

1

00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:03,680

This program is about unsolved mysteries.

2

00:00:03,680 --> 00:00:06,280

Whenever possible, the actual family members and police

3

00:00:06,280 --> 00:00:09,280

officials have participated in recreating the events.

4

00:00:09,280 --> 00:00:11,880

What you are about to see is not a news broadcast.

5

00:00:16,720 --> 00:00:18,960

On Christmas Eve in 1931, a couple

6

00:00:18,960 --> 00:00:21,860

made an incredible discovery in a lonely Arizona

7

00:00:21,860 --> 00:00:25,360

desert, a baby girl abandoned in a hat box.

8

00:00:25,360 --> 00:00:28,080

Today, Sheriff John H. W. H.

9

00:00:29,080 --> 00:00:32,240

Today, Sharon Elliott, the so-called Hat Box Baby,

10

00:00:32,240 --> 00:00:34,720

wants to learn the truth about her parents

11

00:00:34,720 --> 00:00:36,620

and find the couple who rescued her

12

00:00:36,620 --> 00:00:39,760

on that long ago Christmas Eve.

13

00:00:39,760 --> 00:00:43,200

For 30 years, Joe Shambier has been a real-life Santa Claus

14

00:00:43,200 --> 00:00:46,760

with millions of children who listened to his radio broadcast.

15

00:00:46,760 --> 00:00:49,240

But this man who has given children so much happiness

16

00:00:49,240 --> 00:00:51,600

is searching for his own child, Alberta

17

00:00:51,600 --> 00:00:56,040

Elaine, who was given up for adoption 50 years ago.

18

00:00:56,200 --> 00:00:58,920

Also tonight, we will tell the story of John Branian,

19

00:00:58,920 --> 00:01:00,680

a Chicago physician in civil rights

20

00:01:00,680 --> 00:01:04,200

work who was imprisoned for murdering his wife 20 years ago.

21

00:01:04,200 --> 00:01:07,040

A crime he swears he did not commit.

22

00:01:07,040 --> 00:01:08,600

Indeed, there is compelling evidence

23

00:01:08,600 --> 00:01:10,800

that supports his claim of innocence.

24

00:01:10,800 --> 00:01:14,800

If this is true, then a man has been unjustly imprisoned.

25

00:01:14,800 --> 00:01:17,120

Tonight, John Branian makes his final appeal.

26

00:01:56,040 --> 00:02:11,040

Christmas Eve, 1931.

27

00:02:11,040 --> 00:02:13,200

At 8 PM, a car broke down in the middle

28

00:02:13,200 --> 00:02:17,320

of the chilly Arizona desert, 56 miles outside Phoenix.

29

00:02:17,320 --> 00:02:19,040

The four people inside were returning

30

00:02:19,040 --> 00:02:20,600

from a day trip to the mountains.

31

00:02:21,200 --> 00:02:22,760

Ed Stewart took a look at the engine

32

00:02:22,760 --> 00:02:24,920

while his wife Julia waited in the car.

33

00:02:24,920 --> 00:02:26,600

What's wrong, Ed?

34

00:02:26,600 --> 00:02:29,600

It looks like a busted fuel line.

35

00:02:29,600 --> 00:02:31,600

I'll just get to work on it here.

36

00:02:31,600 --> 00:02:35,240

Julia's 15-year-old twin cousins, John and Betty Mansfield,

37

00:02:35,240 --> 00:02:36,600

looked on from the back seat.

38

00:02:36,600 --> 00:02:38,600

I'll just take a few minutes to fix.

39

00:02:38,600 --> 00:02:39,600

You're hungry.

40

00:02:39,600 --> 00:02:41,600

I know you aren't, kids.

41

00:02:41,600 --> 00:02:43,600

I'm going to stretch my legs a bit.

42

00:02:43,600 --> 00:02:44,600

All right.

43

00:02:44,600 --> 00:02:46,600

Honey, be careful out here.

44

00:02:46,600 --> 00:02:47,600

There's score on the car.

45

00:02:47,600 --> 00:02:49,600

I'll get you a little bit of it.

46

00:02:49,600 --> 00:02:50,600

Be careful out here.

47

00:02:50,600 --> 00:02:51,600

There's scorpions.

48

00:03:09,600 --> 00:03:10,600

Hey, Ed.

49

00:03:10,600 --> 00:03:11,600

Come here a minute.

50

00:03:11,600 --> 00:03:12,600

What?

51

00:03:12,600 --> 00:03:13,600

Come here.

52

00:03:13,600 --> 00:03:16,600

I found something.

53

00:03:16,600 --> 00:03:18,600

What is it?

54

00:03:18,600 --> 00:03:19,600

It's a hat box.

55

00:03:19,600 --> 00:03:22,600

That's probably just some child left by some campers.

56

00:03:22,600 --> 00:03:26,600

Of course, it don't look that weathered.

57

00:03:26,600 --> 00:03:28,600

Open it up.

58

00:03:31,600 --> 00:03:32,600

Oh, my gosh.

59

00:03:32,600 --> 00:03:33,600

It's a baby.

60

00:03:33,600 --> 00:03:34,600

Oh, my goodness.

61

00:03:34,600 --> 00:03:37,600

Lord, no on earth would leave a child out here.

62

00:03:37,600 --> 00:03:38,600

I know.

63

00:03:40,600 --> 00:03:43,600

I can't believe this.

64

00:03:43,600 --> 00:03:44,600

Is she OK?

65

00:03:44,600 --> 00:03:45,600

She seems all right.

66

00:03:45,600 --> 00:03:48,600

Did you see anybody when we drove up?

67

00:03:48,600 --> 00:03:49,600

No.

68

00:03:49,600 --> 00:03:52,600

Ed and Julius Stewart saw a new sign of the person

69

00:03:52,600 --> 00:03:54,600

who had abandoned the baby.

70

00:03:54,600 --> 00:03:56,600

They carried the tiny foundling back to their car.

71

00:04:01,600 --> 00:04:04,600

41 miles away at the Mesa, Arizona police station,

72

00:04:04,600 --> 00:04:07,600

Constable Joe Mayer was spending his Christmas Eve on duty.

73

00:04:07,600 --> 00:04:09,600

How's it been tonight?

74

00:04:09,600 --> 00:04:10,600

It's been slow.

75

00:04:10,600 --> 00:04:13,600

You know, Christmas Eve, people home with their families.

76

00:04:13,600 --> 00:04:14,600

Good evening.

77

00:04:14,600 --> 00:04:15,600

Good evening.

78

00:04:15,600 --> 00:04:16,600

Good evening.

79

00:04:16,600 --> 00:04:18,600

Joe, we got a bit of a problem here.

80

00:04:18,600 --> 00:04:20,600

We found this baby in the desert.

81

00:04:20,600 --> 00:04:21,600

You found the child in the desert?

82

00:04:21,600 --> 00:04:22,600

Yeah.

83

00:04:24,600 --> 00:04:26,600

Ed and Julius Stewart told Constable Mayer

84

00:04:26,600 --> 00:04:29,600

the incredible story of how they found the tiny infant

85

00:04:29,600 --> 00:04:30,600

in a hat box.

86

00:04:30,600 --> 00:04:31,600

You found the baby?

87

00:04:31,600 --> 00:04:32,600

In the box.

88

00:04:32,600 --> 00:04:33,600

Right down in the box.

89

00:04:33,600 --> 00:04:35,600

What I'll do is, I don't know exactly what to do with her either.

90

00:04:35,600 --> 00:04:37,600

I'll take her to Modena's for tonight.

91

00:04:37,600 --> 00:04:38,600

That's a good idea, Joe.

92

00:04:38,600 --> 00:04:39,600

You'll take care of her.

93

00:04:39,600 --> 00:04:40,600

We gotta get her home for the night.

94

00:04:40,600 --> 00:04:41,600

No, you didn't.

95

00:04:41,600 --> 00:04:42,600

Enjoy your Christmas.

96

00:04:42,600 --> 00:04:43,600

Merry Christmas to you, Joe.

97

00:04:43,600 --> 00:04:44,600

And to you, folks.

98

00:04:44,600 --> 00:04:46,600

I'll be back to you for a statement on this.

99

00:04:46,600 --> 00:04:47,600

All right.

100

00:04:47,600 --> 00:04:48,600

OK?

101

00:04:51,600 --> 00:04:54,600

Constable Mayer turned over his young charge to Modena,

102

00:04:54,600 --> 00:04:57,600

a midwife living near Florence, Arizona.

103

00:04:57,600 --> 00:04:58,600

She sounds real good.

104

00:04:58,600 --> 00:04:59,600

Oh, wonderful.

105

00:04:59,600 --> 00:05:00,600

Real good.

106

00:05:00,600 --> 00:05:01,600

You know, I thought she was probably about to be...

107

00:05:01,600 --> 00:05:03,600

She called in a doctor who pronounced the child

108

00:05:03,600 --> 00:05:05,600

a healthy seven-day-old girl suffering no ill effects

109

00:05:05,600 --> 00:05:07,600

from her time in the desert.

110

00:05:07,600 --> 00:05:08,600

She's a little bit bigger too.

111

00:05:08,600 --> 00:05:09,600

She sure is a nice-looking baby.

112

00:05:09,600 --> 00:05:10,600

Yeah, there's a picture.

113

00:05:11,600 --> 00:05:15,600

Local reporters were quick to turn up on Modena's porch.

114

00:05:15,600 --> 00:05:17,600

They called them real good, baby.

115

00:05:17,600 --> 00:05:19,600

They dubbed the child a miracle.

116

00:05:19,600 --> 00:05:23,600

News of the Christmas Eve baby spread like wildfire.

117

00:05:23,600 --> 00:05:26,600

People shower the little girl with love, gifts, and attention.

118

00:05:26,600 --> 00:05:27,600

OK, we've got it.

119

00:05:27,600 --> 00:05:28,600

Thank you.

120

00:05:28,600 --> 00:05:29,600

Thank you very much.

