

1

00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:09,600

This program is about unsolved mysteries. Whenever possible, the actual family members

2

00:00:09,600 --> 00:00:13,680

and police officials have participated in recreating the events. What you are about

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00:00:13,680 --> 00:00:20,960

to see is not a news broadcast.

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00:00:20,960 --> 00:00:26,320

1957. At the height of the Cold War, Army Lieutenant Paul Whipkey was an observation

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00:00:26,640 --> 00:00:31,360

pilot for government atomic bomb testing. Almost immediately, he began to show symptoms

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00:00:31,360 --> 00:00:36,720

of radiation poisoning. Then Paul Whipkey vanished and was declared a deserter. Did

7

00:00:36,720 --> 00:00:41,760

he get lost and perish in Death Valley or was Paul Whipkey recruited for a top secret

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00:00:41,760 --> 00:00:43,920

mission?

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00:00:43,920 --> 00:00:49,720

Tonya Koprnick and Richard Bocklage, two lovers, a study in contrasts. She was a promising

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00:00:49,720 --> 00:00:55,000

physician dedicated to her career. He was a struggling pharmacy student with an unpredictable

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00:00:55,000 --> 00:01:02,280

temper and a penchant for murder. In 1936, the depression and the looming threat of

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00:01:02,280 --> 00:01:08,240

poverty took Gary Rosman from his family. Now Gary's sister Gwen hopes you can help find

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00:01:08,240 --> 00:01:11,280

her long lost brother.

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00:01:11,280 --> 00:01:15,280

Join me. Perhaps you may be able to help solve a mystery.

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00:01:55,000 --> 00:02:02,000

In March of 1980, Dr. Tonya Koprnick fell in love with Richard Bocklage. She was a practicing

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00:02:16,000 --> 00:02:21,280

resident at the Truman Medical Center in Kansas City. He was a pharmacy student at the University

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00:02:21,280 --> 00:02:28,280

of Missouri. It seemed an unlikely match. Richard was 10 years younger than Tonya. He

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00:02:28,760 --> 00:02:34,840

had grown up in St. Louis, the quintessential all-American boy. Five years earlier, Tonya

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00:02:34,840 --> 00:02:41,840

had emigrated from Yugoslavia to study medicine, leaving behind all of her friends and family.

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00:02:42,560 --> 00:02:48,080

Like many immigrants, Tonya Koprnick dreamed of an America paid with gold. She was determined

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00:02:48,080 --> 00:02:54,000

to overcome the tremendous obstacles of building a career and a life in a new country. At 34,

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00:02:54,000 --> 00:02:59,040

she seemed to have achieved the American dream, except for one thing. Tonya longed for someone

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00:02:59,040 --> 00:03:05,520

to share her life with, and her Richard Bocklage.

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00:03:05,520 --> 00:03:10,360

Richard was young and dynamic and showered Tonya with attention. Soon after they met,

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00:03:10,360 --> 00:03:17,360

he moved into Tonya's apartment. Six months later, Richard proposed and Tonya accepted.

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00:03:18,080 --> 00:03:25,080

But her friends had strong misgivings about the younger man Tonya intended to marry.

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00:03:25,080 --> 00:03:32,080

I did not really like him because he was using her financially and morally. He was using

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00:03:32,640 --> 00:03:39,640

her for a lot of things, like using her master's charge card and was kind of using car and

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00:03:40,000 --> 00:03:46,080

using everything.

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00:03:46,080 --> 00:03:51,280

Richard spent more and more time with Tonya and less time in class. Midway through his

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00:03:51,280 --> 00:03:56,960

sophomore year, he fell behind in his studies. Unbeknownst to Tonya, Richard was perilously

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00:03:56,960 --> 00:04:01,560

close to flunking out of school.

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00:04:01,560 --> 00:04:08,560

He was not real motivated. He wanted it. He wanted it to be a pharmacist. But he was

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00:04:10,120 --> 00:04:17,120

you have to want it bad enough to devote many, many hours to the academic study end of it.

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00:04:19,000 --> 00:04:25,840

And I'm not sure he was willing to do that.

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00:04:25,840 --> 00:04:32,840

On July 19th, 1980, university officials notified Richard that he was academically ineligible.

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00:04:32,840 --> 00:04:39,840

Richard demanded that Tonya use her connections in the admissions department to have him readmitted

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00:04:46,720 --> 00:04:53,720

to school.

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00:04:54,360 --> 00:05:01,360

I was thinking maybe he's under drugs or alcohol because his behavior was changing. He was

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00:05:01,720 --> 00:05:08,360

kind of a wild person.

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00:05:08,360 --> 00:05:15,360

Richard began to exhibit violent mood swings. For three weeks, Tonya tolerated his outbursts.

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00:05:15,360 --> 00:05:19,360

Finally on September 2nd, she broke off the engagement and ordered Richard out of her

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00:05:19,360 --> 00:05:25,360

apartment.

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00:05:25,560 --> 00:05:31,040

Two weeks later, Richard Baklis returned to class as if nothing had changed. One instructor,

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00:05:31,160 --> 00:05:38,040

familiar with Richard's explosive disposition, asked the assistant dean to speak with him.

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00:05:38,040 --> 00:05:45,040

Richard, I need to talk to you for a minute.

47

00:05:45,040 --> 00:05:47,040

Sure.

48

00:05:47,040 --> 00:05:52,040

Could we go out in the hallway?

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00:05:52,040 --> 00:05:55,040

Richard, we don't show you being enrolled in this class.

