



**COUNCIL BLUFFS POLICE
DEPARTMENT**

PRESS RELEASE

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51503

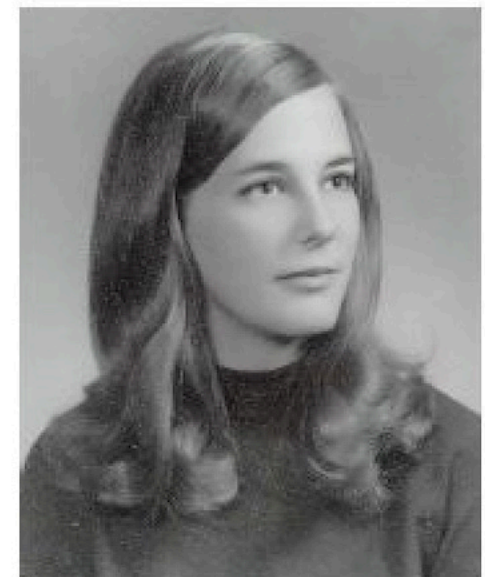
Date:	Reporting Officer:		Assigned Division/Unit:
2/25/22	Captain Todd Weddum		Criminal Investigations
Report#: (if applicable)	Time:	Phone:	Email:
F82-2558		712-328-4728	taweddum@councilbluffs-ia.gov
Type of Incident:	Location:		
Cold Case Homicide	Best Western Frontier Hotel, 2216 27 th Avenue, Council Bluffs, Iowa		

SUBJECT(S):

VICTIM: Rotatori, Lee

AGE: 32 years at time of death

CITY, STATE: Nunica, Michigan



Narrative: Council Bluffs Police detectives have cleared the cold case homicide of Lee Rotatori, who was murdered in June 1982.

Rotatori, a resident of Nunica, Michigan, had just started a job at Jennie Edmundson Hospital and had been staying at the Best Western Frontier Hotel, for several nights, while looking for a permanent place to live. When she did not show up for work on the morning of June 25, 1982, her boss asked the hotel staff to check on her and her deceased body was discovered inside her rented room. Rotatori died from a single stab wound and there was evidence of a sexual assault. No suspects were identified during the initial investigation.

In 2001, the evidence collected in 1982 was resubmitted to the State of Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI) Lab for examination. Advances in forensic technology revealed the presence of a male DNA profile. When entered into the State and Federal DNA databases, there was not a match for this DNA. The DCI Lab would periodically check this unknown DNA over the years, without ever getting any matches.

In April 2019, Council Bluffs investigators submitted the unknown male DNA profile to Parabon Nanolabs to begin a genetic genealogy case. In February 2021, researchers from Parabon and ES Genealogy, who examined familial

relationships, concluded that Thomas O. Freeman, of West Frankfort, Illinois, was the source of the suspect DNA. A sample of Freeman's daughter's DNA was subsequently analyzed by the Iowa DCI Lab, which confirmed that there was a parent/child relationship between the DNA found at the scene of Rotatori's murder and Freeman's daughter.

Further investigation revealed that Thomas Freeman was also the victim of a murder. On October 30, 1982, Freeman's decomposed body was found buried in a shallow grave near Cobden, Illinois. Freeman had been shot multiple times; he was 35 years old at the time of his death. It was reported that he had been dead for about three months before his body was discovered. Freeman's killer was never identified.

Council Bluffs investigators are currently working with the Illinois State Police to determine if Freeman's murder was somehow linked to his involvement in Rotatori's death.

The Council Bluffs Police Department would like to give thanks and credit to Parabon Nanolabs and Eric Schubert, of ES Genealogy, for their work on this case. Council Bluffs Police Detective Steve Andrews and CSI Supervisor Katie Pattee have been leading this investigation locally.

Photo of Thomas O. Freeman (unknown date)

