

# Remains found in Pierce County more than 46 years ago belong to slain Tacoma man

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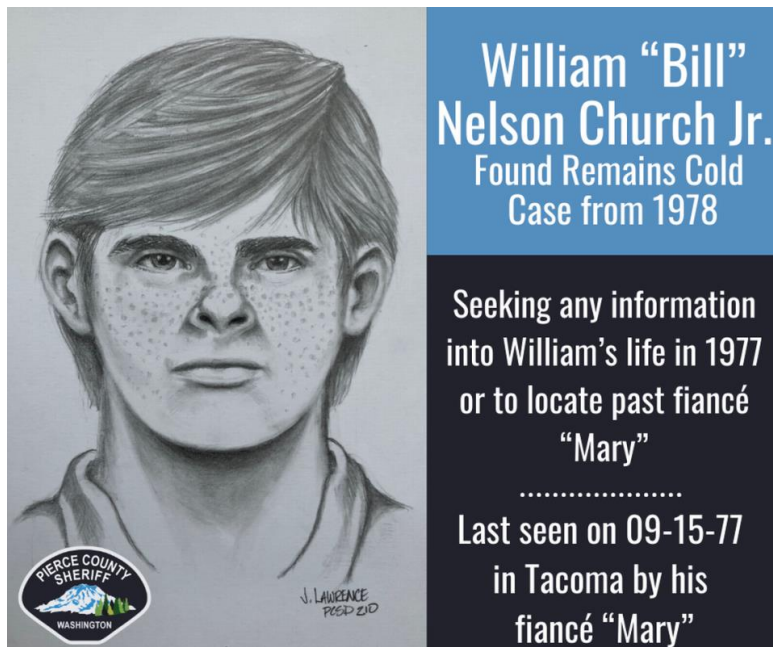
After 46 years, human remains found in Pierce County have been identified as 20-year-old [William "Bill" Nelson Church Jr.](#) of Tacoma.

Mushroom pickers found some of his remains in the Ashford/Elbe area in 1978. Ten years later, a skull was found in the same location. Investigators at the time believed it belonged to the same person, Pierce County Sheriff's Department spokeswoman deputy Carly Cappetto told The News Tribune on Tuesday.

It was not until June 2024 that forensics genealogists identified the remains as Church, she said.

Church was adopted as an infant by a couple in the Tacoma area. Cappetto confirmed Church was living in Tacoma in 1977 and had a fiancé named "Mary" whom detectives are trying to locate. It is also believed he might have had a sister.

Church's death has been ruled a homicide. Cappetto said the Sheriff's Department is not releasing any further details on his death at this time.



**William "Bill"  
Nelson Church Jr.**  
Found Remains Cold  
Case from 1978

Seeking any information  
into William's life in 1977  
or to locate past fiancé  
"Mary"

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Last seen on 09-15-77  
in Tacoma by his  
fiancé "Mary"

PIERCE COUNTY SHERIFF WASHINGTON  
J. LAWRENCE PREP 210

Pierce County deputies are looking for more information in the unsolved death of William “Bill” Nelson Church Jr. who was officially identified in June after his remains were found 1978.

For now, detectives are seeking information about Church’s life.

“Now all these years later we’re starting from the beginning and trying to piece together his life,” she said.

Anyone with information about Church can leave a message or tip through the Sheriff’s Department app. They can also send an anonymous tip through [Crime Stoppers](#).