

Suspected killer had only a wallet, cigarettes, lighter, key, and nine \$1 bills

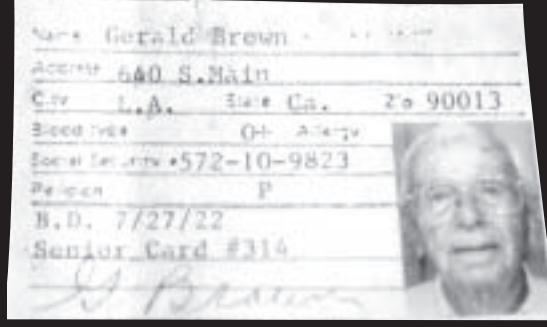
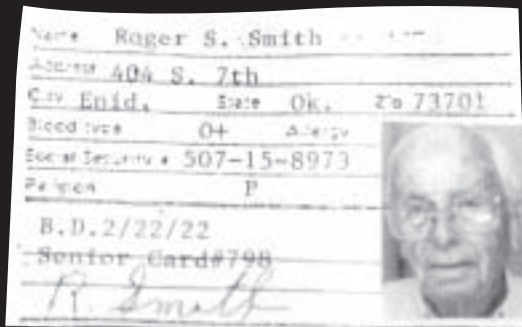
Mystery man was a drifter



Amateur sleuth: Debra Cashion (left) with the artist's impression of Crawford and a picture of the dead man. Picture: LEIGH WINBURN



Killed: Theresa Crawford and her children in 1970.



Mystery: two of the fake IDs the dead man had in his possession.

heraldsun.com.au Multimedia special: We take you to the 1970 crime scene

Amateur's eye for detail puts suspect in frame

Keith Moor

WRONG PICTURE

AMATEUR sleuth Debra Cashion is delighted her detective work provided the breakthrough that may have ended the 40-year hunt for mass murderer Elmer Crawford.

The *Herald Sun* revealed yesterday that police believe they have found the body of Crawford in the US city of San Angelo, Texas.

Crawford has been on the run since he slaughtered his pregnant wife Theresa, 35, and their three children, Kathryn, 13, James, 8, and Karen, 6, in 1970.

He electrocuted and bashed them with a hammer before pushing their bodies over a cliff in the family car at Port Campbell's Loch Ard Gorge.

Ms Cashion, 40, of Hobart, contacted Crime Stoppers after spotting a photograph of a dead man on a US missing and unidentified person website. She'd noticed it was very similar to a Victoria Police computer image of how Crawford might look decades after disappearing.

The *Herald Sun* ran the aged photograph of Crawford on its front page of February 11, 2008; it was that photograph that caught Ms Cashion's attention.

"It is the dream of every armchair detective to solve a major crime, so I am thrilled my contribution might

THE *Herald Sun* yesterday ran a photograph on page 5 that purported to be of murder victims Theresa Crawford and her children Kathryn, James and Karen.

That photograph is actually of a different family, who were neighbours of the Crawfords at the time of the 1970 murders.

The photograph was wrongly captioned years ago when all hard copy photographs in the *Herald Sun* archives were scanned into the new computerised picture library.

The *Herald Sun* yesterday apologised to the family for the error.

have resulted in identifying the body of Elmer Crawford," Ms Cashion said yesterday.

"What doesn't thrill me is that he obviously lived a long life. He wasn't brought to justice and didn't suffer for what he did."

The photograph of the unidentified man was put on the US website www.doenetwork.org, which is run by a volunteer organisation devoted to helping police solve cold cases involving missing people and unidentified victims, in

the hope that somebody would recognise him.

"When I saw that photograph it immediately reminded me of the aged photograph the *Herald Sun* had run of what Elmer Crawford might look like now," Ms Cashion said.

"The things I looked at were the eyebrows, the nose, the ears, the bridge of the nose. And I thought to myself, gee, this could be him. The dead man and Elmer Crawford were eerily similar.

"I have always been interested in forensics and crime — scarily so, my husband says. It would be great if that interest has paid off in this case."

Facial recognition experts from Victoria Police and the FBI's Quantico academy agreed with Ms Cashion after carrying out extensive forensic tests, concluding that the dead man in Texas was almost certainly Crawford.

Victoria Police is trying to get DNA from a relative of Crawford's in the hope of proving it is Crawford's body.

Relatives of Crawford, or anybody with information about relatives of Crawford, are asked to call Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000.

THE US "John Doe" believed to be Victorian fugitive Elmer Crawford died with little more than small change and cigarettes in his pockets.

Texas coroner Russell Smith said: "Nobody else proved to be him and there's no reason this couldn't be (Crawford)."

DNA tests had ruled out FBI suspicions that the body was that of infamous Boston mobster James "Whitey" Bulger, who was wanted for murder, racketeering, money laundering and extortion.

The *Herald Sun* yesterday revealed that facial recognition experts believe the ageing John Doe, who died from a heart attack in San Angelo in 2005, is Crawford.

Victorian police have

Carly Crawford
New York

appealed for his relatives to come forward to help with DNA tests.

Fresh details of the man's life in the US emerged yesterday.

Mr Smith interviewed dozens of people across the US trying to establish the identity of the man, who appears to have lived as a transient in half-way houses, under the names Gerald Brown, Peter Turner and Roger Smith.

He used different birth dates when filling prescriptions for blood pressure medicine.

He suffered a heart attack at San Angelo's Christians in Action thrift store about 10.30am on March 31, 2005, and died in intensive care in the Shannon Medical Centre

five hours later. His only possessions were his wallet, a pack of Marlboro cigarettes, a lighter, a key, and nine \$1 bills.

He also was carrying a health form from Arizona's Pima County in the name of Gerald Brown.

Mr Smith said his fingertips appeared to have been worn down by acid or sandpaper.

"I think he was intentionally trying to conceal his fingerprints," he said.

Crawford has been on the run since 1970.

Author Greg Fogarty, who wrote a book on the case, said: "I am sceptical. But these facial recognition experts are the best in the world and I really hope they're correct. It would finally bring closure after 40 years."

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