

Common Mystics Podcast  
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Episode 7- A Father's Crimes in Ashtabula, OH

00:00:10 On this episode of Common Mystics we tell the heartbreaking tale of one father's crimes against his family. What events unfolded the morning of November 3rd, 2000 in the city of Ashtabula Ohio? And what makes this story, in Ashtabula, different from every other story we've ever been called to tell? Well, for one thing, we've never been there. I'm Jennifer James. I'm Jill Stanley. We're psychics. We're sisters. We are Common Mystics. We find extraordinary stories in ordinary places. And Jill, we've never even been to Ashtabula, Ohio. This is just crazy. Let's get right into it. We leave my house in southwest Michigan, and we're heading East on 94. Then we take 23 South to get into the state of Ohio. Exactly. And as we're traveling south on 23, I get the strong pull to go east on Rte 6. Do you remember that? I do remember that. And so I said I'm feeling east, but at that point we didn't want to go east because we've both taken that route before several times. We're familiar with the area around the Great Lakes, specifically around Sandusky.

00:01:23 And we knew that Rte 6 would take us to Sandusky. Right? Absolutely. So we didn't want to be on a route that we already knew. So we decided to keep going south. Now at that point, you're getting some impressions in the car, right? So at this point I'm reminded of the Amityville Horror story. Ooh. Yes. So I had just posted something to our Facebook page about the Amityville Horror story. So it was fresh in my mind, but it kept, like, it wouldn't leave my mind. It was on, it was in my head as an impression. And the thing is about that story, is it the aftermath of the home that the DeFeo family was tragically murdered in by their son and how the home was sold sometime later to the Lutz family. Now in the Amityville Horror movie and book, based on the Lutz account, it describes how the father of the Lutz family tries to murder them in the house.

00:02:19 Wow. Right. So, wow. What I was getting from that was- He murdered his whole family. That's what I kept hearing in my head. And I was feeling like instead of this house on the seaside, like Amityville, I was feeling a suburban home. Even know we were in the country, there was no suburb to be found. Okay. So I'm creeped out and you're talking about Amityville, you're describing the Lutz's and how he killed his own family. And that was really creepy. And I was looking, or I knew to look, for an entire family that had died in some type of tragedy. Right? Crazy. So we keep south on 23 and all of a sudden on both sides of the road are two old cemeteries. So we break. [Jill makes a breaking sound.] Thank you. And we turn into the one that we're most drawn to, which is called Chestnut Grove Cemetery in Scott Township, which happens to be outside the town of Bradner, Ohio.

00:03:25 Now, Jill, what were you looking for when we started walking around that cemetery? So as Bug (the beagle) and I were walking around the cemetery, I was looking for a family that had a, that had a similar death date. Like everyone died at the same time in one event, because that's what I was looking for... Because that's, that was the impression you were getting in the car. Absolutely, absolutely. So I was helping you. And so we were both kind of combing the cemetery for a family. I didn't see anything that met that description. Did you? I didn't. But you know what? I did keep feeling as we were walking around, I kept feeling that we needed the

name, we needed the name, we needed the name. And so I said to you, Jill, ask your spirit guides. What, what name are we looking for? And you remember what you said to me?

00:04:18 Yes: "I'll know it when I see it." I was getting the impression that I will recognize the name as soon as I see it. So, literally, I was walking around actually looking for the name Lutz, because, I was like, that's what was on my mind at the time. Oh, interesting. Interesting. Well, when you said that to me, I was very disappointed in that answer. I was like, really? You'll know when you see it? Okay. (But you're psychic, dammit.) But you know what, what was weird though, as I'm walking around the cemetery, I don't even know what I'm looking for, but I see a name, like say "Roberts" and Julia Roberts pops into my head. And then I see the name "Dean" James Dean pops into my head... "Davis", Sammy Davis... over and over again. Like I'm seeing these common names, but a movie star is coming into my head.

