1975 Seattle Cold Case Selected as 2025 DNA Hit of the Year

TACOMA, WA, May 13, 2025 — GTH DNA has announced that the identification of the killer in the nearly 50-year-old murder of University of Washington graduate student Hallie Seaman has been selected as the 2025 DNA Hit of the Year. The winning case was chosen from five international finalists, including submissions from Arizona (USA), Spain, Philadelphia (USA), and South Africa.

This year marks the ninth year of the DNA Hit of the Year program, which recognizes extraordinary achievements in forensic DNA analysis from around the world. The winner and finalists were selected by an international panel of judges with deep expertise in forensic science, law enforcement, and human identification. The announcement was made during the annual Human Identification Solutions (HIDS) Conference, held virtually on May 13 and 14, 2025.

“This case represents the long-overdue fulfillment of justice made possible through legislative courage and forensic innovation,” said Tim Schellberg, President of GTH DNA. “Hallie Seaman’s case is a powerful example of how smart DNA policy combined with scientific advances can break through even the coldest of cases.”

In 1975, Hallie Seaman was found brutally murdered in Seattle, Washington. Despite exhaustive efforts by the Seattle Police Department and years of investigative work, her case went cold. The critical turning point came nearly 50 years later in August 2023, when a long-stored DNA sample from the crime scene matched the profile of Charles Campbell, a convicted rapist and murderer who had been executed in 1994.

Campbell’s profile was never part of the national CODIS DNA database during his lifetime. That changed with the passage of “Jennifer & Michella’s Law”, named after two young Washington State murder victims. The law closed a dangerous gap in DNA collection policy by allowing DNA from deceased convicted offenders to be entered into CODIS. Three years after the law passed, Campbell’s profile was uploaded—and quickly matched to the evidence in the Seaman case. This case shows the importance of including all qualifying convicted offender DNA profiles into our national database system.

Seattle Police Department investigators had long suspected that Hallie’s murder might be tied to other brutal crimes in the region. The DNA match confirmed those suspicions, finally closing one of the oldest unsolved murders in the city’s history.

“SPD is honored for this recognition from GTH for the 2025 DNA Hit of the Year. We are proud of the legacy of work created by our homicide investigators (Deplamo, Dorman, and Strunk) in the 1970’s that allowed a future generation to use current available science in order to identify an offender fifty years later. This case also is significant in highlighting the importance of DNA policy and law to allow investigators access to offender DNA profiles from earlier eras. Putting the success of this investigation aside, the real focus of today should be on the memory of victim Hallie Seaman and her family,” said the Seattle Police Department.

The case also reflects the tireless efforts of advocates like Lindsey Wade, a retired detective whose work on the Jennifer Bastian and Michella Welch cases led her to uncover the policy failures that kept dangerous offenders out of CODIS. Wade worked alongside lawmakers and families to champion the reforms that ultimately enabled this breakthrough.

About GTH DNA: www.dna.gth-gov.com
GTH DNA is globally recognized for its expertise in forensic DNA database policy, legislation, and law. For more than 20 years, GTH DNA has advised over 60 countries and jurisdictions on establishing or expanding their national DNA database programs.