121

00:05:29,600 --> 00:05:31,600

We'd never had anything like that happen around Florence.

122

00:05:31,600 --> 00:05:33,600

That was a new thing.

123

00:05:33,600 --> 00:05:37,600

And everybody was very family-oriented

124

00:05:37,600 --> 00:05:40,600

and loved their children and thought of them first

125

00:05:40,600 --> 00:05:45,600

to think that somebody would desert a little helpless baby.

126

00:05:45,600 --> 00:05:48,600

And we felt it was surely a miracle that night

127

00:05:48,600 --> 00:05:50,600

that that little baby was saved.

128

00:05:50,600 --> 00:05:52,600

You're such a doll.

129

00:05:52,600 --> 00:05:54,600

You're going to be just fine.

130

00:05:54,600 --> 00:05:56,600

Yes, we're going to get you a bottle.

131

00:05:56,600 --> 00:05:58,600

The miracle Christmas Eve baby captured

132

00:05:58,600 --> 00:06:01,600

the imagination of the entire country.

133

00:06:01,600 --> 00:06:03,600

To a people weathering the Great Depression,

134

00:06:03,600 --> 00:06:06,600

this tiny baby girl, rescued from the desert,

135

00:06:06,600 --> 00:06:08,600

became a symbol of the Christmas season,

136

00:06:08,600 --> 00:06:13,600

an array of hope in the midst of bleak times.

137

00:06:13,600 --> 00:06:15,600

The baby was put up for adoption.

138

00:06:15,600 --> 00:06:18,600

On February the 16th, 1932,

139

00:06:18,600 --> 00:06:21,600

a hearing was held at the Pinal County Courthouse

140

00:06:21,600 --> 00:06:24,600

in Florence, Arizona.

141

00:06:24,600 --> 00:06:27,600

You know, I think this baby must be the most fortunate baby

142

00:06:27,600 --> 00:06:28,600

in the county.

143

00:06:28,600 --> 00:06:31,600

17 couples had expressed interest in adopting the baby,

144

00:06:31,600 --> 00:06:34,600

but the feel finally narrowed to just two.

145

00:06:34,600 --> 00:06:36,600

I want the other party to know...

146

00:06:36,600 --> 00:06:39,600

Judge E. L. Green faced a difficult choice.

147

00:06:39,600 --> 00:06:41,600

Under all circumstances,

148

00:06:41,600 --> 00:06:44,600

I might say that since I know you haven't adopted a child

149

00:06:44,600 --> 00:06:47,600

and the other couple doesn't have one,

150

00:06:47,600 --> 00:06:50,600

I feel under the circumstances that I am forced to award

151

00:06:50,600 --> 00:06:52,600

the child to them.

152

00:06:58,600 --> 00:07:00,600

Let them leave the court room by themselves.

153

00:07:00,600 --> 00:07:01,600

What's your honor?

154

00:07:01,600 --> 00:07:03,600

I'm going to seal the court records on this case

155

00:07:03,600 --> 00:07:05,600

and we'd appreciate it very much if you boys

156

00:07:05,600 --> 00:07:07,600

would respect these people's privacy

157

00:07:07,600 --> 00:07:10,600

and let the child grow up in a normal life.

158

00:07:10,600 --> 00:07:12,600

Thank you.

159

00:07:12,600 --> 00:07:14,600

The reporters and photographers waited inside

160

00:07:14,600 --> 00:07:17,600

while the baby and her new parents made their exit.

161

00:07:17,600 --> 00:07:19,600

Only the people in court that day

162

00:07:19,600 --> 00:07:22,600

knew who had adopted the hatbox baby.

163

00:07:22,600 --> 00:07:24,600

For more than half a century,

164

00:07:24,600 --> 00:07:28,600

the identity of the family remained a closely guarded secret.

165

00:07:29,600 --> 00:07:31,600

Good morning.

166

00:07:31,600 --> 00:07:33,600

Good morning, honey.

167

00:07:33,600 --> 00:07:35,600

Finally, on August the 10th, 1986,

168

00:07:35,600 --> 00:07:38,600

the adopted mother broke her five-decade silence.

169

00:07:38,600 --> 00:07:41,600

Sharon, honey, there's something I've got to tell you.

170

00:07:41,600 --> 00:07:44,600

We tried to have children and we couldn't.

171

00:07:44,600 --> 00:07:46,600

You're adopted, honey.

172

00:07:46,600 --> 00:07:49,600

We adopted you when you were a little baby.

173

00:07:49,600 --> 00:07:52,600

I was shocked. I just couldn't believe it, you know?

174

00:07:52,600 --> 00:07:56,600

Because I had no idea that I was adopted.

175

00:07:56,600 --> 00:07:59,600

Nobody ever said a thing to me.

176

00:07:59,600 --> 00:08:01,600

It was never...

177

00:08:01,600 --> 00:08:03,600

I never even dreamt that I...

178

00:08:03,600 --> 00:08:05,600

That was the last thing I would think that, you know,

179

00:08:05,600 --> 00:08:07,600

I would hear from her.

180

00:08:07,600 --> 00:08:10,600

Sharon's mother also told her the amazing saga

181

00:08:10,600 --> 00:08:12,600

of how she had been found in the desert.

182

00:08:12,600 --> 00:08:15,600

I've never heard of the hatbox baby.

183

00:08:15,600 --> 00:08:17,600

I'm one person, I grow up,

184

00:08:17,600 --> 00:08:19,600

and I have a family and everything.

185

00:08:19,600 --> 00:08:21,600

Then I'm looking through all these pictures

186

00:08:21,600 --> 00:08:24,600

and it just seemed like it was unreal, kind of,

187

00:08:24,600 --> 00:08:26,600

that this could be me.

188

00:08:26,600 --> 00:08:29,600

Sharon began to look for her birth parents.

189

00:08:29,600 --> 00:08:33,600

News of her search reached an organization called Orphan Voyage,

190

00:08:33,600 --> 00:08:37,600

which reunites adopted children with their families of birth.

191

00:08:37,600 --> 00:08:41,600

Alice Simon, one of the research consultants at Orphan Voyage,

192

00:08:41,600 --> 00:08:43,600

took up Sharon's cause.

193

00:08:43,600 --> 00:08:46,600

Both women felt it was vital to have access

194

00:08:46,600 --> 00:08:49,600

to the sealed court documents from 1931.

195

00:08:49,600 --> 00:08:52,600

And the court has reviewed your file

196

00:08:52,600 --> 00:08:55,600

and determined that it would be in the best interest

197

00:08:55,600 --> 00:08:57,600

to release these files.

198

00:08:57,600 --> 00:08:59,600

So I'll let you look at them.

199

00:08:59,600 --> 00:09:01,600

OK.

200

00:09:01,600 --> 00:09:03,600

And you can review it, and after you've reviewed it,

201

00:09:03,600 --> 00:09:05,600

just leave it with my secretary.

202

00:09:05,600 --> 00:09:07,600

OK, sure, appreciate it.

203

00:09:07,600 --> 00:09:09,600

For the first time, Sharon read the stewards

204

00:09:09,600 --> 00:09:11,600

for Betham account of finding her in the desert.

205

00:09:11,600 --> 00:09:14,600

As she studied the record, she grew skeptical of their story.

206

00:09:14,600 --> 00:09:16,600

It seemed such an amazing coincidence

207

00:09:16,600 --> 00:09:19,600

that their car had broken down at the exact spot in the desert

208

00:09:19,600 --> 00:09:22,600

where the hat box had been left.

209

00:09:22,600 --> 00:09:23,600

I think it was a setup.

210

00:09:23,600 --> 00:09:26,600

Who's going to leave a baby in the desert, in the middle?

211

00:09:26,600 --> 00:09:28,600

This is winter.

212

00:09:28,600 --> 00:09:31,600

It's Christmas Eve, and it's that time of year.

213

00:09:31,600 --> 00:09:33,600

It's cold here.

214

00:09:33,600 --> 00:09:36,600

In sworn testimony, Ed and Julia Stewart

215

00:09:36,600 --> 00:09:40,600

stated they left home at dawn on December 24, 1931

216

00:09:40,600 --> 00:09:42,600

to drive up to the mountains.

217

00:09:42,600 --> 00:09:45,600

The stewards said they stopped only once,

218

00:09:45,600 --> 00:09:48,600

in Roosevelt, Arizona, one of several small towns on their route.

219

00:09:49,600 --> 00:09:54,600

Mrs. Stewart had left an eight-month-old nursing baby at home.

220

00:09:54,600 --> 00:09:57,600

It was Christmas Eve, the day that most people

221

00:09:57,600 --> 00:10:01,600

stay home and cook their turkey, wrap their Christmas presents.

222

00:10:01,600 --> 00:10:05,600

I think that they went up to Globe or Superior,

223

00:10:05,600 --> 00:10:08,600

or maybe Roosevelt, and they picked up the baby.

224

00:10:08,600 --> 00:10:12,600

Someone they knew, maybe a cousin, a relative, a friend,

225

00:10:12,600 --> 00:10:15,600

and brought it back to Mesa.

226

00:10:16,600 --> 00:10:19,600

Could the stewards have picked up the infant Sharon

227

00:10:19,600 --> 00:10:21,600

in Roosevelt or another small town,

228

00:10:21,600 --> 00:10:24,600

or did they indeed find her in the desert?

229

00:10:24,600 --> 00:10:27,600

Sharon's mysterious mother having placed her in the hat box

230

00:10:27,600 --> 00:10:30,600

only seconds before the stewards' car stopped.

231

00:10:31,600 --> 00:10:34,600

It would have been a carefully arranged ruse,

232

00:10:34,600 --> 00:10:36,600

staged for the benefit of the teenage cousins,

233

00:10:36,600 --> 00:10:38,600

John and Betty Mansfield,

234

00:10:38,600 --> 00:10:41,600

who had been brought along as innocent witnesses.

