

THE UNSOLVED MYSTERIES PODCAST | BODY IN THE BRANDYWINE

EP64 Transcript

MISSY MORRISSEY: At 7:39AM, a worker named Cary Turnbull on the northeast Boulevard Bridge had been looking over the side, and so his attention was there on the river, and he saw a body come down the middle of the river, and the body got stuck on the branches of the tree that had been lodged under the bridge. Cary Turnbull actually told me that if the tree hadn't been there, he couldn't imagine that we would have been able to find her. That she may have gone out to Delaware Bay. I know that happens to people, that they never find their loved ones and I just can't imagine a worse torture.

NARRATION:

BRANDYWINE CREEK HAS ALWAYS BEEN CENTRAL TO THE CITY OF WILMINGTON, DELAWARE. KNOWN BY LOCALS AS THE BRANDYWINE RIVER, ITS WATERS ORIGINATE IN NEARBY CHESTER COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA, SNAKING GENTLY THROUGH THE HEART OF WILMINGTON ON THEIR WAY TO THE DELAWARE BAY. BUT ON JULY 23RD, 2019, THE BRANDYWINE BECAME THE SCENE OF A SHOCKING DISCOVERY WHEN A DEAD WOMAN'S BODY WAS SEEN FLOATING THROUGH DOWNTOWN WILMINGTON. WHAT TRAGIC CIRCUMSTANCES COULD HAVE LED TO HER DEATH? YEARS LATER, THERE IS STILL NO ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION.

I'M STEVE FRENCH, AND THIS IS UNSOLVED MYSTERIES: "BODY IN THE BRANDYWINE."

DET. GRASSI: That morning, City of Wilmington got a 911 call about a body floating in the Brandywine River and city police and city fire department responded out.

NARRATION:

DETECTIVE DANIEL GRASSI IS A DELAWARE STATE TROOPER AND THE LEAD INVESTIGATOR IN THIS CASE.

DET. GRASSI: Fire Department fire boat went out. They pulled the body out of the water, brought it to their fire station on the river. They have a dock there, and that's where Wilmington Police Department, Medical Examiner, and EMTs went.

NARRATION:

ON THE DOCK LIES THE LIFELESS BODY OF A MIDDLE-AGED CAUCASIAN WOMAN WEARING A PURPLE RUNNING SHIRT. SHE'S 5 FEET, 4 INCHES TALL, 130 POUNDS, WITH SHOULDER LENGTH BROWN HAIR AND NO IDENTIFICATION. WILMINGTON POLICE HAVE NO IDEA WHO SHE IS, HOW SHE DIED, OR HOW SHE ENDED UP IN THE RIVER.

DET. GRASSI: There were no immediate conclusions, because the autopsy hadn't been done yet. There wasn't a lot we could do as far as looking for evidence at the scene because she was floating in the river. We didn't know how long she had been in there, or what entry point along the riverbank she had gone in. Her body was located just downriver from Brandywine Park, which is a heavily traveled city park. There's a zoo there. Once you get below Brandywine Park, going out towards the mouth of the river, there's not a lot of public access for the river. It's mostly industrial.

NARRATION:

JUST BEFORE 9:00 AM, WHILE THE CITY OF WILMINGTON AUTHORITIES ARE BUSY CONDUCTING THEIR PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION OF THE JANE DOE, DELAWARE STATE POLICE DISPATCHERS RECEIVE A ROUTINE CALL FROM AN ACCOUNTING BUSINESS LOCATED ON WALKERS MILL ROAD, JUST NORTH OF THE WILMINGTON CITY LIMITS. THEY WANT TO FILE A COMPLAINT ABOUT A BLACK HONDA CIVIC THAT'S BEEN SITTING IN THEIR PARKING LOT SINCE BEFORE THE BUSINESS OPENED.

