

Authorities had dragged the Biloxi Back Bay in their search for Marguerite, but they had no indication that her body was in the back bay.. they were trying to cover all bases. Her neighbors had reported her missing on a Friday . Police discovered traces of blood in her home. There was a definite sign of a struggle at her home and someone tried to clean up the disarray at her home. There were no signs of forced entry into her home, and nothing appeared as taken from the home. Traces of blood were also found in her car which was located abandoned at the Biloxi Holiday Inn on Friday. Marguerite also went missing with her pet pit bull. she was the widow of Air Force . Col. James Mayden and she was an avid and competitive golfer. Relatives had established a \$1500 reward fund at the time. She was 61 Yrs. old. Clarion Ledger

[Who is 'Miss Wiggins'? Mystery Remains Unsolved 42 Years Later | Crime | stonecountyenterprise.com](#)

# Who is 'Miss Wiggins'?

## Mystery Remains Unsolved 42 Years Later

- By: Lyndy Berryhill
- Oct 7, 2022 Updated 1 hr ago
- 
- Comments
- 
- [Facebook](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- Email
- Print
- Copy article link
- [Save](#)



**Editor's Note:**

***This is Part 1 in the Stone County Enterprise series "Miss Wiggins," which reexamines the history of Stone County's oldest known cold case. Some details are graphic and disturbing. To read Part 2, click [here](#).***

It was a Sunday afternoon on October 5, 1980. Hunters Kent and Don Ainsworth were scoping out a buck in a thicket off Highway 26 East.

What they found instead sent chills up their spine.

Cutting through the woods, 21-year-old Don saw something that resembled a skull peeking out from under a bramble.

“Something died there,” Don thought with a shrug. He looked closer.

He saw locks of amber-brown hair still attached to it. His younger brother Kent, 19, had walked ahead, assuming the bones were animal.

“Dang, Kent, that’s somebody,” Don called ahead.

“What do you mean?” Kent asked.

“That’s a person!” Don answered.

The body was next to an old fence row. Shrubbery had formed an arbor over the remains.

“We could see the rest of the body, but it was just bones,” Don said.

Despite significant decay, the Ainsworth brothers accurately discerned that the remains were female due to the length of the hair.

The tattered trash bag partially covering the rest of her remains signaled foul play.

The brothers retreated home to their father’s house and called law enforcement.

Over four decades later, little more is known despite years of investigations.

“Miss Wiggins,” as cold case investigators came to call her, is still very much a Jane Doe.

Her murderer has never faced justice.

Her friends and family, whoever they are, remain in the dark.

But before investigators could figure out who Miss Wiggins was, they first worked to learn who she was not. That was a timely process in 1980.

### ***The investigation begins***

After the Ainsworth brothers reported what they found, Stone County Sheriff Eldon Ladner responded to the call.

Officers with SCSD took statements from the brothers and brought in the state crime lab to process the remains.

Sheriff Ladner told a reporter with the Biloxi’s Daily Herald that SCSD “had no clue as to the identity of the woman.”

Though there was no definitive evidence, authorities almost immediately assumed the found remains were not of someone local.

The Stone County Enterprise does not mention a missing person during the time. The Enterprise did not even report a body was found.

The following day's issue of The Daily Herald reported that the Biloxi Police Department was involved and investigating if the remains belonged to a socialite who had gone missing six months earlier under mysterious circumstances.

### ***False leads and missing women***

Neighbors described Marguerite "Peg" Mayden as a "vivacious widow" who frequented greens at the Sunkist Country Club near her home.

The 61-year-old's disappearance in May 1980 perplexed her well-to-do family and friends.

Mayden's 1974 white Buick Riveria was abandoned in a Holiday Inn parking lot days later.

Blood was found in the trunk, alerting law enforcement officers to a possible kidnapping.

BPD searched Mayden's house, where they found blood and evidence of a violent struggle.

It was later discovered Mayden had Mafia connections when a New Jersey mobster was arrested around the same time.

