

FACTS UPDATE ON REMAINS FROM BROOKS COUNTY



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PROGRESS REPORT
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SUMMARY OF PROGRESS

The Forensic Anthropology Center at Texas State (FACTS) Received **66** individuals from Brooks County and **12** individuals from Webb County Medical Examiner’s Office during 2013 - 2015.

Fiscal year budget for 2013-2015: \$0.00

Progress of Brooks and Webb County remains at FACTS:

Task	Number Completed
Remains Cleaned/Processed*	45
Skeletal Reports Completed**	41
Dental Reports Completed***	31
NamUs Entries	43
DNA Submissions to UNT	34
Positive Identifications	3
Repatriations	2

***Labor and supplies = \$10,890.00, ** Labor = \$54,940.00, *** Labor = \$8,750.00**

FACTS PROTOCOL FOR PROCESSING, ANALYSIS, AND IDENTIFICATION

Intake, Processing, and Analysis

The majority of the Brooks County exhumations contained individuals in early to late stages of decomposition, requiring a storage area or location for further decomposition until the maceration could be



Figure 1

accommodated. Because FACTS has large scale storage and maceration capabilities due to the Forensic Anthropology Research Facility (FARF) and the Osteological Research and Processing Laboratory (ORPL), unidentified remains with significant amounts of flesh were brought to FACTS to await maceration and analysis. Once in FACTS custody, all unidentified remains are taken to FARF and placed in a special enclosure within the facility (FIGURE 1). The unidentified remains are not used in any decomposition or taphonomic studies at FARF. During placement of unidentified remains at FARF, faculty and staff conduct intake procedures that involve opening the body bags and documenting the condition of remains and personal effects. At this time, personal effects are removed (FIGURE 2) and placed in plastic bags for freezer storage until they can be hand-washed and dried for photography.

Once the unidentified remains have sufficiently decomposed, they are transferred from FARF to ORPL, where volunteer undergraduate and graduate students clean and inventory all skeletal remains (FIGURE 3). They are then analyzed by FACTS faculty and graduate students (FIGURE 4) and a forensic anthropological report is generated along with a dental report and dental radiographs. Full craniometric and postcranial data are collected prior to curation, pending identification, in secure storage.

All clothing and personal effects associated with each case are hand-washed by undergraduate volunteers. This reveals any patterns, colors or writing that may have been previously obscured by decompositional fluids. Since clothing can often be used to associate unidentified remains with a missing person, cleaning of personal effects is crucial to identification efforts. The brown plaid shirt in FIGURE 5 ultimately lead to a positive identification based on information from a missing persons report in NamUs.

Identification Process

All case information is then entered into NamUs and faculty and students search through the possible missing



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4

persons matches to narrow down potential identifications. DNA samples are sent to the University of North Texas for profiling and uploading into CODIS. Clothing descriptions, along with biological profiles have facilitated several identifications. NamUs and CODIS often lack missing persons information or appropriate DNA family reference samples (FRS) for comparison to unidentified remains. Therefore, FACTS faculty and students also collaborate with human rights groups such as the Equipo Argentino de Antropología Forense (EAAF), the Colibrí Center for Human Rights, the South Texas Human Rights Center by cross-referencing missing persons reports with case reports for our unidentified persons. When an identification hypothesis is generated, we submit an additional DNA sample to BODE DNA Laboratory (a private DNA laboratory paid for by EAAF) for comparison with the FRS obtained through the EAAF. Thus far, all identifications at FACTS have been conducted through DNA comparison at BODE.

When DNA suggests a positive identification, a report is submitted to the appropriate Justice of the Peace (JP) in Brooks County to approve the identification; a signature is also obtained from the JP in order to release the remains to the appropriate consulate via funeral transport.



“The man tied a brown plaid shirt around the knee to help him walk. He was left behind under a tree, somewhere near Falfurrias, Texas. The family visited Falfurrias and were shown pictures of a body that they believe is Oscar*, but were told that the body had already been buried and there was no DNA sample to confirm identity.”

Figure 5: *Oscar is a pseudonym

Additional Volunteers

Karen Taylor of Facial Images and Lisa Sheppard of Dreamfly Creations have volunteered their time to provide 15 facial reconstructions, see Figure 6 and Figure 7.

