

1

00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:18,000

The story starts in this sweet way.

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00:00:18,000 --> 00:00:21,000

You've got five friends.

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00:00:21,000 --> 00:00:25,000

They are pals from a disability center.

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00:00:25,000 --> 00:00:30,000

And they head off to a basketball game.

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00:00:30,000 --> 00:00:36,000

And then no one quite understands what happened after that.

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00:00:36,000 --> 00:00:39,000

I was a young reporter then, but even then I knew.

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00:00:39,000 --> 00:00:44,000

None of it made any sense.

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00:00:44,000 --> 00:00:52,000

You the county lawman call this one of the more bizarre missing person cases they've ever handled.

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00:00:52,000 --> 00:00:57,000

Families are panicking because we got five young men missing.

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00:00:57,000 --> 00:01:01,000

The car has been found 70 miles in the wrong direction.

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00:01:01,000 --> 00:01:04,000

Somebody made them kids do this.

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00:01:04,000 --> 00:01:09,000

Did they get here on their own or were they brought here deliberately?

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00:01:09,000 --> 00:01:12,000

That's the million dollar question.

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00:01:12,000 --> 00:01:18,000

Why do you start walking in the freezing cold clearly having no idea where you're going?

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00:01:18,000 --> 00:01:21,000

How did anyone miss this trailer?

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00:01:21,000 --> 00:01:24,000

The sheriff's department didn't take it serious.

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00:01:24,000 --> 00:01:26,000

How much longer are you going to continue the search?

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00:01:26,000 --> 00:01:27,000

Until we find the rest of it.

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00:01:27,000 --> 00:01:29,000

I want to tell you there's no hope.

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00:01:29,000 --> 00:01:43,000

Someone has to know where they are.

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00:01:43,000 --> 00:01:50,000

On the evening of February 24th, 1978, five men disappeared

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00:01:50,000 --> 00:01:54,000

after leaving a basketball game in Chico, California.

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00:01:54,000 --> 00:02:00,000

Their car was found abandoned 70 miles away from their homes.

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00:02:00,000 --> 00:02:06,000

For almost 50 years, the case of the Yuba County five has perplexed investigators.

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00:02:06,000 --> 00:02:09,000

Nothing adds up.

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00:02:09,000 --> 00:02:13,000

Why did the men drive so far in the wrong direction?

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00:02:13,000 --> 00:02:18,000

Why did they leave the car and walk into the snowy night?

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00:02:18,000 --> 00:02:38,000

Were they lost or did something more sinister happen?

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00:02:38,000 --> 00:02:43,000

Yuba County, to me, it was just a beautiful place.

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00:02:43,000 --> 00:02:47,000

We'd go hunting and fishing.

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00:02:47,000 --> 00:02:53,000

You couldn't drive down the road without somebody waving at you because you knew everybody.

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00:02:53,000 --> 00:03:12,000

I had no clue what the high crime rate was until all this stuff started.

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00:03:12,000 --> 00:03:15,000

This is the one I like. I like that picture.

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00:03:15,000 --> 00:03:17,000

That's Jackie, right?

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00:03:17,000 --> 00:03:20,000

Yeah. It was like six, seven.

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00:03:20,000 --> 00:03:22,000

Look at that hair.

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00:03:22,000 --> 00:03:24,000

I know. You're so cute.

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00:03:24,000 --> 00:03:27,000

You and your brother had the same eyes.

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00:03:27,000 --> 00:03:29,000

That's my mom.

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00:03:29,000 --> 00:03:32,000

That's me and that's Jackie.

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00:03:32,000 --> 00:03:35,000

It looks like Christmas.

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00:03:35,000 --> 00:03:37,000

No date? Oh yeah, it does.

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00:03:37,000 --> 00:03:40,000

Look at that. That's his last Christmas.

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00:03:40,000 --> 00:03:42,000

That was 1978.

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00:03:42,000 --> 00:03:55,000

My brother, Jackie, Bill Sterling, Jack Madruga, Gary Mathias, and Ted Weir.

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00:03:55,000 --> 00:04:00,000

They first met when they went to the Gateway Project.

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00:04:00,000 --> 00:04:07,000

The Gateway Project helped autistic or disabled people to learn sports

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00:04:07,000 --> 00:04:11,000

and learn how to mingle with other people.

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00:04:11,000 --> 00:04:14,000

Basketball was their big thing.

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00:04:14,000 --> 00:04:19,000

The Gateway Gators, they lived for that.

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00:04:19,000 --> 00:04:26,000

My big brother, Jackie, he was 24 years old, but he had the mindset of a 16-year-old.

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00:04:26,000 --> 00:04:34,000

He was slower than most of us growing up, but nobody ever treated him slower.

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00:04:34,000 --> 00:04:38,000

He could write his name. He could use the telephone.

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00:04:38,000 --> 00:04:40,000

He had a girlfriend.

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00:04:40,000 --> 00:04:42,000

He had a girlfriend, talked to her for hours on the phone.

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00:04:42,000 --> 00:04:45,000

Jackie didn't see people as bad.

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00:04:45,000 --> 00:04:50,000

He was just always smiling, always happy.

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00:04:50,000 --> 00:04:54,000

My brother, Jackie, and Ted Weir, you would think they were brothers.

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00:04:54,000 --> 00:04:56,000

They were together so much.

