

# Police: Remains of QC man missing for 28 years identified

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**UPDATE:** A Moline man missing for 28 years drowned in 1994, Moline Police say.

At a news conference Monday, Moline Police announced the remains of Steven Asplund have been identified.

On Jan. 10, 1994, Steven Asplund was reported missing to the Moline Police Department by his fiancée. He had lived in a residence in the 1500 block of 28th Avenue. They were renovating it and planned to be married later in the year.

On Sunday evening, Jan. 9, 1994, Asplund went to a friend's residence in the 500 block of 20th Avenue to borrow a caulking gun. After hanging out for a while, Asplund left in his black Ford Mustang and was never seen again. He was wearing a T-shirt, Chicago Bears jacket, gray sweatpants and white tennis shoes.

A few days after his disappearance, Asplund's car was found at Leach Park in Bettendorf. Items of evidence recovered from the car were analyzed in 1994 through fingerprints examination. Police received only one tip that he had been seen in a tavern on 7<sup>th</sup> Street in Moline, but police say that it was baseless.



Moline Police Department)

(photos courtesy of

## **A break in late 2021**

In November 2021, Moline Police Department Detective Mike Griffin researched the National Missing and Unidentified System (NAMUS) database for recovered/unidentified remains along the Mississippi River from Moline to Memphis, Tenn.

Detective Griffin worked backward from Tennessee and within a time frame of 1994-1996, he located a recovered body of a man in St. Louis County, Missouri from March 1994. The body in St. Louis County was found on March 21, 1994, by barge dock workers at the beginning of their shift. The body, which was in a debris field next to a barge in the docking area, had gray sweatpants and white shoes.

The entry in NAMUS had a discrepancy on the teeth that initially misled investigators. In 2022, Detective Griffin enlisted the help of Dr. Lindsay Trammell, a forensic anthropologist with the St. Louis County Medical Examiner's office. The investigative team compared the Moline missing person case to the St. Louis County unidentified person case.

After the body was exhumed, a bone sample, along with DNA from Steve's family, were submitted to the Illinois State Police Crime Lab.

Attempts by the St. Louis County authorities to identify the body in 1994 were unsuccessful and fingerprints were not obtained at the time because of the condition of the body, which did have gray sweatpants and white shoes, police said.

After exhausting all efforts, the team determined they had to exhume the body for further examination. The team added Forensic Scientist Aaron Small with Illinois State Police Forensic Services Laboratory in Springfield to conduct DNA analysis and comparison.

On June 8, 2022, the unidentified remains were exhumed in St. Louis and a bone sample was obtained from the remains. On Sept. 6, after completion of processing by ISP, it was determined the unidentified remains in St. Louis County on March 21, 1994, were those of Steven Asplund. Amy Jenkinson, regional program specialist for NAMUS, also assisted.

On Sept. 6, the remains were identified. Police say Asplund drowned after he entered the water in Bettendorf, and, after he began to make his way down the river, became tangled up or towed by a barge.

No foul play is suspected, and no charges will be filed.

Chief Darren Gault said Monday at a news conference the family did not want to appear in person, but provided a statement:

### **Statement from Steve Asplund's family**

"Thanks to all the media for shining light on Steve's disappearance today, and over the past 29 years. The news, while bittersweet, will allow us some closure. We'll still think of Steve every day, and miss him just the same, but these answers will provide comfort to us and his friends.

"We would like to thank the hundreds of people who attended the vigils, and helped with searches we did when he first disappeared. The community support and concern has meant a lot to us, and we appreciate it more than we can possibly express.

"We'd also like to thank the Moline Police Department, and all the detectives who have been involved over the years, but we would especially like to thank Detective Mike Griffin, who's been working with us for many years now," the family statement says.