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00:05:55,040 --> 00:06:00,040

Well, the admissions said it would take a few weeks for the paperwork to go through.

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00:06:00,040 --> 00:06:04,040

Richard, there's a proper procedure.

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00:06:04,040 --> 00:06:09,040

Richard always gave me the impression that anything that happened was not his fault.

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00:06:09,040 --> 00:06:16,040

It was just that he could not cope with the fact that this was his responsibility.

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00:06:16,040 --> 00:06:23,040

And again, he just, you know, he just couldn't believe that this was happening to him.

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00:06:23,040 --> 00:06:29,040

Increasingly desperate, Richard wrote to the admissions office, begging school officials

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00:06:29,040 --> 00:06:33,040

to reconsider his case.

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00:06:33,040 --> 00:06:39,040

On September 18th at 3 p.m., the admissions committee convened to determine Richard's fate.

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00:06:39,040 --> 00:06:41,040

The decision was unanimous.

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00:06:41,040 --> 00:06:45,040

Jackie, would you please take care of that as soon as possible?

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00:06:45,040 --> 00:06:53,040

Richard's appeal was denied and a secretary was ordered to call him with the news.

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00:06:53,040 --> 00:06:57,040

Hoping to avoid a confrontation, the committee quickly dispersed.

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00:06:57,040 --> 00:07:02,040

At 3.45, two professors spotted Richard driving towards the dean's office.

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00:07:02,040 --> 00:07:12,040

They immediately headed in the opposite direction.

64

00:07:12,040 --> 00:07:14,040

Excuse me, have you seen Professor Strickland?

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00:07:14,040 --> 00:07:18,040

Bucklage roamed the hallway searching for the dean of admissions.

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00:07:18,040 --> 00:07:21,040

Under his arm, he carried a large manila folder.

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00:07:21,040 --> 00:07:26,040

Some witnesses feared that it concealed a weapon.

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00:07:26,040 --> 00:07:27,040

The dean in?

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00:07:27,040 --> 00:07:28,040

No, he's not.

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00:07:28,040 --> 00:07:29,040

When will he be back?

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00:07:29,040 --> 00:07:31,040

I'm not sure he's coming back today.

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00:07:31,040 --> 00:07:32,040

I'll just wait for him, okay?

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00:07:32,040 --> 00:07:33,040

Okay.

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00:07:33,040 --> 00:08:02,040

Three hours later, Tanya Colbrick returned to her apartment after work.

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00:08:02,040 --> 00:08:25,040

By the time police and paramedics arrived, Tanya Colbrick was dead.

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00:08:25,040 --> 00:08:31,040

She had been shot three times in the head with a 45 automatic.

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00:08:31,040 --> 00:08:36,040

I came out and then I heard the first gunshot and I turned and he just, he shot her two

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00:08:36,040 --> 00:08:37,040

more times.

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00:08:37,040 --> 00:08:43,040

There was a witness at the scene and she saw this man walk up to the side of the doctor's

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00:08:43,040 --> 00:08:46,040

car and shoot her three times in the face.

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00:08:46,040 --> 00:08:53,040

She recognized him as being the man that dated Dr. Colbrick, Richard Bucklage.

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00:08:53,040 --> 00:09:00,040

Later during the investigation, we found out that Mr. Bucklage had purchased a 45 caliber

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00:09:00,040 --> 00:09:06,040

handgun himself and when we checked his residence to see if the weapon was there, we found out

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00:09:06,040 --> 00:09:09,040

it was gone.

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00:09:09,040 --> 00:09:12,040

Authorities launched an immediate search for Richard Bucklage.

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00:09:12,040 --> 00:09:17,040

Six days later, Royal Canadian Mounted Police found Richard's car in Thompson, Manitoba,

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00:09:17,040 --> 00:09:22,040

Canada, more than 900 miles north of Kansas City.

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00:09:22,040 --> 00:09:25,040

Richard was seen by two area residents.

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00:09:25,040 --> 00:09:29,040

He then dropped from sight.

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00:09:29,040 --> 00:09:33,040

I personally think he's back in the United States.

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00:09:33,040 --> 00:09:39,040

I think he would have gotten tired of being that far north with no family and that's,

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00:09:39,040 --> 00:09:41,040

that's not his style.

93

00:09:41,040 --> 00:09:46,040

His style was a little bit faster, a little flashier, a little looser and that might have

94

00:09:46,040 --> 00:09:49,040

been okay for a year or two but I think he's back.

95

00:09:49,040 --> 00:09:53,040

He's back here somewhere.

96

00:09:53,040 --> 00:09:58,040

Two months after Tanya was murdered, her parents in Yugoslavia notified police that they received

97

00:09:58,040 --> 00:10:05,040

an unsigned letter post-March, September 16, 1980, two days before the murder.

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00:10:05,040 --> 00:10:09,040

The envelope was addressed in Richard Bucklage's handwriting.

99

00:10:09,040 --> 00:10:15,040

The letter was a vengeful diatribe which took the tone of a terrorist manifesto.

100

00:10:15,040 --> 00:10:23,040

Dear Copric family, your daughter Tanya Copric has been executed in Kansas City, Missouri.

101

00:10:23,040 --> 00:10:30,040

She has caused so much grief, anguish and turmoil to so many Americans that this act was necessary.

102

00:10:30,040 --> 00:10:35,040

Her execution was inevitable.

103

00:10:35,040 --> 00:10:39,040

At the time of Tanya's murder, Richard Bucklage was 24 years old.

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00:10:39,040 --> 00:10:43,040

He is six feet tall and weighs 170 pounds.

