

THE UNSOLVED MYSTERIES PODCAST | SUNSHINE ON THE RUN

S1E32 Transcript

TIM SUTTLES: This group perpetrated close to 25 arsons across the Pacific Northwest. There was a lot of destruction, close to \$50 million in destruction. People's livelihoods were destroyed. People were traumatized. Their goal was to influence governmental policy, which is the definition of terrorism. Everybody else has been held accountable and I think, uh, she needs to be held accountable.

NARRATION: BETWEEN 1996 AND 2001, A TIGHT-KNIT CELL OF RADICAL ENVIRONMENTALISTS KNOWN AS "THE FAMILY" EXECUTES A CAMPAIGN OF ECO-TERRORISM ACROSS THE WESTERN UNITED STATES. PART OF THE EARTH LIBERATION FRONT MOVEMENT, OR E.L.F., THE FAMILY IS RESPONSIBLE FOR MORE THAN 40 FIRE BOMBINGS AND OTHER CRIMES, CAUSING NEARLY \$50 MILLION DOLLARS' WORTH OF DESTRUCTION. THE FBI HAS PURSUED THE ELUSIVE MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY FOR OVER 20 YEARS, BRINGING ALL OF THEM TO JUSTICE, EXCEPT ONE – A FOUNDER OF THE TERRORIST GROUP WHO HAS MANAGED TO VANISH INTO THIN AIR. ORIGINALLY KNOWN AS JOSEPHINE "SUNSHINE" OVERAKER, THIS UNLIKELY OUTLAW HAS ASSUMED MULTIPLE IDENTITIES OVER THE YEARS AND NO ONE KNOWS IF SHE'S LIVING A QUIET LIFE IN HIDING, OR IF SHE'S CAPABLE OF MORE ACTS OF TERRORISM.

I'M YOUR HOST, STEVE FRENCH AND THIS IS UNSOLVED MYSTERIES: "SUNSHINE ON THE RUN."

IT'S MONDAY, OCTOBER 19TH, 1998. THE PRE-DAWN AIR IS CRISP AND QUIET ACROSS THE MOUNTAINSIDE AT THE RENOWNED VAIL SKI RESORT IN COLORADO. IT'S THE LEAD UP TO SKI SEASON, AND LATER THAT DAY, WORK IS SET TO BEGIN ON A CONTROVERSIAL EXPANSION CALLED THE BLUE SKY BASIN. SUDDENLY, AT 3:30AM THE CALM IS PIERCED BY THE SOUNDS OF A FIRE ALARM AT VAIL'S SKI PATROL HEADQUARTERS. 24 MINUTES LATER, A SECOND ALARM SOUNDS A MILE EAST AT CAMP ONE. FOUR MINUTES AFTER THAT, ANOTHER BLARES OUT FROM THE TWO ELK LODGE.

DISPATCH: 911, where is your emergency?

02:44

NARRATION: AT 4:10AM, AUTHORITIES RECEIVE A 911 CALL FROM CAMPERS ON TOP OF VAIL MOUNTAIN AND FIREFIGHTERS RACE TO RESPOND. THEY ARRIVE TO FIND THE SKY GLOWING ORANGE. SPREAD OVER A MILE LONG STRETCH OF THE MOUNTAIN, THERE ARE EIGHT DIFFERENT STRUCTURES ABLAZE. BY DAYBREAK, ALL OF THEM ARE REDUCED TO SMOLDERING RUBBLE.

NEWS CLIP: Tonight, local, state and federal agencies are investigating the attack. The FBI is investigating the suspicious fires as an act of domestic environmental terrorism. The Earth Liberation Front, or ELF, is taking credit for the fires.

BRYAN DENSON: The Earth Liberation Front wanted to punish a wide array of people who they felt were despoiling the natural world.

NARRATION: BRYAN DENSON IS A VETERAN JOURNALIST WHO REPORTED FOR THE OREGONIAN NEWSPAPER FOR TWO DECADES AND HAS WRITTEN EXTENSIVELY ABOUT THE EARTH LIBERATION FRONT.

