

## THE UNSOLVED MYSTERIES PODCAST | THE SCOTT FAMILY MASSACRE

### EP75 Transcript

SCOTTY HILL: I was told there were four bodies inside the double wide mobile home. Once we found out the extent of their injuries and the fact that their throats were cut, and then they were shot postmortem, it seemed very, very aggressive and personal, and somebody full of rage and hate. I've never seen anything like it before or since.

#### NARRATION:

IT'S HALLOWEEN NIGHT IN PENDLETON SOUTH CAROLINA, TWO HOURS NORTHWEST OF COLUMBIA. GHOSTS, GOBLINS AND MONSTERS ROAM THE STREETS, DOING THEIR BEST TO LOOK SCARY. BUT JUST OUTSIDE OF TOWN, A DIFFERENT KIND OF MONSTER HAS COME TO THE FRONT DOOR OF MIKE AND CATHY SCOTT. INSIDE THEIR DOUBLE WIDE TRAILER HOME, IT'S EERILY QUIET. A BOWL OF HALLOWEEN CANDY SITS UNDISTURBED BY THE FRONT ENTRANCE. IN THE BEDROOM, THE BODY OF CATHY SCOTT LIES IN A POOL OF BLOOD. AND IN THE LIVING ROOM, THERE ARE THREE MORE VICTIMS: CATHY'S HUSBAND MIKE, HER MOTHER, VIOLET TAYLOR, AND MIKE'S MOTHER, BARBARA SCOTT. FOUR MEMBERS OF THE SAME FAMILY HAVE JUST BEEN EXECUTED WITH MILITARY STYLE PRECISION IN A GRUESOME HALLOWEEN NIGHTMARE.

I'M STEVE FRENCH, AND THIS IS UNSOLVED MYSTERIES: "THE SCOTT FAMILY MASSACRE."

#### NARRATION:

ON MONDAY, NOVEMBER 2<sup>ND</sup>, 2015, A WOMAN CALLS 911 TO REPORT SHE'S JUST FOUND FOUR BODIES IN A RURAL-HOME OUTSIDE PENDLETON.

SCOTTY HILL: Pendleton is an older town in South Carolina. It's been around for a long time. It's a small town. It probably would have been considered like a plantation town in you know, the 19th century. A lot of old money kind of town.

#### NARRATION:

STAFF SERGEANT SCOTTY HILL WAS ON DUTY AS A DETECTIVE WITH THE ANDERSON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE WHEN THE CALL CAME IN.

SCOTTY HILL: Pendleton is not somewhere that we have a lot of violent crime. And then this part of Pendleton is actually more of a rural area. It's not even part of the town of Pendleton. It's just somewhat busy as far as traffic, because you can cut between major highways. But you know, you don't have foot traffic, nothing like that. It's a few homes, not somewhere where you would see a lot of activity other than cars just driving through. I was working that day. And like all of us that was working that day, if you were a detective, you got called and told to respond to the scene. We didn't know if there was a killer or if the killer was inside the house. By the time I showed up, it was a pretty big scene. Detectives were arriving, forensics was arriving. There was people everywhere by the time I got there. There are two mobile homes on the residence. We identified them as the double wide and the single wide. It was at least a few acres, the property. Four people lived in the doublewide: Mike

and Cathy Scott, they owned it. They were a married couple. And then each of their mothers lived with them: Violet Taylor, who was Cathy's mother, and then Barbara Scott, who was Mike's mother.

NARRATION:

CATHY SCOTT'S DAUGHTER AND SON-IN-LAW LIVE IN A SEPARATE TRAILER HOME ON THE PROPERTY. THEY TELL POLICE THEY SPENT THE WEEKEND WITH HIS FAMILY IN COLUMBIA, ARRIVED BACK HOME LATE SUNDAY NIGHT, AND HAVE NO IDEA WHAT HAPPENED TO THE FOUR VICTIMS.

SCOTTY HILL: So in the single wide lived Amy Vilardi, who was Cathy's daughter, her husband Ross Vilardi, and then their children. Amy Vilardi is the one who called in the actual crime to the Sheriff's Office. She called 911 and basically said she went to her mother's and found her family deceased inside. Mike and Violet and Barbara were all found in the living room, and Cathy was found in the master bedroom and, you know, obvious injuries, lots of blood. Still, to this day, probably the bloodiest scene I've been to.

NARRATION:

AT FIRST THE SCENE APPEARS TO DETECTIVE HILL AS IF IT COULD BE A CLASSIC MURDER-SUICIDE. WITH CATHY FOUND SEPARATELY FROM THE OTHERS, IT LOOKED AS IF SHE COULD HAVE SHOT HER HUSBAND, MOTHER, AND MOTHER-IN-LAW, THEN RETREATED TO THE BEDROOM AND KILLED HERSELF.

