

## THE UNSOLVED MYSTERIES PODCAST | A LIFE CUT SHORT

### Episode 57 Transcript

MAGGIE ZINGMAN: I called and I did that typical mom message of, “Brittie, I know you're okay. But really, this really begins to worry me, when you don't call back, so just take it that I'm a mom, and I just need you to call me.” So, I went from being worried Thursday night to being totally devastated about five hours later.

NARRATION:

IT'S MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 27TH 2004, IN TULSA, OKLAHOMA WHEN 18-YEAR-OLD BRITTANY PHILLIPS RETURNS HOME FROM AN URGENT CARE VISIT WHERE SHE'S JUST BEEN TREATED FOR A SINUS INFECTION. HER MOTHER, MAGGIE ZINGMAN, WHO LIVES ABOUT AN HOUR AWAY, ASSUMES HER DAUGHTER WILL FINALLY GET A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP AND FEEL BETTER IN THE MORNING. BUT WHEN MAGGIE CALLS THE NEXT DAY, THERE'S NO ANSWER AND NO RETURNED CALL. FRIENDS CAN'T GET A HOLD OF HER EITHER. FINALLY, ON SEPTEMBER 29TH, POLICE ENTER BRITTANY'S APARTMENT AND DISCOVER A GRUESOME SCENE. BRITTANY'S LIFELESS BODY IS SPRAWLED ON THE FLOOR IN THE BEDROOM. SHE'S BEEN DEAD FOR DAYS.

I'M STEVE FRENCH, AND THIS IS UNSOLVED MYSTERIES: “A LIFE CUT SHORT.”

IT'S A STORMY THURSDAY NIGHT IN CHANDLER, OKLAHOMA WHEN MAGGIE ZINGMAN OPENS HER FRONT DOOR TO A UNIFORMED POLICE OFFICER AND THE WORST NEWS OF HER LIFE.

MAGGIE ZINGMAN: I get this bam, bam, bam at 1:30 in the morning, and I opened the door to this really young-looking sheriff in a raincoat. And he just steps inside the door and he goes, “Are you Maggie Zingman?” and I go, “Yeah,” and I thought “Oh no. Did Josh or Brittie get in trouble or something?” And he sticks his hand out to me with a little piece of paper with little number on it. He goes, “You need to call Tulsa police. Your daughter's been murdered.” And he left. And all I remember is just sitting there and going, “What am I supposed to do? What am I supposed to do?” You know? And then I thought, “This must be a mistake. This must be a mistake, you know. It can't be true. It can't be true.”

NARRATION:

MAGGIE IS A TRAUMA SPECIALIST. ONE OF HER EARLIEST CASES WAS WORKING WITH SURVIVORS OF THE OKLAHOMA CITY BOMBING IN 1995. BUT NOTHING COULD HAVE PREPARED HER FOR THE NEWS SHE RECEIVED FROM A PATROL OFFICER ON HER DOORSTEP THAT THURSDAY NIGHT.

MAGGIE ZINGMAN: I was devastated. We had a very close relationship. She had been up a few months before and we were sitting on my porch in my house in Chandler and she's just upset about something and she just laid her head in my lap and that little nose, I would always calm her down by running my finger on her forehead and then just running it up that little nose and telling her it's okay, you know. She was such a unique, kind, caring, self-effacing little girl, and sometimes I think she cared more about others than herself. People would contact me and say, “Brittie,” — who looked like she should have been, you know, in the popular group — “would eat lunch with me,” or, “she would talk to me,” or,

“she'd helped me study.” So, she was very empathetic. She was only 5'2. She'd just have these long curls and these dark brown eyes and this little, impish body and this little pug nose and she had a little round cherub face. But she was also fearless, and I think by the time she was 10, she had various scars on her face, on her back, because she would just, you know, go anywhere.

NARRATION:

AS SHE RUSHES TO TULSA, ABOUT AN HOUR FROM HER HOME, MAGGIE RECEIVES FRACTURED DETAILS ABOUT THE DISCOVERY OF HER DAUGHTER'S BODY.

MAGGIE ZINGMAN: Brittany's best friend, who she went to school with three nights a week, went to her apartment after she didn't show the last class and found that the door was ajar and the lights were on and didn't want to go in. So, she called the police to do a wellness check, and that's when, Thursday evening, around 10:30 or so, they discovered Brittany.

