

Common Mystics Podcast

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Episode 8: Murder After Hours in Sauk City, WI

00:00:00 This episode of Common Mystics contains descriptions of violent crimes of a sexual nature. Listener discretion is advised.

00:00:17 On this episode of Common Mystics. We discuss the events of the summer of 1987 in south central Wisconsin, where the entire area was terrorized by a purported serial killer, and the case of one young woman whose body was found in the woods near Sauk City, Wisconsin. One living person knows what happened in those woods. And he isn't talking. So what does the deceased have to say??? I'm Jennifer James. I'm Jill Stanley. We're psychics, we're sisters. And we are Common Mystics. We find extraordinary stories in ordinary places. And Jill, this story hit me hard. Yeah, it did. Let's get right into it. Jen, can you please remind our listeners what our intentions are? We set out looking to find a story using our psychic senses, a story that was verifiable and a story that would help us give a voice to the voiceless. Yup. That's right. Start us off, Jill. How did we get there? Well, we started outside of Chicagoland and we headed north where the great state of Wisconsin welcomed us.

00:01:30 Right. And we ended up northwest of the city of Madison. That's right, right. And we started getting some impressions in the car. Well, let's just say that this is the first time we've experienced Wisconsin psychically, on purpose, and what an energetic state! Just gotta say. right. A Totally different vibe to it. Oh my gosh. There was so much, there is so much that we have to go back. It's crazy. So, as we were driving before we got to Sauk City, tell me what you were experiencing. The first thing that popped into my head was one of mom's little heritage dolls. Our mom used to collect dolls. And so I kept thinking of the little German heritage doll that had the authentic German costume and the braids. Do you know what I'm talking about? Yeah. That's so cute. Yeah. So that popped into my head.

00:02:29 I had no, no idea why. The other thing that kept popping into my head was Dove soap and you know, like on a bar of Dove how there's the little dove bird that's kind of carved out of it? Yeah. That was in my head. That bird carved out of the Dove soap. What about you? What were you picking up on? I remember as we drove over the river to get into Sauk City, I knew immediately that our story was there. And I remember saying, this is where our story is. What did you see as we drove over the river? Oh my gosh. As soon as we drove over the Wisconsin River, right at the corner of Water Street and Route 12 is this building and at the top of it, Jill, (do you remember?) was a carved out bird that I know now to be an eagle, but immediately I knew that's just like my vision of the bird carved out of the soap. This must be where our story is.

00:03:35 So true. So we looked for an area where we could stretch our legs and take Bug the beagle for short walk. And we found Meyer Oak Grove park, and we're walking around with Bug the beagle. And I'm feeling as if a body was dumped, like there was a body dump. What were you feeling when we were walking around the park?

00:03:57 Well, I, first of all, was completely obsessed with birds. And so I'm noticing that across the way, across the street, is a Plaza called Eagle Plaza. And I'm also noticing that on every single COVID warning sign is the Sauk City logo with an eagle on it. So I'm obsessed with

birds, right? So your obsession with birds was funny because you came back to me and you're like, we have to go back to the bird, right? Exactly. The bird on the building. Exactly. So we go back to downtown Sauk City, Water Street, and we turn north. And that's where I started picking up on... you had said a dumped body... I got the distinct impression that it was in a wooded area. Right? So we drove down that main strip and we were leaving the city of Sauk City. Now the reason why is because we wanted to maximize our time in Wisconsin. And we knew definitely that we had a story here. So we started heading north at that point. Do you remember what we were talking about in the car?

00:05:10 I remember that we were idiots. It was a long car ride. It was a long car ride. And we were passing the time by taking names and pairing them together. And we have a sister named Kim. We are going to see her soon, and we had talked to her on the phone that day and we were so excited about going to visit her. So excited about visiting her. And we were thinking about her. She was on her mind. We were pairing her name, Kim, with other last names in the family. Right. For no reason, like playing a stupid name game. Right. Right.

