



Monterey County District Attorney's Office Cold Case Task Force

Unidentified Human Remains Identified Using Investigative Genetic Genealogy

In September of 2024, the DA's Office Cold Case Task Force, working directly with the Monterey County Sheriff's Office Coroner Division, the California Department of Justice DNA Lab, and the private forensics company Othram, has identified the remains of a man who was lost at sea for over 24 years.

Sandholdt Doe: AKA the "Ancient Mariner"

On March 28th, 2021, the partial skeletal remains of a person were caught up in a fisherman's net, deep in Monterey Bay. The remains were found inside a one-piece fleece garment, consistent with either the inner lining of a dry-suit, or an emergency survival suit. Research on any missing person that matched these remains proved unsuccessful. There was also no match in the California MUPS (Missing and Unidentified Persons) system.

A small sample of the remains were sent to the Othram forensics lab in Texas. A SNP DNA profile was then extracted, and Othram's genealogists used Investigative Genetic Genealogy to identify potential family members of the deceased person, giving investigators fresh leads to follow-up on.

With this information and further investigation, the remains were positively identified as 36-year-old Jeffrey Hulliger, who was lost at sea with a friend while fishing in Monterey Bay on January 14th, 1997. His friend and boatmate, Greg Mitchell, has never been found.

After the fisherman sent out a distress signal from their boat, "Salmon's Patty", the Coast Guard attempted to locate the vessel, which was reported to have been taking on water. Only debris was found, and both men were presumed drowned, but neither the boat nor their remains had been located.

See page 2 for the only newspaper article found outlining the search for the missing fisherman.

Search for boat continues

**'Salmon Patty's'
last transmission
heard Tuesday**

By Marty Burleson

The Californian

A Coast Guard search continued Wednesday night for two Central Coast residents whose fishing boat disappeared off Moss Landing more than 36 hours earlier.

Debris from the "The Salmon Patty" out of Moss Landing was sighted at noon Wednesday about 10 miles southwest of Santa Cruz, Coast Guard Chief Rick Thornton said. The missing men — identified as John Hollinger and Greg Mitchell — were last heard from at 9:30 a.m. Tuesday.

Their ages and cities of residence were unavailable Wednesday.

The pair's final radio message indicated that the fishing boat was taking on water near a Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute buoy 12 miles west of Moss Landing. The debris found Wednesday was 15 miles to the northwest of the buoy, however.

"We searched all day (Tuesday) and didn't find anything," Thornton said. "But due to the fact we found debris (on Wednesday), I'm sure we will continue our search."

Coast Guard officials in San Francisco will determine whether to call off the rescue effort. Until then, two Coast Guard cutters, a helicopter from San Francisco and an airplane from Sacramento will remain assigned to the area.

Rescue personnel were aided Wednesday by sunny skies.

"Search conditions are much better than yesterday," Thornton said.

Spotted from the air Wednesday were a red-orange survival suit, a life preserver, a pair of green buckets and some smaller items, Thornton said.

The boat was equipped with two survival suits, a life raft and an electronic satellite signal, Thornton said. No satellite signals had been received as of late Wednesday.

Salinas Californian, January 16, 1997