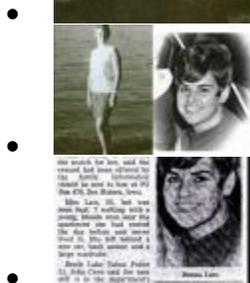


# DNA linked to skull identifies South Lake Tahoe woman missing since 1970

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Submitted by [Jeff Munson](#) on Wed, 12/27/2023 - 12:33pm



Paula Peterson, SouthTahoeNow.com

An identification has been made in the cold case investigation of a South Lake Tahoe woman who went missing in 1970. It has been 53 years since Donna Ann Lass was last seen alive while working at the then Sahara Tahoe.

Her disappearance was covered in a [South Tahoe Now story](#) marking the 50th anniversary of that date, Sept. 6, 1970.

In an announcement on Wednesday, Dec. 27, 2023, the Placer County Sheriff's Office said they identified a skull that was found in 1986 as being that of Donna Lass.

PCSO located an unidentified skull off of Hwy 20 near Interstate 80 in 1986, but there was no evidence at the scene identifying who the victim was, or how the crime was committed. They preserved the skull and classified the case as a Jane Doe investigation.

A cold case team was recently started by the Placer County Sheriff's Office and the Placer County District Attorney's Office, and resources were dedicated to investigating unsolved missing persons cases and suspicious death cases. The skull of Jane Doe was sent to the California Department of Justice to utilize new DNA forensic services.

They matched DNA from the skull with DNA the South Lake Tahoe Police Department (SLTPD) had from a member of Donna Lass's family about four years ago.

SLTPD contacted Donna's surviving family members last week, telling them her remains had been identified.

"The family is grateful for a bit of closure," said SLTPD Lt. Jeff Roberson.

"We are extremely grateful that this team effort was able to bring closure to the Lass family and are hopeful that cold case detectives can continue to make advances in these cases," said PCSO on social media.

Donna had been working at the Sahara Tahoe in the first aid room and saw a patient at 1:30 a.m. on Sept. 6, 1970. She never entered that patient's info which was expected at 1:45 a.m., and did not clock out at the end of her shift at 2 a.m.

Donna's car and belongings had been found in her new apartment on Pioneer Trail except for her purse and what she was wearing at work.

The next day, an unknown male called her landlord and employer, stating Lass wouldn't be returning due to a family emergency. The call was a hoax, and there had been no trace of Lass until now.

At one time Lass was identified as a possible victim of the Zodiac Killer, though the facts didn't match the behavior of the serial killer who terrorized the Bay Area in the 1970s.

South Lake Tahoe police will continue to look into any leads in the future on the Donna Lass case. People with any information are asked to contact the detective division at at [cybertips@cityofslt.us](mailto:cybertips@cityofslt.us).

[https://carsonnow.org/story/12/27/2023/dna-linked-skull-identifies-south-lake-tahoe-woman-missing-1970?page=1&fbclid=IwAR0-vls1rBvbIFILh1M3BHAB6IxSI05YtEU18nm\\_OHtMj4ZnZU1WVXR8eiM](https://carsonnow.org/story/12/27/2023/dna-linked-skull-identifies-south-lake-tahoe-woman-missing-1970?page=1&fbclid=IwAR0-vls1rBvbIFILh1M3BHAB6IxSI05YtEU18nm_OHtMj4ZnZU1WVXR8eiM)