

UNDISCLOSED, the State v. Gary Mitchum Reeves
Episode 3 - In Memory and Shadow
July 24, 2017

[0:22] Susan Simpson When Gary woke up in a Floyd County jail cell on the morning of August 13, 1974, he was told that he had shot and killed his common law wife the night before. He had no memory of what had happened or how he had gotten into that jail cell, and no idea why he would've done a thing like shoot Grace.

It wasn't until six days later, at the preliminary hearing before the Floyd County Superior Court, that he found out the circumstances of her death. Grace's 15 year old daughter, Beverly, testified that she'd been in her bed, in her back porch off the kitchen that had been converted into a bedroom for her. And she'd been listening to records when she heard a gunshot and leapt out of bed, went to the doorway at the kitchen, and she watched in silence as her stepfather, Gary, shot Grace several more times before he'd turned and walked out of the kitchen, flipping off the lights on his way out.

Gary has always known that Beverly's story can't be true, he had that much to hold onto even after his conviction. He couldn't remember killing Grace and he couldn't remember *not* killing Grace, so he couldn't say for sure if he was guilty or not. But casually gunning her down in the kitchen, either for no reason at all, or maybe because he'd asked her to make some dinner and she'd said she was tired? That was too absurd. Too impossible. Whatever happened that night, it wasn't that.

Years later, while in prison for Grace's murder, his memories of that night did start to return. He started to recall what had really happened -- who had really shot her.

So between Gary and Beverly, we have two accounts of Grace's murder, and you'd think that'd make it easy, or - easier, to puzzle out what had really happened in the house that night. Because even if one of them is lying to cover up a crime, that would still leave us with the other one to tell us what really happened, right? At least *one of them* ought to be able to tell us or ought to be able to explain how she was killed, in a straightforward, consistent way.

That's not how things worked out. Yes, Gary and Beverly can both tell us who it is they remember killing Grace that night, but I'm not sure either of them gets us closer to understanding who's responsible for Grace's murder.

[2:44] Susan Simpson We don't know what Beverly's first story was, what it was she'd said that night after her mom was killed and she was talking to the cops, but looking over all the things she said over the years, we can piece together kind of a general outline.

We know that after the murder, after Grace had been shot and left lying on the floor of that kitchen, Beverly had left her bedroom and ran through the kitchen to the living room, where she found her 17 year old sister, Charlotte. At the trial, Beverly never said which of the two of them it was that actually called the police that night, but she testified that she stayed in the house after the murder until the police arrived. And Charlotte said the same thing -- that Beverly had come into the living room after Gary left, and that she'd told her sister to go call the police, so Beverly had gone to the bedroom and called the police from the phone there.

And maybe that's what happened, but that does seem to be the last time that either Charlotte or Beverly had told this version of events. Because Charlotte and Beverly both agree now that Beverly left the house that night. After the murder, she just took off running, out the front door and down the street. And Beverly says now that she ran to call the police. She was scared the shooter would return and shoot her too. She wanted out of there, so she ran next door and knocked on the door till the lady came and answered the door, and went inside and called 911, or tried to.

[4:01] Beverly Reynolds

All I remember is going over there and beating on that door and that old lady coming to the door, and I told her that my mama got shot. I remember I didn't know the police number and I dialed the operator.

[4:13] Susan Simpson We don't have the police file in Gary's case, so we don't know much about what happened when the police arrived there on Maple Street that night. They were there within a couple minutes, and according to the cops, both the girls, both Beverly and Charlotte, were out in the front yard waiting for them when they arrived.

Carol Gresham and her husband owned the house where Grace and Gary were living, and Carol lives in that same house today with her son and his family. I'd wanted to see the inside of it, to get a better feel for the layout and what the witnesses were describing, just to see how everything was set up. So one day Gary and I stopped by, and while there, Carol mentioned that she'd actually been at the house the night of the murder, well, after the murder -- not too long after. She couldn't recall too much now, but what still stands out in her mind, even today, is what she'd seen as she pulled up that night: an image of two girls sitting calmly together on a porch swing.

[5:09] Susan Simpson

But you knew that Grace had been killed when you arrived?

Carol Gresham

There'd been a shootin' in this house. I don't know if it was the police called or who, but the police was asking questions and things, but see I didn't know nothing cause I wasn't here.

Susan Simpson

But when you, when you got up-- you drove up and you saw the girls on the porch?

Carol Gresham

Yeah, that was weird. They're sitting out there swinging. They had blond hair...

Gary Reeves

They did have blond hair, yes.

Carol Gresham

Oh. I mean they didn't, they wouldn't... I didn't know... You wouldn't have known nothing happened I guess. They were just sitting there swinging.

Gary Reeves

That's contrary to what she said

Carol Gresham

But now that might have been after, after...

Susan Simpson

That actually matches what Beverly told me.

[5:51] Susan Simpson Beverly and Charlotte remained at the crime scene for a while with the cops, but later, in the early morning hours after their mom had been taken away, both of them were taken to the police station to give statements. When I talked to Beverly, she told me that she'd been confused and frustrated by what Charlotte was saying that night and what she was telling her, because at first police were questioning them together, but they started to argue. Beverly told me that Charlotte had told her that what she was saying wasn't true, that what she was saying wasn't how it'd happened. And Beverly was upset by this. "How can Charlotte tell me that's not what I saw? Because that's what I saw."

Beverly said that, as a result of the girls arguing, one of the police officers, Officer Kines, had instructed the other officers to take Charlotte and question her somewhere else, and he'd question Beverly by himself. But without that police file, we don't know what Beverly or Charlotte ultimately said, or what it was they were disagreeing about.

Which means that Beverly's testimony at the preliminary hearing, a week after the murder, is the first record we have of what Grace's daughters said happened on the night their mother was killed. But Beverly's testimony in that hearing, was roughly the same outline as what she said at trial, and what she sometimes says even after the trial was over. About how she'd been laying in her bed in that back porch bedroom when her mother and Gary walked into the kitchen, just a few feet away from her on the other side of the kitchen wall. Gary was saying something about how he wanted to go down to the Waffle House to get something to eat, and Grace said no, he shouldn't, he'd get a DUI. Grace just reached over to turn on the eye of the stove to light a cigarette, when Beverly heard her say, "I knew the day would come." Gary responded, "It is here," and then a shot rang out. Beverly sprung out of bed and ran to the door, and when she got there, Grace was still standing, but then Gary shot four more times and she fell. And Gary turned off the kitchen light and walked out. Neither Gary nor Grace had seen her during the shooting, Beverly said, and also she'd been the only one there, the only one to witness the shooting. Charlotte had been on the other side of the house and Beverly never saw her until after Gary had left.

This basic sequence would be what Charlotte and Beverly testified to at Gary's trial. Most of the details do get changed in Beverly's version-- moved around, altered a bit, but the outline still roughly matches up. Gary shot her mother. She saw it with her own eyes.

It wasn't until after the trial that Beverly changed her mind. Said she'd lied, that she'd never seen Gary kill her mother and that she didn't believe he'd done it. But if Beverly lied at Gary's trial... *why?* What reasons could she have had?

[10:16] Susan Simpson From the stories I've heard about Beverly, and later, from talking to Beverly herself, the picture I've built up in my head of what Beverly was like back then, at 15 years old, is almost a tragic take on Anne of Green Gables. She was chatty and friendly and guileless, and easy to underestimate. No, she doesn't have red hair, but she did lament to me about how she'd always been towheaded, in contrast to her mother's beautiful jet black hair. And she had a tendency to come up with these impossibly dramatic stories, impossible to believe, and leaving you uncertain if you were *supposed* to believe them, or if you were supposed to know that she was just telling a story.

