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John Doe homicide victim identified after 49 years

SANTA ANA, Ca. (Nov. 28, 2023) – A John Doe homicide victim discovered 49 years ago in unincorporated Laguna Hills, present-day Aliso Viejo, has been identified through investigative genetic genealogy.

On September 14, 1974, two subjects were off-roading on a fire road when they discovered a deceased male over the side of the trail. He was estimated to have died 3-5 days prior to his discovery. His death was initially determined to be accidental due to alcohol and diazepam intoxication.

Information was released to the press in the hope that someone would come forward with sufficient information to assist in establishing John Doe's identity. His fingerprint classification was submitted to the Criminal Identification and Investigation Division in Sacramento, CA, the Federal Bureau of Identification and Canadian authorities with negative results. After several weeks of efforts to establish his identity, John Doe was interred at El Toro Memorial Park in an unmarked grave. Efforts were made over the years to establish his identity.

In 1980, OCSD Homicide investigators noted there were other deaths in 1978 due to alcohol and diazepam intoxication in Southern California, including Orange County. These deaths were classified as homicides. Over the years, multiple young men were found deceased throughout Orange County and Southern California, including several within a few miles of where John Doe's remains were discovered.

In May 1983, Randy Steven Kraft, later known as the "Scorecard Killer", was arrested for murder after a California Highway Patrol officer conducted a traffic stop on Kraft. In the front passenger seat of Kraft's vehicle was a deceased male, identified as Terry Lee Gambrel. Around his feet were several empty beer bottles and an open prescription bottle of Lorazepam tablets.

In the trunk of Kraft's vehicle was a coded list believed to be upwards of 67 victims of Kraft's. In May 1989, Kraft was convicted of 16 murders and sentenced to death. An additional 10 murders Kraft was suspected of committing were not filed by the Orange County District Attorney. He remains incarcerated at San Quentin State Prison. John Doe has long been thought to be an early victim of Randy Kraft.

In November 2022, OCSD investigators submitted tissue samples for John Doe to Othram Laboratories, a private forensic biotechnology company, to develop a DNA profile. In February 2023, the DNA profile was received by OCSD's Cold Case Team. The Cold Case team is



comprised of two investigators who are trained in the application of investigative genetic genealogy. John Doe's DNA profile was uploaded into a law enforcement-approved genealogy database and investigators began building his family tree.

In October 2023, after months of work, investigators identified the possible grandparents of John Doe. Investigators contacted a granddaughter of this couple, who told investigators she had not seen her 17-year-old brother since April of 1974. Investigators traveled to Kansas City, MO, to obtain a DNA sample from a woman believed to be the mother of John Doe. Her DNA sample was used to positively identify the decedent as Michael Ray Schlicht of Cedar Rapids, IA.

Family members have been notified and are in the process of having a headstone installed to mark his final resting place.

Sheriff's Department investigators now turn their focus to investigating Schlicht's homicide case. Anyone with information related to this case is encouraged to contact Orange County Crime Stoppers at 1-855-TIP-OCCS or crimestoppers.org.



Michael Ray Schlicht