00:05:44 So as we're doing that, Jennifer classic, Jennifer. So I say, Jill, do you think we have a story in Sauk City? I always question. She always, every time we leave the place, she's like, do you really, really think that there's a story there? I'm like, yes, Jennifer, we do a podcast. We find the story. It happens every time.

00:06:06 Do you think we have a story? And right. Then a hawk, swoops down right over the hood of the car and sits down and makes eye contact with us. And you might know that Jill's symbol from our mother, our deceased mother who helps us out, is a hawk. And so, um, that was validating that yes, yes, we do have a story. Shut up, Jennifer, just stop asking questions. She was just as annoyed with Jennifer as I am. So we knew we had a story in Sauk City. We had validation from mom. We were really excited to do some research.

00:06:43 Okay. Let me just tell you. We went to several locations in Wisconsin, but I don't know what happened, but somehow Jennifer was still lost. Her mind was in Sauk City. She, even driving out of town, she was still preoccupied with that story. It was just, you were like elsewhere. She was not in the moment

00:07:04 Well, okay. So we were taking the opportunity while we were in Wisconsin to see if we could find other stories in the area. Because like we said, we are not in Wisconsin every day, but I couldn't get into it. I felt like I was under a spell. I was under the spell of Sauk City and I could not divert my attention from that place.

00:07:23 Literally Googling Sauk City when we were still in other locations. That's so annoying anyway. But, um, Jen, what did, what did you find?

00:07:35 So immediately I started researching bodies found in the woods near Sauk City. And I found out right away that during the summer of 1987, there was a serial killer named Kim Brown. Now the funny thing about this killer's name is that "Kim Brown" is literally one of the names that we said in the car when we were acting like idiots, pairing our sister's name, Kim with different last names that were in our family. Like literally we said that name. That is a true story.

00:08:12 But I just want to bring up something... 1987, the summer of 1987, would have been a year, a time where our parents would have made arrangements to bring us to Wisconsin Dells, that general area where a serial killer was active. Right? The Dells is in the area where all three victims were. And by the way, I found references to this apparent serial killer in the

Chicago Sun Times and the Chicago Tribune. So it's not like our parents didn't know. And yet we did take a family vacation to the Dells that year. Well, the funny thing is dad would take us, so mom could take a break. And couldn't you just see her being like, "Oh Jim, just take them. No, one's going to take these kids. No one's going to take them. If they want them, God bless them. Take the kids." I could hear her saying it. Exactly. So let's get back to Kim Brown. Kim Brown, serial killer, 1987, the summer, he is from a local area and he is charged with the July 28th, 1987, murder, rape and torture of a woman named Linda Nachreiner, a 29 year old housewife and mother of two from Dell Prairie, Wisconsin. Her body was discovered in a wooded area, northwest of Wisconsin Dells. Brown confessed. He was convicted of his crimes against her in 1988. And he is still serving time. And Kim Brown will be eligible for parole in 2031.

00:09:52 That is terrible. Awful. Just terrible. I'm so sorry, Linda. But you said that he was a serial killer. Who else was, or who else was victimized by Kim Brown? Yeah. Good question. So during the summer of 1987, there were two other murders that occurred prior to Linda's, all within the same area, a roughly 40 mile radius around the Wisconsin Dells area. One was of Barbara Blackstone on July 9th, a high school teacher named Barbara Blackstone vanished from her home in a nearby town. Her nude and decomposing body was retrieved on August 4th, 60 miles south of the Wisconsin Dells. I'm so sorry, Barbara. The first murder was that of Angela Fey Hackl a month earlier on June 12th, 1987. Angela Hackl was just 18 when she disappeared after a night out in Sauk City with her friends. Her body was found on June 15th in the woods, six miles west of Sauk City.

