

UNSOLVED MYSTERIES PODCAST | SMALL TOWN HIT

EP 52 Transcript

DAPHNE JACOB: It's a really terrible feeling to think that you live in a small town, and everyone knows everybody, and then to think that someone can just murder another human being and not have to be accountable for it. I think there's a handful of people that know what happened to my brother, and justice needs to be served.

NARRATION:

NESTLED IN A PICTURESQUE VALLEY HALFWAY BETWEEN NASHVILLE AND KNOXVILLE LIES THE SMALL TOWN OF SPARTA, TENNESSEE. FOUNDED IN 1809, THE TOWN'S OFFICIAL WEBSITE PROMOTES SPARTA AS A QUIET, SAFE COMMUNITY WITH A HOMETOWN ATMOSPHERE AND A RICH HISTORY OF BLUEGRASS MUSIC. THE POPULATION OF NEARLY 5,000 PEOPLE HAS BARELY CHANGED IN DECADES, AND MANY SPARTA FAMILIES HAVE BEEN THERE FOR GENERATIONS. BUT AN IDYLIC SMALL TOWN CAN ALSO HAVE A DARK SIDE BUBBLING JUST BELOW THE SURFACE, AND HIDDEN CONFLICTS WITHIN A TIGHT-KNIT COMMUNITY CAN LEAD TO GOSSIP, RUMORS, AND SOMETIMES PERHAPS EVEN MURDER.

I'M STEVE FRENCH, AND THIS IS UNSOLVED MYSTERIES: "SMALL TOWN HIT."

DAPHNE JACOB: My name is Daphne Jacob, and Terry Sullivan was my brother.

NARRATION:

DAPHNE JACOB WAS BORN AND RAISED IN SPARTA AND HER FAMILY HAS DEEP ROOTS IN THE COMMUNITY. HER GRANDFATHER WAS A COUNTY COMMISSIONER AND A ROAD BEARING HIS NAME STILL WINDS THROUGH FARMLAND JUST NORTH OF TOWN. SPARTA IS THE ONLY PLACE DAPHNE HAS EVER CALLED HOME.

DAPHNE JACOB: It's a very rural country-type town. It was a good place to grow up. There was very seldom anything that was exciting that went on here, just a slow country living kind of life.

BROOK JOLLEY: Everybody knows everybody. Almost everybody went to school together. It's got the same small town gossip things that you would suspect any town of that size would have.

NARRATION:

BROOK JOLLEY IS DAPHNE JACOB'S SON. LIKE MOST OF HIS FAMILY, HE WORKED AT THE LOCAL SAWMILL IN SPARTA, THE SULLIVAN AND SON LUMBER COMPANY. DAPHNE'S FATHER, JOE SULLIVAN, FOUNDED THE BUSINESS IN 1978 AND RUNNING IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN A FAMILY AFFAIR.

BROOK JOLLEY: My mom was the secretary at the mill for over 20 years. My grandfather worked there. The entire family worked there with the exception my grandmother, but her job was actually, she cooked lunch everyday for everybody and brought it to the sawmill. So she was actually, basically, our catering service. So, in essence, everybody did something.

DAPHNE JACOB: My uncle, Burton Sullivan, he would sell the logs. And then my brother Terry had a company named Terry Lynn Sullivan Trucking, and he would haul and deliver the logs and the cross ties and the timbers.

NARRATION:

TERRY SULLIVAN WAS THREE YEARS OLDER THAN HIS SISTER DAPHNE. HE WAS THE “SON” IN SULLIVAN AND SON LUMBER, AND HIS LIFE REVOLVED AROUND WORK AND FAMILY.

DAPHNE JACOB: Terry was about six foot six, 240 pounds, very handsome. Just a husky, tall, country boy. He was a really funny, soft spoken kind of guy. He enjoyed working, and he enjoyed making his deliveries to the different companies because he had friends at every location where he would deliver, and he would like to spend time and chat with them during the times that he would go and unload. He was really easy to get along with.