JEREMY STILES: The officers and detectives that responded processed the apartment and Brittany was found deceased on the floor of her bedroom. She was lying partially clothed on the floor next to the bed.

NARRATION:

SERGEANT JEREMY STILES HAS BEEN WITH THE TULSA POLICE DEPARTMENT FOR 11 YEARS, AND IN 2020 WAS ASSIGNED TO THE TULSA COLD CASE UNIT. HE HAS SINCE IMMERSSED HIMSELF IN BRITTANY PHILLIPS' CASE, ABSORBING ALL THE DETAILS FROM THE INITIAL INVESTIGATION.

JEREMY STILES: There were no signs of forced entry. Her front door was obviously unlocked when police arrived as well. The window was unlocked but closed and she had a sliding door on her balcony that was also partially open. So, there's multiple places that a person could have come in or gone out after the fact. Some things, like the mattress, appeared to be out of place in the bedroom where she was found. It was knocked off of the frame a little bit. So yeah, it's likely there was a struggle of some sort. There were multiple areas of semen and a spot of blood that were located at the scene. Fingerprints were lifted throughout the apartment.

NARRATION:

INVESTIGATORS AT THE SCENE DON'T FIND ANY SIGNS OF RANSACKING OR ROBBERY, AND BRITTANY'S KEYS AND PHONE ARE IN PLAIN SIGHT. POLICE DUST THE ROOM FOR FINGERPRINTS AND DISCOVER A SECTION OF THE WALL NEXT TO THE BED WHERE MANY OF BRITTANY'S FINGERPRINTS APPEAR, INDICATING SHE LIKELY PUT UP A FIGHT THERE.

LORI FULLBRIGHT: When I first hear the story, you know, we race out to the scene. You get interviews with officers and you hear the basic facts of “a girl has been murdered, a teenage girl, in her apartment.”

NARRATION:

LORI FULLBRIGHT IS A REPORTER AND MAIN NEWS ANCHOR ON 6 KOTV IN TULSA AND SHE'S BEEN COVERING BURGLARY AND HOMICIDE CASES IN NORTHEASTERN OKLAHOMA SINCE 1992.

LORI SAYS THAT WHEN WORD OF BRITTANY'S MURDER CAME ACROSS HER DESK, SHE KNEW INSTANTLY THAT THIS WAS NOT A TYPICAL CRIME FOR THE AREA.

LORI FULLBRIGHT: Britney Phillips was a young woman who was not living a high-risk lifestyle. This is not a kid hanging out the bars and this is not a kid who's having wild parties in her apartment. She's just a good, well-grounded, smart young woman from a good family. Why this sweet young woman? Why does she have to die this brutal death? So, in Tulsa, to have a truly innocent, random murder victim is unusual. It makes everybody think, "That could be me or someone I love." That's the kind of murder that really shocks people. That kind of murder, in Tulsa, since it's not common, puts people on edge.

NARRATION:

LORI'S FAMILIAR WITH THE SOUTH TULSA NEIGHBORHOOD WHERE BRITTANY WAS MURDERED, NEAR THE INTERSECTIONS OF 65TH STREET AND MANGO ROAD. THE STREETS ARE SPACIOUS AND QUIET, AND THE APARTMENT COMPLEX WHERE BRITTANY LIVED IS DOTTED WITH LARGE, SHADY TREES, A SEEMINGLY PEACEFUL RESIDENTIAL AREA.

LORI FULLBRIGHT: South Tulsa's more affluent, and there's lots of big homes out there, and there's some very nice school districts out there and Union is one of them, and that's where she went to school. It would have been considered a safe part of town, a good part of town, a part of town that I would have told any of my relatives or employees here, "Sure, go live in that area. That's a great apartment complex." And so that's what makes it hard is, of course, we all know in our minds that crime can happen anywhere. Criminals are mobile, but it does put people on edge.

NARRATION:

ROUGHLY FIVE HOURS AFTER BRITTANY'S BODY IS DISCOVERED BY POLICE, HER MOTHER MAGGIE ARRIVES AT HER DAUGHTER'S APARTMENT. SHE'S DREADING THE SCENE SHE'S ABOUT TO WALK INTO.

