

Forensic Art Project EDAN and the Doe Network

Barbara A. Martin Bailey

In 1984, a white female body, deceased, was located in a Broward County, Florida canal. After investigators were unable to establish her identity, she was classified as a "Jane Doe." The case eventually turned into a "cold case" when the investigators ran out of leads to pursue.

Unfortunately, such a case is far from unique. Each year, law enforcement officers around the world deal with thousands of cases of unidentified remains and missing persons. Officers work diligently to establish the identity of victims,

but they often face an extremely difficult task. Decomposition and other damage obviously makes identification challenging. Also, when victims are found in remote locations far from where they were last seen, it can be even harder to make the proper connection. In those cases, trying to match missing and unidentified persons is further complicated by the lack of a central database.*

With the added pressure of new cases, officers have little time and few resources to try to develop new leads on old cases. Officers are left frustrated: despite their hard work, their cases remain unsolved and a victim remains nameless.

THE DOE NETWORK AND PROJECT EDAN

That's where the Doe Network comes in. Established in 1999, the Doe Network is a group of volunteers who help law enforcement officers solve cold cases involving missing and unidentified persons in North America, Europe, and Australia.

The group maintains an online database that can be searched by members of the public, as well as by law enforcement professionals and medical examiners (www.doenetwork.org). In addition, law enforcement officers, medical examiners, and family members can submit cases for missing persons from 1998 and earlier, and unidentified persons who died in 2005 or earlier.

Volunteers from the Doe Network attempt to match unidentified persons cases with missing persons cases, but there is no interfering with an agency's investigation. If a possible match pops up, the volunteer forwards that ➤

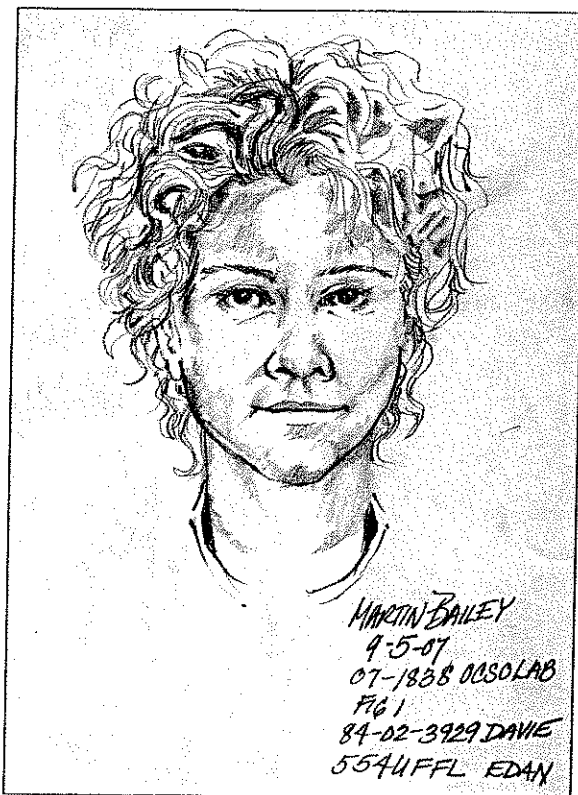


Figure 1A

information to the proper law enforcement agency so that the agency can begin an investigation and an identity can be confirmed. When the agency confirms the match through dental records, fingerprints, DNA, etc., the agency then notifies the Doe Network. The staff at the Doe Network can then clear the case from the open files and place it into the solved data bank of their database.

Often, a photograph of the unidentified person is a crucial piece of information for making a match with a missing person. Sometimes, though, a photograph of the unidentified person can't be published because of decomposition or other damage to the face. In those instances, a forensic artist can produce a facial reconstruction that can serve as a portrait of the deceased. But in some cases, law enforcement agencies don't have their own forensic artist on staff to create facial reconstructions or age progressions to submit to the Doe Network. In an effort to alleviate this problem, the Doe Network formed a cooperative venture with Project EDAN (Everyone Deserves A Name).

