

# 'Baby Holly' speaks out for the 1st time after being missing for over 40 years

*Holly Miller talks about her quest for justice with David Muir.*

By

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Where investigators discovered bodies of 'Baby Holly' parents in Texas woods On Jan. 6, 1981, a dog trotted down the driveway of a Houston family's home with a partially decomposed arm in its mouth. Police eventually found the remains of a young couple in a dense woodland. ABC News

Holly Miller was hustling to prepare a lunch order at the Oklahoma diner where she worked in June 2022, when two detectives in suits – guns and badges visible – wanted to speak with her.

The detectives delivered news that upended Miller's life: Her biological parents were murdered in 1981 in Texas, and Miller, a 42-year-old married mother of five, had apparently been [missing](#) for more than 40 years.

They said that her extended biological family was eager to meet her in a Zoom call.

*Holly Marie spoke with "ABC 20/20" in an exclusive interview with David Muir. ABC News*



*Holly Miller is opening up for the first time with "20/20" co-anchor David Muir in an exclusive interview airing Friday, Nov. 3 at 9 p.m. ET and streaming on Hulu the next day.*

"I was in shock," Miller told ABC News.

"I couldn't believe it. Are you serious?" she recalled thinking at the time. "I had a family out there that wanted to get to know me and had been searching for me all this time. I didn't know what I was missing."

[MORE: 'Baby Holly' found alive after missing for over 40 years after parents were murdered](#)

*Holly Marie was able to meet members of her biological family in 2022. Courtesy Holly Marie*



How investigators came to find Miller in Cushing, Oklahoma, – unaware of the fate of her biological parents – is a tale that spans four decades and multiple states, beginning with a grisly discovery in the woods outside of Houston, Texas.

On Jan. 6, 1981, a German shepherd trotted down the driveway of a Houston family's home with a partially decomposed human arm in its mouth. The gruesome find eventually led police to the remains of a young couple in a dense woodland along Wallisville Road in Harris County.

Despite a thorough examination, the victims – brutally attacked and without clothes – went unidentified. Their remains, labeled "Jane Doe 701" and "John Doe 703," were buried in a potter's field at the Harris County Cemetery among hundreds of other nameless souls.

"Someone had to be looking for them," said Dr. Jennifer Love, former Harris County forensic anthropologist, who in 2011 exhumed the two sets of remains



after receiving a grant from the National Institute of Justice to collect DNA and identify nameless victims.

"This case was definitely top of the list because it was two individuals and it was two young individuals," Love told ABC News. "When young people go missing, people notice."

*In 1981, authorities found the young couple who had been strangled and beaten to death in the woods outside*



But the break Love and her team had hoped for would not come for another decade when a new investigative tool emerged: forensic genetic genealogy.

In 2021, Misty Gillis was looking through various cases on **The DoeNetwork** website and came across an image of an unidentified man (753UMTX) and woman (476UFTX) that piqued her interest. So, she and Allison Peacock, two genetic genealogists working for a California-based company, Identifinders International, took on the case. Using DNA from the remains exhumed by

Love and her team, the pair created profiles and tapped public databases for potential relatives. They then created intricate family trees and were ultimately able to link the remains to relatives in other states. By October of that year, the victims finally had names: Harold Dean Clouse Jr. and Tina Gail Linn, a young married couple from New Smyrna Beach, Florida, who had moved to Texas in late 1980.

But when the genetic genealogists called the couple's family in Florida to inform them of the news, the revelation only deepened the mystery: Where was the couple's baby, Holly Marie, who was an infant when the family had last been in touch with the couple?

"I was like, 'Baby? What baby?'" said Peacock, who, with Gillis on the line, called Dean Clouse's sister, Debbie Brooks, to deliver the news of her brother's murder.

"My brain just was on fire because I was like, 'How can a child be missing for 40 years and nobody knows where she is?'" Peacock told ABC News. "My mind was spinning with all the possibilities of where she might be and what happened to her."