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00:04:56,000 --> 00:05:02,000

If you've seen Jackie, Ted wasn't far behind.

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00:05:02,000 --> 00:05:05,000

Ted loved macaroni and cheese.

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00:05:05,000 --> 00:05:08,000

In fact, that's what my wife got him for Christmas.

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00:05:08,000 --> 00:05:12,000

He had fed the macaroni and cheese, and you had one happy dog.

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00:05:12,000 --> 00:05:15,000

He was kidding a button.

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00:05:15,000 --> 00:05:20,000

But it was just his mind and the way he projected himself.

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00:05:20,000 --> 00:05:23,000

He just couldn't put everything together.

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00:05:23,000 --> 00:05:28,000

Uncle Ted, I never thought of him as being special.

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00:05:28,000 --> 00:05:33,000

Of course, they used a different word back then, the R word.

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00:05:33,000 --> 00:05:35,000

He was the fun, Uncle.

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00:05:35,000 --> 00:05:40,000

Goofy, hairy, burly, curly hair.

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00:05:40,000 --> 00:05:45,000

He was the janitor at junior high school.

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00:05:45,000 --> 00:05:49,000

But he was ours, and you protect your own.

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00:05:49,000 --> 00:05:53,000

We loved him, and we knew he loved us.

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00:05:53,000 --> 00:05:57,000

Jack Madruga wasn't as outgoing as my Uncle Ted,

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00:05:57,000 --> 00:06:00,000

but they were friends.

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00:06:00,000 --> 00:06:03,000

Uncle Jack, he was very quiet, socially awkward.

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00:06:03,000 --> 00:06:05,000

He would get nervous speaking to people,

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00:06:05,000 --> 00:06:07,000

and they thought there was something wrong with him.

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00:06:07,000 --> 00:06:09,000

He was just a very, very reserved person.

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00:06:09,000 --> 00:06:12,000

But there was nothing slow about him at all.

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00:06:12,000 --> 00:06:14,000

He went to Vietnam.

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00:06:14,000 --> 00:06:18,000

He did very well in school, signed up for college all on his own.

83

00:06:18,000 --> 00:06:22,000

He was more like a bigger brother than an uncle.

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00:06:22,000 --> 00:06:25,000

We called him Doc.

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00:06:25,000 --> 00:06:29,000

He used to haul me and all my friends around all the time for us.

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00:06:29,000 --> 00:06:34,000

Or we'd ditch school and call him up, come and get us.

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00:06:34,000 --> 00:06:38,000

We were very close.

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00:06:38,000 --> 00:06:43,000

Doc and Bill Sterling, they were best buddies.

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00:06:43,000 --> 00:06:48,000

Bill Sterling, I remember him giving me pointers

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00:06:48,000 --> 00:06:51,000

on how to release the ball and bowling.

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00:06:51,000 --> 00:06:53,000

He was a sweet guy, and very friendly,

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00:06:53,000 --> 00:06:57,000

and just wanted to help people, wanted to be there for folks.

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00:06:57,000 --> 00:07:02,000

And Gary Mathias, he joined the group a little later than the rest of the guys,

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00:07:02,000 --> 00:07:05,000

but the five of them became a great team.

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00:07:05,000 --> 00:07:09,000

Gary was a little brother. I looked up to him.

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00:07:09,000 --> 00:07:11,000

He was an athlete. He was a musician.

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00:07:11,000 --> 00:07:18,000

He was all kinds of things that inspired me.

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00:07:18,000 --> 00:07:21,000

He stood up for me a couple of times.

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00:07:21,000 --> 00:07:24,000

I was going to get my butt kicked, and he stepped in.

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00:07:24,000 --> 00:07:27,000

See, that was the kind of guy he was.

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00:07:27,000 --> 00:07:34,000

He would back up his family. No questions.

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00:07:34,000 --> 00:07:38,000

When Gary was in the military, he was given a medical release.

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00:07:38,000 --> 00:07:40,000

They believed he was schizophrenic.

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00:07:40,000 --> 00:07:45,000

He got a new psych doctor, and they changed his medications,

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00:07:45,000 --> 00:07:48,000

and they got him doing really, really well.

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00:07:48,000 --> 00:07:53,000

That he started working for our stepfather.

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00:07:53,000 --> 00:07:59,000

Gary was a very caring person.

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00:07:59,000 --> 00:08:04,000

All five of the boys, they were friends for eight or nine years.

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00:08:04,000 --> 00:08:09,000

They would walk everywhere until Jack Madruga got his car.

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00:08:09,000 --> 00:08:16,000

69 Mercury Montego, that was Jack Madruga's pride and joy, that car.

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00:08:16,000 --> 00:08:22,000

They would just pile in there, all laughs, the windows down, wave at the people.

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00:08:30,000 --> 00:08:35,000

Their favorite team was UC Davis, and UC Davis was playing Chico.

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00:08:35,000 --> 00:08:42,000

They planned to go watch this game, and it was close, just an hour drive.

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00:08:42,000 --> 00:08:46,000

Some of the families didn't want them to go to that game that night

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00:08:46,000 --> 00:08:49,000

because they had a big game the next day, theirself.

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00:08:49,000 --> 00:08:55,000

You cannot express the excitement they had for their game that next day.

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00:08:55,000 --> 00:08:59,000

They had already won all their other games to make it to this tournament.

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00:08:59,000 --> 00:09:03,000

It was a championship tournament for the Gateway Gators.

