

EPISODE 303: The Brutal Murder of Jane Doe

Announcer

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Steve Gregory

On any given day in Southern California, hundreds of investigators are working more than 10,000 unsolved cases. That's thousands of friends and families who have lost loved ones, thousands of people who got away with a crime, and thousands of murderers who still walk the streets. Killers who may be your neighbor, go to your church, or could be dating a close friend. For the next two hours, we'll highlight cases that have gone cold, baffled investigators or just needs that one witness to speak out. This is Unsolved with Steve Gregory.

Steve Gregory

Santa Ana Police Department Homicide Cold Case Number 1988-24532. The brutal death of Jane Doe

Announcer

Caution this episode contains graphic material not suitable for everyone.

Steve Gregory

This is our first episode with the Santa Ana Police Department. I had heard that department had a cold case unit. So I reached out to Commander Jose Gonzalez who put me in touch with Detective Mike Gibbons. I met Detective Gibbons at Santa Ana police headquarters. He begins with an overview of the case going back to March 31, 1988.

Detective Mike Gibbons

There was a male that was walking his dog in the middle of the afternoon it was about 3:15pm, and as he was walking his dog he observed in some bushes, what appeared to be a human body. He took a closer look and observed that it was a female body that appeared to be decapitated. He did not have a cell phone so he went to a neighboring business, contacted an employee there and asked them to contact the police. Once the police arrived, he directed the officers to this area within the bushes and it was right at the edge of the embankment that leads down into the creek bed. And their officers discovered that there was a female laying at the at the edge of the embankment within these bushes. She was wearing a yellow spaghetti style strap tank top, a white bra she had her underwear on and her pants were pulled down around her knees. She also had her shoes that were adjacent to her she was not wearing them. And they did in fact confirm that she was decapitated and they were unable to locate her head. Based on that they obviously had a concern to locate any additional evidence including the remainder of her body. They set up a perimeter around the entire park and they conducted an extensive search. Once it got dark and they were unable to search any longer, they kept a perimeter around throughout the night and they continued their search in the morning. After another extensive search throughout the entire park, they were unable to locate her head. The body was processed taken to the Orange County Coroner's Office and an autopsy was performed. And then about four days later, on April 3, roughly around 4pm, there were two juveniles that were walking in the the base of the creek bed and as they were walking through there, they located a human head and they contacted the police department. So officers went out and detectives once again were summoned out to the scene where they located a female head. So this female she is described to be approximately 25 years of age, she had brown colored roughly about col'ar length hair. She had a gold hoop earring in one of her ears and there was another similar earring found on the ground nearby. She is

believed to be either light skinned Hispanic, possibly white and she had extensive trauma to her head, in addition, obviously to being decapitated, so, officers were able to collect that. The concern, obviously, was that, is it possible that they actually missed it? And we actually have some crime scene photos that were taken, actually from the very location where the head was located. Because that was definitely a concern is was the was the head missed initially and so it doesn't appear that way. So we're under the impression to this day that the head was placed there sometime after the body was identified and located and removed from the scene. The coroner's estimation is that, that she had died, probably on the 28th or 29th. So two to three days prior to her body being found, and then obviously close to closer to a week before her head had been found.

Steve Gregory

Okay. I'm sorry, did you want to finish? Did you something has finished? Okay, so detective, what I want to go back a couple of things. How far what was the distance between where the head was found and where the body was found?

Detective Mike Gibbons

It was about 30 to 35 feet. It was a down an embankment. Not directly below her but but fairly close to the location where her body was.

Steve Gregory

So this is now obviously you weren't out at the scene and because you know, that's we're talking 34 years ago.

Detective Mike Gibbons

Correct.

Steve Gregory

So you have to look back at these case files, and you have to sort of take the notes that were given back then, taken back then, and you have to sort of put a fresh pair of eyes on this and make something of it. But, and I know some of my questions might get a little off base because you weren't there. Don't you find it unusual, then, I mean, if you're convinced that investigators back then they were convinced that the head was not there, the day the body was found. As an investigator, what does that tell you? I mean, if if the if the suspect, waits for what two to three days, and then puts the head out there within 30 to 35 feet of the body is that significant in terms of like who you're dealing with?

Detective Mike Gibbons

Really, the thing that kind of would stand out to me would be that this wouldn't appear to be just a body dump. So the 22 freeway, really the Orange Crush is is fairly close, in proximity to where Santiago Park is located. And I know that there are a lot of body dumps that occur, you know, off the freeways, and sometimes in these remote areas, but the fact that the body was placed there, and then the person or persons returned and placed, it would tell me that it wasn't just somebody passing through, I would expect that it was somebody that was residing locally.

Steve Gregory

Okay, but that's what you surmise from the fact that the head was put there a couple days later...

Detective Mike Gibbons

Right, it's something it's somebody that remains remains in the area and either either works in the area or lives in the area, but for some reason they they frequent, this general area.

Steve Gregory

And you said that the this poor young woman's body was she had her underwear on a bra and her pants were pulled around down to her knees, she didn't have a shirt on then?

Detective Mike Gibbons

She did have a shirt on..

Steve Gregory

Oh the spaghetti strap...yeah...

Detective Mike Gibbons

Her shirt was pulled up to to the base of her bra, but her shirt and bra were still on

Steve Gregory

Evidence of sexual assault?

Detective Mike Gibbons

There was not evidence of sexual assault. However, there were some some items with some biological fluid that were collected as evidence.

Steve Gregory

Okay, we'll talk a little bit about that but we need to take a break. This is Unsolved with Steve Gregory on KFI-AM 640, time now for a news update.

