



## Hernando County Sheriff's Office

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### Media Release

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**From:** Michael Terry  
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**Re:** Genealogy Helps Identify Mansfield Murder Victim

**Date:** July 20, 2022

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The Hernando County Sheriff's Office has identified one of the two remaining unidentified victims in the Mansfield investigation from 1981.

In March and April of 1981, four sets of human remains were recovered from the Mansfield property located in Hernando County. Two of the victims were immediately identified. The other two victims remained unidentified until now, where one of the victims has recently been positively identified.

HCSO investigators have recently sought the services of the University of North Texas and Parabon Nano Labs (Parabon), a DNA technology company in Virginia. Parabon specializes in DNA phenotyping: the process of predicting physical appearance and ancestry from unidentified DNA evidence.

The HCSO worked with the University of North Texas and Parabon for this investigation. Law enforcement agencies use the company's Snapshot DNA Phenotyping Service (Snapshot) to narrow the suspect/victim list and generate leads in criminal investigations.

DNA evidence from the unidentified victims' were submitted to Parabon to generate actionable leads for this cold case.

The human remains (evidence) that were collected in 1981 were sent to several labs in an attempt to develop a DNA profile; however this was unsuccessful.

In 2020, a sample of the remains was sent to the University of North Texas where a complete DNA profile was developed and subsequently entered into the national database. A search of that database was unsuccessful.

However, the complete DNA profile was reviewed, and it was determined that a sufficient DNA sample of the unidentified victim existed for further testing.

Using DNA evidence from this investigation, Snapshot produced trait predictions for the associated victim. Individual predictions were made for the victim's ancestry, eye color, hair color, skin color, freckling, and face shape. Parabon's research developed a profile that was utilized in the identification of the victim in this case.

HCSO investigators were able to follow up on the lead and have been able to determine that **Theresa Caroline Fillingim DOB 05-22-1963** was one of the unidentified victims in this cold case investigation.

Fillingim was reported missing to the Tampa Police Department by her sister Margaret Johns on May 16, 1980. Fillingim's remains were recovered from the Mansfield property on April 3, 1981.

The Hernando County Sheriff's Office would like to thank the University of North Texas, Dr. Erin Kimmerle, Kelsee Hentschel Fey with the Forensic Anthropology Department of University of South Florida, N.A.M.U.S., the Fifth District Medical Examiner's Office, Cape Coral Police Department, Longmont Police Department in Colorado, Tampa Police Department, and Parabon for their assistance in identifying Theresa Fillingim and bringing peace to the victim's family.

The Sheriff's Office will continue to use evolving technology and investigative techniques as appropriate to help solve violent crimes.

**The Office of Sheriff:**

**The Office of the Sheriff is established by the Florida Constitution. As a constitutional officer, the Sheriff has the exclusive authority to administer his or her agency and is responsible for preserving the peace throughout the entire county, carrying out the laws of the state, the orders of Florida courts, and the ordinances of the Board of County Commissioners. The Sheriff is the chief law enforcement and correctional officer of the county.**

**Sheriff Al Nienhuis was initially appointed as the Sheriff of Hernando County by the Governor in January of 2011. He was then elected by the people of Hernando County in 2012, ran unopposed in 2016, and was re-elected in 2020. Sheriff Nienhuis remains accountable to the people of Hernando County.**