Pennsylvania State Police identifies 'Jane Doe' from 1986 cold case

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SCHUYLKILL COUNTY, Pa. (WHTM) — Pennsylvania State Police announced Friday that they have identified a "Jane Doe" from a 1986 cold case.

According to State Police, the body of a naked black woman was discovered in a wooded area along the west side of Interstate 81 South in Kline Township, Schuylkill County, by a biker on April 8, 1986.

The victim, then identified as Jane Doe, was wearing only a silver friendship ring with a Florentine finish. Police estimated she was between 18 and 25 years old.

Officials could not identify Doe. Police said a doctor "opinioned" that her cause of death was from adverse effects of cocaine and complications thereof, police said, leading officials to report the death as undetermined.

She was buried at Rest Haven Cemetery in North Manheim Township, Schuylkill County, on September 5, 1986. The case was never closed; investigators continued to pursue leads and tips, but nothing yielded results.

State Police said they entered her into the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NAMUS) to find a match. Fast forward to 2024, officials from PSP, doctors, and staff from the Florida Institute of Forensic Anthropology and Applied Science at the University of South Florida exhumed Jane Doe from her burial site.

Forensic Investigative Genetic Genealogy with Identifinders International began in October 2025 to help find her family, police said. Officials were able to create a digital reconstruction of Jane Doe's face, which was posted to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's social media.



Courtesy of PSP

The post would play a significant role in helping determine Jane Doe's true identity. Police said that an individual contacted NCMEC after seeing the image, claiming that the person could be a member of their family who had been missing since 1986.

Jane Doe was identified as that family member. In October 2026, Jane Doe was identified as Gladys T. Johnson, 18, of Washington, D.C., according to police.

Johnson reportedly left her residence in Washington, D.C., in March of 1986 to celebrate her birthday and never returned home, police said.

