

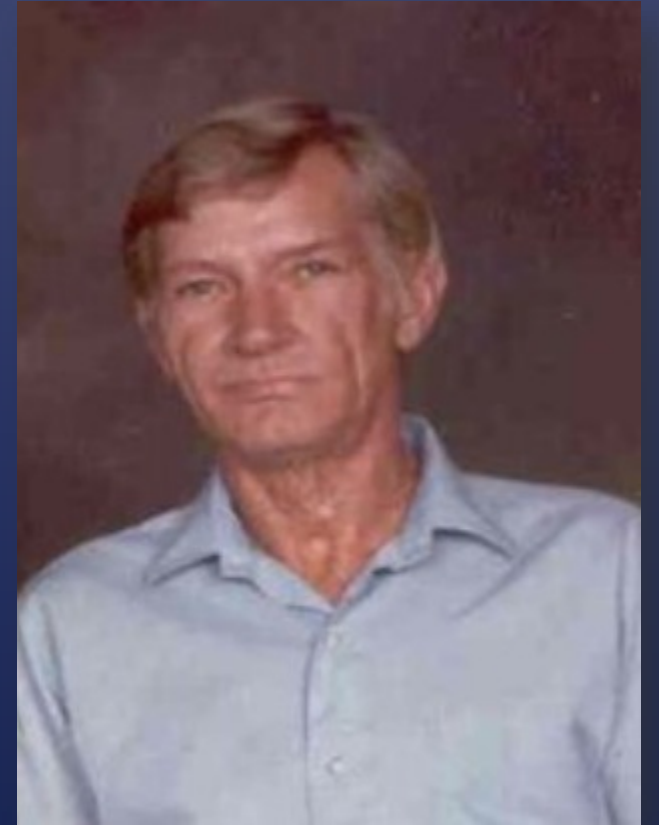


Suspect Identified in 1987 Murder of James Chafin

Arizona Attorney General's Office

Murder of James “Jim” Chafin

- James Chafin was a **Navy veteran** who served our country in the Korean War.
- On the morning of August 8, 1987, **James was murdered** and left in a cemetery in Glendale.
- He was 54 years old. For **39 years**, his family has lived without knowing who did this to him.
- **DNA evidence** has identified the man we believe killed Jim Chafin.



James “Jim” Chafin

Police taking fresh look at '87 homicide; victim was found in Glendale

The headline in the Aug. 9, 1987, edition of *The Arizona Republic* read: "Slaying victim is found in cemetery."



Orison "Jim" Chafin

"A caller led Phoenix police officers to the body of a White male at Resthaven Park Ceme-

tery, 6290 W. Northern Ave., at about 4 a.m., said Officer Marshall Downen of the Glendale Police Department."

The story began: "The body of an unidentified man who police believe was murdered was discovered early Saturday morning in a Glendale cemetery."

When and where: The body of Orison "Jim" Chafin, 54, a Glendale roofer, was discovered early Aug. 8, 1987, according to police. His throat had been slashed. He was naked, except for socks on his feet. His clothing was missing.

The corpse was faint in the moonlight when it was spotted by four young adults who had driven to the cemetery to "spook" each other, police said.

When the four got there about 4 a.m., they saw a mid-

size sedan parked at the end of a driveway. The car sped off when they approached in their vehicle, investigators said.

Summary: Chafin, a disabled veteran, lived alone in a Glendale trailer park. He served in the Navy and was a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

He last was seen about midnight leaving a bar near 59th and Glendale avenues, according to Glendale investigators.

Perhaps he left with somebody, but customers told police they can't be sure because he was in and out all night.

Detectives have not offered a motive, but Chafin had taken

some money out of a bank account and may have flashed his bankroll at the bar. He made no secret that he had planned to make a trip to Laughlin, Nev.

Police don't know whether people in the car leaving the cemetery had anything to do with the slaying.

They also don't know why the killer would take Chafin's clothes, leaving only his socks behind, unless the clothing offered some kind of evidence leading to the killer.

All that was left behind were a few coins scattered around the body, police said. Judging by the amount of blood on the

ground, he probably had been killed in the cemetery, not dumped there, police said.