BRYAN DENSON: The Earth Liberation Front was really predicated on the idea that autonomous cells of people could inflict this damage and that they could get away with it for a long period of time, and perhaps forever.

JANE QUIMBY: We at the FBI had been coming up goose eggs, you know. We had been totally unsuccessful.

NARRATION: JANE QUIMBY WAS AN FBI AGENT WHO LED THE VAIL ARSON INVESTIGATION OUT OF THE DENVER OFFICE.

JANE QUIMBY: The theory, at least initially, on the Vail case was that it was probably a local group. It's a very isolated area, and it was a pretty difficult task, to have this pulled off. And so, the idea was that you would have to have had some type of local involvement, somebody that knew the community, knew the mountain, and was obviously embroiled in local issues. We had pretty much tracked down most of the viable leads, interviewed people that were on the mountain, protesters, people that had publicly announced their support for the arson, and pretty much the leads had been exhausted.

NARRATION: THE VAIL ARSON CAUSED OVER \$12 MILLION DOLLARS IN PROPERTY DAMAGE, AND THE INDIVIDUALS RESPONSIBLE VANISHED WITHOUT A TRACE. THE CASE WENT COLD IN COLORADO, BUT OVER 1200 MILES WEST, IN EUGENE, OREGON, AN FBI AGENT NAMED JOHN FERRARA DEVELOPS A THEORY THAT WILL EVENTUALLY LEAD TO A BREAK IN THE CASE.

JANE QUIMBY: Oregon had been a hotbed of environmental terrorism activity. In John's theory, from very early on, was that these people that were based out of Eugene were kind of a core that was actively involved in arsons, way beyond just the Eugene area, but throughout the country. They were a very, uh, loose knit group of protesters, and one of those was Josephine "Sunshine" Overaker.

NARRATION: IN 1998, SUNSHINE IS JUST 23 YEARS OLD AND AN UNLIKELY ECO-TERRORIST. SHE'S 5'3, DARK HAired, AND WOULDN'T STAND OUT IN A CROWD. SPECIAL AGENT TIM SUTTLES FROM THE FBI'S PORTLAND FIELD OFFICE HAS TRACKED JOSEPHINE'S MOVEMENTS FROM THE TIME SHE ARRIVED IN EUGENE, OREGON IN 1995.

TIM SUTTLES: Josephine Overaker came to the United States from Canada when her parents divorced. Grew up in California, but then at some point, moved Arizona where she graduated high school, and then subsequently attended Prescott College in Prescott, Arizona, and that's where we believe she met William Rogers, a geology professor there.

NARRATION: ROGERS, A PASSIONATE ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVIST, EMBRACED A RADICAL PHILOSOPHY KNOWN AS DEEP ECOLOGY. HE EVENTUALLY BECAME DISENCHANTED WITH USING CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE TACTICS AND DEVELOPED THE MANUALS FOR ARSON AND SABOTAGE THAT WOULD FORM THE E.L.F.'S PLAYBOOK.

JANE QUIMBY: William Rogers was a very charismatic individual. He was active within the movement. He was very articulate. He was smart. He was the type of people that inspired others that shared a similar philosophy, and then he was also one of those people that was willing to walk the walk and talk the talk. And I think that people found that powerful.

NARRATION: IN THE SUMMER OF 1995, WILLIAM RODGERS AND JOSEPHINE OVERAKER TRAVEL FROM ARIZONA TO TAKE PART IN A MASSIVE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTEST AN HOUR SOUTH OF EUGENE, OREGON. IT IS THIS EVENT THAT'S THE GENESIS OF THE TERRORIST CELL KNOWN AS "THE FAMILY."

BRYAN DENSON: There was a rather large blockade in Warner Creek, the southern end of the Willamette National Forest, where a lot of activists had attempted to prevent the US Forest Service from logging some, uh, old growth timber.