SCOTTY HILL: What really kinda ended that theory was kind of twofold. They first moved Cathy and she didn't have a gun. So that really took the wind out of the sails that she shot everybody and then shot herself because there was no gun. And then of course, when they got to Mike and Barbara and Violet and saw that the throats had been slashed, it was very clear at that point that we were dealing with someone who would who had murdered all four of these people, someone, or possibly multiple people that had done this. They all died from stab or slash wounds. Mike, Barbara, and Violet were all killed by their throats being slashed, and Cathy was killed by a stab wound to the chest. Mike, Barbara and Violet were all shot postmortem. Cathy was shot while still alive, but that wasn't what killed her. It was the knife wound to the chest that killed her.

NARRATION:

IT'S A RARE QUADRUPLER HOMICIDE AND WITH EACH VICTIM STABBED THEN SHOT, IT'S ALSO A CLEAR CASE OF OVERKILL. THERE'S NO SIGN OF A BREAK IN OR FORCED ENTRY, AND NO OBVIOUS RANSACKING OF THE HOME. MIKE WAS LIKELY THE FIRST VICTIM.

SCOTTY HILL: With Mike not having any kind of sign of defensive wounds or any sign of a fight, I definitely believe he was caught off guard. It seems like they were probably, at least a couple of them, in the living room watching TV. You know, it's hard to say with Cathy, cause she moved around during the attack. We know that she went from living room to the master bedroom, so I can't say she came out of the master bedroom first into the living room then retreated back into the master bedroom. So, I'm not sure where she was. But it definitely appears Mike at least was in the living room watching TV. I think with there be no forced entry and Mike showing no signs of trying to fight back, it tells me that his guard was down, which leads me to believe he knew the person who was in his house.

NEWS REPORT: A short time ago the names of those who died in the home behind me were released. Family in disbelief over the tragedy that has fallen upon this close community.

PAM ISBELL: I'm Pam Isbell. My mother was Barbara Scott, and I am the sister of Terry Michael Scott, two of the victims who were killed in the Pendleton quadruple homicide. The other two were my brother's wife and her mother. At the time of his death, Mike was 59 years old. He is my older brother. He worked for South Carolina Department of Transportations. He was on a road crew, so he was outside a lot, which was one of the things that he loved the most about having that particular job. I like to say that Mike got all of the good looks in the family. He was a very handsome man, tall, strong, dark hair, turning lovely shades of gray. He was a very hardworking man. He spent his life much like our mother, trying to do good things for family, our friends, for neighbors. As we aged, we definitely became closer. He was always there for me. He was my biggest supporter. No matter what was going on in his life, he took time to be a part of my life. We talked pretty much every morning. That was the way that my morning always started was a telephone call from him. I still find myself thinking it's about time for Mike to call.

NARRATION:

PAM NOT ONLY LOST HER BELOVED BROTHER, BUT SHE ALSO MOURNS THE DEATH OF HER MOTHER, BARBARA SCOTT, WHO WAS 80 WHEN SHE WAS MURDERED.

PAM ISBELL: Everybody knew her. She was a wonderful, wonderful cook. She loved doing for other people. She loved her family. She did a lot of babysitting for people in her community. She really enjoyed being with the babies.

NARRATION:

MIKE'S WIFE, CATHY SCOTT, WAS 60 WHEN SHE WAS MURDERED. SHE AND MIKE HAD BEEN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL SWEETHEARTS, BUT THEY MARRIED LATER IN LIFE AND HAD BEEN INSEPARABLE EVER SINCE. CATHY'S NIECE, TAMMY WHITE, WAS CLOSE TO BOTH HER AUNT AND HER GRANDMOTHER, VIOLET TAYLOR.

TAMMY WHITE: My Aunt Cathy was a people's person. She worked in restaurants for most of her life as a waitress so she liked to be around people. She liked to make people laugh. She liked to always laugh, real bubbly. My grandmother was the sweetest woman that you would have ever met. She didn't say much. She was very shy and kept to herself a lot, but she was very caring. She was a very peaceful lady. I've never really ever heard her say anything bad about anybody.

NARRATION:

PAM ISBELL SPOKE WITH HER BROTHER MIKE THAT HALLOWEEN EVENING. HE AND CATHY WERE LOOKING FORWARD TO CELEBRATING THE HOLIDAY WITH THEIR GRANDCHILDREN THE NEXT DAY. PAM DIDN'T HEAR FROM HIM ON SUNDAY, WHICH WASN'T UNUSUAL. SHE CALLED HIM ON MONDAY AND LEFT A MESSAGE, BUT BY THEN HE WAS ALREADY DEAD. PAM ONLY LEARNED ABOUT HER BROTHER'S MURDER WHEN A COUSIN CALLED.