00:11:09 She had been chained by her neck to a tree and had been shot multiple times in the back. So Jill, although charges had only been filed for the murder of Linda Nachreiner, many consider Brown to be responsible for all three of those local slayings that summer and the string of crime stopped with Brown's arrest in September of 1987. These types of crimes weren't a regular occurrence in the area. Absolutely not. They were unheard of in the central area of Wisconsin and it shook up the entire area. Wow. And so from the earliest news reports, the three slayings were linked together. Okay. So we get home, we're continuing our research. Tell me a little bit about the circumstances of their deaths. Angela Hackl, Linda Nachreiner and Barbara Blackstone's stories... Jill, they've already been told. Here's the thing: their names, their stories, and the circumstances of their death... They've been in the papers for years, especially locally. And they're known locally as the victims of that presumed serial killer Kim Brown during that terrible summer of 1987. So at this point, what I'm doing, and I think Jen was supposed to be helping me do, is look for victims that were victimized with the same modality, the same criminality as the three women that were associated with Kim Brown. Right? Right. So that's my mission. I am looking for other victims.

00:12:44 You are researching the facts about Kim Brown, his employment, his habits, the areas where he lived... to try to find other bodies. Right. And that's what I was attempting to do, but I couldn't. I kept coming back to Angela. Every time I do a search, her story would come up in my search engine.

00:13:04 So I am getting increasingly frustrated with my sister. Every time I'm, like, I can't find anything. This is what I'm getting and trying to have a conversation with her, she keeps going back to Angela. I'm like, Hey, we know Angela, everyone knows Angela.

00:13:18 I kept feeling her around me. I told you I kept seeing her face. I kept thinking about her at random times. I was reading a thread about her murder online. And somebody makes a random comment about how the names and the story are German names. And I'm looking at where Hondo's was located on Google, I do the street view of it, and I see, I see a picture online of that damn building with the bird carved out at the top. Hondo's was two doors away. I mean, I just, at every turn, I was getting signs, bread crumbs, that this was our story. And I couldn't, I couldn't divert my attention from that. Okay. So tell us... you were finding out about Angela's story...

00:14:06 Oh, so I keep reading and I keep digging it and I keep learning more and more about Angela story. Right. I'm learning every detail and I'm starting to scare you. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay. (Not what she should have been doing, not our mission.) Go on.

00:14:23 Angela Hackl was 18 years old and had graduated from high school just three weeks before her murder on Thursday, July 11th, 1987. She goes to downtown Sauk City with her friends, Becky Nelson and Becky's boyfriend, Joe Wilkinson. Now though her boyfriend, Ron Lewis, was not with her that night, Angela was driving her boyfriend's car. The three friends, Angela, Becky, and Joe, they had been drinking at a bar called Hondo's on Water Street and they stayed there until the bar closed at 2:00 AM.

00:15:00 And that's the bar you saw on the street view that was located two doors down from the eagle.

00:15:07 Yes. And we drove right past it. We drove right past it. Okay. So while at Hondo's the three friends met this guy named Terry Vollbrecht, right? He was a local guy from Sauk City. He was in his mid twenties. At the end of the night, Angela leaves Hondo's with Terry Vollbrecht, driving her boyfriend's car, which of course she had borrowed for the evening. Now what happened in those next several hours has been hotly disputed, but here's what we do know. Angela Hackl's nude body was found in a wooded area called The Pines, just six miles west of Sauk City. She was found hanging from a tree by tire chains wrapped around her neck. And she had been shot three times in the back by a 22 caliber gun. A pile of brush had been arranged all around her body as if someone was going to light a fire there, but then didn't, or couldn't. At the scene was also a red sleeping bag, Angela's ripped clothing, tire tracks and the cross member of a car's carriage. Right? So the question is: How did she go from a night out in Sauk City with friends to being the first to be savagely, raped, tortured, and murdered by a deranged serial killer?