BROOK JOLLEY: I saw my Uncle Terry literally every day at the sawmill. My uncle worked probably 80 hours a week between the times that he was driving and at the mill working. He did everything he could to help support the business and support his family.

NARRATION:

TERRY’S WIFE CHERYL ALSO GREW UP IN SPARTA. THEY OWNED A HOME TOGETHER IN THE POPULAR GILLEN SUBDIVISION WHERE THEY WERE RAISING THEIR YOUNG SON. THE NEIGHBORHOOD WAS ONLY SEVEN MILES FROM THE SAWMILL AND CONVENIENT TO BOTH THEIR FAMILIES.

DAPHNE JACOB: Terry met his wife Cheryl when he was getting work done on his truck at Hickey’s Auto and Truck Repair. That's where he would usually take his trucks to have them worked on and have the maintenance done on them, and Cheryl was the daughter of Mr. Hickey.

BROOK JOLLEY: I believe there was about a 10-year age gap between the two of them when they met, and they got along great. Moved in together, got married, bought a house and moved into Gillen subdivision. We saw Cheryl probably at least once a week. She was handling the books for Terry's trucking business. So, there was a lot of her interacting with everyone coming in and out of the office and getting checks or dropping off Terry's son, so we saw her all the time.

NARRATION:

IT’S JANUARY 16TH, 2009, AND AS THE DAY WINDS DOWN AT THE SAWMILL, TERRY SULLIVAN IS GETTING READY TO ENJOY A TYPICAL QUIET FRIDAY EVENING AT HOME.

BROOK JOLLEY: My uncle came to the sawmill sometime around 4:30 or 5pm and he stayed there for a little while and talked to our secretary, Lil. Then he left and went over to my grandmother's because he parked all of his trucks over my grandmother's house anyway, most of the time. So, any day after work, he would go over there and talk to her for a moment before he left.

DAPHNE JACOB: Terry was at my mom and dad's house, and he was going to go by his mother-in-law's house, and then continue on home. Cheryl was over at a local salon getting her hair and nails done.

NARRATION:

AT AROUND 9:30PM, ONE OF TERRY'S AUNTS WHO LIVES NEARBY IN THE GILLEN SUBDIVISION LOOKS OUT HER WINDOW IN THE DIRECTION OF TERRY'S HOUSE AND NOTICES POLICE CARS PARKED NEAR HIS HOME. SHE CALLS TERRY, BUT NO ONE ANSWERS. THEN, SHE CALLS TERRY'S PARENTS BUT THEY DON'T SEEM CONCERNED — TRAFFIC STOPS ARE A COMMON OCCURRENCE IN THAT PART OF THE SUBDIVISION. IF ANYTHING INTERESTING IS GOING ON, TERRY WILL LET THEM KNOW ABOUT IT IN THE MORNING.

DAPHNE JACOB: On Saturday morning, my mom and dad and my brother Terry and I were supposed to go out to eat breakfast at IHOP. My mother called me a little after seven, screaming that she had just gotten a phone call and that my brother was dead.

NARRATION:

DAPHNE CAN'T BELIEVE THE NEWS. SHE HAD JUST SEEN TERRY 12 HOURS EARLIER. SHOCKED AND DISTRAUGHT, SHE CALLS HER SON BROOK, AND THEY RACE OVER TO HER PARENT'S HOUSE TO FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED.

BROOK JOLLEY: The way my grandparents were first told that their son was dead was that they received a phone call from a detective who told them that it was an accident, that it looked like Terry had choked, hit his head, and died in his own kitchen because he hit his head. That was the story that she was told by the detective. I didn't believe that there was any way that he had fallen and bumped his head and died. I just couldn't believe it.

NARRATION:

BROOK SUSPECTS THERE IS MORE TO THE STORY THAN WHAT HIS GRANDPARENTS WERE TOLD.

DAPHNE JACOB: My son Brook decided to go and see if he could find anything on the Internet, and when he went and looked, the Sparta Expositor had put it on their news page, somewhere between 4:30 and 5:00 that morning, that there was a shooting in Gillen subdivision. There was a picture along with the article and it was a picture of my brother's house. So, we knew it had to be Terry. What was going through my head was how could that possibly be true? How could that happen to my brother?

