

Thomas Edward Manizak, now 53, disappeared on his way to Newport, Oregon, in 1999 aged 28 (Image: St Francis Medical Center)

By

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• 09:01, 28 Nov 2024

A woman has been reunited with her long-lost brother who went missing nearly three decades ago - after spotting him by chance in a [news report](#).

Thomas Edward Manizak, 53, was last heard from on July 30, 1999, when he was just 28-years-old. He had been travelling through Idaho, Oregon, and Montana in his 1970 Ford van when he called his [mother](#) from a truck stop to let her know he was alright. But that would be the last time she heard from her son, as she sadly passed away before he was rediscovered by his family last week. His whereabouts for the past 25 years remain unknown.

But Thomas' family never stopped looking for him, working with groups that track down [missing persons](#) and sharing details of the missing man far and wide. Then, 25 years later on April 15, a man was found in South Los Angeles and brought to a [hospital](#). The man was non-verbal and unable to communicate with staff, so it was impossible to find out who he was or track down his family. And it was not until he was featured on a news report that his sister recognised him.

A clue as to why he might have lost the ability to speak can be found in a description from the missing persons database, the Doe Network. "Because of his diabetes, he would renew his insulin supplies at clinics in the towns he travelled through," his Doe Network listing said. "He did not care properly for his diabetes, and may have slipped into a diabetic coma. He has not claimed his disability checks, or used his medical card for diabetic supplies."

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At the time of his disappearance, Thomas' family said he loved travelling in his van, parking up on side roads off the highway to sleep at night. He also carried camping gear and regularly picked up hitchhikers. He would call twice a week from the road to let his mother know he was alright and between spells travelling he would live with her in Doyle, California, a relative told the [Mail](#).

Despite the best efforts of staff at the social services department of the hospital where he was being treated, it proved impossible to track down any of his family members. But then on November 22, a woman called Lassen County Deputy Sheriff, Derek Kennemore, to say that the patient was her brother after she saw a picture of him in a news article from May 9.

On Tuesday Sheriff's Office Captain Mike Carney explained what had happened, saying: "The woman informed Sheriff's Deputy, Derek Kennemore, that she had been sent an article from USA Today that had a picture of a man that she believed to be her missing brother," Lassen County Sheriff's Office Captain Mike Carney said on Tuesday.

"The woman explained that her brother was reported missing in 1999 from Doyle, Ca. The man had not been heard from since. The USA Today article was printed in April 2024 and was requesting assistance in identifying the man, who had been admitted to a hospital in the Los Angeles, Ca area."

A fingerprint match confirmed that the man in the hospital bed was missing Thomas Manizak, to the delight of his family. Carney said his sister was "super excited" to find her brother alive. "She was very appreciative that we took the time just to follow up on it," he said. "She was over the moon and anxious to call other family members to let them know. It's gonna make their Thanksgiving that much better.

"Be tenacious when it comes to these things," he added, "because there are family members that want answers." The Nor-Cal Alliance for the Missing, which had been searching for him since 2016, said: "While Tommy is non-verbal and facing medical challenges, his safe return to the embrace of his family is a testament to resilience, faith, and the power of community. Tommy's return proves that miracles can happen."

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/us-news/woman-finds-brother-who-went-34203299>