

After 33 years, teenage John Doe with Memphis connection identified

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(Photo: NCMEC)

Almost exactly 33 years after he was found shot to death in the North Carolina woods, the boy now has a name.

On Feb. 12, 1984, a hunter stumbled across the body of a teenager near Pine Creek, a small area of Jackson County near Asheville. The boy had shot himself in the head about three weeks before, and his body had been left exposed.

Police found no identification on him, but the boy had been living and working in the area under the name "John Norris." Police soon discovered that the name was fake, though. Other clues found near the body, including a McDonald's placemat that indicated the boy had gone to school in Illinois and lived in Memphis, went nowhere.

Despite the best efforts of investigators, the boy was never identified. His body was cremated, those items found with him were lost and that seemed to be the end of it.

But in 2011, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children launched a unit to identify unknown child victims around the country. NCMEC forensic specialists chose this case, using sophisticated software on photos of the boy's skull to create an image of what he looked like. They publicized that image in places the boy was known to have lived. The Commercial Appeal featured the story on March 18, 2015.

The gambit paid off, not in Memphis but in Illinois. A man there saw the story in the Daily Herald newspaper and the recreated photo — realistic and lifelike, but still a best guess — stood out to him. Then it hit him: that's my old middle school classmate, James Allen Reymmer.

"We started to work with (authorities) closely, following up on that lead. We tried to identify who Jimmy Reymmer was," said Carol Schweitzer, a senior forensic case specialist with the NCMEC. "We contacted

(the man who called) and received a photograph of Jimmy. When we got that photograph, that made us say, 'Wow, this could be it.'"

But that wasn't enough to be certain, so the NCMEC, along with authorities in North Carolina and Illinois, continued to dig. They found Reymers sister and mother in Illinois, who told investigators that Jimmy had gone to live with a family friend in Memphis in 1981. That helped explain why he'd indicated on that McDonald's placemat that he'd worked as a busboy at two restaurants here.

They also managed to find a missing persons report filed with the Memphis Police Department in June 1983, naming Reymers. The family friend, who has since died, told police that Reymers stole money from his wallet and left. Messages left for the family in Illinois weren't returned.

Other evidence also pointed to the boy's real identity.

"We did a dental overlay on a smiling photo of Jimmy. In addition, the facial reconstruction was eerily similar. We also had one of the co-owners of the restaurant in North Carolina where the John Doe worked. He was shown the photograph and he said he was pretty confident that that was the same male that worked for him years ago," Schweitzer said. "There was just a significant amount of similarities that were confirming that Jimmy truly was the John Doe."

And with that, the NCMEC was finally able to tell his family what happened to Jimmy Reymers, the 16-year-old boy who had been nameless for so many years.

Source: <http://www.commercialappeal.com/story/news/local/2017/02/15/after-33-years-teenage-john-doe-has-name/97970570/>

Doe Network Case 969UMNC