Steve Gregory

KFI-AM 640 heard everywhere live on the iHeartRadio app. I'm Steve Gregory, and this is Unsolved. If you're listening on the app, you can send us a tip about a case, a story idea or a comment about the show, just tap the red microphone on the app and record your message.

Announcer

Caution. This episode contains graphic material not suitable for everyone.

Steve Gregory

We're at the Santa Ana police department in the city of Santa Ana headquarters and we're talking with Mike Gibbons about the case simply called Jane Doe from March 31, 1988. The body of a woman found in park in 2500 block of North Main Street. Before the break detective, I asked you if there was evidence of

sexual assault and you said not necessarily but you were able to get some sort of biological evidence. Can you elaborate a little bit on that?

Detective Mike Gibbons

Just that there was, without getting into specifics, there was an item that was collected and it was present with her body and it had some biological fluids that have been determined to be from a male.

Steve Gregory

Okay, so I understand why you have to be a little coy about it, I get that, but I'm going to I'm just going to ask you and see if we're getting a roundabout there. But are we talking about an item used in sexual activity?

Detective Mike Gibbons

No.

Steve Gregory

Okay, but there was an item there you said that had the man's fluid on it. So obviously, that was tested, I assume, and what did you get from it?

Detective Mike Gibbons

So, throughout the years, because there's been a variety of different testing and in, in 88, obviously, we were not using DNA at the time. So several years later, in the mid to late 90s, we started processing some of those items for foreign DNA or trace evidence. A male profile was identified from that that male profile was uploaded, it was entered into CODIS, and there have been no hits. And since that date, in the late 90s, early 2000s, that profile is consistently run, and they're still 20-something years later, still have been no hits identifying that DNA profile. We have once the introduction of why STR searches or familial DNA searches became available, that was one of the first cases that we had submitted. We submitted that to California DOJ. There was an initial backlog, but ultimately they tested it, there was no hits and then there is a waiting period after we get notified of no match. Every time as soon as it becomes eligible for re-entry for a new search for familial search, that process is done. And we still have not to this day been able to identify the male profile, nor have we been able to get to identify Jane Doe.

Steve Gregory

When you talk about a male profile. Can you explain what that is? I mean, when you say male profile, is it simply that the specimen is that of a man? Or is there more information to it that helps you?

Detective Mike Gibbons

So specifically, we're looking for the Y chromosome. So that's only the Y chromosome is only present in the male DNA profile. So when that is there, and in particular, what we're looking at when I talk about fluids, we're talking about semen. So there is semen with spermatozoa. So we know it is from a male that that was known prior to submission, but we were able to get a full DNA profile. And that didn't yield any success and it still hasn't. We continue to try and we will not give up, but to date, we have not been able to identify him

Steve Gregory

To be clear then. Did you not tell me there was no evidence of sexual assault on her?

Detective Mike Gibbons

That's correct.

Steve Gregory

But there was sperm at the scene.

Detective Mike Gibbons

Yes.

Steve Gregory

Um, what does that tell you? I mean, based on being an investigator on something unusual like that?

Detective Mike Gibbons

Well, at the time, she was on her menstrual cycle, and she had a tampon. So potentially, his intentions were to sexually assault her and realized that, that that wasn't going to work out well for him, and so he may have still satisfied himself, whether it was at the scene, whether it was prior to, we don't know whether she was killed at that location or not. From my review of the scene, and obviously, I wasn't present, but my job in any of these scenes is to reconstruct the scene as much as I possibly can in reviewing any any photographic evidence that I can. And the the lack of an enormous amount of blood that you would expect, by cutting somebody's head off, suggests to me that she was killed elsewhere and brought there. So, so it's possible that this person had, for lack of better words, relieved himself elsewhere, and brought an item that had his semen on it, and discarded it there. It's, there's too many unknowns.

Steve Gregory

Now, we're getting into some bizarre psychological issue here. I mean, I mean, obviously, it's heinous enough that someone would be driven to cut the head off of another human. But now this odd sexual sort of twist to it. Have you ever dealt with a case like this, and I mean, separate of the decapitation, but like a sexually explicit crime of any kind where you've got, you've got the sample of semen off to the side, but the but the person was never assaulted?

Detective Mike Gibbons

I've had sexual assaults and strangulations. But the evidence would suggest that the this that the victim actually was sexually assaulted not just somebody satisfying themselves. So...

Steve Gregory

I'm sorry, you just said there is evidence that the victim was sexually assaulted.

Detective Mike Gibbons

No. In other cases...

Steve Gregory

I just want to make sure okay...

Detective Mike Gibbons

I've never had I've never worked at any other cases where there's a decapitation. And certainly, this is a very unusual finding that or at least, at least, I thought that it was very unusual until I also learned that in adjacent years, so this happened in 1988, in 1987, and in 1989.

Steve Gregory

Are you going to talk about a potential connection?

Detective Mike Gibbons

Yes.

Steve Gregory

Okay, let's hold that thought, okay we need to take a break real quick. We're talking with Detective Mike Gibbons from the Santa Ana Police Department about a horrific Cold Case from 1988. But first, this is Unsolved with Steve Gregory on KFI-AM 640, time now for news update.

Steve Gregory

The KFI-AM 640 heard everywhere live on the iHeartRadio app. I'm Steve Gregory and this is Unsolved. To reach the Unsolved team through the iHeartRadio app, just simply press the red microphone and leave us a story idea, tip or comment. Or you can press pound 250 on your cell phone and say the keyword Unsolved.

