**Parricide Podcast **

(Why Can’t) Johnny Be Good?

John Hovey

(**Intro music**) Ring around the rosies, a pocket full of posies. Ashes, ashes we all fall down. (**end music**)

**Marie:** This is the Parricide Podcast.

**Sherry:** At 5:30 a.m. on June 19, 1984, 13-year-old Karen woke up with a start. Was that a gunshot? She glanced to her six-year-old brother, Jeremy, who was still sleeping next to her and then looked through her open bedroom door into her parents’ bedroom as she jumped out of her bed. There, at the foot of their bed, was a figure - arm raised - shooting a gun at her parents! And you won't believe what happened next.

**Marie:** Welcome to the Parricide Podcast. I'm Sherry and I'm Marie and we’re here to tell you how Raymond and Nancy Hovey were murdered by their oldest son, John. If you enjoy listening to our podcast, please subscribe to it or like it while we chat.

**Sherry:** It was happening too fast for Karen to make sense of it all. She could hear her mother screaming! Terrified she reached for her glasses while trying to wake Jeremy without making any noise. Within seconds her older brother, Johnny, appeared in the doorway wearing nothing but his underwear and his glasses. Her mother called out to her, “Bring Jeremy here, Karen. Johnny just shot me and dad!” She looked at Johnny. He said, “Don't believe her. She's lying. It's not true.” She was practically blind without her glasses, but she thought the shooter was bigger than her shortish, slender brother so she paused; paralyzed with indecision. She thought of how the fight last night had sent Johnny packing. He'd said he was moving out. Johnny just turned and went into her parents’ bedroom, precluding her need to make any decision at that point. He didn't stay though. He came right back and told them they needed to get out of there. He said dad had a gun in his hand! Karen panicked as she heard her mother call to her again; asking for Jeremy. As she hurriedly pulled on some clothes, she could hear her mother phoning for an ambulance. Her mother called out, asking for help remembering their address - they'd only lived in this house since last November. She yelled their address to her mother as she helped Jeremy pull on his shoes. She could hear her mother say, “Hurry, hurry.” into the phone. Johnny reappeared, fully dressed and told her to ignore their mother's pleas; it was time to go. They really needed to get to the safety of their neighbor's house. The ambulance was on its way and there was nothing she could do here. She and Johnny hustled Jeremy past their parents’ bedroom door. Everything was a whirlwind, but Karen specifically remembered to look for a gun in her father's hand. There was no gun. Nevertheless, she quickly unlocked the front door and the children fled to the neighbors. They stayed with their neighbors until the police came to arrest Johnny

**Marie:** Okay, now I’m excited because I love a good mystery and I was not expecting a mystery in our second parricide case!

**Sherry:** Oh you'll really like this one then, because this not only has a whodunit - it also has a where did Johnny go when he disappeared and does Johnny even exist! This case is very complicated.

**Marie:**  That's exciting I feel like we're about to get existential!

**Sherry:** Yes ma'am!

**Marie:** But first I guess we should get to know Johnny. What was he like?

**Sherry:** Well, Johnny Raymond Hovey wasn't your typical boy. He grew up in Albuquerque, New Mexico in a devout Catholic family. Raymond was his dad. He was a machinist for the railroad and he used to work for the army. Nancy was his mom. She was a mom and she had three children. Johnny was the oldest and then Karen (13 years old) and Jeremy (who was six). The family had recently experienced financial problems which had forced them to move to a humbler neighborhood. This caused Johnny to have to transfer schools - so he went from the more prestigious del Norte High School to the less prestigious Rio Grande High School.

**Marie:** Okay. So…so far, it sounds like he is just about the most typical boy in the 1980s.

**Sherry:** Okay, okay; I'm getting there. So, the change in the school is key. The teachers and the principal at the new school called Johnny creative, highly intelligent, polite - words he'd already incorporated into his self-identity. But where the teachers also saw an odd, undersized loner with thick glasses, a big brain, and an even bigger attitude - Johnny saw a superior being who was way too good for this school. He also looked down on his parents with similar disdain and he considered himself way better than they were.

**Marie:** So how do we know that he considered himself superior?

**Sherry:** Court documents indicating how he treated his parents, his diary also noted that he felt he was much better than his parents. He was very denigrating of his parents when he wrote in his logbook and also collateral sources; like his Uncle Bill.

**Marie:** Okay, okay. So sorry to interrupt.

**Sherry:** It's okay.

**Marie:** So, another thing is - I’ve seen pictures of him. So, my image of him is very clear. But for our listeners, he really is pretty small. When you see him at court, he doesn't look 16; he looks to me like he's maybe 13. Oh, yeah. I agree. I thought he was much younger than the ages they were listing.

**Marie:** So, he's not what I imagine a murderer, or especially a murdering child. I imagine someone who's physically intimidating and he really wasn't.

**Sherry:** No, he was your typical geek.

**Marie:** Yeah.

**Sherry:** Not only was he a geek, he also had a very very strange hobby. And that's also something that makes him unusual. So, I’ll also mention that as an adult he shows currently as five foot seven and just a little over a hundred pounds; so even now he's quite small.

