

Skull Found at Construction Site in Woolmarket, Miss.(Knight Ridder/Tribune Business News)
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Jan. 18--BILOXI, Miss.--The 7-year-old nephew of a construction worker unearthed a human skull Wednesday afternoon in a wooded area just off Mississippi Highway 67 in the small town of Woolmarket.

James Strayham, owner of Strayham Construction, said he was clearing a 6-acre tract about a mile north of Interstate 10 around 4:40 p.m. when his nephew found the skull on the ground. The child, who Strayham said would not identify, was visiting the site with Strayham's brother-in-law.

"He said, 'Daddy, I found a head,' or something like that," said Strayham, who was clearing the site for Southeastern Door and Window. "I've been clearing land for 12 years, and I've never seen nothing like that."

Harrison County Coroner Gary Hargrove estimated that the skull had been in the woods for six months or longer. He said his office will begin trying to find out as much information as possible about the skull, which police placed in brown paper bag to take from the site.

Investigators with the Biloxi Police Department and Hargrove also found a small bone on the outer edge of the woods, now draped with police crime scene tape. Hargrove said police will continue searching today for additional bones.

Though police were unable to say Wednesday how many people are missing in Biloxi and Harrison County, they will begin looking at those cases today, said Lt. Harold Windom of the Biloxi Police Department.

Strayham said Wednesday was his first day clearing the site for Southeastern Door and Window, which plans to build a warehouse there. He said he had been working for only about 30 minutes when the skull was discovered. He also said that people with Southeastern had walked the site since the weekend but found nothing unusual.

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After 9 years, police still seek victim's identity

By MARGARET BAKER

BILOXI — Nine years have passed since Biloxi police investigators first started trying to identify a man found shot to death in a wooded area off Mississippi 67 in the Woolmarket community.

The killing was ruled a homicide after an autopsy showed the man died of multiple gunshot wounds.

“He was found with blue jeans and a partial pair of light colored pants,” said Biloxi Police Detective Christopher De Back, a member of the Police Department’s Cold Case Squad. “He had no identification. It’s estimated that he’d been there two to six years before he was found.”

The Biloxi Police Department’s Cold Case Squad is taking another look at the case. They’re hoping a facial reconstruction of the victim in a composite sketch will lead them to someone who can identify the victim and possibly provide leads in the murder investigation.

“Our main focus is identifying the deceased,” said Biloxi Police Chief John Miller. “There is some family member out there who doesn’t know what happened to a family member. We don’t have any direction to go on. Very seldom do we have a case where we have no direction at all. That’s what we have here.”

The investigation began on Jan. 17, 2001, when Biloxi police got a report of a skull found in a mostly wooded area at 13180 Mississippi 67 in the then-newly annexed Woolmarket community.

The discovery was made shortly after a man and his son stopped by the property to visit a relative who’d been hired to clear some underbrush.

“We’d just pulled over to talk,” said one of the men on the property at the time of the discovery. “My son jumped out of my truck, and he was just playing in the woods while I was talking to my brother-in-law. My son came back and said he found a skull, and sure enough it was. Once we saw the skull, we just backed off.”

The death was immediately ruled a homicide, and Biloxi police officers soon found themselves enthralled in an investigation centered around a man no one seemed to know.

“The body was about 79 feet off the west side of 67,” Miller said.

“It was out where no one would notice an odor. He could’ve been killed somewhere else and dumped there.”

Police suspect that was likely the case because the property where the man was found was in close proximity to Interstate 10.

At the scene, police officers collected the man’s bones. They were scattered around the property, likely the result of an animal that came across the remains.

Partial pieces of a pair of pants, some purple threads and the projectile from the bullets used in the killing were collected.

Law enforcement officials sent the bones to an expert trained in facial reconstruction who came up with the composite sketch of the victim.

Miller said police officers looking into the case at the time did an in-depth investigation, but with no information on the victim, the case eventually grew cold.

At the time of the discovery, the officers said that relatives of missing persons were not yet submitting DNA to help identify their loved ones in the event their bodies were found.

In addition, a DNA database on convicted felons was not fully in place for detectives to compare any DNA samples with that of a possible suspect.

Now that some time has passed, Cold Case Investigator Mike Manna said, police have collected forensic evidence that is now in the hands of analysts to test for a DNA link.

Manna, also a crime scene investigator and member of the Cold Case Squad, said he's spent countless hours pouring over the descriptions of missing persons nationwide to get a match. So far, he said, "99.9 percent" of the missing persons he's looked at didn't match the description of the deceased.

Still, Manna continues to look at law enforcement teletypes showing the description of people reported missing around the time the murder victim was found.

"The sooner we can identify the victim, the better," he said.

Cold Case investigators believe that once the victim is identified, they'll be one step closer to solving the case.

"If nothing else, we want to give closure to the man's family," De Back said. "There is some family out there that still doesn't know what happened to a loved one. Of course, it's always nice to see the right person answer for the crime. That's what we're hoping to do."

<http://www.sunherald.com/local/v-print/story/1873525.html>

Biloxi Harrison County Mississippi <--- That's where I was found!

Now can you tell me where I'm from? Until we know my identity you can call me Ronald Harrington, good a name as any, I guess!

Here is the harsh reality in 2001 my skull was found in the woods. In a wooded area at 13120 Hwy 67, Biloxi, Harrison County, Mississippi to be exact. It's been estimated I was dead for one to five years before they found me.

Doe Network reported that I had been shot in the head. They found other parts too, but not my hands. Now who would go and do a thing like that? It's damn crying shame I tell you, damn crying shame!

You probably guessed from the computer enhanced facial reconstruction that I'm a black man. They guess I'm between 32 and 42 years of age and about 5'9 1/2" (69.5) tall. They couldn't tell my weight, can't quite figure out how they could tell my height. Don't much care. I just want to know who I am.

It's also been reported that I was probably wearing black colored pants and gray boxer shorts. So the big mystery is solved. I wore boxers instead of briefs. Wonderful. Now can you just tell me who I am?

Look my hands were not recovered. Let's suppose they were cut off and removed so no finger prints could be taken, or maybe the wild animals carried them away. Sad state of affairs I tell you, sad state!

It comes down to this "Do You Know Me?" If you do call someone and tell them who I am. If you don't pass my picture on to someone else and have them keep passing it on until someone somewhere can say who I am! Thank You!

ME/C Contact Information

LSU Faces Lab:

Phone Number:

225.578.6084

or the

Biloxi Police Department

Phone Number:

228-435-6112

Additional Info:

Victim had actually been deceased 6 to 7 yrs. (1995-1996)

Dental Summary: One or More Teeth Present, Resorations, Upper Jaw Present,

Comments: Amalgam filling tooth #18. Tooth #16 is broken