Announcer

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Steve Gregory

Welcome back, we're talking with Detective Mike Gibbons of the Santa Ana Police Department. We're inside headquarters, talking about the case simply called Jane Doe, happened March 31, 1988, and before the break, you were about to talk I mean, we were we were discussing a little bit in graphic detail about this odd sort of sexual connection sexual twist, you said there was no evidence that this young lady had been sexually assaulted, but there was evidence at the scene that you actually retrieved semen. And you determined it to obviously that there was a male profile from that. It let me ask it to you like this? How close was this semen sample to the body?

Detective Mike Gibbons

It was within her clothing,

Steve Gregory

All within her clothing. Okay, so was that something that you noticed right away? Or is that something that kind of came later down the line?

Detective Mike Gibbons

I think the item was was was located as they were processing the body. But they had to forensically analyze it before they were able to determine what substance if any, was on there, and whether whether any DNA would be foreign to the victim or if it was something from the victim.

Steve Gregory

You talked about, you'd never really experienced the case with a decapitation and you were telling us about some of the other cases where we're on sexual behavior was connected. Before the break you were about to tell us, I think a connection with some other cases with similar mo's.

Detective Mike Gibbons

Yes. So in this happened in 1988, our case was. In 1987, and 1989, the Orange County Sheriff's Department as well as the Garden Grove Police Department had female victims that that were that were killed, and were their bodies were dumped in similar type areas, they were not decapitated, but the the overall victim description was fairly similar being that it was early to mid-20s female And just the fact that they were all within Orange County, it led it led those cases to be linked initially, even through the FBI's ViCAP program. So these cases get get entered into and the ViCAP program.

Steve Gregory

What's ViCAP stand for?

Detective Mike Gibbons

ViCAP stands for Violent Criminal Apprehension Program.

Steve Gregory

Okay.

Detective Mike Gibbons

And what it does is it's a database, it's nationwide, obviously, and it's it's there to track serial crimes, whether they're homicides or sexual assaults, where the where the suspect and victim are either believed to be strangers, or if the crimes are part of a series. So if it's, if it's a, let's use a gang, a gang homicide, where its rival gangs believed to have killed one or the other. That's not really necessarily going to be considered a stranger type of a homicide, where this where we have three females that that meet the same obviously same gender, same age group, killed and left in similar type locations and they're also relatively close in time albiet they were different years they were consecutive years. So those initially were linked up and considered to be potentially on face value, potentially a series of homicides.

Steve Gregory

They were also found near parks?

Detective Mike Gibbons

Parks or deserted area

Steve Gregory

Deserted area...and so then so did that yield anything?

Detective Mike Gibbons

Well, those cases, as well as ours were all worked and ultimately, a genetic profile linked the sheriff's case and the Garden Grove PD case and ultimately they were able to use genetic genealogy and identify that suspect. So that that actually resolved this year, in fact.

Steve Gregory

Really?

Detective Mike Gibbons

Yes. So, so unfortunately, that didn't have a link to ours so ours is still unknown.

Steve Gregory

So, you know, one was in '87, and then yours was '88 and then the other one was 1989. So that was just a coincidence, you think that the similarities in the cases other than the decapitation?

Detective Mike Gibbons

Yeah, it there was just similarities that that on face value would you at least had to to be open minded enough to think that there's a possibility that those are the those are all related to each other. Obviously, the the evidence, in the end, the evidence guides you to the truth, and in this case, the evidence showed that the same male DNA profile was present on both of their cases, but it was different than the male profile from our case.

Steve Gregory

And not to go too deep in the weeds on those cases but were those driven, was there a sexual component to those as well? I think you said there was.

Detective Mike Gibbons

Yes.

Steve Gregory

Yeah. So in cases like that, so that would have been two years apart, if it was this suspect. And you're looking now this many years later, three, almost three decades later, this genealogy DNA has really become quite the thing. I mean, it's really helping a lot of departments solve these cases.

Detective Mike Gibbons

Absolutely.

Steve Gregory

So are you seeing are you I mean, are you sort of encouraged then about a lot of these cases you've got as these technologies, and these techniques, and new ways of finding information as that stuff becomes more sophisticated, you have a pretty good chance of solving a lot of cases you have in your folders.

Detective Mike Gibbons

We do and and even once we think that there's some new technology and we test it, and it doesn't yield the results that we're looking for, that doesn't mean we put it away another year, another six months, another two years, however long it is, as technology continues to change, we continue to reevaluate and reanalyze evidence over and over and over again.

Steve Gregory

You said something, you know, in a previous segment about, and I don't know whether it was the California DOJ system with the lab there CODIS which is the federal system. But you said that you have to wait again before you can run your DNA sample. And it's got a I don't remember what the term was something that it has to be resubmitted but you have there's a waiting period of some kind. Why is that?

Detective Mike Gibbons

I think, even right from the very beginning, when they first started doing these familial searches, they were inundated. There was a there was a backlog for us to get our search on this case initiated, it took quite some time, more than a year, before, we actually got to the point where the search was being done. It is a little bit it is labor intensive. So they put a great deal of time effort. It is a modified CODIS search, so they're not looking anymore for a direct hit, but they're looking for anyone that would be like one degree of separation of first degree relative could be a first cousin, half sibling, full sibling...

Steve Gregory

Right.

Detective Mike Gibbons

...Parent, child, something along those lines. But once they test it, and they are able to definitively definitively determine that there is not a match, they will give us the results and the notification letter indicates that we need to wait 12 months before we can resubmit.

Steve Gregory

Wow.

Detective Mike Gibbons

So we have to we have to wait a full year from the time that we get notified of no match, which may be you know, it might be 18 months from the time we submitted to get that notification letter and then another 12 months beyond that.