NARRATION:

THE ARTICLE SAYS THAT THE VICTIM OF THE SHOOTING WAS MURDERED, IT WAS PUBLISHED 8 HOURS BEFORE TERRY'S PARENTS RECEIVED THE CALL FROM THE DETECTIVE SAYING TERRY'S DEATH WAS AN ACCIDENT. SO WAS IT AN ACCIDENT, OR WAS IT MURDER?

BROOK JOLLEY: What I was told by people who were working the 911 call, that were first responders on the scene, was that, when they got there, there was actually an off-duty law enforcement officer there at the house that was telling everyone there that my uncle had choked, fallen down, and hit his head, and that that was the cause of death and that they could go ahead and code the body and take it in. Not to worry about having the medical examiner come there or anything else, just, "Go ahead and take the body in, it'll be fine. I can already tell that the cause of death was him bumping his head."

NARRATION:

THE PARAMEDICS CHOOSE TO FOLLOW PROCEDURE AND WAIT FOR THE COUNTY MEDICAL EXAMINER TO ARRIVE. WHEN HE EXAMINES TERRY'S BODY, HE QUICKLY COMES TO A DIFFERENT CONCLUSION ABOUT THE CAUSE OF DEATH.

BROOK JOLLEY: He was told immediately, by the same off duty cop, the same story that he had told the first responders: looks like he choked, hit his head, and he's fallen on the floor there and he died on the floor from head trauma. Dr. Baker got there and said immediately, "This man has been shot in the head." Like, he could see the head wound. However, it'd looked like he had been cleaned up and the whole scene had been cleaned up. We talked to Dr. Baker about this after the event who's the one that relayed that story.

NARRATION:

THE MEDICAL EXAMINER IS CONFIDENT TERRY'S DEATH WAS NOT AN ACCIDENT, AND TERRY'S HOUSE BECOMES AN ACTIVE CRIME SCENE. WITHIN HOURS, THE TENNESSEE BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION IS CALLED IN TO TAKE THE LEAD ON THE CASE.

ELIZABETH WILLIAMS: My name is Elizabeth Williams and I'm a Special Agent Criminal Investigator with the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation.

NARRATION:

THE TBI HAS BEEN ACTIVELY WORKING THE TERRY SULLIVAN MURDER CASE SINCE THE EVENING HIS BODY WAS DISCOVERED. WHILE UNABLE TO DISCUSS THE DETAILS OF THEIR INVESTIGATION, TBI SPECIAL AGENT ELIZABETH WILLIAMS WAS ABLE TO PROVIDE SOME BACKGROUND INFORMATION DURING A BRIEF TELEPHONE INTERVIEW.

ELIZABETH WILLIAMS: The TBI was requested on behalf of the 13th Judicial District Attorney's office shortly after the discovery of Mr. Sullivan. We bring a lot, as agents, a lot of different skills to these crime scenes and so it's not unusual for the TBI to be requested, especially in a rural town. Mr. Sullivan's body was discovered inside his residence. There was no sign of forced entry, no sign of a struggle. Upon arrival, we would process the scene, collect any evidence, witnesses that are on scene, if we can interview anyone or do a neighborhood canvass or whatever, is, is part of that initial investigation.

NARRATION:

INVESTIGATORS SPEND OVER 8 HOURS AT TERRY'S HOME GATHERING EVIDENCE, AND HIS BODY IS SENT TO NASHVILLE FOR AN AUTOPSY. ACCORDING TO TERRY'S NEPHEW, BROOK JOLLEY, THE CONDITION OF THE CRIME SCENE IS HIGHLY UNUSUAL.

BROOK JOLLEY: We were relayed about how cleaned up the crime scene was by the lead detective for the TBI at the time. His statement was that room had been scrubbed clean, like with bleach, to the point where there was no hair. There was no cells of any sort. There were no fingerprints. There was no evidence in the room where my uncle's body was found. There was also no powder burns on his

head. There was no stippling. There was no evidence of the gunshot having occurred. Somebody had cleaned his head. They cleaned the wound. They had cleaned the floor, and it was the only room in the house that was clean. The whole rest of the house was cluttered, dusty, needed to be cleaned up with the exception of just that kitchen where the body was found, which was the cleanest room in the house by far.