DET. GRASSI: The reported call for the car was 8:54 in the morning. It was reported by employees of Ashford Capital Management. It was parked on their property in an odd spot. It wasn't any of the employees' vehicles, and they reported it to the state police, and patrol troopers responded out for a suspicious vehicle or abandoned vehicle complaint. Delaware's small. The area where the car was found and where the body was found are only about three miles apart. The body was in the river, the car was parked near a bridge that crossed the same river. State police and city police worked together, identified the owner of the vehicle, and then were able to put it together that it was the same person who was in the river.

NARRATION:

THE VICTIM IS IDENTIFIED AS 50-YEAR-OLD SUSAN MORRISSEY LEDYARD, A BELOVED TEACHER AT ACADEMY PARK HIGH SCHOOL NEAR PHILADELPHIA, SUSAN WAS RAISED IN NEARBY CHESTER COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA. SHE AND HER SIBLINGS ATTENDED WILMINGTON'S PRESTIGIOUS TATNALL SCHOOL, BECOMING FRIENDS AND ACQUAINTANCES WITH THE CHILDREN OF THE CITY'S ELITE. IT DOESN'T TAKE LONG FOR THE NEWS OF SUSAN'S DEATH TO SPREAD THROUGH THE COMMUNITY.

MISSY MORRISSEY: My name is Missy Morrissey, and I'm Susan's older sister.

NARRATION:

ON THE AFTERNOON OF JULY 23RD, MISSY IS TUTORING A STUDENT IN HER PHILADELPHIA HOME, WHEN A PHONE CALL FROM HER YOUNGER SISTER MEG INTERRUPTS THE LESSON WITH THE TRAGIC NEWS OF THEIR SISTER'S DEATH.

MISSY MORRISSEY: I had been working with this student of mine, Henry. And then, Meg called and I just turned around. I was looking out my, the French doors in the back and I just remember screaming, "No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no." And then I turned around and saw Henry's face, these big, wide eyes. And of course, I let him go home which I'm sure he was thrilled to do, and then we were scrambling to find out what the hell happened.

JOHN MORRISSEY: It was probably 2 or 3pm when I got the phone call from my father, who said that I should sit down and I didn't take his advice, as is usually the case. And I just figured, "Well, how bad could it be?"

NARRATION:

JOHN MORRISSEY IS SUSAN'S BROTHER AND THE YOUNGEST OF THE FOUR MORRISSEY CHILDREN. THE SHOCKING NEWS OF SUSAN'S DEATH LEAVES HIM SHAKEN AND CONFUSED.

JOHN MORRISSEY: He told me that Susan's gone, and I could just hear in his voice. I mean, I knew what he meant. And it was all just, I mean at that point, all we knew was that her car had been found near the Brandywine River and that she had been found in the Brandywine River, and it was just all very murky.

NARRATION:

FOR SUSAN'S SIBLINGS, HER DEATH SEEMS UNREAL. SHE'S FAR MORE TO THEM THAN JUST THEIR SISTER.

JOHN MORRISSEY: Susan was an exciting person to be around, and it was exciting being her little brother. I mean, I had... the coolest kid on the block was in my house. I really did look up to her, and that got more so as I got older. There always was just a little bit of extra excitement when she was around.

MISSY MORRISSEY: The best times in my life that I ever had, I had with Susan. Every one of them, because they were fun. They were a bit of an adventure, and we just laughed a lot. She was fun. She was funny. I mean really funny, and smart from a very young age.

NARRATION:

AFTER HIGH SCHOOL, SUSAN ATTENDED GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY TO PURSUE A TEACHING CAREER. FOR SEVERAL YEARS, SHE LIVED WITH HER SISTER MEG IN SAN FRANCISCO WHILE TEACHING ENGLISH AT A HIGH SCHOOL IN OAKLAND. BUT AT THE AGE OF 36, SHE MOVED BACK TO THE EAST COAST TO BE CLOSER TO THE REST OF HER FAMILY IN WILMINGTON AND THAT'S WHEN SHE MET BEN LEDYARD, THE SON OF A PROMINENT LOCAL FAMILY AND A FORMER CLASSMATE OF SUSAN'S OLDER SISTER, MISSY.