But, unlike Anne of Green Gables, Beverly didn't start off an orphan. She became one at 15, and her attempts thereafter to find a home again took her to all the wrong places.

Gary didn't even meet any Grace's kids until after he'd been dating Grace for a while. Actually, Gary didn't even know Grace *had* kids until after he'd been dating her for a while. It wasn't until months later, after they'd opened up their first beer joint and were living together, that he learned that Grace had three daughters.

Decades later, in the mid-90's, Beverly would call him up sometimes to talk about the case, and one time they'd ended up getting off topic and started talking about other memories instead, about happier times. And Gary told Beverly about the first time he'd ever met her and her sisters.

[11:45] Gary Reeves

Y'all came down, Grace and I had the tavern. I didn't know Grace had kids. And one day Yvonne and them drove up, unloaded you and Charlotte and Debbie (laughs.)

Beverly Reynolds

Didn't you all have a trailer down there?

Gary Reeves

Yeah

Beverly Reynolds

I remember that.

Gary Reeves

And you just started talking like we had known each other all our lives. You did.

Beverly Reynolds

See I can't remember all that.

Gary Reeves

You started talking like we had known each other all of our lives.

Beverly Reynolds

I remember we stayed in a trailer down there and that you had an old Buick or something . Do you remember that?

Gary Reeves

I gave that to, uh, Fred Isabel. I won it in a... I won a car in a poker game.

Beverly Reynolds

I remember that car.

Gary Reeves

And I gave it -- it was a convertible.

Beverly Reynolds

Yeah, it was a nice car.

[12:45] Susan Simpson I asked Gary about what it had been like to suddenly learn that his girlfriend had three kids that she'd never mentioned before, and to have them dropped off on his door step out of the blue, and be told, oh by the way, they're going to be living with you now.

[12:58] Gary Reeves

And I thought, now man, I'm in a mess. But, we did the best we could do. Came in, and at that time, I don't remember how old they were -- um, she had one child by Doyle Wade, and that was Debbie. 'Course Debbie was just a little, she was a baby herself. Just a little thing. And she still didn't stay with us much. Uh, but Beverly and Charlotte ended up there. So now we've got Beverly and Charlotte there and we've got the beer joint there. And then they, of course, want to hang out in the beer joint during the daytime. I didn't really like that because I didn't -- remember where I come up at, I just didn't think it was a good thing to do.

[13:40] Susan Simpson But despite the surprise, Gary had been fond of Beverly.

[13:43] Gary Reeves

But of the two, Beverly had the best personality. You didn't mind being around her. I mean, she had a good personality, she'd laugh and carry on.

[13:55] Susan Simpson She was cheerful, and always willing to help out.

[13:58] Gary Reeves

I'm telling you, Beverly was a likable person; she was a likable kid. And you could enjoy being around Beverly. And she was -- I hate to say this, but I guess of them, she would've been my favorite. But yeah Beverly, Beverly did -- she would pitch in and help, and she'd clean the house and do stuff. You could have...she could be a lot of fun -- God I wish things had...

[14:31] Susan Simpson Gary had been less fond of Grace's eldest daughter, Charlotte. They just hadn't gotten along as well. And from Beverly's descriptions of Charlotte, you can kinda see why a little.

[14:40] Gary Reeves

You were always getting in trouble because of something --

Beverly Reynolds

I remember when we were living in East Point and Charlotte wouldn't do the dishes. I would have to do the dishes. Charlotte would go down to the park and meet boys and I would end up cleaning the kitchen. [Inaudible] and instead of Charlotte getting a whipping, I would get a whipping and I never understood that.

Gary Reeves

(laughing) Do you remember when y'all got caught for shoplifting?

Beverly Reynolds

Yes

Gary Reeves

And I had to come get you both out of jail.

Beverly Reynolds

You know I was innocent?

Gary Reeves

Uh, yeah I knew that.

Beverly Reynolds

Her and Greg was guilty.

Gary Reeves

I had to come get you both out of jail.

Beverly Reynolds

I didn't do that, Gary. I didn't do that.

[15:11] Susan Simpson So the children were probably the primary source of conflict between Grace and Gary, especially with her letting the girls hang out at the beer joint with them during the day. That's part of why, after Grace and Gary had their son, and after Grace had left Gary in Atlanta to go back to Rome, Gary had obtained full custody.

[15:28] Gary Reeves

The only way you can keep him is to adopt him and get her to waive her right as a parent so she can only see him if I let her see him. And she didn't have a problem with that, at the time.

[15:42] And since Gary had adopted his son, he was able to make sure that he was taken care of consistently. But as for Grace's girls... well, at the times that they were all living together, that was a topic that Grace and Gary had disagreed over. Much as had been the case for Gary, Grace's girls never had much of a chance to have a childhood.

[16:02] Gary Reeves

I really thought Beverly might be able to pull through it and make it, but then she gets hooked up with this...

Susan Simpson

Minshew?

Gary Reeves

Ah, god. I mean....it was awful. So most our battles was about that.

[16:24] Susan Simpson Beverly did have aunts and uncles, and after her mother's death she stayed with them from time to time. They tried to care for her, but she hadn't always been easy to deal with. And Gary had been the closest thing to a father that Beverly ever had, and his imprisonment had felt like an abandonment of her. She once tried to explain to Gary the rage she'd felt towards him as a teenager, when she'd suddenly been left parentless, with her mother dead and her father locked up for killing her mother.

[16:52] Beverly Reynolds

Do you know how I hated you? Do you know what you took away from me? You were the only man in my life that ever was a daddy to me. Doyle Wade was never was a daddy to me, and I don't even remember who was before him. I was 8 years old when she got with you.

Gary Reeves:

I was...

Beverly Reynolds

I was 15 when she died. And you were the only man that ever took care of us when we was with mama. You were the only one that cared if we had a home when we was with mama.

[17:32] Susan Simpson If Beverly lied at Gary's trial, then whatever it was that motivated her to do so, I don't think it could've been because of any personal vendetta she had against Gary. Gary was one of the few stable adult's in her life, and the way she described it, living in that house on Maple Street may have been just about one of the happiest times in her whole life. For a few months, when they were all living there, they'd been a family with a beautiful house that was full of beautiful new

furniture, and shining hardwood floors in the living room, and lovely golden carpet in the bedrooms. Gary had even ordered a canopy bed for her, though it was really only a four poster bed when Beverly had it -- they'd had to order the canopy part separately. But Beverly never got the canopy. Her mother had been murdered before it arrived, and she never went back into the house.

[18:19] Beverly Reynolds

I started drinking. I started smoking pot. I started doing drugs. And you know why? Cause I didn't have nothing to live for. It's not because I killed my mama that I smoked pot and done drugs and drank.

Gary Reeves

Yeah

Beverly Reynolds

It's because I didn't have nobody. Because my life has been fucked up all my life. And I don't think it's fair. And I don't think it's fair that your life has been either.

[18:54] Susan Simpson Two months after his conviction, Gary was still in Floyd County jail awaiting the Georgia Department of Corrections picking him up and taking him into their system. That's when Beverly recanted for the first time.

