

Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office Teams with Othram to Identify a 1984 Homicide Victim

After 40 years, the identify of a murdered man, whose remains were found near South Bay, Florida in 1984, is now known to be **Joseph W. Newman** of Toms River, New Jersey.

Solved



Summary

In February 1984, the remains of an unidentified individual were discovered in brush along U.S. Highway 27 and the New River Canal. The discovery was made approximately seventeen miles from the town of South Bay, Florida in a rural area of Palm Beach County. An investigation revealed that the skeletonized remains were that of a male who was likely between the ages of 17 and 28 years at his time of death. The man's height was estimated to be 5'11", but his weight and other identifying characteristics could not be determined. The man was wearing a pair of white crew socks with blue stripes. Near his remains, investigators located white boxer style underwear and blue jogging shorts with the number 82502 on the inside band. The man's manner of death was determined to be homicide. Despite investigators attempts to identify the murdered man, his identity has been a mystery for forty years.

Details of the case were entered in the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) as UP814. A forensic composite sketch depicting how the man may have looked during his life was developed and released to the public in hopes that it

would generate new leads in the case. In an effort to finally identify Palm Beach County John Doe, Officials with the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office teamed with Othram to determine if advanced DNA testing could help to generate new leads about his identity.



In January 2024, the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office submitted forensic evidence to Othram in The Woodlands, Texas. Othram scientists successfully developed a DNA extract from the forensic evidence, and then used Forensic-Grade Genome Sequencing® to build a comprehensive genealogical profile for the unknown man. Othram's in-house forensic genetic genealogy team then used this profile to conduct genetic genealogy research, ultimately providing new investigative leads to law enforcement.

Using this new information, a follow-up investigation was conducted leading investigators to potential relatives of the John Doe. Reference DNA samples were collected from a potential relative and compared to the DNA profile of the unknown man. This investigation led to the positive identification of the man as Joseph W. Newman of Toms River, New Jersey. Newman was last seen alive in the Spring of 1983 and had been living in the Bal Harbour, Kendall, and Miami Dade County areas of Florida.

The Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office is seeking the public's assistance with identifying any friends and/or associates of Newman in Florida from the early 1980's. A subject named Jamie whose last name is unknown was believed to be one of

Newman's associates at the time he disappeared. Jamie was described as a black male in his mid-30's of American descent, muscular, average height, who often bragged about being a football player. Jamie is believed to be one of the last persons to be around Newman prior to him going missing.

Anyone with information on Joseph W. Newman is asked to contact Crime Stoppers at 1-800-458-TIPS (8477) or Detective John Cogburn of the Sheriff's Office Cold Case unit at [561-688-4063](tel:561-688-4063) or by email: cogburnj@pbso.org.

The identification of Joan Shirley Joyce Waters represents the 30th case in the State of Florida where officials have publicly identified an individual using technology developed by Othram. Most recently in Collier County, Florida, [Joan Shirley Joyce Waters](#), whose remains were found in a shallow grave in 1978, was identified.

We would like to thank Senator Jennifer Bradley and her colleagues in the legislature for fighting for dollars for law enforcement agencies to help them solve these important cases.