

# Alice Lou Williams

**Date Found: October 10, 2009**

**Date Identified: June 10, 2022**

On October 10, 2009, US Forest Service surveyors discovered a partial human cranium in a steep forested ravine near Beckler Road north of Skykomish, Washington. Despite numerous searches, no other remains, clothing, or jewelry was found. The cranium was transported by Snohomish County Sheriff's Detectives to the Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office.

The late forensic anthropologist Dr. Kathy Taylor performed a forensic anthropology exam and determined that the cranium belonged to a female over the age of 40. However, due to the scant amount of remains recovered and the incomplete cranium, it was not possible to infer race or other physical characteristics. Dr. Taylor estimated a postmortem interval of at least one year but as many as decades. The death was classified as suspicious due to the presence of trauma and the location where the cranium was found.

The case was entered into NCIC (National Crime Information Center) which is the FBI's computerized index that tracks crimes and missing persons, and NamUs, the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System. NamUs is a federal database funded by the National Institute of Justice and contains information on missing, unidentified, and unclaimed persons cases from across the country. Dental records and fingerprints, when available, can also be uploaded to a NamUs file which can then be easily compared against known missing persons nationwide who have had their own dental profiles and/or fingerprints uploaded.

In March 2010, a small section of the cranium was sent to the FBI in Quantico, VA for DNA extraction and upload to their Combined DNA Index System (CODIS). In July 2012 the FBI successfully obtained a mtDNA profile and complete STR profile; both were uploaded to CODIS. Unfortunately, there was not match in CODIS for the decedent.

In the following years, the STR profile was used to rule out numerous missing persons. The woman remained unidentified.

In October 2017, the Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office and the Snohomish County Sheriff's Office Cold Case Detective Jim Scharf contacted Colleen Fitzpatrick and Margaret Press from the DNA Doe Project for assistance. AMD Biotech in Georgia attempted to perform DNA testing on the nuclear DNA extract that was developed by the FBI lab. Unfortunately, the DNA extract was heavily contaminated with non-human DNA and testing was not successful.

In October 2019, another attempt was made to build a DNA profile for the decedent. A small section of cranial bone was sent to DNA Solutions, a laboratory in Oklahoma City, for microarray DNA testing. DNA Solutions was not able to extract enough DNA for testing and another extraction was not recommended.

In June 2021, investigators decided to make one more attempt. Based on the SCMEO's previous success in building DNA profiles from challenging skeletal remains with Othram, a section of the cranial bone was sent to Othram, Inc. in The Woodlands, Texas. Othram was contracted to perform DNA extraction and testing so that a DNA profile could be developed and uploaded to genealogical databases. The funding for this laboratory work was generously provided by Audiochuck.

In March 2022, Othram successfully obtained a DNA extract that was sufficient for testing after multiple rounds of extraction and human enrichment. Othram scientists used Forensic-Grade Genome Sequencing to develop a DNA profile that could be uploaded to genealogical

databases. The Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office uploaded the Othram DNA profile to GEDmatch and obtained multiple close matches. The SCMEO built family trees and discovered that Alice Lou Williams was a genealogical fit and that she also appeared to be unaccounted for. Alice's adult children were contacted about the possibility and they volunteered a DNA sample for comparison. Familial testing was performed at Family Tree DNA / Gene by Gene. The FTDNA profile was uploaded to GEDmatch and a 1:1 comparison confirmed that Beckler River Doe is Alice Lou Williams. Snohomish County missing person reports showed that Alice went missing under suspicious circumstances from her Lake Loma recreational cabin in July 1981.

On June 10, 2022, SCME Chief Medical Examiner Dr. Matt Lacy officially identified Alice Lou Williams and classified her death as a Homicide.

If you have any information about this case, please call the SCSO tip line at (425) 388-3845.

The Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for their assistance on this case: Othram, Inc., Audiochuck, GEDmatch/Verogen, FamilyTreeDNA.com/Gene By Gene, genealogist Deb Stone, SCSO Detective James Scharf and SCSO Cold Case volunteer Ken Cowsert, the King County Medical Examiner's Office and the late Dr. Katherine Taylor, PhD, the Washington State Patrol Missing and Unidentified Persons Unit, NamUs and the University of North Texas Health Sciences Center, Colleen Fitzpatrick, Margaret Press, Dr. Greg Magoon, The DNA Doe Project, DNA Solutions, Dr. Weining Tang, and AMD Biotech. Special thanks to Alice's family for their cooperation and help in identifying their mother after 41 years.

<https://www.snohomishcountywa.gov/6067/Alice-Lou-Williams>