[19:05] Gary Reeves

So one day Beverly comes to my parents house; she was crying. She says, "I lied at the trial." So they called my sister, sister comes over -- well they didn't know what to do, uh, so they contact where I was at the jail, they contact the sheriff whose name was Lynn Garner. Lynn Garner was a good man. He really tried to help. He was elected and he was really after Scoggins because he knew Scoggins was involved in two murders himself. Plus, he was on the tape. So he was Wyatt Earp come to town, gonna clean up this corrupt county.

[19:45] Susan Simpson Gary's parents had taken Beverly to the Sheriff's Department because they hadn't known where else to go. Gary's appellate attorney was the same attorney who'd represented him at trial, Bill Buffington, and he was just a few months shy of drinking himself to death. There was no point in going to him. So they went to the jail, because that's where Gary was and that's what they knew. And in doing so, they walked straight into the middle of a Floyd County political battle.

[20:09] Bob Finnell

Uh, Lynn Garner was the first Republican ever elected here.

Susan Simpson

Oh... (laughs) So that's why he was so popular.

Bob Finnell

(Laughs) Okay, I mean *the* first republican, and let me tell you this. You know, the Democrats were just up in arms about it. That just... that flew all over them and the Scoggins people. And he was the anti-candidate, okay. He ran against the system. He was very open and hostile about it. And Lynn had an attitude (laughs). If he was your friend he was your friend, but boy if he was your enemy, you better watch out.

Susan Simpson

Yeah, so I guess the fact that Beverly talked to *him*, and gave him the first statement changing her story... that meant from then on, the Democrat side was going to be opposed to him.

Bob Finnell

That's right.

[21:05] Susan Simpson That was Bob Finnell. Back in 1977, when he'd only been out of law school for a couple years, he'd represented Gary in one of his post-conviction proceedings. He'd known Lynn Garner, and thought well of him, but not everyone in Floyd County had nice things to say about the sheriff.

[21:22] Susan Simpson

Some of them put it in much more harsher terms-- calling him like, stubborn and irrational.

Bob Finnell

He could be that way. Listen, Lynn could be that way. But once he thought he was right about something, watch out. Lynn had a strong sense of right and wrong, and just and unjust. And once he had found his justice, he wasn't going to let go.

[21:44] Susan Simpson And after speaking to Charlotte and Beverly, Sheriff Garner became convinced of Gary's innocence.

Beverly came down to the jail and spoke to Garner for that first time in April of '75, and that same night she went over to speak to Gary at the jail, and then to Gary's sister and his parents. Bea Purdy, Gary's sister, wrote an affidavit recounting everything Beverly had said to them in the jail that day.

And then one night, 20 years later, Beverly called Gary to talk, and he read the affidavit to her, hoping she'd explain why she'd said the things she'd said.

[22:17] Gary Reeves

Well, let me just read to you what happened at the Floyd County Jail on April 8th, 1975 at approximately 3pm.

Beverly Reynolds made the following statement in my presence. The location of when the statement was made was at the Floyd County Jail. She had met with Sheriff Lynn Garner to make a statement. After meeting with him, Beverly Reynolds then met with Gary Reeves. This is a list of the people that were there: Mrs. Marie Reeves, Mr. Herschle Reeves, Mrs. Ellen Purdy, and this is a statement which she made in our presence within 15 minutes after meeting with Sheriff Lynn Garner. Beverly Reynolds said "Gary, you did not shoot Momma. You were at the sink with your back to Momma, you had a glass of ice fixin' to pour a drink. A shot was fired. Momma was trying to defend you and was shot in the hand. You turned around when you heard the shot, reached in your holster for your gun, tried to aim it, but was shaking so, you looked at Momma, put your gun back in the holster, threw up your hands, picked up Sean, and left the house."

Beverly also said there were others in the house, but the one who was to be killed was Gary. She said her mama got in the way. She also said Momma had on pink pajamas, which had been changed to a blue robe, which was Charlotte Reynolds'. She said the undertaker told them her mama's clothes had been changed because the blood had been smeared on her body. In her statement, she said there was footprints, big ones, which had tracked in Momma's blood.

Beverly (barely audible)

Charlotte said that.

She said Bo Salmon had been hit on the head and knocked unconscious. This is on record at the city police department. She said Bo Salmon was picked up, he had been hit three times on the head. She also...

Beverly Reynolds

Who said that?

Gary Reeves

This is the statement you made then.

Beverly Reynolds

I made...

Gary Reeves

Bo Salmon... She also said that her mother's grave was visited on Easter Sunday, and someone had tried to dig it up. She asked Gary as soon as possible as she entered the room when we met at the Floyd County Jail to forgive her, and she was sorry she told the lie on the witness stand against him.

Beverly Reynolds

I did come see you... in a pink maxi dress.

Gary Reeves

And you did ask me to forgive you.

He said she was forgiven. She said Gary you're the only father I ever had, she said the reason she lied because she was mad at him, she said Richard Holcomb had the gun that killed her mother and Doyle Wade's name was used freely in my presence.

That was hidden in the archives of some stuff we had come across a few days ago. But I remember you coming to the jail. And I remember you asking me to forgive you.

Beverly Reynolds

Do you remember me coming to the jail in the pink maxi?

Gary Reeves

Yeah. And you asked me to forgive you and I said I did and you said...

Beverly Reynolds

It was a little itty bitty one...

Gary Reeves

Yeah, and you said I was the only father that you ever had. And that's what I tried to be to you...

Beverly Reynolds

And I lost you and her both.

Gary Reeves

Yeah.

[25:36] Susan Simpson There is *so much* going on in this statement. Grace had been protecting Gary when she died? *Gary* had been the one to be killed? Richard Holcomb had the gun? Doyle Wade's name was being used all over the place?

Unfortunately, Beverly wasn't willing or wasn't able to elaborate on any of it. When Gary asked about it, during this phone call in the '90s, she remembered the event happening, she remembered going to the jail and seeing Gary and wearing that pink maxi dress, but the rest of it she seems ambivalent towards, neither confirming nor denying. She does object at one point, saying that the part about the footprints in the hall or on the carpet, that's what *Charlotte* said, not her, she tried to correct Gary on that point. But according to the affidavit from Gary's sister, that's what Beverly had said, at least on that day. And Gary's sister didn't talk to Charlotte.

At some point, after Beverly had made this statement in the jail, Sheriff Garner decided to get a taped statement from Beverly. This time, though, she walked her story back a little, saying only that she'd never seen Gary fire his gun that night.

[26:39] Beverly Reynolds

When I heard that first shot, the record player was cuttin' off itself, I jumped up, I run over to the door. I glanced at Momma, I glanced back at Gary. His hand was straight but the gun, the shots kept firing. I don't know if they were firing from Gary's gun, but I never did see nobody else.

Sheriff Garner

You never did see any fire come out of his gun?

Beverly Reynolds

No sir.

Sheriff Garner

You never did see...

Beverly Reynolds

His hand was still. His hand and the gun were straight and they stayed that way.

[29:50] Susan Simpson Beverly kept making statements, and kept contradicting her earlier statements, and finally she was brought in so that attorneys could question her. The prosecutor at Gary's trial, Englehart, and Gary's new defense attorney, Jere White, were both there. And Beverly did tell them kind of the same thing about never seeing Gary fire his gun, about his gun always being still

and there never being any recoil or muzzle flash or movement from the gun. But she didn't stop there. Suddenly, all kinds of new details appeared in Beverly's story.

For instance, Beverly now claimed that, although 6 shots had been fired in all that night, the first shot had happened quite a long time before the last 5 shots were fired.

