

Three decades later, fingerprints help identify 18-year-old found dead in Ontario

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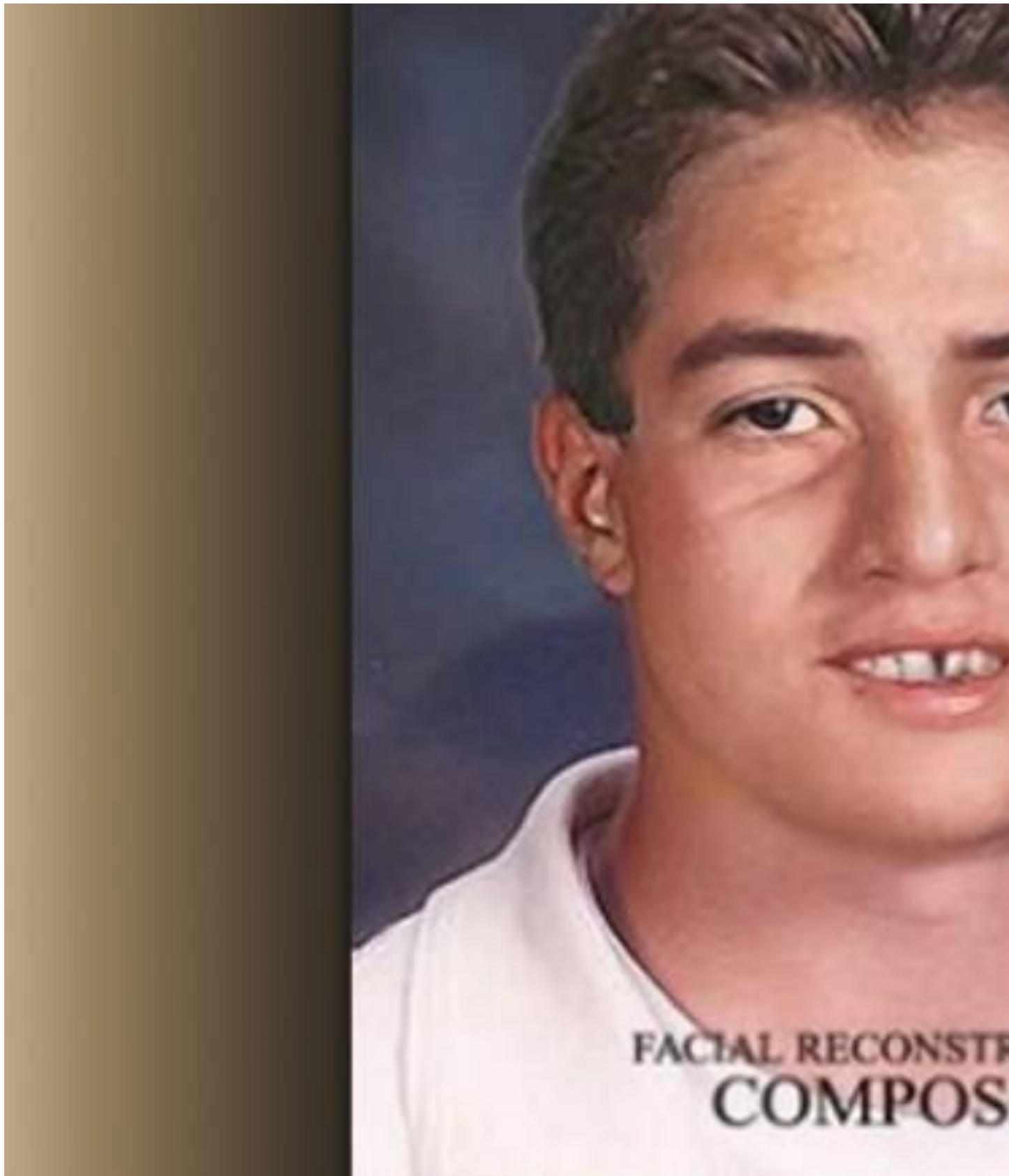
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More than three decades after the nude body of a sandy-haired young man was found in an abandoned Ontario home, new fingerprint technology has led authorities to identify him as 18-year-old Joseph Pace.

