



# **NEWS RELEASE**

## **MICHIGAN STATE POLICE**

### **Decades After the Crime, Wisconsin Man Charged in Cold Case Kidnapping and Sexual Assault Case**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Aug. 1, 2025**

**Delta County, Mich.** The Michigan State Police (MSP) is today announcing that a Wisconsin man has been identified and criminally charged following an investigation into a kidnapping and sexual assault that occurred 39 years ago in Delta County.

The MSP Manistique Post originally began an investigation in August 1986 after a female reported she was assaulted while taking a bike trip from her home in Lac du Flambeau, Wis. to Sault Ste. Marie, Mich. She had stopped to use a public bathroom at the Big Fishdam River access off US-2 in Garden Township and when she exited the bathroom, she was forced at gunpoint into the suspect's car. The suspect drove her around and repeatedly sexually assaulted her, eventually releasing her.

Initial investigative efforts were unsuccessful in identifying the suspect. Over time, when all investigative leads were exhausted, the case became designated as a cold case. Periodically over the years, troopers and detectives reviewed the case and made attempts to follow up on any new credible evidence. There were no breakthroughs in the investigation until, when in the fall of 2023, MSP detectives utilized an ongoing partnership with Northern Michigan University's (NMU) Cold Case Program to review the case.

The NMU Cold Case Program was established in 2022 as a partnership between NMU and MSP to offer students in NMU's Criminal Justice Program real-world experience with forensic analysis, investigation and the criminal justice system. Because active investigations require substantial time and attention, troopers and detectives often have limited resources to dedicate to reviewing cold cases. Students from the Cold Case Program reexamine old evidence with fresh eyes, bringing new investigative ideas to these cases.

The original investigation was reviewed by the NMU Cold Case Program in the fall semester of 2023. During that time, it was determined this investigation may be appropriate for the use of Forensic Investigative Genetic Genealogy (FIGG). FIGG is a relatively new forensic technique that uses DNA evidence from a crime and genealogical databases to trace familial connections.

The MSP Forensic Science Division contracted with a private laboratory to review the evidence and complete the FIGG testing, which resulted in an investigative lead for detectives.

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MSP detectives then coordinated with the Wisconsin Department of Justice's Division of Criminal Investigation and Forest County (Wisconsin) Sheriff's Office to further this investigation in Wisconsin, which resulted in the identification of a 78-year-old male. This suspect had been a resident of Harris, Mich. at the time of the incident, which was approximately a 45-minute drive from the crime scene. The suspect had subsequently moved to Wisconsin shortly after the incident.

A search warrant for the suspect's DNA was issued to confirm his connection to the case, and a sample was subsequently collected from the suspect. MSP detectives delivered the suspect's DNA sample to the MSP Forensic Science Division, who determined through DNA testing that the suspect was a match to the sample obtained from the evidence collected in 1986.

The Delta County Prosecutor's Office issued charges of Kidnapping and CSC First Degree for the 78-year-old male, now residing in Argonne, Wis. and plans were made to effectuate his arrest on July 29, 2025. However, on July 27, 2025, the suspect was found deceased at his residence.

Due to the suspect's death occurring prior to arraignment, the suspect's name is being withheld, but the victim was advised that her assailant was positively identified through DNA comparison.

"This case is a reminder of both the importance of persistence and of collaboration in the pursuit of justice," said Col. James F. Grady II, director of the MSP. "I extend my gratitude to the dedicated MSP troopers and detectives who worked this case over the years, never allowing it to be forgotten. I'd also like to thank the Wisconsin Department of Justice's Division of Criminal Investigation and Forest County (Wisconsin) Sheriff's Office, as well as the MSP Forensic Science Division. Lastly, a special thank you goes to the students and faculty of the NMU Cold Case Program who contributed directly to solving this heinous crime and bringing some measure of closure for this victim."

The Forest County (Wisconsin) Sheriff's Office is overseeing the suspect's death investigation.

This case is believed to be the oldest sexual assault case in Michigan to be solved utilizing FIGG.

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