[30:29] Attorney (Englehart)

And you now say it was how long between the first shot and the other five?

Beverly Reynolds

About 10 minutes before I got to the door.

Attorney (White)

You mean it was that long honey?

Beverly Reynolds

Yeah.

Attorney (White)

Now you, 10 minutes is -- I'm not trying to--

Beverly Reynolds

It's a long time!

Attorney (White)

I mean, I'm not trying to back you up, but I mean, from the time that you heard the first shot until the other five, it was ten minutes that elapsed?

Beverly Reynolds

I laid on that bed from five to ten minutes before I got up to the door.

Attorney (White)

Why, why did you wait so long?

Beverly Reynolds

I don't know. I was scared.

Attorney (White)

And then when you got to the door, that's when Gary was standin' there with his pistol and you, and the other five shots were fired?

Beverly Reynolds

Yessir.

Attorney (White)

And, they just right behind each other?

Beverly Reynolds

Those were just right behind each other.

Attorney (White)

In just a few seconds.

Beverly Reynolds

Yes.

[31:19] **Susan Simpson** And, Beverly told the attorneys that after talking things over with Charlotte, she'd started to realize that she'd made a mistake.

[31:26] Attorney (White)

Why did you come in at a later date and say that this didn't happen just exactly like you told it in court. I mean, there's some reason there.

Beverly Reynolds

Because I don't feel Gary done it after I sit & talk with my sister, 'cause she could swear up & down that Doyle Wade'd done it.

Attorney (White)

Uh huh. Well now how does Charlotte, how did she see Doyle?

Beverly Reynolds

She said he was hid in the bedroom and run out.

Attorney (White)

She said that he was hid in the bedroom and ran out after...?

Beverly Reynolds

And ran out before momma was killed.

Attorney (White)

Ran out what?

Beverly Reynolds

Before Momma was killed, he ran out of the bedroom in through the dining room.

Attorney (White)

What was he doing in her bedroom?

Beverly Reynolds

I don't know. It was just a mixed up situation really.

[32:24] Susan Simpson According to Beverly, Charlotte told her that Doyle Wade had been hiding in their mother's bedroom, that he'd run out before she'd been murdered. Beverly doesn't know why -- according to her "it was just a mixed up situation, really." And I can't tell what Beverly was trying to say here, and I don't think the attorneys interviewing her could quite figure it out either, though they were clearly trying to puzzle out what kind of meaning was behind the details she'd given them.

[32:47] Attorney (White)

Alright, now why would Doyle Wade do it?

Beverly Reynolds

Because he had been trying to get back at her for living with Gary when they first separated.

Attorney (White)

Had they had problems?

Beverly Reynolds

He had asked her at the place to go back to him. And she said no. And he said well I'll get back at you, and she said Doyle you're crazy.

[33:08] Susan Simpson Beverly never says that she saw Doyle Wade in the house that night -- she is very clear in saying it was *Charlotte* who saw Doyle Wade -- but then Beverly adds, there was *something* she'd seen that night, in the house, that she'd failed to mention when she testified at trial. Gary and Grace weren't the only figures she'd seen in the kitchen that night.

[33:26] Attorney (White)

Now, how do you know he was there?

Beverly Reynolds

Well like I told you, Charlotte said he was, and when it was all happening in the kitchen, well from the point I was standing, I couldn't have seen him from where she said he was. But from Gary to Momma, there was a shadow.

Attorney (White)

There was another shadow from Gary to your mother.

[33:51] Susan Simpson A shadow. Beverly says there was also a shadow in the kitchen with Grace and Gary when her mother was shot. But at this point, it seems like the attorneys had just lost patience, and they did not press Beverly to explain what she'd meant by this, by what she was describing when she says she saw a shadow in the kitchen.

[34:08] Attorney (White)

But lay the cards on the table, but for god's sake don't, don't play with us, because this is a serious matter. You have a man that is at Reidsville now, serving a life sentence.

Beverly Reynolds

Could be innocent.

Attorney (White)

What?

Beverly Reynolds

He could be innocent. That's what you're trying to say.

Attorney (White)

Well, that's what I'm saying. He could be. I don't know, I was not there. Mr. Englehart was not there. The judge, the jurors were not there. They depended upon you and Charlotte to tell them the truth.

[34:38] Susan Simpson Talking to Beverly alone was not getting them much of anywhere, so the attorneys brought in Beverly and Charlotte together, to question them about why their stories weren't matching up, and why Beverly's story kept changing. Charlotte denied that she'd seen Doyle Wade at the house that night, or that she'd told Beverly that she had seen Doyle Wade. And, finally, in

the closing seconds of the interview, the attorneys get Beverly to change her story about Doyle Wade, and about how, well, he hadn't been seen at the house that night before her mother was shot.

[35:06] Englehart

Now Beverly, you just said she told you she saw him, do you change that now?

click of tape recorder

white noise of tape recorder, 3 seconds

click of tape recorder

Beverly Reynolds

Yeah, 'cause she says she didn't.

click of tape recorder

[35:23] Susan Simpson And yeah, the tape stopping and starting again, that's how the original cassette is. Makes you wonder what it was Beverly said the first time that caused them to go back and make her to answer it again.

[35:40] Susan Simpson But Beverly's original recantation to Sheriff Garner marked a big change for Gary, too. The very next day, he was shipped out of Floyd County and processed into the Georgia prison system.

[35:50] Gary Reeves

And, uh, the battle between Sheriff Garner and the court, man it was a *battle*. They got me the next day, they came and got me, sent me to Jackson. And I went through the diagnostics center at Jackson, and a guy asked me, "What'd you do outside?" and I said, "Well I ran a package store in Atlanta, and I was in the tavern business." He said, "We don't have any openings for bartenders, liquor store runners. We're going to send you to Reidsville."

[36:21] Susan Simpson Reidsville is Georgia's most notorious prison. Violent, dehumanizing, and overcrowded, and in 1978 it came under federal oversight, because too many people had been killed there, and the rest were warehoused in abysmal conditions.

[36:35] Gary Reeves

Reidsville was *hell*. It was hell on earth. First day I got there, I saw a man die.

[36:43] Susan Simpson When he got shipped off to Reidsville, he was in a bus with another man from Floyd County who gave him some advice on how to survive what lay ahead.

[36:50] Gary Reeves

This guy named Hugh Don Smith- and I'm going to show you that paper in a minute - he was one who told about Scoggin.

[36:56] Susan Simpson Hugh Don Smith had testified in the corruption and vice investigations back in 1970. He was the one that saved the receipts of the bribes he'd been paying to Judge Scoggin. Well, in 1972, he ended up getting charged in a convoluted robbery scheme, and Judge Scoggin had presided over it. Despite the fact that Hugh Don Smith was someone who had a very pressing personal conflict with him. Anyway, Hugh Don Smith got convicted, but he was back in Floyd County, trying to get a new trial, trying to argue that his that sentence should be overturned because Judge Scoggin should not have overseen a trial for him. And that's when he met Gary.

[37:32] Gary Reeves

And he told me, we were on the same bus. Going from Jackson back. He'd been at the county jail trying to get a new trial too. He said, don't buddy up with anybody. He may be a good old boy, but if he's got enemies, they're gonna become your enemies. So what you had to do is you had to keep to yourself but you couldn't act like you was better than somebody else, you know.

[38:00] Susan Simpson At Reidsville, 'keeping to yourself' could only refer to having a certain state of mind. Physically, it's just not possible.