00:05:10 And so I say, do you remember this? So I'm like, Jill, I, this is going to sound really weird, but I think there's some sort of Hollywood actor connection. And that's when you were like, Oh my God. Yeah. Because I was seeing "Norma Jean", I saw "Pickford". So not only were we picking up on actors' names, but like, like big Hollywood star names. Exactly. So we had no idea what that meant, but it was really odd. So we both remembered it. Absolutely. So after leaving the cemetery, we kind of drove around the Bradner area for a little bit. And we were getting, um, breadcrumbs that support that we were in the right place. So we thought we had enough information to go out and research our story. And we, we assumed our story was going to be in Bradner, somehow connected to the cemetery.

00:06:00 We felt very strongly about that. Absolutely. So we went back to your house and it's unusual, but I spent the night. And so when you started to do the research, I was there the next morning. That's what was unusual. I woke up groggy, made coffee, handed over some coffee, and opened my laptop. She's usually gone in the morning. Well, I'm usually not there when you start doing research, but I was on this particular day and I'm glad I was because I witnessed some pretty comical, a pretty comical scene that morning. So what, what did you do initially when you got on the computer? Were you looking for a story in Bradner, Ohio? No. I Googled the name of the cemetery, the Chestnut Grove Cemetery. And what did you find? I found the most haunted cemetery in Ohio, Chestnut Grove, in a different town (Ashtabula). We weren't there, but because we were getting that answer in the cemetery, "I'll know it when I see it",

00:06:57 I felt like I recognized the name of the cemetery. Maybe the family I'm looking for is in the Ashtabula Chestnut Grove Cemetery. So what'd you do next? I Googled family tragedy, Ashtabula, Ohio. And what did you find? I found the most horrific family tragedy. It was the city's worst multi fatality fire in its history. A young mother, her two sons and her sister were all killed in this fire, which was started by her husband, Charles Newman, Sr. Shut up. Now that's when I saw you stand up from your laptop, go over to the couch, get in a fetal position and, like, start rocking yourself. Crazy, crazy. So like Newman, as in Paul Newman, right? There are so many levels of crazy to this. Let's just go through them. Honestly. First of all, the celebrity, big movie star connection name. Oh, Newman, like in Paul Newman, right?

00:08:10 Your preoccupation with the names, the name of the cemetery, the name of the family. And knowing that the name of the cemetery that we were at, not only did I absolutely recognize it, but it's where the family is buried in Chestnut Grove Cemetery in Ashtabula, 160 miles away from where you and I were standing in the other Chestnut Grove Cemetery. And the Amityville connection? The father killed his whole family, his whole family. And it's like a suburb

of Cleveland, which, that checks out too. Seriously, seriously. We weren't even in Ashtabula. What is happening? How did that even happen?

00:08:56 And if we would have made a left on Rte 6 that day, although we were, you were being pulled in that direction, we would have never driven to Ashtabula. That was, wait, we didn't have, like, two days to do this. Yeah. So, but we were right. Didn't matter that we didn't take that left. We still got our story.

00:09:17 So let's tell the most tragic story of the Newman family. Oh, Jill. Well, here's what we found out initially from, from the news reports. On November 3rd, 2000 at approximately 6:00 AM, a fire raged through the residence at 939 West 43rd street in Ashtabula, Ohio. Firefighters were called to the scene in time to witness Charles Newman, Sr. exiting the house by jumping out of a second story window. Now, firefighters rushed into the hot blaze only to find that the occupants of the house had all expired of smoke inhalation. Charlie Newman, Jr., the four year old son of Charles Sr., he was found suffocated and burned at the bottom of the staircase. The first that they found? Yeah, I believe so. Then his wife, Stephanie Newman, 22 years old, was found with their two year old son, Matthew, together in an upstairs bedroom. And also living in the house was Frances Gray. Frances was Stephanie Newman's sister. She was 16 years old and she was found in her bedroom with her face pressed against an air vent. Terrible.