TIM SUTTLES: This whole side of the United States came to help out in that protest, which lasted 11 months. The Cascade Mountains during winter is no easy task. And so, they were committed and, uh, they eventually, uh, won favor and the trees were not harvested. During that 11 months, a certain number of people, you know, a small group who became the family, they became hardened, if you will, and eventually took it upon themselves to do more to affect change. And what they meant by "more" was to damage buildings, damage property and damage companies. They really wanted to stop logging companies and they wanted to stop the US government from systematically harvesting natural resources.

NARRATION: A CRITICAL MEMBER OF THIS RADICALIZED GROUP IS A 23-YEAR-OLD TATTOOED STREET KID NAMED JACOB FERGUSON.

TIM SUTTLES: Jacob Ferguson was a Eugene kid from a broken family. His father was in prison most of his life, so pretty much raised on the streets, had a lot of street smarts. He's a great mechanic, and Jacob Ferguson and Josephine Overaker began dating while they were out there at Warner Creek.

JANE QUIMBY: She and Jake were very close and were friends early on, and Jake was very active in the movement. He was very visible. He had a very visible tattoo on his forehead. He was very much more the attention seeker and attention getter. She looked like the stereotypical hippie, you know, straight, dark hair, very little makeup, dressed unremarkably, not wanting to stand out, not wanting to draw attention to herself. She was not the person that was going to be leading the charge, so to speak, but she was a reliable soldier.

NARRATION: SHORTLY AFTER THE WARNER CREEK PROTESTS END, JOSEPHINE OVERAKER CROSSES THE LINE FROM ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVIST TO ECO-TERRORIST. ON THE NIGHT OF OCTOBER 28, 1996, SUNSHINE AND JACOB FERGUSON SLIP BACK INTO THE WILLAMETTE NATIONAL FOREST AND ATTEMPT TO BURN DOWN A RANGER STATION IN DETROIT, OREGON. TWO NIGHTS LATER, THEY STRIKE AGAIN, 140 MILES AWAY. USING A CRUDE BOMB MADE OF DIESEL FUEL, MILK JUGS, AND SPONGES, THEY BURN THE OAK RIDGE RANGER STATION TO THE GROUND. THE FAMILY'S CAMPAIGN OF DESTRUCTION HAS BEGUN.

TIM SUTTLES: The Detroit ranger station was burned down by just two people. That was Josephine Overaker and Jacob Ferguson. The Oak Ridge station, one more person joined and that was Kevin Tubbs. Those were two really defining actions that saw this group taking a very dark turn.

NARRATION: THE SUCCESS OF THE DETROIT AND OAK RIDGE ARSONS INSPIRES OTHERS TO TAKE ACTION IN THE NAME OF THE EARTH LIBERATION FRONT. CELLS BEGIN TO POP UP ALL ACROSS THE COUNTRY, BURNING AND SABOTAGING BUSINESSES AND GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS. THE E.L.F. IS LABELED THE NATION'S LEADING DOMESTIC TERRORIST THREAT. THE GROUP HAS NO FORMAL LEADERS, BUT THEY HAVE VERY SPECIFIC RULES.

BRYAN DENSON: The way the guidelines of the Earth Liberation Front were set up, if you want to commit sabotage against these entities that we're against, we will publicize what you've done as long as no one is hurt. If I went out and burned down a forest service building, and somehow someone died in that, the Earth Liberation Front would not have accepted that. Even though the person had done it under the color of the Earth Liberation Front, they still would not have acknowledged it.

NARRATION: WHILE MANY GROUPS TAKE ACTION IN THE NAME OF THE E.L.F., THE FAMILY IS THE MOST PROLIFIC. OVER A 6-YEAR PERIOD, SUNSHINE, FERGUSON, ROGERS, AND THEIR CELL ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR OVER 40 ACTS OF ECO-TERRORISM, INCLUDING AT LEAST 20 ARSONS. THEIR COVERT TACTICS MAKE THE GROUP BOTH EFFECTIVE AND ELUSIVE.