105

00:10:43,040 --> 00:10:54,040

This computer-aged photograph shows how he might look today at the age of 34.

106

00:10:54,040 --> 00:10:58,040

Next, the haunting story of an army lieutenant who mysteriously vanished.

107

00:10:58,040 --> 00:11:05,040

His commanding officer believes he was on a secret CIA mission.

108

00:11:14,040 --> 00:11:21,040

August 17, 1958, Death Valley, California.

109

00:11:21,040 --> 00:11:28,040

Temperature, 120 degrees Fahrenheit.

110

00:11:28,040 --> 00:11:39,040

42 miles from the nearest town, a fishing game warden is surprised to come across an abandoned car.

111

00:11:39,040 --> 00:11:46,040

The keys are still in the ignition. There is no sign of foul play.

112

00:11:46,040 --> 00:11:53,040

The car is registered to Lieutenant Paul Whipkey of Fort Ord, California, nearly 400 miles away.

113

00:11:53,040 --> 00:12:00,040

The army states that Whipkey had been missing for five weeks and in fact has been declared a deserter.

114

00:12:00,040 --> 00:12:04,040

Surprisingly, Paul Whipkey had always been considered a perfect soldier

115

00:12:04,040 --> 00:12:09,040

and no one could understand why he would choose the deserter's post.

116

00:12:09,040 --> 00:12:14,040

I don't think Paul deserted. It was completely out of character for Paul to do such a thing.

117

00:12:14,040 --> 00:12:18,040

He was a loyal American soldier devoted to his work.

118

00:12:18,040 --> 00:12:25,040

I think the army knew exactly what happened to him and he was part of a big smoke screen cover-up.

119

00:12:25,040 --> 00:12:33,040

The strange and unsettling account of Paul Whipkey began at Pennsylvania State University where he was an ROTC honor graduate.

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00:12:33,040 --> 00:12:40,040

In 1954, after basic training, he was granted a coveted slot at Army Pilot School.

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00:12:40,040 --> 00:12:45,040

In July of 1956, Whipkey was posted to Fort Ord, California.

122

00:12:45,040 --> 00:12:52,040

Two years later, he was assigned the duties of captain, even though he remained a first lieutenant in rank.

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00:12:52,040 --> 00:12:57,040

Paul was quite worried about his own capability if he had the leadership ability

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00:12:57,040 --> 00:13:03,040

and if he could take care of this job or perform in a proper manner.

125

00:13:03,040 --> 00:13:10,040

He studied a lot and he spent many hours at night trying to learn the job and to do a good job.

126

00:13:10,040 --> 00:13:17,040

Whipkey seemed to undergo a personality change. He became withdrawn and somber.

127

00:13:17,040 --> 00:13:26,040

He also began to suffer several upsetting physical symptoms, which may have been a result of a temporary duty assignment in the summer of 1957.

128

00:13:33,040 --> 00:13:40,040

Paul spent two months at Camp Desert Rock, Nevada as an observation pilot for government atomic bomb tests.

129

00:13:40,040 --> 00:13:47,040

In that role, he was exposed to radioactive fallout. He soon noticed unusual blotches on his skin.

130

00:13:47,040 --> 00:13:52,040

Several months later, back at Fort Ord, he had to have all of his teeth extracted.

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00:13:58,040 --> 00:14:04,040

July 10, 1958, late in the afternoon, Whipkey left Fort Ord.

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00:14:04,040 --> 00:14:09,040

He said his destination was Monterey, California, less than a mile away.

133

00:14:14,040 --> 00:14:20,040

Paul Whipkey never returned to the base. The next morning, he was listed absent without leave.

134

00:14:20,040 --> 00:14:27,040

After 30 days, he was declared a deserter. The following week, his car was found in Death Valley.

135

00:14:28,040 --> 00:14:36,040

Army investigators traced a gasoline receipt found in the car to Mojave, California, 145 miles from Death Valley.

136

00:14:36,040 --> 00:14:42,040

Whipkey had purchased gas there on July the 11th, the day after he left Fort Ord.

137

00:14:47,040 --> 00:14:53,040

The evening before, Whipkey had signed the guest register at White's Motel and apparently spent the night.

138

00:14:54,040 --> 00:14:58,040

The next morning, he drove out of Mojave and vanished.

139

00:15:00,040 --> 00:15:09,040

The Army concluded that Paul Whipkey had broken under the stress of his new assignment, wandered off into the desert, and without food or water, perished.

140

00:15:09,040 --> 00:15:15,040

The Army report made no mention of Paul Whipkey's physical symptoms. His body was never found.

141

00:15:16,040 --> 00:15:20,040

Paul's brother, Carl Whipkey, immediately began to investigate on his own.

142

00:15:20,040 --> 00:15:26,040

More than 30 years later, he is still trying to piece together the truth about his brother's

disappearance.

143

00:15:29,040 --> 00:15:34,040

On the very morning, Paul turned up missing. Two soldiers stripped his room at Fort Ord.

144

00:15:35,040 --> 00:15:39,040

Everything was removed, including Paul's personal belongings.

145

00:15:40,040 --> 00:15:49,040

Regulations state that the next of kin or legal representative must be notified before packing belongings, and they didn't notify us at that time.

146

00:15:51,040 --> 00:15:56,040

I was very suspicious of this action as soon as I discovered this had taken place.

147

00:16:00,040 --> 00:16:05,040

Four weeks after Paul Whipkey disappeared, a rancher driving through Death Valley saw his car.

