

UNSOLVED MYSTERIES PODCAST | BLOOD AND OIL
S1E21 Transcript

DISPATCH: Leon County Sheriff's Office.

GERALD WILHELM: Yes, this is Gerald Wilhelm. I live out on [Unintelligible].

DISPATCH: Yes.

GERALD WILHELM: I think my wife just shot herself.

DISPATCH: You think she shot herself?

GERALD WILHELM: I do. I was sitting there in the chair asleep and I heard a big bang. I woke up and she's got blood running out of her neck.

DISPATCH: What was around her neck, sir?

GERALD WILHELM: She's got blood coming out of her neck.

NARRATION: IN THE SMALL TOWN OF CENTERVILLE, TEXAS, A MODEST HOUSE, QUIET AND EMPTY SITS ON A PLOT OF FARMLAND. ITS PREVIOUS OCCUPANTS, JANICE AND GERALD WILHELM, LONG GONE. INSIDE THE WALLS OF THIS HOME, JANICE WAS THE VICTIM OF A SINGLE FATAL GUNSHOT. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF HER SUDDEN DEATH APPEARED STRAIGHTFORWARD TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES, BUT TO JANICE'S CHILDREN, WHAT HAPPENED TO THEIR MOTHER CAN ONLY BE EXPLAINED BY A SINISTER CONSPIRACY, AND A MOTIVE HIDDEN DEEP UNDER THE GROUND.

I'M STEVE FRENCH, AND THIS IS UNSOLVED MYSTERIES: "BLOOD AND OIL."

DISPATCH: Is she breathing, sir?

GERALD WILHELM: No, I don't think so. I can't, I got her head slumped. I gotta hold her neck so I can... Holy...

DISPATCH: Is there a weapon around?

GERALD WILHELM: I didn't touch her. I didn't touch her.

DISPATCH: Okay no, do not touch her. Don't go near her right now.

GERALD WILHELM: I'm not.

NARRATION: THE 911 CALL COMES INTO THE LEON COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT AT 2:42PM ON DECEMBER 8TH, 2010. 65-YEAR-OLD GERALD WILHELM CLAIMS HE WAS FAST ASLEEP JUST A FEW FEET AWAY FROM HIS WIFE, 63-YEAR-OLD JANICE, WHEN SHE FIRED AROUND FROM A SEMI-AUTOMATIC HANDGUN STRAIGHT INTO HER NECK. THE 45-CALIBER BULLET INSTANTLY SEVERED HER SPINAL CORD. 1600 MILES AWAY, THE DEVASTATING NEWS REACHES WAYNE ROBESON, JANICE'S SON FROM A PREVIOUS MARRIAGE.

WAYNE ROBESON: I was in Idaho when I got a phone call from a relative of mine. And he called to tell me that my mother had allegedly shot herself that day, and I was shocked. So, I called my sister the next day, made arrangements to come home. At that time, and even today, no law enforcement authorities have ever contacted us to tell us our mother's dead.

NARRATION: AT THE WILHELM HOME, INVESTIGATORS PLACE WHAT APPEARS TO BE A SUICIDE NOTE INTO EVIDENCE AND QUICKLY DETERMINE THAT JANICE TRAGICALLY TOOK HER OWN LIFE. NO ONE SEEMS OR QUESTION WHY JANICE'S HANDS ARE RESTING COMFORTABLY IN HER LAP UNDER A BLANKET, AND WHY THE GUN IS FOUND SEVERAL FEET AWAY. JANICE'S HUSBAND, GERALD, IS IMMEDIATELY CLEARED OF SUSPICION BY THE COUNTY SHERIFF.

WAYNE ROBESON: From what I know, the investigation on my mother seems to have lasted less than five minutes. There wasn't any inquest. There were no statements. To this day, Leon County law enforcement has never taken any statements from me and my sister. So as far as I can tell, there never was an investigation. And I had a relative that worked for the sheriff's department, and she was the first person that tipped me off if there wasn't something right.

NARRATION: JANICE AND HER THIRD HUSBAND, GERALD WILHELM, ARE WELL KNOWN BY ALMOST EVERYONE IN THEIR TINY TEXAS TOWN. THE LAND THEY LIVE ON HAS BEEN IN JANICE'S FAMILY FOR GENERATIONS.

WAYNE ROBESON: The town is Centerville, Texas, and it's kind of Central East Texas. It's halfway between Dallas and Houston. It's mainly an agricultural area. There's a lot of hardwood forest, a lot of hills. The property had been in the family, technically, since before the Civil War, but the descendants still live there today.