The unsolved murders of the couple and the search for their missing baby soon became one of the first investigations for a newly formed Cold Case and Missing Persons Unit within the Texas Attorney General's Office. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children also assisted in the case, creating an age-progressed photo of what Holly might look like – if alive 40 years later.

"One of the first things we did as an organization was work to get something that the public could look at because it adds to the story," John Bischoff, vice president for the Missing Children Division at the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, told ABC News. "We want eyes on that poster."

*Holly Marie, the woman known as 'Baby Holly,' was found to be alive and well after being missing for 40*



Dean and Tina Clouse left the sleepy beach town of New Smyrna in 1980 with Holly Marie in tow. The couple first stayed with family in Baltimore before driving to Lewisville, Texas, a suburb of Dallas.

For investigators in Texas, the first step in their search for Holly was to locate her birth records in Florida, a seemingly straightforward task that proved problematic: the birth certificate was sealed. To unseal it, detectives needed a court order.

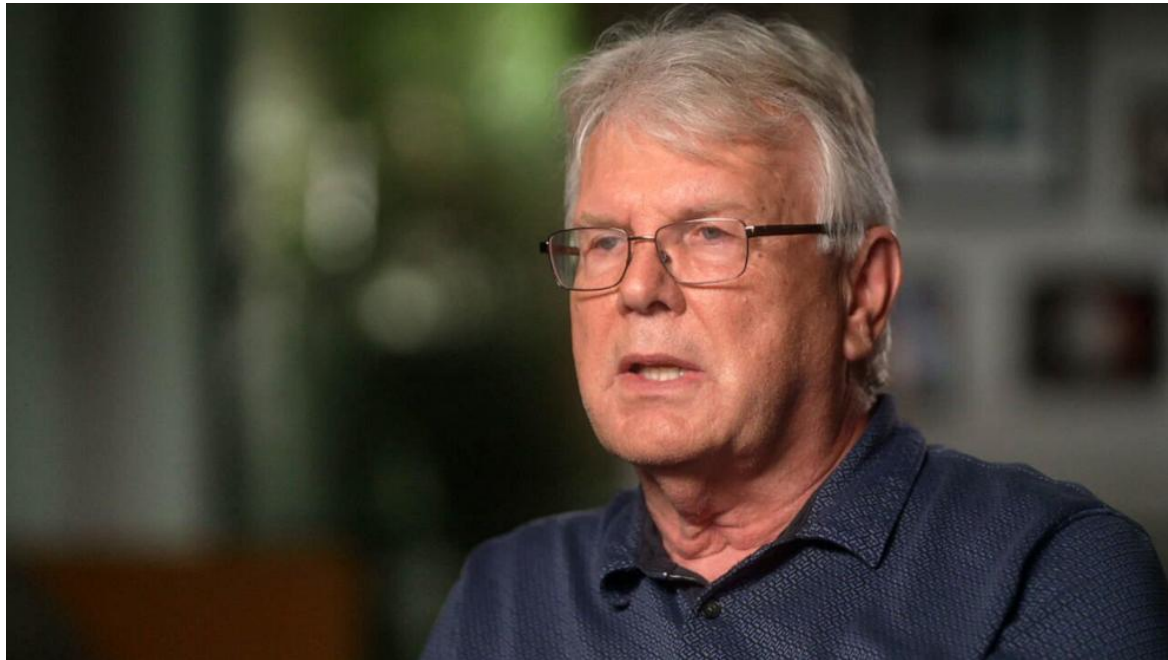
"We realized there's only a couple of reasons why you would need a court order," Mindy Montford, senior counsel of the Texas Attorney General's Cold Case and Missing Persons Unit, told ABC News.

"It was either a juvenile record, which didn't make a lot of sense, or an adoption, and that gave us a little bit of hope because if there was an adoption involved, she could very well be alive," she said.

Montford's hope – and that of the family – was soon realized. Holly Marie was adopted by a pastor and his wife in Yuma, Arizona, in 1980. She was alive and well, now living in a small Oklahoma town with her husband and five children.

