

Nonprofit cracks 45-year-old cold case to name woman pulled from Mississippi River

AUGUST 2, 2022 / 1:35 PM / CBS MINNESOTA

ST. PAUL, Minn. -- A team of volunteer DNA researchers was able to trace genealogy clues to determine the identity of a young woman pulled from the Mississippi River in St. Paul nearly 50 years ago.

The nonprofit DNA Doe Project says it determined the woman was Mary Jensen. Her body was pulled from the river in 1977. At the time, investigators were unable to determine how long she'd been in the water or her cause of death. The case went cold for more than 45 years.

However, in March of 2021, Butch Huston with the Ramsey County Medical Examiner's Office, reached out to the DNA Doe Project, group said. Later that summer, a team of researchers delved into the case.

The team spent more than 850 hours looking at DNA evidence and following genealogy clues to figure out the woman's identity.

The researchers cracked the case after discovering recent links to Finland and Italy. The search led investigators to comb through documents from those two countries, and they eventually determined that the woman was Jensen.