Project EDAN (www.projectedan.us) currently includes a group of 18 certified forensic artists who do forensic artwork pro bono for law enforcement agencies in North America, Europe, and Australia. For each case, a member of EDAN prepares a flyer with art work for the submitting agency and then emails it to them. The art work is then placed on the Doe Network's website. All of this work is done at no cost to the submitting agency.

WORKING A CASE

The unidentified female body located in 1984 in Broward County, Florida, mentioned at the beginning of this article became

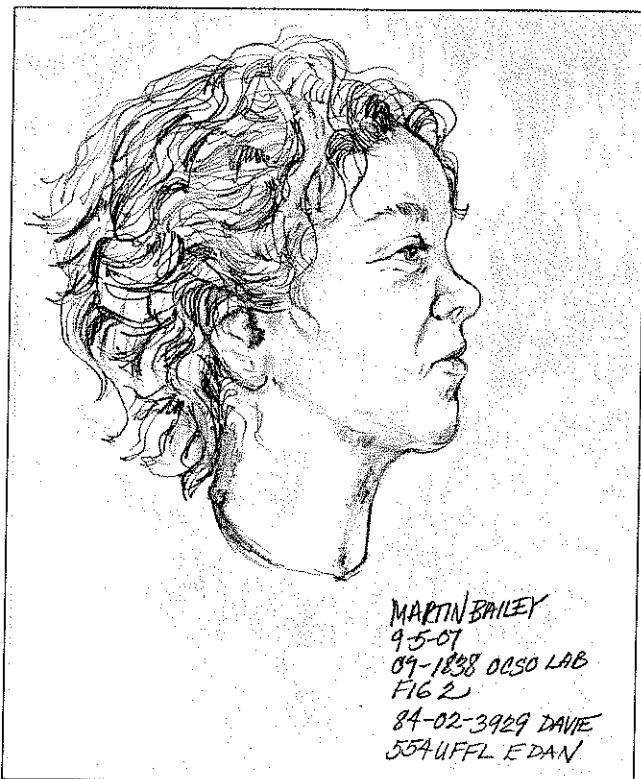


Figure 1B

one of the Doe Network cases. I know because I am the EDAN artist who did the artwork (See Figures 1A-1C).

As a forensic artist certified through the International Association for Identification, I have been working in this field for nearly 39 years, and I have been a part of EDAN since 2003. The goal with facial reconstructions is to create an accurate image that will trigger a family member, friend, or witness viewing it to make an identification of the deceased. To successfully create that image, I work as part of a team with professionals from the relevant medical examiner's offices and law enforcement offices.

When working on a cold case, every scrap of information is important; some small detail that may seem insignificant at first glance may provide a clue to the best way to reconstruct that person's face. To glean as much information as possible, I get the medical examiner's report, along with any available X-rays, dental information, crime scene photos, postmortem photos, and the case incident report.

Facial Reconstruction

A facial reconstruction begins with the factual details from these reports. All information about race, gender, age, height, and weight are crucial because reconstructions are based on tissue depth charts that are set from these parameters. When we have remains where we can't determine the weight, we use the normal weight for that type frame. ➤

