

# Baby Tooth May Hold The Key To NYC Cold Case

## Family Of Missing Vernon Jones Praying DNA Links To Those Responsible For His Mysterious 1993 Disappearance



Reporting  
Lou Young

NEW YORK (CBS) — A grim anniversary approaches with the New Year. An aspiring actor disappeared from a Manhattan party and was never seen again.

It happened 17 years ago but his family has never given up trying to find him.

Now it turns out a **baby** tooth his mother kept years ago could help in her search for the truth.

A mother climbs a narrow New York City staircase; private investigators in tow. They are trying to solve a 17-year-old mystery. Her son vanished here.

"When it's your son you never let it go," Sarah Lineberger said. "And you know somebody knows something."

**Vernon Jones** was 22 when he disappeared New Year's Day in 1993 from a party in a tiny second floor apartment on the Lower East Side. One minute he was there with friends, the next he was gone.

His mother recently set foot inside that apartment for the first time, trying to imagine what might have happened.

"It's very unreal to think this is the last place my son was. I mean how many people just vanish off the face of the Earth?" Lineberger said.

"I was 14 when my brother disappeared," Michael **Jones** said.

Vernon's kid brother is 31 now and is helping his mother in a renewed effort to solve the mystery.

"The pain never goes away, only the intensity of the search," Michael **Jones** said. "And honestly I'm going to continue to look until I get the answers I'm looking for."

The renewed search for answers has already produced some movement, a sketch of what the now-41-year-old **Vernon** would look like if he's alive, and the unlikely DNA sample from a tooth brought to the New York City Medical Examiner.

The family understands they may very well be searching for human remains.

In the 17 years since the disappearance, DNA technology has advanced dramatically. But to build a DNA profile the ME's office needed a sample. They had nothing, until his mother remembered the **baby teeth** she saved.

The tiny piece of enamel **Vernon Jones** shed in the first grade contains the information needed to get his full genetic profile into the National DNA Database, known as "CODIS."

Investigator Kim Anklin delivered hope the size of a small pebble to the lab.

"You can't really explain it. It was this hope that perhaps he's going to be put into CODIS and there's going to be a match," Anklin said.

So now the private investigators are back at the scene, thinking about the other people who were partying with **Vernon** on the night of the disappearance.

"The stories we have are inconsistent, in that two of the people said that when they returned from the store that night and they found that **Vernon** was missing they went out to look for him. Yet, the third person that we spoke to denied that and said none of us went out to look for him. We just stayed in the apartment," investigator Bob Rahn said.

Mark Zimmerman was there that night and spoke in 1993 to "48 Hours" reporter Erin Moriarity

When asked if he ever felt like the family is wondering if he knows more, Zimmerman said, "I don't know; not really."

Zimmerman is still not talking today, and neither are any of the others who were there that night.

"I feel like I have to do something, but I don't know what to do," Lineberger said some years ago.

She told CBS 2 HD recently that the ordeal "never goes away" and that she'll continue searching for answers, "I guess until I die."



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This is an artist's rendering of what **Vernon Jones** might look like today at age 41 if he is still alive.  
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Come New Year's Day it will be exactly 17 years since **Vernon Jones** vanished, seemingly without a trace.

At the family's prodding the NYPD's Missing Persons Bureau searched the apartment building two weeks ago looking for signs of human remains.

They found nothing.

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