00:10:32 So was Charles hurt at all? Charles, Sr., Charles, Sr... Uh, he suffered some singeing on his arms and head and some first degree burns on his upper body. Um, he was treated and released from the hospital. So he was okay. When investigators got to the scene, what struck them immediately upon arrival? Immediately, the investigators recognized the signs of arson. Wow. And, and the deaths were categorized as homicide, but there was no forced entry into the house. So they knew, well, they suspected, that it was somebody who, um, lived there or was in the house.

00:11:17 Did they notice anything else suspicious? Well, Charles, his behavior was deemed suspicious at the time. How so? Well, after he jumped out of the window, he didn't seem at all concerned about trying to get his family out of the house. In fact, it was the neighbors who showed more horror and concern. They were trying to get into the front door, but the front door was locked. And so they were asking him, you know, Charles, where, where are the keys? Do you have the keys? And he said, he didn't have the keys because he just came home from work. But he was just wearing a pair of shorts. So he didn't just come home from work. And it was just an odd scene.

00:11:56 Did anyone ask him like, dude, what happened? What's going on here? Well, sure. Upon questioning, he denied, he denied having anything to do with it. And he said that he did not set the fire. However, I will tell you that in January, 2001, he was arrested on charges of aggravated murder and aggravated arson. Good. Absolutely. And the prosecuting attorney sought the death penalty. So, they must have put together some type of scenario that they thought was plausible in which to present in court. Do you have any of that type of information?

00:12:34 Well, in fact, I do. I have a narrative that describes what they believed happened. Do you want to hear it? No. God. I mean, no, but yeah. So here's what they think happened to the Newman family. So Charles and Stephanie were married in 1996. They were in their late teens. They were a really young couple. They were separated in 1999. Now apparently Charles Sr. was engaging in a series of extramarital affairs. And that will, yeah. And that will put some, uh, that'll put a strain on any relationship. So they discussed divorcing and, uh, Charles agreed to

pay Stephanie \$150 a week in child support. But in fact, he made less than \$200 a week at his job at the local rubber manufacturing plant.

00:13:27 He was looking for a second job then. I guess, who knows what he was looking for. So, um, even though they separated in 1999, they did reunite in October of 2000. Now this is, like, the month before the fire. And again, the fire was November 3rd, so, right before. So they reunited in October, 2000 and he moved into the family home at 939 W. 43rd Street. Again, this is the site of the home, of the fire, shortly before the fire. I don't know if it's hours or days, but before the time of the fire, he went to a gas station and he filled up a five gallon gas can with gasoline. And then he left it in his pickup truck. Now the very night before the fire, Charles and Stephanie went out, and they were out late, they arrived home at approximately 3:00 AM on November 3rd, 2000. Jill, about three hours later, so now we're looking at like 6 in the morning, they believe that Charles got out of bed and went outside to his pickup truck and he got the five gallon gas can. He emptied it in two of the downstairs rooms, the rooms at the bottom of the stairs.

00:14:45 And then he left the home and returned the empty can to his pickup truck. He then reentered the house and locked the door. Now they think in the time that it took for him to return the empty gas can to his pickup truck and get back into the house and prepare to light the fire, the vapors had already started to fill up the house. So as soon as he bent over the puddle of gasoline that he had spilled all over the floor, there was an explosion and it left injuries to his arms, his head and his upper body that were consistent with those, that one would sustain in the scenario.

00:15:26 After lighting the fire, he ran upstairs to the bedroom where his wife was and he climbed over her and escaped through the window. Wow. After hearing or being presented with these facts, what did Charles do? Did he continue to deny his culpability and their murders? After hearing this evidence and this narrative that the investigators had put together, Charles Sr. did admit to starting the fire, but he did not admit to intentionally killing his family. So it's a, maybe it's splitting hairs, but it's troubling to me.

00:16:07 To me. It's, it's, it's ridiculous. Oh, it insults my intelligence. What, what other thing was he doing with five gallons of gas? Well we are a little ahead of ourselves. So what he did, Jill, was he was able to take a plea deal rather than face a jury and the death sentence. And the judge imposed on him four consecutive life sentences. He pled guilty and will not be eligible for parole until 2081. So he is in prison right now.

