



LEAPS OF THOUGHT

Three Boys Missing Frequently Asked Questions

1. What can we learn from the Peterson-Schuessler case?

“Unknown” sexual predators pose a significant threat to the safety of children that should not be underestimated. It is a fact that within any square mile, within any city, there is someone looking to have sex with a child. Couple that with the fact that people who have been molested become molesters, and you have a situation that should give us all pause. Many parents hear the sensational child molestation-murder cases in the news and think: “Oh, that’s sad. That will never happen to my child.” What parents aren’t getting is that those cases are a very small proportion of the number of child molestation situations. The vast majority of cases go unreported. Why? Because they are situations where the predator has created a dual-role of trust, covered his activities well, interviewed and selected his victims, and significantly reduced the possibility that he/she will be found out, just as the Peterson-Schuessler killer did.

2. Three Boys Missing has many lessons for parents today. Tell us what parents need to know about the sex offenders that seek to do our children harm.

There are four things parents need to know and understand:

1. How sex offenders think;
2. How they deceive their victims;
3. How they elude the law; and
4. We have a long way to go in solving the problem, and everyone’s help is needed for us to get there.

Sex offenders, like other criminals, are smart, cunning individuals who have a good grasp on the shortcomings of human nature. They use this knowledge to create double-roles that enable them to create situations of trust that enable them to exploit their victims and deceive those around them for many years. Most of us see them as monsters. The problem with this thinking is that we all believe we know what a monster looks like. Well, the monsters in this instance are teachers, coaches, priests, homeland security officials, day-care workers, scout leaders, and, like Hansen, owners of children’s recreational facilities, such as riding stables. We can’t put a face on the pedophile because they wear many faces. This fact alone makes them exceptionally dangerous.

3. Your book demonstrates, among other things the success and failures of law enforcement. On the one hand, it took 40 years to finally bring a killer to justice. On the other hand, the perpetrator never got to feel he got away with it because he was eventually caught. How difficult is it to find and successfully prosecute sex offenders and child murderers?

It will no longer be difficult to prosecute sex offenders because of DNA and other sophisticated forensic techniques, which unfortunately may also contribute to the increase in child murders. Moreover, with the passage of the Adam Walsh Child Safety and Protection Act it will also no longer be difficult to keep sex offenders behind bars when we find them. With the effort of Oprah Winfrey’s reward system, as well as Internet tools such as SearchHelp, people can actively search for known offenders and know exactly where these individuals live in their neighborhoods. But because of their anonymity, unknown predators, like Hansen, are particularly difficult to find. Worse of all, unknown predators using their double-role of trust in the community, are often invited into our lives and homes and given



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permission to spend time with our children, which creates confusion for children that leads to their silent suffering. And unfortunately, getting parents to allow children to testify against and publicly punish offenders is another problem. This practice of “protecting the child” has led to the many plea-deals that have kept offenders on the street, a situation that greatly frustrated us during the Peterson-Schuessler investigation.

4. **James, you were the first detective to speak to one of the fathers of the three missing boys. When you resigned from the force in 1968, the murderer was still unidentified and not caught. How frustrating was it to see justice eluded back then?**

It was very frustrating, but I kept telling myself: “There is no way in the world this guy is going to walk. I knew deep in my heart that one day somebody was going to turn him in.”

5. **How did you feel years later to find the murderer had been found and convicted?**

When I heard the news flash that Hansen had been picked up and possibly connected to the murders, I was so happy. I reached out to many of the Special Investigating Unit members that worked with me to share the news with the few of them who were still alive. I also immediately contacted Pat Quinn, the State’s Attorney. Although closure set in after a few days, I still felt deeply saddened. I was saddened by the fact that the only way I got to know the boys was through the investigation of their murder. From everything I learned about them, they were great kids, and I wish I had known them.