**Marie:** He's still not this big scary guy.

**Sherry:** Right, right.

**Marie:** So, let's get back…yeah. What was his hobby?

**Sherry:** So, this is very atypical for a child his age. See, Johnny was fascinated with the macabre. He would make, kind-of props - that you would find in horror movies? He was very interested in making horry…(both giggle)

**Marie:**  …as all teenage boys!

**Sherry:** He was very interested in making horror movie props and he even claimed he was going to get rich someday working in special effects in the movies when he grew up. In fact, he really did a lot of creepy, creepy stuff. He'd make grotesque masks that looked like someone who was dead and decomposed. He would mortify his parents with terrifying stories that he would write down in books - and he even converted dolls into creepy, disintegrating objects. For example, the Albuquerque Journal reported he took a mannequin and, using his special effects skills, he created a decomposing body with bloody eyes. He actually named her Bloody Susan and he would roll his new friend around the house and the neighborhood in his dead grandmother's wheelchair.

**Marie:** That's kind of gross. Um, did his interesting hobby disturb the neighbors? Do we know if he was…?

**Sherry:** We don't have a lot of information in this case, really. We have a few items from neighbors when we get down to the court information but there's not a lot of real collateral information in this case. Which is one of the things that makes it interesting.

**Brooke:** Okay. So another thing - I’ve been wondering is - so he's 16, he's really into horror movies. Did they watch horror movies? Did they go to haunted houses? How did this fascination start?

**Sherry:**  No. I’m really not sure how it started. We know it started before he was 13 years old, but his family wasn't allowed to watch scary movies. The parents did not think that the kids should be thinking of Satan or anything. They were devout Catholics and they wanted the children to be very godly. This happened back when the Satanic Panic was occurring; when everyone was afraid that Satanists were out to get their kids - and his parents were very protective of their children.

**Marie:** So, this probably freaked his parents out a lot.

**Sherry:** Completely.

**Marie:** Okay, and I’m I’m going to go ahead and assume that probably it freaked the neighbors out, too. It would certainly freak me out and I don't believe in that Satanic Panic at all.

**Sherry:**  I think as a neighbor I would be a little worried…and maybe I would move.

**Marie:**  So, why were his parents, kind of, letting him do this? I know teenagers can be hard to stop but…

**Sherry:** Well, his parents seem to be kind of torn between pride and dismay. They had this very bright, highly creative boy who was using his talents to make a creative outlet. He was using chemistry to create his objects. He was looking at decomposition. He was looking at how to make blood - there's a lot of science and chemistry in what he was doing, and I think they were really proud of him for doing that at such a young age. But, they were really horrified and concerned about the outputs of his creative endeavors.

**Marie:** That makes sense. I think that it would be hard to stop your kid from doing something where they were willingly learning chemistry and anatomy; even if they were doing it to make, you know, bloody Susan.

**Sherry:** Right, right. I completely agree. In 1981 (when he was 13) on October 30th - his mom caught him making a recording of the show, Halloween. I’m not sure which version it was; I know Halloween has seven or eight versions. I don't know I’ve never really watched it. But um his mom caught him making a recording of the show and she lost it.

**Marie:** Okay, so I don't actually know anything about Halloween. Is that part of the Satanic Panic?

**Sherry:** I know it's a slasher movie, and kind of a popular one/ I don't I know…it's about somebody named Michael who goes around trying to kill someone and they're like running down the hospital bloody scenes - and the person that he's trying to kill is Jamie Lee Curtis and in the second movie or the end of the first movie he finds out it's his sister. But that's, I don't know a lot about the movie, honestly.

**Marie:** Okay. I know we probably should watch these but I’m too scared.

**Sherry:** I know. They scare me to death! They're so bad! Anyway, his parents were so concerned about this that they destroyed and sold off his macabre collection of monsters, masks, dolls, books, and other items. And then they sat him down and explained why they felt the need to get rid of everything.

**Marie:** That's good parenting.

**Sherry:** I feel like that is good parenting. They tried to help him see that this isn't normal. They wanted him to be a good Catholic boy, so they were trying really hard to parent him in a real positive way - even though getting rid of his stuff may have not felt positive at the time.

**Marie:** Well, and even today um that's parenting advice. Like if you're going to punish the kid, talk to them about why. Help them understand what you're doing.

**Sherry:** Right, right. But he was really mad about this! In fact, in his diary he wrote, “I’ll never forgive them. They'll pay for it one way or another.” Now, his diary - he would call his logbook. I think he didn't want to be known as keeping a diary. So, if we refer to a logbook, that's the same thing.

**Marie:** Okay, okay. So, he kind of thinks of himself as like, maybe, this is an explorer thing or keeping track of his progress in his hobby?

**Sherry:** “I am a scientist. Here is how my intelligence was created.” was kind of how I felt…

**Marie:** Okay, yeah. So, he's trying to make a record of his early years, because he does see himself as someone who's going to have extraordinary success.

**Sherry:** Yes. His uncle also sat him down and talked to him about why his parents had disposed of this collection. Remember, he's only 13 years old. The Albuquerque Journal reported that he told his uncle, “I hate them. I cannot accept what they did.” And this is the event that seems to be pivotal in his relationship with his parents. Both his uncle and his sister recounted that event when they were at trial; noting that he held on to that anger and dissensions between Johnny and his parents only escalated for the next two-and-a-half years.

**Marie:** Okay. So, it sounds to me like maybe that kicked off a power struggle

**Sherry:** I’m not sure if it was a power struggle or not. It very may well have been.

**Marie:** Yeah. Because the hardest thing, I think, with a lot of these parricides is; it's the parents trying to apply good parenting techniques to kids who see themselves as - they should be in charge. They should be able to do what they want.

**Sherry:** Right and it doesn't have there aren't any indications that he was trying to rule the house, like Nikki did. He was being a child. He just wanted to be able to do his own thing and keep secrets. So, it was a little bit different.

**Marie:** Okay. So, they had this big fight. but he didn't kill them until two-and-a-half years later. What happened in those two and a half years?