Investigator: Detective Roger Geisler, a cold-case investigator for the Glendale Police Department.

What bothers police most: "The other cigarette butts could have been left by witnesses, as well as suspects," Geisler said. "We have made DNA checks with many people but no matches so far."

New technology's role: DNA analysis has allowed police to do genetic testing of cigarette butts found at the crime scene. One butt has been linked to the

1987 homicide in cemetery in Glendale still unsolved

The Silent Witness program is asking for help this week in solving a homicide that occurred in a Glendale cemetery last summer.

On Aug. 8, 1987, Orison "Jim" Chafin, 54, of Glendale, was found slain in Resthaven Park Cemetery, 6290 W. Northern Ave., according to Sgt. Mike Hobel, director of the Silent Witness program.

Hobel said Chafin's body was discovered at about 4 a.m. by four young adults who had driven to the cemetery to "spook" each other. When they got there, they saw a midsize sedan parked at the end of a driveway, which sped off when they approached it in their vehicle, Hobel said.

After the suspect's car left, the driver of the other car saw Chafin's

SILENT WITNESS

blood-covered body and left the area to notify police, Hobel said.

Hobel said Chafin's throat had been cut.

Chafin was last seen Aug. 8, 1987, between midnight and 1 a.m. leaving Critters Cocktail Lounge, 5932 W. Glendale Ave., Glendale, Hobel said.

Police suspect Chafin may have gotten into a fight with someone before he was killed, Hobel said.

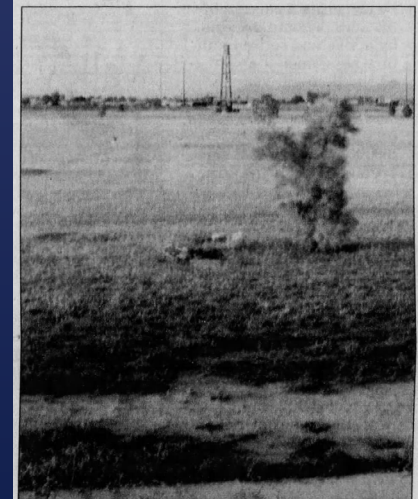
Compiled by M.E. Saavedra of *The Arizona Republic*. Anyone with information about this incident may call Silent Witness at 261-8600 or the General Investigations Bureau at 262-6141.

Slaying victim identified

Glendale police have identified the body of a 54-year-old Phoenix man found dead in a Glendale cemetery.

Police said the nude body of Orison Chafin Jr. of the 7000 block of West Turney Avenue was found Saturday at 4 a.m. in Resthaven Park Cemetery, 6290 W. Northern Ave.

Detectives say Chafin was murdered but refused to comment on the cause of death, saying the investigation is continuing.



The Arizona Republic



The body of Orison "Jim" Chafin (above) was found on this spot (left), shown as it looked on Aug. 8, 1987, in this file photo.

Partnership with Other Law Enforcement

- Thank you to the **Glendale Police Department**, whose detectives were on this scene in 1987 and preserved evidence for nearly four decades.
- Thank you to **Glendale Chief Colby Brandt and to every officer and detective** who worked on this case over the years.
- I also want to recognize the **Cold Case Unit** in our Special Investigations Section. **Roger Geisler, Tom Clayton, Jim Cope, Catherine Ferguson-Gilbert and their teams** re-interviewed witnesses and used DNA to do what could not be done in 1987.

"For over 39 years, Jim Chafin's murder went unsolved. He was a veteran who served his country and he died alone in a cemetery. For a long time it seemed the person responsible would never be named.

Today we can say who killed him. That is possible because Glendale detectives preserved the evidence in 1987, because our investigators refused to let this case stay cold.

No victim in Arizona should be forgotten, no matter how long it takes to find answers."



Jim Chafin & Family

August 7, 1987

- At 2:00 pm, Joe Ramirez arrives at Critters Lounge and sees victim James there.
- At 5:30 pm, Ginger Britson states she last saw victim James at Critters Lounge when she left the bar.
- At 7:00 pm, Gary Buchanan at AKO Liquor saw victim in store.
- Refused to sell to victim as he was too intoxicated.
- Between 8:30 - 9:00 pm, Gail Czerniejewski reports seeing victim James entering bar with Willie Mayfield. Both left around 8:30 pm to eat at La Perla.
- Gail states Kenneth Mayfield and Gary Billups were also at the bar.
- Gail Czerniejewski reported victim James also got into a fight with Gary over James verbally attacking a subject named Mark who was not there to defend himself.