TIM SUTTLES: Their operational security was very good. They operated in very small groups, four or five people. They committed an arson, or a destruction, and never went back to that place, never talked about that place, never told anybody that they did it, other than that small group.

BRYAN DENSON: These were really smart people. Some of the members were highly educated, and they were really successful at building fire bombs that really worked. They started off very crudely. They were basically just gallon milk jugs, you know, with sponges for igniters, when they first started, and then they became very, very sophisticated — electronic timed devices. As they progressed, they also were being evermore careful to avoid being caught by circumstantial evidence such as DNA.

TIM SUTTLES: They made their timing devices in kind of a homemade cleanroom. They would shoplift a tent from a outdoor store, set it up in a hotel and make timing devices inside that tent after putting on painter's gear and, uh, double gloves.

NARRATION: THE FAMILY ALSO DEVISE WAYS TO MASK ALL OF THEIR COMMUNICATIONS, KEEPING AUTHORITIES IN THE DARK ABOUT THEIR PLANS.

JANE QUIMBY: We, the FBI, obviously could trace emails and communications, but what they did, it was actually quite ingenious. They would communicate by drafting an email, and then rather than physically sending that communication, they would just leave it in a draft folder. If I have your email address, and I have your password to that account, then I can access it, and I can make changes, leave it in the draft folder, and so it allowed any number of different people to go in there and view the draft, make necessary modifications or changes, leave that for the next person to look, and they all could have access to the same draft folder by having that common information. Another thing that they did, as far as communication, is they had what they called the book club, where they would use numbers to identify pages, paragraphs, words within a line on the book and pull out those words and, and create a message based on a numerical code. And that's very difficult to crack because obviously if we're the FBI, we don't know what book they're using. We don't know what these numbers mean.

NARRATION: THE FAMILY GOES TO GREAT LENGTHS TO PROTECT THEIR IDENTITIES, EVEN FROM OTHERS IN THE GROUP. VERY FEW OF THE MEMBERS EVEN KNOW EACH OTHER'S TRUE NAMES. INSTEAD, THEY REFER TO ONE ANOTHER ONLY BY WHAT THEY CALL THEIR "FOREST NAMES."

JANE QUIMBY: William Rogers went by Avalon. Josephine Overaker was known as Sunshine. We had Country Girl, Country Boy, Dog, Little Missy.

BRYAN DENSON: No one wanted to be caught. They all declared that they were in this together, that there would be no snitches, that no one would ever inform, and as long as they kept to that, they would be successful and stay on the run and committing these crimes.

NARRATION: THE FAMILY EVENTUALLY GROWS FROM ROGERS, FERGUSON, AND SUNSHINE TO A COHORT OF 19 PEOPLE. THEIR ARSON SPREE TARGETS FACILITIES ACROSS THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST, BURNING TRUCKING COMPANIES, SLAUGHTERHOUSES, AND HORSE CORRALS. AS THE 2-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THEIR FIRST ARSON APPROACHES, THE FAMILY HITS THE ROAD TO COLORADO WITH THE BIGGEST TARGET YET IN THEIR SIGHTS.

JANE QUIMBY: There was a group of individuals, including Jake Ferguson, Sunshine, Chelsea Gerlach, and William Rogers, that had traveled to Colorado with the intent of committing this arson at Vail. Obviously, it was October. The weather was inclement. They had a lot of difficulties because now they were dealing with high altitude. It was cold. It was snowy. They had some technical difficulties in terms of the timing devices that they intended to use. The enormity of what they were proposing to do, I think, kind of hit the group and they started to become a little bit discouraged thinking, "are we really going to be able to pull this off?" And so, the group, with the exception of Chelsea Gerlach and William Rogers, returned to Oregon with the intent that they would come back at some later point in time.

NARRATION: BUT IN SPITE OF THE CHALLENGES, WILLIAM ROGERS FEELS THIS ACTION CANNOT WAIT. SOMETIME AFTER MIDNIGHT ON OCTOBER 19TH, HE HEADS UP THE MOUNTAIN ALONE, DETERMINED TO SET VAIL ABLAZE.