[38:08] Gary Reeves

Reidsville was, um, bad. It was bad. Um, I ended up in a dormitory that was built for 50 men maybe, and there was over 100 in it. So we get into the dormitory, and they had this guy, Toobie, they called him Toobie [laughs] and another named Iron Head. He had been shot in the head with a .357 Magnum and had a plate, an iron plate in his head. They were the house men, they ran the dormitory, so, he called us over there, he had this whistle around his neck, and he said 'If you guys like to fight, you go ahead and call 'em now and get you another dormitory'. I said 'Brother, I don't want to fight nobody, I just want to do whatever I got to do to get through this thing.'

[38:55] Susan Simpson Gary had been sentenced to life at hard labor, and that's what Reidsville offered.

[38:59] Gary Reeves

So I ended up out on a detail, um digging stumps, out in the swamps. See they'd cut these trees down and you go out there and dig 'em up. Now I'd been in jail since back in August, and here I am, and I'd never done labor like this anyway. So now I'm now on a detail, and you line up in the mornings, you have a number, and they call your number. And you was a number, and you say 'check'. Then they put you between fences and they count you again. They you get on this bus with no seats, and you stand on this bus nose to nose. Hot weather. And you're taken out to the fields or wherever you're gonna work that day, and you worked. Then at lunchtime, they put you back on the bus, they carried you back to industrial mess hall, and they had this stew called hog head stew. And they had the whole hog's head in it, and it was bad. Yeah, it was terrible.

There was a houseman job coming up. I wanted that job because what was bad was the noise. The noise was so bad. And...what's. you got 100 - somethin' men, in a dormitory built for 50, and you got all this noise, and you got a TV on each end. Only the houseman could change the TV station, and it had to be voted to who to change that. But all that noise was just god awful. And that houseman job, once those details went out, man, quiet, yeah. And see where I was, I still got no memory of nothing. I've got my family back home, trying to get something done, trying to get another attorney, workin' on it and they would send me letters. And that mail call was, man, you'd live for that. Because then, they didn't have phones. You had to apply to a counselor to make a phone call, once a month, for 5 minutes.

[41:13] Susan Simpson This life of chain gangs and noise and hogs head stew, that should've been Gary's life for at least half a decade, minimum.

[41:19] Gary Reeves

In Reidsville I was supposed to be there 5 years before I was eligible for a transfer. I'd been there a year. I had the houseman job. I get a letter from my sister, and she says 'By faith! Apply for a transfer.' And I said, "I can't, I can't transfer out of here for five years.' 'But by faith do it.' Okay, act of faith, I'll try that. I apply for a transfer. Bing, denied. So one day they bring an old boy in, from Rome, GA. And his name was Jimmy Gravely. And he was a piano player. He played piano, gospel music, in churches and places. He'd gotten involved with a girl who was underage, I don't know if he knew she was underage or what, but anyway, he was in there, there he was. And this guy was scared to death. Now I...it was bad for me. But I'd, remember I'd run these beer joints, and I'm used to rough and tumble, and people shooting people, and fights, and cuts, and all that kinda stuff. I've lived in it all my life. This old boy played piano for a living. And here he is, he's scared to death. So I kind of just took him under my wing, and I said here's how you do this. When you walk to mess hall, you stay on the line, you stay against the wall, I don't care what you see. If you see a guy cuttin' a guy's throat, you put your head

against the wall and you walk on by. You don't see nothing. So, kind of protected him. So, anyway he got transferred, he was gone.

And he was at Carroll County. So, I didn't know this was happening, but for helping him, and he went to Carroll County, and he became the warden's secretary, at Carroll County. Now Carroll County was a old timey chain gang. You ever see 'Cool Hand Luke', the movie 'Cool Hand Luke'? Paul Newman, road gang, they worked on a road, all that stuff, that was Carroll County. And uh, so what was going on, Jimmy was sendin'...I put in for another transfer. By faith, do it again. Okay. So Jimmy was the warden's secretary, and he was sending a letter - and the only way to transfer before 5 years was up, if a warden requested you. And I didn't know any wardens. So, I didn't know one was requesting me either. And he didn't know it either! [laughs] [**Rabia Chaudry**: Ah, Jimmy!] Jimmy was requesting it, and so one day, the last time I put in for a transfer, man, I get a notice, you're shipping out of here tomorrow. I never did really unpack, to tell you the truth, I kept a bag fully packed. But, that night, cuz I'd seen this before - people could be jealous and if they knew you're about to leave they could cause some trouble for ya - and I stayed awake all night. I laid there all night long watching everything around me. And I got out of there. And I didn't look back.

[46:16] Susan Simpson So, Gary was off to Carroll County. It's not that Carroll County was perfect, but just about anywhere on earth was better than Reidsville.

[46:23] Gary Reeves

They put me on that Bluebird bus, got to Carroll County, came in through the back door. Well the kitchen was back there. When they brought me in, Jimmy had, unbeknownst to me, requested that I be transferred there to work in the kitchen. Well, the kitchen people lived downstairs in a little small area, there were 2, 4, there was 8 people in that little closet, with bunk beds. One of them was, what they call the dog boy. The reason the kitchen people lived down there was because they had to get up 3:30, 4:00 in the morning, to start preparing these lunches for the gangs to go out and take their lunch with them. So that was where they were going to put me. Well so this dog boy, ah, this sounds bad...

Rabia Chaudry

What's a dog boy?

Susan Simpson

Yeah, you have to explain what that was.

Gary Reeves

You don't know what that is

Susan Simpson

No

Gary Reeves

Oh OK, he's a prisoner, who, if someone escapes he goes with the guards, and he takes care of the dogs, and trains the dogs and finds, tracks 'em. So he is an unpopular person. The kitchen people lived down there because they had to get up early, they couldn't live with the population. And Jimmy lived down there because he was the secretary to the warden. But the dog boy had to live down there because they'd have killed him, upstairs. So, I didn't know nobody, except Jimmy. So they bring me through the back door, and um, the main cook, his name was Howard Miller. He looked out and he said, I don't like that SOB already, and I didn't even know the man! So I come through... I know, I'm gonna get there with this thing...we came through the back kitchen, and, and the door, and there's a little breezeway right here, well here's the dog boy with an ax handle. And I walk through, and he swings at me, and I duck. The guy tried to knock my head off when I come through. Reason was, he knew I was coming out of Reidsville, notorious prison. He's thinking that I would probably try to kill him because he was a dog boy, and he was just going to get me first.

[48:34] Susan Simpson That dog boy wasn't being paranoid, just realistic. An article I found in the Rome News Tribune from a year after Gary's conviction showed just how real the danger was. It said:

Rome News-Tribune - Mar 7, 1976 [Browse t](#)

Who killed 'dog boy'?

CAMILLA, Ga. (AP)—John D. "Whitey" Bailey was the "dog boy" during the 15 years he was in prison for the slaying of his wife. His job was to handle the bloodhounds which tracked those who tried to escape.

"If certain people ever get out of prison, I'm dead," he remarked to authorities.

He never mentioned names and Mitchell County officials wish now he had been more specific.

Bailey, 68, is dead, run down in his yard by some type of vehicle and then repeatedly run over with his own pickup truck.

But despite the dog boy's attempt to murder him within five seconds of getting to the prison, all in all, Carroll County was pretty great.

[49:24] Gary Reeves

There you had mustard, ketchup, salt and pepper on the table. Man, I hadn't seen that in while. It was a chain gang but compared to Reidsville it was like a resort.

