

Noble R. Brown

Skeleton found by hunters

ESCATAWPA — Skeletal remains of a human, found by hunters near Greenwood Cemetery on Frank Griffin Road about 10 a.m. Thursday, had apparently been in the area for some time, according to Jackson County Medical Examiner David Miller.

Miller said hunters Roderick L. Rouse of Escatawpa and William L. Landrum of Gautier discovered the remains on the north side of the cemetery near the Escatawpa River.

Miller and sheriff's officers went to the scene after the discovery was reported to the sheriff's department at 12:45 p.m.

The remains were not intact and have been determined to be those of a human, said Miller. He said the remains are not those of a person who been buried in the cemetery.

"The remains will be shipped to the State Medical Laboratory, and I will be in contact with the state medical examiner," said Miller.

Miller, assisted by sheriff's officers at the scene, said his office will conduct an indepth investigation of the incident.

2
5

1





Bones crucial pieces in solving puzzling deaths

Anthropologist called in to help lawmen solve cases

By SHARON STALLWORTH
JACKSON COUNTY BUREAU

■ ESCATAWPA — On his knees in a cold, muddy swamp near the Escatawpa River, Ed Waldrip paws through handfuls of muck searching for more bones of an unknown man whose remains were found there Christmas Eve.

A clot of mud yields a sticklike toe bone. "You never know what bit of information is going to make the difference," said the Hattiesburg forensic anthropologist, often consulted by law officers with unidentified skeletons.

His tools are metal detectors, shovels, rakes, trowels and screens. His trade is putting faces and names to the bits of bones found in the remote underbrush of woods and creeks in Mississippi.

The bones found in Jackson County, and a different set found 10 days later in Harrison County, became Waldrip's fifth and sixth cases since October in which county coroners have asked him to identify remains or detail time and cause of deaths.

Waldrip usually spends 10 to 15 hours studying the bones he receives and tries to search the site where they were found as well.

The Jackson County bones, apparently undisturbed since the body floated up by Greenwood Cemetery on a high tide or was dumped there several years ago, were contained within a much smaller area than the several acres Waldrip sometimes has to search.

An almost complete skeleton, including skull and pelvis, was recovered by the Jackson County coroner and Sheriff's Department on Dec. 24.

Four hours of kneeling amid the tall grass and thorny thickets adjoining the cemetery last week yielded some vertebrae, a rib, and a few finger and toe bones.

"We work with what we've got," Waldrip said. "If we had our druthers, we'd have the skull and pelvis. But the more bones, the better. You never know when



Ed Waldrip examines a bone he found near the Escatawpa River in Jackson County.

Please see BONES, A-4

BONES

Continued from Page A-1

one or two bones will have marks or wounds on them."

The skull is where he starts. Its shape and size can reveal age, race and sex. The pelvis also can reveal age and sex, and possibly blood type, race or disease changes. An investigator can tell if the victim was ever pregnant. The pelvic shape and bone marrow tell a life story to one who can read it.

Anatomy and anthropology — the studies of body structure and people — are Waldrip's fortes. He has correctly identified about 70 percent of the 20 cases since his first in 1982.

"First, you have to have some ideas on who you're looking for, and then, from their history, do comparisons," he said.

When investigators think they know who a victim is, any X-rays or medical records the victim may have had are compared with the remains.

Dental comparisons are the first line of identification. Comparisons of skull and chest X-rays of the remains and the suspected victim also are common means of identification.

If no records exist or matches can't be made, data from other studies are used. Wear and tear on different

bones and muscle processes, produced by various occupations, are apparent to a trained eye.

Pipesmokers show changes in their teeth from clenching the stem of the pipe. Motorcycle and horseback riders have pelvic changes, as do secretaries. Indistinct muscle workings, if present, reflect a sedentary lifestyle.

How a person died is usually apparent, too. Most fatal wounds occur in the chest or skull, and hard bone tissue faithfully reproduces the marks of the bullets, knives or bludgeons that ended a life.

"We want to help build as much of a case as possible," Waldrip said. "We try to get absolutely as much information from the skeleton as we can."

Facial reconstructors use clay to model the victim's face from its bone structure and known tissue thicknesses. Super-imposition uses projection of a photo image over the skull. These are usually last-ditch efforts at identification.

It's easier for someone who knew the victim to identify a reconstruction rather than a skull, even if the face isn't entirely accurate.