MAGGIE ZINGMAN: I still couldn't fathom what had happened. I get to the apartment and there's these bright lights on and the door is open, and a police officer comes out and he goes, "Who are you?" and I go, "I'm the mother of Brittany." He goes, "Well, the detective's not here, and the body's not here. They already took it down to the M.E." So, you know, I'm going, "I thought I had to identify it?" "No, she was identified by her license." So, I didn't get to see the body.

JEREMY STILES: She was in partial stages of decomposition. Obviously, we can't determine the exact time of death on an occurrence like this, but both the medical examiner's evaluation, as well as the timeline of Brittany's last known contacts with, like, friends and family, put her as having been deceased for approximately two to three days before she was found.

NARRATION:

INVESTIGATORS' BEST ESTIMATE SUGGESTS THAT BRITTANY WAS KILLED SOME TIME THAT MONDAY NIGHT, SOON AFTER HER VISIT TO THE URGENT CARE CENTER.

MAGGIE ZINGMAN: So, the last contact was on Monday night, September 27th. She called me at about 8PM, and that was the last time I talked to her. The police think that she was most likely murdered, from the time of death they can guesstimate, between 9PM that Monday night to sometime 8 or 9AM that Tuesday morning.

JEREMY STILES: The official cause of death was asphyxia due to neck compression. It appears to be, from all we could tell, a manual strangulation. There were no ligature marks or any signs that, like, a sharp or blunt object was used. No significant injuries other than what caused the homicide.

NARRATION:

THIS MEANS THE KILLER USED HIS BARE HANDS TO STRANGLE BRITTANY, PROBABLY AS SHE STRUGGLED TO FIGHT THEM OFF. BUT AT 5'2", THE YOUNG STUDENT WAS NO MATCH FOR WHAT WAS LIKELY A MUCH LARGER MALE ASSAILANT. A RAPE TEST IS PERFORMED AND CONFIRMS THAT BRITTANY WAS SEXUALLY ASSAULTED, THOUGH NO DNA IS RECOVERED. AFTER THE AUTOPSY IS COMPLETE, MAGGIE IS FINALLY GRANTED ACCESS TO HER DAUGHTER'S BODY.

MAGGIE ZINGMAN: After not being able to see her at the crime scene, I thought, at the funeral home, that I would be able to see her before we buried her. The funeral director brought us back to where she was and he said to me, "Because she was autopsied, I'm not gonna let you look at her." There was a blanket over her face, and back then I had no voice. So, all I could do was say goodbye to her in the same way I did all the times when I was trying to calm her down. And so, I just took my finger and ran it down over the blanket, ran it down her forehead, on her nose and then just laid my head, and it was a very cold chest and just cried and said, "I'm sorry," and then I just ran screaming out of there.

NARRATION:

FAMILY AND FRIENDS CAN'T BEGIN TO FATHOM HOW THIS BRIGHT YOUNG WOMAN'S LIFE COULD BE SO TRAGICALLY CUT SHORT. BRITTANY SPENT MOST OF HER LIFE GROWING UP IN TULSA. THEN, WHEN SHE GRADUATED FROM HIGH SCHOOL, SHE CHOSE TO GO TO ECKERD COLLEGE IN ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA, WHERE SHE RECEIVED A FULL SCHOLARSHIP IN CHEMISTRY. BUT AFTER A YEAR IN FLORIDA, BRITTANY WANTED TO RETURN TO TULSA TO BE CLOSER TO FRIENDS AND FAMILY, SO SHE MOVED INTO AN APARTMENT COMPLEX JUST ACROSS FROM HER OLD HIGH SCHOOL AND RESUMED HER STUDIES AT TULSA COMMUNITY COLLEGE.

MAGGIE ZINGMAN: We looked into the apartment and did research on it and it seemed like a generally safe area, which is not what we learned after she was murdered. We learned that, in the building that she had her apartment in, that there was a break in down the same building at the other end, eight months before she moved in. We discovered there were some sexual offenders that were living there. You know, it's right next door to high school. That's not supposed to happen. So, there were a lot of breaches.