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00:09:03,000 --> 00:09:10,000

I remember Jack Madruga pulling up in the driveway in his Mercury Montego.

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00:09:10,000 --> 00:09:14,000

My dad told my brother on his way out the door,

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00:09:14,000 --> 00:09:18,000

no booze, no smoking, and no girls.

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00:09:18,000 --> 00:09:22,000

And my brother looked at my dad and said, oh, come on, Dad.

123

00:09:22,000 --> 00:09:25,000

Turned around and walked out the door.

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00:09:25,000 --> 00:09:31,000

They were all just happy and hooting and hollering about their favorite team

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00:09:31,000 --> 00:09:34,000

and left to go to Chico.

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00:09:41,000 --> 00:09:46,000

The next day, my mom telling me your brother's not home,

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00:09:46,000 --> 00:09:49,000

and I asked her, what do you mean they're not home?

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00:09:54,000 --> 00:09:59,000

I was an 11-year-old boy, and I wake up on a Saturday morning,

129

00:09:59,000 --> 00:10:04,000

and my mom says, get up, we've got to go to your grandma's house.

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00:10:04,000 --> 00:10:08,000

Uncle Ted hasn't come home, and your grandma's really worried.

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00:10:11,000 --> 00:10:17,000

Because of their special needs, it sent up the alarms quick.

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00:10:17,000 --> 00:10:19,000

Something was up.

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00:10:21,000 --> 00:10:24,000

Families started calling each other, hey, did you see Bill?

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00:10:24,000 --> 00:10:27,000

Have you seen Jack? Ted didn't come home.

135

00:10:27,000 --> 00:10:31,000

Now the families are panicking because we got five young men missing.

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00:10:33,000 --> 00:10:37,000

My brother, Jackie, did not stay the night anywhere, anytime.

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00:10:37,000 --> 00:10:40,000

He was home every single night.

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00:10:40,000 --> 00:10:44,000

He wanted to be home where he had his comfort safe zone.

139

00:10:44,000 --> 00:10:46,000

They would have been home.

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00:10:46,000 --> 00:10:49,000

From that basketball game, they would have been home.

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00:11:02,000 --> 00:11:05,000

When they did call the Yuba County Sheriff's Office,

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00:11:05,000 --> 00:11:09,000

they said there was nothing they could do, because they were all over 18.

143

00:11:12,000 --> 00:11:17,000

You have to wait this 24-48-hour timeframe before you can report them missing.

144

00:11:17,000 --> 00:11:22,000

And family members said, but wait a minute, they all have intellectual disabilities.

145

00:11:22,000 --> 00:11:27,000

Nothing they do. Bullshit. It's bullshit.

146

00:11:28,000 --> 00:11:32,000

The families on February 25th do what they can.

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00:11:32,000 --> 00:11:36,000

They're frantically calling people, they're driving the highways.

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00:11:36,000 --> 00:11:38,000

There's no sign of the boys.

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00:11:41,000 --> 00:11:45,000

And at 8 p.m. they'd call back the Yuba County Sheriff's Department and say,

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00:11:45,000 --> 00:11:48,000

look, we need help finding these guys.

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00:11:50,000 --> 00:11:54,000

The initial investigation tried to retrace where they knew they had been.

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00:11:54,000 --> 00:11:57,000

They were supposed to be at Chico State watching a basketball game

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00:11:57,000 --> 00:12:00,000

and the editor of the newspaper in Chico.

154

00:12:00,000 --> 00:12:04,000

He had been at the game that night. He saw them. He very much remembered them.

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00:12:06,000 --> 00:12:08,000

So they were able to verify they were present.

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00:12:10,000 --> 00:12:13,000

It was really quiet for the first couple of days.

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00:12:19,000 --> 00:12:23,000

February 26th, February 27th, no information.

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00:12:24,000 --> 00:12:29,000

On February 28th, the Forest Service says we found a car in the Plumas National Forest.

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00:12:31,000 --> 00:12:37,000

Basically 70 miles in the wrong direction up in the mountains.

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00:12:47,000 --> 00:12:53,000

It's a 1969 two-door Mercury Montego and it matches the car of the missing men.

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00:12:54,000 --> 00:12:59,000

The Plumas National Forest is very rugged area. It's very mountainous.

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00:12:59,000 --> 00:13:02,000

Where they disappeared is about 4,000 feet above sea level.

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00:13:09,000 --> 00:13:15,000

There were major snowdrifts up there, up to 10, 20 feet in spots.

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00:13:16,000 --> 00:13:22,000

There are drop-offs in certain areas where you could just go up and down.

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00:13:23,000 --> 00:13:27,000

You could just lose your footing and fall 1,000 feet.

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00:13:27,000 --> 00:13:31,000

Nobody goes up that way. That's no man's land.

167

00:13:37,000 --> 00:13:41,000

When I walked in the house, my mom was sitting on the kitchen floor crying

168

00:13:41,000 --> 00:13:44,000

saying that they found the car but none of the boys.

169

00:13:45,000 --> 00:13:48,000

The men were known to adhere to rigid schedules.

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00:13:48,000 --> 00:13:55,000

It was unheard of for them to do something as spontaneous as drive into the mountains in the middle of the night.

171

00:13:57,000 --> 00:14:00,000

What could possibly have brought them there?