148

00:16:06,040 --> 00:16:13,040

It was driven by a man in military uniform. Paul Whipkey left Fort Ord wearing civilian clothes.

149

00:16:16,040 --> 00:16:23,040

When the car was found a week later, a pile of cigarette butts was beside it. Paul Whipkey did not smoke.

150

00:16:26,040 --> 00:16:34,040

Also troubling to Whipkey's family was the fact that the Army did not mount a search for Paul's body until nine months after his car was found.

151

00:16:35,040 --> 00:16:39,040

And it was only by accident that Carl Whipkey heard about the car at all.

152

00:16:41,040 --> 00:16:47,040

The only way that I learned about it was due to an official call to an enlisted man at Fort Ord.

153

00:16:48,040 --> 00:16:57,040

In a half an hour, he called back, very excited, and he said, this is classified information and requested that I did not tell anyone where I had received this information.

154

00:16:58,040 --> 00:17:03,040

After I was informed that Paul was a deserter, I called six Army headquarters.

155

00:17:04,040 --> 00:17:14,040

And I was inquiring about his status. I found it almost unbelievable that he would be classified as a deserter.

156

00:17:15,040 --> 00:17:26,040

I was curious what was the basis for it. And I was quickly and promptly advised that Charlie, forget this, the case has been closed, and I would recommend that you don't carry any further.

157

00:17:27,040 --> 00:17:31,040

And in essence, I was told to shut up and drive and blow away.

158

00:17:34,040 --> 00:17:39,040

In 1957, Lieutenant Colonel Lewis was a captain stationed at Cap Desert Rock.

159

00:17:40,040 --> 00:17:45,040

He recalled the day he saw two men in plain clothes talking to Paul Whipkey and another officer.

160

00:17:46,040 --> 00:17:50,040

On the way to the airfield one morning, there was two visitors on the airfield over talking with Paul.

161

00:17:51,040 --> 00:17:58,040

I noticed that they had gone directly to the airfield instead of reporting operations, which was required for a purpose of security.

162

00:17:59,040 --> 00:18:01,040

So I asked them for their identification.

163

00:18:02,040 --> 00:18:03,040

Excuse me gentlemen, did you see that sign over there?

164

00:18:04,040 --> 00:18:05,040

Yes, sir.

165

00:18:06,040 --> 00:18:08,040

This is a restricted area. Do you have any identification?

166

00:18:09,040 --> 00:18:10,040

Yes, we do.

167

00:18:11,040 --> 00:18:16,040

They showed me their military identification cards, and the picture did verify who the two were.

168

00:18:16,040 --> 00:18:20,040

Looks okay. Is everything all right here?

169

00:18:21,040 --> 00:18:22,040

Yes, sir.

170

00:18:23,040 --> 00:18:24,040

There we are.

171

00:18:26,040 --> 00:18:35,040

Lewis did not know which government agency the two men represented, but over the next few weeks, he often saw Paul Whipkey talking to the same two men.

172

00:18:36,040 --> 00:18:47,040

When Lieutenant Whipkey would come in after they had departed, you could feel and sense a rigidity in his personality traits and his mannerism.

173

00:18:49,040 --> 00:18:50,040

Whipkey, is everything okay?

174

00:18:51,040 --> 00:18:52,040

Everything's fine, sir.

175

00:18:54,040 --> 00:18:55,040

Sure.

176

00:18:56,040 --> 00:18:57,040

Sure.

177

00:18:58,040 --> 00:19:03,040

Finally, I asked him, Paul, is there something that is wrong, something you need to explain?

178

00:19:04,040 --> 00:19:06,040

And he said, no, I'm fine. I have no problems.

179

00:19:08,040 --> 00:19:14,040

Years later, Lewis realized there could have been a logical explanation for Whipkey's association

with the men.

180

00:19:15,040 --> 00:19:20,040

During that era, there was a tremendous amount of nationwide recruiting conducted by the CIA.

181

00:19:20,040 --> 00:19:27,040

And with Paul's qualification, Lieutenant Whipkey's qualification, he would have been an exceptional candidate for such an assignment.

182

00:19:28,040 --> 00:19:37,040

January of the year he disappeared, he told me during a telephone conversation that he was going to be going on an assignment that he was going to make a name for himself.

183

00:19:38,040 --> 00:19:47,040

Before he could tell me what it was, he was interrupted by some officers moving in the proximity of his desk and he could no longer talk to me about the subject.

184

00:19:50,040 --> 00:20:03,040

I theorize that Paul was recruited into an Army CIA joint program. He was going along at that time.

185

00:20:08,040 --> 00:20:14,040

When Paul left Fort Ortega drove to the town of Mahoby, California and checked into Whites Motel,

186

00:20:15,040 --> 00:20:26,040

it's a possibility that he was met there by Army Intelligence Asians or the CIA and transported to Southeast Asia, possibly from Edwards Air Force Base, which is nearby.

187

00:20:27,040 --> 00:20:29,040

Lieutenant, good morning. Everything going alright?

188

00:20:30,040 --> 00:20:31,040

Yes, sir, thank you.

189

00:20:32,040 --> 00:20:33,040

Sleep okay last night?

190

00:20:34,040 --> 00:20:35,040

Yes.

191

00:20:35,040 --> 00:20:43,040

It's a good thing that when Paul left on his secret assignment, he turned his car over to the military, who kept it for four weeks before driving it into the desert.

192

00:20:48,040 --> 00:20:54,040

I think the Army took his car out to the desert to get rid of it, out of sight, out of mind.