NARRATION:

NOTHING IS REPORTED MISSING FROM THE HOME, MAKING IT UNLIKELY TERRY WAS KILLED AS THE RESULT OF A ROBBERY. THE AUTOPSY REPORT CONFIRMS THAT TERRY WAS SHOT ONCE FROM BEHIND AND DIED FROM THAT GUNSHOT WOUND. THE BULLET'S ANGLE OF ENTRY, COMBINED WITH OTHER FORENSIC DETAILS, RULES OUT SUICIDE AS A POSSIBILITY. BUT BROOK BELIEVES THE WAY HIS UNCLE WAS SHOT MAY PROVIDE A CLUE ABOUT WHO PULLED THE TRIGGER.

BROOK JOLLEY: Terry's autopsy showed that whoever shot him shot him in the back of the head at close range with a small caliber pistol entering from underneath the base of the skull at the bottom and going up into the head. The bullet did not exit the head. It was a caliber small enough to where the bullet itself went in and never exited. They know that he had to have been shot at close range because of the angle of the projectile. Also, whoever it was most likely had to be somebody that Terry knew, simply because he appeared to have answered the door while he was eating dinner and they shot him in the back of the head without him paying the slightest bit of attention to whoever it was being behind him. It had to be someone that he was so comfortable with that he didn't even feel the need to stop eating to talk to them.

NARRATION:

WAS TERRY SULLIVAN MURDERED BY SOMEONE HE KNEW? GIVEN THE LIMITED EVIDENCE AVAILABLE, IT'S QUITE POSSIBLE. BUT WHO WOULD WANT HIM DEAD?

DAPHNE JACOB: I don't think Terry ever had any arguments or disagreements with anyone that amounted to anything other than your just normal disagreements with work or, you know, family involvement.

BROOK JOLLEY: No one at the mill had problems with him or didn't get along with him. I mean, other than standard family bickering. He and I would bicker about how I had loaded a truck, or sometimes he would adjust a machine wrong, and I would make fun of him for that, or things like that. But it wasn't, he didn't have enemies that way. He got along with everybody.

NARRATION:

AS THE SULLIVAN FAMILY TRIES TO ZERO IN ON A MOTIVE, THEY CAN'T HELP BUT REMEMBER, AND BE PUZZLED BY THE VISIT THEY RECEIVED FROM TERRY'S WIFE, CHERYL, A FEW HOURS AFTER THEY LEARNED HE HAD BEEN MURDERED.

DAPHNE JACOB: Cheryl finally came to my mom and dad's house. She came with a friend and came and knocked at the front door, which is not the door that she would ever come in when she visited before. She always came in the back door. That's the door that family and friends always used.

BROOK JOLLEY: Cheryl got there, and then walked around the house and told every single person in the house the story about Terry choking on chicken that he was eating, falling down, hitting his head, and dying from a head blow. The story that was in the newspaper was already that he had been shot. I watched her walk around the entire house and tell every single person there that story. Got to me, and I showed her the newspaper article. And I asked her, "Did you get an attorney yet?" And her face turned white, and she left the house immediately. She didn't say bye to anybody. She walked straight out of the house.

DAPHNE JACOB: We don't know what Cheryl was thinking when she was telling us that. We couldn't figure out why we were told one thing when it wasn't the correct thing, and we don't know why we were told that by the detective.

NARRATION:

WHY DID BOTH CHERYL AND THE LOCAL DETECTIVE TELL THE SULLIVAN FAMILY THAT TERRY'S DEATH WAS AN ACCIDENT? THEY'RE HOPING FOR AN EXPLANATION WHEN LOCAL OFFICIALS SHOW UP ON THEIR DOORSTEP TWO DAYS AFTER THE MURDER.

