

Body found in New Hampshire in 1971 identified as Boston woman



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Investigators say a body found along a New Hampshire highway in 1971 is that of a young Boston woman who disappeared 51 years ago.

On Oct. 6, 1971, the remains of an unidentified white woman were found in a then-wooded area at the end of Kilton Road near the Route 101 Bypass in Bedford, New Hampshire, which is now the on-ramp from Route 101 to Kilton Road.

More than five decades later, investigators said forensic testing, with assistance from the DNA Doe Project, the woman was identified as Katherine Ann Alston, 26, of Boston.

"Genetic genealogy was able to make a match, we were able to speak with the members of the family, both genetically and through interviews," said Senior New Hampshire Assistant Attorney General Ben Agati, who is chief of the Homicide Unit for New Hampshire Department of Justice.

The genetic match was from a sibling who made their DNA searchable via a commercial genealogy site, investigators said.

Alston was born in Chelsea in 1945, graduated from Dorchester High School and attended classes at Boston University. She married when she was 22 but later divorced, investigators said.

In 1971, Alston's parents and siblings moved from Massachusetts to Texas, where her father's family was from. Alston's siblings said she was supposed to meet them at Logan Airport for their flight to Texas, but she never showed up. "Not only did she not show up, but they didn't know why she was out of communication with them and what had happened, so it's a bit of a mystery," Agati said.



NH AG's office
Katherine Ann Alston

When her body was found in October 1971, investigators said she had been killed one to three months before. The cause of death has not been determined, but the manner of Alston's death is homicide.

Now that Alston has been identified, the focus of New Hampshire law enforcement has shifted to finding the person responsible for her death.

"We are determined to stay on this case and will work tirelessly with our law enforcement partners to follow any leads that may help us determine who might be responsible for Ms. Alston's death," said NH Attorney General John Formella.

No records show that anyone ever reported Alston as missing. Investigators said there is no evidence to suggest her divorce was not amicable, and her former husband has since died.

"There is a whole network of individuals who knew who Katherine Alston was, and when she went missing, none of those people reported her missing," Agati said.

At the time of her death, Alston was reportedly living at 36 Beacon St. in Boston with roommate, David Cormier, with whom investigators hope to speak.

In 1993 and then again in 2006, the New Hampshire State Police and Office of the Chief Medical Examiner consulted with experts in the field of clay facial reconstruction to create an impression of the then-unidentified woman's appearance. In 2020, the New Hampshire Cold Case Unit consulted with forensic anthropologists and experts in the field of digital facial reconstruction to create an updated impression of her possible appearance.