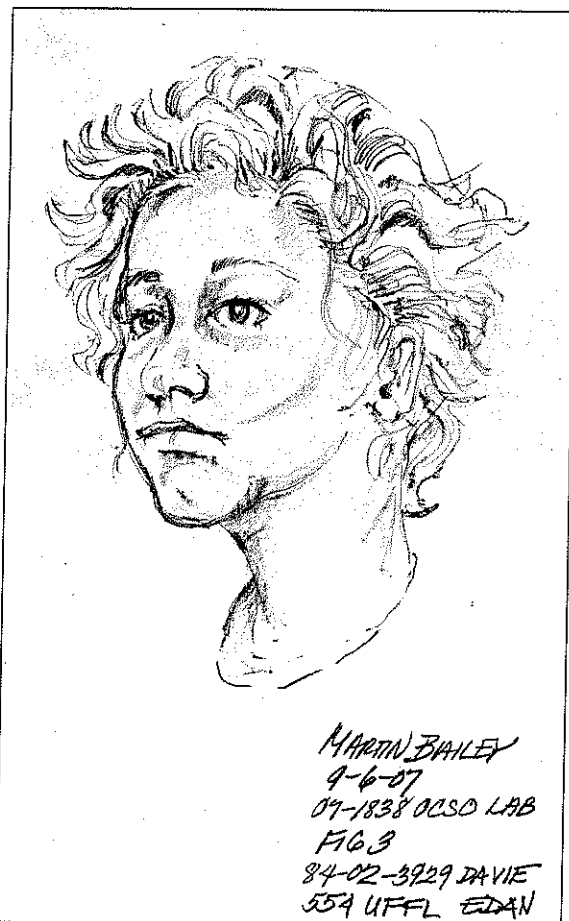


Figure 1C

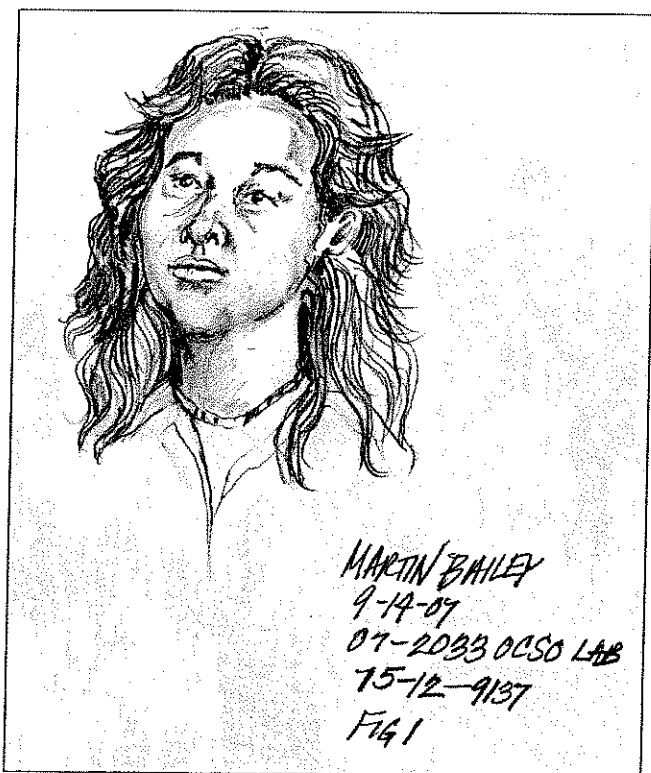


Figure 2A

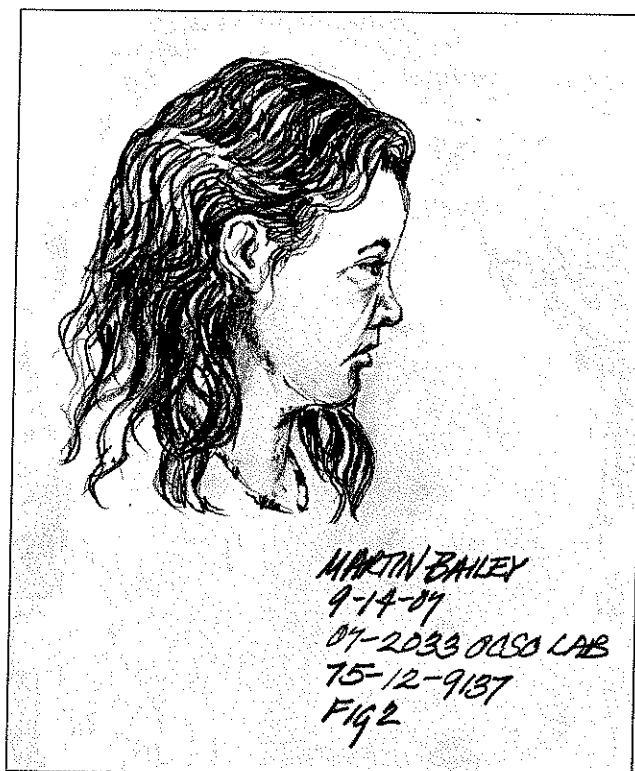


Figure 2B

Creating facial reconstructions for young children can be especially difficult. In the past, we lacked information for this age group; new research specific to children now allows us to create more accurate work for them. As Caroline Wilkinson states in *Forensic Facial Reconstruction*, "Until 1963, there were no published juvenile facial tissue depth measurements, and anthropometrical studies concentrated on facial growth patterns rather than facial standards. However, there has been a great deal of anthropological research into age and sex determination, and the growth of juvenile skulls."⁷ Most age determinations of preadolescent children are now based on dentition formations. Determining gender in very young children, however, can still be challenging because there are few facial differences present between males and females until puberty.

Drawings
Forensic artists may also provide separate drawings for specific details to accompany the main forensic artwork. For example, artists will sometimes render an enlarged detail drawing of the mouth and teeth area to bring attention to problems like a chipped front tooth or dental caries. These

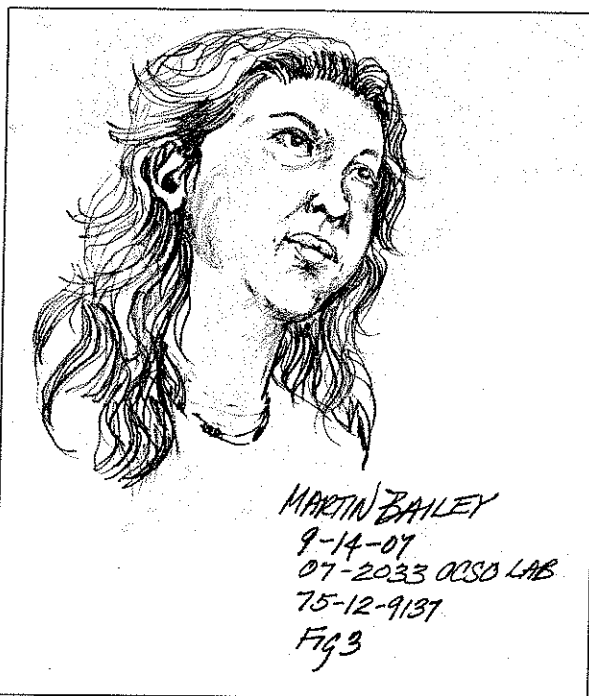


Figure 2C

features would stand out in someone's mind and might help them make an identification. An artist might also create a single view or a detailed image of scars, tattoos, or other distinguishing marks. Drawings can also be made of jewelry worn by the deceased. Again, these details cannot be overlooked because they are closely associated with the person whose identity is being sought.

But the forensic artist's work extends beyond trying to accurately record the anatomical features of the victim. Any good artwork should breathe a bit of life back into that person. Gary Faigin explains this point in *The Artist's Complete Guide to Facial Expression*: "In [Leonardo da Vinci's] case, the result of all his meticulous effort was not just anatomical drawings. The men in his battle scenes, just like the women in his portraits, have faces more real and more alive, than any that had appeared in paintings before. Science in the service of art led to the mastery of expression."²²

In other words, the forensic artist must stay within the rules of facial reconstruction procedures, but the artist can take a certain amount of restricted license to recreate a personality type. For example, the artist can look for clues to the



Figure 3A

victim's personality from the victim's appearance. After all, we present an image of ourselves to the world with our clothes, hairstyle, and other accoutrements, and artists through the ages have been man's reporter and recorder of his times and era. From the choices the deceased made about his or her appearance, the artist may gain some insight into the type of activity he or she was preparing for. The artist may also find other clues at the scene. For example, a broken bracelet or only one earring may be significant in identification. Used appropriately, these clues can add important details to forensic drawings.