Steve Gregory

And only because they're overwhelmed.

Detective Mike Gibbons

There's a lot of work that goes into it from from their end. So yes, when you think about the volume of of these unsolved cases, and it's not just homicides and sexual assaults, there's there's an awful lot of cases that are out there, unfortunately, and I give credit for every agency that's still working them and trying their best to solve them, but I realized at the same time that as many as I'm trying to submit, every other agency in the state has the same type of problem. So I can I have to understand that that DOJ only has so many people that and so many scientists that can that can do these searches for us.

Steve Gregory

More with Detective Mike Gibbons but first this is Unsolved with Steve Gregory on KFI-AM 640, time now for news update.

Steve Gregory

KFI-AM 640 heard everywhere live on the iHeartRadio app. I'm Steve Gregory and this is Unsolved. We've been speaking with Detective Mike Gibbons inside the headquarters of the Santa Ana Police Department.

Announcer

Caution. This episode contains graphic material not suitable for everyone.

Steve Gregory

We're talking about this case from 1988, Jane Doe, she was found decapitated in a park near the 2500 block of North Main Street, and just a couple days after that her head was found in a creek bed. And there was this odd, unusual sexual sort of twist to it, where you found semen on on the victim on the article of clothing, I think you said you found something along those lines. We're talking a lot about DNA, which is obviously become a huge help in these cases, before the break, you were talking about the waiting time and I was just that baffles me because of the backlog of cases. And how many cases are are being submitted to the state lab for processing on this DNA. So when you say it takes a lot of work to do these. So walk us through one of these cases. I mean, if you submit a sample, do you know the process?

Steve Gregory

I don't know the entire process, but having been notified of a hit from a familial search, California DOJ, they do a lot of due diligence, they they want to make sure that they are not unnecessarily giving you a link to somebody that's totally unrelated or uninvolved. So as much as this case is our case, and remains our case, Department of Justice requires several of the reports that are related to to the case. And in the background without us ever being advised, hen they do get a potential link, they do their own full background search. So they do a lot of the investigation behind the scenes without us even being aware of it. And in best case scenario, they come back and they say your suspect has a parent child relationship with this child and it was a male suspect, so it would be their dad, and this is their dad, this is where their dad works, this is what kind of car he drives. Like, they literally pretty much hand you everything about your suspect with a bow on top just saying you will get your own confirmation swab and there's your suspect. On the flip side, we get somewhere they say it is a one degree of separation from this particular individual, we have done some background, these are some of the potential people that are related to to your suspect, and you have to go and do your own follow up. But I was very impressed at the amount of work that they actually put into this case, doing their own investigation behind the scenes without my

knowledge that they were even doing and so they they actually hand hand me a CD with a whole workup of all this investigative work that they have done. Before I'm even aware that they've gotten any type of a connection to a case.

Steve Gregory

Well you suppose I mean, I mean, they've probably got all these databases, access to stuff that you probably don't have access to.

Steve Gregory

Yes, they have, obviously the DNA database of course they have that. But their search engines and the lot of the law enforcement databases are similar or the same. But I think really what it is, is DOJ wants to make sure that the integrity of this system this search, that it withholds the challenges in court, that they are not only trying to help law enforcement, but they're also protecting the community, they're making sure that we don't get sent to the wrong individuals. We don't want to get sent to the wrong place, they certainly nor do we want to go end up investing the time the efforts, the surveillance, search warrants, collection of of evidence to be analyzed, only to have it be totally unrelated. So I can appreciate and respect the work that they do. It, it did surprise me though, just that there's that much work that's being done behind the scenes, without us even being aware of it.

Steve Gregory

And so now, given that sort of that time limit, you talked about, when is the next time you can resubmit this DNA?

Steve Gregory

On this particular case, we we renewed our request at the late part of last year.

Steve Gregory

So you still have another year to go, don't you? Or half a year?

Steve Gregory

Well, it depends on when they get back to me. It would be fantastic if they did a whole bunch of background work and ultimately told me who my suspect is. But if they come up with with no hits, and I get that letter, you know, say the early part of next year, then then I'm not eligible to resubmit again until the beginning of '24.

Steve Gregory

The, you know, this information is only as good as the data that goes into it.

Detective Mike Gibbons

Correct.

Steve Gregory

Since your suspect's information doesn't come up, or it hasn't at least the last few times it's been submitted, it doesn't pop up. Is that unusual? Does that mean usually that this might have been just a singular crime that this person committed this, this guy based on the evidence, but the this might have been his only type of crime like this?

Detective Mike Gibbons

I mean, it could be but it stands to go against reason that somebody would commit such a heinous crime completely decapitating somebody, and then choose all of a sudden to turn around, turn their life around. Is it possible? Sure it is. Other possibilities are that the person has since left the country gone somewhere else, it's possible that this person may have gotten arrested in 1990 for a murder and, and is locked up in one of our state prison systems for life but his DNA is not on file.

Steve Gregory

Wasn't that if it's a felony, wouldn't when was that law that you had to take DNA samples?

Detective Mike Gibbons

It started in closer to '95 and then there was a brief period of time where that was suspended and then it's it's back current again.

Steve Gregory

When we come back, I want to talk a little bit more on there's a lot of other questions I have about this case as well. We are talking with Mike Gibbons with the Santa Ana Police Department about Jane Doe it's a case for March 31, 1988. But first, this is Unsolved with Steve Gregory on KFI-AM 640, time now for a news update.