**Sherry:** There aren't a lot of details about the following two-and-a-half years. But remember, I told you the family had moved, and Johnny was transferred to Rio Grande High School? In December of 1983, Johnny's mom actually reached out to the probation officers at his new high school. I think the probation officers are more like what we call resource officers or Mr. Friendly or…not Mr. Friendly. Mis…

**Marie:** Officer Friendly? (laughter)

**Sherry:** Officer Friendly.

**Marie:** Mr. Friendly sounds creepy. (laughter)

**Sherry:** That Right. Anyway, the resource officers (or probation officers) were holding what's called a CHINS Outreach. CHINS stands for Children In Need Of Supervision. She went to them to see if she could get help with her incorrigible child - which is who they were trying to find. They wanted to connect parents with resources. She explained to them that she felt her life was in danger and she described how Johnny would threaten her and her husband with murder - and how he would threaten to run away; and tell them that if he did run away he would send someone back to kill everyone.

**Marie:** That’s creative.

**Sherry:** (chuckles) Very creative. And she wanted to consult with them and find out if there was anything that could be done to keep him from killing them. The officers told her that she did have a case; that they did think that she had an incorrigible child and they would need to fill out some paperwork and she would have to come back the next day to sign the paperwork to get everything rolling. She never did come back, so the officers weren't able to do anything about the complaint and it was of course just left by the wayside.

**Marie:** Okay. So, she did make, at least, a small gesture to try and get help. But either she didn't realize she needed to do more or she did just choose not to follow through?

**Sherry:** Right. We don't know what happened there. We don't know if she forgot, or if she got home and things seemed better - so she decided to drop it, or if she was just worried about ruining his future - while trying to keep the rest of her family safe.

**Marie:** That's a hard balancing-act, too. Because he did seem like he was very smart; he was good at science; and parents are so worried about saddling their child with a criminal - or even medical treatment record - that could harm their career choices.

**Sherry:** Exactly! And I can totally see that. You don’t want to destroy your child’s future because of teenage angst.

**Marie:** That's true!

**Sherry:** Yeah. Well, anyway, I know that she felt abandoned - because (when she had been shot and she was talking to the paramedics) she told them that she had talked to the probation officers and was surprised that they didn't do anything, because he'd said he would do this. So she somehow thought they would swoop in and save them. And it didn't happen.

**Marie:** Okay. So, maybe she didn't even intend to drop it; she just didn't know that it - it wasn't an ongoing process.

**Sherry:** Right. So, we'll probably never know the real answer to that. But anyway, let's fast forward a few months to Friday the 13th - which was April 13, 1984 to be exact.

**Marie:** So, wait! What month did she talk to the probation officer?

**Sherry:** That was in December of 1983.

**Marie:** So, she talked to the police officers, like, seven months before she ended up being shot?

**Sherry:** Right. So, she lived with some terror for quite some time, from the sounds of it.

**Marie:** Yeah. Because I’m sure she was already dealing with it for a while before she talked to the police.

**Sherry:** Right. So on Friday the 13th, Johnny had brought home a can of gasoline and hid it and some gasoline-soaked drags behind the wood burning stove. When his parents discovered it, he was really evasive. He wouldn't tell them what it was or what it was for; but one quick whiff and they knew it was gasoline. He still refused to tell them anything until they applied some parental pressure - and then he explained that it was for a special mask project he'd read about. He wanted to mix the gasoline with some latex to make a special mask. And his parents weren't buying it. They insisted that he show them the project paper and he couldn't. So, they confiscated his gasoline and that was that. Until his mom was peeking in his diary (as worried parents are wont to do) and she was terrified to see “DOOMSDAY. This is it!” written in blood red across Friday the 13th.

**Marie:** Okay. So if I’m a mom and I’m reading DOOMSDAY on the same day that I find a gas can behind a wood burning stove, my assumption is - oh okay, so that was not to make a mask. That was to burn the house down with all of us asleep in it.

**Sherry:** Right!

**Marie:** Okay. So he's…this sounds like maybe he had a previous attempt to kill his family or at least a fantasy about it that was pretty…he made some actions toward…

**Sherry:** He'd done a few things to scare the hell out of his family, I’m convinced of it.

**Marie:** Yeah. I mean, because, that didn't even get her to call the police. So she must have been pretty used to that level of

**Sherry: …**threat or menace.

**Marie:** threat; um…upsetting behaviors. Something along those lines.

**Sherry:** Right, right.

**Marie:** Okay.So, what happened next?

**Sherry:** The next month, Johnny got into even more trouble. I think I mentioned before that he didn't like that he was now going to Rio Grande High School. Well, he didn't just not like it, he became very self-destructive. He would not do any of his homework, he wouldn't do his classwork, he wouldn't turn his papers in, he basically went on strike - from what I can tell. So, from November of his Junior year until May of his Junior year there were struggles. And a lot of visits with mom and the principal. The principal described him as polite and very intelligent. Teachers described him as the invisible boy - someone who was very bright but ignored by everyone in the room. So, they were all very concerned about him. They knew he could get straight A's, but he was basically getting straight Fs.

**Marie:** So, basically he could get straight A's if he wanted to, but he wasn't about to perform for these teachers.

**Sherry:** Yes. They weren't good enough for him. And he complained about everyone in the school. He hated the teachers, he hated the students, he hated the principal; he just did not want to be in this school and felt it was beneath him. Well, on May 3rd, he and his mom were visiting with the principal. I’m assuming it was for remediation - maybe talking about summer school to catch him back up so he could be a senior - and he formally dropped out of school. So, he was near the end of his Junior year and kind of just kind of, peaced out.

