

Hunt for human bones continues in San Joaquin Valley

Publisher's note: Families are hoping the uncovering of remains in the San Joaquin Valley will lead to the solving of other murders. The killing of Henry Howell, 45, in Hope Valley in 1984 is still not completely resolved. Loren Herzog was convicted of being an accessory to Howell's murder, but his conviction was overturned after an appellate court ruled his confession had been coerced.

By Kim Minugh and Melody Gutierrez, Sacramento Bee

Should the rains hold off, investigators are expected to return to rural San Joaquin County today to pull aside their tarps, descend 45 feet into the earth and resume their painstaking search for human remains.

Already, their tedious archaeological digs have unearthed more than 300 bones or bone fragments at three sites in Calaveras and San Joaquin counties, the most fruitful of which was an abandoned well east of Linden.

The discoveries could confirm what many have long suspected: The carnage left in the wake of notorious "Speed Freak Killers" Loren Herzog and Wesley Shermantine far exceeds those victims known to date.

It could be weeks or even months before authorities know how many more deaths can be attributed to the boyhood friends whose methamphetamine-fueled crime spree over two decades landed both in prison.

In the meantime, authorities have vowed that the digging will not stop until the bones stop appearing.

Read the whole story