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News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Missoula, MT (September 23, 2022) – Missoula County Sheriff’s Office Cold Case Unit solves 30-year-old transient murder case. On September 13, 1992, a partially buried body was discovered in an area known as “Orange Avenue Ranch” or “Peace Tree Camp”. Detectives were able to determine that the victim, William T. Adams, aka “Cadillac Man”, spent the night at the Poverello on August 25, 1992, and, through an entomology report, died as a result of a knife wound to the chest and massive head trauma on September 2nd or 3rd. No suspect was found during the initial investigation.

The body of Mr. Adams, a known transient that was known to ride the rails, was found face down in a shallow grave near the base of a hillside with a broken knife in his chest. He was wearing a sweat jacket and wool sweater that had been pulled up over his head, appearing as though he had been drug to the location. Several other items of clothing were found at the scene including two ball caps and a bloody shirt/jacket that, through DNA testing, led to the identity of the suspect.

During the initial investigation it was believed that the unknown suspect had sustained a cut on their hand and possibly used the shirt/jacket to cover and help control the bleeding. Through DNA testing the Cold Case Unit was able to identify the suspect from that piece of clothing as Leonard D. “8 Ball” Owen. He was also a known transient who travelled by train. He had an extensive criminal history which included violent crimes.

Mr. Owen is deceased but with the cooperation of immediate family and the support and financial assistance of Season of Justice, the Cold Case Unit was able to make a positive identification. Although, a transient by choice, Mr. Owen had family ties to Montana that most likely brought him to the area.

“Our Cold Case Unit has proven invaluable,” stated Sheriff T.J. McDermott. “Their dedication and perseverance to seek the truth and close these cases is appreciated by many, including law enforcement, past and present, and family members that experience closure.”

Sheriff McDermott established the Cold Case Unit in January 2019. The unit has been successful in solving cold cases for Missoula County Sheriff’s Office and multiple law enforcement jurisdictions across the State.

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