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00:14:11,000 --> 00:14:15,000

The boys, this is not common for them. They shouldn't have been there in the first place.

173

00:14:15,000 --> 00:14:18,000

There was no reason for them to have gone to the snow.

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00:14:18,000 --> 00:14:23,000

When they left their house, they were very lightly dressed for a basketball game in a gymnasium.

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00:14:24,000 --> 00:14:27,000

The car was, for the most part, unremarkable.

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00:14:27,000 --> 00:14:32,000

No damage, nothing to suggest anything bad had happened. The keys were missing.

177

00:14:38,000 --> 00:14:42,000

What they did have in there were milk cartons, candy, wrappers,

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00:14:42,000 --> 00:14:50,000

things that you would more likely associate with children partying than you would with adult men traveling from a basketball game.

179

00:14:52,000 --> 00:14:58,000

One of the investigators contacted the distributor of the milk and found out who their local vendors were.

180

00:14:58,000 --> 00:15:05,000

So they started at Chico State and went to those stores one by one looking to see if anybody recalled seeing the boys in there that night.

181

00:15:05,000 --> 00:15:11,000

They came across the bear market in Chico and fortunately they were able to speak with a woman who was working the night of the 24th.

182

00:15:12,000 --> 00:15:19,000

And she did recall them. They were at Bear's Market right around closing time, which puts them there probably around 10 o'clock at night.

183

00:15:19,000 --> 00:15:24,000

From there, they disappeared between Chico and Marysville.

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00:15:32,000 --> 00:15:41,000

It could be possible that sometime between 10 p.m. and 11 p.m., they exited off of the highway into a town.

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00:15:42,000 --> 00:15:45,000

It was a town called Oroville.

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00:15:45,000 --> 00:15:49,000

From there, they drive into the Plumas National Forest.

187

00:15:49,000 --> 00:16:02,000

And probably sometime around 11 p.m., maybe 11.30 p.m., they drive up a rutted snow-covered road in the middle of nowhere.

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00:16:02,000 --> 00:16:07,000

And their car gets stuck in probably five to six inches of snow.

189

00:16:07,000 --> 00:16:17,000

And at that point, these guys wearing tennis shoes, blue jeans, and lightweight jackets just run into the darkness, snow, freezing temperatures for no reason.

190

00:16:22,000 --> 00:16:31,000

When I set out to do the piece, I was able to talk to the investigators and really sit down and spend time with the families.

191

00:16:32,000 --> 00:16:41,000

The questions that I remember being most bewildered by, why do you make that turn off?

192

00:16:41,000 --> 00:16:49,000

Why do you stop the car there? Why do you get out of the car? Why do you start walking?

193

00:16:49,000 --> 00:16:52,000

Clearly having no idea where you're going.

194

00:17:01,000 --> 00:17:05,000

The thing was, is they had their game the next day.

195

00:17:07,000 --> 00:17:11,000

Some of them had their uniforms laid out on the beds.

196

00:17:12,000 --> 00:17:17,000

And they wouldn't do anything voluntarily to miss that day.

197

00:17:19,000 --> 00:17:25,000

Uncle Doc, he knew how to get to Chico. He had done this drive hundreds of times.

198

00:17:25,000 --> 00:17:29,000

The car was found with a driver's window down.

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00:17:29,000 --> 00:17:35,000

His car was his baby. And to leave his car there, abandoned with the window down, no way.

200

00:17:35,000 --> 00:17:40,000

There's no reason for those men to even get out of that car unless they were forced or scared.

201

00:17:41,000 --> 00:17:48,000

To some folks, they didn't know what they were doing. They didn't make a mistake.

202

00:17:56,000 --> 00:18:06,000

So this is the Bedwell Bar Bridge. It crosses Lake Oroville and leads you into the Plumas National Forest.

203

00:18:06,000 --> 00:18:14,000

This is an obvious landmark, but if the men saw this bridge, they would know that they were far, far from home.

204

00:18:14,000 --> 00:18:17,000

And they were going the wrong way.

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00:18:18,000 --> 00:18:24,000

And then if they see a sign for the plumas, they got to know better.

206

00:18:29,000 --> 00:18:38,000

As you can see, the road is closed. Eight miles north up the road, that's where the Mercury Montego was abandoned.

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00:18:39,000 --> 00:18:45,000

I mean, it was a logging road. It didn't go anywhere.

208

00:18:45,000 --> 00:18:52,000

Maps wouldn't have taken them this way. There's no reason for them to be here just on a joyride.

209

00:18:52,000 --> 00:18:55,000

There's something that brought them up this way.

210

00:18:59,000 --> 00:19:04,000

There's no way they got lost. This night, something was going wrong. Really wrong.

211

00:19:09,000 --> 00:19:19,000

The law enforcement agencies began a comprehensive search of the area immediately surrounding where the car was found.

212

00:19:21,000 --> 00:19:28,000

There was multi-agency, at least four agencies involved. Well over 200 people participating in a search.

213

00:19:28,000 --> 00:19:37,000

Between horseback, on foot and vehicles, it could go some distance in the snow and aircraft. It was extensive.

214

00:19:38,000 --> 00:19:49,000

My dad, Jack, went to where the car was and started searching. He was there every single day.

215

00:19:51,000 --> 00:19:54,000

We hunted those areas. We knew those areas up there.

216

00:19:54,000 --> 00:19:59,000

Jack Sr. got out and he walked for miles on the side of that mountain.