NARRATION: JANICE GAVE BIRTH TO WAYNE WHEN SHE WAS JUST 17 YEARS OLD. WAYNE SPENT MUCH OF HIS EARLY LIFE ON THE FAMILY FARM, LIVING WITH HIS GRANDPARENTS, MORRIS AND MABEL ROBESON. WAYNE'S SISTER JENNIFER WAS BORN NINE YEARS LATER, AND RECALLS A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH HER MOTHER.

JENNIFER DAVIS: My mother would call us The J Girls, because her name was Jan and my name is Jennifer. My mother would also refer to us as the Bobbsey Twins because we looked a lot alike. And we loved going to the mall, and going shopping, and then going to lunch, and we also loved watching movies together. We would go to Blockbuster back in the day and rent five movies and just, you know, hang out in my mother's room and, and watch the movies, and just visit. We were very, very close.

NARRATION: JANICE RAISED JENNIFER WHILE EARNING A NURSING DEGREE AND WORKING IN THE ICU IN PARKLAND HOSPITAL NEAR DALLAS. THEN IN THE MID 90S, HER LIFE TOOK A DARK TURN. JANICE WAS INJURED IN A HIT AND RUN ACCIDENT AND SUFFERED CRIPPLING BACK PAIN. HER DOCTORS PRESCRIBED A POWERFUL NEW DRUG — OXYCONTIN.

WAYNE ROBESON: You could honestly say that she was that first wave of Americans that were addicted to OxyContin. It got rid of her pain and she could still function. And she stayed on OxyContin for the remainder of her life.

NARRATION: BY THE LATE 90S, JANICE HAD BEEN DIVORCED FROM HER SECOND HUSBAND FOR SEVERAL YEARS, AND IS WORKING IN THE HOSPITAL WHEN SHE RUNS INTO AN OLD FRIEND, GERALD WILHELM.

JENNIFER DAVIS: Gerald and my mother knew each other in high school, and she said they had dated once or twice. They were friends, but nothing ever happened between them. And then, my mother was working in a hospital in the area and Gerald had been in the hospital, visiting his wife at the time, who had suffered from a stroke. And Gerald and my mother saw each other and sparks flew. They immediately became infatuated with one another and started dating, although he was still married. He seemed like a nice guy to me. He was very intelligent. Honestly, I did not pick up on anything wrong with the situation. I was more relieved that my mother had found somebody. My brother, on the other hand, immediately picked up on something just didn't feel right.

WAYNE ROBESON: Gerald was from the area. He spoke very much like someone who had never left that area his entire life. He was very cold. Some people describe him as a sociopath, and I tend to agree with that. My grandfather did not like him. The whole family pretty much felt the same way. Honestly, I believe that Gerald married my mother because he thought he was going to get something. She may have encouraged that. She found someone to quasi-take care of her. She found someone to spend time with.

NARRATION: NOT LONG AFTER MARRYING GERALD IN 1999, JANICE SUFFERS A SERIES OF HEALTH PROBLEMS INCLUDING A STROKE, A BROKEN ANKLE, AND A LARGE TUMOR IN HER LEFT ARM THAT LEAVES IT SIGNIFICANTLY WEAKENED. THESE PROBLEMS ONLY ADD TO JANICE'S RELIANCE ON PAIN MEDICATIONS. IN HIS 911 CALL ON THE DAY OF HER DEATH, GERALD POINTS TO HER ADDICTION AS A POSSIBLE MOTIVE FOR THE SUICIDE.

GERALD WILHELM: Oh yes. She's got back trouble and she's been taking some medicine then this... She's been taking that morphine for years, for her back...I don't know. I'm so screwed up. I'm trying, I guess I'm making sense.

DISPATCH: Okay, she has been taking her medicine, or she has not?

GERALD WILHELM: Well, she run out of it.

DISPATCH: She ran out?

GERALD WILHELM: She's been out of it for about a week.

DISPATCH: Okay. So she, was she talking about harming herself?

GERALD WILHELM: Well, you know, that's the crazy part. She talked to her drug accountant 9today and she told that girl, she had, she knew how she'd kill herself.