00:16:41 Well, I am all too anxious to call bullshit on that. Although I am happy that he's in prison until 2081. It's not only does it not bring back his family, but he's not, he's not manning up to, to murder... the murders he committed. So you have a problem with his, with his insistence that he set the fire, but never meant to kill his family.

00:17:04 Well, let's break it down, Jen. This, his behavior does nothing but support murderous intent. Tell me why he locked the door. He did. He poured the gasoline directly on the escape route at the bottom of the stairs, the rooms at the bottom of the stairs. And what do you think about his night out with his wife? Well, you know what I was thinking about that? They're out till 3:00 AM. What's open until 2:00, 2:30? Bars. I know all too well. You and I both. He probably got her drunk, Jill. She was probably passed out in bed. So he could get up and tip toe to his truck.

00:17:51 Jill, did he have any history... If his, if his answer was that he just liked setting fires, did he have any history to support that? Absolutely not. I have so much information about this man and his history. There is no history of criminality. Not only that, let alone arson, he wasn't just playing with matches. Right? He made no effort to even help get his family out of the building. Like we said, he discouraged his neighbors. He didn't help his neighbors. And what about, okay, fine, what about grabbing his wife and trying to pull her out of the house? If he didn't mean to kill her, at the very least, at the very least, instead of climbing over her, maybe grab her and take her with you. I don't know. Just as an idea, just, I don't even know what to say. He meant to kill his family. He meant to kill his family. He meant to kill his family.

00:18:50 What other explanation could a logical person draw? What am I missing? The fact that there is something, and I believe it's called the Alford plea, that allows him to say that I did this without intending murder to me is astounding. And again, I'm not a lawyer, but I do watch Judge Judy. Anyway. So what was his motive, then? He wanted to kill his family. We both believe that to be true. What was his motive? I mean, it's pretty obvious to me that this man was not trying to be responsible for his kids or his family and being, being, having to pay \$150 a week when he's only making less than \$200... that seems like motive to me. I don't think he wanted to kill Stephanie, but he definitely didn't want to pay child support. And that's what I think caused this. Well, he wanted to be, he wanted to be out of the marriage with Stephanie without the burden of paying for his children is what he wanted.

00:19:53 Absolutely. Absolutely. So, Jill, who do you think we were meant to give a voice to? Jen, this story, although he did not man up to him being culpable for their murders, has been well documented in the Ashtabula Star Beacon. So, at least locally, they have a voice. I agree with you. I really do feel that Stephanie and her sons, Charles, Jr., and Matthew and her sister Frances, they already have a voice. So maybe we were meant to share their story with our listeners. What do you think? Well, I did find another member of the Newman family that, yeah, that I believe had died at Charles' hands. I found it in the Ashtabula Star dated Saturday, May 29th, 1999. So this would be the year before the fire. Yup. Can you read that article for us? It's titled "Bunk Beds May Have Caused Death." A five year old girl was found in her bedroom Friday afternoon, apparently after bunk beds collapsed on her. Jeff Lewis, the chief investigator, the chief investigator for the County coroner's office said the girl, Jessica L. Newman, 5, at 232 Marin Drive, Ashtabula, was already dead by the time paramedics arrived. And the scene, the events surrounding the girl's death are still sketchy. She was found laying on a mattress. Apparently a bunk bed in the room collapsed. Louis said one of the possible scenarios is that the girl became trapped under the bed. According to captain PF DeAngelo of the city police, the girl's father, Charles Newman, Sr. called the police for assistance around 1:30-2:00 PM Friday. Apparently the father attempted to revive the girl before calling the police.