For questions or comments please contact Dr. Kate Spradley at 512-245-8272 or mks@txstate.edu.

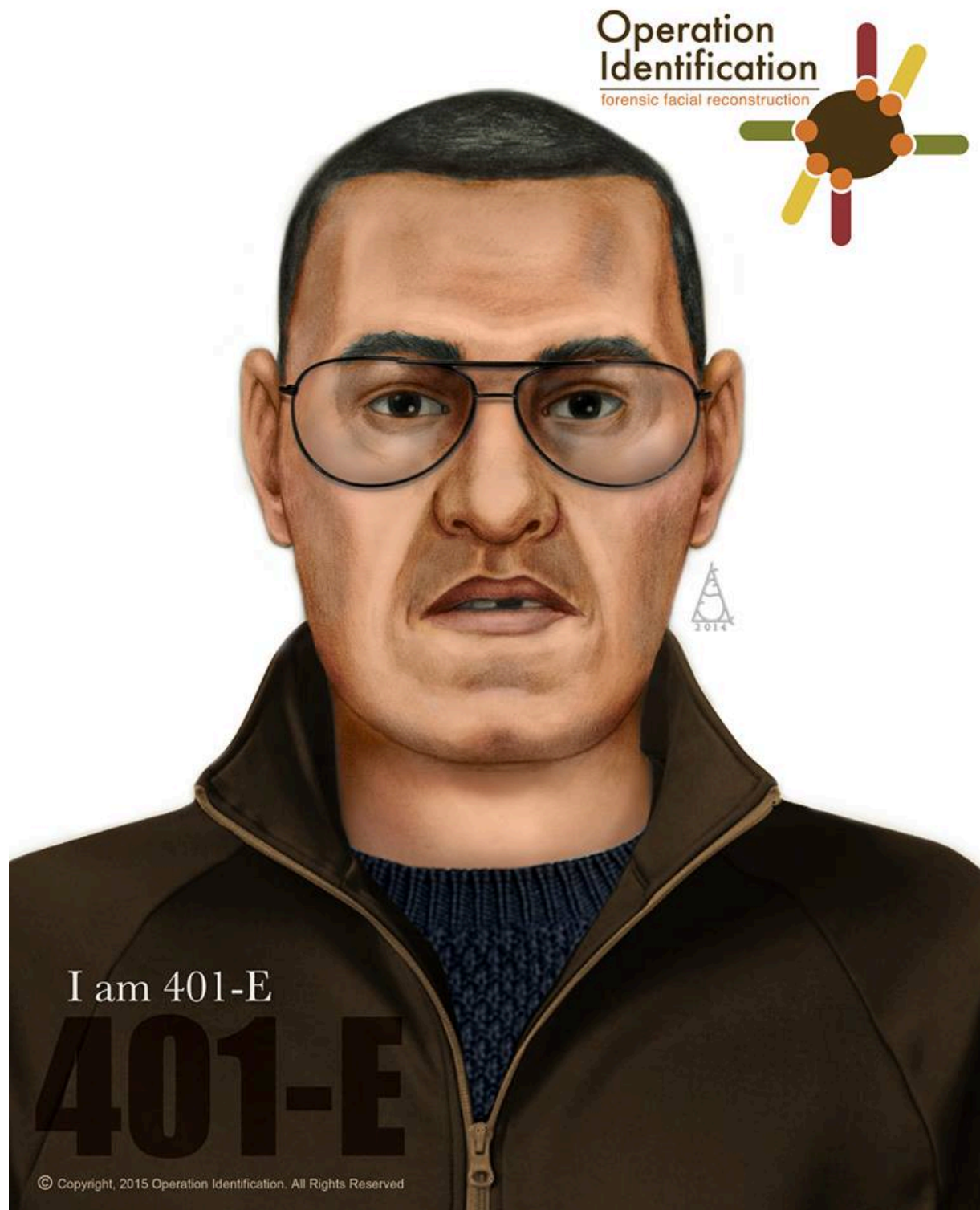


Figure 6

Operation
Identification
forensic facial reconstruction



Figure 7