JENNIFER DAVIS: The first story I heard from Gerald regarding the events of the day my mother passed away, Gerald stated that he was in his recliner next to Jan, taking a nap. And then Gerald said that he heard my mother on the phone with a drug company, and the drug company said that they were cutting my mother off of her pain medicine. And apparently, my mother said, "Well, then I'll just kill myself." And she hung up the phone, and my mother grabbed this gun and then shot herself, with him sitting right there. My brother and I felt that that was really odd. My mother seemed intimidated by firearms her whole life. It was utterly shocking, because I know my mother had pain, but she was still active as she could be and it didn't make sense.

NARRATION: WHEN WAYNE AND JENNIFER ARRIVE IN CENTERVILLE TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THEIR MOTHER'S FUNERAL AND BURIAL, GERALD'S BEHAVIOR FUELS EVEN MORE SUSPICION.

WAYNE ROBESON: After she, uh, passed away, the guy at the funeral home in Centerville called me on the phone and said that Gerald wanted my mother cremated and buried in an unmarked grave. And he couldn't believe it, and I couldn't believe it.

JENNIFER DAVIS: After we had the memorial, we heard that there was a suicide note, and my brother and I both wanted to see it, just for added closure. The Sheriff's Department refused to give it to us. Then Wayne decided, "Well, you know what, if they're refusing the suicide note, I really would like to see the police report as well."

NARRATION: INITIALLY, INVESTIGATORS REFUSE TO HAND OVER THE POLICE REPORT TO WAYNE AND JENNIFER. SO, WAYNE ASKS A FRIEND WHO'S A JOURNALIST TO FILE A FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUEST, AND THAT'S WHEN THE FAMILY FINALLY GAINS ACCESS TO PHOTOS FROM THE SCENE, GERALD'S 911 CALL, AND THE ALLEGED SUICIDE NOTE.

JENNIFER DAVIS: We started looking at it, and Wayne and I realized that it wasn't a suicide note. And we eventually received the scene photos and saw the gun placement, saw that her hands were under a blanket. And then we were like, "Oh my goodness. We don't think she did this."

WAYNE ROBESON: When we got the suicide note, the first thing I noticed is it was dated in the upper left-hand corner. My sister recognizes immediately for what it was, as did I.

JENNIFER DAVIS: It was not the type of suicide note that you would typically expect where it says, "Dear World, Dear family, I can't handle this anymore. This is it. The end. Love, Jan." It was nothing to that effect. It was literally the date of, in January, which was, almost a year prior. It had listed blood pressure, pulse, respirations. Then it talked about pain symptoms. It talked about, I believe, a dream that this person had. And it, in no way, reflected any sort of letter or note. It was literally medical nurse's notes.

WAYNE ROBESON: Our mother did home health care towards the end of her career for several years. The alleged suicide note was a nurse's note from a patient she had cared for many, many years before.

NARRATION: WAYNE AND JENNIFER SOON REALIZE THIS SUSPICIOUS SUICIDE NOTE IS JUST ONE MYSTERIOUS ASPECT OF THEIR MOTHER'S DEATH.

JENNIFER DAVIS: The first time my brother and I had the ability to look at the crime scene photos... it's haunting. The images of her, of my mother's dead body, still haunt me to this day, just seeing the wound on her neck. We started looking at these photos, and there were so many things that popped up to my brother and I that just did not make any sense. My mother's body, it was leaning in a reclined position in a recliner, and both of her hands were under her blanket. The bullet casing was way far to the left of her body. They stated that she shot herself with her left hand, when she didn't have the strength to even lift a remote. The gun itself was at least five feet from her body in front of her. The fact that my mother's hands were under a blanket, and that the gun was five feet in front of her is, is, is not physically possible. It's just not.

NARRATION: BAFFLED BY HOW HIS MOTHER'S DEATH COULD EVER HAVE BEEN RULED A SUICIDE, WAYNE RETURNS TO THE AUTOPSY REPORT AND COMPARES IT TO THE CRIME SCENE PHOTOS. HE CONSULTS WITH FORENSIC DETECTIVES AND EXPERTS, INCLUDING RENOWNED PATHOLOGIST DR. VINCENT DEMAYO, AND FRANK POWERLL, WHO IS A MEDICAL DOCTOR AND CRIMINAL DEFENSE ATTORNEY.