JANE QUIMBY: He put devices and, we believe, buckets, plastic buckets with a combination of diesel and fuel oil, placed those around the perimeter of the buildings, then ran across and, transporting the fuel mixture himself, a mile and a half, and this is probably, I would guess, at least probably 10,000 feet of elevation, and torched all these facilities, and then, upon completion, ran down the mountain, injured himself, hurt his ankle pretty severely, and then, uh, left the area.

NARRATION: BY DAYBREAK, THE ARSON AT VAIL IS NATIONAL NEWS. BACK IN OREGON, THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY ARE IN AWE OF WHAT WILLIAM ROGERS HAS ACCOMPLISHED.

JANE QUIMBY: He was responsible for torching all the facilities in conjunction with that arson. It was quite a physical feat. So, he was more or less legendary, I would say, within the movement after he committed that Vail arson.

NARRATION: IT'S THE LARGEST E.L.F. ACTION TO DATE AND A GUT PUNCH TO VAIL'S CORPORATE OWNERS. THE ARSON BRINGS ATTENTION TO THE CAUSE OF ENVIRONMENTALISTS, BUT IT ALSO BRINGS JUDGEMENT AND SCRUTINY.

JANE QUIMBY: This was kind of a signature event. A lot of people probably had never heard of the Earth Liberation Front until Vail happen. And it also scared a lot of people. There were folks that obviously believed in, you know, preservation of the environment, weren't particularly happy maybe with logging of areas and wildlife protection, and that sort of thing. But I think, generally speaking across the greater environmental community, this escalated things to a whole new level. And I think that soured a lot of people on the movement.

NARRATION: UNDETERRED, THE FAMILY CONTINUES THEIR CAMPAIGN OF DESTRUCTION. THEN, IN MAY OF 2001, THEY PLAN A BOLD TWO-STATE ACTION. IT WILL PROVE TO BE ONE OF THEIR LAST.

BRYAN DENSON: The cell known as The Family had evolved into the biggest antagonist of genetic engineering, which they thought was a real hazard to the natural world. And so, they had the first two-state arson spree, one in Seattle, Washington at the University of Washington School of Horticulture. That same night, almost simultaneously, I think within an hour and a half, they hit the Jefferson Poplar Farm, three hours south in a place called Clatskanie, Oregon, believing that Jefferson Poplar Farm was still growing genetically engineered trees.

NARRATION: BUT THIS TIME, THE FAMILY HAS NOT DONE THEIR RESEARCH. THE POPLAR FARM IS UNDER NEW OWNERSHIP, AND THEIR TREES ARE NO LONGER GENETICALLY MODIFIED. THEY BURN TO ASHES JUST THE SAME. WORSE STILL, THE FIRE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON TARGETING THE OFFICE OF A GENETICS PROFESSOR, BURNS OUT OF CONTROL, ACCIDENTALLY DESTROYING THE ENTIRE BUILDING. THE ERRORS BECOME A PUBLIC RELATIONS NIGHTMARE FOR THE E.L.F., AND FISSURES BEGIN TO DEVELOP AMONG THE MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY. THEN, ON SEPTEMBER 11TH 2001, THE NATION WATCHES IN HORROR AS THE TWIN TOWERS FALL IN NEW YORK CITY.

JANE QUIMBY: All of a sudden, after 9/11, terrorism took on a whole new meaning and I don't think anybody wanted to be associated with terrorists. And I think for them, it was maybe a little bit of a wake-up call to think, you know, what I'm doing is not the right thing.

BRYAN DENSON: By 9/11, some of the members really believe that what they were doing hadn't really accomplished their goals. For instance, the Vail ski resort was rebuilt some one year later. And ultimately, they just quit. Most of them spread out around the country. They were living from New York to Oregon. They were very careful to not talk about what they had done, or brag about it to

spouses, or partners, or friends. They were on the run and all face really, really long prison terms if caught, and their belief all along was that if none of them ever told, they would never be caught. And of course, we know that one of them did tell, and then the dominoes all began to fall.

