing in 2006. In 2007, the remains were only able to be identified as male.

Investigators obtained familial DNA samples, and the Redding Police Department coordinated testing through the California Department of Justice and Othram. In March 2026, DNA analysis positively identified the unidentified remains as those of James Homer Wright Jr.

Following additional investigative review to corroborate the findings, investigators from both agencies notified James' family of the identification on July 15, 2026.

https://www.actionnewsnow.com/news/dna-solves-1988-shasta-county-missing-persons-cold-case/article_6fb4a98b-ba44-4f0e-a7a3-ebdad48e7a57.html