NARRATION:

MAGGIE ALSO LEARNS THAT A PREVIOUS TENANT IN BRITTANY'S COMPLEX HAD HAD A RUN IN WITH A LOCAL DRUG GANG. BUT WHILE BRITTANY WAS LIVING THERE, MAGGIE NEVER SAW ANY SIGNS OF ISSUES WITH THE BUILDING OR OTHER TENANTS. INVESTIGATORS INITIALLY TRY TO TRACK DOWN ANY

SECURITY FOOTAGE THAT COULD SHOW SOMEONE GOING INTO OR OUT OF BRITTANY'S APARTMENT, BUT BECAUSE BRITTANY WAS FOUND THREE DAYS AFTER HER MURDER, MANY CAMERAS HAVE ALREADY RECORDED OVER THE RELEVANT FOOTAGE. ALTHOUGH THERE ARE NO SIGNS OF THE KILLER'S ENTRY INTO THE APARTMENT, INVESTIGATORS NOTICE A WINDOW SCREEN THAT'S BEEN REMOVED AND PLACED OUTSIDE.

JEREMY STILES: The front door to her apartment is at the top of, like, a landing, a staircase you have to go up, and next to the front door are a couple of windows. One of the screens on the window was removed and placed kind of a few feet away, like near the banister. It's out of place for sure, it's strange. That window frame was collected and fingerprinted. They did the full forensic workup on it.

NARRATION:

BUT THE WINDOW AND SCREEN DON'T YIELD ANY USABLE EVIDENCE AND, IN FACT, DETECTIVES SUSPECT IT MIGHT ACTUALLY BE A DIVERSION, STAGED BY THE KILLER TO THROW OFF THE INVESTIGATION AND DISGUISE THE ACTUAL MEANS OF ENTRY.

MAGGIE ZINGMAN: If somebody took those screens off, you could see somebody climbing in through them. The detective back then told me he felt it was made to look like they accessed the apartment through the windows.

NARRATION:

THERE IS ONE OTHER POSSIBLE WAY THE KILLER COULD HAVE GAINED ACCESS — A DOOR AT THE BACK OF THE APARTMENT THAT OPENS ONTO A BALCONY. MAGGIE RECALLS BRITTANY HAD ONCE LOCKED HERSELF OUT OF HER APARTMENT AND A FRIEND HAD BEEN ABLE TO HOIST HIMSELF UP ONTO THE BALCONY TO LET HER IN.

MAGGIE ZINGMAN: The week I was cleaning the apartment, I was sitting out on the balcony and I remember looking, there's like wood lattice all over those two French doors, and the wood lattice on the right looked all bowed out. And that was the first time that I thought, "I don't remember that looking that way." We wonder if they just pried open the French doors, which were not that secure even when locked, that they could have got in that way.

NARRATION:

NO FINGERPRINTS OR FORENSIC EVIDENCE FOUND AT THE DOOR GENERATE ANY STRONG LEADS. BUT AS POLICE SEARCH THE APARTMENT, A THIRD POSSIBLE ENTRANCE IS DISCOVERED.

JEREMY STILES: In one of the closets was an attic access. And when you go up into that attic, it's kind of a shared attic between the other apartments in that building. So, theoretically, a person could go up into the attic and drop down into one of the other apartments. There was no evidence of that. It didn't appear as though the little door had been disturbed or anything but, I mean, it's a possibility.

MAGGIE ZINGMAN: Early on, they looked at it for evidence. Could it have been somebody who works at the apartment that would have that access? It could have been somebody who had been at the apartments before and knew of that access. The other thing about that building is, on the stairs going

up to the second floor, if you stand on the railing, you can hike yourself up to the roof and if there's roof access, which I think there is, through the top of the roof, somebody could have got into it that way.

NARRATION:

AGAIN, POLICE ARE UNABLE TO FIND ANY EVIDENCE TO GENERATE A BREAK IN THE CASE, BUT THE IDEA OF A BUILDING WORKER ACCESSING THE APARTMENT REMINDS MAGGIE OF ANOTHER UNSETTLING INCIDENT THAT BRITTANY MENTIONED TO HER MOTHER, SUGGESTING THAT SOMEONE MAY HAVE BEEN STALKING HER DAUGHTER AND COULD HAVE GAINED UNAUTHORIZED ACCESS TO HER UNIT.

MAGGIE ZINGMAN: Just a couple of weeks before she was murdered, she mentioned that she came home and there was urine in her toilet. So, she was gonna go talk to the apartment complex, because they were always fixing things. If somebody had been in there or something, you know, and she couldn't really think about who it was.

NARRATION:

POLICE ALSO HAVE TO CONSIDER THAT BRITTANY LET THE MURDERER IN HERSELF, EITHER BECAUSE SHE KNEW THEM OR BECAUSE SHE WAS TRICKED INTO OPENING THE DOOR. IN EITHER CASE, THE MURDERER WOULD LIKELY HAVE BEEN WATCHING BRITTANY TO KNOW WHEN SHE WOULD BE HOME AND ALONE.

