

## UNSOLVED MYSTERIES PODCAST | SECRET DIARY OF A MISSING GIRL

### EP61 Transcript

LAURIE ENHERT: Amber had had a fender bender on her way to school, and she had hit her head on the steering wheel and nobody heard from her. We thought maybe that she was delirious, you know, lost some memory or something, but then when they weren't able to find her car, then I just had a bad feeling that something bad had happened to her. But I don't think any, any of us ever imagined it going on this long, and never thought we'd never find her.

NARRATION:

IN 1998, COLLEGE JUNIOR AMBER WILDE VANISHES. ONE MINUTE SHE'S IN HER APARTMENT AND THE NEXT, SHE'S GONE WITHOUT A TRACE. POLICE CAN'T FIND A SINGLE CLUE TO WHAT'S HAPPENED... UNTIL HER DIARY IS DISCOVERED AND, LIKE A VOICE SPEAKING FROM BEYOND, AMBER HERSELF REVEALS A HIDDEN PAST AND A TRAGIC LOVE AFFAIR THAT MAY HAVE GONE DESPERATELY WRONG.

I'M STEVE FRENCH AND THIS IS UNSOLVED MYSTERIES: "SECRET DIARY OF A MISSING GIRL."

LAURIE ENHERT: Amber was a pretty girl. She had long brown hair, brown eyes, beautiful smile. She was always bubbly, always smiling, and she was a very special person. I loved her very much.

NARRATION:

LAURIE ENHERT IS AMBER'S AUNT AND GODMOTHER. SHE HELPED RAISE AMBER AND HER SISTER AFTER THEIR PARENTS DIVORCED. THE OLDEST OF THE TWO GIRLS, AMBER ALWAYS RADIATED AN AIR OF CONFIDENCE AS SHE GREW UP — SHE HAS AN EXCEPTIONALLY CLEVER MIND, GOT STRAIGHT A'S EVERY YEAR IN SCHOOL, AND HAD NO FEAR OF HARD WORK.

LAURIE ENHERT: Amber had two, three part-time jobs most of the time while she was in school, whether it was in high school or when she was in college. Very goal driven. Her plan was to go on to medical school at some point and become a pediatrician because she loved children.

NARRATION:

AFTER A YEAR AT THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN WEST BEND, AMBER WAS PLANNING TO ATTEND THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN IN GREEN BAY, WHERE SHE'D RECEIVED A FULL SCHOLARSHIP TO PURSUE HER DREAM OF BECOMING A DOCTOR. THE ONLY THREAT TO AMBER'S PLANS FOR HER FUTURE WAS AN UNEXPECTED PREGNANCY.

LAURIE ENHERT: Amber approached me in June of 1998 and told me that she was pregnant. The father of the baby was somebody that she had met going to school at the University of Wisconsin in West Bend. They didn't know each other very long. She did not tell anybody else for a while and then, in early August, Amber and I went by her parents' house. She individually told them she was pregnant. She told them she wanted to have the baby, but that she was

planning on going to school up until she had the baby and very soon after, she was gonna continue.

NARRATION:

AMBER'S FAMILY WAS SUPPORTIVE OF HER PLAN TO KEEP THE CHILD, OFFERING TO HELP OUT WHERE THEY COULD AFTER THE BABY WAS BORN. IN THE BEGINNING OF SEPTEMBER 1998, AMBERS LEFT FOR COLLEGE IN GREEN BAY, A TWO-HOUR DRIVE FROM HOME. SHE'D BEEN LUCKY ENOUGH TO FIND AN AFFORDABLE APARTMENT IN A SAFE PART OF TOWN CLOSE TO SCHOOL. HER FAMILY WAS CONFIDENT SHE WAS READY AND PREPARED FOR THIS NEW ADVENTURE IN HER LIFE. BUT SHE WAS ONLY IN SCHOOL FOR THREE AND A HALF WEEKS BEFORE SHE DISAPPEARED.

LAURIE EHNERT: The last time, that I saw her and spoke to her was Labor Day weekend, before she left for college. We just had, you know, just a couple quick conversations that weekend, told her good luck and things. She was in a good mood. She was so excited to be getting ready to go to school. Very happy, very excited for her future.