On the other hand, forensic artists should be careful to present the victim as he or she most typically appeared. Even if the deceased was found with a very formal hairstyle, for example, the artist should probably make the deceased person's appearance less like "just out of the beauty shop" and more like every day. After all, this is probably how this person appeared to family, co-workers, neighbors, and acquaintances.

All of the drawings I've included here are rendered in pencil; in black and white. I feel that black and white sells the personality better. People tend to get distracted by color. You may have noticed this problem with witnesses — they can remember seeing a red pickup truck, but they can't recall the make or

model or any other helpful features. With facial reconstruction, you want to avoid anything that might distract someone from making an identification. Black and white drawings also have some additional advantages over color: they are easier for a re-printing process, inexpensive for a department to copy, and are produced in a faxable size.

One drawback to using black and white is that it sometimes makes it difficult to maintain the subject's youthful appearance. However, keeping that youthful quality is actually a problem in any facial reconstruction technique; it just arises for different reasons and has different solutions. In a black and white drawing, the problem occurs because the more lead you use, the more you age the subject. To correct for this problem, I might take out some contrast, remove some lines from under the eyes, or tip the nose up a bit, etc., to create a more youthful appearance.

Forensic artwork, then, is like composite drawings: it is not a photograph of a person but an attempt to capture the features and qualities of that person, thus enabling someone to recognize him or her. And of course, the artwork also has to be available and visible which is why the Doe Network and Project EDAN are so important.

So as you look again at these examples of my Project EDAN drawings, you'll see that I've tried to capture both the factual details and the personality of each person. For the 1984 case, I began with the experts' reports that indicated that the unidentified person was a white female, 5'4" tall, 110-120 pounds, 18-25 years of age, with bleach processed blonde hair, in a layered and curly hairstyle. All three views (Figures 1A-1C), along with the full description, appear on the Doe Network.

In the second case, (Figures 2A-2C), the victim was also found in a Broward County, Florida, canal — but this time in 1975. Again, I gathered as much data as possible and discovered that this unidentified person was a white female, 5'4" in height, 115-125 pounds, 18-25 years of age, and had what appeared to be shoulder length, reddish-brown hair cut in long layers. The ➤

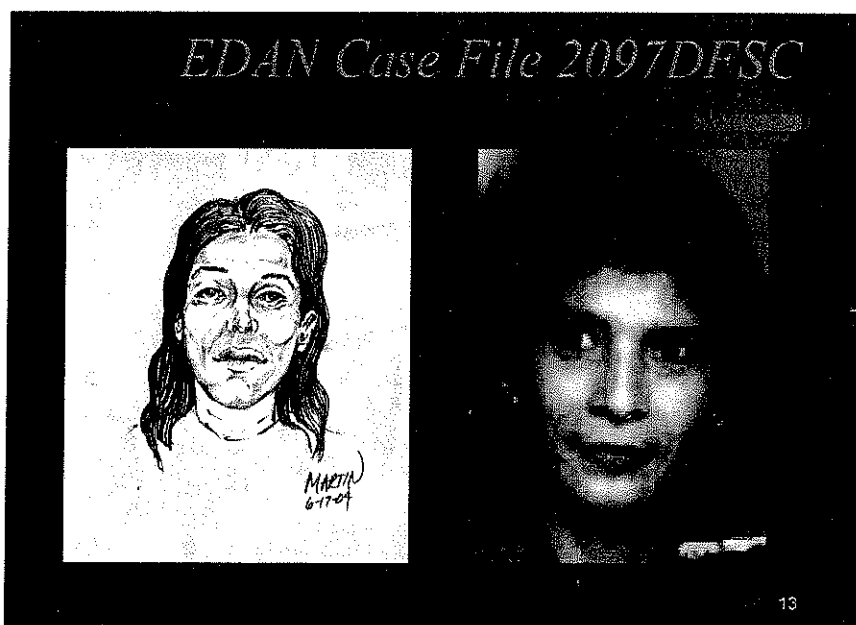


Figure 3B

dental records for this case also indicated that the victim had a gap between her teeth. The gap was not especially large, so it isn't noticeable in my drawings. That information is still very important, so it is included with the full description of the case that appears on the Doe Network.