MISSY MORRISSEY: Ben and Susan didn't know each other, but my siblings, we all kind of knew the Ledyards, and the Ledyards knew us just because we went to a very little country day school, 20 kids to a grade. They started dating and they enjoyed going out. They enjoyed going to restaurants a lot. They really enjoyed music, and they loved the beach.

NARRATION:

SUSAN AND BEN GOT MARRIED IN 2016 AND SETTLED INTO A COMFORTABLE LIFE TOGETHER IN WILMINGTON. SUSAN HAD A BUSY SOCIAL LIFE AND WAS ACTIVE IN THE COMMUNITY. IN JULY OF 2019, SHE WAS ON HER SUMMER BREAK FROM TEACHING AND HAD RECENTLY CELEBRATED HER 50TH BIRTHDAY. SHE SPENT MOST OF THAT MONTH AT HER PARENT'S VACATION HOME IN STONE HARBOR, NEW JERSEY. EVERY YEAR SUSAN RELISHED THE CHANCE TO RELAX ON THE BEACH AND RECONNECT WITH HER FAMILY. EVEN AFTER SHE RETURNED TO WILMINGTON ON SATURDAY JULY 20TH, THE PLAYFUL BANTER WITH HER SIBLINGS CONTINUED THROUGH DAILY CALLS AND TEXTS.

ON TUESDAY, JULY 23RD, SUSAN WRAPS UP A TYPICAL LATE NIGHT TEXT EXCHANGE WITH MISSY AT 12:29 AM. 7 HOURS AND 10 MINUTES LATER, A BODY IS SPOTTED IN THE BRANDYWINE. LATER THAT MORNING, DELAWARE STATE POLICE VISIT THE LEDYARD HOME TO INQUIRE ABOUT SUSAN'S CAR

THAT HAD BEEN FOUND ABANDONED. THEY'VE NOT YET MADE THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE BODY IN THE RIVER AND SUSAN'S CAR.

MISSY MORRISSEY: At 9:30AM, a trooper knocked on Ben and Susan's door at Riverview Avenue. He knocked for four minutes and there was no answer. So, he left and called and he got Ben. Ben said he hadn't heard the knocking, and then at 10:50-something, Ben drove to Walker's Mill where Susan's car was. Sometime in the next half an hour, there was the realization that it was Susan in the river. Wilmington Police came to the scene with Delaware State Police and they informed Ben.

BEN LEDYARD (via archival): Susan was the love my life. My best friend, my beloved wife. Our family is so heartbroken.

NARRATION:

HOW DID SUSAN LEDYARD END UP DEAD IN THE BRANDYWINE RIVER? FINDING THE ANSWER TO THAT PERPLEXING QUESTION FALLS TO THE DELAWARE STATE POLICE. DETECTIVE GRASSI IS ASSIGNED TO LEAD THE INVESTIGATION.

DET. GRASSI: So, at the outset of a case, we usually have quite a few people assigned to it. There's always the primary investigator, but then in the beginning you have a lot of help from patrol troopers, from other detectives, either from the homicide unit or from the troops. You have assistance from high tech crimes as you need it. So, there's a lot of resources.

NARRATION:

TO DETERMINE WHAT HAPPENED TO SUSAN, INVESTIGATORS START WITH HER CAR. IT'S BEEN PARKED JUST A FEW YARDS FROM THE BANKS OF THE BRANDYWINE, APPROXIMATELY THREE MILES UPRIVER FROM WHERE HER BODY WAS RECOVERED. SUSAN'S CELL PHONE IS INSIDE.

DET. GRASSI: We were fortunate that we had her cell phone and were able to get into the cell phone. So, we had access to all of her call logs, text message history, location history, anything that would be on a phone, we were able to get to. She was on her cell phone throughout the night, texting and calling friends. Those calls and texts stopped around 2:45am. We were able to locate surveillance footage from some area businesses and residences, and I know that at approximately 3:02am, her car pulled out of the driveway. It's about a two-minute drive from her house to where her car was parked, and her car went straight there, and we're able to track it through a couple of different cameras along the path.