August 8, 1987

- At 2:00 pm, Joe Ramirez arrives at Critters Lounge and see's victim James there. Four witnesses arrived to the Resthaven Cemetery Between 3:00 – 3:30 am
- 6450 W Northern Ave, Glendale, AZ
- A designated burial ground for the deceased approximately 90 acres, bordered by farm land to the north, Schuck building components to the west, Northern Avenue to the south and 63rd avenue to the east.
- Witnesses drove into the cemetery through an unsecured driveway on 63rd avenue north of Northern Ave to spook one another.
- Once inside, witnesses observe a midsize sedan stopped in the northwest paved portion of the cemetery with lights on.
- Vehicle described as having horizontal lights and a sloped back.

August 8, 1987 *(continued)*

- As witnesses drove towards the vehicle, it fled the area across the dirt and sidewalk onto Northern Ave west.
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William “Willie” Mayfield

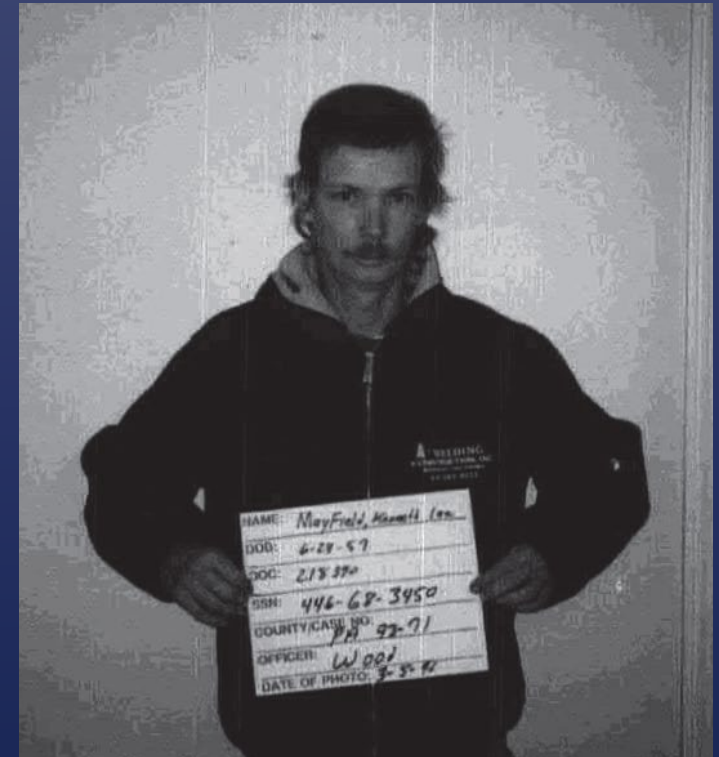
- 34 years old at time of Murder
- Lived at 6120 W Glendale Av, Apt B
- Worked at American Fence Company
- Interviewed at Critter’s Lounge on 8/14/1987 @ 10:20 pm
- Confirms Gary Billups is his roommate
- Confirms he got off work at 3:30 pm
- Came to Critters bar at 4:30 pm
- States Chafin already at bar
- Chafin bought couple of drinks



William “Willie” Mayfield

Kenneth Lee Mayfield

- 30 years old at time of the murder
- Lived at 6120 W Glendale Av, Apt B
- Lived with brother Willie and Gary Billups
- Worked at Insulation Specialists
- 61st & West Northern Ave
- Claims he worked all day and did not see anything at the bar



