MEDIA RELEASE

ROSS COUNTY CORONER USES DNA GENEALOGY TO IDENTIFY UNIDENTIFIED INDIVIDUAL FROM 1996....

The Ross County Coroner, Dr. Benjamin Trotter, is pleased to announce that the identity of a cold case from 1996 was recently made.

In 1996 human remains were found on a sand bar in the Scioto River behind Chillicothe Correctional Institute by CCI workers. Every investigative tool of the time was used but the individual was not identified. In early 2022 the case was reopened, and the remains were sent for DNA testing. The DNA identified the individual as a male, confirming what was discovered in 1996, but unfortunately no DNA match was identified; but with the help of the DNA Doe Project and a new modern investigative tool called Investigative Genetic Genealogy, the individual was positively identified as Ward Raymond Thomas, born in Muskingum County on September 5, 1918. The identity was confirmed by using family comparison mitochondrial DNA.

Mr. Thomas was a patient at the Chillicothe VA Medical Center when he was reported missing on May 6, 1972; according to all records, search efforts by the VA, local authorities and his family were extensive but unsuccessful. Mr. Thomas was declared deceased on June 10, 1977 by the probate court of Licking County, where he and his wife resided. Mr. Thomas is survived by nieces and nephews, who we are in contact with. The family wishes to remain private at this time.

The Ross County Coroner would like to thank the Ross and Muskingum County Sheriff's Offices, the Ohio Bureau of Investigation & Identification-especially the DNA Lab and the Missing Persons Unit, the David Meade Massie Trust Fund, the Veterans Administration, Astrea Forensics and a special thank you to the DNA Doe Project and the team of volunteer genetic genealogists that made this identification possible.

NOTE: A second release with more details of the investigative genetic genealogy process will be released later.

PLEASE DIRECT ANY QUESTIONS TO THE SECURE EMAIL ADDRESS:
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