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Police identify body of Hamilton man who went missing 30 years ago

David Nixon was last seen on the corner of King and James on July 6, 1984

By Adam Carter, [CBC News](#) Posted: Nov 20, 2014 11:16 AM ET Last Updated: Nov 20, 2014 5:43 PM ET

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Police have made a breakthrough in a 30-year-old missing person's case and identified the remains of [Hamilton man David Nixon](#).

For decades, Nixon's body was in an unmarked grave in Toronto, while his family in Hamilton agonized over what could have happened to their brother and son.

Finally, in October, Ontario Provincial Police contacted Hamilton police and told them that they had a DNA match for Nixon from a body that was pulled from Lake Ontario about a month after he went missing in 1984.

"We have so many questions, and we're seeking answers. It doesn't make sense to us." - *Janis Nixon, sister*

The body was never identified at the time. Now, police are investigating the circumstances of his death and the discovery of his remains.

"Dave lived life to the fullest, but his life came to an unfortunate end during the summer of 1984 at the tender age of 23," said his sister, Janis Nixon, during a Thursday morning news conference. "It's a travesty. To say the past 30 years have been hard on our family would be an understatement."

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It's not clear why the body found back in 1984 was never tied to Nixon's disappearance. Nixon was last seen by his uncle on the corner of King and James in Hamilton on July 6, 1984. On that summer day, Nixon's uncle invited him for coffee but he declined, saying he was running late to meet someone else.

He then walked westbound on King Street West from James Street. He was never seen again. Police say Nixon had no criminal background and was religious.

DNA solved part of the mystery

Det. David Brady from Hamilton police took up Nixon's case several years ago. Hamilton police provided DNA samples from Nixon's parents — now in their 70s — to analyze alongside the remains provided by the OPP. The Centre of Forensic Sciences tested those samples and found a positive match between the two.

"2014 is a lot different than 1984. We now have DNA," Brady said. The police investigation has not been passed on to the homicide unit, though the family believes foul play may have been involved.

"For all of us that knew and loved Dave, he was too young and beautiful to meet this fate," his sister said. "We strongly believe that if foul play was involved, there are people out there who have information and know what happened to our brother."

"We are appealing to them to come forward. The recent confirmation of his death has raised more questions and we are committed to seek answers."

Nixon says she doesn't know how her brother ended up in Lake Ontario near Bluffers Park, back in 1984. He grew up with his family in the east end of Hamilton and went to St. David's Elementary School before graduating from Cardinal Newman High School. Nixon loved sports, especially hockey and karate, his sister says.

"He had beautiful blue eyes and a perfect smile," she said through tears at the news conference.

Historic cases tough to crack, police say

Det. Brady admits that figuring out what happened to Nixon will likely be difficult, considering his death happened so many years ago.

"Cold-case television works really well, but the reality is it's very difficult to follow up on information. When I took on the investigation 10 years ago, everyone we interviewed — their memories were 20 years old even at that time," Brady said. "Basically, we're at the mercy of the information we were able to assemble."

"This investigation is still open, and we're continuing to pursue different information that needs to be followed up, and we will see where that takes us."

As the investigation goes on, the family is still left wondering what could have happened to David Nixon. "We have so many questions, and we're seeking answers. It doesn't make sense to us."

According to the OPP Missing Persons Unidentified Bodies Unit that brought Nixon's body to the attention of Hamilton police, they have 556 unsolved missing persons and 281 unsolved unidentified bodies in their database.

There are 7,206 people listed as missing on the Canadian Police Information Centre database. Of those, 1,662 are from Ontario, and 350 are from OPP jurisdictions.



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