While identification is a precise process, discovery of remains often is not. The first case Waldrip ever worked was in Greene County, where two boys playing in a low creek found what they thought was a fish trap. It turned out to be a woman, shot, wrapped in chicken wire and

weighted to the creek bottom.

"I suspect if we had had our normal rainfall that year, that body would never have been found," Waldrip said.

Hunters often make the grisly finds. The Jackson County bones and the remains of Elizabeth Teresa Carter found in Harrison County early this month were both hunters' discoveries.

Carter was quickly identified through missing person reports and dental records, but Waldrip has been called in to establish how and when she died.

His specialized science is a boon to those who want to tie medical evidence into a legal case.

"For a lay coroner, or even an MD coroner, there's so many specifics involved," said Harrison County Coroner Ed Little.

Although the Harrison County case is identified, Jackson County Coroner Dave Miller will still have work ahead of him after he hears Waldrip's report on the Jackson County bones.

"We'll take the summary to the Sheriff's Department and start pulling missing persons (reports)," he said. "We'll try to match their heights, weights, maybe talk to some family members and then, if we have to, try facial reconstruction."

"With I-10 running through the county and all the transients, we can have missing persons anywhere."

Likeness created to help ID dead man

By PAT KELLY
JACKSON COUNTY BUREAU

■ PASCAGOULA — The glass eyes peering from the sculpted re-creation of the dead man's skull seem to painfully accuse his onlookers for failing to find his killer.

Law enforcement officials are hopeful the public can help ease the stare.

The Jackson County Sheriff's Department unveiled the model head Tuesday of what they believe is a close likeness of an unidentified man whose bones were found Dec. 24.

Two hunters found the skeleton in a muddy area in Escatawpa's Greenwood Cemetery near the Escatawpa River. Authorities at first believed the body had washed up from the river several years ago and was perhaps the victim of a drowning accident.

Now they are convinced the man was murdered. "We are now 90 percent sure he didn't just float up," Jackson County Coroner David Miller said. "The clothing was inside out and lying next to the remains. He was either killed there or transported there and dumped."

Hattiesburg forensic anthropologist Edward B. Waldrip has been collecting the bones and studying their characteristics for a cause of death. The remains of the body and the results of his findings were turned over Tuesday to the Sheriff's Department.

He said the remains show marks on the shoulders and ribs "which are suggestive of two stab-like wounds, possibly inflicted by a knife-like object."

Based on his study of the bones and other evidence collected at the crime scene, Waldrip said the victim was a white male, about 25 to 30 years old and between 5 feet 3 inches and 5 feet 6 inches tall.

The man weighed between 155 and 165 pounds, was left-handed, had two impacted wisdom teeth and was a smoker. He had blond or light brown hair.

"The slight muscle markings (on the bones) indicate to me that the individual had a sedentary



PAT KELLY/SUN HERALD STAFF WRITER

Specialist Ed Waldrip explains how this likeness of an unidentified skeleton was made.

lifestyle," Waldrip said.

The plaster head was sculpted by Charles Ambros, director of the Art Department at the Gulfport campus of William Carey College.

He said he first did a casting directly from the skull and then added facial characteristics that are consistent with what Waldrip was able to discover, such as determining how much the skin should sag by the age. Facial contours were decided by adding known tissue depths to the skull casting.

"When we get through we have a pretty good idea of the likeness," he said.

Waldrip said law enforcement officials are suc-

cessful about 60 percent of the time in eventually identifying victims through re-creations such as the one performed by Ambrose.

"The degree of success depends on the amount of people who see the results," Waldrip said. "The best scenario will be for someone to call after they think they know this person. We have a dental chart that will be our best bet for identification."

Waldrip said the victim has been dead at least since 1981.

Sheriff Pete Pope urged anyone who thinks they may know the unidentified person to contact the Jackson County Sheriff's Department.

Skeleton found in cemetery

PASCAGOULA (AP) — Jackson County officials report two hunters have found a skeleton in a muddy area in a cemetery near the Escatawpa River. Investigators said the skeleton, found by the hunters last Thursday, apparently had washed in from the river several years ago but they were unsure how old it was. “We have ruled out that they (the bones) were from the graveyard — we think they washed up from the river,” said Coroner David Miller. “The skeleton had been there a while and it had fallen apart.” A wool jacket also was found with the skeleton.

**UID-MS - #UP14824 - Escatawpa John Doe - Escatawpa, MS -
24 Dec 1987**