The Doe Network

International Center for Unidentified & Missing Persons

2311UMAZ – Michael Kotyk

Identified – The 1998 Phoenix “Box Mike” Case

CASE OVERVIEW

On July 11, 1998, an unidentified man was struck by a vehicle at 35th Avenue and Peoria in Phoenix, Arizona. He was taken to a hospital but died from his injuries. Known locally as “Box Mike,” he had lived on the streets of Phoenix for years. He was buried at White Tanks Cemetery in Goodyear after authorities could not establish his identity.

The Doe Network recorded him as case **2311UMAZ**; his NamUs case number was **UP1952**. He was described as a White male, approximately 5 feet 9 inches tall and 190 pounds, with gray hair, blue eyes, and a beard and mustache.

INVESTIGATION & IDENTIFICATION

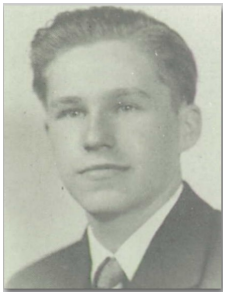
The Phoenix Police Department referred the case to the DNA Doe Project. By June 2021, a DNA profile was available, but distant genetic matches made the investigation difficult. Researchers traced possible Ukrainian and Polish ancestry and explored immigration and family records from a region southwest of Lviv.

In June 2026, researchers identified Michael Kotyk as a promising candidate after tracing a family that immigrated to the United States. Kotyk, a Philadelphia native, had attended South Philadelphia High School and enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1944. The FBI later confirmed his identity through fingerprint comparison. Kotyk was 73 when he died.

CASE TIMELINE

July 11, 1998	Unidentified man struck by a vehicle in Phoenix; later dies of injuries.
June 2021	DNA profile developed; genetic genealogy research begins.
2021–2026	Researchers investigate distant DNA matches and Eastern European family roots.
June 2026	Investigators identify Michael Kotyk as a tentative candidate.
2026	FBI fingerprint comparison confirms identification as Michael Kotyk.

IDENTIFICATION PHOTO



SOURCES

DNA Doe Project, “Box Mike Phoenix John Doe 1998” (updated November 17, 2026). Doe Network case: 2311UMAZ; NamUs: UP1952.