



# NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## OCSD arrests man suspected in 1976 cold case murder

**SANTA ANA, Ca. (May 30, 2019)** – Orange County Sheriff's Department investigators arrested a man suspected of murdering a 30-year-old woman in 1976 and dumping her body near the Marine Corps Air Station El Toro.

The suspect, Eddie Lee Anderson, 66, was arrested on suspicion of murder on Friday, May 24, at his residence in River Ridge, La.

At approximately 4:30 a.m. on May 18, 1976, military police from Marine Corps Air Station El Toro found a deceased woman lying on a roadway near the base. It was determined the victim, identified as 30-year-old Leslie Penrod Harris, had been strangled.

On May 17, 1976, the victim had been at dinner with her husband at a Costa Mesa restaurant, but left alone at approximately 8:30 p.m. When the restaurant closed and Harris had not returned, her husband reported her missing to police. Her body was found approximately five hours later.

Orange County Sheriff's Department investigators canvassed nearby businesses and reached out to taxicab companies, with no results. At the time, investigators believed the suspect to have a military connection as the place where Harris' body was discovered was an area unknown to the public surrounding the base. After exhausting all investigative leads, the case went cold.

With advancements in DNA evidence analysis, swabs containing DNA evidence that had been collected during the 1976 autopsy were re-examined in 1997 in an attempt to identify a possible suspect, but the search yielded no results.

Further progression in DNA technology, including the ability to conduct familial DNA searches, prompted investigators to again run the DNA evidence in 2016, but no matches were identified.

In August 2018, Sheriff's investigators assigned to the Orange County Homicide Task Force began utilizing genealogy techniques to possibly identify a suspect. In 2019, investigators had a lead to start building a genealogy profile and, working with the FBI's Investigative Genealogy Team, were able to identify Anderson as a person of interest.



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Investigators learned Anderson was previously enlisted in the United States Marine Corps and had lived on the Marine Corps Air Station El Toro in the early 1970s. At the time of Harris' murder, Anderson lived less than a mile from the restaurant where Harris had been the evening of her murder.

Investigators traveled to New Orleans on Thursday, May 23, to interview Anderson, who volunteered to provide a DNA sample. Anderson was arrested on suspicion of murder and was taken to the Plaquemines Parish Sheriff's Office. Extradition proceedings are pending.

"Even when leads seemingly run cold, in this case spanning more than four decades, our investigators never stop utilizing new technology and any resource necessary to solve cases, bring justice to victims, and provide much needed closure to their families," said Orange County Sheriff Don Barnes.

"Through both traditional DNA and genealogical DNA, we now have the opportunity to solve decades-old cases that would have otherwise been left unsolved," said Orange County District Attorney Todd Spitzer. "These victims and their families have been waiting for justice for decades, and the addition of genealogical DNA is now helping us to advance our efforts to achieve justice for crime victims."

Although this crime happened more than 40 years ago, investigators are asking anyone who might have information related to this case to call Orange County Crime Stoppers at 1-855-TIP-OCCS.

This case has been a collaborative effort with the Orange County District Attorney's Office and the FBI's Investigative Genealogy Team.

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