

Telling stories that unlock truth



INVESTIGATING INNOCENCE MEDIA

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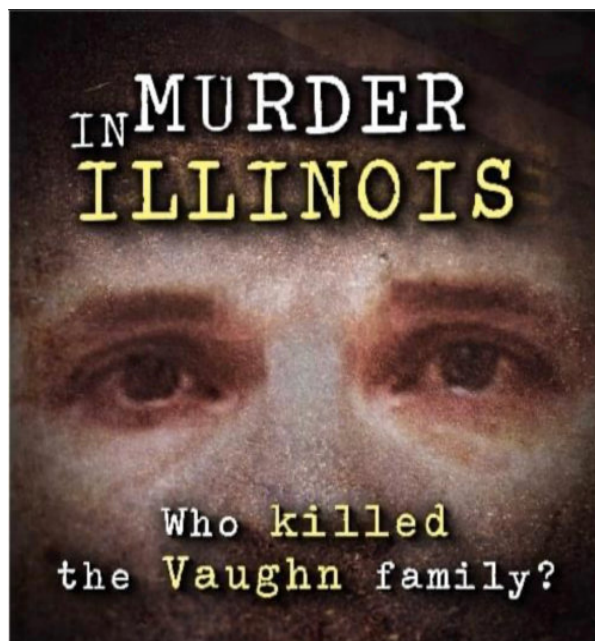
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Founder of Illinois Innocence Project to be featured on I Heart Radio Podcast Murder in Illinois

For Immediate Release

For more information email: InvestigatingInnocenceMedia@gmail.com

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Springfield, IL. The work of a not-for-profit organization called Investigating Innocence will be featured in a 12-part podcast produced by I Heart Radio. The first episode is scheduled for release July 8th.

The narrator of the podcast, Emmy Award winning producer Lauren Bright Pacheco shifted her career in television to producing podcasts, beginning with Happy Face, a story about serial killer Keith Hunter Jespersen, an Oregon semi-truck driver who taunted police in letters signed

with a smiley face. That led to another podcast called *Murder in Oregon*, about the wrongful conviction of Frank Gable, who spent 30 years in prison before finally being freed. She now produces podcasts for celebrities like former NBC Today Show host Katie Couric and Country Western star LeAnn Rimes.

The podcast will feature the work of private investigator Bill Clutter, who founded the Illinois Innocence Project 20 years ago and was credited by the Chicago Tribune for his work on two cases that led to the abolition of the death penalty in Illinois in 2011. After moving to Louisville, where he continues to work defending those facing the death penalty, he started Investigating Innocence, a national organization of private investigators.

Clutter's work as a consulting expert in the case of David Camm, a former Indiana state police trooper who was wrongfully convicted in New Albany, Indiana on the Ohio River, based on the testimony of a bloodstain expert, became the organization's first exoneration when a jury acquitted Camm in October of 2013.

After helping win Camm's freedom, Investigating Innocence played a major role in winning the release of former prosecutor Curt Lovelace in 2017, who was wrongfully charged with murdering his wife in Quincy, Illinois, eight years after an autopsy determined she had steatosis of the liver, which can cause sudden death. In 2018, Investigating Innocence helped free Rodney Lincoln, in St. Louis, who spent 36 years in prison before his sentence was commuted by then Missouri Governor Eric Grietens.

In February of 2013, Clutter launched Investigating Innocence with a continuing legal education program called *Side Effects: Homicidal and Suicidal Behavior Influenced by Prescription Medications*, at Chicago Kent College of Law, which focused on the Joliet, Illinois case of Christopher Vaughn, who had been facing the death penalty in 2007, wrongfully accused of killing his family in 2007. It is that case which will be featured in the podcast called *Murder in Illinois*.

Vaughn was tried and convicted in 2012, the year after the abolition of the death penalty, which stripped Vaughn of a fund that was enacted by lawmakers in 2000, one of the reforms designed to protect an innocent person facing the death penalty, after the Governor of Illinois declared a moratorium on execution that year.

Vaughn was charged despite the fact that the CSI for the Illinois State Police determined that the forensic evidence supported a murder-suicide committed by Vaughn's wife, who was

taking prescription medications to treat stress-induced migraine headaches. Over a year after Vaughn was arrested, the FDA recommended a black-box warning for one of the medications she was taking, Topamax, in December of 2008, after clinical data and the FDA Adverse Events data base indicated an increase in suicidal thoughts and behavior in persons taking the prescription medication.

At trial, prosecutors were able to persuade a jury that Vaughn staged the crime scene to make it appear that his wife shot their three children without any supporting evidence, other than the opinion of a bloodstain expert who testified as a prosecution witness.

In 2009, the National Academies of Science issued *Strengthening Forensic Science in the United States: A Path Forward*, revealing that many forensic experts used by prosecutors are prone to error based on a study of DNA exonerations by the Innocence Project. The report concluded, “the opinions of bloodstain pattern analysis are more subjective than scientific.”

The Vaughn family was killed inside of the family vehicle, after Chris’s wife Kimberly asked him to pull over because she was feeling nauseous, a side-effect of stress-related migraine headaches she was experiencing. They were on their way to a waterpark in Springfield from the home in Oswego, IL.

The investigation, led by Will County State’s Attorney James Glasgow immediately suspected that Christopher Vaughn had killed his family. Probable cause to arrest Vaughn cited the fact that his story failed to account for a large transfer stain of his wife’s blood, that occurred when he turned back to look at his three children, seated in the back seat, who were each shot twice.

“His wife had a single gunshot wound below her chin,” said Clutter. “Every expert who has reviewed that evidence finds it consistent with a self-inflicted gunshot wound. The blood that poured out of that wound caused secondary spatter stains on the left side of the driver’s seat, and when Chris turned to look back at his children after witnessing his wife shoot herself, that’s how that stain pattern was transferred to the back left-side of Chris’s jacket,” said Clutter.

“What State’s Attorney Glasgow failed to consider were the gaps in Christopher Vaughn’s memory from being a crime victim and witnessing such a traumatic, horrific event,” said Clutter. “He displayed classic symptoms of dissociative amnesia,” said Clutter.

Christopher Vaughn was also shot twice, but survived his injuries. During a second day of interrogation, investigators urged Vaughn, “fill in the gaps for us – for your children . . . tell us what you saw.”

The video shows Vaughn struggling to remember. After a long pause, Vaughn tells investigators, “I got back in the truck and I looked over at Kim and I think she - I think she had a gun...right in my face and I put my hand up (takes left arm up to his forehead) and ugh, and...everything kind of went numb and uhm, (long pause), I don’t know if she was mad at me or what. There was no way she could have hurt the kids.”

The shot he described caused a defensive wound to his left wrist. The bullet struck a heavy silver watch that he inherited from his grandfather, shattering the glass of the driver’s window as the bullet deflected out the window, missing his head.

“As in the case of David Camm, tunnel vision infected the state police investigation and, in both cases, it was the erroneous testimony of bloodstain pattern experts who wrongfully convicted both men, said Clutter.”

Investigating Innocence is raising money to conduct an animated crime scene reconstruction. Clutter was part of the forensic team of experts that conducted the animated crime scene reconstruction in the case of David Camm, which helped persuade a jury that he was innocent.

Those wishing to donate can visit www.InvestigatingInnocence.org

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