

Family gets closure in discovery of Long Beach woman's body in Utah

By [Greg Yee](#), Press-Telegram

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JUAB COUNTY, UTAH >> After waiting nearly 40 years for closure, the family of Marilee Bruszer finally has some answers.

Bruszer vanished from her Belmont Shore apartment on Tuesday Aug. 22, 1978. The Juab County Sheriff's Office announced Wednesday that her body was identified through DNA testing.

"There's the shock, the pain, the hurt, the sadness," said Don Bruszer, her cousin and a South Gate resident.

Don was raised in Chicago, while Marilee's side of the family lived in South Gate, so the family branches had only intermittent contact until he decided to move to Southern California in 1968, he said.

"They were all so good to me," Don Bruszer said. "She was a blonde, a little shy ... she was a sweetheart."

After moving, he found a job with McDonnell Douglas.

"She'd since moved to an apartment in Belmont Shore," Don Bruszer said. "We were all shocked this could happen in a community like that. It was pretty awful not knowing."

Marilee Bruszer was reported missing Aug. 22, 1978. The body eventually identified as her's was found the next month at Yuba Reservoir, part of a state park in Central Utah about an hour south of Provo along Interstate 15.

The medical examiner's office at the time ruled that she died of strangulation, but her body remained unidentified.

In 2014, Juab Sheriff's Lt. Craig Ryan obtained a sample of the victim's hair from the medical examiner's office and sent it to the University of North Texas Health Science Center for DNA analysis.

On Aug. 20, 2015, Ryan learned that the DNA in the victim's hair matched samples taken from Bruszer's mother and a sibling, the sheriff's news release said.

The Long Beach Police Department is reopening her case as a homicide investigation.

During the intervening years, Don Bruszer said he and his family had hoped she would be found, but knew police hardly had any leads.

“You start to wonder if this was some kind of white slavery thing, if she was taken away and kept,” he said. “We expected she would come in one day and say, ‘I know I’ve been gone. I was finally able to get away.’”

Now the family knows what happened, but the criminal investigation is just beginning.

Don Bruszer, who is also a pastor at [Grace Bible Church in South Gate](#), said he at least has a measure of peace from the faith he shared with his cousin.

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“She wasn’t a member of our church, but she was Catholic,” he said. “We believe she’s home with the Lord.”

The Salt Lake Tribune contributed to this report.

Source:

<http://www.presstelegram.com/general-news/20151002/family-gets-closure-in-discovery-of-long-beach-womans-body-in-utah>

Utah police identify two cold-case slaying victims

The Salt Lake Tribune

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Crime » DNA testing provides identities of Nevada boy, California woman.

The Juab County Sheriff’s Office announced Wednesday that the victims of two unrelated cold-case homicides — the 1994 murder of a 4-year-old boy and the 1978 murder of a 33-year-old woman — had been identified due to DNA testing.

The boy was identified as Rene A. Romero, from Reno, Nev., whose parents were prosecuted and sentenced for the boy's Nov. 24, 1994 murder, even though his body had not been found, the Juab County Sheriff's Office said in a news release.

The woman was identified as Marilee Bruszer, 33, from Long Beach, Calif., who was reported missing on Aug. 22, 1978, according to the news release.

In the case of the boy, sheriff's deputies responded to Juab Lake on the report of a human skull in November 1996.

The skull was recovered along with other bones and hair, which were taken to the Utah Medical Examiner's Office. The case was treated like a homicide and listed on the National Unidentified Persons Data System, the news release said.

In November 2013, Juab sheriff's Lt. Craig Ryan arranged to have the evidence released to him from the medical examiner, and he sent a bone to the University of North Texas Health Science Center in hopes of getting a DNA profile.

In January 2014, Ryan received confirmation from UNT Health Science Center that a DNA match had identified the victim as Rene Romero, due to a match with his mother, Ana Romero. Follow-up on this case with the Reno Police Department confirmed that Rene Romero had been murdered in Reno, the news release said.

In the second case, sheriff's officers responded in September 1978 to the report of a female body at Yuba Reservoir.

The medical examiner's office ruled that the victim died from strangulation, but the victim was unidentified, the news release said.

Then, in 2014, Ryan obtained a sample of the victim's hair from the medical examiner's office and sent it to the UNT Health Science Center and had a DNA profile established.