**Marie:** Okay, so that would be upsetting to any parent but it sounds like he had experienced a lot of disappointment in the last year. Actually the last couple of years. Because it'd been a couple years since they threw out his original collection. And it sounds like at this point he had an intense dislike for his school and his parents and maybe his whole family - because his brother and sister would have burned to death in in the gasoline fire, too.

**Sherry:** Right, right. So, I’m not really sure about the relationship because there's really very little information about family interaction - which is kind of strange for a case of this magnitude.

**Marie:** It is strange.I think we can infer that maybe he wasn't the closest to them. Now some families will have the oldest child have their own room but in - I would say in - most families, the boys share a room and the girls share a room. But we know that his six-year-old brother was rooming with their 13-year-old sister - which may mean nothing - but probably doesn't indicate that he was very close to that brother, at least.

**Sherry:** Right! And it's kind of weird. It's kind of weird once the girl is 13-years-old, to have her little brother in there with her when there's an older brother.

**Marie:** Yeah. So, it's, maybe not that unusual but I think - based on the totality of this story - I would say they were not extraordinarily close.

**Sherry:** Exactly. That's what I think. So, let's talk about the night of the murder a little bit more.

**Brooke:** Okay. So, the first thing that was like a red flag for me in hearing the story was he shows up in his underwear.

**Sherry:** Right.

**Marie:** Which has a real Lizzie Borden story feel - taking off all your clothes to avoid blood splatter. Um, but then my second thought of course was well how many teenage boys sleep naked and of course he put his glasses on if he was…

**Sherry:** I hope he wasn't sleeping naked. (laughter)

**Marie:** Yeah. I mean thankfully he sounds like he at least wore underwear, but I’m I mean we don't know what he normally wore. But to me that was like – hmm, I don't know about this guy.

**Sherry:**  Right and I have no information about that, whatsoever. but it is something I thought about, too. Especially where Karen thought she saw something bigger. I’d wondered if he'd had on a large robe that he hid or something - but they never found anything like that.

**Marie:** Yeah. I mean, it's very strange because she was trying to describe what she saw - because she wasn't wearing her glasses. All we know, for sure, is she saw someone over her parents bed with their arm out; that's all we really know.

**Sherry:** Right and she - they had an ophthalmologist who actually testified during the trial and he said that without her glasses all she would have seen is fuzzy blobs - because she was pretty blind. As was Johnny.

**Marie:** Yeah. It sounds like - but he got his glasses on pretty quickly.

**Sherry:** Right, right. So Johnny made a confession to the police just a few hours after the murders, but that evidence was accepted by the courts and could be used as testimony but I wasn't able to get hold of that evidence, unfortunately. So we're not able to tell you what's in it.

**Marie:** Yeah.

**Sherry:** But anyway, why don't you talk about the trial.

**Marie:** Okay. So, first my first question was; how do we know that he wanted to kill his parents? And obviously the gas canister is suspicious, but when we get to trial there was actually a lot of evidence. So, first of course was his logbook. Now I wish that everybody who ended up committing murder kept a diary, because you get to know you get to know them so well.

**Sherry:** Right, right. That and Facebook tells you a lot about a person.

**Marie:** Yes. And so, his diary is how we know how he felt about his parents. We know he had some nasty nicknames for them.

**Sherry:** Oh, he actually really liked the book, Christine, and apparently in the book, Christine by Stephen King, there are characters that the main character calls the Bastard and the Bitch. And that's how he referred to his parents; he was very disrespectful.

**Marie:** That's a lot of anger for a kid that age. So, it just really gives you a feel for the person. So, we have his diary and then we know that he was threatening his parents, because mom wasn't quiet about it. She talked to the neighbors, and to her family, and to the neighbor that they ended up running to, actually. Which I’ll talk more about her in a minute. But then, we also know because of um talking to the resource officers at the school, his Uncle Bill, and his sister, Karen - both were really open about the fact that he had (for a long time) sworn revenge on his parents.

**Sherry:** He hated them; felt disdain for them. Ever since he was 13 years old; when they tossed his stuff out.

**Marie:** Which is really very young - I mean, 13 is very young to be calling your parents’ names and to feel like they're inferior to you.

**Sherry:** Exactly.

**Marie:**  Um and then - he also had some problems um with fighting with his parents, which was reported by another neighbor. So there were a lot of people at the trial talking about how they'd had a really troubled relationship for a long time. So, one of the sources of a lot of information was Mrs. Saiz;

**Sherry:** Oh, the neighbor that the kids ran to.

**Marie:** That's right. So her name is Irene Saiz, and we got a lot of information from the Albuquerque Journal about her testimony.

**Sherry:** Okay.

**Marie:** So, she was friends with the mom, Nancy Hovey, and she had talked to her at length about her fears about John. She was afraid that Johnny had joined a cult because he would disappear for hours and she had no idea where he was going or with whom. He was only 16. But then she also told the journal about that night. So, while they waited for the paramedics and the police. Johnny and Karen were talking about Johnny's assertion that dad had shot mom and himself. So, he was trying to say, ‘Yeah dad had the gun.’ And Karen was saying, ‘No. I saw someone else shooting them. I saw someone above their bed with their arms out - with at least one arm outstretched.’ She, as we said, she couldn't see very well because she didn't have her glasses on, but she was *sure* that there were three people in that bedroom.

**Sherry:** Oh, man.

**Marie:** So…they were kind of already - it sounds like Johnny already was trying to build his defense. “Oh no, it was someone else.” or “Oh no, it was dad.”

