

Missing Texas woman identified as 1980 Minnesota murder victim

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by Karen Scullin

CONNECT

ST. PAUL, Minn. (KMSB) - Considered a Jane Doe for the last 35 years, a missing Texas teenager killed back in 1980 by a former Minnesota state trooper now has a name. Through advanced DNA technology, Minnesota investigators identified a body buried in Blue Earth, Minn. as Michelle Busha of Bay City, Texas.

Busha was just 18 years old when she was assaulted, strangled and left in a ravine off Interstate 90 in Faribault County. While the victim's identity was a mystery, the killer's identity came easy. Former Minnesota state trooper Robert Leroy Nelson confessed to the crime 9 years after the murder. A court document details how the two met -- she was hitchhiking and he asked her to get in the squad car. She did. He handcuffed and sexually assaulted her.

"This was a case not of who done it, but who was she?" BCA assistant superintendent Drew Evans said at a Tuesday morning news conference announcing the development.

'I thought about it every day'



When a DNA match to information in a nationwide database identified Jane Doe as Michelle Busha, it closed the case that had haunted retired investigator Jerry Kabe for years.

"I thought about it every day, and so did the former Sheriff Fletcher," Kabe said at Tuesday's announcement. "We talked about that often. It's something that never leaves your mind."

Busha was buried as an unidentified woman at Riverside Cemetery in Blue Earth, but that label didn't sit well with Blue Earth resident Deborah Anderson.

"I don't want to believe she was forgotten and nobody cared," Anderson said in a 2006 interview with Fox 9.

Anderson is credited with helping to get the body exhumed, which finally happened in August 2014. If it weren't for that, Michelle Busha's parents would not be getting their daughter back.

Timeline

May 9, 1980: Michelle Busha reported missing in Texas

May 30, 1980: Body found by farmer off I-90, east of Blue Earth, Minn.

2007: DNA provided by two of Busha's family members was entered into the CODIS missing person DNA database. The mitochondrial and nuclear DNA linked her to her family members.

Aug 12, 2014: Michelle Busha's body was exhumed to obtain DNA samples and conduct facial reconstruction using previously unavailable technology.

"Miss Busha's family's decision to come forward all those years ago to provide samples was key," said Catherine Knutson, the BCA forensic science director. "We wouldn't be sending her home otherwise after all these. She would still be Faribault County's Jane Doe."

Do you have a missing family member?

Families with missing relatives should contact the Minnesota BCA at 651-793-1118, with the person's name and date of birth.

Source: <http://www.myfoxtwincities.com/story/28540665/minnesota-cold-case-has-significant-development>

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