FRANK POWELL: When Wayne first approached me and presented the information, I was skeptical at some of the stuff he was saying, so I had him give me all the documentation and everything checked out. And the big issue that I had trouble with initially was the manner of death of Janice Wilhelm, which was ruled as a suicide by the coroner in Leon County. The evidence indicated that that may have been a rush conclusion and not thoroughly investigated. Just looking at the crime scene photographs, it sort of defied logic. Medically, Janice Wilhelm had previous surgeries on her arm, had a tumor removed, and it left her fairly well incapacitated in her left arm, and the left hand would have had to have been the hand used if it was suicide. Her hands were found under her blanket that she was covered up with in the chair. And if death was instantaneous, she wouldn't have been able to get her hand back under the

blanket after she shot a gun. The gun's location after the shooting was not in a location that you would expect to see it, if it fell straight to the floor after someone went limp from a gunshot. There were some things in there that just did not make sense based on the severity of the gunshot wound and the fact of the trajectory and the path it took through her body.

NARRATION: WAYNE AND JENNIFER ALSO FIND INCONSISTENCIES IN GERALD'S STATEMENTS TO POLICE ABOUT WHY JANICE DECIDED TO KILL HERSELF.

WAYNE ROBESON: Gerald's statements of what happened that day changed depending on what reports you read. He says one thing in the 911 call, that she had been without the medication for over 30 days and hadn't been able to get any because they'd cut her off. But yet, in the scene photos, there's medication all around her. You can zoom in and identify what it is. Then, in the police report, Gerald said that she was an addict who had been without her medication, going through withdrawals, and detox, was out of her mind. Then, uh, in the Texas Ranger report, he says that she just refused to take her medicine and went crazy. The inconsistencies never seem to stop.

NARRATION: AFTER REVIEWING ALL THE EVIDENCE, WAYNE AND JENNIFER ARE CONVINCED THAT THEIR MOTHER WAS MURDERED, AND BELIEVE AUTHORITIES TOO QUICKLY RULES HER DEATH A SUICIDE, RATHER THAN THOROUGHLY INVESTIGATING THE CASE.

JENNIFER DAVIS: One of the interesting things about the autopsy is that they performed a gun residue kit on my mother's hands to confirm that she in fact fired the weapon. And the autopsy report confirms that the kit was completed and sent back to the sheriff's department, and some time between it leaving the Dallas Medical Examiner and it arriving back at Leon County, that gun residue kit disappeared. We will never know what the results were. They never did a gunshot residue on Gerald's hands. They immediately treated Gerald as he was a victim to the situation. The Sheriff's Department never acknowledged our concerns as to the discrepancies of our mother's death. I genuinely don't know why the sheriff's department there will not look into it.

FRANK POWELL: They relied on information from Leon County, who did not do a proper, thorough investigation, and that carried up to the medical examiner's office in Dallas, who just basically did the post mortem on the corpse, and just described what they found without consideration for: was it even possible, and who fired the gun? I think they just labeled it as suicide and wrapped the case up rather than do a thorough investigation. And I think the manner of death is still an unknown, and I think it still needs to be looked at more closely.

NARRATION: AT FIRST, WAYNE AND JENNIFER CAN'T FIGURE OUT WHY GERALD WOULD WANT TO KILL THEIR MOTHER. BUT TWO MONTHS AFTER HER DEATH, A MOTIVE IS REVEALED. THEY LEARN THAT GERALD HAS SUBMITTED A WILL TO THE PROBATE COURT AND HE CLAIMS IT WAS SIGNED BY JANICE.

JENNIFER DAVIS: We thought it was interesting that we were never notified of the will, since we are heirs of hers. Even though we weren't listed in the will, I believe you're supposed to be notified that a will has occurred. It seemed very suspicious.

WAYNE ROBESON: We know for a fact that our mother didn't have a will. She had told me, as well as my sister, that she wasn't interested in having a will. That was why we went to the trouble of filing an affidavit of heirship to protect the property.

NARRATION: THE AFFIDAVIT OF HEIRSHIP IS MEANT TO ENSURE THAT THE FAMILY HOMESTEAD WILL RETURN TO THEM ONCE GERALD PASSES AWAY. BUT IF JANICE'S WILL IS DEEMED AUTHENTIC, THE RIGHTS TO THE PROPERTY WOULD GO TO WHOMEVER SHE LISTED AS INHERITORS. SO AS SOON AS WAYNE HEARS ABOUT THE WILL, HE HEADS STRAIGHT TO THE COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE TO SEE IT FOR HIMSELF.

WAYNE ROBESON: The will that they probated in court was strange. It wasn't notarized. One page was handwritten. One page was fill in the blank, and it looked like another page had been typed. And there was a provision that was typed out, not handwritten, and in that typed up part it said that, basically, Jennifer and I were completely disinherited from our mother's will and would receive absolutely nothing. Everything that belonged to my mother was conveyed to Gerald when they probated the will.