**Sherry:**  Yeah. I get the feeling he was doing that right from the murder.

**Marie:**  And I mean, this is moments after it happened!

**Sherry:**  Right.

**Marie:** And they also um - another problem that Johnny had was that Karen was saying, “No. There couldn't have been anyone else in the house, because I had to unlock the front door to get us out. So there wasn't another person in the house and it wasn't dad.” And I think at that point, she was probably just overwhelmed and confused. But at trial I think there's a that's a pretty simple equation - it wasn't dad, there was no one else in the house, it wasn't Karen.

**Sherry:** And there's more. Because the mom actually lived for seven hours after the shooting - and she had a lot to say about it.

**Marie:** She did! I was surprised that she lived so long, because she sounded (when she was calling to Karen) like she thought she was going to die.

**Sherry:** I think she was determined to make sure Johnny paid for this.

**Marie:** Yeah. I think that she was really worried; and I personally would have been worried about my other kids.

**Sherry:** And probably mad! She'd been worried about this for months or years.

**Marie:**  Yeah, she probably was mad. I can't imagine being mad when you get shot, but I think that's actually a pretty common reaction is -especially if you've seen it coming - you're mad about it. (giggles) Yeah, um but so, she - we know she called out to Karen and said, ‘bring Jeremy here. Johnny has shot us.”

**Sherry:** Did she take Jeremy to Nancy that night?

**Marie:** No. It looks like she didn't. It looks like she followed Johnny and they left the house.

**Sherry:** That breaks my heart.

**Marie:**  Yeah, I think that um if you're going to shoot someone, let them say goodbye to their other children; if you manage not to shoot them well enough.

**Sherry:** Right – sorry, I didn't mean to pull you off-topic.

**Marie:**  No, it's fine um. It's just I I found that very irritating. She also wrote “John Hovey shot us” on a notepad by her bedside. So she's laying there bleeding next to her dead husband. This is a very determined woman! Um so, then when the police showed up she was, you know, conscious and talking and was telling them that he had been planning to kill his parents for six months. She talked a lot about um struggling over the gun as he was trying to shoot her.

**Sherry:** Oh, my gosh.

**Marie:** And - this is really important – (I know it's terrible) but she told them that the gun was under the bed. She described in detail how she and Johnny had struggled over the gun as he was trying to shoot her. She told them that she'd gotten the gun in the struggle and he stopped shooting because she took the gun and threw it under the bed - so that he would stop shooting. Then she also she asked them to go get him. So, she did want him, at this point, to be caught. And then the last people that we know she told is the responding paramedics who came in and were taking her to the hospital. she also told them that John had been the assailant, so she's told neighbors beforehand and she's told the police by writing it down on a notepad and talking to them. And then she's also talked to the paramedics. So as far as evidence - this is really important - because there's…it's hard when you can't have someone testify, but she's met several exceptions to the Hearsay Rule: by writing it down, by telling the police, by telling paramedics in the course of trying to get treatment. So she's done a lot to make sure - whether she knew it or not - she's done a really good job of making sure that this evidence will make it into trial.

**Sherry:** Good. Because it sounds like Johnny was determined to get dad to pay for that crime.

**Marie:** Yes, um, I think that it's always really convenient to try to blame the person you know you actually killed - because they can't speak up for themselves. But I think that mom living really ruined that plan. Because here's the great part; when they get to trial the police are able to testify that yes the gun was under the bed - exactly as Nancy has said. And here's an interesting thing, that I think also speaks to the fear this family was living in, dad had been sleeping with the gun by his bed. Which arguably was because they moved to a neighborhood they weren't familiar with and maybe you could say, ‘Oh dad was just trying to protect his family.” But given how afraid they were, I’m inclined to believe he had it by his bed because they were afraid of John. He had a holster and a gun by his bed. And they find the gun under the bed. But guess where they find the holster?

**Sherry:** Where?

**Marie:** In Johnny's bedroom.

**Sherry:** OMG.

**Marie:** So it's pretty clear that the gun was in dad's bedroom before bed. And we know that for sure because Karen testified that he’d had the gun with the gun pouch on his nightstand the night before the murder. But then in the morning, the gun is under the bed - just like mom said when she said that John shot them - and the gun pouch is in Johnny's bedroom. And then also, the autopsy showed there was no way that dad had killed himself. So, the first defense - dad killed himself - that's out. There's no way to show that.

**Sherry:** Right. I heard that their dad had a bullet in his head and a bullet in his neck.

**Marie:** Which you can't do for suicide no you can only shoot yourself once for suicide. Just in case anyone wondered.

**Sherry:** There went his defense.

**Brooke:** Yeah. So, then his attorney – now, I feel for Johnny's defense attorney here because there's so much evidence it's really hard for him to go for not guilty - but he did. So, their next defense was – well, it wasn't him and all of this evidence about him hating his parents and trying to kill them - that was just normal teenage angst. You know, teenage boys all hate their parents. I’m kind of annoyed by this, because not all teenage boys hate their parents so much that they call them the Bitch and the Bastard in their journal. And they don't put gas cans behind wood stoves - he was you know 15 or 16, but old enough to know better. And this also irritated Uncle Bill (who I talked about before). He testified about how much John held his parents in disdain and he said, “You know, I’m a father and this is not typical teenage angst. This is not how just how teenage boys are.”