217

00:19:59,000 --> 00:20:07,000

Jack told me he stated out loud, vocally, I will find you son. I won't stop until I do.

218

00:20:09,000 --> 00:20:16,000

All the families were out searching the woods. It was hell. I mean, you wake up every day just not knowing.

219

00:20:16,000 --> 00:20:18,000

That's the worst part, not knowing.

220

00:20:24,000 --> 00:20:33,000

The weather at the time became very snowy. It became very treacherous. The search and rescue teams would begin and then they'd stop.

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00:20:38,000 --> 00:20:47,000

March is their busiest time. April, May things have slowed down considerably and by June they're not really looking.

222

00:20:52,000 --> 00:20:59,000

We had hope every day. Every day you'd wake up and they're going to find him. He's going to be okay.

223

00:21:01,000 --> 00:21:05,000

The silence would just unbearable.

224

00:21:09,000 --> 00:21:11,000

Sorry.

225

00:21:23,000 --> 00:21:29,000

Some motorcyclists coming past this Forest Service campground smell something awful.

226

00:21:29,000 --> 00:21:39,000

There's a camp trailer with its window smashed in inside of which they find the emaciated body of Ted Weir.

227

00:21:41,000 --> 00:21:53,000

Ted Weir's body is on its back. His hands are crossed over his chest the way you would imagine someone preparing a body for mummification.

228

00:21:53,000 --> 00:22:03,000

He was wrapped very tightly in several sheets. Almost as if he were swaddling a child. It's not something he could have done to himself.

229

00:22:04,000 --> 00:22:16,000

Ted had suffered horrendous frostbite. He was about six foot to 20 when he went missing and was probably down to 120 pounds when he's found.

230

00:22:16,000 --> 00:22:21,000

He was clean shaven when he had disappeared. He had a full beard.

231

00:22:21,000 --> 00:22:34,000

Because of the beard growth the coroners who looked at him were able to determine that he had been alive for some eight to 13 weeks.

232

00:22:37,000 --> 00:22:47,000

This got to me. Slow death by starvation and hypothermia over at least eight weeks.

233

00:22:48,000 --> 00:23:04,000

The trailer where Ted died was 19 miles from the abandoned Montego. Panicked questions arose. How could police have missed this shelter? And was it too late to find the other men alive?

234

00:23:04,000 --> 00:23:17,000

My Aunt Dorothy took me up to the place where they found the car. It's in March sometime.

235

00:23:18,000 --> 00:23:32,000

I can't help but think that when we went up there he was still alive at that time. It struck me that I was that close to him.

236

00:23:32,000 --> 00:23:42,000

He must have suffered terribly. He was still alive. And they didn't try hard enough to find him.

237

00:23:47,000 --> 00:24:05,000

About seven miles south of the trailer they find the badly decomposed remains of Jack Madruga. Across the road they find the remains of Bill Sterling and they had been scattered over an area by animals.

238

00:24:06,000 --> 00:24:16,000

Doc had the keys in his pocket when he was found. So he was the driver. There was no doubt.

239

00:24:16,000 --> 00:24:30,000

Grandma wanted to see Doc's remains. And our dad told her, Mom there's nothing left but bones. And she collapsed. She wanted to see her son. Tell him goodbye.

240

00:24:35,000 --> 00:24:58,000

I heard someone say we found him. We found something. And I turned and walked back. And that's when I seen Mr. Hewitt Sr. drop to his knees and he was crying.

241

00:24:58,000 --> 00:25:04,000

And he said, I'm sorry son. I promised I was going to find you.

242

00:25:04,000 --> 00:25:18,000

He knew immediately that it was my brother from the clothes that he was wearing.

243

00:25:18,000 --> 00:25:36,000

And they picked up a bunch of bones and my brother's backbone fell out of his shirt that he was wearing. And he still had his wallet and his jeans.

244

00:25:37,000 --> 00:25:54,000

It was a hard day. It was a hard day. Still a hard day. It was like yesterday. Now my dad kept it together, I don't know.

245

00:25:55,000 --> 00:26:06,000

When they pulled the search off here that I didn't need their help, I'd find my son. And I believe I proved my point.

246

00:26:06,000 --> 00:26:17,000

And I'm going to continue to help find the rest of them too. One way or the other. That's all I got to say.

247

00:26:25,000 --> 00:26:37,000

The pathologist's report ruled the death is because of exposure. They succumbed to the elements. But there was not enough of them to where you could really accurately know everything.

248

00:26:37,000 --> 00:26:45,000

There wasn't enough left. If there was blunt force trauma, if there was some other type of injury, it was possible that would never be known.

249

00:26:46,000 --> 00:26:54,000

Gary Mathias has not been found at that scene. They just don't know where he is.

250

00:26:54,000 --> 00:26:57,000

It was very hard.

251

00:26:57,000 --> 00:27:12,000

But it gave me hope. I thought, well, the other ones are found. We'll find Gary.

252

00:27:12,000 --> 00:27:22,000

But after Jackie Hewitt's body was found, it seemed like the Sheriff's Department decided they didn't want to look anymore. It was like, we're done.

253

00:27:23,000 --> 00:27:34,000

By June 19th, the search teams up there decided to call it a day. The Sheriff's Department says we did everything we could to find him.