[49:33] **Susan Simpson** And it was there, at Carroll County, that Gary's memories of the night Grace died first started to come back to him.

[49:43] Gary Reeves

I'm laying out there enjoying the world, the clouds. And my mind began to open up. I began to, 'wait a minute, I went here that day, I went to the Pontiac place that day. Now they accused me of, when we tried to get another trial, they accused me of, the lawyers were, the attorney was:

'well, his memory just miraculously recovered.' Well it wasn't that way. It did recover, slowly. But I began to remember different things.

[50:20] Susan Simpson Gary's last clear memory of the night of Grace's murder is leaving the beer joint to pick up his son. From there, he says he went back to the house, and when he got there, Richard Holcomb was there, and others were out on the front porch as well. So he put Sean down and Sean ran inside, and then he sat down on the porch, just to have a drink and shoot the breeze before bed. Nothing had really happened until, after a while, after talking to Richard for a bit on the porch, he was called inside by Charlotte. Here's how Gary told me the story the first time I met him.

[50:55] Gary Reeves

Basically what happened, uh, I can remember Charlotte coming to the door and telling me I had a phone call. And it was a woman - if that woman is still living, she'd be about the only one plus the two girls who are still living that was involved in this thing. Her husband was supposed to have been arrested for DUI, and she wanted to know if I could sign a bond. Well I don't have property to sign a bond, you've got to have property to sign a bond. And then from there it all went slow motion. I went to the kitchen. Bag of ice was in the kitchen sink and I went to the kitchen to make a drink. I heard a shot and it was so close, it, my ears rang. And then from there, it's slow motion. I turn, there was Beverly there with a pistol in her hand, and there was Richard Holcomb, saying 'No not now.' Well the first thing I thought of was, I knew the kid was in the house, cuz I had brought him, and I knew he was in that bedroom, so my first thinking was 'Get him out of here'. And so I grabbed him, I remember and I ran out the house. And there was a shared driveway with the house next door, and this guy worked the night shift, he was just coming home. And he saw me, I came out with the kid, and I can remember getting him in the car, I'm trying to start the car. Now what I'm telling you, I didn't remember that next day. This started coming back years later after the fact. But I can remember that. And I remember, I'm trying to cover the kid, crank the car and there's two guys came out, they didn't shoot at me because the guy next door, he would have seen them. But when he went in the house, here they come. And I'm thinking in my mind, if I don't shoot at them, they won't shoot at me and hit the child. And that, I mean, that's the way I was thinking. From there I got away, I got to my mom and dad's house which is a couple of, not far away at all..

[53:15] Susan Simpson When explaining his memory of the shooting, Gary often compares his memory to another event that had happened a few months before. He'd been working at the liquor store in Atlanta when he was robbed at gunpoint.

[53:25] Gary Reeves

So when this guy pulled a gun on me in Atlanta, in 1974, if he walked in this door right now, and he looked like he looked same as before, I would recognize him. It's like a photograph, that memory. I will never, ever forget that face, what he had on, nothing about him.

[53:48] Susan Simpson That event is clear and distinct in Gary's mind, even if no shots were actually fired. But his memory of Grace being shot and killed? That? That's different.

Gary thinks he remembers seeing Beverly and Richard Holcomb when the first shot went off. And he's never remembered more than first shot, that one shot only, so he's always assumed that someone else must have finished Grace off with four or five shots at a later time, after he'd gotten away. But he does think it was Beverly that fired that first shot.

[54:17] Gary Reeves

When I heard the shot, Beverly was standing right in here, right in this area. I'd been to the sink, or headed to the sink, and the shot went off. And that's when everything went crazy, and that's when I turned and saw Richard saying 'Not now', and grab the gun, and took off.[sigh]

[54:45] Susan Simpson But what's always seemed kind of interesting to me is that it's not Gary's memories of Beverly with that gun seem to convince him of Beverly's guilt. He could remember something like that, but it was all so slow and dreamlike. No, what really convinced him of Beverly's guilt, and what made him think that Beverly had killed Grace, was that she'd confessed and passed a polygraph. So of course she'd done it, right?

[55:12] Gary Reeves

And now I know what Beverly says, that she still thinks I did it. But I don't buy that. Beverly knows what happened in that house. I really do believe that. I would like to believe, and I'm hoping you have some new eyes on this thing, and different views with it, and you may see something that I've never seen or know something I don't know, and I hope - I would like to think she didn't -- but when she came forward and admitted she had lied, she was broken hearted about it. She was really sorry about it, at that time when it happened.

[56:02] Susan Simpson Actually, Gary thought that Grace might've been involved too, in the murder plot too. Or maybe she had been involved initially, but she'd changed her mind. Maybe that's why she'd been killed. Or that's why Beverly said Grace had been trying to protect Gary when she died.

I don't trust any of these memories. They sound like nonsense, and from the start they've always been the guiltiest-seeming thing about Gary. They're just these... hazy scraps of a dream that have somehow calcified over time, with some parts of the story becoming just a bit more solid every time

he tells it, while other parts, they may appear once or twice, and then evaporate again from later retellings.

And these memories have a dreamlike logic as well. Gary might say he recalls what happened, or has a memory of something that happened that night, but when you try to break it down, try to get him to pin down in words what these images or thoughts in his head actually look like, there's just nothing there. Like, for example, at one point, in one of the post-conviction proceedings, Gary is asked about the two men that he says chased him out into the driveway when he ran out the door with his son. Were they in the house when he arrived? Gary says yes, the two men had been hiding back in that back porch, along with Doyle Wade. But... how could he have known they were there? Did he see them? Gary said no, he hadn't. But they had to have been in the house, because they'd chased him out of the house. And they'd had to have been back on the back porch, because if they'd been anywhere else in the house, he'd have known they were there, but he hadn't known they were there so, ergo, those men had been hiding on the back porch when he got home. And also Doyle Wade was hiding back there too, because one of the girls had said Doyle Wade had been there too that night.

Well okay, sure, that kind of makes a certain kind of sense, but it also makes no sense at all.

So for a little while after I first met Gary, I kept peppering him with questions about memories, trying to figure out if there was something there worth relying on. And I pretty quickly gave up because -- I just wasn't in a place where Gary's memories were any help to me.

[58:14] Gary Reeves

Where I'm going with this is, on the night Grace was killed, and I think this is one thing, one reason they ain't been too worried about what I've been trying to do, because when I've told what I thought I could remember, I don't think any of it is that accurate. Like I told you...

Susan Simpson

No offense, I don't either.

Gary Reeves

You don't?

Susan Simpson

No. [laughs]

Gary Reeves

I don't think -- I think she was killed before I got there. I think, I don't know, I'd like to know!
But...

Susan Simpson

Do you have any memory of her there at all, that night? Do you remember anything you said to her, anything you talked to her about?

Gary Reeves

Last time I remember talking to her was at the joint. And what I remember her saying was...next day was election day, we was gonna have to close, she said, let's go ahead and close early, I feel like something bad's gonna happen. And I took off, and the best I remember, I went after Sean. And that was the last time I remember talking to her. At all.

Now, I can remember...here's the thing, is, there were so many nights that those women would park over there at the Kayo. And you're right, there's no way I coulda got one of those window lights out [laughs]... But you know I'm thinkin', okay, did that happen that night, was there...there was so many nights, or did that happen at another time...? I'm not sure. I do remember *saying* that.

