



MONTEREY POLICE DEPARTMENT

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DNA and Forensic Genetic Genealogy Solve 2014's MPD Death Cases

On February 4th, 2014, the Monterey Police Department (MPD) responded to the death of a woman in the 1100 block of Fourth Street, Monterey. The woman, identified by her California Driver's license as Francesca Linda Jacobs, with a birthdate in 1955, had died from starvation. No foul play was suspected in this sad, but non-criminal death.

The surprise came when MPD officers and the Monterey County Sheriff-Coroner located the decomposed remains of another person inside a box under the kitchen table. At the autopsy, the body of a fully clothed woman was found in the box. The virtually empty apartment that Francesca Jacobs had been living in for the past 12 years revealed a handwritten will, outlining that the woman in the box was her mother, whom she identified as Florence Jacobs. Due to the condition of the remains in the box, which appeared to have been in that state for many years, no cause of death could be determined and foul play could not be ruled out.

In death, Francesca Jacobs appeared much older than her potential age of 58 years. Additionally, her driver's license photo seemed to show a much older woman. The records for "Francesca Jacobs" were only related to her time living on the Monterey Peninsula, starting in the 1990's. Almost no records could be found for Jacobs' "mother."

In late 2022, with the election of Monterey County Sheriff-Coroner Tina Nieto, the Monterey County District Attorney's Office Cold Case Task Force began working directly with the Monterey County Sheriff-Coroner's office to attempt to identify all unknown human remains cases in Monterey County. This included the Monterey case that was referred to as the "Mom-In-The-Box" case and Francesca Jacobs, whose true identities could not be established, and would remain unknown until 2023.

The California Department of Justice (DOJ) provided funding for the DNA portion of this investigation through the Roads to Justice Grant, which was created to assist in identifying unknown human remains. In 2022, samples from both deceased women were used to create DNA profiles that could be used in Forensic Genetic Genealogy through Othram, a

well established private forensics lab based in Texas. The technique used in this case has gained momentum in recent years to resolving not only unknown human remains cases, but unsolved homicide and sexual assault “cold cases” as well.

The new process, utilizing Othram’s DNA profile work, led to surprising facts and a truth that had been known only to the woman who had died in 2014 in Monterey. The woman who had portrayed herself as Francesca Jacobs, born in 1955 - was actually Linda Rae Jacobs, born in 1942. Linda Rae Jacobs was a full 12 years older than she had led people to believe she was as Francesca Jacobs. The California DOJ was able to confirm through DNA analysis that Linda Rae Jacobs and Ida Florence Jacobs were indeed daughter and mother. Utilizing the newly developed DNA facts, MPD Detectives followed new leads and contacted relatives, including a previous husband who helped confirm the true identities and the unusually strong life-long bond between the daughter and mother.

As a result of this investigation, utilizing the latest DNA technologies and processes, which provided detectives new leads and allowed further investigation – no foul play is suspected in the death of remains in the box, Ida Florence Jacobs. Many who may have shed light on other details as a result of knowing both women earlier in their lives, have also passed away. The reasons Linda Rae Jacobs assumed a new name or why she would keep her mother’s body in a box under the kitchen table will likely never be known.

The District Attorney’s Cold Case Task Force was created in 2020 to identify, review, and collaboratively re-investigate unresolved homicide cases, missing persons cases with foul play suspected, and cases of unidentified human remains throughout Monterey County. The Monterey Police Department has provided investigative resources that have been an integral part of the Cold Case Task Force since its inception. Many of the modern investigative approaches to develop new leads in unsolved “cold case” crimes, such as the case described herein are being utilized to work unresolved cold cases in the city of Monterey.

Additional information about:

- Monterey Police Department Unsolved Homicides can be found at the following link: https://monterey.org/city_hall/police/unsolved_homicides.php
- The Monterey County District Attorney’s Office Cold Case Task Force can be found at the following link - <https://www.co.monterey.ca.us/government/departments-a-h/district-attorney/cold-case-task-force>
- The Monterey County Sheriff-Coroner can be found at the following link - <https://montereysheriff.org/>

Persons with information about cold cases in Monterey can contact MPD Cold Case Detective Bill Clark, or our confidential tip line: (831) 646-3840.

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