193

00:20:55,040 --> 00:21:08,040

If they would just say, yes, he died on a secret assignment, we'd live with that. We're all oil, American citizens in our family and we would buy that.

194

00:21:09,040 --> 00:21:13,040

Until the Army tell us what happened, there will be no peace in our family.

195

00:21:16,040 --> 00:21:19,040

There is a final puzzling twist to the saga of Paul Whitkey.

196

00:21:20,040 --> 00:21:21,040

Charlie!

197

00:21:21,040 --> 00:21:26,040

One of Paul's closest friends, Lieutenant Charlie Gess, had served with him at Camp Desert Rock and again at Fort Ord.

198

00:21:27,040 --> 00:21:32,040

Gess disappeared in an airplane 11 days after Paul had vanished.

199

00:21:34,040 --> 00:21:39,040

Just over a year later, Gess' remains were found near a crashed plane northwest of Death Valley.

200

00:21:41,040 --> 00:21:46,040

Curiously, the wreckage showed a different serial number from the plane Gess had taken off in.

201

00:21:47,040 --> 00:21:59,040

In 1982, the Army board for correction of military records met to review Paul Whitkey's case and found no basis to support his status as a deserter.

202

00:22:00,040 --> 00:22:05,040

Two months later, the board officially changed Whitkey's status from deserter to died in the line of duty.

203

00:22:06,040 --> 00:22:15,040

Carl Whitkey hopes that someone watching tonight served with his brother at Camp Desert Rock or Fort Ord and has knowledge that will shed light on Paul's mysterious disappearance.

204

00:22:18,040 --> 00:22:24,040

Next, a woman's quest to find a long lost brother she has not seen for more than 50 years. Perhaps you can help.

205

00:22:36,040 --> 00:22:45,040

Catherine Bickford was 19 years old when she fell in love with Andrew Rossman, a man twice her age.

206

00:22:46,040 --> 00:22:50,040

It was 1932 in Lake Placid, New York, a height of the Great Depression.

207

00:22:51,040 --> 00:22:56,040

Rossman cut a dashing, romantic figure, a rugged outdoorsman who made his living,

208

00:22:56,040 --> 00:22:59,040

making a living, hunting and trapping in the Adirondack Mountains.

209

00:23:00,040 --> 00:23:02,040

That's the spot I was telling you about.

210

00:23:03,040 --> 00:23:05,040

Oh, Andrew, it's beautiful.

211

00:23:07,040 --> 00:23:13,040

Catherine knew that Andrew was not the marrying kind, but she was in love and nothing else mattered.

212

00:23:18,040 --> 00:23:22,040

For that time and place, Catherine and Andrew's relationship was certainly unconventional.

213

00:23:22,040 --> 00:23:28,040

They never married, but lived together and had two children, a daughter Gwen and a son Gary.

214

00:23:29,040 --> 00:23:35,040

Sadly, family life and responsibility proved too much for Andrew. He left Catherine when Gary was still an infant.

215

00:23:36,040 --> 00:23:42,040

Catherine went to work as a waitress to support her children, but was often made to feel ashamed of being an unwed mother.

216

00:23:43,040 --> 00:23:48,040

However, one family, the Winches, who had known Catherine from childhood, never wavered in their support.

217

00:23:52,040 --> 00:23:58,040

Suffer the little children to come to me and do not forbid them, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

218

00:24:01,040 --> 00:24:05,040

In the winter of 1935, Catherine had her son Gary baptized.

219

00:24:06,040 --> 00:24:10,040

Despite local gossip, the Winch family went to the baptism and stood by Catherine.

220

00:24:11,040 --> 00:24:12,040

Amen.

221

00:24:14,040 --> 00:24:17,040

This is Gary Bickford, the newest member of the family of God.

222

00:24:18,040 --> 00:24:22,040

By the time of Gary's baptism, Catherine was in deep financial trouble.

223

00:24:23,040 --> 00:24:26,040

After the ceremony, she took Florence, the Winches' daughter, aside.

224

00:24:32,040 --> 00:24:34,040

What is it, Catherine? What's wrong?

225

00:24:35,040 --> 00:24:40,040

I got kicked out of my boyfriend today, and I can't even get back into getting any of my stuff until I get work.

226

00:24:41,040 --> 00:24:42,040

What are you going to do?

227

00:24:42,040 --> 00:24:45,040

My uncle owns a restaurant in Scrooge Lake, and he said I could come there and work for him.

228

00:24:46,040 --> 00:24:47,040

But I can't take Gary with me.

229

00:24:48,040 --> 00:24:49,040

Would you like us to keep him for a few days?

230

00:24:50,040 --> 00:24:54,040

Catherine found herself facing the most difficult decision a mother could ever make.

231

00:24:55,040 --> 00:25:00,040

She had to earn a living to provide for her children, even if it meant being separated from them.

232

00:25:03,040 --> 00:25:05,040

Looks like we're all set. Ready to go?

233

00:25:06,040 --> 00:25:09,040

Daddy, Catherine wants to know if we can take in Gary for a few weeks. Is that okay?

234

00:25:09,040 --> 00:25:11,040

Oh, a few weeks, sure.

235

00:25:12,040 --> 00:25:17,040

Several days later, Catherine left Lake Placid to take the job at her uncle's restaurant,

236

00:25:18,040 --> 00:25:22,040

securing the knowledge that Gary would be well cared for by Florence and her family.

237

00:25:24,040 --> 00:25:28,040

Catherine's daughter, Gwen, who was three years old, went to live with Catherine's mother and father.

