



# ***NEWS RELEASE***

**MICHIGAN STATE POLICE**

## **Remains of Female Who Washed Up on Lake Michigan Shoreline Identified 25 Years Later**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Date: January 9, 2023**

**MANISTEE COUNTY, MI.** On October 27<sup>th</sup>, 1997, troopers from the Michigan State Police (MSP) Manistee Post responded to the 4000 block of Fox Farm Road in Manistee County reference a deceased and unclothed female who appeared to have washed up on the Lake Michigan shoreline. There was nothing identifying this female at the time other than a lone earring. Numerous broadcast messages were sent out to surrounding states via LEIN (Law Enforcement Information Network) by MSP Manistee Post troopers when the female was found, however, there were never any credible leads. An autopsy of the female determined the cause of death to be Asphyxia due to drowning and the manner of death an accident.

In September 2020 detectives with the MSP Cadillac Post and the MSP Missing Persons Coordination Unit reexamined the case and exhumed the individual for advanced DNA testing. Once exhumed, 'fresh' bone samples were sent to Astrea Forensics under the DNA Doe Project for Forensic Genetic Genealogy (FGG). Funding for this process was provided by the MSP Seventh District and the MSP Intelligence Operations Division.

In July 2021 a possible familial match was located via FGG; the names were supplied from the DNA Doe Project to the Michigan State Police for vetting. The DNA Doe Project uses Investigative Genetic Genealogy, which results in the generation of leads to identify the deceased. The possible connection linked the unidentified human remains to the Thyng family in Acton, Maine. With the assistance of the York County Sheriff's Office in Maine, familial DNA reference samples from a possible brother were obtained. It was also learned by detectives that a possible daughter of the unidentified female was currently residing in Chicago, Illinois. Familial DNA reference samples were then obtained by MSP Cadillac Post detectives from her. The DNA Doe Project also located news articles from the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel from 1997 detailing the unidentified woman's contacts just prior to her going missing.

A PROUD tradition of SERVICE through EXCELLENCE, INTEGRITY, and COURTESY since 1917

[www.michigan.gov/msp](http://www.michigan.gov/msp)

Further DNA testing was needed for positive identification. Due to the degraded state of the bone samples, they were found to not be suitable for traditional testing. The bone samples were subsequently shipped to Intermountain Forensics in Salt Lake City, Utah for positive identification through advanced Next Generation Sequencing (NGS). In December 2022, the DNA Diagnostics Center (DDC) and Intermountain Forensics was able to confirm the identity of the unidentified female as Dorothy Lynn (Thyng) Ricker.

Mrs. Ricker was last seen in Wisconsin on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1997, at 12:30 pm by St. Francis Police Department (Wisconsin) police officers. At that time, Mrs. Ricker was sitting on a Lake Michigan beach park bench. The officers briefly talked to her. She mentioned she was from Chicago and was “enjoying the lakefront and the sun.” When contacted by police officers, she had not yet been reported missing and nothing appeared abnormal. The next day an abandoned vehicle was found nearby. When police officers ran the registration plate it came back to a “missing/endangered person” entered by the Chicago Police Department. Mrs. Ricker was 26 years old and resided in Chicago, Illinois at the time she went missing.

Forensic Genetic Genealogy continues to unlock mysteries and provide families with answers about their loved ones. Although DNA testing wasn't possible when Dorothy Ricker died, investigators are grateful that it brings her family some resolution today.

[DNA Doe Project](#)