



NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
OC Sheriff Public Affairs, 714-904-7042

Investigators seek new leads in 1983 cold case

SANTA ANA, Ca. (Feb. 13, 2025): Orange County Sheriff's investigators are seeking information after uncovering new leads in the homicide of Maritza Glean Grimmatt.

Maritza, long-referred to as Jane Doe, was positively identified in March 2024, reinvigorating investigative efforts to solve her decades-old homicide.

Investigators have identified two persons of interest in the case: Maritza's ex-husband, Howard Grimmatt, and his current wife, Isabel "Terry" Cruz-Grimmatt. They are also seeking additional information from the public that may help solve Maritza's murder.

Maritza's remains were discovered in April 1983 in a culvert in the area of Canada and Old Trabuco roads in what is now the city of Lake Forest.

Investigators shared multiple forensic renderings over the years and also worked with private and federal partners in an attempt to identify Maritza. Despite years of investigative genealogy, media outreach and social media posts, she remained unidentified for more than 40 years.

Investigators were able to establish a distant genetic relative who in November 2023 suggested posting Maritza's forensic rendering to a Facebook group dedicated to identifying missing women from the 1970s and 1980s.

A month later, a woman contacted investigators saying she believed the photographs could be her missing mother. In March 2024, investigators positively identified Maritza and began piecing together her story.

They learned that Maritza, a Panamanian native, married US Marine Howard Grimmatt in the summer of 1978 and gave birth to a daughter. In late 1978, the family moved to the United States and lived in Columbus, Ohio then in Millington, Tenn.

In July 1979, the couple began divorce proceedings and Howard later married Isabel "Terry" Cruz. Howard Grimmatt subsequently moved to California, leaving Maritza in Tennessee. Maritza told her sister she was going to California and her family never heard from her again.

Investigators are actively investigating Maritza's homicide, and are interested in any details that might help establish how and when Maritza arrived in California. They also are interested in speaking with former military service members who may have seen Maritza at the former El Toro Marine Corps Air Station between late 1979 and April 1983.

Anyone with information on this case is asked to email the cold case homicide team at coldcase@ocsheriff.gov. Anonymous tips may be submitted to OC Crime Stoppers at 855-TIP-OCCS (855-847-6227) or at occrimestoppers.org. To read more about Maritza's story visit the OC Sheriff's Cold Case Website at ocsheriff.gov/coldcases.



Maritza Glean Grimmatt



Howard Grimmatt



Isabel "Terry" Cruz-Grimmett



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