BROOK JOLLEY: The detective who called them and told them that it was an accident came with the sheriff on Sunday and apologized for having done it. He actually came and said he was sorry for telling us the story that it was an accident. But he didn't give a reason for why they had done it, just that he was sorry about that, that obviously wasn't true, and they were going to do everything they could to investigate the murder. My grandfather, being an ex-sheriff's deputy, you could see immediately was upset, but he wanted to believe that there had been a mistake made.

NARRATION:

IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING TERRY'S MURDER, LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AND THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE MAKE PUBLIC STATEMENTS ASSURING THE COMMUNITY THAT THEY ARE WORKING TIRELESSLY TO FIND TERRY'S KILLER. THEY REFUSE TO RELEASE INFORMATION ABOUT THE INVESTIGATION TO THE PUBLIC OR TERRY'S FAMILY, CITING RESTRICTIONS MEANT TO PROTECT THE CASE AT TRIAL. IN A SMALL TOWN LIKE SPARTA, AN UNSOLVED MURDER IS A MAJOR TOPIC OF CONVERSATION, AND IN THE ABSENCE OF OFFICIAL INFORMATION, LOCALS BEGIN TO DRAW THEIR OWN CONCLUSIONS ABOUT WHO MAY HAVE BEEN INVOLVED.

BROOK JOLLEY: I suspected immediately that Cheryl had something to do with it because of the lying. 12 hours had gone by. She fully knew that it was a murder because they had interrogated her all night long. The TBI had been called in to do the interrogation. She had told them who she thought suspects were. The suspects had been interrogated all night long, and then she called and came over to the house and told everybody, despite it already being in the paper that it was a shooting, that it was an accident. It's highly suspicious to me that the only people who ever repeated that story were the two detectives and my uncle's wife. It just, it seems extraordinarily suspicious more than anything.

NARRATION:

DID TERRY'S WIFE HAVE A REASON TO WANT HIM DEAD? AUTHORITIES INTERVIEWED CHERYL THE NIGHT SHE FOUND TERRY'S BODY, BUT DIDN'T FILE CHARGES OR DISCLOSE A POSSIBLE MOTIVE. HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO TERRY'S FAMILY, THERE MAY HAVE BEEN SOME TENSION IN THE MARRIAGE.

BROOK JOLLEY: Terry was pretty guarded about talking about his actual marriage a lot of the time, but occasionally, especially on days where he was upset about something, there would be stuff that he would talk about at work with somebody. The time right before he got murdered, there were several times where he was actually talking about things that had gone on with the marriage and how he was upset.

NARRATION:

TERRY'S SISTER DAPHNE CLAIMS THAT SHE ALSO HEARD ABOUT PROBLEMS IN HER BROTHER'S MARRIAGE.

DAPHNE JACOB: I received a phone call from a lady telling me that Terry's wife was having an affair with her husband, and it had caused them to get a divorce. And when I told him about it, he let me know that he had already known about it, and that he was planning on having a conversation with Cheryl about it that night. And that's the night he was murdered.

BROOK JOLLEY: After the murder, we heard from a lot of people that came forward telling us that there had been an affair and that they knew the people that were involved with it. There are also a number of social media posts where people made claims anonymously.

NARRATION:

AS LOCAL RUMORS SPREAD, INVESTIGATORS CONTINUE TO FOLLOW LEADS AND INTERVIEW POTENTIAL WITNESSES. WHILE THE AUTHORITIES ARE GUARDED ABOUT RELEASING DETAILS, TERRY'S FAMILY STATES THAT, EARLY ON, THEY DID RECEIVE OCCASIONAL UPDATES ON THE PROGRESS OF THE CASE.

BROOK JOLLEY: Beginning of any murder, obviously, the first person that they look at as a suspect is the spouse. So obviously they looked at Cheryl as being a suspect. They've told us that they did investigate the guy Cheryl told them she believed was the murderer, and it just happened that he had photographs where he was at a child's birthday party at the exact time that it happened, or they probably would have arrested him. We even were told by representatives from the TBI that they had had to investigate, I believe it was 29 different men that she had some connection to within the last couple years. They also told us that they had investigated and cleared a couple of the law enforcement officers that they initially thought might be involved, because at least one of them was interfering in the investigation.