NARRATION: JOSEPHINE OVERAKER AND THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY MOVE ON WITH THEIR LIVES, GETTING JOBS AND STARTING FAMILIES. WITH NO NEW ARSONS, THEIR TRAILS GROW COLD, BUT THE GOVERNMENT REMAINS COMMITTED TO TRACKING THEM DOWN. IN 2004, THE FBI STEPS UP THEIR EFFORTS, CREATING A MULTI AGENCY TASK FORCE DUBBED OPERATION BACKFIRE TO REVISIT THE UNSOLVED ARSON CASES AND FINALLY BRING THE E.L.F. TO JUSTICE.

JANE QUIMBY: We put together a task force, which was based in Eugene, Oregon. It consisted of people from the Forest Service, from the IRS, from obviously ATF, the FBI, the Eugene police department, and it wasn't just focused on Vail. That was one of the actions, but obviously, we're looking at probably at least a dozen different things that had taken place primarily in northwest, but across the country. We were looking at Sunshine. She was obviously very active in Eugene, Oregon circles. She was well known, having been visible at protests. And so, she became a, I would say, a very, very high-profile person of interest early on in the investigation. There was a period of time that we decided that we needed to become maybe a little bit more overt. Let folks know that we were suspicious of them and kind of put the pressure on to see if we couldn't get somebody to start talking to us and, and maybe cooperate.

NARRATION: WITHOUT DIRECT EVIDENCE, AUTHORITIES NEED A SNITCH — SOMEONE INSIDE THE GROUP WHO THEY CAN CONVINCED TO TURN AGAINST THE OTHERS. THE FBI INCREASES THEIR PRESSURE CAMPAIGN, BRINGING IN SEVERAL SUSPECTS FOR QUESTIONING IN THE HOPES THAT ONE WILL CRACK. AND EVENTUALLY ONE DOES: JACOB FERGUSON, SUNSHINE'S OLD BOYFRIEND.

JANE QUIMBY: John Ferrara, the agent in Eugene, really had kind of called Jake out and said, "I know you've been involved in these activities. I'm coming for you. I'm gonna get you. It's only a matter of time." Jake started to become a little bit fearful that maybe John really was hot on his tail, and Jake also had a young son at the time that he cared about a lot, and I think was concerned about, you know, if he was going to end up in prison for a long time, he wouldn't get to see his son grow up. John probably exploited that vulnerability in Jake and eventually convinced Jake that the best thing to do was to cooperate with our investigation.

NARRATION: IN 2004, JACOB FERGUSON MAKES A DEAL. IN EXCHANGE FOR IMMUNITY FROM PROSECUTION, HE REVEALS THE DETAILS OF EVERY ELF ACTION HE WAS INVOLVED IN. HE ALSO AGREES TO BETRAY HIS FORMER ACCOMPLICES. AGENTS HOOK HIM UP WITH A WIRE AS HE PAYS SOCIAL VISITS TO OTHER TARGETS ON THE FBI'S WANTED LIST.

BRYAN DENSON: He traveled the country, from Oregon to New York, meeting with people and say, "Hey, remember when?" And by God, some of them were willing to talk to him, in fact most of them did. And they reminisced about their crimes, all of which was being recorded by agents and prosecutors out in these raid vans. They collected all this information, and then they began to go visit those people and get them to become cooperating witnesses.

NARRATION: ON DECEMBER 7TH 2005, FBI AGENTS SWOOPS IN AND ARRESTS 6 ALLEGED MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY IN A COORDINATED 5-STATE OPERATION. WHEN PRESENTED WITH THE THREAT OF LIFE IN FEDERAL PRISON, MOST OF THEM CHOOSE TO CUT A DEAL AND INFORM ON THE OTHERS, LEADING SWIFTLY TO MORE ARRESTS.

JANE QUIMBY: We didn't know where Sunshine was at that time, but she was kind of considered more of a peripheral, or lesser player, less important, and we really thought we wouldn't have trouble locating her down the road. And that obviously was a mistake.

