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In Mills' Northlake office, assistant Marian Hamm took a dozen X-rays of the teeth in the reconstructed skull for the orthodontist to compare with the records of the child who never had a chance to make his dental appointment. They matched. The skeleton was that of Christopher Richardson.

But they had a problem with the other skeleton. The remains could point to either Glass or Terrell, and the dental evidence was of mixed quality. On Terrell there was none, but his parents provided four color photographs of him. Mills had an unsmiling photo of Darron Glass, which was useless for his purposes, but he did have dental X-rays.

Miss Hamm made a series of X-rays of the teeth from various angles to assist in the match-up process. On first glance, they appeared to be those of Glass.

"These teeth look so identical," said Mills as he pored over the photos Tuesday afternoon. "They are nice, healthy, typical, unfilled teeth. This is as close as I've ever seen two sets of teeth."

The shape of the front teeth appeared to be the same, and the bloated "H" inside the tooth — the pulp — also seemed to match. But there were distinctions. Glass had a 12-year-molar which had sprouted from his gums and was about halfway into position in his mouth. In the X-ray of the skeleton, the molar had not yet entered the mouth. And under a magnifying glass, Mills saw that the points of the crowns of the teeth had slightly different patterns. Despite the similarities, it couldn't be Glass. There was no similarity to Mathis, and Richardson was already identified.

Which left Terrell — who had no dental records.

Mills propped up the color pictures of Terrell and reached for a jar of brown modeling clay. Using a wax carver and the tip of a pencil eraser, he began to sculpt. It is hard, he said, to identify a skull — there is no reality to a bony smile. What he wanted to do was fill in the blanks, creating a "skin" of sorts around the jaw, providing a lifelike framework for that smile to fit into.

It didn't work. The lips weren't quite right. The dimples were too big, then too small, then in the wrong place, then just dropped. Mills is not a sculptor.

Miss Hamm came in, and began working on the dimples. She did a better job — had a defter touch. Still, the little boy's bucktoothed grin resembled more of a grimace.

Then, through a side door, entered Manita Davenport, Mills' pert fiancée, who took one look and said, "Some of his teeth have grown in."

Which was what was wrong, and what everyone else in the room had overlooked. The character of the smile on the photograph of young Terrell was contingent on the fact that some of his teeth had not fully grown into place, giving a curve to the enamel profile. But at the time of his disappearance, the teeth had grown into place. Mills had been trying to sculpt a smile to a mouth which had grown up and no longer existed.

He began reworking the lower lips, broadening the curvature of the smile around the edges — emulating the *character* of the smile in the picture, rather than imitating its exact shape. As the details got finer and finer, Miss Hamm took over and completed the process.

The resemblance was unmistakable, but it was not proof.

Lt. John Cameron, who is detailed to the medical examiner's office, phoned Dr. Zaki at home, and within 10 minutes, the pathologist was conferring with Mills. He found the evidence compelling, but not convincing.

"In the absence of dental records," he said to Mills, "what will you use as definitive proof? You do not have enough to confirm who it is."

And that was the crucial distinction. Determining who it could not be was possible through the use of the dental records. But similarities did not conclusively prove the body was that of young Terrell. Mills and Zaki debated for nearly an hour.

"You have to have dental records to get an exact comparison," said Zaki. "In our office there are several skeletons which have never been conclusively identified because there was no feature that could be compared with records on hand."

*The skeleton, for the time being, would have no name.*