



Florence Junction Clandestine Grave Jane Doe 1988

Doe-Nate Cases, Funded, Success Stories

Description:

On June 28, 1988, the decomposing remains of a white woman were found partially buried in the desert in Pinal County, Arizona. The area is located approximately ¼ mile west of US 79 and south of Florence Junction. The woman was believed to have died within the previous year and was buried in a clandestine grave.

Authorities estimate this Jane Doe was over 50 and about 5'3" tall with medium length gray hair with traces of blonde. A pink denture with porcelain teeth was found with her remains. She had suffered from osteoporosis, compression fractures and a curved spine that would have caused her to have a hunchback posture.

Her clothing was described as a floral dress or housecoat with snaps up the front. She was also wearing a white bra and white size 8 underpants.

Status: Identified

DNA Doe Project solves 1988 Jane Doe Case

Elderly woman found in clandestine grave ID'd as Evelyn "Dottie" Lees
Pinal County, Arizona – After 36 years of anonymity as a Jane Doe discovered buried in a shallow grave near Florence Junction, Arizona, **Evelyn "Dottie" Lees** has been identified by the DNA Doe Project. Born in 1898 in Salt Lake City, Utah, Lees was living in Scottsdale before her disappearance. The investigation into the circumstances of her death was handled by the Pinal County Sheriff's Office.



Evelyn "Dottie" Lees

At the time of the discovery of her remains in 1988, authorities estimated that the unknown woman was between 50 and 99 years old at the time of her death, but believed that she would be on the younger side of that estimate. In actuality, she was 88 or 89 years old when she died. Her father was British, and her DNA relatives were spread across a broad geographic area.

Dr. Bruce Anderson, Forensic Anthropologist with the Pima County Office of the Medical Examiner, brought the case to the DNA Doe Project in 2023, hoping that genetic genealogy analysis of the remains would yield leads to her identity. "I responded in 1988 to the desert clandestine grave and have been trying to get her identified for nearly 35 years," he explained in an email to the non-profit group's Director of Case Management.

Like many DNA Doe Project cases, the work to identify Dottie Lees was funded by donors to the non-profit, who contributed nearly \$5,000 toward the lab fees and case management costs.

The process of investigative genetic genealogy involves creating a DNA profile for the unidentified person, then analyzing the lists of people whose profiles are a partial match to the unknown person to build a family tree. Using traditional genealogy techniques and records, researchers typically go back many generations and sometimes hundreds of years to identify common ancestors before they start to build forward in time to find the identity of the Jane or John Doe.

After bone samples from the remains were processed to produce a DNA profile uploaded to GEDmatch Pro and FamilyTreeDNA.com, it took a team of expert volunteer investigative genetic genealogists a matter of hours to find Dottie's branch of the family tree.

A team of nine investigative genetic genealogists worked on the case together during a weekend retreat. "The case really started to heat up when we identified a married couple from the 19th century who shared DNA with the Doe," said Lance Daly, team co-leader. "The Doe's estimated year of birth was about 1900; therefore, we knew we were looking at the names of her possible grandparents."

"Her recent British heritage meant that her DNA matches came from all over the world," said team co-leader Matthew Waterfield. "Although they were fairly distant relatives of hers, our team quickly found connections between them, and they led us to Dottie within hours."

The DNA Doe Project is grateful to the groups and individuals who helped solve this case: the Pima County Office of the Medical Examiner, who entrusted the case to the DNA Doe Project; Astrea Forensics for extraction of DNA from bone and sample prep for whole-genome sequencing; Azenta Life Sciences for sequencing; Kevin Lord for bioinformatics; GEDmatch Pro and FTDNA for providing their databases; our generous donors who joined our mission and contributed to this case; and DDP's dedicated teams of volunteer investigative genetic genealogists who work tirelessly to bring all our Jane and John Does home.

NamUs ID: UP7209

Date Body Found: 6/28/1988

Race: White/Caucasian

Sex: Female

Estimated Age: 50-99 years

Estimated PMI: months to 1 year

Agency of Jurisdiction:

Pima County Office of the Medical Examiner

Bruce Anderson

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More Information:

<https://www.namus.gov/UnidentifiedPersons/Case#/7209/details?nav>

<https://doenetwork.org/cases/1131ufaz.html>

Doe-Nate Fund Goal: \$4,962

This case was part of DNA Doe Project's pre-funding program. 71 individual donors contributed to the costs of the case, allowing our agency partner to send their sample to the lab. Funds donated pay for expensive labwork and operational support of our volunteer team of investigative genetic genealogists. DNA Doe Project is a 501(c)3 non-profit. Donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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