235

00:10:41,600 --> 00:10:44,600

In that day, if a girl got pregnant,

236

00:10:44,600 --> 00:10:47,600

if she was not married, it was, I guess,

237

00:10:47,600 --> 00:10:50,600

the greatest disgrace that she could bring up on her family.

238

00:10:50,600 --> 00:10:52,600

I think that probably they were just trying to help out a young girl.

239

00:10:52,600 --> 00:10:54,600

Maybe it was a relative. Could have been a niece.

240

00:10:54,600 --> 00:10:56,600

Could have been a friend.

241

00:10:56,600 --> 00:10:58,600

You know, I don't know.

242

00:10:58,600 --> 00:11:01,600

Maybe they had friends that had a daughter.

243

00:11:01,600 --> 00:11:04,600

Well, I'm just glad that I survived.

244

00:11:04,600 --> 00:11:07,600

I don't know if I have any brothers or sisters.

245

00:11:07,600 --> 00:11:10,600

I don't even know the exact date of my birth,

246

00:11:10,600 --> 00:11:12,600

or even where I was born.

247

00:11:12,600 --> 00:11:15,600

I don't know what heritage I am, what nationality,

248

00:11:15,600 --> 00:11:18,600

or where I come from.

249

00:11:18,600 --> 00:11:20,600

And I want to know, you know, who I look like,

250

00:11:20,600 --> 00:11:23,600

and I think my daughter would like to know about her grandmother, too,

251

00:11:23,600 --> 00:11:26,600

her real grandmother.

252

00:11:26,600 --> 00:11:31,600

The Christmas Eve miracle has remained a mystery for nearly six decades.

253

00:11:31,600 --> 00:11:34,600

The vital missing links to Sharon Elliott's lost identity

254

00:11:34,600 --> 00:11:37,600

are the couple who found her in the desert.

255

00:11:37,600 --> 00:11:41,600

If they are alive, Ed and Julia Stewart would be today in their 80s.

256

00:11:41,600 --> 00:11:44,600

Only they know the truth about Sharon Elliott,

257

00:11:44,600 --> 00:11:47,600

the woman who began her life 58 years ago,

258

00:11:47,600 --> 00:11:49,600

as a poignant baby in a hat box,

259

00:11:49,600 --> 00:11:53,600

lost in the chill December blackness of an Arizona desert night.

260

00:11:56,600 --> 00:11:59,600

When we return the story of a Chicago physician

261

00:11:59,600 --> 00:12:01,600

who was convicted of murdering his wife,

262

00:12:01,600 --> 00:12:05,600

dramatic evidence suggests that he may have been unjustly imprisoned.

263

00:12:11,600 --> 00:12:14,600

Donna!

264

00:12:14,600 --> 00:12:17,600

Donna!

265

00:12:17,600 --> 00:12:19,600

Donna!

266

00:12:19,600 --> 00:12:23,600

December 22, 1967, Chicago, Illinois.

267

00:12:23,600 --> 00:12:27,600

A 41-year-old physician named John Bracken and his son, Joby,

268

00:12:27,600 --> 00:12:30,600

arrived home to pick up John's wife, Donna.

269

00:12:30,600 --> 00:12:34,600

The family was planning to go Christmas shopping together.

270

00:12:34,600 --> 00:12:37,600

Joby and I returned from the nursing school

271

00:12:37,600 --> 00:12:39,600

and went into the...

272

00:12:39,600 --> 00:12:41,600

to the house.

273

00:12:41,600 --> 00:12:44,600

And the first thing that struck me was all the lights were on

274

00:12:44,600 --> 00:12:47,600

and the two television sets were on.

275

00:12:47,600 --> 00:12:49,600

And I called out to Donna.

276

00:12:49,600 --> 00:12:51,600

I got no answer.

277

00:12:53,600 --> 00:12:55,600

And then when I got to the kitchen,

278

00:12:55,600 --> 00:12:57,600

I looked to the right and I could see feet,

279

00:12:57,600 --> 00:13:00,600

her legs really sticking out of the utility room.

280

00:13:00,600 --> 00:13:03,600

And she was dead.

281

00:13:03,600 --> 00:13:06,600

She wasn't breathing.

282

00:13:07,600 --> 00:13:10,600

Her legs were askew

283

00:13:10,600 --> 00:13:12,600

and her skirt was kind of

284

00:13:12,600 --> 00:13:15,600

ruckered up over her legs.

285

00:13:16,600 --> 00:13:19,600

I switched off the light

286

00:13:19,600 --> 00:13:22,600

and reached around and grabbed Joby

287

00:13:22,600 --> 00:13:25,600

and ran out of the back of the house.

288

00:13:25,600 --> 00:13:28,600

After his grim discovery,

289

00:13:28,600 --> 00:13:31,600

Dr. Branian immediately called the police.

290

00:13:32,600 --> 00:13:35,600

Five months later, he was on trial for his life.

291

00:13:38,600 --> 00:13:41,600

Today, John Branian is serving a 20 to 30 year term

292

00:13:41,600 --> 00:13:43,600

at Illinois' Dixon Correctional Center

293

00:13:43,600 --> 00:13:46,600

for the first degree murder of his wife.

294

00:13:46,600 --> 00:13:49,600

A crime he swears he did not commit.

295

00:13:49,600 --> 00:13:52,600

I think it was an atrocity.

296

00:13:52,600 --> 00:13:55,600

I think it was extremely unfair.

297

00:13:55,600 --> 00:13:58,600

I feel that it was a set-up.

298

00:13:58,600 --> 00:14:01,600

My father was railroaded because he didn't kill my mother.

299

00:14:01,600 --> 00:14:04,600

I think he's innocent because the evidence shows

300

00:14:04,600 --> 00:14:06,600

that he could not have physically been there

301

00:14:06,600 --> 00:14:08,600

at the time these events were going on.

302

00:14:08,600 --> 00:14:12,600

I think the jury was emotionally caught up in the case

303

00:14:12,600 --> 00:14:15,600

and just didn't forgot or didn't pay attention

304

00:14:15,600 --> 00:14:18,600

to the evidence that overwhelmingly proved

305

00:14:18,600 --> 00:14:21,600

that John couldn't have been the killer.

306

00:14:21,600 --> 00:14:24,600

I couldn't murder the mother of the killer.

307

00:14:24,600 --> 00:14:27,600

I think it was a murder.

308

00:14:28,600 --> 00:14:30,600

I think it was a murder of my children.

309

00:14:30,600 --> 00:14:32,600

I couldn't murder my high school sweetheart.

310

00:14:32,600 --> 00:14:35,600

Don and I had known each other since the age of 14.

311

00:14:35,600 --> 00:14:38,600

I didn't murder her.

312

00:14:40,600 --> 00:14:42,600

It is not uncommon for a convicted criminal

313

00:14:42,600 --> 00:14:44,600

to stoutly maintain his innocence.

314

00:14:44,600 --> 00:14:47,600

But in John Branian's case, he is not alone.

315

00:14:47,600 --> 00:14:49,600

Though some say he is a murderer,

316

00:14:49,600 --> 00:14:51,600

others are convinced that he was framed.

317

00:14:51,600 --> 00:14:54,600

For John Branian, this debate is literally a matter of life

318

00:14:54,600 --> 00:14:56,600

and death.

319

00:14:56,600 --> 00:14:59,600

In his five heart attacks, he desperately needs a heart transplant.

320

00:14:59,600 --> 00:15:01,600

But because he is a convicted murderer,

321

00:15:01,600 --> 00:15:05,600

the operation he needs to survive has been denied him.

322

00:15:05,600 --> 00:15:08,600

This is John Branian's story.

323

00:15:08,600 --> 00:15:13,600

He shall open fire.

324

00:15:15,600 --> 00:15:17,600

During the mid-60s, Martin Luther King

325

00:15:17,600 --> 00:15:20,600

dreamed his dreams of equality for all Americans.

326

00:15:20,600 --> 00:15:22,600

John Branian marched by his side.

327

00:15:22,600 --> 00:15:26,600

In 1966, he was King's personal physician in Chicago.

328

00:15:26,600 --> 00:15:30,600

Chicago was a racial battleground during those years.

329

00:15:30,600 --> 00:15:32,600

Branian was often on the front lines.

330

00:15:35,600 --> 00:15:38,600

He even went so far as to provide medical services

331

00:15:38,600 --> 00:15:40,600

for the Black Panthers, the Weathermen,

332

00:15:40,600 --> 00:15:43,600

and other extreme revolutionary groups.

333

00:15:43,600 --> 00:15:46,600

Not surprising, Branian was viewed with hostility

334

00:15:46,600 --> 00:15:49,600

by the Chicago police.

335

00:15:49,600 --> 00:15:52,600

I've always struggled for equal rights

336

00:15:52,600 --> 00:15:55,600

and struggled for freedom,

337

00:15:55,600 --> 00:15:58,600

hoping that there would eventually be

338

00:15:58,600 --> 00:16:01,600

freedom and equal rights.

339

00:16:01,600 --> 00:16:03,600

And I've done it all my life.

340

00:16:03,600 --> 00:16:08,600

I did it very early in very left-wing groups.

341

00:16:08,600 --> 00:16:11,600

And I'll do it when I get out of here.

342

00:16:13,600 --> 00:16:16,600

The son of a prominent attorney, John Branian,

343

00:16:16,600 --> 00:16:18,600

worked at a busy community clinic

344

00:16:18,600 --> 00:16:21,600

and lived in Chicago's affluent Hyde Park District.

345

00:16:21,600 --> 00:16:24,600

In 1946, he married Donna Brown,

346

00:16:24,600 --> 00:16:26,600

and they had two children.

347

00:16:28,600 --> 00:16:31,600

December 22, 1967.

348

00:16:31,600 --> 00:16:33,600

After being called by John Branian,

349

00:16:33,600 --> 00:16:37,600

the Chicago police arrived at his Hyde Park home.

350

00:16:38,600 --> 00:16:41,600

Dr. Branian, how are you holding up?