00:16:35 Right? According to Terry Vollbrecht, after the bar closed, he and Angela got into Angela's boyfriend's car and went down to the Wisconsin River where they had consensual sex. So he said, just to be clear, he said they drove to a different area right on the river, not the wooded area called The Pines. Okay. Gotcha. Right. Then Angie dropped Vollbrecht back off at his car outside of Hondo's bar.

00:17:02 The problem was that Angie never came home. And so when her father discovered that Becky and Joe got home okay, he reported her missing. Angie's brother and her boyfriend went looking for her. They didn't find her, but they discovered Ron's car parked along the highway, near The Pines, that wooded area where she was found, with the doors unlocked and the driver's side window rolled down. He couldn't find the car keys. And he looked through the car and he noticed that the .22 caliber revolver and holster that he had left in the glove

compartment were missing and the car's cross member, which supports the transmission, was also missing.

00:17:44 So at this point, the disappearance of Angie is all over the news. They hadn't found her body yet, but Terry Vollbrecht volunteers to talk to the police. So he just shows up at the police station and he's like, hey, I just want to let you guys know that I was presumably the last person to see Angela alive. So he tells the police what had happened after they left the bar and how Angie dropped him off after consensual sex.

00:18:09 Right. He tells them his story. He cooperates. He leaves them samples for whatever reason. I mean, DNA testing wasn't around in 1989 or 1987. But after a two year investigation, despite him being very cooperative, on February 13th, 1989, a criminal complaint was filed charging Terry Vollbrecht with first degree murder and first degree sexual assault with the use of a dangerous weapon. And after a lengthy trial, the jury found him guilty after only two hours of deliberation. And he was sentenced to life in prison. Despite the fact that there was a lack of witnesses and a lack of physical evidence linking him to the murder. I mean, it was all a very circumstantial case.

00:18:54 Well, Terry didn't give up hope. He appealed his conviction twice, but was unsuccessful. At his third attempt, in 2011, he was granted a new trial based on new information. Jen, what was that new information that had been discovered?

00:19:10 Well, long after Terry Vollbrecht was convicted, Kim Brown, remember that serial killer from the beginning of the episode? Yep. Kim Brown had been telling his fellow prisoners that he killed Angela Hackl. So there's his "confession." Also, at the original trial of Terry Vollbrecht, Brown was believed to have been at work, which is a perfect alibi. But they found out years later that Brown was not at work. So it made him available to commit the murder of Angela Hackl. Well, he had opportunity. He did.

00:19:52 Then there's the DNA evidence. Now, DNA wasn't around in 1989. But later evidence showed that, yes, Vollbrecht's DNA was found in Angela and on the red sleeping bag that was found at the scene. But in addition, there was also another man's DNA that was located that did not match Terry and was unknown. And then there's the similarities between Linda Nachreiner's murder and Angie's murder. What similarities did they cite? Both Linda's and Angie's murders occurred in a wooded area, in a place that was known as a party place for young people. Nachreiner was shot once in the back of the head. And Angie Hackl was shot three times in her back. Both had been sexually assaulted. And the perpetrators of both of these homicides chained their victims to a tree by their neck. So, what happened at the trial?

00:20:50 Well, that's an interesting question, because there never was a trial. Huh? He just spent like 20 years trying to get a new trial. Five months before his new trial was set to begin, Vollbrecht pleaded no contest to Hackl's murder. Because he was sentenced for 25 years in prison and already served 22 of those years, he had reached the legal mandatory release date. The judge remanded him to serve three years of parole and he was set free, which essentially closed the case.

00:21:24 So at this point I have completely lost Jennifer. She is out of her mind. Every time she calls me, she's bringing up Angie and I'm like, dude, are you okay?

00:21:33 I was in deep. I was obsessed. I admit, I was sitting in a dark room all weekend, living on black coffee. I have, like, the bulletin board, the photos, the red string... like it was out of control. My husband was worried about me. It just didn't sit right. It didn't sit right. Something

was wrong. So I knew, I knew in my heart of hearts that we were meant to tell the story of Angie, but I didn't know what she wanted people to know. I didn't know what her message was. Now. I know that you, Jill (and we've talked about this in the past) have a very special talent that you've been practicing for years where you can look at a photograph of someone and read the energy of that person. And if that person is deceased, you can't often communicate with that person, if they are willing to talk. I knew Angie wanted to talk. And so I said, Jill, read her picture. And what did you find?