The arrestee reportedly had two phone numbers in his pocket.

The Herald reported that one belonged to Mayden, and the other belonged to a known drug dealer in the Dixie Mafia.

Her family offered a \$25,000 reward for information leading to her whereabouts.

She remains missing to this day, but Mayden is presumed dead.

In the months after her high-profile disappearance, many in Biloxi hoped she was alive somehow.

The Stone County remains renewed hope that Mayden could be laid to rest properly.

But the state crime lab would report the next week that the body of Miss Wiggins had been there for about three to four months, too short of a time to have been Mayden's body.

The lab report revealed other differing details between Mayden and Jane Doe.

The body of Miss Wiggins was aged too young to be Mayden. The heights were different as well. Dental records were also inconsistent.

In fact, four bodies in two states would be found in the search for Mayden, among numerous tips and dead ends.

***“Somebody might go and kill us, too.”***

In the time between the body’s discovery and the report that Miss Wiggins was not Mayden, the Ainsworth brothers wondered if they were in danger for stumbling across her body.

Don wondered if they may have known the victim or if someone local had killed her.

He even considered that they might know the killer. Who else would have known about the old abandoned home she was next to?

He quickly pushed that theory out of his head.

The driveway to the old Lula Hall place was still there, but the house had fallen in on its foundation.

The only thing that remained was an old fence line to mark a garden plot. But that was so covered in vines and grown up.

The land also belonged to an employee of the Stone County Sheriff’s Department who grew cucumbers in a nearby field.

There is no way someone unfamiliar knew that, he thought.

Don rationalized that it was likely someone driving up from some seedy downtown part of New Orleans or the Gulf Coast who thought they were in a rural enough area where no one would find the body.

The brothers had to drive back on Highway 26 later that day.

The officers were still there, making them feel uneasy knowing what they had found.

Kent and Don worried they already knew too much.

“Hey, somebody might go and kill us, too,” Don remembers Kent saying.

### ***Mayden’s Mafia Connection***

The Dixie Mafia was going strong on the Gulf Coast, and Mayden was not the first nor would she be the last body missing in connection to the mob.

Just three years later, Mayden’s neighbor John Higgins was arrested, along with then-Harrison County Sheriff Leroy Hobbs, and eight other mobsters.

Higgins and Hobbs were waiting in a field for a plane to airdrop a load of cocaine.

Years later, the man police identified as the man seen dropping Mayden’s car off the night she disappeared was Ricky “Red” Brawley.

FBI agents later killed Brawley in an unrelated raid. He was believed to be a hitman for the Dixie Mafia.

When the Wiggins radio station mentioned the body found on air, someone told Kent about it.

He worried if the station said who found the body.

“He kind of freaked out,” Don said. “He thought the mob was coming after him next.”

But no one from the mob or anyone else bothered the Ainsworth brothers.

### ***Miss Wiggins goes to Washington***

Months would go by before more information was learned about Miss Wiggins.

Her bones would be tossed between forensic scientists from Stone County to Biloxi to Oklahoma and later Washington, D.C., before returning to Harrison County.

All investigators had after a year of searching was a basic description of what she looked like and a good idea of how she was murdered.

Two forensic scientists determined Miss Wiggins' was between 32 and 45 years old at the time of her death. She was between 5 feet 3 inches and 5 feet 6 inches tall with reddish-brown hair.

She had expensive dental work and could have possibly injured her back in a car accident as a teenager.

She was most likely tied up and strangled.

Don still drives down Highway 26 several times a week and wonders if Miss Wiggins will ever have a name.

“She could have been anybody,” Don said. “That’s one reason I’d love to know who she was and what happened.”

Her case would sit dormant and untouched for more than 30 years.

But in 2013, a phone call led a McHenry resident to begin investigating Miss Wiggins again.

***NOTE: If anyone has information about who this person is and what happened to her, please contact Mississippi Coast Crimestoppers at 1-877-787-5898 to remain anonymous.***

By: Lyndy Berryhill