351

00:16:41,600 --> 00:16:43,600

I've been OK.

352

00:16:43,600 --> 00:16:45,600

Spare with me.

353

00:16:45,600 --> 00:16:47,600

I've noticed anything missing,

354

00:16:47,600 --> 00:16:49,600

anything that might have been taken from the apartment.

355

00:16:49,600 --> 00:16:51,600

Investigators found four shell casings

356

00:16:51,600 --> 00:16:54,600

from a 9-millimeter gun next to Donna's body.

357

00:16:54,600 --> 00:16:57,600

They assumed that she had been shot four times.

358

00:16:57,600 --> 00:16:59,600

You own a 9-millimeter weapon?

359

00:16:59,600 --> 00:17:01,600

Yes.

360

00:17:01,600 --> 00:17:03,600

Branian was an avid gun collector,

361

00:17:03,600 --> 00:17:05,600

and says that police asked him for any weapon in his collection

362

00:17:05,600 --> 00:17:08,600

capable of firing a 9-millimeter bullet.

363

00:17:08,600 --> 00:17:13,600

He gave them a Luger pistol.

364

00:17:13,600 --> 00:17:16,600

Wait, Dr. Branian, let me get the gun.

365

00:17:16,600 --> 00:17:18,600

Thank you.

366

00:17:18,600 --> 00:17:22,600

Police determined that the gun had not been recently fired.

367

00:17:22,600 --> 00:17:25,600

They would later claim that Branian had denied

368

00:17:25,600 --> 00:17:29,600

owning any other gun capable of firing the fatal bullets.

369

00:17:29,600 --> 00:17:32,600

Have a seat here, gentlemen.

370

00:17:32,600 --> 00:17:34,600

The same evening at the police station,

371

00:17:34,600 --> 00:17:37,600

Branian gave detectives his alibi.

372

00:17:37,600 --> 00:17:40,600

Dr. Branian, I know it's been a long difficult day.

373

00:17:40,600 --> 00:17:42,600

I'd like to go over one more time

374

00:17:42,600 --> 00:17:44,600

and you'll wear a box for me.

375

00:17:46,600 --> 00:17:48,600

Branian told police that he had left the clinic

376

00:17:48,600 --> 00:17:50,600

where he worked at 11.30 a.m.

377

00:17:50,600 --> 00:17:51,600

Hey, John, how's it going?

378

00:17:51,600 --> 00:17:52,600

Morning. Good.

379

00:17:52,600 --> 00:17:54,600

Listen, I'm on my way to pick up Joby.

380

00:17:54,600 --> 00:17:56,600

I won't be back anymore this afternoon.

381

00:17:56,600 --> 00:17:58,600

Merry Christmas.

382

00:17:58,600 --> 00:18:00,600

He then drove to his four-year-old son's nursery school

383

00:18:00,600 --> 00:18:02,600

to pick him up.

384

00:18:02,600 --> 00:18:04,600

Come on, here's your coat.

385

00:18:06,600 --> 00:18:08,600

After leaving the school,

386

00:18:08,600 --> 00:18:10,600

he was asked to see his wife's cousin, Maxine Brown,

387

00:18:10,600 --> 00:18:12,600

to meet her for lunch.

388

00:18:12,600 --> 00:18:14,600

Hi.

389

00:18:14,600 --> 00:18:17,600

Oh, goodness, I can't go.

390

00:18:17,600 --> 00:18:20,600

I'm looking for a way to close in this afternoon.

391

00:18:20,600 --> 00:18:22,600

I have to be here to take care of it.

392

00:18:22,600 --> 00:18:24,600

She was unable to join them.

393

00:18:24,600 --> 00:18:28,600

Branian told police that he then proceeded home.

394

00:18:28,600 --> 00:18:31,600

There, he discovered the body of his wife.

395

00:18:32,600 --> 00:18:35,600

And you arrived home at what time?

396

00:18:35,600 --> 00:18:37,600

Ground noon.

397

00:18:39,600 --> 00:18:42,600

Dr. Branian, would you submit to a lie detector test?

398

00:18:42,600 --> 00:18:45,600

John, I don't think that's such a good idea.

399

00:18:45,600 --> 00:18:48,600

No, but I would like to have a nitrate test, though.

400

00:18:48,600 --> 00:18:50,600

We don't have the chemicals.

401

00:18:50,600 --> 00:18:53,600

A nitrate test would have determined whether he had fired a gun,

402

00:18:53,600 --> 00:18:56,600

but the Chicago police were unable to conduct this test.

403

00:18:57,600 --> 00:19:00,600

That night, Branian was released without being charged.

404

00:19:04,600 --> 00:19:06,600

Morning.

405

00:19:06,600 --> 00:19:08,600

One month passed.

406

00:19:08,600 --> 00:19:10,600

Then on January 22, 1968,

407

00:19:10,600 --> 00:19:13,600

the police made an unexpected visit to Branian's clinic.

408

00:19:13,600 --> 00:19:16,600

Dr. Branian, you're under arrest for the murder of your wife.

409

00:19:16,600 --> 00:19:18,600

How can it be?

410

00:19:18,600 --> 00:19:20,600

You'll have to come with us right now.

411

00:19:20,600 --> 00:19:23,600

I think that the police were under great deal of pressure

412

00:19:24,600 --> 00:19:27,600

from the black press at the time.

413

00:19:27,600 --> 00:19:30,600

And I think they saw a chance,

414

00:19:30,600 --> 00:19:34,600

because 85% of murders are committed by either the family or friends,

415

00:19:34,600 --> 00:19:37,600

close friends, they saw a chance to arrest me.

416

00:19:37,600 --> 00:19:39,600

And they did.

417

00:19:39,600 --> 00:19:42,600

I don't think they thought they were going to convict me,

418

00:19:42,600 --> 00:19:44,600

but they arrested me anyway.

419

00:19:54,600 --> 00:19:58,600

On April 4, 1968, Martin Luther King was gunned down in Memphis,

420

00:19:58,600 --> 00:20:01,600

and riots broke out in Chicago.

421

00:20:01,600 --> 00:20:05,600

Racial tensions in the city were at an all-time high.

422

00:20:05,600 --> 00:20:09,600

In this polarized atmosphere, John Branian's trial began.

423

00:20:09,600 --> 00:20:11,600

Would you state your name, please, sir?

424

00:20:11,600 --> 00:20:13,600

Michael Boyle.

425

00:20:13,600 --> 00:20:15,600

His jury was composed of 11 whites and one black.

426

00:20:15,600 --> 00:20:18,600

I'm a detective for the Chicago Police Department.

427

00:20:18,600 --> 00:20:21,600

The prosecution's case was reported to the police

428

00:20:21,600 --> 00:20:23,600

on the day of the murder.

429

00:20:23,600 --> 00:20:26,600

The prosecution's case was built on three assertions.

430

00:20:26,600 --> 00:20:29,600

First, although the murder weapon was never found,

431

00:20:29,600 --> 00:20:31,600

they claimed that the bullets that killed Donna

432

00:20:31,600 --> 00:20:33,600

could have been fired from a Walther PPK

433

00:20:33,600 --> 00:20:35,600

that was part of Branian's gun collection.

434

00:20:35,600 --> 00:20:38,600

A gun they maintained, he had denied owning.

435

00:20:38,600 --> 00:20:42,600

The detective testified and went back to him

436

00:20:42,600 --> 00:20:45,600

and said, do you have a Walther PPK?

437

00:20:45,600 --> 00:20:48,600

And he said, no, he never had one.

438

00:20:48,600 --> 00:20:51,600

It turned out that he had, a Walther PPK

439

00:20:51,600 --> 00:20:55,600

had been sold about a year before to a man named Hooks,

440

00:20:55,600 --> 00:20:58,600

who was one of the good friends of Dr. Branian.

441

00:20:58,600 --> 00:21:01,600

The police then went to Hooks and asked him where his gun was,

442

00:21:01,600 --> 00:21:03,600

and he said, no, he bought that gun for Branian

443

00:21:03,600 --> 00:21:06,600

as a Christmas present the year before.

444

00:21:06,600 --> 00:21:09,600

Now, sir, what, if any, relationship

445

00:21:09,600 --> 00:21:11,600

did Mrs. Branian bear to you?

446

00:21:11,600 --> 00:21:13,600

She was my sister.

447

00:21:13,600 --> 00:21:16,600

Later during the trial, Donna Branian's brother, Nelson Brown,

448

00:21:16,600 --> 00:21:19,600

testified that John Branian had told him

449

00:21:19,600 --> 00:21:21,600

that the day Donna was murdered,

450

00:21:21,600 --> 00:21:24,600

his Walther PPK had been stolen from his bedside.

451

00:21:24,600 --> 00:21:26,600

He mentioned that there were two guns missing,

452

00:21:26,600 --> 00:21:29,600

one was a PPK and the other was a collector's item

453

00:21:29,600 --> 00:21:32,600

worth \$1,500 to \$2,000.

454

00:21:32,600 --> 00:21:35,600

In the confusion following his wife's death,

455

00:21:35,600 --> 00:21:38,600

Branian had not immediately noticed the theft.

456

00:21:38,600 --> 00:21:40,600

I show you now that which has been marked

457

00:21:40,600 --> 00:21:42,600

as people's exhibit, 13.

458

00:21:42,600 --> 00:21:44,600

The prosecution's second assertion

459

00:21:44,600 --> 00:21:47,600

was that the four shell casings found by Donna's body

460

00:21:47,600 --> 00:21:49,600

had come from a box of ammunition they had discovered

461

00:21:49,600 --> 00:21:52,600

when they searched Branian's closet.

462

00:21:52,600 --> 00:21:55,600

Four shells were missing from this box.

463

00:21:55,600 --> 00:21:58,600

These are the shells that I recovered from the shelf

464

00:21:58,600 --> 00:22:00,600

in the den closet.

465

00:22:00,600 --> 00:22:02,600

Finally, the prosecution claimed that John Branian

466

00:22:02,600 --> 00:22:05,600

had a motive for wanting his wife dead.