00:22:30 First, I have to tell you that I completely reconsidered, I had to go along with this, like honestly, she wasn't giving up on this. So it was apparent, Angie is our story. And I obliged Jennifer and I was reading her picture over my morning coffee. I was getting the feeling that Angie was telling me first and foremost, that she was not a slut and that she did not want to have sex with Terry.

00:22:59 I knew it! as soon as you told me that, I freaking knew it! Vollbrecht's defense paints Angie as this party girl who leaves a bar that night in her boyfriend's car to have sex with a different guy. And then after dropping him off, continues the party where she apparently had sex with another guy. And then somewhere along the way, runs into Kim Brown, who murders her???

00:23:26 Yeah. Okay. Okay. Okay. Crazy. We're obviously calling bullshit, but here's your chance to make your case. Tell me, tell me what didn't sit right.

00:23:37 Vollbrecht had a criminal past. He had been involved in burglary and was a cocaine dealer. So he had access to illicit drugs that he might've been taking and that might have impaired his judgment and influenced his actions that night. You got me? Go on. Okay. Now did Angie leave the bar to have sex with Vollbrecht? No! Based on my opinion, I do not think so. One of the articles describes Joe Wilkinson (remember Joe, Becky's boyfriend who was there that night?) Joe and Angie, according to him, were both trying to convince Becky to leave with Vollbrecht to continue the party after the bar closed. But Becky was all like, No, I'm tired. I want to go home. So Joe and Becky got another ride home and Angie left with Vollbrecht. But she did not leave with the intention of having sex with him, because that's not what an 18 year old does when she wants to leave and have sex with someone else. She doesn't say, Hey guys, come with...

00:24:37 Totally just based on our research...

00:24:39 According to friends, theoretically... if a young lady wants to leave and go have sex with someone else, she doesn't invite her friends. She says something like, Hey, catch you later. She doesn't say, come on and join this after party.

00:25:01 And what wasn't sitting right with me having read some of the evidence that Jennifer was going over as that Terry randomly mentioned to police that he tried to get into the glove compartment of Angela's boyfriend's car, but it was locked.

00:25:17 Oh my gosh. Why would he even mention it? One, because he's basically telling the cops, um, if you find my fingerprints there, here's why... and Two, what gun? I was never in the glove compartment because the gun was in the glove box. Right? Exactly. But wait, there's more... In a footnote of the actual Court of Appeals published opinion, it says that two of Terry Vollbrecht's former girlfriends testified that he took them to The Pines, that wooded area, to have sex with them on different occasions. Wow.

00:25:50 So that was in the transcripts of the court, but it was not admissible. That's right. It was in one of the footnotes. That's right. What else struck the detectives as being suspicious with Terry's story? There are witnesses who placed him walking around near the abandoned car in the middle of the morning and also the next day sitting on the road, near the murder scene. So totally just based on our opinion and our psychic impressions and the research that you dived into, can you give us the scenario of what you think really happened that night to Angie?

00:26:32 Well, here's what I believe happened. Angie, having just recently graduated from high school is celebrating with her friends. She's drinking and she's looking to let loose and have a good time. She meets Terry Vollbrecht at Hondo's that night. He invites her to continue the party. After the bar closes, when her friends decline the invitation, she goes along driving them in her boyfriend's car. Vollbrecht takes advantage of Angela being alone with him and directs her to the area where the party is. When she realizes there's no party, she resists him, and they struggle. And the car drives off into the woods and is damaged there. Here's where she starts to feel that her life is threatened. She goes for the gun that she knows is in the glove box. He overpowers her and he rapes her. And then he tries to cover up his crime by shooting her in the back, chaining her to a tree and trying to light her on fire, trying to make it look like something different than just a date rape gone wrong.