NARRATION:

THREE WEEKS LATER, ON WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23<sup>RD</sup>, AMBER CALLS HER FATHER, STEVE, TO TELL HIM SHE'S BEEN IN A CAR ACCIDENT. SHE QUICKLY REASSURES HIM THAT IT WAS JUST A FENDER BENDER — HER CAR IS STILL DRIVEABLE. BUT SHE REPORTS THAT SHE BUMPED HER HEAD HARD ON THE STEERING WHEEL, SO SHE WENT TO THE CLINIC AT THE UNIVERSITY TO HAVE IT CHECKED OUT. THE NURSE THERE HAS SUGGESTED THAT AMBER ASK SOMEONE TO CALL HER IN THE MORNING, JUST TO MAKE SURE SHE'S OKAY.

LAURIE ENHERT: My brother had tried calling her Thursday morning, several times, he could not get ahold of her. She was not answering her phone. She had a cell phone and a house phone and she wasn't answering either phone.

NARRATION:

STEVE IS EXTREMELY CONCERNED, SO HE IMMEDIATELY LEAVES WORK AND DRIVES THE 75 MILES TO GREEN BAY TO FIND OUT WHAT'S HAPPENED TO HIS DAUGHTER — WORRIED THAT SHE COULD BE UNCONCIOUS AS THE RESULT OF A CONCUSSION FROM THE CAR ACCIDENT.

LAURIE ENHERT: Her father went to her apartment to see if she was there. She was not. Her car was not there. Her dad was able to go into the apartment. He did have keys to get in there. There was nothing different than what he would expect. I remember him saying her prenatal vitamins were on the, the counter in the kitchen. Her bed was a little messy and he could tell that, you know, like in the bathroom, you know, she had showered and stuff, but nothing was any concern there. And then he drove around. He went to the university, kind of looked around town, you know, to see if he would see her vehicle anywhere and was not able to find her anywhere. In the beginning, her father and her grandma were thinking was that she was delirious, you know, lost some memory or something and was wandering along. But then, when they weren't able to find her car, then that kind of raised more concerns about it. I knew

something was wrong. I just had a feeling. I knew her well. We were very, very close. I just had a bad feeling that something bad had happened to her.

NARRATION:

DESPERATE TO FIND HIS DAUGHTER, AMBER'S FATHER GOES TO THE GREEN BAY POLICE DEPARTMENT TO FILE A MISSING PERSON'S REPORT. BUT BECAUSE AMBER'S OVER 18-YEARS OLD AND HAS ONLY BEEN MISSING FOR ONE DAY, POLICE CAN'T OPEN AN INVESTIGATION. THEY HAVE TO WAIT 48 HOURS BEFORE THEY CAN BEGIN TO SEARCH FOR A MISSING ADULT WHO MAY HAVE WANTED TO DISAPPEAR. DAVID GRAF IS A DETECTIVE WITH THE GREEN BAY WISCONSIN POLICE DEPARTMENT'S COLD CASE UNIT.

DAVID GRAF: At the time police department said, "Well, we'll put out, attempt to locate for her." It wasn't until September 26<sup>th</sup> that her family was finally able to formally report her as missing. One of the first things detectives did was have contact with Amber's family and got some background on her. And what they did find was that she never made any statements to anybody that she was actually gonna go anywhere, and there was no reason to believe that she would just up and leave her scholarship, her college, her friends, and her family behind. But we also did check all of her financial records, her phone statements, but there was no indication that she had gone anywhere or purchased any tickets. There's just no reason to believe that she had actually left on her own accord.

NARRATION:

INVESTIGATORS PUT OUT AN APB ON HER MISSING 1988 SILVER SUBARU AND BEGIN A SEARCH OF HER APARTMENT TO SEE IF THEY CAN FIND ANY INDICATION OF FOUL PLAY.

DAVID GRAF: There was nothing unusual. There's no notes, no sign of forced entry. There was no disturbance. It was neat, tidy, in order.