**Sherry:** And parents know!

**Marie:** Yeah. I think parents know this is not just normal. So, I was I was glad that he mentioned that at trial. So, at this point it wasn't dad, it wasn't teenage angst, and - thanks to Karen’s testimony - we know the likelihood of an intruder is low because the door was locked and the police didn't find any broken windows or anything.

**Sherry:** Right.

**Marie:** It didn't take the jury long to convict him.

**Sherry:** How long did it take:

**Marie:** It only took six-and-a-half hours; which in a murder case - especially for a younger person, a child - really is - that's not a lot of time. I think that speaks to how strong this case was. But they found him guilty on two counts of First Degree Murder and Johnny - he looked stunned at the verdict. I think he really thought that he was so smart that he could get away with murder.

**Sherry:** I’m sure.

**Marie:** So, um, the next part is of course Sentencing Guidelines. Depending on the kind of case, judges might have a lot of choice, but he didn't have much discretion in this case. Johnny was going to receive two life sentences for the murders. The Judge's only choice was whether he should have the sentences run consecutively or concurrently.

**Sherry:** Can you describe those two a little bit? What's consecutive versus what's concurrent and why would the judge make that distinction?

**Brooke:** Basically, consecutively means back to back. So, a life sentence - as we know - isn't really until you die. It's usually a set number of years that they consider life.

**Sherry:** In New Mexico, I believe that's 30 years minimum.

**Marie:** Yes. So, let's say 30 years. If you have consecutive sentences, you'll serve for 30 years and then you'll start your second life sentence and serve for 30 more years.

**Sherry:** So the clock starts over.

**Marie:** Most people in most cases have concurrent sentences - which means that you start both life sentences at the same time and when the 30 years is up, you've served your time for both murders. But Johnny was sentenced to two consecutive life sentences - which means the judge decided he needed to be in jail for 60 years.

**Sherry:** So, he saw this as a terrible murder.

**Marie:** Yes, and I think rightly so. This one was pretty bad. But, well, the defense also talked about how Johnny had some untreated mental health issues - which I think most attorneys raise because I think the assumption is, kind of like, people who don't have mental health problems don't usually run around killing people. So, the judge kind of made a gesture toward that and especially, you know, based on his youth. I think this was appropriate. He ordered that Johnny needed to be treated for psychological problems while imprisoned.

**Sherry:** hmm, okay.

**Marie:** Now this is where they kind of lose him, I think. In order to provide this court-ordered psychological help, Johnny was sent to Oregon to participate in a program which was designed specifically for youthful violent offenders. But something went wrong here. The program had actually been canceled and he ended up landing in a maximum security prison in Salem.

**Sherry:**  Oh, my goodness.

**Marie:** This is kind of where it gets, I think, dicey. We'll talk about this a little bit later, because there is some intrigue later about - where did Johnny go? But then, a year after his conviction he's in Salem and he appealed the consecutive sentence; claiming that he needed a “ray of hope” and complaining, validly, that he not been receiving the psychological counseling that was ordered. So the District Attorney opposed this request and said that - you know – “Look, this is a murderer who refused to take any responsibility for his crimes and a ray of hope is not actually legal grounds for revising the sentence. Like, you don't have a right to hope. That's not part of your rights as a prisoner. Most people, when they're sentenced - by the time they're sentenced - they've been in prison long enough they've thought about it and they say, “Wow, I am so sorry. I did this.” And even in this appeal he didn't really express remorse.

**Sherry:** Right. I hear that even, when he was convicted, he complained vociferously that he did not have the psychological constitution to bear two consecutive life sentences. There was no sorrow or or remorse for what he did to his parents, he was just really sorry about these two consecutive life sentences.

**Marie:**  Yeah and being sorry for yourself is not the same thing as going, ‘Wow, I am remorseful” or “I shouldn't have done that.”

**Sherry:**  Got it.

**Marie:** Um so, that's not going to - that's actually part of Sentencing Guidelines, is um, you can actually get a step down for showing remorse - for doing things that show that, Wow, I actually am sorry that I did this.” And he never, even to this day as far as I can see, takes any kind of accountability or expresses remorse for the act - just for what happened to him.

**Sherry:**  So, you're talking about mitigating factors. When you talk about the Sentencing Guidelines, you're talking about things that would help lighten the sentence if the judge chose to do so.

**Marie:**  Yes. He also talked to a counselor and that counselor told reporters that she believed that he had convinced himself of his own innocence - which I think happens on occasion; but most people really give themselves an excuse more than they're convinced of their own innocence.

**Sherry:** Right.

**Marie:** So, then what happened to him next is according to Crime Library. He was moved to a prison in Florida, and he would be in and out of this prison over the years - and it was one that he didn't want to be in. And we'll see in a minute what his strategy was when he didn't want to be in a certain prison.

But at this point he's incarcerated in a prison in Washington.

**Sherry:**  Oh, today. He is. Yes, today.

**Marie:** And so, this isn't really strange. A lot of people who commit murder will end up being held in prisons in different states. And this is for a lot of reasons. It's got to do with space. It's got to do with how violent they are in prison. It's not really unusual for a prisoner to be moved around quite a bit. So for a minute, let's talk about what he did when he didn't want to be in a certain prison.

**Sherry:** Okay.

**Marie:** And this was a prison in New Mexico - and by this point he's 31 years old, so he's been in prison for a long time. So, of course this is 1997.

He and one of his prison buddies, Peter Rosa, stabbed a wheelchair-bound inmate, Tim Lucero - they stabbed him 230 times.

**Sherry:** OMG. Did it kill him?

**Marie:** Well, yes, it did kill him.

**Sherry:** That was stupid.

**Marie:** It was stupid! And my first question is - why would you stab someone who's wheelchair-bound? That - the motivation was mystifying to me.