00:21:57 There were two other young siblings in the room at the time of the incident. Oh my gosh, Jill. He tried to kill his kids the year before the fire. I totally believe he tried to kill his kids that day and only succeeded in Jessica's death. Oh, poor baby. In 1999. That was the year that their marriage hit the rocks. Right, right. So that would be consistent with that timeline. Well, I had a lot of unanswered questions after reading this article. I mean, in hindsight, it seems like someone would have addressed Jessica's death with Charles. So I called the police department, not only the Ashtabula City Police, but also the County Police. And I asked for the

investigator or any investigators who can help me. And not only are the people that were investigating this particular incident retired, but also they purged her file.

00:23:01 They don't even have record of the incident. In November 2000, did prosecutors make reference to this incident? The only thing that I found referencing little Jessica was in the Ashtabula Star Beacon on October 5th, 2001 at the end of the article titled "He Let His Family Burn," it references Jessica's death and said that the police at the time were not going to reopen her death. So little Jessica's death was never answered for. That's right. And there was no closure for those people who are still alive who loved her and her memory is still shrouded in mystery and suspicion. Absolutely. Wow.

00:23:46 Jill, I think we were meant to tell the story of this family, but also specifically to highlight the untold story of Jessica's death, which I believe in my heart was murder. Absolutely. Of course we don't have any evidence of this, but the man killed his whole family. Like we were picking up on the car, he killed his entire family, including little Jessica. And, Jill, how do we know that we were called by spirit to tell this story because we were nowhere near Ashtabula? Oh, there are so many reasons. The Amityville Lutz connection, the feeling of going east and the irony was we never would have gotten there, but spirit led us to a graveyard with the same name. And they showed us a family tragedy with a celebrity's last name, which would be Newman. Absolutely. Wow. So this is really freaking us out, the way that this story unfolded. It really does. It's because we weren't there. Little Jessica's little spirit was shouting at us, not only between time, but space and distance. It's insane. I mean, the story is different because these events that we're talking about are fairly recent. This is the first story we did where people are alive. Right. And it occurred in a location where we never even had to go. So what does that mean? It means this is out of control. This is completely out of control. This little podcast project is getting serious.

00:25:31 Apparently we think we're making decisions about finding a story, but the stories are really finding us. Spirit decides what story we're going to tell and all the banter we do back in the car, like, should we turn, well, it doesn't matter. It doesn't even matter, right? At this point, it's like we're working at the intersection between free will and predetermination. The only thing that I feel like we have control over is our intention to find a story that's verifiable and to give voice to the voiceless. That's the only thing. Wow. So at this point, Jill, anything is possible. So stay tuned. I'm a little curious myself.

00:26:14 I want to talk to our listeners about a contest that we're having. It's actually a raffle. Um, we would love, love to raffle off a free 30 minutes, psychic reading with me and Jill. Um, and we would love to give it to you, one of our listeners, via telephone or video call. To participate, please leave a positive written review on Apple Podcasts, take a screenshot of your review and email it to [commonmystics@gmail.com](mailto:commonmystics@gmail.com). The contest ends Sunday, September 12th. I just want to say that at this point, people have a really, really good chance of getting a reading. Just in case, say that email address again, it would be [commonmystics@gmail.com](mailto:commonmystics@gmail.com). Email us. We would love to hear from you. I also want to take a moment just to thank not only all of our listeners here at home, but also our international listeners, Germany, Ireland, Canada. We see you. Thank you so much. Keep listening. And, Jill, tell our listeners where they can find us. We can be found at our website, [commonmystics.net](http://commonmystics.net). Look for us on Facebook. Subscribe to the podcast on Stitcher, Spotify, Google podcasts, and Apple podcasts, where like Jen said, you can leave us a positive review, like Spooky Ms. Tiyi.

Speaker 1 00:27:46 Spooky Ms. says, **Well Done!** Common Mystics provides a fresh approach to an intriguing topic. If you love a good mystery with a psychic twist this is the podcast for you. I love both the psychic and familiar connection between these two sisters who enhance each others' insight. I also love the historical context provided by their excellent research. Great job! Great podcast!

Thank you. Spooky Ms.! Thank you so much. We sincerely appreciate it. We do. Thank you everybody. And have a one eight. Thank you. Keep Jessica in your prayers.