

MAMA'S BABY, PAPA'S MAYBE! HOW MISATTRIBUTED PARENTAGE AND OTHER CHALLENGES CAN COMPLICATE YOUR IGG CASE

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DNA Doe Project

DNA Doe Project (DDP) was the first organization to solve an unidentified decedent case using investigative genetic genealogy (IGG) technology. Now in our fifth year of operation, DDP continues to apply learning from our early cases to overcome challenges in the identification of John and Jane Does.

Two early cases that will be discussed presented multiple unusual and intriguing details which required our investigative genetic genealogists (IGGs) and law enforcement partners to overcome challenges in technology, employ foreign records experts, and probe family secrets and lies.

In the case of "Annie Doe", degraded DNA made it difficult to obtain workable data, challenging DDP's bioinformatician. After a usable kit was obtained, matches took us all over the world including New Zealand, the UK, Canada and Germany. A clue left by the Doe herself, carved on a piece of jewelry, helped lead our IGGs to "Annie's" true identity.

In another Jane Doe case (anonymized for privacy of the decedent's family), multiple generations of misattributed parentage presented a unique barrier to our IGGs. Our team and law enforcement partners were compelled to confront long-buried family secrets in order to identify Jane Doe.

Obstacles like these are just a few of the challenges we have overcome in the identification of more than 50 John and Jane Does, including the victims of serial killers, foreign nationals, and historic unidentified decedents. Our hope is that our experience and shared knowledge may assist other IGGs confronting difficult casework.