Steve Gregory

KFI-AM 640 heard everywhere live on the iHeartRadio app. I'm Steve Gregory and this is Unsolved. To reach the Unsolved team simply email us unsolved@iheartmedia.com. That's unsolved@iheartmedia.com. We're at the headquarters of the Santa Ana Police Department talking with Detective Mike Gibbons of the cold case unit, about the case of Jane Doe, a young woman found in Santiago Park on March 31, 1988.

Announcer

Caution, this episode contains graphic material not suitable for everyone.

Steve Gregory

We've been talking an awful lot about DNA and the role DNA plays in these cases, and you know, detective, how many how many cold cases does the Santa Ana PD have right now?

Detective Mike Gibbons

Over 500.

Steve Gregory

Over 500 of those 500, how many have you submitted for DNA workups?

Detective Mike Gibbons

I don't have a count on that. Many of these were worked thoroughly by people long before I started working these but very safely, in the hundreds.

Steve Gregory

A few hundred?

Detective Mike Gibbons

Yes

Steve Gregory

A few hundred had been submitted for DNA. 500 cases in, what is the oldest case? How far back do you go?

Detective Mike Gibbons

I'm aware of cases that we have from the 60s. The oldest one I'm actively working as a 1979.

Steve Gregory

How many people work in cold cases here?

Detective Mike Gibbons

Me.

Steve Gregory

You're it. This is your full time assignment?

Detective Mike Gibbons

It is.

Steve Gregory

Where do you start? What makes you decide where to start?

Detective Mike Gibbons

So we had a homicide Task Force and multiple agencies from 2014, up to mid 2020, and that was very well staffed. And they went through a lot of these books and went through screening and criteria that they had for solvability factors. So they had a combination of of senior detectives, Deputy District Attorneys, even law clerks that would go through these books, and they would look at the solvability and they would give it a category rating from low to very high. And so of course, you're gonna want to try to look at the

ones that have a high solvability and that's what has worked predominantly for those first many, many years. And we're, we've kind of depleted the very high solvability ones. But going back to it looking at that, that matrix that we have, looking at the evidence that's there, keeping in mind, new technology as it emerges, and how it could be applied to some of the evidence that's there. Even something that was moderate solvability but now you take into consideration some new technology that might work fantastic on a particular case, then, then that quickly becomes at the top of your list of cases that you want to work.

Detective Mike Gibbons

So on any given day. I mean, how many folders do you have laid out on your desk? I mean, we're looking at some three ring binders right now, are these all for this case?

Detective Mike Gibbons

These two books. So that's what two, four inch binders are for for this particular case. That doesn't include some other reports, some other CDs that have you know, hundreds of photos, different documents that are on them as well.

Steve Gregory

Did detectives of years past do a pretty good job preserving these files?

Detective Mike Gibbons

Yes. I sometimes I'm fairly amazed at the the detail the the amount of time, effort that's put into these cases. And I've talked to former detectives that that were original case agents on some of these cases and you know, they they stay with you, the ones that are unsolved, they stay with you, and it really brings a great satisfaction to them, just hearing their appreciation of the work that somebody continued and picked up that case and was able to bring it to resolution.

Steve Gregory

Going back to the case, the Jane Doe that we've been talking about There was no social media back in 1988. I'm not sure, I wasn't here in 1988, so I don't know what the media landscape was like, how much attention to this case get in the beginning?

Detective Mike Gibbons

In the beginning, just a few newspaper articles. It was it was just on the Orange County Register. I'm not really aware, even if it made it to the LA Times. But there wasn't a whole lot. We did revisit that in an attempt to gain some attention, in 2015, this was run an article, again in the newspaper, but also on on a local news channel attempting to gain some public attention and generate some new leads on this case.

Steve Gregory

And did you get any?

Detective Mike Gibbons

We did actually have several people that called in. Some were citizens, some were other law enforcement officers calling in about missing person cases that they were aware of. Some as far as Massachusetts, and we had somebody called from Chino Police department, we also had some community members, one

person said that around this time, he never saw his boss' wife anymore. So he suspected that potentially this may have been her, there was a few people that called in speculating that it's potentially this particular missing person. And so that causes the detectives, and they have to follow up on every lead. So tracking those people down either identifying that the missing person has returned. We went as far as locating somebody in Puerto Rico, for this.

Steve Gregory

If you look back on this now, how many detectives do you think have handled this case?

Detective Mike Gibbons

I would say that going through the case log and in the notes, there's safely no less than 10.

Steve Gregory

Really, over the 34 years.

Detective Mike Gibbons

Yes.

Steve Gregory

And can you tell from the notes, and in the logs there that did each of the detectives over these 34 years, did they make any progress any more than what had happened in 1988?

Detective Mike Gibbons

When you have an unidentified victim and certainly no, no description or information about a suspect, it makes it much more difficult for us because the starting point is the victimology, learning about the victim who was the victim around at that time? What type of lifestyle did they live? Did they have any known conflicts or enemies, anybody that's likely to have done this? So really, the biggest thing that we need is to identify her, and then we could start really working the case more so to say, did they do or make a whole lot of progress? I would say they did everything that they could by resubmitting reanalyzing the evidence and doing everything that's available in an effort to try to identify her.

Steve Gregory

And it was only because of what was available at the time, I guess whatever technology or advancements in sciences forensic sciences was available, right?

Detective Mike Gibbons

Correct. And with other organizations, such as like the DNA Doe project, they have been working on this case as well, trying to help identify her for us.

Steve Gregory

Okay, when we come back, we're going to talk more about the case of Jane Doe from March 31, 1988. But first, this is Unsolved was Steve Gregory on KFI-AM 640, time now for news update.

Steve Gregory

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Announcer

Caution. This episode contains graphic material not suitable for everyone.