PAM ISBELL: She said, "I don't know how to tell you this. The preacher is there. And there are four dead bodies at Mike's house." And that's all I remember.

NARRATION:

THE EXACT TIME OF THE MURDERS IS UNKNOWN, BUT DETECTIVES ARE ABLE TO NARROW IT DOWN, THANKS TO CATHY SCOTT'S BROTHER, ROGER. ON SUNDAY AFTERNOONS, HE USUALLY STOPPED BY MIKE AND CATHY'S HOME TO SAY HI. BUT ON THIS SUNDAY, THERE WAS NO ANSWER AT THE DOOR. SO, ROGER LEFT WITHOUT SEEING THEM. STAFF SERGEANT HILL THINKS THAT'S BECAUSE THE MURDERS HAD ALREADY TAKEN PLACE.

SCOTTY HILL: Our coroner's office ruled their death as being on November 1st. I believe they were killed Halloween night. Last activity we have on either bank accounts was that night. Mike and Cathy went out to dinner that night. There was still Halloween candy by the front door. I don't know if they're anticipating trick or treaters, but they had candy by the front door.

NARRATION:

SINCE THE VICTIMS WERE ALL STABBED AND THEN SHOT, ANOTHER THEORY EMERGES ABOUT THE PERPETRATOR.

SCOTTY HILL: With there being two weapons used, it suggests that two people were involved. I won't say it's impossible for it to have been one person. I will say whoever used the knife was a very skilled person with a knife. This wasn't somebody who picked up a butcher knife and, you know, out of anger. This is somebody who was at least trained on how to use a knife. The majority of people who've worked this case's opinion is that there are two people involved, one with a knife, one with a gun. Again, we don't believe this was a kitchen knife or anything like that. So, we believe the killer brought the knife with him or her, and they were led into the house, most likely. The family had to have known them because nobody put up a fight until after the attack occurred or started. So, I definitely believe this was well thought out, well planned by the people who perpetrated it.

PAM ISBELL: All four victims suffered violent deaths. Not the kind of murders that you just happen to kill someone, or you break into a home and you're surprised by someone still being up or awake or whatever. These deaths were not like that. People from the sheriff's department have described it as the worst scene that they had ever investigated.

NARRATION:

MIKE, CATHY, AND THEIR ELDERLY MOTHERS LIVED A QUIET LIFE IN RURAL SOUTH CAROLINA. AT FIRST GLANCE, THEY APPEAR TO BE UNLIKELY TARGETS FOR A MURDER THIS VICIOUS.

SCOTTY HILL: None of these people would have, as far as we have found, would have crossed anybody or done anything to someone who would want to hurt them. They didn't do drugs. You know, they didn't drink excessively, they didn't gamble. There's absolutely nothing in their history to lead us to believe that someone would want to hurt them.

NARRATION:

THERE IS ONE INVESTIGATIVE ANGLE THAT INTRIGUES DETECTIVES. IN ADDITION TO WORKING FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, MIKE HAD A SECOND JOB TO EARN EXTRA MONEY.

PAM ISBELL: Mike was well known in the area for being the buyer and seller. If you needed some cash, and you had something that you wanted to sell, a lot of people knew he was the person to call.

NARRATION:

MIKE BOUGHT AND SOLD A VARIETY OF ITEMS INCLUDING JEWELRY AND GOLD. AT ONE TIME, HE CONDUCTED TRANSACTIONS AT HIS HOME BUT STOPPED WHEN CATHY BECAME CONCERNED ABOUT SAFETY. HOWEVER, BECAUSE THE DEALS HE MADE WERE IN CASH, HE OFTEN HAD LARGE SUMS OF MONEY IN THE HOUSE.

PAM ISBELL: When I was first questioned, I was asked if Mike would have had a lot of cash there at the house, and I told them that he would. They asked me how much. I'd say anywhere between 70 to \$80,000 in cash. And they told me then, "Oh, well, we did not find that amount of cash in Mike's house."

NARRATION:

THAT SUGGESTS ROBBERY AS A POSSIBLE MOTIVE. BUT IN THE BATHROOM, POLICE FIND A SMALL SAFE STUFFED WITH CASH. COULD THE KILLER OR KILLERS HAVE MISSED THIS HIDDEN MONEY?

