



COUNTY OF KENOSHA

John T. Jansen, Director
Department of Human Services

Patrice Hall, Medical Examiner
Office of the Medical Examiner
Kenosha County Public Safety Building
1000 55th Street
Kenosha, Wisconsin 53140
Phone: (262) 653-3869
Fax: (262) 653-3877

August 24, 2018

News release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Patrice Hall, Medical Examiner
262-653-3869

With 25th anniversary approaching, Kenosha County ME's Office continues probe of 1993 John Doe case

As the John Doe mystery of an unidentified body found alongside a set of railroad tracks in Pleasant Prairie hits the quarter-century mark next week, the Kenosha County Medical Examiner's Office is turning to cutting-edge technology to identify the man.

Medical Examiner Patrice Hall recently engaged the services of forensic scientists at the Smithsonian Institution who will use isotopic analysis of one of the man's teeth to try to learn more about his origins.

"I'm hoping with this isotope analysis that I can narrow down where in the world this person is from," Hall said. "It's literally a shot in the dark, but we'll give it a whirl and see what happens."

The John Doe body was spotted Aug. 27, 1993, by a photographer walking in the area of the Soo Line – now Canadian Pacific – tracks just north of the Illinois state line. With the body in an advanced state of decomposition, investigators at the time were unable to yield the identity of the decedent, nor did they turn up any additional leads in the case.

Hall resumed the investigation in December 2014, when she learned that the man's skull had been retained by the Pleasant Prairie Police Department.

Working with NamUs – the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System – Hall focused on the unique tattoos that were reconstructed as part of the original investigation.

Hall consulted with the Kenosha Police Gang Unit and law enforcement in Illinois, seeking information about the significance of the tattoos. She even had one of her deputies take reconstruction images to local tattoo parlors, in search of ideas about the tattoos' origins.

"That's how it is with a lot of these cold cases, where you're just trying different things," Hall said. "You have to think outside the box."

In October 2015, with the support of NamUs, the skull was mailed to the University of North Texas Center for Human Identification for further anthropologic examination. There, DNA analysis concluded the John Doe was a man roughly 40 to 60 years old, likely Asian or Asian-derived (Amerindian, Hispanic, etc.), with some Caucasian lineage also possible.

Hall said it was concluded that the man's four upper front teeth had been missing for a while before his death, as the bone in his mouth had healed.

The new anthropology work led the Medical Examiner's Office and Pleasant Prairie Police to reclassify the John Doe's manner of death, from homicide to "undetermined." While the 1993 investigation concluded that a gunshot wound was a possible cause of death, Hall said the more recent review disputed that finding.

In 2016, the Michigan State Police Biometrics and Identification Division donated the services of a forensic artist who performed a facial reconstruction, offering the clearest yet view of the likely appearance of John Doe. Images of that reconstruction were released to the public in May 2017.

Still, even with new DNA analysis and the vivid facial reconstruction, the case found no new leads. Hall said she hopes the isotope analysis will offer more clues about the origins of John Doe.

Teeth capture an isotopic snapshot of where people lived during their youth or teen years, a Smithsonian scientist explained to Hall. This is established by the water people drink and the food they eat.

This service is being provided by the Smithsonian at no charge to the county, Hall said.

"It's not an exact science, but any information we get could help us to advance this investigation," Hall said.

Though it has been 25 years since the man's body was found, Hall said her office remains motivated to identify him.

"My motivation is to give them back their name and to give closure to their family," Hall said, "because I'm sure that somebody out there is looking for them or wondering what happened to a loved one."

Pleasant Prairie Police Chief David Smetana shared similar sentiments.

"The Pleasant Prairie Police Department greatly appreciates the effort and resources dedicated to identifying the remains found 25 years ago and assisting a family in bringing a measure of closure to this case," Smetana said.

Those with any information about John Doe's identity or other aspects of the case are urged to contact the Pleasant Prairie Police Department at 262-694-7353 or Kenosha Area Crime Stoppers at 262-656-7333.

More information about the Kenosha County Medical Examiner's Office is available at <http://www.kenoshacounty.org/377/Medical-Examiners-Office>, or on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/KenoshaCountyME/>.

###