**Sherry:** Well, I think you'll find that Tim Lucero was a rat.

**Marie:** A prison rat? Which means he would, he would tell on the prisoners when they were being bad?

**Sherry:** I think he actually narced on them because they were making an escape plan - and they had fashioned some shanks. And he told on them to get some benefit. He was actually kind of a horrible person. He had been sentenced to 24 years for the enticement, kidnapping, and criminal sexual penetration of a child.

**Marie:** Okay. So probably the other inmates did not look down on him for stabbing this inmate - which may have been a factor in choosing who to murder.

**Sherry:** Right, right.

**Marie:** Um so, they actually had a third accomplice who was Philip Jason Rhodes. He acted as the lookout and Johnny, according to his friends, thought that this murder would prevent his upcoming move to a prison in Estancia.

**Sherry:**  Oh! That's a, that's a private prison in New Mexico, isn't it?

**Marie:**  It is. So, it may have been that they were killing him because he was a rat. It may have been they were killing him because child molesters are looked down upon - even in prison and, knowing Johnny, it's also entirely possible that they just looked for a good victim that would keep him from being moved. Because if you've committed another murder, they're not going to really transfer you around. You're a violent prisoner. They're going to hold on to you. You might have to go into solitary, but you're not going to get moved.

**Sherry:** Wow!

**Marie:**  So, he of course received an additional life sentence for this murder. But all of this moving around brings us to the second mystery. Which is when they thought that he had disappeared.

**Sherry:** Ah. This is a good mystery.

**Marie:**  Okay. So do you want to talk about the Albuquerque Journal's article that started this, kind of, rumor and intrigue?

**Sherry:**  Sure! According to the Albuquerque Journal - which we've quoted a lot in this case - a man named Roman Garcia (who was one of the original investigators of Johnny's murder case) came across a document that he thought Johnny might like to have. When he couldn't find him with the New Mexico Inmate Locator, he contacted the prison and an employee informed him she could find no record of Johnny anywhere. Mr. Garcia pressed her; reminding her of news articles claiming that Johnny had committed, and been convicted of, an additional murder while incarcerated - and of a few other court cases that Johnny had filed while he'd been in prison that received media attention. The Department of Justice employee sharply replied, “Oh, really? He was never here.”

**Marie:**  Humph. That's professional. (laughter)

**Sherry:** This uncovered an odd practice. If an inmate was transferred to an out-of-state prison, as Johnny had been, they no longer appeared on the Department's website. They claimed that this was to protect the inmates - from what, I have no idea!

**Marie:** My personal theory on that is that they probably - this was like the 1990s - they probably didn't want all of these people they weren't currently supervising cluttering up the limited memory on their, you know, Windows 98 computer. (laughter)

**Sherry:** That's very possible. But anyway, a notorious conspiracy theorist, named Miles Mathis, got hold of this information and went wild! He added it to his list of purported conspiracies. He's very well known for claiming conspiracies everywhere he looks. So, he claimed the murders had never happened. He believes the government created this murder to encourage people to support gun control - to get guns out of the home. Just like he theorized that the Boston Marathon bombing; the movie house mass shooting in an Aurora, Colorado theater; and a couple of other public fatalities had never happened. His evidence - most incidents faked by the government (and this has definitely happened in the past) will be created by government employees - usually the CIA - who have a sense of humor birthdays are often derived from George Orwell’s famous book, 1984. Well, Johnny's dad was born in 1948 - which is 1984 transposed - and he died in 1984. This was Miles’ proof that it was all a spoof.

**Marie:** It's a little thin.

**Sherry:** That's real thin! Additionally, the faked obituaries often claim the deceased had a government or military career because these are easier for the government to fake. Johnny's dad was a machinist for the local railroad, but had been reported to earlier been a sergeant in the Air Force. These were his two major proofs for this case. But, additionally, he claims that no sane person thinks they are about to die -and remember, Nancy said, “Get him before I die.”

She was still alive and talking when the help arrived, so there was no way she thought she was going to die.

**Marie:**  Well. This man is a little naive and probably hasn't read enough murder cases. Because we know - and I think most people who work in criminal law would know - that there is, in fact, an Evidence Exception for people who are about to die - because they won't be able to testify at trial. And if you say something with the belief that you're about to die, that can come in; because so many people do that that there's an Evidence Exception for it!

**Sherry:** Well, maybe Miles needs to get a little more education. But this was his theory.

**Marie:**  Yeah, I mean I can see where he goes, “Oh well, who really thinks they're going to die?” It turns out a lot of people are aware that, if they've been shot, there's a good chance they're about to die.

**Sherry:** Right, right. Anyway, he posits that the government was very clever to create a double parricide with a weird kid, a trial replete with court documents, and newspaper articles that are all local newspaper articles -from what we can find - and a difficult-to-believe story. And an additional murder of a convict while incarcerated; but they forgot to forge the paper trail for the prison stay. John did not show up in the prison roster for New Mexico; nor did he appear in the inmate locator for the Washington State roster. Well, I checked yesterday and now he does show up in the New Mexico inmate locator, but he's done an online essay that someone helped him get published that claims he is currently incarcerated in Washington State. So, it's still a little bit odd.

**Marie:** So, there do seem to be some inconsistencies and information gaps, and the family details are a little bit um scanty. Like there's not a whole lot for such an interesting (seems like a bad word for it but) an interesting case.

