

Cold Case: Young mother who vanished in 1986 linked to skeletal remains 33 years later

In August 1986, 22-year-old Paula Boudreaux disappeared from Golden Meadow in Lafourche Parish, leaving behind a 4-year-old son.



Author: WWL Staff

Published: 1:46 PM CDT April 19, 2023

Updated: 5:13 PM CDT April 19, 2023

LACOMBE, La. — Thirty-three years after a body was found near [Slidell](#), investigators say they've identified the remains as missing mother who vanished from Lafourche Parish in 1986.

Now, authorities are hoping that new leads will help determine how she died and how her body wound up 105 miles away from her home in Golden Meadow.

In August 1986, 22-year-old Paula Boudreaux disappeared from Golden Meadow in Lafourche Parish, leaving behind a 4-year-old son. Despite several leads, detectives ultimately were unable to determine what happened to her.

In January 1989, a sportsman found skeletal remains near Slidell. Those remains were sent to the LSU Forensic Anthropology Computer Enhancement Services (FACES) Lab, and the St. Tammany Parish Coroner wasn't involved.

Thirty-three years later, current St. Tammany Coroner Dr. Charles Preston said he contacted the FACES Lab requesting inventory of overlapping or unsolved cases.

Preston said that an email tip to the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System received in October 2022 suggested that investigators look at Boudreaux's disappearance and that there may be a link to the unidentified remains found in 1989.

The coroner said cold case investigator Chris Knoblauch contacted Lafourche Parish Sheriff Craig Webre, whose investigators collected DNA from Boudreaux's known surviving relatives. Using that DNA, Preston linked the remains found in 1989 to Boudreaux in January 2023. The link prompted Preston to call the St. Tammany Parish Sheriff's Office to join the investigation.

Preston said that from a forensic standpoint, the case was "closed," but there was still work to be done for law enforcement.

"Knowing who she was does not, after all, explain how she died – or how she wound up in Slidell, 105 miles away," Preston said.

Family members were contacted, but the investigation was kept quiet while the LPSO and STPSO did their work. Last week, investigators decided it was time to go public in hopes that more leads may develop.

"It's unfortunate that Ms. Boudreaux's identity remained undiscovered all these years while science caught up with mystery," Preston said. "We're happy to have played a role in bringing some measure of closure to her family, and to have contributed substantially to the work of local law enforcement. As the only Coroner's Office in the state with an in-house DNA lab, we are able to provide these investigative tools that bring not only emotional closure, but justice. We have now identified the victim, and we will

continue to work with these sheriff's offices as they seek to identify whoever is responsible for her death."

"Mrs. Boudreaux's family has been left with unanswered questions for the past 33 years, but today, they can finally begin to have some closure," Lafourche Parish Sheriff Craig Webre said. "With that said, this is only the first piece of the puzzle. Now, our investigators will work with St. Tammany Parish investigators, and likely other jurisdictions as well, as we attempt to determine what happened to Mrs. Boudreaux. We hope this ongoing investigation displays our commitment to finding the truth in every case, even when it means waiting for the technology to catch up to that investigation. We also implore anyone who may have any information which might be helpful in this case to come forward."

"We never forget the victim of any crime, and we are thankful that more than 30 years later due to the cooperation between our agencies and the other entities involved, we are finally able to begin the process to help provide closure for Ms. Boudreaux's family," Sheriff Randy Smith said. "Our detectives will continue to work with the detectives in Lafourche Parish to determine what happened to Ms. Boudreaux and how her body ended up in St. Tammany Parish so the person or persons responsible can be held accountable."