

The University of Utah Police announced that they have solved a missing person case that started more than 50 years ago.

Douglas Brick, a University of Utah student, left his dorm on October 12, 1973, and was never seen again. Douglas Brick's family never stopped looking for him.

Last week, results from an out-of-state lab confirmed that skull fragments found in the foothills near the University of Utah matched one of Douglas Brick's living relatives.

Up Next - Air traffic controller shortage cause delays

-00:14

### **PREVIOUS COVERAGE: Missing in Utah: When missing persons go unnoticed**

His older brother, David Brick, spoke with ABC4 in 2022. He said that Douglas Brick, a Pocatello, Idaho native, had traveled to Utah to get a degree. David Brick was in Europe when he got the news of his brother's disappearance.

"There was a lot of things going on," David Brick said in 2022. "He had some girlfriend, and he broke up with the girlfriend. We really don't know why he just took off and disappeared."

## **The university's investigation**

In 2022, a new face joined the University of Utah Police Department. A crime data analyst, Nikol Mitchell, discovered the cold case during her work in Utah's Statewide Information and Analysis Center (SIAC). It appeared that the case had been lost for at least 20 years, according to the university.

She told Major Heather Sturzenegger, and she reopened a new case, making it a goal to find what had happened to Douglas Brick.

### **32 years later: Victim identified in Weber County cold case involving boat burning in field**

"For me, I just wanted to try to bring closure to the family and solve the case so they can have some peace," Sturzenegger is quoted in the release. "I have always had a really strong feeling that we would be able to solve this case."

When Sturzenegger was promoted, Detective Jon Dial was assigned the case. The two worked together to put together what might have happened.

Claims floated around online about where Douglas Brick had gone. ABC4 previously found a forum post that said he was leaving to start a new life and didn't want anyone to know. Police said they found leads that reported him fleeing the country or disappearing in the foothills behind the U.

During their search, Dial and Sturzenegger found that Douglas Brick's sister had contacted the police in 2018 about his case. Dial flew to California to meet with her and take a DNA sample in hopes that it would bring up something in the national system.

Unfortunately, nothing came of the sample in 2022.

### **Logan detectives solve 59-year-old cold case homicide of 17-year-old girl**

In a surprising coincidence, Sturzenegger was attending a doctor's appointment with her daughter in December 2022. She was speaking with the doctor casually about what she did and happened to mention the case they were investigating.

"That's strange, when I was a student at the U in 1973, my roommate went missing," the doctor said. This doctor was Steve Warren, and he was the one who initially reported Douglas Brick missing back in 1973.

Warren had reported the disappearance, called his family, and discovered Douglas Brick's abandoned car. This confirmed that police were searching the foothills in the right area, evidence that had been lost to time.

"I can still picture him in his glasses, going to class with his hard-cased briefcase," Warren says. "I can still see all of his belongings in the back seat of his car — I never forgot one thing about it."

No discoveries were made for roughly a year following that. Sturzenegger kept that case open, in hopes that something would come through.

### **DNA testing confirms identity of body found in 1980s to be missing teenager**

In October 2024, hunters found two fragments of a human skull roughly six miles above the white U painted on the hill, near the summit of Black Mountain. University police were permitted to send the bone to an out-of-state lab to see if it was Douglas Brick.

After five months, the University of Utah student who had been missing for more than 50 years was no longer missing. The lab confirmed that the DNA evidence matched 99.9%.

“My heart was pounding. I was shaking. I was thinking, am I reading this right? Is this him?” Sturzenegger is quoted in the release.

Dial and Sturzenegger flew to California and informed the family. The family released the following statement.

*“We thank the hunter who found him 6 months ago and reported it immediately, Detective Jon Dial and Major Heather Sturzenegger, search and rescue volunteers, and all the individuals and agencies that were involved in this case. We are requesting privacy during this time of transition.”*

#### ***FAMILY OF DOUGLAS BRICK***

#### **Tooele man charged with murder in 50-year-old cold case**

### **A chance psychic encounter**

Donna Brick, Douglas’ mother, passed away in May 2010. She remembers seeing him for the last time in September 1973, when he left Idaho to continue his education at the U.

Following his disappearance, Donna Brick did her best to find answers about what happened. She was in contact with the Salt Lake City Police Department, according to David Brick, and went to his dorm room at the university after he went missing.

“The only thing that I found as strange was my mother claimed she went down to clean his room. She found an empty box of bullets,” David Brick recalled in a 2022 interview with ABC4.

According to a press release from the university, a memorial was held for Douglas Brick in 1990. That same year, Donna Brick wrote an entry in her journal that Detective Dial says he “will never forget.”

### **SLCPD arrest suspect in 2022 cold case homicide**

She wrote about an encounter with a store clerk who told her she was a psychic. The clerk intrigued Donna Brick, and she asked her if she could tell her what had happened to her son.

According to the release, Donna Brick wrote that the psychic told her that Douglas Brick had gone to the foothills above the University of Utah and was contemplating ending his life. She claimed that he was afraid because it was dark, and slipped and fell.

“Where the skull was located, the terrain I was traversing as part of the search, it is extremely steep and loose on both sides, and I was having a hard time in the daylight keeping my footing under me and figuring out where I was going,” Dial is quoted in the release.

Although the case is solved, the University of Utah Police are planning to go back to the area and check for any additional evidence now that the weather is warm.

“I felt a very personal connection to Douglas throughout this investigation,” Dial stated in the release. “In a way, it’s hard to explain. There was a push and a connection that I felt was from Douglas to this case specifically, in moving it along and being persistent. I have felt very strongly that I will always have Douglas in the back of my mind, and his family.”