**Sherry:**  Egregious – yeah.

**Marie:** Yeah. So….

**Sherry:** But, to be honest, I’ve been drawn back to this case - and wondered about it a few times – because, in researching the case, there is very scant information on the family and scant information even on Johnny compared to other murders that I’ve researched. So, it's a little bit odd that way and at first I couldn't even find news articles on him. So, it could be that the family as a whole is media shy, it could be that they don't exist, it could be something else, but I think Miles found an unusual case and decided to go all Conspiracy Theory on it.

**Marie:** It makes sense and the thing is we do know that the government doesn't always tell the truth. And it's like that book we read, Operation Mincemeat.

**Sherry:** Oh! Yeah! Isn’t that Ben McIntyre?

**Marie:**  Yes. So I mean, it's not an American government lie - but if you guys haven't read the book I really recommend! It’s really good. But it was…Operation Mincemeat was a kind of counterintelligence that was part of a larger military operation which was Operation Barclay. Operation Barclay was the deception plan to support the invasion of Sicily. The idea was to convince the Germans that the allies might be about to attack Corsica…

**Sherry:** Sardinia?

**Marie:** Yeah, or Greece, rather than Sicily. It was just, you know, a little bit of misdirection. So they, in that case they built a man - like a citizen with relationships, with (you know) a career, and then they went out and they found a cadaver. They assigned that cadaver this identity: they dressed him up, tried to make it look like he was a drowned officer of the Royal Marines, and they planted some papers that looked super important on him that would kind of perpetuate this misconception. Then they took this cadaver to Spain by submarine and released it.

**Sherry:** Ohh, so Spain was in on it. I knew that America was in on it and I knew that the Brits, of course, put it together. I’d forgotten that Spain was also in on it.

**Marie:** Yeah. So I mean, it's not that “out there” for the government to come up with some counter intelligence that's misdirection to try and influence other governments. Right now, I feel like there's a lot of information about the ways that the American government has not been totally honest with its citizens.

**Sherry:** There seems to be a lot of deceptive practices. But anyway, what happened when it was released in Spain?

**Marie:** Oh, the story? Okay, well when Operations Mincemeat is released in Spain, Spain shares the documents on the body with Germany, and then - you know – voila! We win the Battle of the Bulge! It's easier, we save lives, we shorten the reign of Mussolini - in that case, lying worked out great for the British government.

**Sherry:** Right.

**Marie:** This was actually also approved, of course, by the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill. But also by Eisenhower. He wasn't the President at the time; he was an American General. But Americans knew about this, we were cool with it. And government deception and espionage has been used as a means to an end for a very long time. But I think people are more familiar and comfortable with it being used to deceive other governments.

**Sherry:** Well and with, yeah, with purpose at least.

**Marie:** Yeah. I mean the idea that the government would do that to try and perpetuate gun control; I think is a little more controversial. So - I don't know - I’m not sure if I’m convinced.

**Sherry:** Well if we were investigative reporters, we would have a field day with this; trying to contact family, friends, the school principal to find out what really happened. I know that his family is either particularly shy or…something's odd. Because usually I can do enough research to find collateral contacts, family members, and kind of see how everyone is doing; and that's been very very difficult with this case. It doesn't mean they're fake - it might mean they're quiet - it might mean something else completely - we don't know. But we do have a few photos of Johnny at court, a mug shot, and a photo that accompanied an essay that he is said to have written while in Washington - and you can find his essay and the photos on our website at parricide.org.

**Marie:** But we aren’t investigative reporters, and maybe someone wants to do a podcast documentary series on this.

**Sherry:** I hope they do it someday, I think that would be so cool!

**Marie:** Oh, I would definitely listen. But I think - in my experience - government inefficiency and rude employees is much more likely than a full-scale kind of, scheme against the NRA - but I don't know. I think that I can see where he would be like, “this is fishy.”

**Sherry:** Well it does seem fishy, but one thing that I noticed in this is it was the original investigator who was trying to contact John. I would think that an original investigator of their murders - would actually know if John Hovey existed or not.

**Marie:** And he wasn't a government employee; he was private, right?

**Sherry:** Right. So I thought - that was that's where I kind of, they lost me. I was like “no, he investigated the case initially - he would have noticed if there was no family or no son.”

**Marie:** Yeah. I mean it's interesting. But anyway…

**Sherry:** …that's the third mystery.

**Marie:**  That's the third mystery! I love the mysteries, but I don't know - I would love to hear what our listeners think! So if you want to - write to us talk to us on Instagram or Facebook - but this is kind of the first time I’ve seen someone point out inconsistencies and kind of some odd missing gaps in a parricide case and cried conspiracy.

**Sherry:**  Oh, wait! There's the Adam Lanza case; that's the second time, though, right?

**Marie:**  That's true! I never think of that as parricide, even though he started out by killing his mother.

**Sherry:** Right. But we'll save that for another time.

**Marie:** Yeah. That is a big case.

**Sherry:**  Right.

**Marie:** So, like I said, I would love to hear what you guys think - if you could join us on Instagram at parricidepodcast; Facebook - also Parricide Podcast; or write to us at parricidpodcast@parricide.org. And if you like our podcast, hit follow right there on your screen, subscribe, share it with your friends -just keep up with us!

**Sherry:** Yeah! And we'd like to thank Jade Brown for our theme music; and the Albuquerque Journal, the Carlsbad Courant, and the Santa Fe New Mexican for a variety of information and the photos that we used for this show. You can see our photos at parricide.org. Just click on Parricide Podcast Photos once you get into the website.

**Marie:** Bye for now!

**Sherry:** Bye!

(musical theme song) ashes, ashes we all fall down (music ends)