254

00:27:34,000 --> 00:27:41,000

But there's nothing that they've been able to find for the remains of Gary Mathias.

255

00:27:41,000 --> 00:27:47,000

I stayed out there two more weeks after they were gone. My husband and I and my brother-in-law.

256

00:27:47,000 --> 00:27:57,000

I hate to say it, but it just didn't seem like they did a very thorough to me.

257

00:27:57,000 --> 00:28:01,000

The family did more than the law enforcement did.

258

00:28:01,000 --> 00:28:17,000

There's reports that members of the U.S. Forest Service claim we told law enforcement about those trailers and they never searched them.

259

00:28:17,000 --> 00:28:30,000

We were hunting fish here our whole life. My dad could tell you what kind of print was in a swamp.

260

00:28:30,000 --> 00:28:39,000

He seen four sets of tracks leading away from that car going up the hill north, not downward, the Sheriff's Department thinks.

261

00:28:39,000 --> 00:28:49,000

Jack Sr. knew those trailers were there. They told him to go up there.

262

00:28:49,000 --> 00:28:59,000

Jack asked them to go to those damn trailers. He asked them and I remember him saying he believes one person told him they would never make it that far.

263

00:28:59,000 --> 00:29:02,000

They would never make it that far. Like hell they wouldn't.

264

00:29:02,000 --> 00:29:16,000

The distance between the trailers and the Madruba vehicle probably close to 20 miles. I don't think anybody thought those boys in that condition and that weather could have made it that far.

265

00:29:16,000 --> 00:29:23,000

So I'm not shocked that nobody went all the way up to that fire camp, which at that time probably was under about five feet of snow.

266

00:29:23,000 --> 00:29:35,000

They knew this cabin was up there and they didn't search it. So who's to say that somebody couldn't have been saved?

267

00:29:35,000 --> 00:29:45,000

The men's capabilities continued to be a point of contention and for many it cast a dark shadow

over the case.

268

00:29:46,000 --> 00:29:50,000

It makes you mad.

269

00:29:50,000 --> 00:29:54,000

Just the word pisses me off.

270

00:29:54,000 --> 00:30:01,000

Foul play suspected and disappearance of five slightly retarded Californians.

271

00:30:01,000 --> 00:30:03,000

And do you think that that's the word?

272

00:30:03,000 --> 00:30:05,000

Why would you say retarded?

273

00:30:05,000 --> 00:30:07,000

That's what they said back then.

274

00:30:07,000 --> 00:30:12,000

That's just not right.

275

00:30:12,000 --> 00:30:25,000

A little bit slower than if they would have said five championship basketball players for Gateway got lost.

276

00:30:25,000 --> 00:30:27,000

They would have probably found them.

277

00:30:27,000 --> 00:30:35,000

Instead of saying this shit, I think it would have went a lot different.

278

00:30:37,000 --> 00:30:44,000

They would have looked harder.

279

00:30:44,000 --> 00:30:57,000

These were not 25 to 35 year old men who were as capable of making decisions and locating themselves as they might have been.

280

00:30:57,000 --> 00:31:05,000

That stigma being called retarded really shaded the whole incident.

281

00:31:05,000 --> 00:31:14,000

The perception of these men were just too stupid to turn around and come back and just kept going up in the forest was absurd.

282

00:31:14,000 --> 00:31:21,000

And I think this perception spilled over into the public's eye and especially in law enforcement's eye.

283

00:31:21,000 --> 00:31:29,000

They were just like, well, should we put all this effort out just to find some retarded men that got lost?

284

00:31:29,000 --> 00:31:37,000

I think five young men with the mental capacity were excited about having seen their winning basketball team do so well.

285

00:31:37,000 --> 00:31:46,000

They stopped at a market and got sugared up with chocolate milk and candies and somewhere along the way they made a bad decision.

286

00:31:46,000 --> 00:31:48,000

And they took a bad road and they never recovered.

287

00:31:48,000 --> 00:31:51,000

One bad decision led to another bad decision.

288

00:31:51,000 --> 00:31:56,000

To another bad decision.

289

00:31:56,000 --> 00:32:10,000

They tried to make us believe that it's stupidity and because they were retarded that they're up here on their own and there's no way that they've done this on their own.

290

00:32:10,000 --> 00:32:24,000

One of the things that completely perplexed the investigators, there's a food locker outside the trailer and some sea ration cans, military food, have been removed and eaten.

291

00:32:24,000 --> 00:32:35,000

But there was a second locker filled with enough canned food that it could have kept them alive for many months that had not been opened.

292

00:32:35,000 --> 00:32:39,000

There was a propane heater that had not been turned on.

293

00:32:39,000 --> 00:32:41,000

So there was food there that could have fed them.

294

00:32:41,000 --> 00:32:44,000

There was a heater that could have kept them warm.

295

00:32:44,000 --> 00:32:46,000

Why do you not eat the food?

296

00:32:46,000 --> 00:32:49,000

Why do you not turn the heat on?

297

00:32:49,000 --> 00:32:53,000

Why do you lie in a bed?

298

00:32:53,000 --> 00:33:01,000

Covered by sheets as though someone is caring for you, starving to death, for weeks.

299

00:33:01,000 --> 00:33:07,000

What happened?

300

00:33:07,000 --> 00:33:18,000

Ted wouldn't have done anything that he thought would be against the law if he was stealing something. He wouldn't have done it.