Pace's decomposing body was found in the empty home in the 1600 block of East Holt Boulevard on the morning of Aug. 21, 1986, according to Ontario police officials and a press release from the time.

After his positive identification, police learned Pace's body was found less than a mile from where his mother and stepfather worked as on-site managers and maintenance employees at the Capri Motel, located on Holt Boulevard near Grove Avenue. The motel is still operating today.

His family, mother, brother and two sisters, all currently live outside of California, police said.



In 2005, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children completed a facial

reconstruction composite of the body found in a vacant Ontario home in 1986. He was recently identified as Joseph Pace, 18. (Courtesy Ontario Police Department)
At that time, police estimated the young man was between 17 and 21 years old and had probably been in the home, dead, for about a week, according to authorities.

Investigators found nothing with the body that could help identify him, according to Sgt. Jeff Higbee, spokesman for the Ontario Police Department. There was no wallet, no jewelry and no identification. The San Bernardino County Coroner's office at that time assigned him the case name and number John Doe #27-86.

In the 1980s, investigators gathered fingerprints by using black ink and a paper card. Doe #27-86's prints were taken and submitted to several databases, unfortunately, "(d)ue to the decomposition of the body and the poor condition of the prints, the victim went unidentified and was only known as another John Doe," according to a police statement about the case.

For nearly 20 years the case sat with no one coming forward to provide enough evidence to identify the young man who investigators at the time said was long and thin but appeared to have been a teen in good physical shape.

Hoping to finally crack the case, in 2005, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children created a poster using facial reconstruction of what he may have looked like at that time. He would have been in his 30s.



Joe Pace yearbook school photo approx. 14/15 years old

Joseph Pace, recently identified through FBI fingerprints as a homicide victim, is shown here at age 14 or 15. About 9,000 posters were printed and sent to several locations, including schools, truck and travel stops and businesses in California, Arizona and Nevada. The poster was also featured on the television show, America's Most Wanted.

At about the same time, the unidentified young man's DNA profile was submitted to various national identification systems including the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System and the FBI's Violent Criminal Offender Program. No helpful information returned.

Then in March of this year, FBI authorities called the Ontario police station to alert them they had made a positive identification of the young man found in the bedroom of that vacant home. John Doe #27-86 was Joseph "Joe" Pace.

Federal investigators used a relatively new program called Next Generation Identification which makes identifying people through poor or partial fingerprints easier and more precise, according to police officials.

Through NGI, authorities were able to compare the degraded fingerprints submitted decades ago to a fingerprint card only a few months before Pace's death when the Ontario man was arrested for being drunk in public, according to the police statement.

Pace attended Ontario schools and briefly attended Buena Vista High School in Chino, but during his high school years, he moved back and forth between the Ontario and Chino

areas and Needles, police said. School records show he graduated from Needles High School only a few days before his body was discovered.



Joe Pace most recent photo near the time of his death

Using new fingerprint technology, FBI investigators were able to identify an Ontario man more than 30 years after his body was found in an abandoned home.

Family members told police they remembered Pace would hang around with a young man named Jesse and his older brother, Michael. The brothers lived in the area of Seventh Street and Grove Avenue in Ontario.

Although family members can't remember the brother's last names, detectives are looking to find the siblings to talk to them about Pace, officials said.

Pace's family also recalled an unnamed girlfriend the 18 year old had who lived in the Needles area.

Investigators would also like to speak to her, officials said.

Detectives ask anyone who might have information about Joseph Pace to contact Reserve Detective Diane Galindo at 909-395-2001 x 4190 or Detective Jeff Zeen 909-395-2744 on Case #860801642. Information can also be reported anonymously by calling WE-TIP at 800-78-CRIME or online at www.wetip.com.