

Pulaski County (Mo.) detectives identify woman considered “Jane Doe” since death in 1981

ST. ROBERT, Mo. (KY3) - The Pulaski County Sheriff's Office and the DNA Doe Project identified a woman considered a “Jane Doe” since 1981.



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Detectives say Karen Kay Knippers is a victim of an apparent homicide. Detectives found her body at a low-water crossing in May of 1981 near Dixon. Law enforcement buried her in the Waynesville Cemetery with “Jane Doe” on the gravesite after they could not identify her.

In 2012, Lieutenant Dottie Taylor of the Missouri Highway Patrol entered Knippers’ profile in the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System. In 2015 Detective DJ Renno, and Pulaski County Coroner Mikel Hartness obtained a court order for the exhumation of “Jane Doe’s” remains to obtain DNA for use in identification. They sent the remains to the University of North Texas Center for Human Identification in Fort Worth for DNA and Forensic Anthropology testing. In January 2016, the school released findings, claiming the extraction and development of DNA was successful. In May 2016, the University of South Florida conducted forensic Imaging and Isotope analysis.

In April 2019, detectives submitted Jane Doe’s remains to the DNA Doe Project, in Sebastopol, California. The DNA Doe Project is a volunteer organization using genetic genealogy to identify relatives through DNA research. In December 2019, The DNA Doe Project provided a possible name of Jane Doe and the name of a possible relative. Investigators contacted Knippers’ family

in Virginia. Knippers' brother mentioned he had lost contact with his sister in the early 1980s. After submitting a sample, the two became a match.

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