301

00:33:24,000 --> 00:33:33,000

And he wouldn't have known how to turn on propane in the first place.

302

00:33:33,000 --> 00:33:40,000

Ted Weir could not have tucked himself into the bed like that. Someone else was with him.

303

00:33:40,000 --> 00:33:48,000

In the trailer were black tennis shoes and they were the shoes that Gary Mathias was wearing.

304

00:33:48,000 --> 00:33:56,000

Weir shoes were never found. Either he lost them in the plumus or Gary Mathias took them and went away.

305

00:33:56,000 --> 00:34:06,000

Ted Weir and Gary Mathias both most likely made it to that trailer.

306

00:34:06,000 --> 00:34:12,000

What happened to these men? What happened to Gary Mathias?

307

00:34:12,000 --> 00:34:21,000

Evidence suggested that Gary could have made it to the trailer and with no sign of his body, suspicion started to rise.

308

00:34:21,000 --> 00:34:33,000

Was Gary a victim, a scapegoat or something far worse?

309

00:34:33,000 --> 00:34:36,000

I do know.

310

00:34:37,000 --> 00:34:40,000

Oh God forgive me.

311

00:34:40,000 --> 00:34:49,000

Doc and the other guys were scared of Mathias. Gary was just going to go to the game with them. They didn't really want them to go, but they were too scared to say anything.

312

00:34:49,000 --> 00:34:55,000

I did know that for a fact and that came from my uncle.

313

00:34:55,000 --> 00:35:05,000

Gary Mathias was under medication successfully. Had had a very peaceful two years before the events of that night.

314

00:35:05,000 --> 00:35:16,000

But Gary Mathias had drug problems. He'd had very checkered experience in the army. He'd had some violent and very problematic outbursts.

315

00:35:16,000 --> 00:35:32,000

The only explanation that made any sense to me was that Gary's psychosis had returned and that somehow he had persuaded these guys that this is the right thing to do.

316

00:35:32,000 --> 00:35:48,000

What would conceivably be some other person's motive for persuading five men to do this long hike through the woods and then go die in a Forest Service cabin?

317

00:35:48,000 --> 00:35:57,000

His schizophrenia is easy to use as an excuse, but there's no proof of Gary ever pulling something like this before.

318

00:35:57,000 --> 00:36:15,000

If they can get in a car, drive to Chico without incident, attend a basketball game without incident, go to Bears Market without incident, house Gary the problem. I don't buy it.

319

00:36:15,000 --> 00:36:27,000

If he wasn't on his medication, he cannot function by himself. So if he was not on his medication, my dad would not let him go. Period.

320

00:36:28,000 --> 00:36:40,000

Law enforcement, they really, really didn't treat my brother fairly. They snap-chugged him.

321

00:36:40,000 --> 00:37:06,000

You were the first person ever in 45 years to ever ask me a question. No one in the police department, no one from the media, no one ever asked me for nothing. I don't know what happened to him. That's part that bothers me. I need to know where he is.

322

00:37:06,000 --> 00:37:23,000

More than 40 years after the men's disappearance, one crucial question looms over this case. What happened to Gary Mathias?

323

00:37:23,000 --> 00:37:39,000

I have mixed thoughts about what happened to Gary Mathias. Our mother owned a bar there in Browns Valley, and within a year after the bodies were found, I got an off-work full bar.

324

00:37:39,000 --> 00:37:55,000

The third bar still down from the end, there was this guy. We locked eyes, and it was Gary Mathias. And I went through the swing door there that goes behind the bar, and I told Mom, I said, that's Gary Mathias sitting there at the end of the bar. She goes, are you sure?

325

00:37:55,000 --> 00:38:16,000

I said, I'm positive. I called the sheriff's department. Gary looked at us, and he jumped up and took off running. We could not catch him. People told me that he had been to CNAP. Montgomery Ward's, Denny's Restaurant, 7-Eleven parking lot. So I really don't know what to think. God strike me dead if I'm wrong.

326

00:38:17,000 --> 00:38:30,000

There's a man driving through the Plumas area in 1979 who claims that Gary Mathias was hitchhiking. But there's no mention of that in the Yuba County Sheriff's Department file.

327

00:38:31,000 --> 00:38:45,000

There have been some reports of Gary Mathias having been spotted or seen after the remains were found, both in the area, out of the area. We've had reports even out of the state. Nothing that we've ever been able to substantiate.

328

00:38:45,000 --> 00:39:02,000

I could tell you what I think. I don't think Gary Mathias made it to that trailer.

329

00:39:02,000 --> 00:39:21,000

When I was growing up in Barrisville, there were certain families that you knew better than to fuck with. And the bully of the town was in and out of prison his whole life. And I've seen him do things.

330

00:39:22,000 --> 00:39:42,000

Very scary guy. There was rumors that this bully and a group of people that had bad blood with Gary Mathias and took his vengeance out on all of them. They started something with my brother.

331

00:39:42,000 --> 00:39:55,000

Gary Mathias stood up for him and these people beat the shit out of Gary Mathias and threw him over the Orville Bridge.

332

00:39:55,000 --> 00:40:10,000

And then they made the other four boys drive up that road and scared them enough that they would not come back down that hill.

333

00:40:10,000 --> 00:40:22,000

One of the boys may have carried Gary Mathias' shoes up the trailer. That's why there was only four sets of footprints going up that hill.