NARRATION:

USING THE SURVEILLANCE FOOTAGE, INVESTIGATORS TRACK THE 1.3 MILE ROUTE TAKEN BY SUSAN'S CAR FROM HER HOME TO WHERE IT WAS FOUND ON WALKER'S MILL ROAD. UNFORTUNATELY, NONE OF THE CAMERAS ALONG THE ROUTE CAN PROVIDE ANY DETAIL ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED TO SUSAN.

DET. GRASSI: The parking area is pitch black at night, and the camera is far away from where the vehicle was parked. So, you can see headlights approach, can see headlights go off. You can see a speck of light that appears to be the dome light go on and then go off. We can't see, on any of the

surveillance footage, who was in the vehicle. A door opened, but I don't know if anyone got out. I don't know if anyone got in. Don't know who was driving the car.

NARRATION:

THE MYSTERIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING SUSAN'S DEATH CAPTURE THE PUBLIC'S IMAGINATION AND EVERYONE HAS A THEORY.

MISSY MORRISSEY: The Wilmington area has a very strong rumor mill. You would hear about friends that would go out to a bar, or out to a party, and they would be sitting around talking about the possibilities. So, there was a lot of speculation of foul play. Then there's speculation from people, of course, there's a car by a bridge, that it could have been a suicide. And everything in my being did not believe that, just because of Susan and who she is and how her night was. You know, I texted with her, and it was just an average night. Then your thoughts go to her getting into the river at Walker's Mill. You know, the car being so close to the river, it being so late at night. Was it an accident where you would go down to enjoy the river and slip and fall down a bank? And then, there's speculation of how that happened.

NARRATION:

COULD SUSAN HAVE ACCIDENTALLY FALLEN INTO THE RIVER AND DROWNED? OF ALL THE SCENARIOS, THIS SEEMS THE MOST PLAUSIBLE TO HER FAMILY. ESPECIALLY WHEN SUSAN'S HUSBAND BEN REVEALS ONE DETAIL THAT SEEMS TO SUPPORT THE THEORY OF A TRAGIC ACCIDENT.

MISSY MORRISSEY: Ben had told us that she took Ambien that night. So, my brain went 100% on Ambien, and the misadventures that can happen with Ambien, because I started to hear so many stories of crazy things that went on on Ambien. You know, sleepwalking, sleep eating, sleep driving. Could that have created some sort of fugue state or, I don't know, something that would mean that she could accidentally end up in the river?

NARRATION:

BEN IS THE LAST PERSON KNOWN TO HAVE SEEN SUSAN ALIVE, BUT HE SAYS HE CAN'T PROVIDE MISSY WITH MUCH INFORMATION ABOUT WHAT SUSAN DID THAT EVENING BECAUSE HE WAS OUT MOST OF THE EVENING.

MISSY MORRISSEY: Ben had gone to a movie with a friend of his at the Queen Theatre in Wilmington. His friend drove, so his friend dropped Ben off around 10:30 and the friend stayed 10 to 20 minutes. Ben's friend left. Susan and Ben were together in the house. They had shared half a bottle of wine together. They had each taken their respective sleep aids and went to bed. He came down in the morning. Susan wasn't there.

NARRATION:

BEN TELLS MISSY HE WENT TO BED AROUND 11PM MONDAY NIGHT, AND HE DOESN'T REMEMBER SUSAN GETTING OUT OF BED. BUT RECORDS FROM HER CELL PHONE SHOW SHE WAS CALLING AND TEXTING WITH PEOPLE ALMOST CONTINUOUSLY UNTIL 2:47AM. ACCORDING TO HER SIBLINGS, LATE NIGHT COMMUNICATION WAS COMMON FOR SUSAN.