467

00:22:05,600 --> 00:22:08,600

At the time of Donna's death, his marriage was in trouble.

468

00:22:08,600 --> 00:22:11,600

For six years, John Branian had been conducting an affair

469

00:22:11,600 --> 00:22:14,600

with a nurse at his clinic named Shirley Hudson.

470

00:22:14,600 --> 00:22:18,600

His wife knew about the affair, but the couple had not divorced.

471

00:22:18,600 --> 00:22:23,600

My theory of the trial was that it was to get out of a bad marriage,

472

00:22:23,600 --> 00:22:26,600

or get out of a marriage without having to pay

473

00:22:26,600 --> 00:22:30,600

all the consequences of divorce and that.

474

00:22:30,600 --> 00:22:34,600

Certainly I had a friend, a girlfriend.

475

00:22:34,600 --> 00:22:39,600

Of six years, it wasn't a hot on the burner affair.

476

00:22:39,600 --> 00:22:42,600

There was nothing pressing about our relationship.

477

00:22:42,600 --> 00:22:45,600

Our relationship was mutually accepted.

478

00:22:45,600 --> 00:22:48,600

Shirley never pressed me.

479

00:22:48,600 --> 00:22:52,600

And I never ever thought of leaving, Donna.

480

00:22:52,600 --> 00:22:56,600

Why would I suddenly decide to kill her?

481

00:22:56,600 --> 00:22:58,600

No.

482

00:22:59,600 --> 00:23:03,600

Our theory of prosecution was that he had planned

483

00:23:03,600 --> 00:23:06,600

for why that day we don't know to kill his wife

484

00:23:06,600 --> 00:23:08,600

and that he was going to leave the hospital,

485

00:23:08,600 --> 00:23:11,600

come home and kill her, do it silently

486

00:23:11,600 --> 00:23:13,600

when that didn't work, he used the gun.

487

00:23:13,600 --> 00:23:16,600

Then pick up his son at school,

488

00:23:16,600 --> 00:23:19,600

then pick up Maxine for the luncheon date

489

00:23:19,600 --> 00:23:22,600

that was made at the very last minute of the night before.

490

00:23:22,600 --> 00:23:26,600

Have lunch, have an alibi for the period of time involved,

491

00:23:26,600 --> 00:23:30,600

and then have either someone or himself find the body

492

00:23:30,600 --> 00:23:33,600

and have a very good alibi.

493

00:23:34,600 --> 00:23:36,600

Are you ready with your next witness?

494

00:23:36,600 --> 00:23:38,600

Branyan's defense was simple.

495

00:23:38,600 --> 00:23:41,600

He and his attorney were certain his alibi was airtight

496

00:23:41,600 --> 00:23:43,600

as they maintained it was impossible for Branyan

497

00:23:43,600 --> 00:23:45,600

to be in two places at once.

498

00:23:45,600 --> 00:23:48,600

Mrs. Kentra, when you got home,

499

00:23:48,600 --> 00:23:50,600

did you have occasion to look at your clock?

500

00:23:50,600 --> 00:23:52,600

Yes.

501

00:23:52,600 --> 00:23:55,600

This alibi was strengthened when Branyan's next door neighbor

502

00:23:55,600 --> 00:23:58,600

testified that she had heard the fatal gunshots at 11.20 a.m.

503

00:23:58,600 --> 00:24:02,600

while Branyan was reportedly still at his clinic.

504

00:24:02,600 --> 00:24:05,600

The doctor Branyan's left the hospital at 11.30,

505

00:24:05,600 --> 00:24:09,600

and I heard the shots at 11.20, and I'm sure of it.

506

00:24:09,600 --> 00:24:11,600

I was sure then, and I'm sure now

507

00:24:11,600 --> 00:24:14,600

that it's impossible for him to shoot his wife,

508

00:24:14,600 --> 00:24:16,600

to be there at that time.

509

00:24:16,600 --> 00:24:18,600

When you heard those sounds,

510

00:24:18,600 --> 00:24:20,600

while you were putting away the groceries,

511

00:24:20,600 --> 00:24:24,600

surprisingly, this testimony would have little impact on the jury.

512

00:24:24,600 --> 00:24:26,600

The prosecution pursued their theory

513

00:24:26,600 --> 00:24:29,600

that the murder took place after Branyan left the clinic.

514

00:24:29,600 --> 00:24:31,600

Yes.

515

00:24:31,600 --> 00:24:36,600

Now, officer, you also stated that you drove certain routes

516

00:24:36,600 --> 00:24:38,600

and that you totaled these times

517

00:24:38,600 --> 00:24:41,600

and that the time you arrived at was from 6 to 12 minutes.

518

00:24:41,600 --> 00:24:42,600

Is that right?

519

00:24:42,600 --> 00:24:44,600

Yes.

520

00:24:44,600 --> 00:24:46,600

Police testified that they had driven

521

00:24:46,600 --> 00:24:48,600

and timed Branyan's route on the morning of the murder

522

00:24:48,600 --> 00:24:50,600

and had determined that he did, in fact,

523

00:24:50,600 --> 00:24:52,600

have just enough time to kill his wife

524

00:24:52,600 --> 00:24:54,600

before he picked up his son.

525

00:24:54,600 --> 00:24:56,600

Yes.

526

00:24:56,600 --> 00:24:58,600

And when you arrived at Dr. Branyan's home...

527

00:24:58,600 --> 00:25:00,600

However, in one of the trial's most dramatic moments,

528

00:25:00,600 --> 00:25:02,600

the defense challenged this timetable.

529

00:25:02,600 --> 00:25:04,600

It's not the watch.

530

00:25:04,600 --> 00:25:08,600

By the way, officer, when you arrived at the nursery school,

531

00:25:08,600 --> 00:25:10,600

whose little boy did you use?

532

00:25:10,600 --> 00:25:13,600

I don't understand your question, sir.

533

00:25:13,600 --> 00:25:16,600

Well, I assumed that you went to the nursery school

534

00:25:16,600 --> 00:25:18,600

to cover some time about checking on a kid.

535

00:25:18,600 --> 00:25:21,600

Now, how much time did you allow for him to pick up his son

536

00:25:21,600 --> 00:25:23,600

from the nursery school?

537

00:25:23,600 --> 00:25:25,600

We allowed no time for that.

538

00:25:25,600 --> 00:25:27,600

You didn't allow that?

539

00:25:27,600 --> 00:25:32,600

I can remember feeling a chill in the courtroom

540

00:25:32,600 --> 00:25:34,600

when he sent us,

541

00:25:34,600 --> 00:25:37,600

in that you are moving a lot slower

542

00:25:37,600 --> 00:25:39,600

when you've got a child in tow

543

00:25:39,600 --> 00:25:42,600

than when you're with yourself.

544

00:25:42,600 --> 00:25:45,600

So I thought that was an effective point.

545

00:25:45,600 --> 00:25:47,600

The point of...

546

00:25:47,600 --> 00:25:49,600

The other point is when he walked into the house

547

00:25:49,600 --> 00:25:51,600

knowing his wife was dead with the kid.

548

00:25:51,600 --> 00:25:55,600

That's a shocking thing to see if he knew what had happened.

549

00:25:55,600 --> 00:25:59,600

So I thought those were the strong points they had going for them.

550

00:25:59,600 --> 00:26:02,600

On May 28, 1968,

551

00:26:02,600 --> 00:26:04,600

after deliberating for eight hours,

552

00:26:04,600 --> 00:26:07,600

the jury reached their decision.

553

00:26:07,600 --> 00:26:12,600

Mr. Foreman, has the jury reached the verdict?

554

00:26:12,600 --> 00:26:13,600

We have, Your Honor.

555

00:26:13,600 --> 00:26:15,600

Read the verdict, Mr. Foreman.

556

00:26:15,600 --> 00:26:18,600

We, the jury, find the defendant,

557

00:26:18,600 --> 00:26:20,600

John Brannian Jr. Guilty,

558

00:26:20,600 --> 00:26:24,600

and manner and form is charged in the indictment.

559

00:26:25,600 --> 00:26:28,600

When the judge said I was guilty,

560

00:26:28,600 --> 00:26:29,600

the verdict will be entered.

561

00:26:29,600 --> 00:26:32,600

I felt hollow.

562

00:26:32,600 --> 00:26:35,600

I felt as though I was no longer.

563

00:26:35,600 --> 00:26:37,600

But I know what I did do.

564

00:26:37,600 --> 00:26:39,600

I remember kind of sticking my head up.

565

00:26:39,600 --> 00:26:42,600

I don't know why, but I remember that.

566

00:26:42,600 --> 00:26:43,600

I did that.

567

00:26:43,600 --> 00:26:47,600

I know my shoulders got a little straighter.

568

00:26:47,600 --> 00:26:50,600

But it certainly hurt when he said that.

569

00:26:50,600 --> 00:26:53,600

It really hurt.

570

00:26:54,600 --> 00:26:56,600

Congratulations.

571

00:26:59,600 --> 00:27:01,600

For three years, Brannian was free on board

572

00:27:01,600 --> 00:27:03,600

as he appealed his verdict.

573

00:27:03,600 --> 00:27:08,600

During this time, he married his former girlfriend Shirley.

574

00:27:08,600 --> 00:27:12,600

I loved him, and I still love him very much.

575

00:27:12,600 --> 00:27:17,600

And I could not desert him

576

00:27:17,600 --> 00:27:20,600

as people were beginning to do.

577

00:27:21,600 --> 00:27:24,600

He was a walking shell.

578

00:27:24,600 --> 00:27:27,600

He loved both of us.

579

00:27:27,600 --> 00:27:30,600

He loved Donna, and he loved me.

580

00:27:32,600 --> 00:27:35,600

In April of 1971, his appeal was denied,

581

00:27:35,600 --> 00:27:37,600

and John Brannian was ordered to begin

582

00:27:37,600 --> 00:27:40,600

serving his 20 to 30 year sentence.