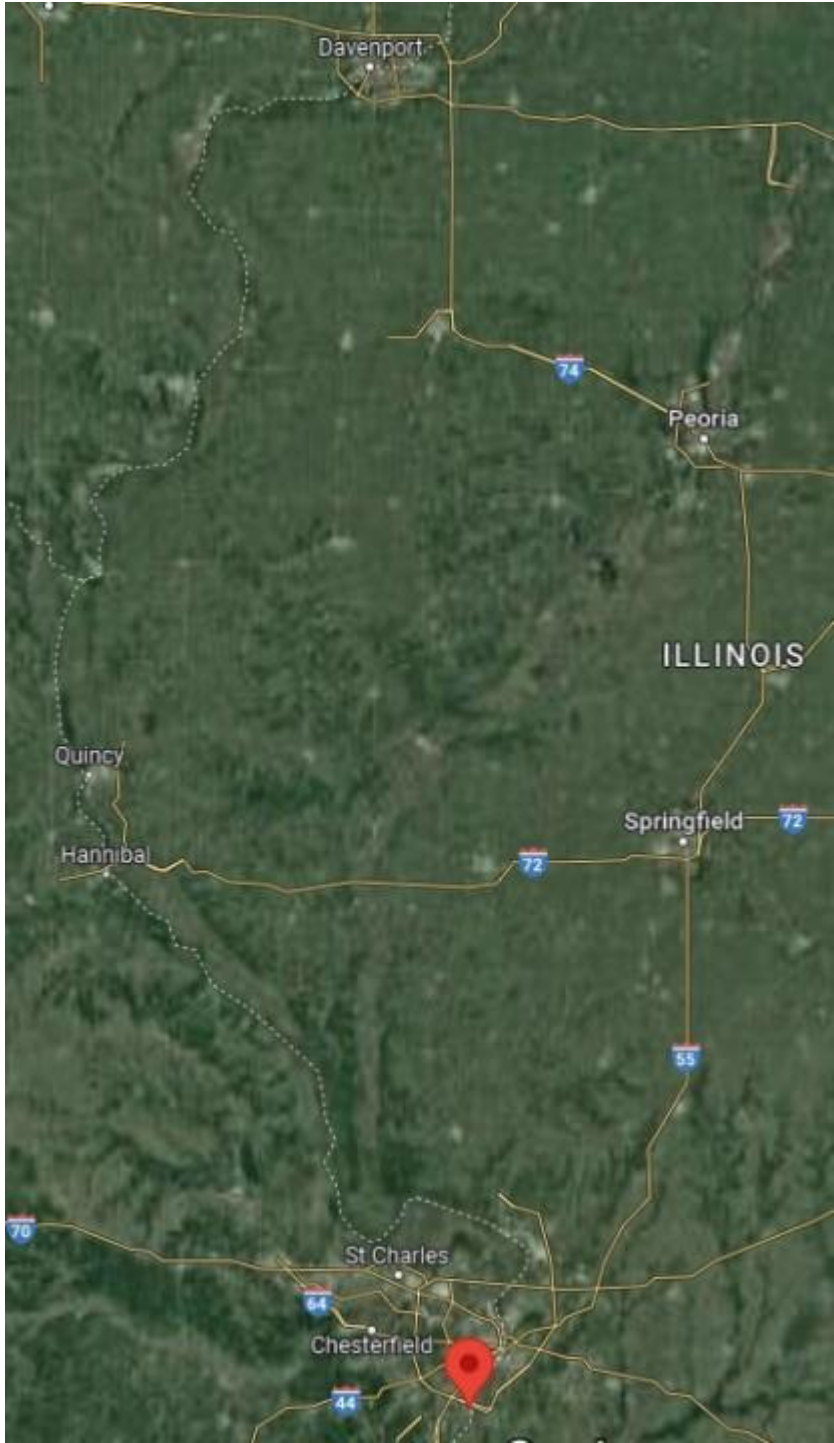
"He has stayed in touch and communicated with us even when there wasn't anything new to report. He's a good man... and his compassion, and concern for getting us answers has always been obvious. We feel blessed that he became involved in the case.

“We would also like to thank the Doctor of Forensic Anthropology for the St. Louis County Medical Examiner’s office, Dr. Lindsay Trammell and Forensic Scientist Aaron Small from the Illinois State Police,” the family said. “Without their assistance we might never have known what happened. Their work will allow us to bring Steve back home, and we thank you for that.