SCOTTY HILL: I was the one who found the safe and it was pretty well hidden. I guess we missed it the first night. So, I don't think they knew it was there, and that's the only reason why they didn't take it. It was tucked in behind the toilet. It was one of those lucky moments where I'm in the bathroom kind of looking around and it just kind of caught the, you know, out of the side of my eye. Like, what is that? And walked over, it turned out to be \$20,000.

NARRATION:

THERE'S NO WAY TO KNOW HOW MUCH MONEY WAS ACTUALLY IN THE HOME, OTHER THAN WHAT WAS CONTAINED IN THE SAFE.

SCOTTY HILL: According to family members, no one other than family knew that Mike kept a lot of money in his house.

NARRATION:

AS PART OF THEIR INVESTIGATION, DETECTIVES OBTAIN A SEARCH WARRANT FOR THE HOME OF AMY AND ROSS VILARDI WHO LIVED IN THE SINGLE WIDE TRAILER HOME, AND THAT'S WHERE POLICE MAKE ANOTHER SURPRISING DISCOVERY.

SCOTTY HILL: We found a little over \$65,000. I think it was \$67,000, almost \$68,000 in a safe in the master bedroom of the single wide. The amount of money we found in the single wide did raise some questions because we were told by various family members and confirmed through interviews that Amy and Ross who lived in the single wide were in financial trouble. Their cars were about to be

repossessed, they're about to be kicked out of the building they rented for their business. So, it was pretty surprising to find that amount of money when they were having financial issues.

NARRATION:

DURING THE SAME SEARCH OF THE VILARDI HOME, POLICE FIND A LARGE STASH OF GUNS AND WONDER.... COULD ONE OF THEM BE THE GUN USED IN THE FOUR MURDERS?

SCOTTY HILL: Whenever we're on a scene like this, and we know a guns involved, if we see a gun, we're going to take the gun because we don't know if it's the murder weapon or not. We did take every gun we found in there. Ross Vilardi claimed most of them, and he was a Marine. So, you know, really didn't seemed out of the ordinary for him to have a lot of guns, being military and being here in the South, you know, everybody has guns down here and, and especially former military would have more than even the average person.

PAM ISBELL: I was surprised that a lot of cash was seized from Cathy's daughter's residence. I was also very surprised that one particular gun that was registered in Mike's name was taken from the other residence. And that really made me begin to wonder, if this gun belonged at Mike's house, you know, what other things were taken from there that I didn't know about?

NARRATION:

POLICE FIND NO SIGN OF THE MURDER WEAPON INSIDE THE SINGLE WIDE AND BOTH AMY AND ROSS APPEAR SHOCKED BY THE HOMICIDE. AMY EVEN SPEAKS ON CAMERA TO A LOCAL NEWS REPORTER.

AMY VILARDI VIA NEWS: I keep feeling like I should be waking up from a dream right now and it's not happening. So yeah, it's like a movie or something. It's not supposed to be real life.

SCOTTY HILL: Amy provided us with a few potential suspects, but we were able to rule them out pretty quickly through alibis and even, in some cases, phone records showing they weren't near the scene of the crime when it occurred. So, Cathy's daughter Amy, and her husband Ross were initially very cooperative with the case. Once the focus of the investigation turned toward them being potential suspects, they stopped cooperating altogether.

NARRATION:

IN ADDITION TO AMY AND ROSS VILARDI, DETECTIVES TAKE A CLOSE LOOK AT SEVERAL OTHER POSSIBLE SUSPECTS.

SCOTTY HILL: WE pursued a lot of suspects. There was a neighbor down the street that we initially looked at as being potential suspect. Him and Mike had had a bit of a falling out over a deal they didn't work out. He tried to sell Mike something, but Mike told him he wasn't interested in the item and the neighbor got upset. We looked into him. He had nothing to suggest he would know how to use a knife in this way. He just did not fit with our theory of what the killer would look like. We could never put him on scene. His DNA was not inside the house, nothing like that. So, we moved on from him.

NARRATION:

STAFF SERGEANT HILL ALSO EXPLORES THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE KILLER DIDN'T KNOW MIKE AND CATHY, AND THAT IT WAS A RANDOM ATTACK. HE LOOKS AT OTHER MURDERS COMMITTED IN THE AREA FOR A SIMILAR PATTERN AND ONE NAME STANDS OUT: A SERIAL KILLER NAMED TODD KOHLHEPP.

SCOTTY HILL: Todd Kohlhepp is a, I use the word local-ish, serial killer, operated in Spartanburg County, which is two counties over. So, we know he did have dealings down here, and then more information started rolling in about how he had committed a quadruple homicide in the past. We kind of took a look at him.