00:27:34 I just want to be clear that Terry Vollbrecht has consistently maintained his innocence throughout his imprisonment and after he did plead no contest to the crimes against Angie.

He did. You're right. And, Jill, what about Brown though? Because Kim Brown had confessed to Angie's murder to prisoners in jail. What do you think about that?

00:27:57 I think it's just classic inmate bolstering to get more street cred in prison. What about the similarities between Linda Nachreiner's murder, which he confessed to, and Angie's murder? Well, Kim Brown, for months before Linda's murder, had been in a drug induced, alcohol fueled haze for about three months and Angie's murder and the description of the crimes against her were all over the media. It would be very easy for him to have been inspired by the crimes against Angela.

00:28:34 Good point. Good point. So let's debrief. Let's debrief. Jen, let's go through it. German heritage. Talk to me. According to Wikipedia, Sauk City in 1852 was founded by German immigrants who started the Sauk City Free Congregation religious society that celebrated German music, literature, and culture, and also Angie Hackl and Terry Vollbrecht both have German surnames.

00:29:07 And let's just, uh, remember your bird. Oh my gosh. That bird on the corner of Water Street in downtown Sauk City, two doors down from Hondo's... validation that Sauk City, which has a bird as its symbol, was the place where our story was. Yeah, absolutely. Me knowing the story was there... obvious. The body dump... obvious. Obvious. Research keeps bringing you back to Angela, which I'm really grateful it did, but you were haunted AF by Angela. I was seriously haunted by the spirit of Angela and it's obvious Jill, that we were meant to tell this story to give Angie a voice. Absolutely. Right. And she is validated. Based on the scenario that you laid out for us, it is more plausible, I believe, than Terry's story. She isn't a slut. She wasn't looking to have sex with him or any other unnamed man that night. She just wanted to hang out with her friends and celebrate high school ending and summer beginning, and her life being

ahead of her. Jill, I think that she attached to me this way because I could totally identify with being 18, in college, engaging in under age drinking, and staying out at the bars until they closed. You know? And a couple of times, Jill, I even left those bars with a guy that I had just met. Angie and I both acted like we were invincible. Like nothing could possibly happen to us. And I was lucky, no one ever took advantage of me of, or harmed me in any way. But Angie wasn't so lucky. That's true. So keep Angie in your thoughts and your prayers, but also, I just want to say as a side note, I believe everyone should be free to go out and have a good time, but people, do not leave your friends to go off with some guy, whether you want to have sex with him or not, it's not a good idea. And I, for one, with my friends, who are listening, who know this, have to go after you and pull you back in because that's not okay.

00:31:18 Do not do that. Do I think everyone's out to hurt someone? No, but just don't engage in risky behavior to leave yourself vulnerable for anyone who might have insidious reasons to try to get you alone. And it makes your friends not want to have a good time. Like, I can't have fun if I know my friend's going to wander off with some dude. Okay. I'm just saying, just saying. We're on a Jill tangent here. Okay. I'm just saying, how can I drink while you're off? Anyway, anyway, keep Angie in your thoughts and prayers. And if you know a young person who is living their lives in a reckless way, talk with them, have them listen to this podcast and be safe everybody. I just want to mention before closing that Barbara Blackstone's case is still a cold case and has not officially been associated with Kim Brown. So please, we're going to post on Facebook the articles about these three women. So please check it over. If there's anything you can add to help, please, or someone can, that case is still open. So it could be helpful. On that note, tell our listeners where they can find us. Well, Jen, they can check us out on our website, commonmystics.net. Find us on Facebook. Listen in on Spotify, Stitcher, Google Podcasts, and Apple Podcasts, where you can leave us a positive review so other people can find us. Thanks for listening, everyone. Thank you all goodnight.