NARRATION:

ON AMBER'S KITCHEN TABLE, DETECTIVES FIND A MAP WITH DIRECTIONS TO A RESTAURANT IN SHAWANO, ABOUT 50 MILES FROM GREEN BAY. THEY CHECK WITH THE OWNERS, WHO REPORT THEY HAVEN'T SEEN ANYONE MATCHING AMBER'S DESCRIPTION. INVESTIGATORS CONTINUE THEIR SEARCH OF THE APARTMENT, AND UNDER AMBER'S MATTRESS, THEY MAKE A KEY DISCOVERY: A DIARY — A DETAILED, DAY-BY-DAY ACCOUNT OF AMBER'S LIFE AND HER INNER THOUGHTS. IT'S LIKE THE MISSING GIRL HAS REAPPEARED TO GIVE POLICE A FULL ACCOUNTING OF THE MONTHS AND DAYS LEADING UP TO HER DISAPPEARANCE.

LAURIE ENHERT: The diary was a surprise. I knew in the past that she had a diary, and I did not know that she had kept that up. The diary was a really good piece of evidence to find, I guess you can say, but that was a little more of a red flag that she didn't leave intentionally for a long period of time.

DAVID GRAF: It is kind of unusual to actually find a diary. Essentially, her diary was a outline as to who she had contact with, what they talked about. And this diary provided a pretty good list of her activities within the months preceding her disappearance, and a good portion was concerning her pregnancy, but also her relationship with Matt.

NARRATION:

MATT IS TWENTY-ONE-YEARS-OLD — A MAN AMBER MET AT A PARTY WHEN SHE WAS ATTENDING COLLEGE IN WEST BEND AND THEY HAD A BRIEF RELATIONSHIP. ACCORDING TO AMBER'S DIARY, HE'S THE FATHER OF HER BABY.

LAURIE ENHERT: In the beginning, it seemed like it was a relationship and as time went on, she did find out that he had a girlfriend. After that, Amber wasn't looking for a romantic relationship anymore. She just wanted to make sure that her child knew its father and that he was present in the child's life.

NARRATION:

LAURIE REMEMBERS THAT WHEN AMBER BROKE THE NEWS TO MATT THAT SHE WAS PREGNANT, HE WAS NOT HAPPY. HE NEVER EXPECTED THEIR RELATIONSHIP WOULD HAVE ANY LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES.

DAVID GRAF: It was apparent from her diary that Matt was upset because he was engaged to be married, and didn't want his family to find out that Amber had gotten pregnant. So, he encouraged her to get an abortion.

LAURIE ENHERT: Amber had looked into an abortion clinic. It was just something she felt she needed to do, you know, to satisfy him, I guess. But she wanted to have the baby. She wanted to have the baby, be a mother and go on with her life.

DAVID GRAF: When she made a decision that she was going to keep the baby, then, you know, he became, according to Amber, more upset about what was going on.

LAURIE ENHERT: I told her to let it settle a little bit. Let it get through to him. Let him think about it for a little while and maybe he would change his mind and wanna be a part of the baby's life.

NARRATION:

BUT AMBER DOESN'T TAKE HER AUNT'S ADVICE. INSTEAD, HOPING TO GET MATT TO ACCEPT HIS ROLE AS THE FATHER OF THEIR CHILD, SHE REVEALS TO MATT'S FAMILY THAT SHE'S PREGNANT.

DAVID GRAF: According to Amber in her diary, Matt wanted to keep it a secret. However, Amber really wanted Matt to be involved with the child. So, she, in fact, did notify Matt's mother that she was pregnant and she also did notify Matt's fiancée that she was pregnant. This, in turn, did upset Matt somewhat more. The fiancée and the mother were both

interviewed, both were convinced that Matt never had sex with Amber, that he really did not know Amber at all. He claimed that Amber was basically stalking him and the mother basically believes that Amber is alive somewhere with a child, and for reasons she couldn't explain has not bothered to talk to her family at all.