6. **You attended the two trials it took to convict him. The first one ended in a conviction but was overturned on appeal. Did you think he was going to get away with it?**

No. I felt he would be convicted in the second trial. In my mind, the evidence was overwhelming. And, if you consider the time period, it was understandable. Hansen was brought down in the way many unknown predators are: eventually their victims grow up and understand that they have been victims. They are no longer scared children, and they talk. Hollatz, one of the State’s witnesses is a good example. While I am disappointed that he did not initially have the courage to come forward, I understand his reasoning. He did not want to expose to his family, particularly his father who was a Chicago police officer, that he had a homosexual relationship. For forty years, he suffered in shameful silence because he chose self-preservation over doing the right thing.

7. **Do you believe he’s guilty?**

Without a doubt.

8. **What advice do you have for society when it comes to how it deals with prevention as well as law enforcement in cases involving pedophilia?**

There are five areas where we need improvement to help children:

1. Adjust our thinking to understand that we don’t know a pedophile when we see one; the dual and deceitful-role they play in society makes this extremely difficult;



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2. Because of this, parents must communicate openly with their children and educate themselves;
 3. Parents must be more aware of changes in the behavior of their child that could signal that something is wrong;
 4. Parents must use the tools available to them that identify sex offenders to help protect children when they are on- and off-line; and
 5. We need more effective ways to alert law enforcement to individuals whose activities with children seem suspicious.
9. **You spent some time with the families of the missing boys. What is that like, to see a parent not knowing where their child is, and what, if anything, happened to them?**

I wouldn't wish that on anyone. They were like zombies, and that was before the bodies were found. They couldn't sleep, eat, or hold a conversation. When I talked to Mr. Peterson in the police station, his hands were shaking, he kept circling the brim of his hat with his hand, and crumpled the paper cup I had given him for water. Really, he was a basket case. My heart just went out to him. It's a sight you never want to have to see.

10. **In the course of conducting your investigation, you uncovered many other child molesters and sex offenders. In fact, one suspect that you were about to bring in, escaped and shot himself dead. He was under the care of a psychiatrist at the time, who thought he was "cured." What can be done to rehabilitate these degenerates or is there no hope?**

I'm not a doctor, but I believe there is no cure. Importantly, that particular case demonstrates how pedophiles create these dual-roles of trust and exploit them. The case is also sad because the doctor worked for the institution involved.

11. **The Internet shows just how big a problem pedophiles pose to our children. But your case shows that this problem's been around for a long time, and has always posed a grave danger. What can we teach kids so they will not fall victim to these sickos?**

Educate your children when they are young. Help them understand the dangers. Work with your child on issues of self-esteem and loneliness, so they are less susceptible to becoming targets. Importantly for teenagers, do not ignore the reality that they are naturally sexually curious. Be open and honest with them. Do not assume that just because you tell your child what to do, that if a stranger approaches them, they will follow these instructions. Studies have shown that some children will and others will not. As parents, the onus is on us to understand that these situations can happen in the blink of an eye and right under our noses. We must be alert to the signs and undeterred in our willingness to act on and bring attention to situations where a child, any child, might be in harm's way of a predator. The goal should be keeping all children safe, not just our own.

12. **Has society fully come to terms with the reality of the dangers of this unspeakable evil?**

No, we haven't. We have come a long way in understanding the dangers of known sexual predators, but we have much work to do in the area of Internet sexual predators and unknown sexual predators. Both pose significant challenges for detection and apprehension.



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- 13. After you left the force you dedicated 25 years of service to Bargain Town USA, which later became Toys-R-Us, a manager of security for the Midwest region. How did you help keep children safe in the stores from pedophiles?**

In the stores themselves, predators pose less of a threat. The reason is that situations, such as Adam Walsh and Carlie Brucia's, of abduction in a very public place represents a smaller percent of sexual predator situations. The most important thing is to constantly remind parents to be aware of where their children are at all times. A child can easily get lost in a toy store, and that is when there is a risk for abduction. We tried to be vigilant in reinforcing the message to parents to keep their children with them at all times.

