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PRESS RELEASE

****UPDATE****

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Plumas County Sheriff's Office

Investigative Genetic Genealogy Identifies 1988 Homicide Victim as Paul Richard Davis

February 28, 2025

04/21/1988, a tree removal crew, while working in a secluded area of Quincy California, located what appeared to be a bone sticking out of the ground. The worker dug up the object and additionally located some clothing with the bone. The worker then contacted the Sheriff's Office to report his discovery.

The Sheriff's office responded, and Investigators excavated the site, locating what was confirmed to be human skeletal remains. Investigators collected evidence from the shallow grave, including tree root samples, which were sent to The University of Arizona for examination. Examination of the root samples estimated the earliest time the grave could have been dug was during the growing season of 1985 and the latest was the growing season of 1986.

The skeletal remains were ultimately transferred to California State University of Chico Anthropology Department for examination. Preliminary findings from the Anthropology Department estimated the victim was that of a Caucasian male approximately 6' tall, muscular build, approximately 35 to 45 years of age. Additionally, the victim's skull had a hole in the back consistent with that of a gunshot injury.

In 1988, items of evidence were transferred to the California Department of Justice (DOJ) for examination. DOJ attempted to identify the victim by dental records with negative results. All remains were later returned to Chico State University Anthropology Lab.

In 2022, detectives from the Plumas County Sheriff's Office were contacted by the University of Chico Anthropology Department. They advised they were re-examining old cases and would like to complete a re-analysis of the remains they had custody of since 1988. In addition to the examination, the anthropology department entered the unidentified victim into NAMUS (National Missing and Unidentified Persons System) as well as submitted bone samples to California Department of Justice DNA Lab to create a DNA profile in CODIS (Combined DNA Index System). This technology was in its very early stages of development and not commonplace in the 80's. Despite efforts, there was never a DNA match made in CODIS. Throughout the years, investigators had completed multiple follow-up investigations of possible matches for missing people with negative results.

In January 2023, the Plumas County Sheriff's Office was contacted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Sacramento Field Office to discuss an investigative approach involving the development of leads leveraging Investigative Genetic Genealogy (IGG) and the potential the investigative technique held for the case. With financial assistance from the NamUS Forensic Unit and the FBI, the case was approved to move forward in November 2023. The Sheriff's Office then contracted with a private DNA lab to obtain a DNA profile and submitted evidentiary bone samples for testing and analysis.

A single nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) was obtained from the sample to aid the development of a family tree by using publicly accessible genealogy services and law enforcement resources, such as birth certificates and obituaries, to identify potential family members of the unknown profile. In April 2024, Plumas County Sheriff's Detectives met with the FBI to review the results of the investigative genealogy, which revealed the 1988 homicide victim may be Paul Richard Davis, a former resident of Kern County, California.

With this new lead, the FBI and Sheriff's Detectives located two living, blood-related family members of Davis in the Bakersfield area. Plumas County Detectives and FBI Special Agent's traveled to Bakersfield to contact the relatives and explain the investigative technique that may have identified their relative as the victim. The family members agreed to voluntarily provide DNA samples that were then compared against the DNA profile.

DNA samples were sent to the California DOJ Bureau of Forensic Services for direct comparison. The DNA profile obtained from the victim was also compared to the DNA profiles obtained from the family reference samples submitted for Paul Davis. The comparison of the samples provided strong support that the decedent is related to this family.

Speaking with family members, Davis lived a transient lifestyle and had substance abuse problems. The family noted Paul would contact them via telephone every six months or so until one day in the early 1980's, the calls just stopped. The family was not aware of any reason Davis would be in Plumas County and no known family or friends resided in that area. The last contact date with Paul Davis investigators could narrow down was 01/11/1983, when Paul was released from custody in Santa Rosa California for petty theft.

There is very little information regarding Davis's past associates and friends. The Plumas County Sheriff's Office is looking for anyone that may have information regarding Paul Richard Davis and how he came to be a victim of homicide in Plumas County. Anyone with information is asked to contact the Sheriff's Office Detective Unit at (530) 283-6363.



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END