“Thanks to everyone for your concern over the years, and know that it has been appreciated,” said the statement, emailed to Chief Darren Gault from Steve’s brother Mike Asplund, Sept. 12, 2022.

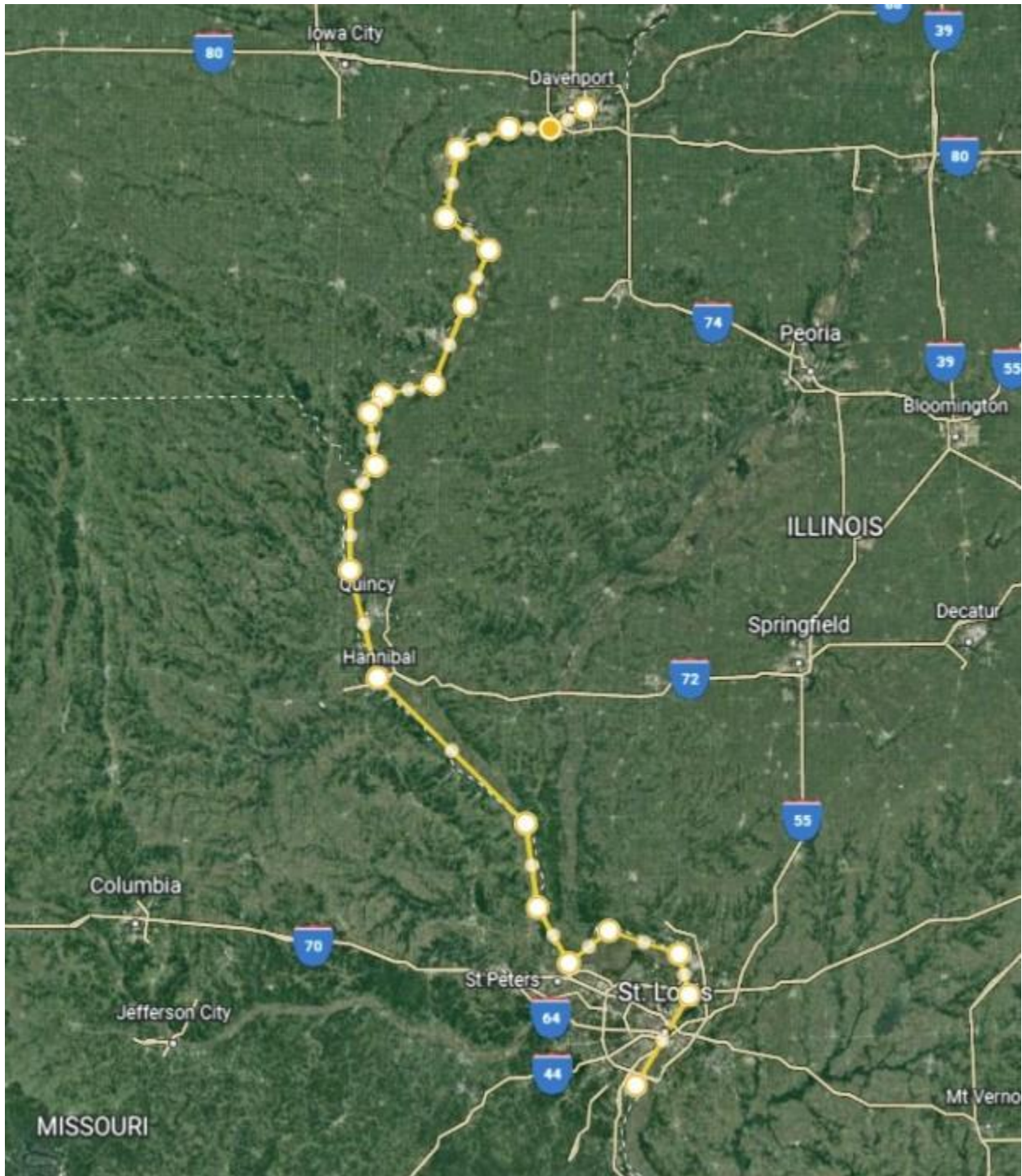
The remains are currently buried in Friedens Cemetery, St. Louis, Mo. The Moline Police Department is working with the family to make arrangements on a decision for a final resting place for Asplund, Gault said.