JENNIFER DAVIS: When the will popped up, Wayne and I felt that that was a very odd. What caught my attention was the signature that was supposed to be my mother's signature. My mother has a very unique signature. She's left-handed. It slants at a certain angle. It's very neat, and that was not my mother's signature on her will. We sent it to a handwriting expert, and the handwriting expert confirmed that the signature on our mother's will was not only not her signature, not our mother's signature, but it was Gerald's handwriting.

NARRATION: BEFORE WAYNE AND JENNIFER CAN ACT ON THEIR FINDINGS, THE WILL IS PROBATED, AND GERALD WILHELM TAKES OVER JANICE'S FAMILY ESTATE. THEIR BATTLE TO PROVE THAT THE WILL IS A FORGERY IS JUST BEGINNING.

WAYNE ROBESON: We've taken depositions, got handwriting analysis. We've got witnesses. Gerald maintains that she did create a will and these two witnesses that witnessed the will, they were familiar with her and her signature, and the will was signed and dated a year prior to her death. We took both of their depositions. One of them only would respond that he didn't remember, he didn't remember, he didn't remember. And the other one said that, she'd never met our mother. Well, that's strange. If you've never met her, then how did you see her sign it? "Well, I didn't. It was already signed," she said. Gerald had brought her the will already signed and that she agreed to witness it for him as a favor.

NARRATION: WITH THE DEPOSITIONS AND THE HANDWRITING ANALYSIS OF JANICE'S SIGNATURE, WAYNE AND JENNIFER BELIEVE THEY HAVE A STRONG CASE FOR NULLIFYING THE

WILL AS A FORGERY. THEN WITHIN WEEKS OF THEIR MOTHERS DEATH, THEY ARE SHOCKED TO LEARN THAT GERALD IS ALREADY TAKING ADVANTAGE OF HIS NEWLY INHERITED PROPERTY.

JENNIFER DAVIS: My brother called me and said, "You will not believe what is happening to our mother's property." And I was like, "Okay, what's happening?" and he said, "They are putting an oil well right in front of her house." And I was, like, within six months of her death? The timing is really odd.

JENNIFER DAVIS: I remember as a small child, my grandparents showed me this small glass bottle and it was filled with this black liquid. And I was like, "What is that?" And they were like, "Oh, it's oil. They've put an oil well on the back of our property."

NARRATION: THE CENTERVILLE AREA WHERE JANICE'S FAMILY HOMESTEAD IS LOCATED SITS ON A VASTLY PROFITABLE RESERVOIR OF OIL AND GAS. AFTER GERALD PUTS THE WELL IN HIS FRONT YARD, WAYNE UNCOVERS THE EXISTENCE OF AN OIL AND GAS LEASE AGREEMENT THAT INCLUDES THE FAMILY ESTATE, AS WELL AS NEARLY 600 SURROUNDING ACRES. ANYONE WITH MINERAL RIGHTS IN THAT AREA WHO SIGNED THE AGREEMENT STANDS TO PROFIT FROM THE OIL SALES.

JENNIFER DAVIS: We found out that the oil well was being held up because our mother would not sign the lease agreement. Everyone that was in that pool for mineral rights had signed the agreement almost a year prior to when they drilled, so her signature was the only one that was not on that lease agreement and was holding up the oil production. My mother would have never been comfortable with having an oil well on the front of her property. My mother would complain about the oil industry when she moved onto her property. The fact that Gerald was the last one to sign that lease agreement, to me, shows motive, most definitely, behind her death, and behind the will.

NARRATION: GERALD'S TAKE FROM THE NEW WELL? POTENTIALLY \$10,000 PER MONTH. CONVINCED THAT GERALD MURDERED JANICE FOR THE MINERAL RIGHTS OF HER PROPERTY, WAYNE AND JENNIFER'S TEAM TAKES A LOOK AT THE CIRCUMSTANCES AROUND JANICE'S DEATH. THEY ALSO MOVE FORWARD WITH LEGAL PROCEEDINGS TO CONTEST JANICE'S WILL AND HOPEFULLY REGAIN OWNERSHIP OF THE FAMILY ESTATE.