On Aug. 20, 2015, Ryan learned that a DNA match had been made with Bruszer's mother and a sibling, the news release said.

The Long Beach Police Department — which had listed Bruszer as a missing endangered person — advised the Juab Sheriff's Office that now, having a positive notification on the death of the victim, they would reopen that case as a homicide case and try to follow leads again.

Notification to Bruszer's remaining family members was made by Long Beach police, the news release said.

Source: <http://www.sltrib.com/home/3011126-155/utah-police-identify-two-cold-case-murder>

2 cold case victims identified in Juab Co. thanks to DNA

By Ben Lockhart | Posted Sep 30th, 2015 @ 9:18pm

NEPHI — A woman found dead at Yuba Reservoir in 1978 was positively identified by DNA testing in August, becoming the second named cold case victim in Juab County in the past two years, police say.

Marilee Bruszer (Case from 1978)

Marilee Bruszer, from Long Beach, California, was identified when DNA sample submissions from her mother and a sibling matched a hair sample provided by the Juab County Sheriff's Office to the University of North Texas Health Science Center.

Bruszer was 33-years-old when she went missing on Aug. 22, 1978. The state medical examiner's office ruled at the time she died by strangulation, said Juab County Sheriff Douglas Anderson. The Long Beach Police Department has said it will now reopen Bruszer's missing person case as a homicide investigation.

Bruszer's characteristics were matched against the cases of other missing women for several years, including comparisons with those women's dental records, but with no success.

"The case went cold with no new leads for a number of years," Anderson said.

After receiving some physical evidence from the Davis County Sheriff's Office that had been "unknown to anyone since 1978," Juab County investigators began again looking into the case in earnest.

Davis County Sheriff's Sgt. DeAnn Servey said Wednesday that a detective was searching through the agency's evidence room while investigating another cold case and found something that took him aback.

"He found some hair in the evidence locker, and it was only labeled: 'Hair from Yuba Lake body.' That's it," Servey said.

Retired Davis County Sheriff's Capt. Kenny Payne worked for both the sheriff's office and state medical examiner's office at the time and added that is the only conceivable reason "why we had that evidence in our locker."

He found some hair in the evidence locker, and it was only labeled: 'Hair from Yuba Lake body.' That's it.

-Sgt. DeAnn Servey

The detective sent the sample to Juab County, asking them to send it to UNT Health Science Center, which Servey says has "the best of the best" DNA profiling methods and nationwide DNA databases.

Juab County officials said they received the sample in 2013. The evidence from Davis County wasn't directly used because it had been in that county's possession unsupervised for so long, Anderson said.

However, the Juab County Sheriff's Office requested a sample of Bruszer's hair from the state medical examiner's office in 2014 and sent it to Texas for testing.

There, a DNA profile was created from the sample, and it matched with previous DNA submissions from two of Bruszer's family members. Long Beach police notified Bruszer's relatives, telling them she had been positively identified as of Aug. 22, Anderson said.

Juab County also announced Wednesday that in January 2014, investigators positively identified a 4-year-old boy whose decayed remains were found in the area of Juab Lake nearly 19 years ago.

Rene A. Romero (Case from 1996)

Rene A. Romero, of Reno, Nevada, was found dead in November 1996. In November 2013, the Juab County Sheriff's Office sent one of several bones obtained from the state medical examiner's office to the UNT Health Science Center. The center soon found the bone's DNA matched a forensic sample from Romero's mother, Ana Romero, indicating it was his.

Alvaro Ortiz, the boy's stepfather, was convicted of murdering his stepson in Reno, despite no body to use as evidence during his trial. Ortiz is currently serving a lifetime prison sentence with no opportunity for parole, Anderson said.

Ana Romero was also convicted for her role in her son's death and is currently out of prison on parole.

Prosecutors listed Nov. 24, 1994, as the date of Rene Romero's death. Reno police confirmed with Juab County that the boy had in fact been killed in Reno, despite his body being found in Utah, Anderson said.

The Juab County Sheriff's Office had separately investigated the discovery of Rene Romero's body as a homicide case, but investigators were unable to reach a resolution, despite listing information about his remains on a national missing persons database.

Source: <http://www.ksl.com/?sid=36762352&nid=148>