

The Darkroom

TRANSCRIPT

Correspondent: Ken Williamson

This Criminal Archives report airs September 18, 9 EST.

The seasons were changing in Sewickley, a sleepy suburb twelve miles outside of downtown Pittsburgh. The days were shorter, and cooler. Color had begun to burst from the trees and farm stands selling pumpkins and calico corn were popping up roadside.

But a young Jonathan Glenn didn't recall the early signs of Fall. No, his memories of that day were much darker. Sinister, perhaps.

JONATHAN GLENN: It was my first memory. Mom woke up me, dragged me by my arm to the car - which was packed full of clothes, threw me in the backseat, and off we went. I watched out the rear window as we pulled away, mom slapped me a couple times to turn around. I hoped my father would see me, save me. The next evening we were in Garden City, Kansas.

KEN WILLIAMSON: Why Garden City?

JONATHAN GLENN: I think she blindly picked a town on a map. We knew no one. We lived off a carton of eggs a week until she got a job at a beef packaging plant - that was probably three months after we arrived.

KEN WILLIAMSON: Was your father abusive? Why the sudden departure?

JONATHAN GLENN: She told me he was a monster, creep, pervert. Never talked about why we left and I didn't ask. She wasn't the type to encourage conversation.

Jonathan's father Paul was a well-known local. He was a photographer, specializing in senior portraits. And on any given morning of the week you could guarantee to run into Paul at Eat'n Park eating two sunny side-ups with a cup of black coffee.

A former waitress, who asked not to be on camera, said Paul was a nice guy, a social guy. Every parent in town wanted their kid's senior portrait taken by him. She said Paul always spoke highly of his wife Marie, who chose to be a stay at home mother.

Jonathan was just two years old when the first vanishing occurred. A cross country runner named Annie Smick, a high school stand-out always in the Sports section, went missing during a meet. Twenty years later and neither she or her remains have been found.

Then there was the teen equestrian, and the CMU student. The college girl found strangled in Schenley Park, the horse rider still missing to this day. Detectives were stumped. Forensic science was cutting edge, but not advanced enough.

And so these mysteries were filed away in the basement of the Allegheny County Police Department. Joe Beachem had just graduated to Detective.

KEN WILLIAMSON: Paul Glenn was the common denominator. He had taken all of their senior portraits. You don't need forensics for that. How'd this go unnoticed?

DETECTIVE BEACHEM: Didn't even cross our radar. We profiled the suspect as a college kid. Someone popular, a jock, with this horrible urge to prey on young females.

KEN WILLIAMSON: So you have a serial monster out there and you stop investigating?

DETECTIVE BEACHEM: The crimes stopped and other cases took precedent.

Back in Garden City, Jonathan was growing up sheltered. His mother cold and distant and always praying the same mantra to her rosary. Monster. Creep. Pervert.

He took up an interest in photography, a hobby his mother forbade. And so Jonathan hid his Vivitar under a broken floorboard in his room, waiting until his mother would go to mass to take it out. His subjects were his mother's bizarre jewelry collection. One necklace in particular always stuck out to him.

JONATHAN GLENN: It was one of those best friend necklaces - a heart broken in half, you keep one side and your friend keeps the other.

KEN WILLIAMSON: Something a teenager would wear?

JONATHAN GLENN: Yeah, in hindsight. When I was younger, it made me wonder who my mom's best friend was. I think that was my intrigue with it. As far as I knew, my mom didn't have any friends. I could imagine her happy at some point.

Marie Glenn was found in her room, forever asleep, clutching her rosary in April of 2015. Natural causes. She left behind an envelope from Paul addressed to Jonathan.

KEN WILLIAMSON: You waited to open it for six months. Why?

JONATHAN GLENN: I was terrified of it. I wasn't ready to know.

KEN WILLIAMSON: And when you were ready, what was inside?

JONATHAN GLENN: There was a will bequeathing the house to me. And a letter from my father with specific instructions to go into his darkroom and process a negative. I didn't know at the time that he committed suicide a few months before mom died.

Paul Glenn may have taken his own life but he left secrets. Secrets that revealed evidence from those mysterious vanishings some twenty years ago.

JONATHAN GLENN: There was a secret door behind the refrigerator that led to the basement. Newspaper headlines of missing girls lined the stairwell. I went to the darkroom and developed the negative. An image of my mom strangling a young girl with her rosary - she looked surprised to be caught on camera. Just horrid.

KEN WILLIAMSON: What are you thinking at this point?

JONATHAN GLENN: That I had to call the police.

DETECTIVE BEACHEM: He mentioned the articles of the missing girls, the letter, the photo. We could provide the victims' families some closure, but we couldn't prosecute. The suspects were both deceased.

Jonathan, now 24, is trying to make sense of it all. He moved into his family home and this Fall he begins college, studying photography at the Art Institute. This may be an open and shut case for Detective Beachem, but Jonathan has his own theory.

JONATHAN GLENN: I don't think my father hurt anyone. I think my mom was jealous of him always being around young girls. She killed them, he just happened to catch her and she fled.

But we may never know the entire story, some secrets stay buried with the dead.