334

00:40:22,000 --> 00:40:41,000

I could feel that in my heart that my brother was the one who wrapped Ted up in those sheets. My brother would have never left Ted alone, not if he was alive.

335

00:40:41,000 --> 00:40:56,000

There had been somebody in that trailer taking care of Ted and I believe it was my brother Gary. And I think him and Jackie took off to try to find help. But Gary was weak without his medication.

336

00:40:57,000 --> 00:41:10,000

I think it was a little while before he started losing his mind. I think he just got lost and it was still cold. I do believe that he didn't make it out of there any more than the other boys did.

337

00:41:10,000 --> 00:41:23,000

I think he was the one who was trying to get away from me.

338

00:41:23,000 --> 00:41:31,000

Anybody who's ever worked a case like this wants to know. It doesn't matter how many times I read the report, but I'll find some little nuance that just strikes me different.

339

00:41:31,000 --> 00:41:42,000

I would bet within the first 11 miles from the car, Madruga, north Stirling, became fatigued, which is the first symptom of hypothermia.

340

00:41:42,000 --> 00:41:52,000

They were close friends. If one was succumbing to the elements, the other was likely to stay. And together they perished.

341

00:41:53,000 --> 00:42:03,000

The three were taking care of each other, so they were destined to continue. Jackie Hewitt's remains were found along that path. I don't think he ever made it to the trailer.

342

00:42:07,000 --> 00:42:16,000

Ted Weir, obviously we know he makes it there. I think it's a pretty significant chance that Gary Mathias makes it there.

343

00:42:16,000 --> 00:42:23,000

I think he was there right up until Ted perished based on the way that he was swaddled. He probably took the better pair of shoes to try to make it away.

344

00:42:23,000 --> 00:42:27,000

And likely didn't get very far.

345

00:42:36,000 --> 00:42:42,000

You can only speculate. You may answer one question, but you're going to bring up 20 more.

346

00:42:46,000 --> 00:42:53,000

The only thing that I could ask for right now is please find his remains. He needs to come home.

347

00:42:53,000 --> 00:43:00,000

I don't believe in closure. I don't. As long as there's an empty chair at that table, nothing's closed.

348

00:43:16,000 --> 00:43:21,000

Knowing how all of them were, it had been so scary for him, and that just eats up my heart.

349

00:43:21,000 --> 00:43:24,000

I couldn't be there to help him up.

350

00:43:33,000 --> 00:43:35,000

They were worthy human beings.

351

00:43:35,000 --> 00:43:37,000

Yes, every one of them.

352

00:43:37,000 --> 00:43:48,000

I can't even remember what the last words were that I ever said to my brother. I'm hoping it was, I love you.

353

00:43:48,000 --> 00:43:57,000

These were vulnerable guys. How could that happen to these guys?

354

00:43:57,000 --> 00:44:03,000

Ted, he probably lived with me if he was still here.

355

00:44:03,000 --> 00:44:06,000

Yeah, I don't think it could be on his own.

356

00:44:06,000 --> 00:44:11,000

No. Whoever had the most macaroni cheese, if we would stay with him.

357

00:44:11,000 --> 00:44:18,000

He would have been with somebody that knew him and loved him to take care of him. And we did.

358

00:44:22,000 --> 00:44:29,000

We were a very close-knit family, but we weren't the type of family that did the hugs and I love you.

359

00:44:29,000 --> 00:44:33,000

The first time my dad ever told me they loved me,

360

00:44:39,000 --> 00:44:42,000

was the day my brother was found.

361

00:44:45,000 --> 00:44:48,000

But we knew we loved each other.

362

00:44:53,000 --> 00:44:55,000

We'd still like answers.

363

00:45:00,000 --> 00:45:05,000

The way that they were viewed as incompetent, that's not fair.

364

00:45:05,000 --> 00:45:11,000

Something brought them up to that mountain where they meant their death.

365

00:45:13,000 --> 00:45:17,000

You just don't know what they were doing, what was happening that night.

366

00:45:19,000 --> 00:45:22,000

Where they abandoned their car in the darkness on a side road.

367

00:45:22,000 --> 00:45:27,000

And you come up here and you're more confused than you've ever been in your entire life about this case.

368

00:45:28,000 --> 00:45:33,000

They can't prove there was foul play, and they can't explain it if there wasn't.

369

00:45:34,000 --> 00:45:43,000

What exactly happened to the Yuba County Five on the night of February 24th, 1978, may forever be a mystery.

370

00:45:44,000 --> 00:45:49,000

Almost 50 years later, the truth is still unknown.

371

00:45:49,000 --> 00:45:54,000

Can you just imagine them standing on the street corner drinking their pop?

372

00:45:54,000 --> 00:45:56,000

Waving at everybody.

373

00:45:56,000 --> 00:45:59,000

Waving at everybody. Everybody waving back.

374

00:46:01,000 --> 00:46:06,000

Somebody out there knows exactly what happened to those boys.

375

00:46:08,000 --> 00:46:10,000

Let there be justice.

376

00:46:19,000 --> 00:46:49,000

The truth is,
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378

00:46:56,120 --> 00:47:01,920

truth is, the truth is, the truth is, the truth is, the truth

379

00:47:19,000 --> 00:47:21,060

you

380

00:47:49,000 --> 00:47:51,060

you

381

00:48:19,000 --> 00:48:21,060

you

