

A Memphis, Tenn., man whose family says has cancer has been missing for more than a month. The man was allegedly shocked with a stun gun after he was found to have marijuana in his car, according to local law enforcement and news agencies.

However, family members and the Mississippi NAACP are questioning what authorities said happened.

James Irby, 55, was stopped by a Walls police officer on the corner of Highway 61 and Church Road in Walls, Miss., on May 4, according Memphis news outlet WMC-TV.

Irby, whose mother has said was on his way to a funeral, was in possession of marijuana and a prescription bottle containing "illegal narcotics," Walls Police Chief Gary Boisseau told Memphis' ABC 24.

Irby was on the phone when officers found the drugs, Boisseau said. The officer asked him several times to hang up the phone and then discharged his stun gun, Boisseau told ABC 24. At that point, Irby ran away, escaping into a wheat field after being briefly pursued by the officer, he added.

Boisseau said he thinks Irby fled through the field and caught a ride out of town on a nearby highway. He says his K-9 cadaver dogs would have picked up the scent of dead body if Irby had perished in the area, ABC 24 reported.

But Irby's family, who say they have not seen him since, say that Irby was ill and could not have run far, as police suggest.

"James couldn't run that far on foot. He had gout real bad and he's got prostate cancer," Irby's mother, Ethel Allen, told local Fox affiliate WHBQ. "I've had all of my grandchildren, great-grandchildren and my nephews out there walking the field [looking for him]."

"He had never left home not calling anybody," Irby's girlfriend, Tonia Bryant, told the station.

The local police and Sheriff's Office also searched for Irby but to no avail.

To make matters more mysterious, Allen says a Walls police officer told her Irby fled into a swamp, according to WHBQ. Allen says the officer told her the traffic stop didn't happen at Highway 61 and Church, but a quarter mile down the road near a swampy area, the local outlet reported.

Also strange is that the Mississippi NAACP says local police told the FBI, which is reportedly involved in the investigation, that Irby was not shocked with a stun gun, according to WHBQ.

Although police dash-cam footage shows an officer attempting to stun Irby, the video does not definitely show Irby being struck. (The video does appear to show Irby fleeing from the officer, however.)

The DeSoto County Sheriff's Department in Mississippi did not immediately return a request for comment from The Huffington Post.

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Walls, MS) The search for a Memphis man who disappeared more than a month ago intensifies.

The Walls, MS police department stopped 55-year-old James Irby driving through their town with a small amount of marijuana. The officer says he tried to arrest Irby, even used a Taser on him, but he ran and hasn't been seen since.

However, the man's family doesn't believe that's what happened.

"I'll never believe that he kept on running from the condition that my brother was in. I'll never believe it," said Viola Johnson, sister.

James Irby's family says he had cancer and gout, and could not have run the day he got stopped by Walls police. They don't believe the Walls Police Department is telling the truth.

Johnson said, "Y'all know what y'all done did to my brother. That's the reason why y'all been giving us all the round around. Y'all know exactly where. You just done killed him and took him off somewhere else."

The DeSoto County Sheriff's Office brought out an all-terrain vehicle to see if they could find what happened to Irby.

Chris Olson, Dep. Dir. DeSoto Co. Emergency Services, said "What we were searching is on the edges of the wheat field off in the swamps."

It's the third different location they've searched and found no sign of him.

Ethel Allen said, "Lord Jesus, just tell us the truth where is he at. That's all I want to know. That's the only boy I got."

DeSoto County Sheriff Bill Rasco wants the family to have closure.

"We've been out here several times since this incident. I was out here the day that it occurred and we want to make sure that we do everything we can to get some closure for them," said Rasco.

The Sheriff isn't commenting about the family's allegations. He says he can't say what happened prior to his officers arriving on the scene. He directed us to the City of Walls for those answers.

We tried to talk to Walls Police Chief Gary Boisseau about what happened, but he dodged our cameras. His car was parked outside the police station. We even saw him inside but he's not answering our phone calls or the door. But that won't keep WREG from getting to the bottom of what happened.

<http://wreg.com>

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZkuOle2TmUM>

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Three years later, Memphis man's disappearance still a mystery

 Posted: April 30, 2016

By Ron Maxey of The Commercial Appeal

Three years ago, James Irby Jr. dropped off the map.

In a wheat field alongside U.S. 61 in Walls, Mississippi, just north of the Tunica County line, the 55-year-old Memphis man disappeared into the tall stalks after a police pursuit May 4, 2013, and his family says they haven't seen or heard from him since.

Police officers who said at the time they searched every tributary, creek and bog in the area but found nothing speculated he slipped their grasp and found a ride. But family members contend it's unlikely a man of his age, with gout and prostate cancer, outran a younger police officer across a highway and into a field before vanishing without a trace and without any further contact.