MISSY MORRISSEY: I would call Susan a night owl, especially in the summer when she didn't have school. I could tell from some of her texts with friends that she was sitting out on the porch, which was very common for her to do. So, she talked to these friends and I'd say about 90% of the people she was talking to that night were San Francisco friends. And she was talking to them until close to two in the morning. I texted with her from 12 to 12:29, and it was completely normal. It could not have seemed any more run of the mill texting.

NARRATION:

THE TEXT CHATS WITH SUSAN'S FRIENDS END JUST BEFORE 2:00 AM ON TUESDAY MORNING. PHONE RECORDS SHOW THERE WERE TWO OUTGOING CALLS TO THESE SAME FRIENDS — ONE AT 2:36 AND ONE AT 2:47 AM, BUT THE CALLS WENT UNANSWERED. SUSAN'S CAR LEAVES HER HOUSE 15 MINUTES LATER, BUT NOTHING IN ANY OF HER TEXTS HINTS AT WHY.

MISSY MORRISSEY: I have gone over this, I can't even tell you how many times since this happened, and it's completely vexing. Susan would be one to go out and get a pack of cigarettes late at night. Three o'clock is a little bit of a stretch for me, but it's not out of the realm of possibility. It's just that this path she took is not in the direction of a store that would be close. There's nothing down there that looks like a business. There's Breck's Mill, there's a post office, and there's Ashford Capital, which is an old mill building. It's very, very dark at night. It's so incredibly quiet. There are homes around there, beautiful places, very charming area. It is the route that she would take to school in the morning. And she also loved Hagley Museum, which is probably an eighth of a mile up the road. So, she was familiar with that area. It's just... what would take you there at three o'clock in the morning? And I actually can't answer that.

GRASSI VIA PRESS CONFERENCE: Based on the timeline and the course of the river, we do not believe that Susan entered the Brandywine where her car was parked. Between Rising Sun Lane and Northeast Boulevard, there are numerous obstructions in the river, such as dams, bridge piers, and areas of shallow water and exposed rocks.

NARRATION:

AT A PRESS CONFERENCE ON SEPTEMBER 18TH, MORE THAN SIX WEEKS AFTER SUSAN'S DEATH, DELAWARE STATE POLICE RELEASE THEIR SOME OF THEIR INITIAL FINDINGS. DETECTIVE GRASSI REVEALS THAT THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT SUSAN ACTUALLY ENTERED THE WATER AT WALKER'S MILL, AND THEY NOW BELIEVE SHE WENT IN MUCH FURTHER DOWNRIVER. A SHORT TIME LATER HE MEETS WITH SUSAN'S FAMILY AND PRIVATELY REVEALS ANOTHER DISTURBING DETAIL.

MISSY MORRISSEY: When she was discovered, she was wearing her Fitbit. The Fitbit registered that she was active from three until sometime before 7am. Her heart was beating for at least three and a half to four hours between that time that the car parked and the time that she was found. You know, we were operating under the assumption still, all of us, that it was an accident. He was talking to us about injuries to her body, but there was no statement: "This was a homicide."

NARRATION:

IT'S STANDARD PRACTICE FOR INVESTIGATORS TO APPROACH EVERY DEATH AS IF IT COULD BE A HOMICIDE, BUT MURDER DOESN'T SEEM LIKE A POSSIBILITY TO SUSAN'S FAMILY. THEY REMAIN CONVINCED THAT SUSAN DIED OF A TRAGIC ACCIDENT AFTER TAKING AMBIEN. THEN ON NOVEMBER 14, 2019, NEARLY FOUR MONTHS AFTER HER BODY WAS RECOVERED FROM THE BRANDYWINE, THE MEDICAL EXAMINER'S OFFICIAL REPORT IS FINALLY RELEASED.

DET. GRASSI: We haven't released a ton of information out to the media, just to maintain the integrity of the investigation, and based on the autopsy, the examination by our, the medical examiner did the autopsy, the nature of the injuries didn't lend itself to accident. The cause of death was blunt force trauma and drowning and the manner of death was homicide.

NEWS CLIP: Delaware State Police now confirm 50-year-old Susan Ledyard's death is a homicide. This family is still in shock and disbelief. They say whoever committed this murder is a monster.