JENNIFER DAVIS: At that point in time, my brother was trying to find out, you know, what happened with our mother, and why there hasn't been an investigation. During this time, strange things started happening on his property. He would be out of town and somebody would release all the propane from his propane tank and it would appear that somebody tried to set a fire to where the propane was released. I think, initially, Wayne was being harassed to get my brother to stop investigating, to scare him off. Unfortunately for whoever was harassing him, my brother is not easily swayed.

WAYNE ROBESON: We did the contested will. That's a lawsuit. And when we did that, that's when people started warning me that they're going to retaliate on you. And the more we did,

the worse the retaliation became. I kept bees. I think I had, like, about 28 beehives, and something started killing the bees. I would find a beehive, when I would check them and, uh, you could smell a strong odor of pesticide, and all the bees would be dead. That's how it started. Another time, I came home and there was some family photographs that had bullet holes through them and they were stuck in the handle of the storm door. And then, I was warned by a relative that they were going to kill me.

JENNIFER DAVIS: My brother went to the sheriff's office to report all of these crimes, and the sheriff's department told him it was a civil matter, and they would not do anything about it. The majority of the time, the police department didn't even file a report. The breaking point for me personally was when my brother was home, and at 3AM, somebody was banging on his front door, yelling at him to come outside. Wayne woke up and heard this and knew to obviously not go outside. But he was able to find a safe place in the hallway with a weapon and he stayed up all night, thinking that that was going to be his last moments. That whoever these people were, were going to come in the house and kill my brother that night. Fortunately, that did not occur. But when I heard that that happened, I said that, "Enough is enough." And I asked my brother if he would stay with me, just because it was just too dangerous at this point.

JENNIFER DAVIS: Wayne was run off of his property. And not only that, but this property has been in our family since the late 1800s, so you're talking about not only someone being just ripped away from their home, but really being forced to leave a legacy. It's been stolen from us in that respect that it's impossible for us to enjoy the land, to even go there. It's dangerous. I believe that my mother was murdered there and the local officials refused to do anything about it.

NARRATION: IN A BIZARRE TWIST OF FATE, JANICE WILHELM'S ALLEGED SUICIDE IS REMINISCENT OF ANOTHER TRAGEDY IN THE FAMILY. HER FATHER, MORRIS ROBESON, SUPPOSEDLY COMMITTED SUICIDE 10 YEARS EARLIER ON NOVEMBER 10th, 2000. WAYNE ROBESON REMEMBERS HIS GRANDFATHER'S SUDDEN DEATH AND WONDERS IF THERE'S ANY CONNECTION TO WHAT HAPPENED TO HIS MOTHER.

WAYNE ROBESON: I got a call on a Friday afternoon that my grandfather had died and I telephoned home as soon as I could. Supposedly, my grandmother was in the home with him at the time, in another room. And, as the story goes, she heard a gunshot and went into the bedroom and he had shot himself. My understanding is he took a 38-caliber handgun — it's a colt revolver. The barrel is about six-inch barrel, and he shot himself behind the head. He had a deteriorating disc in his lower neck and upper back. And as a result of that, he couldn't hardly lift his arms over his head, but he took a 38-revolver and shot himself in the back of the head.

JENNIFER DAVIS: The gun, the way it fell, and was, like, I believe it was under his foot, and the way that, that my grandfather was sitting on the bed, indicates that the gun should have just fallen to the side of him on the bed if he, in fact, did that.

WAYNE ROBESON: We didn't even question that for a long time. And, I think that death is about as impossible as my mother's death. I wasn't there. There's no police report. There's no scene photos. There's no 911 call. They never did an autopsy, so we don't have anything to go on.

NARRATION: NEITHER WAYNE NOR JENNIFER CAN RECALL ANY REASON THEIR GRANDFATHER WOULD WANT TO KILL HIMSELF. HE HAD SOME HEALTH ISSUES, BUT HE DIDN'T APPEAR DEPRESSED OR SUICIDAL. AT THE TIME, THE FAMILY WAS TOO SHOCKED TO ENTERTAIN THE NOTION OF FOUL PLAY, BUT ONE POLICE OFFICER, WHO WAS PRESENT AT THE SCENE, WAS SUSPICIOUS OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES.

WAYNE ROBESON: I hadn't been at the house, maybe not even two hours, and a neighbor who was a highway patrolman named Louis Weaver, came to the front door and refused to come inside. He wanted to talk to me outside. He told me that he was the first one on the scene of my, uh, grandfather's death, and that he felt my grandfather's death was a homicide. And he asked me some questions. He wanted to know if I knew the location of where Gerald Wilhelm was that day.