NARRATION:

POLICE ATTEMPT TO SPEAK WITH MATT, BUT A WEEK GOES BY AND THEY STILL HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO ARRANGE A MEETING. SO, ON OCTOBER 1<sup>ST</sup>, IN AN EFFORT TO OBTAIN A STATEMENT, POLICE FINALLY DRIVE 30 MILES OUT OF TOWN TO A CONSTRUCTION SITE WHERE MATT'S WORKING AS A SURVEYOR ON A HIGHWAY EXPANSION PROJECT.

DAVID GRAF: When the detectives initially made contact with him at the job site, his only concern was to tell detectives that he never had sex with Amber and that the child was not his in any way, and he doesn't know anything about a pregnancy. Matt stated that he had only had contact with her maybe once or twice. At first, he stated that he last had contact with Amber on July 15<sup>th</sup>, and he changed the date to August 23<sup>rd</sup>. But Matt never expressed any type of concern for Amber being missing or questioning about where she was, and he also told the detective where he had been staying at the time, which was a family cottage located in the Waupaca, Wisconsin area.

NARRATION:

WHEN POLICE OBTAIN AMBER'S AND MATT'S PHONE RECORDS, THEY REALIZE THAT MATT HASN'T BEEN ENTIRELY HONEST WITH THEM.

DAVID GRAF: Detectives were able to obtain phone records from Amber's cell phone and from her apartment phone and saw the phone records for Matt's cell phone and Matt's residence in West Bend, and found that there had been numerous contacts between the two of them, which told us that he was not telling us the truth in terms of the amount of contact he had with Amber.

NARRATION:

POLICE ALSO DISCOVER THAT FOR ALMOST EVERY PHONE CONTACT AMBER HAD WITH MATT, THERE'S A CORRESPONDING ENTRY IN HER DIARY THAT DESCRIBES DETAILS OF THAT CONVERSATION. DAYS GO BY, WITH FEW CLUES TO AMBER'S WHEREABOUTS. THEN, ON OCTOBER 1<sup>ST</sup>, OVER A WEEK AFTER HER DISAPPEARANCE, THE YOUNG GIRL'S CAR IS FINALLY LOCATED IN THE PARKING LOT OF A POPULAR RESTAURANT JUST ACROSS FROM LAMBEAU FIELD WHERE THE GREEN BAY PACKERS PLAY. IT APPEARS THAT WHOEVER PARKED THE CAR THERE WAS IN A HURRY.

DAVID GRAF: Basically, it was just left, abandoned there. The doors were unlocked. The keys were in the ignition. Her cell phone was lying on the front seat. It was still plugged into the charger and her purse was in the trunk of her car. And the significant thing that they found was Amber was short in stature, so she always drove her car with her car seat all the way completely forward. And when the car was found, the driver's seat was all the way back, as far

it could go. And so, that could have indicated that maybe another person had driven Amber's car there.

LAURIE ENHERT: After she went missing, we had flyers made up, put 'em up all over the place. We went to Packer games. They let us in the stadium. We passed out the flyers there. Walked around the parking lots. That parking lot, everywhere in the surrounding area, it was just packed with cars all the time. So, to have that car just sit there by itself, I can't imagine it had been there very long.

NARRATION:

THE GREEN BAY POLICE CRIME UNIT SEARCHES THE CAR FOR EVIDENCE OF FOUL PLAY OR ANY TRACE OF THE SUSPECT WHO MIGHT HAVE ABANDONED AMBER'S CAR AT THAT LOCATION.

DAVID GRAF: The car was checked extensively and several fingerprints were recovered from the vehicle. However, most of 'em were matched to either Amber or her father. DNA was attempted to be isolated from numerous items, and at this point they really weren't able to develop a solid DNA profile that would believe to be a suspect.

NARRATION:

AMBER HAS BEEN MISSING FOR EIGHT DAYS WHEN HER CAR IS FOUND IN THE PARKING LOT AND WITNESSES HAVE JUST RECENTLY NOTICED IT. SO WHERE HAS THE CAR BEEN ALL THIS TIME? AMBER'S FATHER STEVE REMEMBERS THAT AMBER HAD HER CAR SERVICED THE WEEK BEFORE SHE DISAPPEARED AND THAT DETAIL PROVIDES A NEW LEAD IN THE CASE.

