

Bones matched to lost brothers

CRIME: Artists sketches provide a break in the case of two Huntington Beach men missing since 1978.

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The Orange County Register

A 17-year-old mystery that started with the kidnapping of two Huntington Beach brothers — and remained unsolved even

after a homicide trial — ended Thursday in a Riverside morgue.

Two skeletons found clad in motorcycle boots, leather jackets and Harley-Davidson belt buckles were identified as the remains of missing brothers Allan G. Taylor, 22, and Charles D. Taylor, 20.

"I just can't believe it's really them," said Dona Robinson, 63, who knew the brothers in 1978 and helped investigators solve the case. "Isn't it something after all this time?"

The discovery of the bodies

and new evidence found with the remains could help prosecutors with their still-open homicide case, attorneys said.

Three years after the Taylors disappeared, and without their bodies as proof that they were dead, a jury convicted Thomas Floyd Pugh, then 33, of killing the brothers after a dispute over stolen motorcycle parts. All three men belonged to motorcycle gangs.

An appellate court overturned the verdict in 1985 after learning that two key witnesses had been

hypnotized. Pugh was freed.

"There's no statute of limitations on murder," said Deputy District Attorney Rick King, head of Orange County's homicide unit. "We will take the information from this, analyze it and see how the case should proceed."

Prosecutors, police and coroner's officials will meet next week to discuss the case.

The attorney who represented Pugh at trial, however, said the bodies wouldn't alter anything.

"The issue wasn't whether

they were killed, but who killed them," said Los Angeles attorney Harland Braun.

While prosecutors believed they had solved the case, the missing bodies had baffled investigators for nearly two decades.

Investigators had searched the state for the brothers' remains. Authorities thought the bodies might have been hidden in concrete at a motorcycle shop in Santa Ana. They sent a spelunker into caves near Inyo-Kern, off

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BONES: When dental checks failed, artist was asked to bri

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back yard of notorious motorcycle-gang member Tom Maniscalco, a friend of Pugh's, but did not find human remains, court records show.

The case was solved after a chance discovery. While playing near a dry creek bed in Winchester, near Hemet, on April 14, 1993, two boys discovered a skull. Investigators, digging for two days with an anthropologist, found a makeshift grave.

The grave — at one time 6 feet deep — might never have been found if not for rains that turned the dry creek into a river, washing away years' accumulation of dirt, Riverside Deputy Coroner Mike Oare said.

But police had few clues to the skeletons' identities. For a year, Oare said, they checked the skeletons' teeth against records of missing people. None matched.

Then the case turned a crucial corner. Six months ago, investigators sought help from Orange police officer Michael Streeds, a forensic artist. Working with the skulls and anthropology charts, he drew composites of how the men probably looked.

The work was painstaking, Streeds said, taking several months. The skulls came to life in his garage as he reconstructed

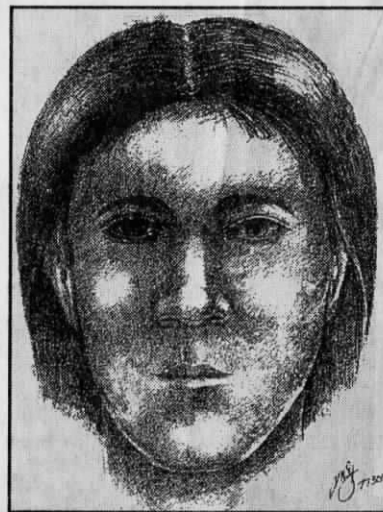
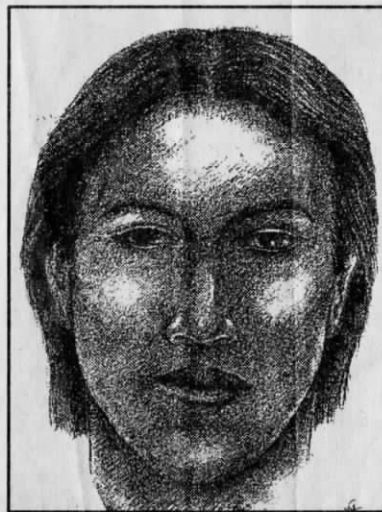
faces atop the bone. Then he began sketching.

When he finished his drawings about six weeks ago, Streeds said, he was confident that he had captured good likenesses.

"I'm anxious to find out what the brothers actually looked like," Streeds said after learning that the skeletons had been identified.

Oare gave the drawings to The (Riverside) Press-Enterprise. The paper published the sketches with a story detailing what investigators knew about the skeletons. Based on the bones, an anthropologist had determined that they were probably brothers who had been dead about 20 years. The story described their clothing and the ring one man wore — silver with a marijuana-leaf insignia.

Robinson read the story April 6. A longtime Orange County resident who retired to Riverside



INTERPOLATION: A police forensic artist created these images of Allan G. and Charles D. Taylor of Huntington Beach, not individually identified in these sketches, from their bones. The drawings led to a newspaper reader's identification of the brothers, missing for 17 years.

two years ago, Robinson knew the Taylor brothers. She remembered them from the Sin-Knot, a

Santa Ana bar she managed that they frequented in their motorcycle garb. She remembered one

ng skeletons' features to life

wore a marijuana-leaf ring.

"They were friends of my son-in-law, and he had told me they disappeared," Robinson said. After consulting with her son-in-law in Garden Grove, she called the reporter who had written the story. He took down the Taylor brothers' names and gave them to Riverside County sheriff's Detective Jeff Mullins.

At about the same time, Orange County District Attorney's Office investigator Don Null, who had worked on the Pugh homicide case, also saw the article. He called Huntington

Beach police Detective Steve Mauk, who called Mullins.

Within days, coroner's investigators had tracked down the Taylor brothers' dental records, on file at the Orange County District Attorney's Office. Null hand-delivered the files to Oare. A forensic dentist verified the match.

"I always felt this was one that was solvable, even when we started," Oare said. "I hope it brings the family some relief."

Register staff writer Vik Jolly and news researcher Penny Love contributed to this report.