MORRISSEY SISTER NEWS CLIP: Someone is waking up every day and going to sleep every night knowing that they have taken her life and shattered her family, and now we are faced with the questions: Who did this to her and why?

NARRATION:

THE MORRISSEY FAMILY CAN'T BELIEVE ANYONE WOULD WANT SUSAN DEAD.

MISSY MORRISSEY: It was a complete shock. People are aware they're sharing ideas. They're communicating with our detectives. As people do, they speculate about the boyfriend, the wife, the girlfriend, the husband. And then we found out there was no Ambien. No Ambien in her system at all.

NARRATION:

IF SUSAN DIDN'T TAKE AMBIEN THE NIGHT SHE DIED, THEN WHY DID BEN TELL MISSY THAT SHE HAD? WAS HE SIMPLY MISTAKEN? MISSY SAYS THERE ARE OTHER THINGS BEN DID FOLLOWING SUSAN'S DEATH THAT SHE JUST CAN'T UNDERSTAND.

MISSY MORRISSEY: To my knowledge, no one reported Susan missing, and it was almost an hour and a half before he left the house, after getting the call from the trooper about Susan's abandoned car, that he drove the mile down to Walker's Mill. He had made a call to a friend, a work friend, who in turn called Ben's brother, and then a different friend of theirs had shown up, and they were all down at the river. I can say that there were no calls to her family, nor to her close friends, any of her friends.

NARRATION:

IF BEN REALIZED THAT SUSAN WASN'T HOME WHEN HE WOKE UP THAT MORNING, WHY WASN'T HE WORRIED AND WHY DIDN'T HE REPORT HER MISSING? AND WHEN POLICE INFORMED HIM SUSAN'S CAR WAS FOUND ABANDONED AT WALKER'S MILL, WHY DID IT TAKE HIM MORE THAN AN HOUR TO GO TO THE SCENE? MISSY ALSO RECALLS BEN MENTIONING SOMETHING TO HER LATER THAT DAY ABOUT WHAT INVESTIGATORS DISCOVERED WHEN THEY CONDUCTED A CANINE SEARCH AT WALKER'S MILL.

MISSY MORRISSEY: He told me that a tracking dog had come. They were trying to figure out where she had gone after she got out of the car. He said the dog was the best dog they had, and the dog tracked her straight down to the river. What we heard later was that the dog couldn't get a scent because of all the rain the night before. So, I think there must have been some confusion down there. You know, maybe he got that third hand from somebody. I don't know whether he spoke to the tracker directly. A little bit of a question mark.

NARRATION:

ACCORDING TO MISSY, BEN WASN'T PARTICULARLY CLOSE TO MEMBERS OF SUSAN'S FAMILY. HE DID SPEAK WITH THE MORRISSEYS SEVERAL TIMES IN THE AFTERMATH OF SUSAN'S DEATH AND JOINED THEM AT AN INITIAL PRESS CONFERENCE WITH DETECTIVE GRASSI. HOWEVER, HE WASN'T PRESENT WITH SUSAN'S FAMILY WHEN POLICE ANNOUNCED THAT SUSAN'S DEATH WAS A HOMICIDE, AND HASN'T ACTIVELY PARTICIPATED IN THE FAMILY'S EFFORTS TO KEEP SUSAN'S MURDER IN THE PUBLIC EYE IN HOPES OF BRINGING FORTH NEW LEADS IN THE CASE.

MISSY MORRISSEY: I think Ben moved on fairly quickly, and I think he wanted to put Susan and this case behind him. He got engaged about a year later. He is married, he has moved to a new house. If he was very interested in helping, I think things would have gone very differently. And certainly, someone could do something independent of us if they were interested in helping, and that never happened.