"My gut feeling is that the police did something and buried him," Charles Hampton, first vice president of the Mississippi NAACP, says as the third anniversary of Irby's disappearance approaches.

Irby is African-American, the former Walls police officer involved is white.

The case was turned over to the Mississippi Bureau of Investigation, which could not be reached despite repeated phone calls about the status of the investigation. Billy Myers, attorney for the Town of Walls at the time of the incident, said about a month later the FBI looked at the case and found no federal wrongdoing "on the part of any Walls official, uniformed or otherwise."

Family members and supporters, however, still want answers. Hampton said he has talked with Irby's Clarksdale, Mississippi, family "almost weekly" for the past three years and plans to have another conversation with investigators in the near future to try to revive interest in the unusual case.

"I've never been involved in another case quite like it," Hampton said. "We (the NAACP) have gotten involved in cases before where the person was never found, but they were cases where some time had passed. In this case, we've been in on it from the start, and it just didn't add up."

The mystery began on a Saturday, as Irby was on his way from his Memphis home to Clarksdale in the Mississippi Delta for a funeral. Former Walls police officer Zach Jenkins stopped Irby in the tiny DeSoto County town, just before Tunica County's casino strip, for a traffic violation.

Gary Boisseau, who was the Walls police chief at the time, said Jenkins spotted what appeared to be drugs in the car and had Irby outside the vehicle. Irby was on the phone, according to Boisseau, and ignored requests to hang up. Video appears to show a Taser-like shock device being fired at Irby ;X it's inconclusive whether he was struck ;X before he began running across the divided highway and into the field, followed by Jenkins.

"The wheat was pretty high after about 100 yards," Boisseau, who is no longer police chief, said at the time, "so the officer turned back."

Helicopters doing low flyovers didn't spot Irby, and neither did search dogs.

Boisseau said Irby had a criminal record, but family members and James Mathis, a DeSoto County representative of the Mississippi NAACP, said he only spent time in jail, in Clarksdale, for traffic violations.

A couple of months after Irby's disappearance, town leaders voted not to reappoint Boisseau as chief. They said the decision had nothing to do with Irby's disappearance. Current Chief Herb Brewer declined to comment on the case, referring questions to MBI.

Jenkins, the officer, was placed on administrative leave in December 2013 following a second, unrelated incident that put him in the spotlight again ;X this time, for a mobile meth lab bust in which Jenkins put the contents in his patrol vehicle and returned to the police department. The

DeSoto County Sheriff's Department had to be called to decontaminate Jenkins and the vehicle, and dispose of the meth lab.

Reginald Harris, interim chief at the time, said Jenkins' suspension was an internal administrative issue that had nothing to do with the meth lab. He did not mention Irby's case.

Jenkins is no longer with the department.

Walls Mayor Patti Denison had no comment on the current status of the case.

"I don't know what it would be," Denison said when asked if she wanted to say anything.

Irby's sister, Viola Johnson, said the family has as many questions and as few answers today as three years ago.

"We still haven't come up with anything," Johnson said. "We've talked to a lawyer, but they won't even take the case unless something turns up."

Nearly a year after Irby disappeared, in April 2014, family members joined other volunteers on a Saturday morning to conduct a daylong search in the area where Irby vanished near U.S. 61 and Church Road. The search yielded bones that family both hoped and feared might signal a break in the case, but investigators reported the bones were from a deer.

Since then, there's been nothing but no physical evidence to suggest Irby died or, according to family members and the NAACP representatives, any other type of evidence such as phone records or purchases to suggest he is alive.

Mathis, the DeSoto County NAACP representative, has been involved with the case since just after Irby's disappearance.

Knowing Irby's physical limitations makes it hard to believe he could elude police and escape undetected, Mathis said, but he believes Irby's nature makes it even more unlikely he would just run away and cut all family contact.

"This was a mama's boy," Mathis said of Irby, a "shade tree mechanic" who lived off S. Parkway near the interstate in South Memphis. Even though in his mid-50s, Mathis said Irby still called his mother daily and his car was registered in her name.

"He was never an independent boy," Ethel Allen, the mother, told state NAACP officials in 2013. "He wasn't as smart as some, and he always needed a little help to get along. He always needed to hear from me. That's the way he was."

Added Johnson, the sister, about the possibility of her brother being alive but not contacting family: "By the name of Jesus, he just wouldn't do that."

Unless or until there's a break that helps unravel the mystery, Johnson and other family members do the only thing they say they can do: remember. Johnson said the family plans to go Wednesday, the third anniversary of Irby's disappearance, to the area where it happened and release balloons.

"It's been hard," Johnson said. "It's hard just not knowing."

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<http://www.wmcactionnews5.com/story/22448489/memphis-man-missing-after-pulled-over-for-traffic-stop>