Holly's adoptive father, Phillip McGoldrick, told detectives that two barefoot women in white robes knocked on the door of his church in Yuma in late 1980, looking for someone to take in baby Holly. He said one of the women presented herself as Holly's mother. The pair handed McGoldrick the child's birth certificate as well as a note purportedly written by Holly's father, Dean, revoking custody of the girl.

*Phillip McGoldrick said he adopted Holly Marie after two women knocked on his door in 1980, said they had*



"I'm thinking, 'Are they serious?'" McGoldrick told ABC News.

"And I'm also thinking, "'Who in the church could take care of this baby?' And they said, 'Oh yeah, we're serious. We've done this before,'" he recalled.

The women went on to state that they were part of a nomadic religious group and could not care for the child. They were gone almost as quickly as they came, never to be seen by McGoldrick again.

The pastor went on to raise Holly as his own, with church being a focal point of her life.

"She was a beautiful child," McGoldrick said of Holly, who grew up knowing the story of her adoption but who always questioned what became of her birth parents.

[MORE: Video 'Baby Holly' found alive after over 40 years](#)

Montford and her team later determined that the women who dropped Holly off at McGoldrick's church belonged to the Christ Family, a traveling religious group whose beliefs were far outside the norms of traditional Christian denominations. They believed in sexual abstinence, denounced materialism, and opposed killing of any kind. The group was founded by Charles Franklin McHugh, known to his followers as "Lightning Amen."

Investigators focused on the Christ Family based on the information from McGoldrick as well as an account from Donna Casasanta, Dean's mother, about a strange encounter she had in Florida 40 years ago. Some time in late 1980, Casasanta received a phone call from an unidentified man, informing her that the red car she had loaned her son had been found abandoned in a suburb of Los Angeles, she said.

Three women in white robes later returned the car to her at the Daytona Speedway around midnight, according to Casasanta. She said a woman identified as "Sister Susan" told her that Dean had joined a religious group and was cutting off contact with his family.



"I begged her," said Casasanta. "I said, 'Let me just call him. I'll talk to him on the phone. I'll know his voice or Tina.' And she says, 'He has left.'"

When reached by ABC News, the individual identified as "Sister Susan" confirmed that she delivered the car to Casasanta but denied any knowledge or involvement in the deaths of Dean and Tina. She stressed that she and other members of the Christ Family group were committed to a life of nonviolence.

The Texas Attorney General's Office has not named any suspects in connection with their murders and investigators have made clear that they do not believe the Christ Family members they have interviewed are responsible for the crime.

"But I certainly believe that fringe members of the group could have possibly done this," said Sgt. Rachel Kading, a lead investigator on Montford's team, noting that this case remains active.

"I believe the answers are within our reach," Brent Dupre, director of law enforcement with the Texas Attorney General's Office, told ABC News.

"I do think this is a solvable case," Dupre added.

*Christ Family member, Sister Susan, who delivered the car to Casasanta, is seen with other*



For Miller, the news that her parents had been murdered – that she had been lost and then found – put to rest many questions, while also raising new ones.

"Who are these women in white?" Miller writes in her new memoir, "Finding Baby Holly: Lost to a Cult, Surviving My Parents' Murders, and Saved by Prayer," which is set to be released Nov. 7.

"Is there some link between these groups and the disappearance and murder of my parents? Are they villains in my story—or heroes?" writes Miller.

For the families of Dean and Tina, their legacy is one they hope to keep alive through the formation of a non-profit group, "Genealogy for Justice," which works to identify the scores of other victims in the U.S. who have no name.

"I hope people will realize that it can happen to anybody. And it doesn't matter who you are, how rich you are, poor, doesn't matter," said Casasanta.

"We are helping other people who've lost loved ones that have been missing for a long time, identifying bodies that they have found or bones that they have found," added Cheryl Clouse, Dean's sister. "We want to give that miracle to other families."

The Texas Attorney General's Office is asking anyone with information pertaining to this case to please contact its Cold Case and Missing Persons Unit at [babyhollytips@oag.texas.gov](mailto:babyhollytips@oag.texas.gov).