583

00:27:42,600 --> 00:27:44,600

A few days later, after the Supreme Court

584

00:27:44,600 --> 00:27:46,600

declined to hear his case,

585

00:27:46,600 --> 00:27:49,600

Brannian jumped bail and left the country.

586

00:27:50,600 --> 00:27:53,600

For 12 years, Brannian lived in Africa,

587

00:27:53,600 --> 00:27:56,600

but in 1983, he was apprehended in Uganda.

588

00:27:59,600 --> 00:28:02,600

He was brought back to Illinois to serve his sentence.

589

00:28:05,600 --> 00:28:09,600

An innocent person should be found innocent in this country.

590

00:28:09,600 --> 00:28:12,600

We've been taught that ever since we were kids.

591

00:28:12,600 --> 00:28:14,600

So because of that, I had to flee

592

00:28:14,600 --> 00:28:17,600

because I couldn't get justice anywhere else.

593

00:28:17,600 --> 00:28:19,600

The evidence against me proves

594

00:28:19,600 --> 00:28:22,600

that I couldn't have done the crime, yet I'm here.

595

00:28:25,600 --> 00:28:27,600

Currently, two investigators

596

00:28:27,600 --> 00:28:30,600

have volunteered their services to Brannian's case.

597

00:28:30,600 --> 00:28:32,600

Anthony DeMotto, a prominent law professor

598

00:28:32,600 --> 00:28:34,600

from Northwestern University,

599

00:28:34,600 --> 00:28:36,600

and his wife, Arthur Barber DeMotto,

600

00:28:36,600 --> 00:28:38,600

are working with Brannian's wife Shirley

601

00:28:38,600 --> 00:28:40,600

to document what they consider to be

602

00:28:40,600 --> 00:28:43,600

a shocking miscarriage of justice.

603

00:28:44,600 --> 00:28:46,600

When Mrs. Brannian said,

604

00:28:46,600 --> 00:28:48,600

my husband was innocent,

605

00:28:48,600 --> 00:28:50,600

I was very skeptical about that.

606

00:28:50,600 --> 00:28:52,600

I don't tend to believe people's statements

607

00:28:52,600 --> 00:28:54,600

about things like this.

608

00:28:54,600 --> 00:28:56,600

And it was only Barber's investigation of the thing

609

00:28:56,600 --> 00:28:59,600

that proved to me that no matter what John Brannian said,

610

00:28:59,600 --> 00:29:01,600

he couldn't have done it.

611

00:29:01,600 --> 00:29:03,600

That was the amazing thing about this case.

612

00:29:03,600 --> 00:29:05,600

It was an impossibility case,

613

00:29:05,600 --> 00:29:08,600

not a case of somebody's word against somebody else's word.

614

00:29:09,600 --> 00:29:12,600

John Brannian is currently serving his sentence in Illinois

615

00:29:12,600 --> 00:29:15,600

for the 1967 murder of his wife Donna.

616

00:29:15,600 --> 00:29:18,600

He could be incarcerated until the year 2006.

617

00:29:20,600 --> 00:29:22,600

But Tony and Barber DeMotto

618

00:29:22,600 --> 00:29:25,600

believe he deserves to be released immediately.

619

00:29:25,600 --> 00:29:27,600

They claim that by reconstructing the events

620

00:29:27,600 --> 00:29:31,600

that took place in the late morning of December 22, 1967,

621

00:29:31,600 --> 00:29:35,600

it can be proved that John Brannian did not shoot his wife.

622

00:29:36,600 --> 00:29:40,600

The fact is that when his wife was murdered,

623

00:29:40,600 --> 00:29:43,600

he was a mile and a half away treating patients in a hospital,

624

00:29:43,600 --> 00:29:45,600

and that's proven. That's a fact.

625

00:29:45,600 --> 00:29:48,600

So there's no, there's no legal rule whatsoever

626

00:29:48,600 --> 00:29:51,600

that says an innocent man has to stay in prison.

627

00:29:51,600 --> 00:29:53,600

Now stay off this, okay?

628

00:29:53,600 --> 00:29:55,600

As it cannot definitely be proved

629

00:29:55,600 --> 00:29:58,600

that the fatal shots were fired at 1120,

630

00:29:58,600 --> 00:30:01,600

then it is possible that Donna was murdered later.

631

00:30:01,600 --> 00:30:03,600

Brannian's gun was shot in the face

632

00:30:03,600 --> 00:30:05,600

of the murder of his wife.

633

00:30:05,600 --> 00:30:07,600

But when he was murdered later,

634

00:30:07,600 --> 00:30:10,600

Brannian's guilt or innocence might rest on the 10-minute window

635

00:30:10,600 --> 00:30:13,600

of time between 1135 when he left his clinic

636

00:30:13,600 --> 00:30:15,600

and the time that he arrived at the nursery school

637

00:30:15,600 --> 00:30:17,600

to pick up his son.

638

00:30:17,600 --> 00:30:19,600

What seems to be your trouble, Ken?

639

00:30:19,600 --> 00:30:22,600

Oh, I'm a stomach doctor out of pain.

640

00:30:22,600 --> 00:30:24,600

John Brannian spent the morning of December 22

641

00:30:24,600 --> 00:30:27,600

at his clinic where he saw 14 different patients.

642

00:30:27,600 --> 00:30:30,600

Three to four times a day.

643

00:30:30,600 --> 00:30:33,600

The doctor at the clinic located here

644

00:30:33,600 --> 00:30:35,600

stopped outside to talk with Leonard Scott,

645

00:30:35,600 --> 00:30:38,600

the hospital's administrator.

646

00:30:38,600 --> 00:30:41,600

He was next seen by a teacher at his son's nursery school

647

00:30:41,600 --> 00:30:44,600

here approximately 10 minutes later.

648

00:30:44,600 --> 00:30:46,600

In order to have murdered Donna,

649

00:30:46,600 --> 00:30:48,600

Brannian would have had to have driven to his home,

650

00:30:48,600 --> 00:30:50,600

shot his wife,

651

00:30:50,600 --> 00:30:52,600

and then raced to his son's school

652

00:30:52,600 --> 00:30:55,600

all in less than 10 minutes.

653

00:30:55,600 --> 00:30:59,600

Now there's no way the police could have made this in six minutes.

654

00:30:59,600 --> 00:31:01,600

In the trial, police claimed that this drive

655

00:31:01,600 --> 00:31:03,600

could be made in as little as six minutes.

656

00:31:03,600 --> 00:31:05,600

But according to the Domados,

657

00:31:05,600 --> 00:31:09,600

the police grossly underestimated the actual time this drive would take.

658

00:31:09,600 --> 00:31:12,600

The Domados traveled the same route several times.

659

00:31:12,600 --> 00:31:15,600

It took them at least 11 minutes.

660

00:31:17,600 --> 00:31:20,600

The police testified that they got it down as low as six minutes,

661

00:31:20,600 --> 00:31:24,600

but they also said that they sometimes it took them 12 minutes.

662

00:31:24,600 --> 00:31:27,600

Well, that's a huge disparity between six and 12.

663

00:31:27,600 --> 00:31:30,600

I just wonder how they could have pulled off that six minutes,

664

00:31:30,600 --> 00:31:32,600

and they certainly couldn't have done it at a time

665

00:31:32,600 --> 00:31:34,600

when there were other cars on the street,

666

00:31:34,600 --> 00:31:36,600

or pedestrians, or snow, or anything else,

667

00:31:36,600 --> 00:31:39,600

like the conditions that John Brannian had to drive it in.

668

00:31:39,600 --> 00:31:41,600

It's one thing to say, well, if you're going to kill your wife,

669

00:31:41,600 --> 00:31:43,600

you can speed and hurry up to get home,

670

00:31:43,600 --> 00:31:45,600

but you can't drive through a car ahead of you.

671

00:31:45,600 --> 00:31:47,600

Now if the streets are filled with pedestrians

672

00:31:47,600 --> 00:31:50,600

and people crossing the streets and other kinds of cars,

673

00:31:50,600 --> 00:31:53,600

it was just clearly impossible.

674

00:31:53,600 --> 00:31:55,600

Out of the bedroom, around the corner,

675

00:31:55,600 --> 00:31:57,600

and she would have been resisting.

676

00:31:57,600 --> 00:32:00,600

Further evidence that Brannian could not have shot his wife

677

00:32:00,600 --> 00:32:04,600

came when the Domados consulted pathologist Douglas Shanklin.

678

00:32:04,600 --> 00:32:09,600

After examining the original autopsy reports on Donna Brannian,

679

00:32:09,600 --> 00:32:12,600

Shanklin believes he can prove that she was first assaulted

680

00:32:12,600 --> 00:32:16,600

at least a half hour before John Brannian had even begun to drive home.

681

00:32:16,600 --> 00:32:20,600

An attack, he believes, would have required at least two assailants.

682

00:32:21,600 --> 00:32:24,600

It's very important to note that there were bruises

683

00:32:24,600 --> 00:32:26,600

and other marks on her body,

684

00:32:26,600 --> 00:32:29,600

the most particular of which is a groove in her neck.

685

00:32:29,600 --> 00:32:33,600

It was a very deep groove that began in the anterior neck

686

00:32:33,600 --> 00:32:36,600

and moved laterally and then disappeared behind

687

00:32:36,600 --> 00:32:40,600

as though somebody was standing in back with a taut cord,

688

00:32:40,600 --> 00:32:43,600

not strong enough to strangle a person,

689

00:32:43,600 --> 00:32:45,600

but strong enough to hold them,

690

00:32:45,600 --> 00:32:48,600

to move their body as you wish them to move

691

00:32:48,600 --> 00:32:51,600

and to restrain them from escape.

692

00:32:51,600 --> 00:32:54,600

And of course, as soon as she was shot and the cord was released,

693

00:32:54,600 --> 00:32:56,600

this groove stayed there.