NARRATION:

BUT THERE IS NOTHING TO TIE KOHLHEPP TO THE TOWN OF PENDLETON OR THE SCOTT FAMILY AND THE EVIDENCE FOR IT BEING A RANDOM ATTACK IS SLIM.

SCOTTY HILL: Mike and Cathy were not flashy people. They didn't drive nice cars. They drove decent cars, but it's not like they were rolling around in a Mercedes or anything like that. They didn't wear Rolexes and, you know, they were normal people, working class people. If you saw them out, you would never think that guy has thousands of dollars in cash in his house. And if you drove by this house, again, it's just a double wide trailer in the middle of a place with a thousand double wide trailers, and that's if you even noticed it. You know, and this area is not somewhere where you get a lot of foot traffic either. So, I believe it's highly unlikely someone was walking down the road and in fact, I would almost bet a paycheck on if somebody had been walking down the road, someone would've called law enforcement because it would be that abnormal to see someone walking on that street.

NARRATION:

WITH FEW CLUES AT THE CRIME SCENE, THE INVESTIGATION QUICKLY RUNS OUT OF VIABLE LEADS, THREATENING TO GROW COLD.

NEWS REPORT: Seven months, no arrests for the murder of Mike, Cathy, and Barbara Scott...

NEWS REPORT: Today marks one year since four people were found dead...

NEWS REPORT: It's now been three years since the four brutal murders of the Scott and Taylor families in Pendleton.

NARRATION:

STAFF SERGEANT HILL BELIEVES THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE QUADRUPLE HOMICIDE POINT TO A TARGETED, PLANNED, AND WELL THOUGHT OUT ATTACK.

SCOTTY HILL: There are really two motives that I believe would be possible. And to be honest, it could be a mixture of both, and that's a financial gain and hatred. The person knew how to kill someone quickly with a knife. They planned to get in this house, and they planned to do it when they're everyone who lived there's guards were down. And they were able to take the biggest threat out, which would have been Mike, you know, being the only man in the house. They took him out first. It

was a well-executed plan. I mean, as bad as that sounds to say I mean, as far as the person who did this, they did their homework. They knew what they were doing, and they almost did it flawlessly.

PAM ISBELL: A person who does this kind of thing must be a person who has no idea in the difference in what's right and what's wrong. They have to be selfish. I would say, there had to be a personal relationship with one or, or even with all of the victims. It wasn't just a random act of violence. There was no sign of anyone breaking into the house. So, whoever is responsible, it had to have been someone that either was welcomed in or who just came through an unlocked door, which would have been unusual.

TAMMY WHITE: I got the feeling that it was probably someone that they knew just by how they described that it didn't like the doors were forced opened. The house was immaculately intact and cleaned. The only thing that was out of place was the bodies were laying there. So, it wasn't like anyone came in and ransacked the house to look for stuff, and was trying to steal anything.

NEWS REPORT: Two upstate families hope a new billboard will bring answers about an unsolved quadruple homicide. The billboard went up nearly five years to the day, their loved ones were found murdered in their Pendleton home.

NARRATION:

THE PASSAGE OF SO MUCH TIME WITH NO ANSWERS HAS LEFT THE FAMILY FEELING MORE HOPELESS WITH EVERY YEAR THAT GOES BY.

PAM ISBELL: It has been so long. It's been seven years. My family was brutally murdered, and justice would have been for this case to have been solved a long time ago. I was taught to believe that God has his hand in every aspect of our lives, and in our deaths. I know that my family is at peace. Their bodies are healed. They're in heaven. I know that I'm going to see them again one day.

TAMMY WHITE: It's sad. I mean, this is something that you think about pretty much every day. And you wish that you could have done something to stop it, but you never know what's going to happen.

NARRATION:

IF YOU HAVE ANY INFORMATION ABOUT THE QUADRUPLE HOMICIDE IN PENDLETON, SOUTH CAROLINA, SUBMIT A TIP AT 1-888-274-6372, OR ONLINE TO [WWW.P3TIPS.COM](http://WWW.P3TIPS.COM) OR [WWW.CRIMESC.COM](http://WWW.CRIMESC.COM), OR GO TO [UNSOLVED.COM](http://UNSOLVED.COM).

NEXT, ON UNSOLVED MYSTERIES:

TERI CEPLO: I sped to her house as fast as I could. The house was locked. I could see her dogs in the house and I did a quick run out in the yard, along the stream, just screaming her name as loud as I could in case she was laying hurt somewhere and could yell out at me. I just knew something's seriously wrong here.

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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 Paul Yates

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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 75 of Unsolved Mysteries.