LORI FULLBRIGHT: My theory, for what it's worth, is I believe that someone was watching her. I believe someone was stalking her. I believe somebody saw this beautiful, bouncy, friendly young woman and I think they became obsessed with her, and I believe that that's the person who raped and killed her. There's a lot of people who think maybe it was someone who has a mobile job, like a truck driver passing through, and we've seen those cases. I don't feel like that's this case. I feel like it was someone in a circle around her, not maybe her immediate circle, but maybe on the periphery, someone who noticed her, some kind of a peeping Tom person.

JEREMY STILES: Everybody they could find in the apartment complex was talked to and asked what they've seen, workers at the apartments. Probably the biggest challenge of this case is no witnesses. No one can say they saw a person coming or going from the apartment. Nothing was seen or heard around the apartment. And then, in addition to that, Brittany was a young, active person and between people she knew from high school, college, past jobs, everything else, there's a very wide net of people in her life.

MAGGIE ZINGMAN: My first thought was maybe it was some of the boyfriends that she had problems with, one who had been involved with drugs years before. One who, just her senior year, she had a lot of conflict. He was abusive. So, of course, as a mother, my mind went to some of those suspects.

JEREMY STILES: She had people she dated on and off. Most, if not all, of those people have been interviewed found and spoken to. She had a boyfriend and he was definitely spoken with.

NARRATION:

BRITTANY'S PAST AND PRESENT BOYFRIENDS ARE QUICKLY RULED OUT, BUT BRITTANY WAS AN ATTRACTIVE, OUTGOING YOUNG WOMAN WHO RECEIVED PLENTY OF UNWANTED ATTENTION FROM MEN SHE CAME INTO CONTACT WITH.

MAGGIE ZINGMAN: She was constantly having people interested in her. One was a security guard at the mall that was right near her apartments. And right after the murder, he was walking around acting like he was part of the investigation and they came to find that he was interested in her, and we really thought maybe he could be the killer. Of course, we used the DNA to rule him out.

NARRATION:

WITH EACH POTENTIAL SUSPECT, DNA IS USED TO HELP IDENTIFY THE POSSIBLE KILLER. NEARLY 75 DIFFERENT STRANDS OF DNA WERE FOUND IN THE APARTMENT, BUT THERE'S ONE CONSISTENT SAMPLE FOUND IN BOTH SPERM ON THE BEDSHEETS AND A SMALL SPOT OF BLOOD ON THE WALL. IN THE FIRST WEEKS OF THE INVESTIGATION, POLICE TRY TO MATCH THAT SAMPLE OF DNA TO THE HUNDREDS OF SUSPECTS THEY'RE ABLE TO IDENTIFY AS HAVING BEEN IN OR NEAR BRITTANY'S APARTMENT BUILDING AROUND THE TIME OF THE MURDER.

LORI FULLBRIGHT: They believed DNA found at the scene belonged to the killer. So, you've got this big pool of suspects. So, what do you do? You start testing the ones that you can. You start testing them against this DNA. Well, it's not a hit, it's not a hit, it's not a hit. Over and over and over. Then you widen the pool. Up to, at one point, there were 1500 that we had tested with DNA, then it goes to 2000, then 3000 people we've tested with this DNA, and some of those suspects look pretty good. There's a handyman maintenance guy, at the apartment complex who's given a lot of the girls there the creeps. There are people who live in the apartment complex who have previous sex crimes. There are people who are Peeping Toms who live in the area. But you test them all against this DNA, and it's like, oh, this one's ruled out. This one's ruled out.

NARRATION:

POLICE CAST A WIDE NET AS THEY SEARCH FOR BRITTANY'S KILLER. BUT THEY HAVE NO IDEA IF THEY'RE DEALING WITH A ONE-TIME CRIMINAL OR POTENTIALLY A REPEAT OFFENDER.

LORI FULLBRIGHT: I have covered serial killers in my career, certainly, and I have covered people who do it just one time. So, the nature of this crime kind of makes you think that, if this was their first time, they probably didn't stop. They were slick. They probably learned from it, and I believe likely have gone on to do it again. Once you get a taste of that kind of feel, I think you don't just stop.