NARRATION:

IS IT POSSIBLE BEN LEDYARD KNOWS MORE ABOUT HIS WIFE'S MURDER THAN HAS BEEN PUBLICLY REVEALED? HE DECLINED TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS PODCAST. BEN'S CONDUCT AND THE ALLEGED INCONSISTENCIES IN HIS STORY HAVE PROVIDED FUEL FOR SOME PEOPLE'S SUSPICIONS. HOWEVER, NO CHARGES HAVE EVER BEEN FILED IN SUSAN'S CASE, AND DETECTIVE GRASSI IS QUICK TO POINT OUT THAT BEN HAS COOPERATED FULLY WITH THE INVESTIGATION AND IS NOT CURRENTLY A SUSPECT IN THE CASE.

DET. GRASSI: In a lot of cases, we don't get cooperation from witnesses or family members. But in this case, everyone that I've reached out to, that I've contacted for assistance, including her husband, Ben, including his family, including the Morrissey family, Ben and Susan's friends, have all cooperated with this investigation. I haven't had any issues with calling someone up and having them either come to the troop for an interview or them inviting me over the house for an interview. And although it hasn't generated a lot of leads, I haven't had any problems talking to the people that were close to Susan about this case.

MISSY MORRISSEY: When something like this happens, it does seem that it would be somebody in Susan's life, not a stranger. But the more you look at these things, and the more you hear of cases where it could be a stranger, you know you have to stay open to it. I can't think of anyone that would want my sister dead. I can't think of an enemy that she would have had.

JOHN MORRISSEY: That seemed to make sense in the beginning, to think of it as being somebody she knew. Now, and this is strictly my opinion, it just seems to make more sense that it was some sort of freak thing, purely based on the amount of time that things have gone on without a real suspect. I

don't have so much confidence in people's ability to do something like this and keep it covered up for this long.

NARRATION:

WAS SUSAN LEDYARD THE VICTIM OF A RANDOM ENCOUNTER WITH A VIOLENT CRIMINAL, OR WAS SHE KILLED BY SOMEONE SHE KNEW? WHY DID SHE ABRUPTLY LEAVE HOME AT 3:02 AM AND PARK IN A SECLUDED SPOT BY THE BRANDYWINE?

DET. GRASSI: We know her car left the house at 3AM. We know that her Fitbit stopped recording activity at 7AM, and that her body was first seen at 7:39AM. So, we have a four-hour period that we don't know where she was, what she was doing, why she left her house.

JOHN MORRISSEY: I don't think that she was going for some sort of two-in-the-morning-walk along the Brandywine. That doesn't make much sense, and that's not something that I ever knew of her doing. If it was going to buy something from the store, she would have gone to the store, but she didn't. Was she meeting up with friends, or a man, or someone that she was involved with? There's nothing suggesting that. There's just no thing that makes a lot of sense as to why she would go down to where she went at that hour.

MISSY MORRISSEY: We don't know if she was in the car when it went to Walker's Mill, much less driving it. If she was actually down at Walker's Mill at 3:04, it's almost impossible that she wasn't transported farther down. Could somebody have picked her up and not been seen on a camera? I guess so, it's all speculation.

NARRATION:

DID SUSAN, EITHER WILLINGLY OR OTHERWISE, TRAVEL WITH SOMEONE ELSE TO SOME UNKNOWN SPOT DOWNRIVER? IF SO, WHAT HAPPENED IN THE HOURS BEFORE SHE WAS SEEN FLOATING TOWARDS THE NORTHEAST BOULEVARD BRIDGE? AND WHERE ALONG THE RIVERBANK COULD SOMEONE KILL SUSAN AND DUMP HER BODY IN THE WATER WITHOUT BEING SEEN?

MISSY MORRISSEY: There's not a lot of time between when her Fitbit activity stopped and she was found. And with the way the water was moving, it's very likely she wasn't in the water very long. As you move down the river, you're going past condos and businesses and it's hard to be right along the river, until you get to places like Brandywine Park below the Brandywine Zoo and on the other side where there are walking paths. After that, there's really not a way to get close to the river. But when you get to about 16th Street, there's a 16th Street Bridge in between the Market Street Bridge and the Northeast Boulevard Bridge. And from 16th Street and below, I would say, on the left side looking downriver, there are at least two or three very secluded spots where somebody could be up to something and not be noticed.