Kenneth Lee Mayfield

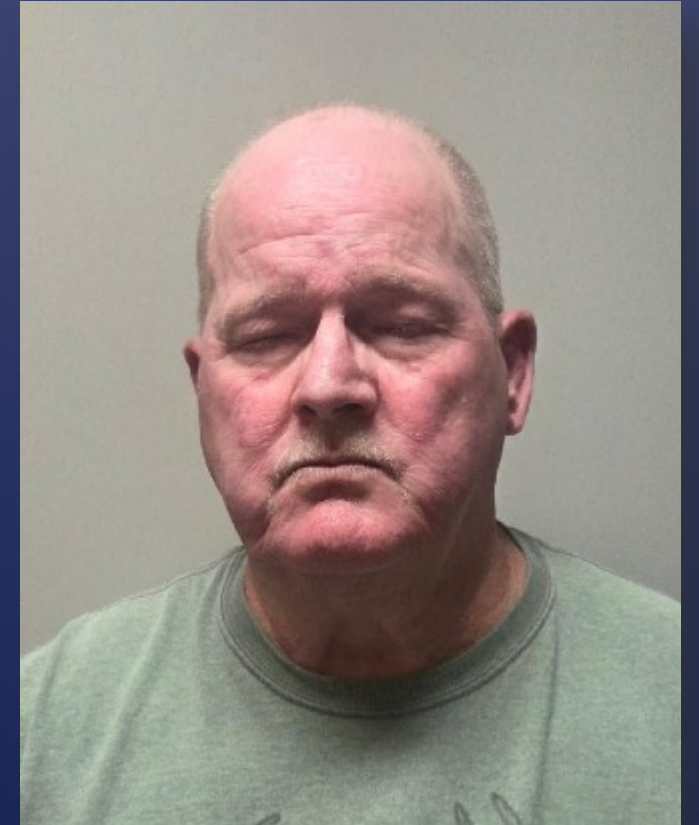
Kenneth Lee Mayfield

- Kenneth confirmed he owns **1974 Datsun 610**
- Tail lights and vehicle rear, **same shape as suspect vehicle** described by witness from scene



Gary Wayne Billups

- DNA evidence has identified **Gary Wayne Billups** as the likely perpetrator.
- Billups **lived in Glendale** in 1987, he was at the **same bar** as Jim on the night of the murder, and his **DNA matched evidence** recovered from the scene.
- Billups **died by suicide** in June, shortly after our investigators obtained his DNA sample.



Gary Wayne Billups



Thank You

Background on the Case

- In the early morning hours of Saturday, August 8, 1987, a group of four people driving through Resthaven Cemetery saw a midsize sedan stopped with its headlights on in the northwest section of the grounds.
- As they approached, the vehicle fled across the dirt and sidewalk onto Northern Avenue, heading west. Witnesses reported seeing two men in and around the car before it left.
- Where the car had been parked, witnesses observed the body of a man lying in the roadway. This body was later identified by Glendale police as 54-year-old Chafin, who lived alone in a trailer park in the West Valley. Chafin had been discovered with his throat cut, wearing only socks; the rest of his clothing was never recovered.
- The Maricopa County Medical Examiner ruled his death a homicide.

Background on the Case

- Investigators learned that Chafin had spent the previous afternoon and evening at Critters Lounge near 59th Avenue and Glendale Avenue. Witnesses placed Billups and two others at the bar that evening with Chafin.
- Detectives collected beer bottles and cigarette butts from the scene which later through forensic testing produced three male DNA profiles from that evidence. These profiles were entered into the national CODIS database.
- In 2025, the Arizona AGO's Cold Case Unit reopened the case alongside Glendale PD Investigators and re-examined the original file, re-interviewed surviving witnesses, and identified Billups, who had lived in Glendale in 1987 but was never interviewed by police at the time.

Background on the Case

- Investigators first attempted to contact Billups in March 2026, but he declined the request. On June 19, 2026, investigators located him in the West Valley. Billups voluntarily accompanied investigators to the Surprise Police Department for an interview, during which he denied knowing Chafin and denied living in Glendale in 1987, despite arrest records placing him in the city in 1986 and 1987. He provided the DNA sample and was released.
- Billups died on June 24, 2026. The DNA results confirming the match were returned August 6, 2026.
- Because the suspect is now deceased, no criminal charges will be filed. Two other individuals investigated in connection with the case have also since died and could not be contacted further.
- The Attorney General's Office and the Glendale Police Department both consider this case closed.