[59:42] Susan Simpson It's also pretty clear that Gary is embarrassed about the way he's explained the shooting in the past. That he hates how it seems to others that his story has changed over time. And he really hates that he told one of these stories on national TV, when he was filmed for Inside Edition, when they took him to the house on Maple Street to reconstruct the shooting.

[1:00:00] Gary Reeves My sister and I are both are on here. On the TV thing. And, uh, we go to the cemetery. And we're looking at the grave. And you gotta walk around, and they, you know, what do you do, you walk around while they're filming you. But, we went to the house, now, and my mind- everything I've told you, I've told the truth. There has been some times when I've said, I thought it was this way, and I'm- in my mind I'm thinking I remember that, but then after I said it, I'm like, man, that ain't right. Truth is, after picking up Sean, I don't remember nothing. I basically remember that. The thing, sitting on the porch, if that happened that night, the phone call, I think it happened that night- I think I went to the sink, and I think a gun was shot, I ran to get Sean, I think that's what happened, but the way I tell it on here is not the way I really remember it. And I, I hated that I did that on National TV. They got me on there with Nicole Simpson.

[1:01:21] Susan Simpson For the most part, I've treated all of Gary's memories about what happened at the house that night as a distraction. As meaningless noise. Because when it comes to trying to reconstruct what actually went on that night, it just doesn't matter whether it was because Gary was lying, or whether he was constructing false memories based on the testimony he'd heard, or whether these were fragments of genuine repressed memories that he'd slowly recovered. Because

whatever they are, wherever they came from, it just felt like these memories were more likely to lead away from truth than towards it. And even if they're real, or some of them are real, there's no reliable way of sorting between the real ones and the false ones, so how do you know what to follow and what to disregard?

And beyond that, Gary's memories could be truly genuine memories, and still be completely useless. Because Gary might be recalling these events because they happened, but, not on that night.

[1:02:15] Susan Simpson

I've told you before I have no idea how much of your memory to trust. [Gary sighs audibly] And I've asked you, is it possible that- is it possible everything you recall is either, another night... like the stuff about the shooting the Kayo -- at one point I asked you, is it possible that you never even went home?

Gary Reeves

It's... it's possible.

[1:02:34] Susan Simpson And then there's another possibility, too. That his memory is real, more or less. And that he did exactly what he says he did that night. That he heard a gunshot, and then he turned and ran away.

[1:02:47] Gary Reeves

One thing that's bothered me -- and I'm, I'm, I'm hope- I'm thinkin' wonder-- I'm thinking, could

this be why it got blocked out -- Um... Grace stood beside me more than once, and we really came close to a gun battle several times. Well the the- the reason I told you those stories a while ago... If, if I was there, and Grace was being shot at, or she was facing danger, I would never have ran away from it, I don't think. And that's one thing that's bothered me is, Did I run and get out of there, with, with something happening to her? And... I, - I don't think I did, I don't think I would've done that. But I don't know. And that has tormented the hell out of me.

[1:03:49] Susan Simpson At the same time that Gary's memories began to return, Beverly's own stories began to change as well, and significantly. There'd always been inconsistencies in what she said. From the time of her mother's murder until Gary's release from prison, Beverly gave nearly two dozen statements in all, either in written affidavits, or court testimony, or in oral statements to investigators. And there is just a sea of contradictions. Sometimes she claims that she had been pressured by Sheriff Garner, or Gary's family, or her own family. Sometimes she's adamant that everyone had been clear to her- that they only wanted her to tell the truth- for God's sake! Just tell the truth. And, sometimes she said that Bo Salmon's friend Richard Holcomb is the one that had the gun

that killed her mother, and sometimes she says that the gun had been buried with mama, in the casket. And sometimes, she really did see a shadow that night, and sometimes, she really did not.

But as confusing as all these stories are, none are as baffling as the one she made in September 1976, while in prison for writing bad checks. The one where she confessed to Grace's murder. Even the reason she claims she did it doesn't make any sense. In that letter to the correctional officer that Beverly had written, she says:

"On the 13th day of August 1974 I shot and killed my mother for the exact reason that I was jealous of them living together. I shot her and walked off and got back into bed."

But jealous of *who* living together? She never explained that, and no one ever really presses her to explain. The closest we get is from the polygraph examiner, who talked to Beverly both before and after she passed the polygraph claiming she'd killed her mother. And the examiner said that, yes, she told him that she very much wanted to take the examination, that she'd been trying to tell people that she'd killer her mother, but that no one would listen to her. And, according to the examiner:

"[Beverly] stated to me that she and her mother had been on the front porch of their home and her mother was scolding her for being out with her boyfriend just for the purpose of having sex. She was upset about it. And after this, her mother left the front porch and went into the kitchen. She, in turn, went into the living room to talk with her sister. She said that she remembered that her mother kept her revolver in the bedroom on the shelf in the closet. And she went in and got it and went into the kitchen and shot her mother, and that she did not remember anything after that."

There's another odd detail of Beverly's confession, too. One that she told to Lt. Jerry Schaeffer and John Barnett after she was asked where the gun had gone. What had happened to it, after she'd shot her mother? Beverly told them that she'd thrown the gun out of the back door and it was picked up by a person in a white Cadillac. And that the driver of the white Cadillac had been Richard Holcomb.

But even though at first it seems so confusing and so hard to make sense of, I now think that, out of all of the stories Beverly has told, her confession is the easiest to understand.

When I asked Beverly why she'd confessed, her answer was simple. "I was very good at 'I done it,'" she said. "I done anything to keep anyone from getting a whooping. I didn't do the dishes or I didn't sweep the floor or I did break the dishes, I did steal those items from the store. I didn't want my sisters to take any blame."

I asked her if Charlotte had ever returned the favor, and Beverly said, "No, she always blamed me."

There's another reason, too, that Beverly has given for why she confessed. She told Gary in one of her phone calls to him that her husband had made her confess, and at first I'd dismissed it as nonsense. One of Beverly's stories that sound like drama, not truth. But then, I looked closer into it... and I realized that this might actually explain it all.

[1:07:47] Beverly Reynolds

Michael Minshew made me do that. Michael Minshew said, I killed my daddy and I got out in six months.

[1:07:54] Susan Simpson This makes perfect sense to me. When Michael Minshew was a child, 11 or 12, his father had been shot and killed, and when police arrived, they were told that Michael's father had been assaulting his mother, and acting in her defense, Michael had grabbed a shotgun and killed him. Ultimately, the grand jury declined to indict him, likely due to his age, and he was released.

So yeah, that does make sense to me, that Michael Minshew might've told her that if she wanted to make this all go away, make the whole mess just disappear, just confess to it. Say you did it. You were a child, you won't get in trouble, if you say you did that'll be the end of it.

So she did. She confessed. Gary tried to use it as part of another post-conviction proceeding, but that didn't work. The court was exasperated and confused by Beverly's claims, but it wasn't going to indulge that kind of nonsense.

So Gary remained in prison. And even if Beverly's confession didn't end up helping Gary any, it's something she's had to live with ever since.

Gary's last post-conviction proceeding ended in November 1977. He was out of options at that point -- nothing else he could do could really get his sentence overturned, or change the outcome. Still, his life on the whole was improving. As much as it can improve, when you're serving a life sentence for murder, and every appeal or postconviction proceeding you've done has been denied. But, hey, he could go home sometimes.