NARRATION: GERALD HAD JUST RECENTLY MARRIED JANICE, AND IT WAS A WELL-KNOWN FACT THAT MORRIS ROBESON AND HIS NEW SON IN LAW DID NOT GET ALONG.

JENNIFER DAVIS: Gerald was nowhere to be seen, which was really kind of odd, in my opinion. Gerald worked for a ranch that was maybe 20 or 30 minutes away. And personally, I think, okay, my spouse just lost a parent, and yet they're gone all day. It was odd. And I know my grandfather did not like Gerald. I know that, for some reason, that my grandfather did not trust Gerald. And my grandfather was the head of household. He was in control of everything. And if my grandfather were gone, it would be a lot easier to gain control of assets.

WAYNE ROBESON: I believe that Gerald had something to do with my grandfather's death, but I don't think he did it alone. And to this day, I have been trying to discover what the motive was, whether it was a life insurance policy they had, or something of that nature, because they didn't get the land. I think they wanted him out of the way for control reasons.

NARRATION: THE STRIKING SIMILARITY BETWEEN THESE TWO SUDDEN DEATHS, TEN YEARS APART, AND THE CONNECTION TO GERALD WILHELM, CONVINCES WAYNE AND JENNIFER THAT THERE WAS A CONCERTED PLOT TO SEIZE CONTROL OF THE VALUABLE OIL HIDDEN BENEATH THE FAMILY'S PROPERTY. IN THE YEARS FOLLOWING THEIR MOTHER'S DEATH, WAYNE AND JENNIFER REACH OUT TO LOCAL, STATE, AND FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES, URGING THEM TO TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT THEIR CASE, BUT THEY GET NOWHERE. THEN, IN 2017, THERE'S A SURPRISING NEW TWIST IN THE CASE. GERALD WILHELM DIES SUDDENLY OF AN APPARENT HEART ATTACK. JENNIFER AND WAYNE ARE FRUSTRATED NOW THAT GERALD CANNOT BE BROUGHT TO JUSTICE FOR THE ALLEGED MURDER OF THEIR MOTHER, BUT THEY HOPE THAT WITH HIS PASSING, THEY CAN RECLAIM THE FAMILY ESTATE. THEN, ANOTHER ROADBLOCK. WITHIN HOURS OF GERALD'S DEATH, HIS WILL IS PRESENTED TO THE COURT, AND IT'S NO SURPRISE THAT NEITHER WAYNE NOR JENNIFER ARE LISTED AS HEIRS.

JENNIFER DAVIS: My brother found out that Gerald's will was probated within 24 hours. And that's a very, very fantastic turnaround for a county to get anything done, especially a small one. It's very abnormal, and given the fact that he had been dead, and the cause of death wasn't even determined yet, but that will was probated immediately... I don't want to say it was suspicious, but it was shocking that the county could get it probated so quickly.

WAYNE ROBESON: When Gerald died, he appears to have left his estate to two heirs. One of them was a woman who had signed and witnessed my mother's forged will. The other woman he left it to was a woman we'd never heard of. But it was interesting that you've got this forged will going on, it's making national media. The man dies, and even though the will was contested, deep in litigation, they go ahead and probate his will and give the estate to new people.

NARRATION: WAYNE AND JENNIFER AGAIN APPEAL TO THE JUSTICE SYSTEM TO NULLIFY THE WILL AND RETURN THEIR MOTHER'S PROPERTY, BUT THEY RUN INTO ALL THE SAME OBSTACLES.

JENNIFER DAVIS: Legally, I believe it's our burden to prove that, you know, our mother's will was forged, which would then nullify Gerald's will. I know that the oil royalties are going to the executor, and we haven't been able to freeze those, but our attorney put a *lis pendens* on the home, which basically means you can't touch it. And so, the house is frozen until all the court cases are finalized. To my knowledge, no one is living in the home and no one is going in the home.

NARRATION: PERHAPS MORE PAINFUL FOR WAYNE AND JENNIFER IS THE FACT THAT, EVEN THOUGH THE HOUSE IS UNOCCUPIED, AND GERALD IS DEAD, THEY'RE LEGALLY UNABLE TO RETRIEVE ANY OF THEIR MOTHER'S PERSONAL BELONGINGS. WHILE HE WAS ALIVE, GERALD PREVENTED WAYNE AND JENNIFER FROM EVEN STEPPING FOOT IN THE HOUSE, SO THE FATE OF HER BELONGINGS IS UNKNOWN.