Although neither of these women has been identified yet, there is still hope that the right person will see the forensic artwork and make an identification.

Finally, I've included the last case to illustrate the positive results the Doe Network and Project EDAN can help law enforcement achieve. In this case, an unidentified female, the victim of a homicide, was discovered in Tennessee in 1997. After an initial investigation, officers were unable to learn her identity. The case was featured in Tennessee newspapers and even on cable Court TV programs, but no one came forward to identify the victim. In 2004, I created a facial reconstruction drawing (Figure 3A) using postmortem photographs provided by Tennessee law enforcement.

A Doe Network volunteer in Texas learned about a woman reported missing in 1996 from South Carolina. After seeing the forensic artwork for the unidentified woman, he noticed similarities to the missing woman. Figure 3B shows a photograph of the missing woman.

Once the Doe Network volunteer saw the connection between the unidentified body and the missing woman, he contacted officials from Tennessee and Texas and gave them the missing

woman's name. When law enforcement officers found the missing woman's fingerprints on file, they compared them with the homicide victim and got a match.

In March 2007, the victim was identified as 32-year-old Ada Elena Torres Smith.

Now, an unidentified person has her name back and can be returned to her family. After so many years of not knowing what happened to her, this family can now grieve and give her a final resting place. And now that law enforcement officers have a name for their homicide victim, they can reopen their investigation.

BRINGING CLOSURE

This case demonstrates the real value of the Doe Network and Project EDAN. Volunteers from EDAN provide the forensic artwork that can be the spark that evokes a response in a viewer. The Doe Network then provides the database that displays that artwork and other information on unidentified and missing persons. The Doe Network also takes advantage of the time and skills that volunteers have available. These volunteers can perform some of the preliminary research that needs to be done before a cold case can be reopened. Since it functions as a clearinghouse, the Doe Network can link a variety of different agencies once a match is made. And perhaps most importantly, at a time when many law enforcement agencies are struggling with budget short crises and cut backs, they don't have to worry about receiving a bill for services rendered from the Doe Network or Project EDAN.

In the end, law enforcement officers and volunteers from the Doe Network and Project EDAN share the same hope: to give the unidentified back their name and bring closure to cold cases.

References

1. Wilkinson, Caroline. *Forensic Facial Reconstruction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. 220.
2. Faigin, Gary. *The Artist's Complete Guide to Facial Expression*. New York: Watson-Guption Publications, 1990. 54.

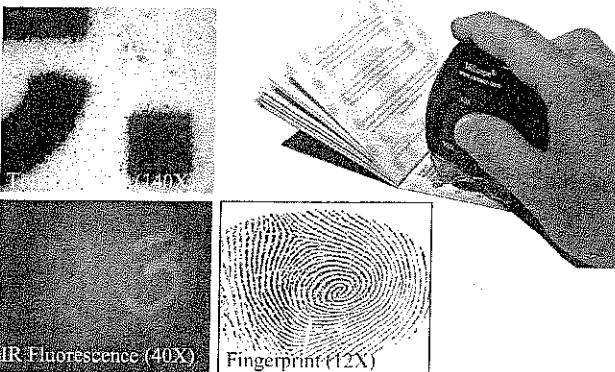
For more information on these and other cases, please visit www.doenetwork.org and www.projectedan.us.

*The U.S. Department of Justice has taken an important step towards addressing this problem with NamUs (www.namus.gov). Eventually, this site will link two databases: one for missing persons and one for unidentified persons. The unidentified persons database, which launched in July 2007, is now searchable; the missing persons database will be added by September 2008; and by 2009, the system should be fully operational, allowing one database to be searched against the other. For more information, read "Justice Department Launches Missing and Unidentified Persons Databases" By: David W. Hagy, Ph.D., *Forensic Magazine*® December 2007/January, 2008.

<http://www.forensicmag.com/articles.asp?pid=180>

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