[1:09:34] Gary Reeves I was a statewide trusty. And I made statewide trusty when I got to Carroll County. Statewide trusty, then, I could go home certain times of the year for 3 day pass. Uh, you could choose Thanksgiving, or Christmas, or whatever. And um, family member had to come get me, family member had to take me back, but... And I still had my driving license. They had not expired yet, and the state patrol barracks was right next door to the prison camp, so I walk up there one day, and got my driving license renewed.

[1:10:05] Susan Simpson Finally, he ended up back in Floyd County full time. He left Carroll County and was relocated back to the Floyd County Jail. This wasn't just to be closer to family -- Gary had a plan, and getting sent back to Floyd County, where he could work in public buildings, was part of it. And at the same time, Gary was carrying out his parole campaign. He was trying to get parole, by having people who supported him write letters, offer employment, convince the parole board he should be released. Something else happened in this case, in the meantime, though.

[1:10:39] Gary Reeves So, the County police would be the ones who would take me back to the prison at night, after I got through. Well, there was a police officer named Jerry Boyd, he came to me one day and he said, uh, man, I've been talking to the GBI. They've got a witness who says you were not in that house when she was actually killed.

[1:11:02] Susan Simpson Who this informant was, what they'd told the GBI that seems like it could be a big deal. But Gary never learned more about it. He continued working towards parole, which seemed to be working, or at least making progress, despite the fact he'd made enemies with the warden at the Floyd County Jail. Gary had made some suggestions about how the uh, department of corrections should structure its procurement department, and to run it in a way that was more efficient, which had accidentally caused the Floyd County jail warden to uh, lose some administrative power, so the warden wasn't Gary's biggest fan.

[1:11:35] Gary Reeves Warden called me in one evening, I got back down there one evening, and he said, uh, he called me in his office, he said um, "You know you ain't gonna make parole." He said, "You gonna be with me a long time. You might as well get used to that. "Again, all I could do was -- uh, yeah, yes sir, thank you.

I already knew I'd made parole. I knew I was going to make it. I found out I'd made parole before the warden found out I'd made parole. Because the purchasing agent was on the phone every day with the parole board. They were all rooting for me.

This purchasing agent on the phone, and he, I was walking by one day, and he grabbed me. Says, get in here. Man. What happened? What have I done? There's a big walk-in safe. He pushed me in there, and he said, you've made it!

[1:12:28] Susan Simpson And, as for that GBI informant that Officer Jerry Boyd had told him about? Well, nothing ever came of that.

[1:12:35] Gary Reeves Jerry Boyd was trying to get something together, to get the GBI to uh,

meet with me. And uh, maybe try to get something going. I'm also coming up for parole at this time. Well, I didn't hear anything else from it, and I made parole.

[1:12:52] Susan Simpson Once out of prison, Gary spent the next 9 years getting his sentence commuted, and then received an administrative pardon. Life on the outside wasn't always easy after 7 years behind bars, but he did have some success.

[1:13:06] Gary Reeves So I made parole. And I went to work at an office supply place. Now, now, you know, it was a lot of difference in working with office supplies, then selling beer and wine, liquor, and you know. Big difference. So I had to learn it pretty quick. And they wasn't doing much business selling office furniture at that time, and I've got a reason for telling you this- because this is a great story. He put me in, uh, charge of the uh, buying the office furniture. Well, on down here, if we buy one or two filing cabinets, one or two desks, and I got to looking at this stuff, and I said, hey, they've got this surplus, you know, might have a scratch or a dent, or something like that, but we could buy that, ten cents on the dollar. We could sell that 50% off, and still gross 25-30% profit margin. And uh, got into that, yeah, I got into that, got interested in that. Well, guess what. They build a new county jail. Well, my old buddy the purchasing agent, [Rabia laughs] he called me one day, and he said, "Hey, man, uh, they're gonna furnish that thing, and said, uh, I want y'all to bid on it. I go up there, and I get the bid. We went in at- me and my buddy, the owner, it was a pride thing. We didn't make much money on it, but we got that bid. I made that sale, fifty thousand dollar sale, for the jail. And guess what. They didn't open on time. And I've got this furniture coming in from all over the country. [laughs] This is sweet revenge. And I tell the person, I said, look... we ain't making much money on this thing. You guys could help foot the bill to store this stuff- we'll leave it on the trailers, but we need a safe place. I said how about down at the chain gang counter. Here I go. In a company car, and I got a convoy of tractor-trailers following me- I go in, [laughs] Mr. Warden, I need you to guard this furniture. Oh, man. He was mad.

[1:15:17] Susan Simpson Gary made it out of prison, and even if he still had the conviction for Grace's murder hanging over his head, he was able to start a new life on the outside, this time with a career in office supplies rather than bootlegging.

But, as impressive as Gary's successful campaign was to obtain parole, something about it seemed off. Rabia and I had the same reaction to that part of Gary's story. Sure, he'd won over a lot of community support and built up a favorable paper record to impress the parole board, but still. How the hell did he get paroled 7 years into a life sentence, while still adamantly declaring that he was innocent in the murder he was convicted of? Seriously? That seems a little bit not normal.

[1:16:04] Rabia Chaudry The fact that you could even apply for parole, 7 years into a life sentence, is what I'm ... is that normal?

Gary Reeves

It was a law that you come up for parole in 7 years.

Rabia Chaudry

Really??

Susan Simpson

But making it?

Gary Reeves

As a rule, you didn't make it for 15 years. Or longer. Or some cases-never. But, I had a lot of people who believed in me. And a lot of people who were sending these letters. And...

[1:16:32] Susan Simpson And... maybe that's all it was. A lot of people who believed in him and a lot of people who sent in letters. But while parole was a step along the way, that wasn't the end of it. Gary wanted to clear his name. He wanted answers. He wanted to know who had killed Grace. And he wasn't alone in that.

[1:16:52] Beverly Reynolds I remember going to the police station. And I remember talkin' to Kines. And I cannot tell you anything else. I don't remember. And I'm tryin to remember. I've asked God to let me see, to let me remember and I don't know if he don't want me to, or if it just don't happen that way. You know?

Gary Reeves

Well.

Beverly Reynolds

Maybe God don't want to put more on me than I can bear. He says he won't. But God knows I've beared this ever since she died.

Gary Reeves

Well, it could, it could end. As soon as we--

Beverly Reynolds

Investigate a little bit.

Gary Reeves

Yeah. And it would come off of you.

Beverly Reynolds

I know I didn't hurt my mama. I know I didn't take my mama's life. And I know you know that, too. And I know all you got to stand on is that piece of paper, and I don't blame you, Gary. And I don't blame you any more, but I'm telling you. I want to find out as bad as you do.

[1:18:01] Susan Simpson Thanks for listening to Episode 3 of Undisclosed: The State v. Gary Mitchum Reeves. Don't forget to go to our website to check out the episode transcripts, case materials, photos, and more. If you have any information about the people or cases discussed on the show, I'd love to talk to you. Please reach out via email, at undisclosedpodcast@gmail.com, or through social media. And, if you'd like to discuss the show, please join us at Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or Reddit. Big thanks to our Jack-of-all-trades producer, Mital Telhan, and Najah Bhatti, whose assistance has been invaluable. Our sound editor is Rebecca LaVoie, of the Crime Writers On Podcast. If you haven't listened, go check it out now. And if you found the episode transcripts useful, big thanks go out to our volunteers, who put the transcript together: @slowdawning, @_beebz, @TheWindAndRain, @oldsinglebitter. Until next time.