

Penny Doe No More: Authorities announce the identity of a Jane Doe found in Pennsylvania 36 years ago as Windy Buchanan

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By **Veronica Fulton**

In July 1990, an unidentified woman was found in Clarion County, Pennsylvania. There was a penny in each of the woman's jeans pockets, a small detail that would earn the woman a nickname: "Penny Doe." For the past 36 years, her identity has remained unknown. Now, she has her name back.

On Monday, Clarion County District Attorney Drew Welsh held a [news conference](#) to share the news. "Today is an important and significant day in the investigation into the death of Penny Doe," he said. "Through the dedicated work of investigators over the past 36 years, today, I am able to reveal the identity of Penny Doe."

The DA outlined the steps taken over the last three decades of investigation. He described it as a "true team effort," but cautioned that since the investigation is ongoing, some information would not be shared to protect the integrity of the case.

"On July 22, 1990, a woman's body was discovered in Monroe Township, Clarion County, by four local children," Welsh recapped. "Three of those local children are here with us today."

In 2022, Dateline [featured Penny Doe's case](#) in its "[Cold Case Spotlight](#)" digital series. We spoke with Angie Clinger, one of the children who found Penny Doe's remains in a tunnel underneath a railroad trestle. "We freaked out," she told Dateline in 2022. "I don't think I ever ran so quick in my life." The children reported their finding to the authorities, and the investigation began.

The autopsy determined the unknown woman died as a result of "blunt trauma to the right side of her head," Welsh said. "From that point forward, the death has been considered a homicide, and has remained open."

For the past 36 years, investigators have worked with two goals in mind. "The first was to identify who Penny Doe was, and the second was to prove what had happened to her and bring those responsible to justice."

Authorities have used various methods to try to identify her: fingerprint identification, checking her DNA against known missing persons, and testing her remains by analyzing her bones and teeth. “The Pennsylvania State Police have investigated and ruled out over 100 individuals of being Penny Doe,”

“There have been re-creations made of her face, and artists renderings of what she might have looked like.” A clay representation, illustrations and computer-generated images have also been made. And while those brought in leads and tips that were followed up on, they ultimately did not bring investigators any closer to finding her identity.

Welsh said that from 1990 through 2020, when he began reviewing the case files, “there had been constant work done” by the Pennsylvania State Police. “After seeing all the hard work that came before me, I wanted to make sure that we got the case moving forward,” he said. They again looked into testing the DNA as technology continued to evolve. In 2023, police identified a funding source via a federal grant called the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant.

In March 2024, they partnered with Othram Labs for a DNA extraction. A family tree was developed, and a potential sister identified. Police contacted the woman, who submitted her DNA, and the DNA came back as a match.

“Ladies and gentlemen, Penny Doe has a name,” Welsh announced on Monday. “Penny Doe is **Windy Buchanan**.”

She was born in October 1970 in Kentucky. Windy and her siblings did not have an easy upbringing, Welsh shared at the news conference. “The last time her family saw Windy, was that she and her family and two brothers pulled off on a random off-ramp looking for a place to rest and eat,” he said. “Windy’s last words to her family were, ‘Bye, Dad, I’m leaving.’” They never saw her again. Welsh would not share any additional information about where exactly that highway off-ramp was located. It is unclear where the off-ramp was in relation to the tunnel where the remains were found.

Welsh said Windy’s family had searched for her over the years but were unsuccessful. Her younger sister, Tania Buchanan Boyd, spoke at the news conference, and shared more about who Windy was as a person. “My sister was fierce and she was kind, and she was loving,” she said. “She was the firstborn of five, and she would often watch over us.”

“She was basically always there for me,” Tania said. “She was creative and artistic. She loved horses and animals. She was convinced that horseshoes brought good luck.”

They weren’t the only things Windy believed brought good luck.

“She always thought that finding a penny heads up brought you good luck,” Tania said. “Find a penny, pick it up. And all the day, you have good luck.”

Tania also thanked the investigators who worked the case for more than three decades. “Our family deeply, deeply appreciates each and every one of you for staying with the case,” she said. “For many years we did search for Windy. We prayed that she would somehow be found, or that she might return to us one day.”

“One of our deepest and longest-held prayers has finally been answered,” Tania said. “But it’s not over. We know where she was at, but we don’t know what happened to her.”

“It’s important that our first goal has been accomplished,” Welsh stated. “My sincerest hope today is that this will start a new beginning to this investigation, where we will be able to answer that second question — that second goal — to find out who did this and bring them to justice.”

Welsh urges anyone who knows anything about what happened to Windy Buchanan to please come forward. “It was easy for you to stay silent when it was an anonymous Penny Doe. Those days are done,” he said. “Now, you must speak.”

“It’s never too late to come forward,” sister Tania said. “Windy deserves the truth, and our family deserves all of the answers.”

If you have any information that could help the investigation, please contact the Pennsylvania State Police at 814-226-1710.