

### **Family Member Wrote to the DoeNetwork:**

On Thursday, April 4, 2024

Hi Donna,

I am a Family Member. I wanted to point out to you that one of your cases should be listed as identified. His remains were identified and confirmed by DNA in 2018.

The case is 2890UMCO. He is identified as Russell Martin Block, my older brother. He was 26 when he passed. DNA remains were analyzed by the Nebraska State Patrol at my request. We obtained his remains from University of Texas Tech if I remember correctly. His remains have been interred.

This information should be confirmable by the Pueblo Police Department. There was a switch between which detectives were handling the cold case along the way so perhaps that is why they did not give you this information. I have the death certificate somewhere.

His murder has not been solved, but at least he has been laid to rest. Thank you so much for all the work your organization did on the case. Without the Doe Network we never would have known what happened to him when he disappeared in 1989.

If I can answer any further questions, please let me know.

Thank you

### **DoeNetwork Responded**

Hello,

Thank you so much for this information and I am so sorry that you had to go through all of this. I would like to point out however, that he is still listed in NamUs;

<https://www.namus.gov/UnidentifiedPersons/Case#/9865>

You mentioned that if it were not for the DoeNetwork that he never would have been identified. Can you tell me some more about that? How were we able to assist?

Also, can you tell me why the Nebraska State Police became involved? Is that where you live?

### **Family Member Responded**

Hi again,

Thank you for your reply.

I am puzzled that Russell is still listed in NamUs. Although the murder case was re-opened, he was most definitely positively identified, death certificate issued.

I can understand the details are murky to you. I will try to lay out what happened on my end. This might be somewhat enlightening on the red tape and attitudes the families of the missing run into.

In about May 2018, I saw the sketch and case on the Doe Network. I knew in an instant it was my brother. I contacted the Pueblo Police Department. Somewhat surprisingly, they tried to convince me this probably was not my brother. I pointed out all the details that lined up: height, weight, hairline, hair color,

clothing, watch, date last seen (I was the last family member to see him, about 2 weeks before his murder). I also pointed out the sketch clearly showed that two of his front teeth overlapped. They were still skeptical.

The PPD said DNA could take up to 2 years for analysis and frankly, they didn't know if they could talk their people into running DNA at all. I was not willing to wait another 2 years. 29 years is quite long enough.

I tried to find other resources to run the DNA. I looked into the med school at University of Nebraska (I live in Omaha). Results would be accurate but might not hold up in court. So, I went to the Nebraska State Patrol on recommendation of a local police officer. The State Patrol officer, Scott Haugaard, practically laughed at me and said the chances of these remains being my brother's were one in a million and it wasn't worth the effort. He gave me the usual "he is alive and doesn't want to be found" BS that my family had heard for decades.

I looked into the university again. It would cost a lot of money but I was willing to pay. After two months, the Officer Haugaard from the Nebraska State Patrol called me asking if any progress had been made. I won't lie, I gave him a piece of my mind. I told him "you laughed me out of your office and now you have the nerve to check on me and act like you care?"

He must have felt guilty, because this time he offered to look into the case. He contacted Pueblo PD and got the details. He said he needed my DNA. A snag: Russell was adopted, so it had to be Russell's DNA, as mine would be useless. I found some stickers Russell had licked as a child in the 1970s and submitted the samples. Officer Haugaard pulled some strings and got the lab to do the samples quickly. That was around September 2018.

In November 2018, Officer Haugaard called me to tell me the samples I submitted were a 99% match with Russell's remains, a positive ID. I informed my mother--the hardest thing I have ever done--and she asked me to request Russell's remains be sent from Colorado to Arizona, where she lived, so she could bury him. I arranged all that. Russell was buried.

Why Russell is still in NamUs is a mystery to me. Sounds like people on whichever ends are not communicating as needed. Who do I need to contact to rectify this?

I hope this cleared things up a bit. Thank you for your reply, and all that you do to help the families of the missing.

Sincerely

P. S. What I left out above is the emotional side of the story. I broke out in hives and went into treatment-resistant depression for two years. My mother had a psychotic break and had to be hospitalized. People's reaction to my brother's death? Meh. "You must be so happy to have news." "Oh good, you have closure." Not a single hug, condolence, or card. People figure he had been dead for 30 years, so no biggie. It was horrible. It taught me so much about the importance of empathy.