NARRATION: BY EARLY 2006, MOST SUSPECTED MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY HAVE BEEN ARRESTED AS PART OF OPERATION BACKFIRE. MANY COOPERATE WITH THE GOVERNMENT IN EXCHANGE FOR REDUCED SENTENCES. WILLIAM ROGERS TAKES HIS OWN LIFE IN PRISON. JOSEPHINE OVERAKER IS THE ONLY REMAINING FUGITIVE OF THE FOUR SUSPECTS NOT CAUGHT IN THE INITIAL WAVE OF ARRESTS. HOW IS IT POSSIBLE THAT SUNSHINE HAS GONE COMPLETELY DARK?

JANE QUIMBY: That truly is one of the mysteries of Sunshine. Usually over time, somebody somewhere sees something, or says something, and that has not happened in this case. She's looking at substantial federal prison time, obviously, if she's ever caught, and she is the last remaining fugitive. So, there's certainly, you know, not a whole lot she can do as far as helping yourself in terms of implicating others at this point, because most of those folks have already been arrested and served their time and are actually now back out on the street. It's highly possible that she could have assumed a completely new identity in a new place, and the people that she now associates with have no idea who she really is.

NARRATION: WHERE IS JOSEPHINE OVERAKER TODAY AND HOW HAS SHE MANAGED TO ESCAPE DETECTION ALL THESE YEARS? UNLESS NEW INFORMATION COMES TO LIGHT, WE MAY NEVER KNOW THE ANSWERS. BUT FOR THOSE WHO HAVE SPENT YEARS PURSUING THIS ENIGMATIC FUGITIVE, SOLVING THE MYSTERY OF SUNSHINE REMAINS WORTHWHILE.

TIM SUTTLES: I think it's important to bring her to justice because Josephine Overaker was involved from day one. There was a lot of destruction, people's livelihoods, private companies were destroyed.

People were traumatized, and their goal was to influence governmental policy, which is the definition of terrorism.

JANE QUIMBY: Was she a ringleader? Was she the vicious, primary person? No. But she committed multiple crimes over multiple years and she needs to be brought to justice. Protesting, holding a sign, or gathering together is one thing. Torching buildings takes it to another level. For me personally, it would be nice just to have the closure and know that we can kind of close the book on that chapter.

TIM SUTTLES: I'm still working on the case. I review old interviews, old tips, old leads, trying to look for new leads. We do get tips from time to time. Most times they end up with nothing, but there might be that one time where it is actually her.

NARRATION: THE FBI IS OFFERING A \$50,000 REWARD FOR INFORMATION LEADING TO THE ARREST OF JOSEPHINE SUNSHINE OVERAKER. SHE'S BELIEVED TO NOW BE IN HER LATE-40S AND IS KNOWN TO GO BY MANY ALIASES. SHE HAS A LARGE TATTOO OF A BIRD STRETCHING ACROSS HER UPPER BACK. IN THE PAST, SHE HAS WORKED AS A FIREFIGHTER, A MIDWIFE, A MASSEUSE, AND A SHEEPHERDER. SHE IS FLUENT IN SPANISH AND AUTHORITIES BELIEVE SHE COULD BE LIVING IN SPAIN. IF YOU HAVE ANY INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT THE FEDERAL BUREAU INVESTIGATION AT 1-800-CALL-FBI, GO TO [TIPS.FBI.GOV](https://tips.fbi.gov), OR SUBMIT A TIP AT [UNSOLVED.COM](https://unsolved.com). NEXT, ON UNSOLVED MYSTERIES...

VALERIE STOREY: "No, she knows or she's responsible." I says, "I don't know what to say to about this." She says, "Another thing I'm telling you, if they knew I was talking to you, I'd be next." This was in September. A few months later, she was dead.

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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 Molly Ryan, and it was edited by Keith Shea.

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THANKS FOR LISTENING TO EPISODE 32 OF UNSOLVED MYSTERIES.