JEREMY STILES: So, around the time of Brittany's murder, Tulsa actually had, uh, a serial rapist in town as well. And so, homicide detectives were fortunate enough to be able to work alongside the sex crimes detectives and that allowed buccal swabs and DNA swabs from hundreds of people to be collected. And then all those swabs obviously were run against Brittany's evidence. Eventually the rapist was caught though, and their DNA did not match any of Brittany's evidence.

NARRATION:

THE PROCESS OF INTERVIEWS AND DNA MATCHING CONTINUES FOR WELL OVER A DECADE, BUT NO MATCHES OR SOLID LEADS DEVELOP. THEN IN 2017, A NEW GENETIC TESTING COMPANY IS ENLISTED TO RE-PROCESS THE DNA IN THE CASE, IN PARTICULAR, THE CONSISTENT SAMPLE FOUND IN THE SEMEN AND THE BLOOD STAIN. THE RESULT OF THE PROCESS IS WHAT'S KNOWN AS A PHENOTYPE SKETCH.

LORI FULLBRIGHT: They made the sketch appear to be someone who would be at the age of 25 years old. And from that phenotype report, it looks like it's a white male. He's light-complected. He's got green or blue eyes. He's got brown or blonde hair, and for the first time, I mean, this was explosive in 2018. It was like this is the face of Brittany Phillips' killer. Everybody look at this face. Tell us if you know this face, this is a huge step. I mean, we thought this is it. And their tips are coming in and the detectives are following up and sure enough we get a tip that says, "This is the guy."

NARRATION:

THE NEW TESTING COMPANY USES FORENSIC GENETIC GENEALOGY TO MATCH TO A SINGLE INDIVIDUAL, AND THAT INDIVIDUAL TURNS OUT TO BE THE BOYFRIEND OF ONE OF BRITTANY'S BEST FRIENDS. THIS NEW SUSPECT IS SOMEONE WHO KNEW BRITTANY WELL, AND SHE WOULD HAVE FELT COMFORTABLE ALLOWING HIM INTO HER APARTMENT. AND IT TURNS OUT HE HAD BEEN IN HER UNIT JUST PRIOR TO HER MURDER.

MAGGIE ZINGMAN: My daughter's best friend was a year younger than her and she, at times, would let her friend sleep over with her boyfriend and my daughter would sleep out on the couch. The weekend before she was killed, her best friend and the boyfriend stayed over, and the DNA that was found on the sheet was his DNA. That's why it was there. The detective said that, after talking to the suspect, after talking to the suspect's ex-girlfriend, and after talking to the suspect's girlfriend's dad, that he had a pretty much airtight alibi, and he wasn't the killer.

NARRATION:

IT'S A DEVASTATING BLOW TO THE INVESTIGATION WHEN DETECTIVES LEARN THAT THE DNA SAMPLE THEY BELIEVED BELONGED TO THE KILLER ACTUALLY CAME FROM AN APPARENTLY INNOCENT PERSON. NOW, THE PAST ATTEMPTS TO MATCH DNA WITH ALL THE OTHER SUSPECTS IS THROWN INTO QUESTION.

MAGGIE ZINGMAN: My brain went, well what are you talking about? This can't be true. And it was like receiving that notice at 1AM in the morning that my daughter had been murdered. I'm 67 now, and so when I got that notice, it was like, how can I keep on fighting?

NARRATION:

MAGGIE IS DEVASTATED. AS IS THE POLICE DEPARTMENT AND LORI FULLBRIGHT, WHO AFTER YEARS FOLLOWING THE CASE, HAS BECOME EMOTIONALLY INVESTED IN FINDING BRITTANY'S KILLER.

LORI FULLBRIGHT: It was hard. I, you know, obviously have reported on thousands and thousands of crimes and interviewed thousands and thousands of victims, but few have I been on a journey this long, like I have with Maggie Zingman and covering this case, and I think so highly of her and so fondly



of her. We've been through some ups and downs with this case, and we've become close. So, when she calls and says, "You gotta get back here. We're gonna have an arrest." And our hopes were soaring. And then when she said, "It's not the killer, which means we don't have the killer's DNA after all," it was a blow, because I wanted so much for Maggie to have his case solved. So, you wonder now, was he in that first group of 300? Is he in that group of 3000? How do we go back and find those guys? How do we go back and say, you know, where were you again? Tell me what your relationship was? Did you know her? Did you see her? How do we go back and find some of those really good suspects now and talk to them? Because without the DNA, what we're left with is tips, and those have been pretty few and far between over the years.