NARRATION:

ACCORDING TO BROOK, AMONG THE RUMORS SWIRLING ONLINE WERE ALLEGATIONS THAT CHERYL HAD CALLED THE OFF-DUTY POLICE OFFICER WHEN SHE FIRST FOUND TERRY'S BODY BEFORE SHE CALLED 911 — AND THAT THE TWO OF THEM WERE INVOLVED IN AN AFFAIR.

BROOK JOLLEY: There was a police officer that showed up on the scene of the murder before the ambulances even arrived. The TBI, after being told that there was some indication that he had a personal relationship with my uncle's ex-wife, ordered him to not interfere in the investigation any further in any way. That he wasn't allowed to do anything involved with the Terry Sullivan murder at all anymore. And then shortly thereafter, he was upset about posts that he had seen on social media. He went to the courthouse himself. He wrote himself a subpoena in his own handwriting, demanding the IP addresses of every single person who had mentioned him after being ordered directly by the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation to have no further contact with anyone involving the Terry Sullivan murder, and that resulted in his indictment and firing.

NARRATION:

THE SULLIVAN FAMILY ALSO CLAIMS THEY WERE TOLD THAT A WITNESS OBSERVED AN UNUSUAL EXCHANGE DURING CHERYL'S NAIL APPOINTMENT THE NIGHT OF THE SHOOTING.

BROOK JOLLEY: There was some indication that, during the nail appointment, Cheryl handed an envelope to someone who came over to meet her there. I'm not sure who that person was. I don't know what was in that envelope. The story that we were told, though, is that someone came during her appointment, she met them, she handed them something, and then they left. She did something kind of peculiar that night, also. She was very adamant with her nail tech that her nail tech needed to come back with her to her house so that she could give her her Christmas present. She left around 9PM with the nail tech who had just finished doing her nails and took her back over to Terry and Cheryl's house in Gillen subdivision. And then, she went to the door, opened the door, and immediately started screaming that Terry was laying on the floor and hurt. To me, the way that story sounds, it sounds like she was just bringing someone over to have an alibi.

NARRATION:

HOWEVER, DESPITE THE MANY RUMORS AND SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THE CASE, NEITHER LOCAL INVESTIGATORS NOR THE TBI TURN UP THE EVIDENCE THEY NEED TO PROSECUTE SOMEONE FOR MURDER. AS THE WEEKS AND MONTHS PASS AND NO ONE IS CHARGED IN TERRY'S KILLING, HIS FAMILY'S FAITH IN THE AUTHORITIES BEGINS TO ERODE.

BROOK JOLLEY: The most frustrating thing about the entire investigation has to be that the investigative services involved have refused to share any documents with us. They've refused to share what's going on with the family in any way. They don't keep us updated. They didn't even notify us that there had been a murder until the next morning, despite holding Cheryl overnight and questioning her all night about a murder. Despite them calling in other people and questioning them all night about a murder, they never told us until the next morning because, technically, under Tennessee law, we're not the next of kin. They have no duty to inform us. Under Tennessee law, if they had not declared it a murder on the scene, we would have had no right to request an autopsy. She could have had that body cremated.

NARRATION:

ROUGHLY A YEAR AFTER TERRY'S MURDER, THE SULLIVAN FAMILY DECIDES TO ACT ON THEIR SUSPICIONS AND FILE A WRONGFUL DEATH LAWSUIT AGAINST TERRY'S WIFE, CHERYL. THE GOAL IS TO STOP CHERYL FROM COLLECTING TERRY'S LIFE INSURANCE WHILE THE CASE IS STILL UNDER INVESTIGATION, BUT IT'S HARDER THAN THEY EXPECTED TO FIND AN ATTORNEY TO TAKE THE CASE.