238

00:25:35,040 --> 00:25:38,040

Three years passed. Catherine visited whenever she could.

239

00:25:39,040 --> 00:25:43,040

Throughout this period, Gwen stayed with her grandparents, and Florence Winch took care of Gary.

240

00:25:47,040 --> 00:25:54,040

Florence and my mom were great friends, and when my mother left my brother with Florence,

241

00:25:55,040 --> 00:26:02,040

I think she felt that it was a temporary thing and that she would get herself together and be able to support the family, you know.

242

00:26:03,040 --> 00:26:07,040

But it never really worked out that way. There were really difficult times.

243

00:26:07,040 --> 00:26:16,040

Times were very hard, and Catherine was two hours away working, and she couldn't get there.

244

00:26:17,040 --> 00:26:22,040

It wasn't something that she didn't want to do. It was something that, a circumstance.

245

00:26:24,040 --> 00:26:29,040

In 1939, when Gary was three, county child welfare officials contacted Catherine.

246

00:26:30,040 --> 00:26:34,040

She signed papers which she thought would allow Florence to continue in the role of foster parent.

247

00:26:34,040 --> 00:26:40,040

In fact, the papers gave the county authorization to put Gary up for adoption.

248

00:26:41,040 --> 00:26:46,040

When they told me that he was ready for adoption, I tried to adopt him.

249

00:26:47,040 --> 00:26:52,040

But I wasn't married at the time, and in those days you couldn't adopt a child unless you were married.

250

00:26:53,040 --> 00:27:00,040

So then my mother and father tried to adopt him. They were too old. There was an age limit at that time.

251

00:27:01,040 --> 00:27:12,040

So we had very good neighbors, and the neighbors took up a petition at that time and asked the county if I could keep him.

252

00:27:13,040 --> 00:27:18,040

And of course that was unheard of, so I couldn't keep him.

253

00:27:18,040 --> 00:27:30,040

Finally, in the early spring of 1939, a county welfare worker informed Florence's family that Gary would be taken away for adoption.

254

00:27:31,040 --> 00:27:36,040

She gave them no idea when or where. Florence began to prepare Gary for the journey.

255

00:27:36,040 --> 00:27:49,040

Look at the train, Gary. It's very heavy. This train was all the way to New York.

256

00:27:50,040 --> 00:27:56,040

When we would go by the railroad station to go to church or go to the store and things, he was afraid of the train.

257

00:27:57,040 --> 00:28:04,040

I suppose because it made a noise, it was a steam engine. So in order that he wouldn't be afraid of it, I took him up to the train.

258

00:28:04,040 --> 00:28:13,040

The conductor saw us and I was talking to Gary about the train and it wouldn't hurt you. The conductor said, come on on to the train.

259

00:28:20,040 --> 00:28:26,040

We went on to the train and I sit in a seat with him. The train didn't go anywhere. I was sitting there.

260

00:28:27,040 --> 00:28:30,040

But I don't think he was afraid of the train after that.

261

00:28:31,040 --> 00:28:33,040

Do you mind if we sit here a while?

262

00:28:34,040 --> 00:28:46,040

I didn't talk to Gary at all about him leaving. I never told him that he might be going away. Now I could see maybe I should have, but at that time I didn't.

263

00:28:47,040 --> 00:28:49,040

I never told him that he was ever going to leave.

264

00:28:53,040 --> 00:28:58,040

Eight days after Gary's fourth birthday, the child welfare worker returned.

265

00:28:59,040 --> 00:29:09,040

One morning at nine o'clock, the social worker drove up and came into the house and said she was going to take him.

266

00:29:10,040 --> 00:29:19,040

I always thought that she wouldn't come and that one way or the other we would keep him. Either Catherine or our family would keep him.

267

00:29:20,040 --> 00:29:22,040

But of course that didn't happen.

268

00:29:25,040 --> 00:29:27,040

I've packed a few things for him.

269

00:29:28,040 --> 00:29:29,040

That won't be necessary.

270

00:29:30,040 --> 00:29:34,040

And I said, well, could he take a toy? No, he couldn't.

271

00:29:36,040 --> 00:29:42,040

So with that, she just took him by the hand and the car was down in front of the house and she took him.

272

00:29:43,040 --> 00:29:55,040

I think now as I look back on it that Gary thought he was just going for a ride with somebody. That he was coming back. I don't think he ever thought he was going to leave.

273

00:29:59,040 --> 00:30:06,040

By the time Florence was able to contact Catherine, it was too late. Gary had already been taken to New York City.

274

00:30:07,040 --> 00:30:16,040

Eventually Catherine and her daughter Gwen were reunited. But in 1984 Catherine died. She never had a chance to tell Gary how much she loved him.

275

00:30:17,040 --> 00:30:33,040

Well, I felt a real desire to find my brother in that I wanted to express to him how much guilt my mother had experienced through her life because of this loss.

276

00:30:33,040 --> 00:30:42,040

And to maybe be able to fill in some of the feelings that she had toward him and still carried onward even to her death.

277

00:30:43,040 --> 00:30:54,040

And I thought, well, I could give this to him on her behalf. I think it's about the last thing I can do for her.

278

00:30:54,040 --> 00:31:12,040

Gary Pickford was born in Saranac Lake, New York on June 6, 1935. He has brown hair and brown eyes. On Gary's birth certificate, his first name was probably spelled with two R's and his last name may have been listed as Rossman.

279

00:31:12,040 --> 00:31:29,040

When we return, the perplexing case of a missing millionaire, his family believes he was murdered.