NARRATION:

DESPITE THE MAJOR SETBACK IN THE CASE, SERGEANT JEREMY STILES CONTINUES TO PUSH FORWARD IN THE HUNT FOR A VIABLE SUSPECT.

JEREMY STILES: We still got some other unknown DNA samples, so we are hopeful that it may lead to another unknown person of interest to explore. We've got people flagged that we know we want to find that haven't been found yet and we would like to question them. We're not just sitting around waiting. I would like it to be solved, you know, to bring closure to Brittany's mother, and the rest of her family. Brittany didn't deserve to die the way she did. From all accounts, she was a caring and driven person who had a lot she wanted to accomplish in this world and it's unfair she didn't get the chance to carry on with it. She deserves justice, and the person that did this deserves to be held accountable. We need some tips. We would really appreciate the tips.

NARRATION:

FOR MAGGIE ZINGMAN, THE SEARCH FOR BRITTANY'S KILLER HAS BECOME A MOTIVATING FORCE IN HER LIFE. IN 2007, SHE TURNED HER CAR INTO A MOBILE WANTED POSTER, COVERING IT WITH PHOTOS OF BRITTANY, INFORMATION ABOUT HER MURDER, AND A PLEA FOR TIPS. SHE HAS DUBBED HER CAR "CARAVAN TO CATCH A KILLER" AND HAS DRIVEN ALL AROUND THE U.S. HOPING TO GENERATE LEADS.

MAGGIE ZINGMAN: I thought maybe I can just get the story out there. I just started going out for four or five weeks, hitting cities, sending out media notices before I got there, doing interviews. It was all about getting tips. I've covered over 300,000 miles through 48 states in four cars. I do this a couple of times a year. It's what has recharged me.

LORI FULLBRIGHT: Maybe this killer is in another state, maybe this story will reach the right person with that one tip, maybe loyalties have changed and now someone is not afraid to come forward. I'm just still shocked that we don't know who did it, that we haven't figured it out. There is something about giving this community a sense that this killer did not go free, did not come into Tulsa, Oklahoma and take one of our young, beautiful women and get away with it. It would be amazing if I could tell the viewers that this case has been solved.

NARRATION:

BRITTANY'S KILLER REMAINS AT LARGE, BUT MAGGIE ZINGMAN CONTINUES TO SPREAD THE WORD OF HER DAUGHTER'S MURDER ACROSS THE COUNTRY. SHE HAS EVEN BEGUN HELPING OTHER VICTIMS OF VIOLENT CRIME BY EDUCATING THE PUBLIC ABOUT DNA EVIDENCE AND ADVOCATING FOR THE OKLAHOMA STATE GOVERNMENT TO UPDATE AND EXPAND THE DNA LAB AT THE OKLAHOMA STATE BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION.

MAGGIE ZINGMAN: I've learned early on, if I crumble, then her memory crumbles. And if her memory crumbles and goes away, then nobody knows her, and I've been able to keep her memory alive. So that's how I've survived but I, I miss that face. I just used to love her and love that face. I would just hold it in my hands, and that's what just hurts my heart. I miss my best friend.

NARRATION:

IF YOU HAVE ANY INFORMATION ABOUT THE MYSTERIOUS MURDER OF BRITTANY PHILLIPS, PLEASE EMAIL TIPS TO [TPDCOLDCASEHOMICIDE@CITYOFTULSA.ORG](mailto:TPDCOLDCASEHOMICIDE@CITYOFTULSA.ORG), PHONE THE TULSA COLD CASE HOMICIDE UNIT AT 918-596-9133, OR LEAVE A TIP AT [UNSOLVED.COM](http://UNSOLVED.COM).

NEXT ON UNSOLVED MYSTERIES:

ANDREA GIBBON: Desiree always said to me she would die young. She says, "I don't think it's a car accident, Mom, but it's gonna be tragic. I'm gonna die when I'm young, so you gotta be prepared." And I used to tell her, "Des, don't talk like that. A mother doesn't bury her child, it's not right."

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Unsolved Mysteries is a production of Cosgrove Meurer Productions and Cadence 13, an Audacy company.

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Thanks for listening to Episode 57 of Unsolved Mysteries.