NEWS CLIP: Academy Park High teacher Susan Ledyard's killer is still at large.

NEWS CLIP: The murder of a beloved teacher remains shrouded in mystery. The case is unsolved.

MISSY MORRISSEY VIA NEWS CLIP: Still a shock somehow to know that somebody killed her.

NEWS CLIP: The search for answers and justice continues.

NARRATION:

MORE THAN THREE YEARS AFTER HER MYSTERIOUS DEATH, SUSAN LEDYARD'S CASE REMAINS A HIGH-PROFILE TOPIC IN THE TIGHT-KNIT WILMINGTON COMMUNITY. AMIDST ALL THE RUMORS AND INNUENDO, DETECTIVE GRASSI CONTINUES TO ACTIVELY SEEK THE TRUTH BEHIND HER MURDER.

DET. GRASSI: Although it was an isolated area in the middle of the night, it's still a heavily populated area. Her body was located just downriver from Brandywine Park, which, at six, seven o'clock in the morning is heavily trafficked with people exercising or going to work. You would think that there would be people who would have seen something. I've gotten to have a pretty good working relationship with Susan's family. It's tough to have tell them, "It's still unsolved," you know, 1, 2, 3 years later. So that's the most frustrating part. You know, for homicide detectives, you very rarely think about the cases that you solve, but the unsolved ones you can't shake.

MISSY MORRISSEY: We aren't told everything about the investigations. Understandably, they have to keep some things close to the vest to maintain the integrity of the case. I know they're trying everything they can, but I think the most important thing is that we get people talking and that we get tips. I'm afraid that we're going to need to rely on a tip, either to give the evidence that's needed for someone they already know of, or to find someone they don't know of.

NARRATION:

THE MORRISSEY FAMILY REMAINS DEDICATED TO HELPING INVESTIGATORS UNRAVEL THE MANY BIZARRE MYSTERIES SURROUNDING SUSAN'S DEATH. BUT AS LONG AS BOTH ANSWERS AND JUSTICE REMAIN ELUSIVE, THEY WILL CONTINUE TO BE HAUNTED BY THE PAIN OF HER LOSS, THE UNEXPLAINED NATURE OF HER DEATH, AND THE EVER-PRESENT QUESTIONS: WHO TOOK SUSAN'S LIFE AND WHY?

MISSY MORRISSEY: It's hard for my brain to connect to a person who did this to her. I want to know why. Right now, I'd settle on just knowing what happened to her. The worst thing in all of this, for me, is thinking about her being scared and thinking about her being in pain and struggling. So, to be honest, I don't think of that. I think of everything leading up to that and everything after that, and that's the way I can keep it together.

NARRATION:

THE MORRISSEY FAMILY IS OFFERING A \$50,000 REWARD FOR INFORMATION THAT LEADS TO THE ARREST OF SUSAN'S KILLER. THEY ARE ALSO COMMITTED TO HONORING SUSAN'S LIFE AND HAVE ESTABLISHED THE SUSAN MORRISSEY FOUNDATION TO PROVIDE AN ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP TO ENGLISH STUDENTS AT ACADEMY PARK HIGH SCHOOL WHERE SHE TAUGHT.

IF YOU KNOW ANYTHING THAT CAN SHED LIGHT ON THIS BAFFLING CASE, PLEASE CONTACT DELAWARE CRIME STOPPERS AT 1-800-TIP-3333, OR SUBMIT YOUR TIP TO UNSOLVED.COM.

NEXT, ON UNSOLVED MYSTERIES:

PAUL PARIZEK: It was just total straight radio silence from Beth, from the early morning, December 22nd on, except for one person, her fiancé, who claims that he talked to her by phone and saw her face to face. Other than that, nobody. That really brought a great amount of concern to us. You start to become incredibly concerned that something horrible has happened.

—

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 64 of Unsolved Mysteries.