Steve Gregory

Welcome back, we're talking with Detective Mike Gibbons of the Santa Ana Police Department, he's working a cold case and then we found out that he IS the cold case unit here at the Santa Ana Police Department. We're inside headquarters and we've been talking about the case of Jane Doe going back to March 31, 1988. We've been talking an awful lot about DNA and how helpful DNA has become over the years. Detective, I wanted to talk to you a little bit about reward, and you know, the sad part about these types of cases is that the big motivator is always money. And people just don't come forward anymore, because it's the right thing to do they come forward because they get a payday. Is there a reward in this case?

Detective Mike Gibbons

So there isn't, per se a particular reward for this case. The Santa Ana Police Department does have a reward related to any gang homicide, so should this person ultimately get identified and the suspect become identified and it is deemed to be a gang related homicide, then that would qualify for our gang homicide reward of up to \$50,000.

Steve Gregory

Based on your experience, based on what you see in these files that we're looking at here, do you think this was a any kind of a gang related crime?

Detective Mike Gibbons

From what we're aware of, and what we know at this point, there isn't anything that would suggest that it is a gang related homicide. But until the people are known and identified, there really is no way to for us to determine truly what occurred, what the motivation may have been, or or what type of demographics or circle of people that that they they interacted with.

Steve Gregory

The type of crime I've talked to psychologists and forensic people in the past, and they say usually decapitation, and crimes like this are usually crimes of a very personal nature. Do you suspect that the person who committed this crime was known to the victim?

Detective Mike Gibbons

I'm certainly not a psychologist, but based on the amount of effort that would go into that, coupled with the extensive injuries that were inflicted on the face, I would definitely agree with that.

Steve Gregory

You know, it's such an intimate personal crime to actually take a saw and that's the one thing I noticed in the narrative here is that there was evidence that there was the head was removed by a back and forth sawing motion with a sharp bladed instrument, and had seven stab wounds in and about the left eye.

Detective Mike Gibbons

Yes.

Steve Gregory

And then there was two stab wounds to the right side of the face, and stab wounds to the neck. What does all of this brutality tell you?

Detective Mike Gibbons

I think you're absolutely right. There was an extreme amount of personal anger vented all on this young young woman, it's definitely far above and beyond. If if somebody was simply trying to kill somebody that that would have been satisfied and accomplished long before any of these other injuries needed to occur. It it seems like it's something very personal in nature there was whether we whether they felt slighted whether they felt that somebody was, I don't know if this could have been a disrespect thing, if this was something where it was somebody that felt you, you were leading me on and then went back on that you didn't carry through with what I thought what I thought was going to occur. I felt something was going to happen and then I realized that you're on your menstrual cycle, I don't know none of those certainly would justify killing somebody let alone decapitation.

Steve Gregory

The none no weapons of any kind wherever recovered from anywhere where they?

Detective Mike Gibbons

Correct.

Steve Gregory

No weapons were found near the scene.

Detective Mike Gibbons

No.

Steve Gregory

Did you attempt to do anything with the DNA since, we've talked an awful lot about DNA, on the Jane Doe?

Detective Mike Gibbons

Yes.

Steve Gregory

And nothing there as well?

Detective Mike Gibbons

Right. So she has been entered into MUPS, the missing and unidentified persons system. And then also we touched on her case being submitted to the DNA Doe project, and they they look at trying to identify the victims through genetic genealogy, as opposed to trying to identify the suspects through the same means.

Steve Gregory

Talk about DNA Doe, what that what is that?

Detective Mike Gibbons

So it's a it's a nonprofit organization, that they work with law enforcement throughout the country, trying to help not only bring resolution to criminal cases, but to families help the families to realize that, you know, hey, there was somebody that reported their loved one missing back in, in this case, '88, it could have been 2006, it doesn't really matter, but the goal is to help that family to have some understanding of what did happen to their to their loved one. So the DNA Doe project, they try to identify unknown decedents.

Steve Gregory

Are they successful?

Detective Mike Gibbons

Yes. In many cases they are and they do they do fantastic work. They were at the very forefront of genealogy doing the family trees, and they've been a tremendous help to law enforcement as a whole. Sometimes they run into some funding issues so, you know, for anyone that may be interested, they can visit their website and consider contributing, they have a ability to sponsor a particular case. And they have they have case names and sketches, composite sketches that are on their website as well.

Steve Gregory

The girl you identified 20 to 25 years old, she had nothing in her pockets. That's the other thing that I wanted to ask you was there anything in the pockets at all?

Detective Mike Gibbons

No, nothing.

Steve Gregory

Nothing, nothing in the pockets?

Detective Mike Gibbons

No.

Steve Gregory

Was there any evidence or was there anything to suggest that she was a US citizen, or could she have been a Mexican national?

Detective Mike Gibbons

Through some genetic testing, her ethnicity breakdown showed that, that she was 48%, American Indian, which would be indicative of Hispanic, but she also had roughly 30% that was European. So I don't think that she would have been a Mexican national. I mean, potentially, with the combination of the two maybe, you know, from Spain or somewhere, but but I don't, based on if we're going to accept the ethnicity breakdown as correct, I think that she's probably from from here.

Steve Gregory

When we come back, we're going to wrap up this case with Detective Mike Gibbons from the Santa Ana Police Department. But first, this is Unsolved with Steve Gregory on KFI-AM 640, time now for news update.