BROOK JOLLEY: We talked to a lot of attorneys when this first happened, trying to actually find an attorney who was willing to do a wrongful death lawsuit. Every single attorney within a 50-mile radius declined to take the case that we talked to. All of them. Every single one of them had the same exact reason, too. "I have kids, and I have a family, and looking at the evidence of this, this appears to be a murder for hire, and I don't want anything to do with it because it might put my family at jeopardy." People in the area talk about the Dixie Mafia sometimes. It's a pretty well-known thing, in this area at least, that there are government members and people who are involved that sometimes go out of their way to make sure that investigations don't happen, and that's what those attorneys were afraid of. They did not want the Dixie Mafia showing up and killing their children or them. They didn't want anything to do with the case for that reason.

NARRATION:

BUT THE SULLIVAN FAMILY WON'T GIVE UP, AND THEY EVENTUALLY FIND AN ATTORNEY WILLING TO TAKE THE CASE. IN JANUARY OF 2010, A LAWSUIT AGAINST CHERYL SULLIVAN AND 2 UNNAMED CO-CONSPIRATORS IS FILED AND WHAT THEY DISCOVER IN THE PROCESS ONLY FUELS BROOK'S SUSPICIONS OF HER INVOLVEMENT.

BROOK JOLLEY: John Hancock Life had actually, in the court documents, listed that, at the time of the murder, that there was a divorce pending, and that was the first time our family had actually ever heard about that. I'm not certain who filed for divorce. I'm not certain if it was Terry or Cheryl. I don't know who filed it. But I do you know that John Hancock Insurance lawyers believed so firmly that it had been filed, that they swore to it and put it in court documents. So, it's pretty apparent that there was a divorce going on, or at least they had a good reason to believe it.

NARRATION:

THE LAWSUIT ALSO REVEALS THAT TERRY HAD TWO SEPARATE INSURANCE POLICIES ON HIS LIFE. BOTH NAME HIS WIFE CHERYL AS THE BENEFICIARY, AND TOGETHER THE POLICIES ARE WORTH OVER \$2 MILLION.

BROOK JOLLEY: He had gotten a, it was around \$1.2 million dollar life insurance policy on him several years before. And everyone knew that that one existed because. But there was also a second insurance policy that nobody knew existed that was also for another million dollars that had been taken out three years prior. There are numerous signatures on the policy, but only one of them appears to be my uncle's. He was left-handed and had a very peculiar penmanship. His letters had a very certain lean to them. He always signed his name the exact same way, and whoever had signed his name in three of the positions on that paper had signed it in a way that was not like Terry's signature. We looked at it, immediately said, "That's a forgery." The only page on that insurance policy that had my uncle's signature did not tell what kind of policy it was. It did not tell the value of the policy. It didn't explain anything about the policy. What he was told to get him to sign that page, I have no idea, but he could

have been shown a completely different insurance policy for all anyone knows, because his signature is not on any of the other pages.

NARRATION:

BROOK AND HIS MOTHER IMMEDIATELY CONTACT THE TBI, BELIEVING INVESTIGATORS CAN USE THE ALLEGED FORGERY AS PART OF A CRIMINAL CASE. THE RESPONSE, HOWEVER, IS NOT WHAT THEY EXPECT.

BROOK JOLLEY: The TBI said, "Okay," and said that they were going to look into it, but then came back to us and said that, even though they knew that that looked like it was a forgery, they wanted to give her that money because, quote, unquote, "We want to see what she does with the money and see if she pays anyone with it, and that way we might be able to catch her." And we were not in favor of that. We told them flatly that we did not like that idea.

DAPHNE JACOB: We didn't do any handwriting analysis or anything like that because we were asked to kind of leave it alone. And after we were told to leave it alone, we did make sure that one of the policies was put in the name of my nephew to make sure that he was well taken care of for the rest of his life.

NARRATION:

ALTHOUGH ESTABLISHING THE TRUST FOR TERRY'S SON DOES PREVENT CHERYL FROM COLLECTING ALL OF THE INSURANCE MONEY, THE WRONGFUL DEATH LAWSUIT IS ULTIMATELY DROPPED BY THE FAMILY DUE TO THE INABILITY TO OBTAIN ANY FILES OR RECORDS FROM INVESTIGATORS TO BACK UP THEIR SUSPICIONS.