280

00:31:42,040 --> 00:32:00,040

St. Croix, the U.S. Virgin Islands, a lush tropical getaway known as the American Paradise. In 1984 Jim Rice, a wealthy and successful contractor, came to the island of St. Croix with his wife Astarte to build their dream house and live the good life.

281

00:32:02,040 --> 00:32:05,040

But two years later the marriage was crumbling.

282

00:32:06,040 --> 00:32:09,040

Dalia, I wish you'd reconsidered coming to San Francisco with me.

283

00:32:09,040 --> 00:32:12,040

I've already told you, I can't. I've already made plans.

284

00:32:12,040 --> 00:32:26,040

In July 1986, Jim planned to fly to San Francisco for shoulder surgery. Astarte refused to accompany him, so Jim Rice was scheduled to make the trip alone. Now police believe he never made the trip at all.

285

00:32:26,040 --> 00:32:30,040

To get an operation without his wife, which is more important.

286

00:32:30,040 --> 00:32:41,040

My dad was scheduled to arrive on July 29th and he never showed up at my house. Never called from the airport or we just never heard from him again.

287

00:32:42,040 --> 00:32:55,040

Jim Rice was a man's man. He played football in college and was a highly decorated bomber pilot during the Second World War. Through his construction business, Jim amassed a sizable fortune worth nearly two million dollars.

288

00:32:56,040 --> 00:33:18,040

In 1970, Jim Rice met Astarte Davis and was instantly captivated. Jim turned his life upside down and left his first wife to marry Astarte. He proved to be a tumultuous union marked by business failures, separations, reconciliations, and finally Astarte's imprisonment in 1982 for bankruptcy fraud.

289

00:33:19,040 --> 00:33:28,040

Yet through it all, Jim Rice remained loyal to Astarte. Then, three years after Jim vanished, Astarte Rice also disappeared.

290

00:33:30,040 --> 00:33:41,040

She was born Esther Bell White, but as an adult changed her name to Astarte after a primitive goddess of love. She had three grown sons from a previous marriage which ended in divorce.

291

00:33:42,040 --> 00:33:57,040

She seemed to make my dad happy and I was happy for him. I figured he saw something in her that I didn't see. As long as he was happy, then that was okay.

292

00:33:58,040 --> 00:34:04,040

In 1979, Jim and Astarte moved to Kona, Hawaii and eventually started a charter fishing business.

293

00:34:07,040 --> 00:34:16,040

Two years later, while Jim was out of town, Astarte's son, Noble, was cleaning their boat when it was rocked by an explosion. Noble was seriously injured but recovered.

294

00:34:16,040 --> 00:34:22,040

By good fortune or design, Astarte just happened to be near the dock at the time.

295

00:34:23,040 --> 00:34:36,040

Well, there was a large debt on the yacht and they carried insurance on the yacht. Noble indicated that he was just aboard cleaning the ship, which is kind of strange because it was like two or three o'clock in the morning.

296

00:34:37,040 --> 00:34:46,040

It would be strange time to be cleaning a boat using gasoline and the yacht caught on fire and he said it was just purely an accident.

297

00:34:48,040 --> 00:34:55,040

But there was sufficient cause for the authorities back there in Hawaii to charge both Astarte and Noble with the arson of the yacht.

298

00:34:55,040 --> 00:35:04,040

After the explosion, Jim and Astarte separated, both returned to California. Astarte and her son were never extradited back to Hawaii for trial.

299

00:35:04,040 --> 00:35:15,040

In April 1981, Astarte filed for bankruptcy. A year later, she was charged with altering official court documents. She was convicted and sent to federal prison.

300

00:35:16,040 --> 00:35:24,040

When Jim visited Astarte in prison, she convinced him that she had mended her ways and they reconciled.

301

00:35:27,040 --> 00:35:36,040

After her release in 1983, Jim and Astarte moved to St. Croix in the Virgin Islands and built their dream house on an isolated bluff overlooking the Caribbean.

302

00:35:37,040 --> 00:35:49,040

He got down to St. Croix and expected to build his dream house and Astarte was going to go straight and not get into any trouble.

303

00:35:49,040 --> 00:35:56,040

And I think that he found out that she was not rehabilitated.

304

00:35:57,040 --> 00:36:08,040

On July 20th, 1986, Jim phoned his daughter Kathy in the States and told her that he would be flying to California for shoulder surgery in a week. He never arrived.

305

00:36:10,040 --> 00:36:20,040

Jim disappeared around the end of July, 1986. Kathy kept trying to reach him by telephone and was totally unsuccessful for about two weeks.

306

00:36:21,040 --> 00:36:32,040

When she finally was able to reach his home in St. Croix, she talked to Astarte and at that time Astarte had told her that Jim had run off with a woman from Australia.

307

00:36:35,040 --> 00:36:44,040

A few days later, when she talked to Astarte, the story was that Jim had gone on an airplane and flown from St. Croix to Miami.

308

00:36:44,040 --> 00:36:51,040

So we had two completely different stories and later on Astarte denied that either of these things had occurred.

309

00:36:51,040 --> 00:36:59,040

So we know that right from the beginning she lied about what had happened to Jim and how he disappeared.

310

00:37:01,040 --> 00:37:07,040

Two months later, Kathy Clements hired Dennis Chirac, a private investigator, to look into her father's disappearance.

311

00:37:08,040 --> 00:37:11,040

I'm looking for a gentleman by the name of James Rice. He's a missing person.