694

00:32:56,600 --> 00:32:59,600

It's not going to continue to form after death

695

00:32:59,600 --> 00:33:01,600

because of the loss of circulation.

696

00:33:01,600 --> 00:33:05,600

It takes at least 15 minutes for such a groove to be formed

697

00:33:05,600 --> 00:33:07,600

and possibly longer.

698

00:33:09,600 --> 00:33:15,600

So you've got a minimum of 15 minutes before the gun is used.

699

00:33:16,600 --> 00:33:20,600

The latest time in testimony for those sounds was approximately 11.25.

700

00:33:20,600 --> 00:33:24,600

So that pushes the beginning of the cord around the neck

701

00:33:24,600 --> 00:33:26,600

15 minutes earlier,

702

00:33:26,600 --> 00:33:30,600

and seems to me that the crime began probably around 11 o'clock

703

00:33:30,600 --> 00:33:32,600

or a few minutes before that.

704

00:33:32,600 --> 00:33:35,600

So she would lie that way in the alcove,

705

00:33:35,600 --> 00:33:36,600

and that would mean...

706

00:33:36,600 --> 00:33:38,600

I think Dr. Branion is innocent of this crime

707

00:33:38,600 --> 00:33:41,600

because there were two people at least involved,

708

00:33:41,600 --> 00:33:44,600

one of whom held the victim for a period of time

709

00:33:44,600 --> 00:33:46,600

but could not have shot at the same time.

710

00:33:46,600 --> 00:33:49,600

Bang, bang. She falls.

711

00:33:49,600 --> 00:33:53,600

So there had to be two parties to the final action of this scenario.

712

00:33:55,600 --> 00:33:58,600

But even if Donna Branion was killed by two assailants

713

00:33:58,600 --> 00:34:00,600

while her husband was at work,

714

00:34:00,600 --> 00:34:02,600

former prosecutor Patrick Tuitt

715

00:34:02,600 --> 00:34:05,600

believes that Branion may still be guilty.

716

00:34:06,600 --> 00:34:09,600

I always, even at the time of trial,

717

00:34:09,600 --> 00:34:12,600

had doubts as to whether he actually pulled the trigger.

718

00:34:12,600 --> 00:34:15,600

That was our theory of the prosecution.

719

00:34:15,600 --> 00:34:20,600

But I always felt and I still feel that he was somehow responsible for his death.

720

00:34:20,600 --> 00:34:22,600

He is a man that deals with facts.

721

00:34:22,600 --> 00:34:26,600

If there are facts that say that I did not kill my wife,

722

00:34:26,600 --> 00:34:28,600

but I hired someone else,

723

00:34:28,600 --> 00:34:30,600

then let him come forth with them.

724

00:34:30,600 --> 00:34:33,600

How? What gives him the right, the arrogance

725

00:34:33,600 --> 00:34:37,600

to say that he believes something

726

00:34:37,600 --> 00:34:39,600

when there's no evidence of it?

727

00:34:39,600 --> 00:34:41,600

If there was a second party involved,

728

00:34:41,600 --> 00:34:44,600

why did he get the second party and hang us both?

729

00:34:45,600 --> 00:34:48,600

There is no basis in the law whatsoever to say,

730

00:34:48,600 --> 00:34:51,600

oh, well, if he wasn't there, he hired someone to do it.

731

00:34:51,600 --> 00:34:55,600

It's the jury should hear if there was any evidence of anyone being hired,

732

00:34:55,600 --> 00:34:58,600

and if they didn't, if the state chose not to present that theory,

733

00:34:58,600 --> 00:35:01,600

then it is legally irrelevant.

734

00:35:02,600 --> 00:35:07,600

Today, John Branion and the Damados have exhausted all avenues of judicial appeal.

735

00:35:07,600 --> 00:35:11,600

Branion's only hope is clemency from the governor of Illinois,

736

00:35:11,600 --> 00:35:14,600

a clemency that cannot be delayed much longer,

737

00:35:14,600 --> 00:35:16,600

for John Branion needs a heart transplant

738

00:35:16,600 --> 00:35:20,600

that will be denied him as long as he remains in prison.

739

00:35:20,600 --> 00:35:29,600

Convicted murderers are not put on the waiting list for heart transplants.

740

00:35:29,600 --> 00:35:34,600

So he's almost, you know, he has a double death sentence.

741

00:35:34,600 --> 00:35:38,600

He's already in prison for a crime that he did not commit,

742

00:35:38,600 --> 00:35:42,600

and then he can't get the medical care that he needs to continue living.

743

00:35:42,600 --> 00:35:46,600

So in essence, he has a death sentence.

744

00:35:50,600 --> 00:35:55,600

Tonight, John Branion is in prison, and for him, time is running out.

745

00:35:55,600 --> 00:35:59,600

Is he a murderer or an innocent victim?

746

00:35:59,600 --> 00:36:03,600

If Branion's operation is delayed much further,

747

00:36:03,600 --> 00:36:06,600

the answer will make little difference.

748

00:36:20,600 --> 00:36:23,600

In a moment, the poignant story of a real-life Santa Claus

749

00:36:23,600 --> 00:36:26,600

who has given happiness to children across the country.

750

00:36:26,600 --> 00:36:29,600

But today, Joseph Shambier wants a Christmas present of his own

751

00:36:29,600 --> 00:36:32,600

to speak with his long-lost daughter.

752

00:36:33,600 --> 00:36:41,600

All of us are familiar with the department store

753

00:36:41,600 --> 00:36:45,600

Santa's and street corner Santa's who appear each December.

754

00:36:45,600 --> 00:36:48,600

These jolly men are cheerful symbols of the season.

755

00:36:48,600 --> 00:36:52,600

Yet our next story is about a Santa Claus who behind his jolly smile

756

00:36:52,600 --> 00:36:55,600

has been hiding a broken heart for more than 40 years.

757

00:36:55,600 --> 00:36:59,600

Tonight, maybe you can help bring about a happy ending to this story,

758

00:36:59,600 --> 00:37:02,600

which we call Santa's Baby.

759

00:37:04,600 --> 00:37:07,600

The story begins toward the end of the Great Depression.

760

00:37:07,600 --> 00:37:11,600

In 1937, the economy was slowly beginning to improve,

761

00:37:11,600 --> 00:37:14,600

but Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania remained hard hit.

762

00:37:14,600 --> 00:37:17,600

Bread lines were still a common sight.

763

00:37:17,600 --> 00:37:20,600

Good jobs were hard to come by.

764

00:37:20,600 --> 00:37:26,600

20-year-old Joseph Felix Shambier could find work only as a Western Union delivery boy.

765

00:37:26,600 --> 00:37:29,600

Against the backdrop of his bleak depression hit city,

766

00:37:29,600 --> 00:37:32,600

Joe did, however, find a wife.

767

00:37:32,600 --> 00:37:36,600

He and Garnet Ullry, two loners without family ties of their own,

768

00:37:36,600 --> 00:37:38,600

fell in love and married.

769

00:37:38,600 --> 00:37:41,600

They were both eager to begin a family.

770

00:37:41,600 --> 00:37:45,600

Two months after the wedding, Garnet became pregnant.

771

00:37:47,600 --> 00:37:51,600

On June 16, 1939, I was at work at Western Union.

772

00:37:51,600 --> 00:37:54,600

I had 14 cents in my pocket.

773

00:37:54,600 --> 00:37:58,600

Felix, Felix, you better get a move on.

774

00:37:58,600 --> 00:38:00,600

Your wife's just gone to labor.

775

00:38:00,600 --> 00:38:01,600

What?

776

00:38:01,600 --> 00:38:02,600

I just gave her another phone.

777

00:38:02,600 --> 00:38:05,600

My wife's gone to labor. She's having a baby.

778

00:38:05,600 --> 00:38:11,600

Neither I nor Garnet had any idea that this would happen so suddenly.

779

00:38:11,600 --> 00:38:14,600

We had given it like an additional couple of weeks.

780

00:38:14,600 --> 00:38:18,600

The doctor thought it would be an additional couple of weeks.

781

00:38:18,600 --> 00:38:20,600

But that wasn't solved.

782

00:38:23,600 --> 00:38:26,600

Needless to say, I ran up the three flights of stairs,

783

00:38:26,600 --> 00:38:30,600

and I was excited. Very excited.

784

00:38:31,600 --> 00:38:34,600

Garnet was further along in her labor than Joe had expected.

785

00:38:34,600 --> 00:38:38,600

The landlady had called for a doctor, but he had not yet arrived.

786

00:38:45,600 --> 00:38:49,600

Here, you just hold on. Hold on.

787

00:38:49,600 --> 00:38:51,600

Come on to my belt. There, now pull on.

788

00:38:51,600 --> 00:38:53,600

Hold on that time.

789

00:38:53,600 --> 00:38:56,600

I think the baby's coming.

790

00:38:56,600 --> 00:39:01,600

I didn't expect that baby to come rushing out and say hello right off the bat

791

00:39:01,600 --> 00:39:03,600

without the doctor being there.

792

00:39:03,600 --> 00:39:04,600

Come on.

793

00:39:04,600 --> 00:39:07,600

You know, that's quite a shock to the system.

794

00:39:09,600 --> 00:39:11,600

Come on, sweetheart.

795

00:39:11,600 --> 00:39:23,600

The two of us were so elated.

796

00:39:23,600 --> 00:39:27,600

It was like a package sent from heaven.

797

00:39:31,600 --> 00:39:35,600

At one o'clock in the afternoon, the doctor finally walked in.

798

00:39:35,600 --> 00:39:38,600

He pronounced both mother and daughter in good health

799

00:39:38,600 --> 00:39:40,600

and congratulated the new parents.

800

00:39:40,600 --> 00:39:42,600

Little baby girl, huh?

801

00:39:42,600 --> 00:39:49,600

Garnet, for the better part of an hour or so,

802

00:39:49,600 --> 00:39:52,600

had the baby in her arm and she kept talking about it.

803

00:39:52,600 --> 00:39:54,600

You know, it was quite...

