Body identified as ex-Wheatland resident

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — A decomposed body found in a shallow grave north of Santa Fe has been identified as that of an Albuquerque diamond broker and a former Wheatland resident.

Medical investigators said James Gossen, 39, had been strangled, New Mexico police Maj. John Denko said Friday.

Gossen, who was reported missing July 10, 1988, in Albuquerque, once had been accused of being part of a stolen property ring based in Wheatland, authorities said.

He was acquitted of charges contained in a 10-count federal grand jury indictment in 1981.

Ron Stugart, police chief in Wheatland, said he was not surprised that Gossen, a Wheatland native, had been killed "due to some of the incidents he was allegedly involved in."

"Jim was smart. He's not your white collar-type criminal. He just seemed to get into some things," Stugart said.

Rick Bowen, a Wheatland businessman and Gossen's friend, said he did not know why anyone would have wanted to kill Gossen, "although he did carry a lot of diamonds with him."

The body, found Monday by two rabbit hunters, was wrapped in black plastic and covered with a blue tarp, authorities said.