JENNIFER DAVIS: It's not that she had anything that was really worth money. But you know, we had the antique clock. Then there's photos. My mother had lots of photos of us as a family, and I'm concerned that Gerald probably threw all those out. She had recipes that, you know, were handwritten for her whole life and they're irreplaceable. Nothing of financial gain, but just memories. We've lost everything in that respect, and it would be nice if someday, we'd have an opportunity to regain some of that.

NARRATION: WITH THE CIVIL LITIGATION STALLED IN COURT, WAYNE AND JENNIFER'S BEST ROUTE FORWARD MAY BE TO ATTEMPT TO CHANGE THE RULING OF JANICE'S DEATH FROM SUICIDE TO HOMICIDE, AN EFFORT SPEARHEADED BY DR. FRANK POWELL.

FRANK POWELL: The only way that they can look at this again, and reconsider the manner of death, is if the coroner, or the JP Court in Leon County, will request they do so, and they need

to ask the medical examiner in Dallas to relook at the case. That may or may not happen. If not, we have other avenues that we may take, and that may include asking the district court to order this to be looked at again, because the manner of death, as suicide versus homicide, affects wills and probate of more than one person. It affects land. It affects mineral rights for oil, and more importantly, for Janice Wilhelm's children. They need closure to what really happened.

WAYNE ROBESON: If someone is ruled a homicide, then the person most likely to have committed that homicide, especially if they were the only person in the room, cannot benefit from that person. So therefore, it would void any of her estate from going to them, or passing through them to someone else. So therefore, we would be able to have our mother's estate back.

NARRATION: WAYNE AND JENNIFER CONTINUE TO PURSUE EVERY LEGAL OPTION AVAILABLE TO THEM, NOT JUST TO RECLAIM THEIR FAMILY HOMESTEAD, BUT TO GAIN JUSTICE FOR THEIR MOTHER.

JENNIFER DAVIS: I believe my mother would be proud of the fact that we've worked so long and so hard at this. I know she would be very, very proud of my brother. He's just been pushing through all these obstacles for justice for her. I think she would also be really sad that he's been victimized, you know. His home has basically been taken from him. His life, in many ways, has stopped because of the pursuit for justice for this.

NARRATION: DESPITE THE HARASSMENT THEY'VE ENDURED AND THE NEVER-ENDING COURT BATTLES, WAYNE AND JENNIFER REFUSE TO LET JANICE'S DEATH OVERSHADOW THE MEMORY OF HER LIFE.

JENNIFER DAVIS: It is very hard that my kids, I mean they, they don't remember her. They don't know her. And now, everything that's discussed about her is regarding her death, and it takes a lot of effort to teach them about who she was in her life, and what she did, and what an amazing nurse that she was, and how she made them blankets. And it's just unfortunate, you know, we don't have a lot of photos. Wayne and I are hanging in there because there's nothing left to do. We have to push forward. When we started this, we knew that it would be a long haul. We knew that there would be a lot of hurdles. And we agreed that this was important enough to see to the end. We're doing it for her, and I'm also doing it for my children to know that hey, you know, you can stand up to what's wrong and make it right.

NARRATION: IF YOU HAVE ANY INFORMATION ABOUT THE DEATH OF JANICE WILHELM, PLEASE SUBMIT YOUR TIP TO [UNSOLVED.COM](https://www.unsigned.com).

NEXT, ON UNSOLVED MYSTERIES...

ANGIE MOCK: He would not come forward. He would not talk to the police. He denied any request they had of a lie detector test, anything. He refused, and they could not make him

come in and talk to them. In my mind, if you have nothing to hide, why wouldn't you come forward?

—

Unsolved Mysteries is a production of Cosgrove Meurer Productions and Cadence 13. It is executive produced by Terry Dunn Meurer and Chris Corcoran. Produced by Lloyd Lochridge, Christine Lenig, Courtney Ennis, Paige Hymson, and Paul Yates. The Story Producer for this episode was Cynthia Bowles, and it was edited by Ryan Dann.

From Cadence 13, editing, mixing and mastering by Chris Basil, Andy Jaskiewicz and Bill Schultz. Production support by Sean Cherry and Ian Mandt. Artwork and design is by Curt Courtenay. Publicity by Josefina Francis and Hillary Schupf. The original theme music was composed by Gary Malkin and Michael Boyd.

THANKS FOR LISTENING TO EPISODE 21 OF UNSOLVED MYSTERIES.