DAVID GRAF: The detectives were able to follow up at the garage where she had her service done and got the mileage that was on the car at the time of the service. And then they compared that mileage to the mileage of the car when it was found on October 1st and there was 923 unaccounted for miles. Now there was several days there when she would've driven her car to and from school, but that would not nearly account for this extra 900 miles. So, it wasn't like she drove it right from her apartment to this location and left it there. It had been driven during that time period that it was missing.

NARRATION:

ACCORDING TO AMBER'S FAMILY, AMBER HAD BEEN TALKING ABOUT GOING TO MEET UP WITH MATT TO AGAIN DISCUSS THE PREGNANCY. THEY REMEMBER THE MAP THAT WAS FOUND ON AMBER'S DINING ROOM TABLE.

DAVID GRAF: According to her family, Amber had been talking with him and also was trying to meet up with him to discuss the pregnancy. So, one theory is that she had left to go try to meet Matt on two separate occasions. One approximately a week before her disappearance and then the first time was approximately two weeks before her disappearance. However, there is no indication that she actually had contact with Matt on the day she was last heard from. So, while a couple trips back and forth the miles could add up, but we still not been able to substantiate exactly how to account for that mileage that was on her vehicle.

LAURIE ENHERT: With Amber being so close to the school, to have that many miles put on her car was hard to believe. Even, I would say, a hundred miles would be a lot to put on in a week. I think that her car had all those miles on because somebody else was driving it, to wait and dispose of the body.

NARRATION:

IS IT POSSIBLE THAT, IF AMBER WAS MURDERED, HER KILLER, OR AN ACCOMPLICE, DROVE AS MANY AS THREE OR FOUR HUNDRED MILES TO HIDE HER BODY? THAT MIGHT EXPLAIN THE EXTRA MILEAGE ON THE CAR, BUT OF COURSE, IT ALSO CREATES AN AREA FAR TOO WIDE FOR GREEN BAY POLICE TO SEARCH.

DAVID GRAF: Quite honestly, we have no real working theory as to how those miles could have got on there. It just is one of the mysteries of this case.

NARRATION:

WITHIN A MONTH OF AMBER'S DISAPPEARANCE, DETECTIVES ARE AT A LOSS. NO ONE HAS COME FORWARD WITH ANY NEW INFORMATION AND AMBER'S FAMILY MUST FACE THE POSSIBILITY THAT SHE WILL NEVER BE FOUND.

LAURIE EHNERT: I think we all had hope that she would show up again and everything would be good, but as time went on, we realized that she was never coming back. And Amber's mom and dad made the decision to end her lease at her apartment and move all her belongings out. That was a very, very difficult weekend. Yeah. Obviously, there was a lot of very difficult weekends, but that was probably one of the toughest ones, because I think that was, you know, us coming to the realization that she wasn't coming back.

DAVID GRAF: I do not believe that Amber is alive based on the totality of the circumstances of her just disappearing, how her vehicle was found, and the fact that she was very close to her family, very dedicated to going to school and also was dedicated to having her child.

NARRATION:

AMBER'S DISAPPEARANCE IS STILL OFFICIALLY LISTED AS A MISSING PERSON'S CASE, BUT IS BEING APPROACHED BY INVESTIGATORS AS A MURDER INVESTIGATION — WITH A PARTICULAR PERSON OF INTEREST WHO'S BEEN FRUSTRATING THEIR SEARCH FOR ANSWERS.

DAVID GRAF: Matt has not been very cooperative with investigators. He really has not provided an explanation as to his relationship with Amber, his actions in days preceding her disappearance and after her disappearance. He's really not provided any explanation as to his whereabouts during time period that Amber went missing. He's told a friend of his that he went out to eat in a movie by himself, and then he's told a family member that he had gone to the ATM and gotten cigarettes. So, he's not been consistent with his so-called alibi, but he is never provided any such alibi to the police department that we were able to confirm exactly.