NEWS CLIP: It was 11 years ago today when this quiet Sparta neighborhood was the scene of a horrific crime. 50-year-old Terry Sullivan was shot and killed in his own home. The Tennessee Bureau of Investigation says Sullivan was last seen by his parents around 6pm that evening. Three hours later, his wife found his body. More than a decade later, still no answers as to why.

NARRATION:

IN THE YEARS SINCE TERRY SULLIVAN WAS KILLED, NO ONE HAS EVER BEEN ARRESTED OR CHARGED WITH HIS MURDER. TERRY'S NEPHEW BROOK HAS GROWN INCREASINGLY VOCAL ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND IN THE PRESS ABOUT HIS FAMILY'S CONCERNS WITH THE INVESTIGATION. IN JANUARY 2019, BROOK, AND HIS MOTHER AND GRANDMOTHER, FILED A FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUEST WITH THE TENNESSEE BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION, SEEKING OFFICIAL RECORDS RELATED TO THE CASE. BROOK STATES THAT THE TBI REFUSES TO SHARE ANY INFORMATION WITH THE FAMILY, BUT HE WON'T STOP PUSHING AUTHORITIES UNTIL THERE IS CLOSURE FOR TERRY AND HIS FAMILY.

BROOK JOLLEY: I'm not willing to give up until something's actually done. I can deal with being frustrated. I can deal with being disappointed, but what I, what I have a very hard time dealing with is that justice has never been served. We need everyone that's ever had any information about this to come forward, and we need all the attention it can get so that somebody actually feels pressured to do their job.

NARRATION:

THE TENNESSEE BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION MAINTAINS THAT THE MURDER OF TERRY SULLIVAN IS STILL AN ACTIVE CASE AND ONE THAT THEY ARE COMMITTED TO SOLVING.

ELIZABETH WILLIAMS: We work to solve our cases and we don't stop working until the work is finished. So, this case will remain active and ongoing, and all new leads will be addressed as they become available. If someone out there knows something, that individual needs to bring that information forward. It could very well be that missing piece that is needed to make an arrest in this case.

DAPHNE JACOB: It's a really terrible feeling to think that you live in a small town like we do, and everyone knows everybody, and then to think that someone can just murder another human being and not have to be accountable for it. I think there's a handful of people that know what happened to my brother, and I really wish that some of them would decide that justice needs to be served.

NARRATION:

IF YOU HAVE ANY INFORMATION THAT MAY HELP SHED LIGHT ON THE MURDER OF TERRY SULLIVAN, PLEASE CALL THE TENNESSEE BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION AT 1-800-TBI-FIND, OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT UNSOLVED.COM.

NEXT, ON UNSOLVED MYSTERIES...

BRAD DERMOND: We were at our son's baseball game and I received a call from the deputy sheriff. It was something that you would never expect — that dad was deceased and then my mother was missing.

—

UNSOLVED MYSTERIES IS A PRODUCTION OF COSGROVE MEURER PRODUCTIONS AND CADENCE 13, AN AUDACY COMPANY.

IT IS EXECUTIVE PRODUCED BY TERRY DUNN MEURER AND CHRIS CORCORAN.

PRODUCED BY CHRISTINE LENIG, COURTNEY ENNIS, AND BILL SCHULTZ.

THE STORY PRODUCER FOR THIS EPISODE WAS CINDY BOWLES, AND IT WAS EDITED BY KEITH SHEA.

FROM CADENCE 13, EDITING, MIXING AND MASTERING BY CHRIS BASIL AND ANDY JASKIEWICZ.

PRODUCTION SUPPORT BY SEAN CHERRY, IAN MANDT, AND AVA FENEBERGER.

ARTWORK AND DESIGN IS BY CURT COURTENAY.

PUBLICITY BY MOIRA CURRAN, JOSEFINA FRANCIS, AND HILLARY SCHUPF.

THE ORIGINAL THEME MUSIC WAS COMPOSED BY GARY MALKIN AND MICHAEL BOYD.

THANKS FOR LISTENING TO EPISODE 52 OF UNSOLVED MYSTERIES.