

Son Says Skull Fragment Of Mother Joanne Dolly Burmer Found In Nevada County

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NEVADA CITY (CBS13) — Human remains that were discovered in Nevada County in 1993 have finally been identified. The missing woman's son says the discovery brings his family closure.

In August of this year, the Nevada County Sheriff's Office was notified of a DNA match made between the 1993 remains case and Joanne Dolly Burmer, a person reported missing in Nevada County in 1973.

The sheriff's office said Burmer was 25 years old when she was reported missing on March 8, 1973. Burmer's friends told deputies they dropped her off at Highway 20 and Excelsior Point Road to go snowshoeing to an

acquaintance's residence three miles away on Feb. 27, 1973. More than a week later, she was reported missing.



Philip and Joanne (credit: Philip Desmet)

Philip Desmet was just three years old when his mother went missing. That memory is still vivid to him, years later.

“She drove off, and that was the last time I remember seeing her. I remember being upset because she was

leaving to go somewhere without me. I remember running to the door, to the window and she was getting into a vehicle,” Desmet said.

Burmer drove away with some friends who dropped her off near Highway 20, leaving her son behind. Desmet, who was born Robert Burmer, was eventually adopted, and that couple changed his name to Philip.

He has followed his mother’s case and collected photos of his family for decades. Growing up, he still had a relationship with Ruth, his biological maternal grandmother.

“I would always ask questions here and there, but she was not very forthcoming,” he said.

Lieutenant Bob Jakobs with the Nevada County Sheriff’s Office, looked at the case. He noticed a report of a human skull found off of Highway 20 in 1993.

A man had, by chance, found it while looking for a place to harvest wood. That man turned the skull in to the sheriff’s office.

“The file went into a file cabinet. I’m not sure anybody looked at it from that point forward,” Jakobs said.

The remains had never been tested for DNA.

“At that time in 93, DNA was not in use for missing and unidentified persons cases,” said Jakobs. “It wasn’t on the radar, it wasn’t a thought at the time.”

In 2017, those remains were registered with the California Department of Justice’s DNA lab. Two years later, the match was made.

“The finally matched the DNA to me,” said Desmet.

The sheriff’s office had Desmet’s DNA also registered with the state and a link was made. He said the discovery means closure for his entire family, ones alive and those who have passed away.

He said, “My grandmother, this would be closure for her.”

Desmet says he may never know what happened in the woods in 1973. He says he plans to cremate his mother’s remains and bring them to Monterey to be buried next to his maternal grandmother.

source: <https://gooddaysacramento.cbslocal.com/2019/09/24/case-cracked-son-skull-fragment-missing-mother-nevada-county/>