312

00:37:12,040 --> 00:37:23,040

Chirac came across a customs declaration dated July 28th, 1986. The day Jim was to leave for

California. On the form, Jim Rice's signature appeared to have been forged.

313

00:37:23,040 --> 00:37:25,040

Chirac notified the FBI.

314

00:37:26,040 --> 00:37:32,040

I wonder if you do me a favor and hold this aside. I'll have one of the agents from the FBI stop by and pick it up so they can process it.

315

00:37:33,040 --> 00:37:42,040

We noted that Jim supposedly had flown on an airplane on July 28th, 1986 from St. Croix to Miami.

316

00:37:43,040 --> 00:37:58,040

In fact, the airplane ticket had been bought by a person using the name of Jim Rice and in fact the people who actually flew on that flight were Astarte, Astarte's son, Noble, and Noble's girlfriend.

317

00:37:59,040 --> 00:38:12,040

Private investigator Dennis Chirac also discovered that a week prior to Jim's scheduled flight to San Francisco, Astarte had filed documents which gave her control of Jim Rice's entire estate.

318

00:38:13,040 --> 00:38:15,040

He's a husband to Jim. Where is he?

319

00:38:16,040 --> 00:38:21,040

He's, we're meeting him in Miami very shortly and that's one of the reasons we're in kind of a rush.

320

00:38:21,040 --> 00:38:33,040

Probably the key document was a power of attorney in Astarte's name. Investigation however showed that this original power of attorney was in the name of Jim's daughter, Kathy Clements.

321

00:38:34,040 --> 00:38:40,040

And Astarte had done a cut and paste job on the document and inserted her name in its place.

322

00:38:40,040 --> 00:38:42,040

I hope you see you again.

323

00:38:43,040 --> 00:39:01,040

I feel because Jim would have known that his assets were beginning to be changed or taken away from him, that Jim's disappearance had to happen in that 12-hour period from the time that he last spoke to Kathy to the following morning when the documents were presented to the notaries.

324

00:39:02,040 --> 00:39:03,040

Hi ladies.

325

00:39:04,040 --> 00:39:08,040

I don't know if you had a chance to look at all the shirts and everything yet, but the jacket is really great.

326

00:39:08,040 --> 00:39:23,040

Our investigation showed that just days after Jim's disappearance, all of his personal effects, his tools, his truck were all sold in a garage sale that was conducted at the house and sold by Astarte and Noble Davis.

327

00:39:24,040 --> 00:39:39,040

Four months later, Kathy Clements received a typewritten letter from Australia signed by Jim Rice. Once again, Jim's signature appeared to have been forged and one other discrepancy cast doubt on the letter's authenticity.

328

00:39:40,040 --> 00:39:57,040

The most important thing was the fact that the letter throughout contained the words, I am, put together. We know that from letters which we can attribute to Astarte that that was a grammatical error that she frequently used.

329

00:39:58,040 --> 00:40:18,040

I just thought that was the coolest thing anybody could do, be to write a letter to a family of a missing person posing as that person still being alive, giving an ounce of false hope. I just thought that was so cool.

330

00:40:19,040 --> 00:40:32,040

Kathy Clements and Dennis Schirrar convinced that Jim Rice was murdered and that his body lay somewhere beneath the blue waters of the Caribbean and that Astarte Rice may hold the key to solving the mystery.

331

00:40:32,040 --> 00:40:43,040

In January 1989, Astarte Rice was charged with bank and mail fraud because of her attempt to seize Jim Rice's assets. She was released on bail and disappeared.

332

00:40:44,040 --> 00:41:01,040

In 1991, Astarte Davis Rice was arrested in Santa Barbara, California. Because Jim Rice's body had never been found, authorities were unable to charge her in his death, though the FBI still considers her a prime suspect.

333

00:41:01,040 --> 00:41:12,040

Astarte did, however, plead guilty to bank and passport fraud in the United States and in St. Croix and served the first portion of her 15-year sentence in a medium security prison in California.

334

00:41:12,040 --> 00:41:21,040

In 1997, Astarte was transferred to the minimum security federal prison camp in Dublin, California to complete the rest of her term.

335

00:41:21,040 --> 00:41:29,040

A year later, taking advantage of the lighter security, Astarte Davis Rice simply walked out of the facility.

336

00:41:30,040 --> 00:41:35,040

She was present during the morning count at approximately 5 and 6 a.m.

337

00:41:35,040 --> 00:41:42,040

Then during the course of the day, there was a fire drill conducted which resulted in another prison count being conducted at 10 a.m.

338

00:41:42,040 --> 00:41:50,040

She wasn't scheduled to work that day and so was the time frame between the first count and the second count that she had the opportunity to leave the facility.

339

00:41:50,040 --> 00:41:54,040

She's very cunning. She's smart, she's intelligent and she's very dangerous.

340

00:41:54,040 --> 00:42:01,040

She'll use anyone to plead their resources and she's been suspected of being involved in the disappearance of people.

341

00:42:20,040 --> 00:42:33,040

For every mystery, there is someone somewhere who knows the truth. Perhaps it's you.

342

00:42:50,040 --> 00:43:00,040

The first day of her 15-year sentence in a medium security prison in Dublin, California, was the day of her 15-year sentence in a medium security prison in Dublin, California.

343

00:43:00,040 --> 00:43:06,040

She was the first to be released from prison in the first 10 years of her life.

344

00:43:06,040 --> 00:43:12,040

She was the first to be released from prison in the first 10 years of her life.

345

00:43:12,040 --> 00:43:17,040

The first to be released from prison in the first 10 years of her life.