Steve Gregory

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Announcer

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Steve Gregory

We're wrapping up with Detective Mike Gibbons of the Santa Ana Police Department's cold case unit, he's been debriefing us on the brutal murder of Jane Doe, a young woman found decapitated in Santiago Park March 31, 1988. Her head was found 35 feet from the body two days later, but as Detective Gibbons pointed out, the head wasn't there when detectives searched the area just a couple of days before. DNA has played a huge role in these types of cases. And we have been talking about some of the details, some of them graphic, and some of them very disturbing. So detective, I understand that when the head was found, you told me that it had been partially decomposed, is that correct?

Detective Mike Gibbons

It was more decomposed than the body was. Naturally it was several days later.

Steve Gregory

So what is that? So does that give you any idea on the timeline of death or and how that might have worked?

Detective Mike Gibbons

That would just be normal and anticipated, if if her body, the coroner had estimated two to three days prior was her time of death. You're looking at, you know, seven days now. So you would expect the natural course that the decomposition would be worse as time progresses.

Steve Gregory

So there was no effort on the part of the suspect to preserve any of these, you know, the head or anything, then?

Detective Mike Gibbons

Nothing that would suggest that no.

Steve Gregory

No, Okay. Does this appear based on again, we were talking about the brutality, this crime. But is there anything to suggest that this might have been a spontaneous act? Or do you think this was a planned act?

Detective Mike Gibbons

I don't, I don't know that there's really any way for me to determine that, you know, short of one day having the opportunity to have a conversation with the person that is believed to be responsible. You know, whether it was whether it was planned or spontaneous, I believe that it occurred at a different location. But beyond that, that would just be all speculation.

Steve Gregory

Here's the challenge. And you talked about the your suspect might actually be in state prison, because however old the man was in 1988, he's 34 years older now. And so we could be talking about someone in their 50s someone in their 60s, even 70s. We don't know for sure. But...

Detective Mike Gibbons

...or sadly, like many of these cases, in the end, the all the work is put in through genetic genealogy only to discover that, that your suspect is already deceased.

Steve Gregory

Sure. Yeah, I was gonna ask that too, because if this person has led some sort of a life of crime, you know, the their lifespan reduces pretty significantly.

Detective Mike Gibbons

Right.

Steve Gregory

But the familial DNA that you did, that you got, well, actually, let me back up. So the DNA you got from the semen sample, were you able to do a genetic familial DNA off of that?

Detective Mike Gibbons

Familial? Yes.

Steve Gregory

And what did that tell you?

Detective Mike Gibbons

There was no matches.

Steve Gregory

No matches? Okay, I guess what is what is it the other technique where they can give you the well, you said yourself the ethnicity, like the ethnicity breakdown? Do you know what do you know about that?

Detective Mike Gibbons

Right. So there are different types of, we'll call it languages for simplicity. So there's different types of DNA profiles. So there's a particular language or DNA type of profile that gets uploaded into CODIS. That profile cannot be turned around and uploaded into, say, a family tree or Gedmatch or any of those. It's a different language, a different format of a DNA sample. So unfortunately, with retesting, we have now consumed that sample, and we don't have the ability to do genetic genealogy, at least as we sit here today. In the future, few more years down the road, they may need less and they may be able to start doing it...

Steve Gregory

So you literally don't have enough sample to go around.

Detective Mike Gibbons

Correct?

Steve Gregory

How much sample do you need to do a DNA?

Detective Mike Gibbons

They they tell me numbers in the nanograms but that's something with the scientists will they're they're better suited at figuring out, let me know, what can I do? What can't I do at this point?

Steve Gregory

You know, you've provided some sketches also of who this woman might be. I'm looking at a sketch dated here, April 4, 1988 and then April 7, 1988. Talk us through the sketches in kind of how these came to be.

Detective Mike Gibbons

So those sketches are made from, from her her skull, her head, as it as it was there, on a table at the coroner's office or at the crime lab, and photographed. And we had somebody from the Orange County Sheriff's Department as well as a forensic artist, that she works off on the side, but she does a lot of work for law enforcement. They were both contracted and asked to provide composite sketches. So you see, each one of those, one is was one is head on, or the face of and the other one is a side profile. So those

are what we have, those are the the only the only ones that we have that suitable for public release. Naturally, the photos were far too graphic to release.

Steve Gregory

It's unusual because the one shows straight hair and the one shows more curly hair.

Detective Mike Gibbons

Yeah, I think if you look at the composite, it does show the hair coming down onto the forehead in a similar fashion as the one.

Steve Gregory

Of course these sketches are online at KFIAM640.com/unsolved. And you can see them also on our social media sites as well. You know every time I see these it kind of creeps me out a little bit because you know this was this is a real person.

Detective Mike Gibbons

Yes.

Steve Gregory

Do you feel like I mean, I guess obviously with DNA, but do you feel like you're further along today than you were 34 years ago?

Detective Mike Gibbons

I think just having these profiles having the searches having the ability to to utilize science and technology, I think certainly, we're further along in that we have profiles that are in the system. We've got a long way to go and I know that it's been said many times on different cases before but that that genetic genealogy, it really is such a tremendous asset to us in in solving, not just old, old cases, but even very heinous, recently committed cases we could use genetic genealogy on. So the people that do look into their own family trees and genealogy, if they do choose to build their family tree, and they do utilize Gedmatch, it really is a tremendous asset to us, for them to opt in and allow their profiles to be utilized in only very serious cases. These are only being used for sexual assault and homicide. So we're not looking for people through genealogy for the person that stole your neighbor's car.

Steve Gregory

Right. Yeah. Well, Detective, fascinating case it's, it's a sad case, it's a horrific crime. I wish you all the best. I wish you all success on this because I'm interested to find out who would have committed such a crime...

Detective Mike Gibbons

You're in a long line of people.