NARRATION:

IN DECEMBER, THREE MONTHS INTO THEIR INVESTIGATION, POLICE DECIDE TO BRING OUT BLOODHOUNDS AND SEARCH THE AREA AROUND MATT'S FAMILY'S COTTAGE NEAR WAUPACA WHERE MATT WAS STAYING AT THE TIME OF AMBER'S DISAPPEARANCE.

LAURIE EHNERT: They did quite a few searches there with, you know, big machinery digging for three, four or five days, hoping to find something, to find her out in that field. And there was nothing found.

NARRATION:

TWO YEARS LATER, POLICE CONDUCT ANOTHER SEARCH.

DAVID GRAF: In December of 2000, they did do a search warrant at the same cottage where there's a pond at their premises. So, they had some scuba divers go through the pond and they had some cadaver dogs check the area to see if they could come up with anything, and they also searched the cabin itself but nothing was ever really matched to Amber.

NARRATION:

FOUR MONTHS LATER, IN APRIL OF 2001, INVESTIGATORS ORGANIZE YET ANOTHER SEARCH — THIS TIME LOOKING FOR AMBER'S REMAINS BURIED BENEATH THE NEWLY CONSTRUCTED HIGHWAY 29, JUST WEST OF GREEN BAY. THIS IS THE AREA WHERE MATT WAS WORKING AS A SURVEYOR AT THE TIME OF AMBER'S DISAPPEARANCE.

DAVID GRAF: The police department received several tips from individuals who saw suspicious activity after Amber went missing. Activity consisting of like a backhoe being operated in the middle of the night as if someone was trying to bury something outside of normal times when the, uh, workers would be there.

NARRATION:

POLICE CHECK UNDER THE CONCRETE FOUR-LANE HIGHWAY USING GROUND PENETRATING RADAR AND CADAVER DOGS, BUT NOTHING IS DISCOVERED. NOW, MORE THAN 24 YEARS LATER, GREEN BAY INVESTIGATORS STILL FACE THE DAUNTING TASK OF FINDING AMBER AND BRINGING HER KILLER TO JUSTICE.

DAVID GRAF: Do I hope that's this could be resolved someday? Yes. Do I think it could be? Yes. But it takes time sometimes, or a little luck. One of the biggest challenges is that we don't have a body, and a body could prove very helpful in several ways. One way is we could find out a manner of death. And so, you could follow up as to if it was firearm related, did a person have relations to firearms and such. Also, could give an indication as to exactly where she was killed. Another big challenge is the uncooperative nature of certain individuals, mainly being Matt and his family, as to his contacts and his relationship with Amber. And so, that's been frustrating. To me, it's about not letting the case die, so to speak, with the hope that somebody knows something and finally decides it's time to come forward and provide some information that maybe could lead us in a solid direction, that we can bring some answers to Amber's family.



LAURIE ENHERT: I miss her like crazy. I still think about her every single day. I like to make sure that nobody forgets that she is still missing and we still need our answers. It's been a long time and we deserve it. We all do. I don't believe that she will be coming home. I believe that she was murdered. I just would like to know where she is so that we just have that peace of mind, just to know. We just wanna know, and just put her to rest because she deserves that much.

NARRATION:

NINETEEN-YEAR-OLD AMBER WILDE DISAPPEARED FROM GREEN BAY, WISCONSIN, ON SEPTEMBER 23<sup>RD</sup>, 1998. HER SUBARU WAS FOUND A WEEK LATER, ON OCTOBER 1ST. POLICE ARE LOOKING FOR ANYONE WITH INFORMATION THAT MAY HELP THEM BRING THIS CASE TO A CLOSE. IF YOU HAVE ANY INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT THE GREEN BAY POLICE DEPARTMENT AT 920-448-3200 OR [UNSOLVED.COM](http://UNSOLVED.COM).

NARRATION:

NEXT, ON UNSOLVED MYSTERIES...

NICOLE MILLER: My dad did say that she had been acting strange. It makes me think there was something really wrong going on, because I feel she knew something bad about someone, whether it would ruin reputation or money, she knew something that someone didn't want to get out.

—

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 Ann Toler, and it was edited by Robert Wise.

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 61 of Unsolved Mysteries