“From all of us at the Moline Police Department, we wish to extend our deepest condolences to the Asplund family as they work through the emotions of the death of Mr. Asplund again after 28 years,” Gault said Monday. “Every day is difficult for the family of a missing person. Even with this news many years later, the grief is still painful. Please respect the privacy of the Asplund family while they process the grief and closure of this case.”









(maps, provided by Moline Police, show the areas involved in the case)

## **Recognition for Detective Griffin**

“Although this is a sad day, I am very proud of the work of the Moline Police Department and the tireless pursuit of truth for families seeking answers about loved ones,” Gault said. “I would like to



commend Moline Police Department Detective Mike Griffin, who is extremely passionate about policing, investigations and serving the community.”

“Over the years, you have heard his name before solving extremely difficult and sometimes cases that have spanned decades. This isn’t his first success story and it won’t be his last. His dedication, passion and expertise is extraordinary. He spent countless hours examining water routes, unidentified bodies, case files and reports in this case. He did not give up, even when the initial review appeared this body wasn’t Mr. Asplund. He works hard for the community he serves and we are lucky to have him on our team.”

## **Investigations continue**

“While this concludes the investigation into the disappearance of Steven Asplund, the work of the Moline Police Department continues in serving the community,” Gault continued. “We still search for answers in cases such as Trudy Appleby who went missing in 1996; Jerry Wolking who went missing in 1990; Baby September, an infanticide from 1993; and Corey Harrell Jr. who was murdered in 2018. The Moline Police Department will continue to investigate these cases regardless of time passing.

“We hope with continued public cooperation, advancements in scientific technology, and passionate police officers, one day we will have answers for these cases as well.”

**EARLIER:** After 28 years, Moline Police have brought some closure to the family and friends of a Moline man who has been missing since 1994.

At a 3:30 p.m. news conference Monday, Moline Police announced they have identified the remains of Steve Asplund, of Moline, who was 32 when he disappeared on Jan. 9, 1994.



Steve Asplund (photo contributed)

## **He drove away .... and vanished**

He left a friend's Moline residence near 4th Street and 20th Avenue in his Ford Mustang and vanished.

He had gone to his friend's house to borrow a caulking gun. At 7:30 p.m. he left for home, which was close by.

He never made it home. When he hadn't shown up by 6 a.m. the next day, his fiancée reported him missing to Moline Police.

His 1987 Ford Mustang was found abandoned in a parking lot at the 13th Street landing at the base of the Interstate 74 Bridge in Bettendorf. Evidence gathered from the car was inconclusive.

In August of 1994, Steve's medical insurance card was found on the rail of a foot bridge at Loud Thunder Forest Preserve in Rock Island County. Officers searched the river below for his body but found nothing related to the case.

At the time, police said they thought the card could have been placed there deliberately, possibly by someone who found it somewhere. On the other hand, it may have been lost before Steve disappeared, and may not have any connection to his disappearance.

For many years, police tried to find a man with a beard who was a possible witness. The man was described as having a tattoo of the letters “HR” on the back of his left hand, and he wore a Green Bay Packers jacket.

That person was identified by police in 2014 but his identity never was not publicized.

Steve worked for a Quad-City tool-and-die maker at the time of his disappearance. From the beginning, law enforcement and Steve’s family thought foul play was involved.

Through the years, Steve’s credit cards had not been used, and no money was withdrawn from his bank account.

## **A plea in 2018**

In 2018, Moline Police asked for help from the community in a news release:

*On January 11, Steve’s vehicle a red Ford Mustang was found unoccupied near the base of Interstate 74 Bridge in Bettendorf.*

*It has been 24 years since anyone saw or heard from Steve, who has seemingly vanished without a trace.*

*Over the course of the last few years, we have conducted advanced testing on items of evidence that wasn’t available in 1994 and are continuing to use the technological advances in science to pursue justice in this case.*

source: <https://www.ourquadcities.com/news/crime/police-remains-of-qc-man-missing-for-28-years-identified/>