Steve Gregory

...and the motive behind it as well. So detective, thank you so much for your time. Good luck.

Detective Mike Gibbons

Thank you. I appreciate your interest. In this case.

Steve Gregory

Coming up. We take a bit of an unusual turn will actually highlight a case for a future episode. But first, this is KFI-AM 640, time now for a news update.

Steve Gregory

KFI-AM 640 heard everywhere live on the I Heart Radio app. I'm Steve Gregory and this is Unsolved. You can always contact the Unsolved team on the iHeartRadio app through the talkback feature. Just press the red microphone and record your message tip or show idea. We're gonna do something a little unusual now. While wrapping up my chat with Detective Mike Gibbons from the Santa Ana PD. He wanted to also talk about the death of Ruby Rubio, a tragic case of a 15-year-old girl who fought back against someone who stole her brand new cell phone. Gibbons gave me a debrief on the case and we'll air it on a future episode. But I did want to play the audio from the Santa Ana PD's YouTube program 'For The Record: A Homicide Spotlight.' It features cold cases, and it's a little different from what we do here on Unsolved, but we wanted to give it extra attention. So here's the audio from the program dated April 14, 2021.

Commander Jose Gonzalez

Hi, I am Jose Gonzales, commander of the crimes against persons division. The Santa Ana Police Department always strives to utilize all available resources to involve the community during difficult homicide investigations. 'For The Record: A Homicide Spotlight,' will be produced monthly to draw attention to unsolved homicide and cold case investigations. All segments will be shared via social media to encourage the community's assistance in capturing the suspects with the ultimate goal of providing closure to grieving families and friends. This month segment of for the record involves Ruby Rubio, who was 15-years-old at the time of her death. On Thursday, July 3, 2014 around noon, Ruby and her younger sister were walking in the area of 1000 West Warner. As the two young ladies walked in the area, a suspect approached them on foot and asked for the time. As Ruby looked at her cell phone. The suspect grabbed it and took off running with the phone. Ruby and her younger sister gave chase and saw that the suspect got into the passenger seat of a gray or silver Pontiac Grand Am vehicle that was waiting on Towner Street, Ruby was able to catch up to the suspect vehicle and jumped on the trunk of the car. The suspects then drove off with Ruby holding on to the antenna. As the suspect drove south on Towner, the driver swerved back and forth to shake Ruby from the vehicle. Ruby subsequently fell and sustained a significant head injury. Ruby was transported to a local Trauma Center, where she ultimately succumbed to her injuries on July 5, 2014. Ruby's family was and is still devastated by her tragic death. Ruby's parents are here to give you a little insight about her and to ask for your help.

Steve Gregory

Marisol Hernandez is Ruby's mom. Ruby's parents don't speak English so I will interpret.

Marisol Hernandez

< in Spanish >

Steve Gregory

Ruby came to me to teach me many lessons. Since Ruby was young, she knew what she wanted to do. She was very playful, happy, and was a fast learner. She wanted to become a veterinarian someday. When she was in kindergarten, I would ask Ruby what she wanted to be and she would always reply, a veterinarian. She finished elementary school, and I asked her again and she gave me the same response, a veterinarian. And about five days before she passed away, I asked her yet again and she told me she wanted to be a veterinarian, and she wanted to attend Chapman University. I even received a letter from Chapman University just after Ruby died. That was her dream to be a veterinarian. She loved animals, she would actually bring them home, take care of them, give them a home. She was also a very caring sibling. She would give me examples of how to be a mother, a human. She came to my life to teach me great lessons,

Pablo Hernandez

< in Spanish >

Steve Gregory

I am Ruby's father, Pablo. She was a very playful child. She wanted to be a veterinarian. I was actually fixing up a truck to give to her, I still have that truck the one that was going to be for her. And I don't and I don't want to get rid of it. I do hope for justice because this was not okay. We are still suffering for her loss. I asked the public that if anyone has any information to please call the police. If you are the one that did this to my daughter, please give yourself up. My daughter would never go out. she would just go from school to the house. Anyone with information, please provide it to the police.

Pablo Rubio

Again Ruby's mother Marisol Hernandez,

Marisol Hernandez

< in Spanish >

Steve Gregory

I asked the public or anyone that has information or knows something, please talk to the police. Anyone that knows something so this investigation can continue. I don't want it to stay this way. Sometimes I want to give up. I know that she would come back but I don't want anyone to suffer like I am. This pain does not end, our whole family is suffering every day. I don't want another family to have to go through this. Please, if anyone knows something or saw something, please talk to the police. I asked you from the bottom of my heart to please help me get justice for Ruby. Again, here's Santa Ana police commander Jose Gonzalez.

Commander Jose Gonzalez

A witness described the suspect as being five foot eight to five foot 10 inches tall with a medium build and was last seen wearing a white tank top and light jeans. At this point. It is unknown whether the suspect was male or female, but was further described as being in their late 20s or early 30s. Using this description, the detectives were able to obtain a composite sketch of the suspect. Detectives ask that if anyone recognize the suspect or has information regarding the murder of Ruby Rubio, please contact homicide detective Gibbons at 714-245-8390.

Steve Gregory

And remember Unsolved will focus on this case in a future episode. That's going to do it, Unsolved is a production of the KFI-AM 640 news department for iHeartMedia Los Angeles, Robin Bertolucci, Program Director, Chris Little, News Director. The program is produced by Steve Gregory and Jacob Gonzalez. Our field engineer is Tony Sorrentino, our technical director is David Callaway, our digital producer for this episode is Michelle Kube. Coming up it's Coast to Coast but first, this is KFI-AM 640, time now for a news update.