



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 15, 2023

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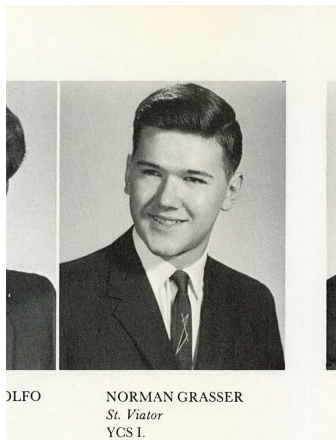
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Investigative Genetic Genealogy Helps Identify John Doe in 43-year Cold Case

Norman Grasser of Chicago, IL Identified by Ramapo College of New Jersey

Mahwah, NJ- Students of the Ramapo College of New Jersey [Investigative Genetic Genealogy \(IGG\) Center](#) have successfully uncovered the identity of “Rhineland John Doe,” now known to be Mr. Norman Grasser of Chicago, IL through DNA testing and investigative genetic genealogy.



The Chronology

On March 19, 1980, the Oneida County Medical Examiner’s Office along with the Oneida County Sheriff’s Office responded to a call about a body found in the snow in a field in the Town of Pine Lake, WI approximately 46 yards off of Highway 17. No identification was found on the body. A forensic autopsy performed at the University of Wisconsin determined that the male died from cold exposure due to hypothermia. Fingerprints sent to the Wisconsin State Crime Laboratory and Federal Bureau of Investigation did not confirm an identity. The case continued to be investigated through missing persons reports and press releases through the years.

In 2019, the unidentified male was entered into NamUs. Multiple potential matches were all confirmed to be negative.

In April 2021, the Oneida County Medical Examiner’s Office exhumed the body of John Doe 1980. The body was taken to the Fond du Lac Medical Examiner’s Office to be processed for DNA collection. The collected items were sent to the FBI Laboratory in Quantico for DNA profiling.

In January 2023, the Ramapo College IGG Center was enlisted by the Oneida County Sheriff’s Office in Rhineland, WI to assist with identifying “Rhineland John Doe.”

In February, the Oneida County Sheriff’s Office sent a portion of John Doe’s lower jaw to Intermountain Forensics where DNA extraction, whole genome sequencing, and bioinformatics were performed.



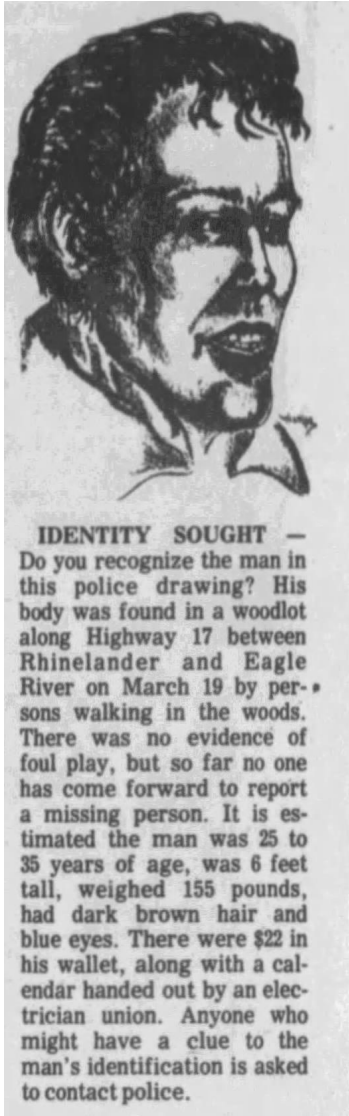
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IDENTITY SOUGHT —
Do you recognize the man in this police drawing? His body was found in a woodlot along Highway 17 between Rhinelander and Eagle River on March 19 by persons walking in the woods. There was no evidence of foul play, but so far no one has come forward to report a missing person. It is estimated the man was 25 to 35 years of age, was 6 feet tall, weighed 155 pounds, had dark brown hair and blue eyes. There were \$22 in his wallet, along with a calendar handed out by an electrician union. Anyone who might have a clue to the man's identification is asked to contact police.

In May, the same month that Intermountain successfully generated a SNP profile which was uploaded to the DNA databases GEDmatch and FamilyTreeDNA, students in the [Ramapo College IGG Certificate Program](#) investigated genetic matches of “Rhinelander John Doe” and identified Norman Grasser as a candidate.

Mr. Grasser's brother had been searching for him for over 40 years and even created a [FindAGrave](#) page noting that the date of Mr. Grasser's death was the day he was reported missing, January 20, 1980, in Chicago, IL.

DNA testing and the work of the Ramapo College IGG Center were able to bring closure to Mr. Grasser's family, who are grateful for identifying Mr. Grasser after 43 years, and wish for privacy to grieve and process this information.

IGG combines traditional genealogy and genetic genealogy to provide investigative leads in cases involving violent crime and unidentified human remains. IGG can also be used to help exonerate the wrongfully convicted. The first of its kind in the nation, the IGG Center [opened in December of 2022](#) and trains students to become proficient and ethical practitioners using IGG to resolve cases involving violent crime, unidentified human remains, and wrongful convictions. More than 40 cases from across the United States have been accepted since the center opened.

For more information about Ramapo College and the IGG Center, visit ramapo.edu/igg.

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ABOUT RAMAPO COLLEGE

Ramapo College of New Jersey is the state's premier public liberal arts college and is committed to academic excellence through interdisciplinary and experiential learning, and international and intercultural understanding. The comprehensive college is situated among the beautiful Ramapo Mountains, is within commuting distance to New York City, was named one of the 50 Most Beautiful College Campuses in America by *Condé Nast Traveler*, and boasts the



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best on-campus housing in New Jersey per Niche.com. Established in 1969, Ramapo College offers bachelor's degrees in the arts, business, data science, humanities, social sciences and the sciences, as well as in professional studies, which include business, education, nursing and social work. In addition, the College offers courses leading to teacher certification at the elementary and secondary levels, and offers graduate programs leading to master's degrees in Accounting, Applied Mathematics, Business Administration, Contemporary Instructional Design, Computer Science, Creative Music Technology, Data Science, Educational Leadership, Nursing, Social Work and Special Education, as well as a Doctor of Nursing Practice.