804

00:39:54,600 --> 00:39:59,600

You'd have never known that she had gone through this misery

805

00:39:59,600 --> 00:40:02,600

of giving birth.

806

00:40:02,600 --> 00:40:04,600

She was so pleased with it.

807

00:40:04,600 --> 00:40:07,600

And I was too, because my goodness,

808

00:40:07,600 --> 00:40:09,600

look at that pretty girl.

809

00:40:09,600 --> 00:40:12,600

She got a little bit tired and I didn't have a bassinet,

810

00:40:12,600 --> 00:40:15,600

so what I did was wrap the baby up in the blanket

811

00:40:15,600 --> 00:40:17,600

and I placed her in the drawer.

812

00:40:17,600 --> 00:40:22,600

I had a bureau dresser there with three drawers.

813

00:40:22,600 --> 00:40:24,600

The bottom drawer was quite long and large

814

00:40:24,600 --> 00:40:28,600

and so once I made a bed in there and placed the baby in there.

815

00:40:28,600 --> 00:40:30,600

Temporary.

816

00:40:30,600 --> 00:40:36,600

And then Garnet had a sharp nap

817

00:40:36,600 --> 00:40:41,600

and woke up again and started speaking in a strange fashion.

818

00:40:41,600 --> 00:40:47,600

For example, Felix, if anything happens to me,

819

00:40:47,600 --> 00:40:50,600

make sure Alice Miller gets the baby.

820

00:40:50,600 --> 00:40:53,600

Alice raised Garnet, so to speak.

821

00:40:53,600 --> 00:40:56,600

There was a relationship there.

822

00:40:56,600 --> 00:40:58,600

More like a second mother.

823

00:40:58,600 --> 00:41:00,600

They were very close.

824

00:41:00,600 --> 00:41:03,600

Just get some.

825

00:41:04,600 --> 00:41:07,600

Take care of the baby, Alberta.

826

00:41:10,600 --> 00:41:14,600

Four o'clock, she just died.

827

00:41:14,600 --> 00:41:19,600

No fight, no suffering.

828

00:41:19,600 --> 00:41:21,600

Nothing of that sort.

829

00:41:21,600 --> 00:41:23,600

Garnet, wake up, what's wrong?

830

00:41:27,600 --> 00:41:29,600

I was numb.

831

00:41:29,600 --> 00:41:31,600

I was absolutely numb.

832

00:41:33,600 --> 00:41:36,600

So I followed her death bed wish.

833

00:41:36,600 --> 00:41:41,600

I did what I thought I was supposed to do.

834

00:41:41,600 --> 00:41:45,600

Joe took his baby daughter, Alberta Elaine, to Alice Miller.

835

00:41:45,600 --> 00:41:49,600

You're going to be a good little girl for Mrs. Miller, Alberta Elaine?

836

00:41:49,600 --> 00:41:50,600

Everything will be all right.

837

00:41:50,600 --> 00:41:53,600

There was a sense of relief in that

838

00:41:53,600 --> 00:41:56,600

I knew that the baby would be well taken care of.

839

00:41:56,600 --> 00:41:59,600

She'd be brought up properly.

840

00:41:59,600 --> 00:42:01,600

Your shirt's not too much trouble.

841

00:42:01,600 --> 00:42:03,600

Oh, no trouble at all.

842

00:42:03,600 --> 00:42:06,600

We'll have a good time.

843

00:42:06,600 --> 00:42:08,600

Well, I appreciate it.

844

00:42:08,600 --> 00:42:10,600

I know this is what Garnet wanted.

845

00:42:10,600 --> 00:42:12,600

God rest her soul.

846

00:42:12,600 --> 00:42:15,600

Alice was a very conscientious woman.

847

00:42:15,600 --> 00:42:19,600

Very loving, caring person.

848

00:42:19,600 --> 00:42:21,600

Good common sense.

849

00:42:21,600 --> 00:42:25,600

She was a typical good American woman.

850

00:42:26,600 --> 00:42:28,600

Don't worry.

851

00:42:29,600 --> 00:42:31,600

Thank you, man.

852

00:42:34,600 --> 00:42:37,600

Good jobs were still almost impossible to find.

853

00:42:37,600 --> 00:42:41,600

So one week before Pearl Harbor, Joe Shambier enlisted.

854

00:42:41,600 --> 00:42:47,600

He felt the army was his best chance to give some financial security to his tiny daughter.

855

00:42:47,600 --> 00:42:51,600

Joe was assigned to basic training in Fort Devens, Massachusetts,

856

00:42:51,600 --> 00:42:53,600

then shipped out to the Pacific Theater.

857

00:42:53,600 --> 00:42:57,600

His little daughter never left his mind.

858

00:42:57,600 --> 00:43:00,600

And all during the time that I was in the service,

859

00:43:00,600 --> 00:43:04,600

I kept a little prayer book here,

860

00:43:04,600 --> 00:43:07,600

the little manual is what it's called.

861

00:43:07,600 --> 00:43:11,600

And inside that manual is a picture of my daughter.

862

00:43:11,600 --> 00:43:15,600

It's the only picture that I have of her.

863

00:43:15,600 --> 00:43:20,600

I wrote to the Nulles several times.

864

00:43:20,600 --> 00:43:23,600

I don't know, five, six times.

865

00:43:23,600 --> 00:43:26,600

I never received a reply.

866

00:43:26,600 --> 00:43:29,600

No communications with Alice at all.

867

00:43:29,600 --> 00:43:32,600

All during the time I was in the army.

868

00:43:32,600 --> 00:43:39,600

In August of 1943, Joe suffered a head injury during air raid drills in the Panama Canal Zone.

869

00:43:39,600 --> 00:43:42,600

After treatment, he was plagued with intermittent neck and back pain,

870

00:43:42,600 --> 00:43:46,600

so he was shipped to a Boston hospital for further treatment.

871

00:43:46,600 --> 00:43:50,600

On the way, his plane stopped in Pittsburgh.

872

00:43:50,600 --> 00:43:55,600

At the Allegheny Airport, when we landed, we had a half an hour to refuel,

873

00:43:55,600 --> 00:43:58,600

and I asked permission to call Alice Miller.

874

00:43:58,600 --> 00:44:02,600

After all, she had the baby, and I wanted to find out about the baby, how she was doing,

875

00:44:02,600 --> 00:44:07,600

and so far the baby was roughly five years old at the time.

876

00:44:07,600 --> 00:44:08,600

Hello.

877

00:44:08,600 --> 00:44:15,600

This strange voice of a woman answered, and when I told her who I was,

878

00:44:15,600 --> 00:44:19,600

she said I was supposed to be dead, that the baby had been adopted.

879

00:44:19,600 --> 00:44:23,600

Bang, went to receive him.

880

00:44:23,600 --> 00:44:25,600

You gotta go.

881

00:44:25,600 --> 00:44:28,600

The nameless woman on the telephone left Joe dumbfounded.

882

00:44:28,600 --> 00:44:35,600

She said Alberta Elaine's adoption records were sealed, and he would never see his daughter again.

883

00:44:35,600 --> 00:44:37,600

Well, it's a blow.

884

00:44:37,600 --> 00:44:39,600

To say the least, it's a blow.

885

00:44:39,600 --> 00:44:43,600

It's enough to blow your mind.

886

00:44:43,600 --> 00:44:47,600

Despite Joe's best efforts, he could not locate his baby daughter.

887

00:44:47,600 --> 00:44:50,600

He never stopped trying to find her.

888

00:44:50,600 --> 00:44:54,600

In 1946, he married for the second time, then moved to New England,

889

00:44:54,600 --> 00:44:57,600

where he worked as a clerk at the Veterans Administration.

890

00:45:03,600 --> 00:45:07,600

Oh, Rudolph! Oh, oh boy! Slow down!

891

00:45:07,600 --> 00:45:11,600

One year later, at Christmas time, Joe phoned a little girl in his neighborhood

892

00:45:11,600 --> 00:45:13,600

pretending to be Santa Claus.

893

00:45:13,600 --> 00:45:15,600

Ho, ho, ho, ho!

894

00:45:15,600 --> 00:45:18,600

So this is Santa Claus calling from the North Pole.

895

00:45:18,600 --> 00:45:20,600

The little girl was delighted.

896

00:45:20,600 --> 00:45:24,600

Soon, all the other neighborhood children were clamoring for Santa to call them.

897

00:45:24,600 --> 00:45:28,600

By the next Christmas, a local radio station had put Joe on the air.

898

00:45:28,600 --> 00:45:33,600

Soon, thanks to newspaper articles across the country, telephone operators everywhere

899

00:45:33,600 --> 00:45:38,600

were referring young callers who asked to speak to Santa Claus to Joe's shambere.

900

00:45:38,600 --> 00:45:40,600

What would you like for Christmas?

901

00:45:40,600 --> 00:45:43,600

I'm writing this down in my big book.

902

00:45:43,600 --> 00:45:45,600

That's not work.

903

00:45:45,600 --> 00:45:47,600

It's a challenge.

904

00:45:47,600 --> 00:45:51,600

But you know, deep down, that you're doing something good,

905

00:45:51,600 --> 00:45:55,600

and at the same time, you are looking for that needle in the haystack.

906

00:45:55,600 --> 00:45:58,600

Namely, Alberta Elaine.

907

00:45:58,600 --> 00:46:01,600

That would be a heaven sent.

908

00:46:01,600 --> 00:46:08,600

To be able to look at her, be able to sit down with her, talk with her,

909

00:46:08,600 --> 00:46:13,600

maybe give her a big hug if she would let me.

910

00:46:13,600 --> 00:46:17,600

It's my own flesh and blood, and she deserves to know what took place.

911

00:46:37,600 --> 00:46:42,600

For every mystery, there is someone somewhere who knows the truth.

912

00:46:42,600 --> 00:46:44,600

Perhaps that's someone who's watching.

913

00:46:44,600 --> 00:46:46,600

Perhaps it's you.