- 14. Was it unusual that such a high-profile case that made headlines for a long time, that utilized hundred of police officers, and involved over 41,000 interviews, didn't yield a prime suspect?**

In those days, unfortunately, no it wasn't. In fact there were other equally heinous crimes, such as the case of Judith Mae Anderson and the Grimes sisters, which we were also not able to solve. In more recent times, of course, the most famous situation is that of Adam Walsh, the son of John Walsh, whose abduction and murder twenty-five years after the three boys spurred much of awareness of the problem. In 1996, of course, JonBenet Ramsey was abducted and found murdered. Again, the perpetrators have never been apprehended.

- 15. Why did you write the book?**

This book was growing in me for 50 years. I have had an opportunity to see how we have evolved and dealt with the problem of pedophilia and child murder over the past fifty years. Every new case of kidnapping and murder of a child reminded me how little we as a society do to prevent pedophiles from committing these gruesome crimes. Writing this book was my way of making the public more aware of how the underworld of pedophilia has been ever present in our reality. The media sometimes took an impersonal approach to this tragedy. By explaining this tragic event on a human level through my experience as a detective on the case. I hope to help people better understand the problem we face. I had the unfortunate advantage of seeing first-hand the reactions of the families, police department, and citizens of Chicago. Those reactions are profound in my memory.

- 16. What bothers you most about the case?**

What saddens me most is that through all these years, few solutions until very recently have been put in place to prevent these types of crimes. If this book inspires only one reader to come up with an idea that in the future leads to saving the life of just one child, I will consider myself a very successful writer.

- 17. How did this experience affect our life personally?**

Being a father and watching my children grow strong, happy, and healthy was always the greatest joy of my life. For the families of the Peterson and Schuessler's, this joy was taken away. One act by a cruel individual to satisfy his immediate perverted needs brought a tragic end to the happiness of so many. Having my own kids helped me feel for the Peterson-Schuesslers and all the parents of missing children, so in a way it has become my personal mission to help other families learn through this tragedy.



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18. Why did it take so long to write the book?

Until the murderer was caught, I did not feel that we could have closure. We did not have enough information to understand why someone would senselessly take the lives of three young individuals. There were far more questions than there were answers. Over the years as I watched other crimes against children being committed, my desire for the capture of the perpetrator(s) grew. I continued to be hopeful that one day we would understand why. That time came more than forty years later when Kenneth Hansen was convicted of the crime. At that point, I began to think in earnest about how I could create closure for the families and myself. That is when I began writing the book.

19. Given killer Kenneth Hansen's extensive pedophilic background, why do you believe he escaped justice for so long?

There are four reasons:

1. His activities as a pedophile were never brought to the attention of law enforcement. This meant he was not a "known sex offender." Most law enforcement efforts focus on known offenders. Many unknown offenders, particularly when it is a relative or someone the victim knows, escape detection and their activities go unpunished. This is one area where we must develop ways to help undercover these abuses and get children out of harms way. As the Masha Allen story demonstrates, we must create detection methods that protect children who are being victimized within environments that we would normally consider safe.
2. The murder seems to have been covered up by the Silas Jayne organization and his brother, Kurt Hanse, who was a hard-core mobster. His actions were quickly and effectively cleaned up to prevent them from bringing down a very powerful and lucrative illegal operation.
3. We were afraid to admit to ourselves as a society that crimes against children were a growing problem. People have to place the entire story into context. Our awareness as peace officers of pedophilia grew dramatically through the Peterson-Schuessler investigation. However, in the larger society, we, as individuals, choose to believe that such an event would never happen in our own backyards. This allowed individuals like Hansen to prey on children's innocence and conceal their activities by taking advantage of their vulnerability through threats and other means.
4. We as a society treated homosexuality with such disdain during that time period that the individuals who were involved with Hansen were afraid to come forward and openly admit their sexual orientation. Their voices were stifled for fear of societal repercussions and for self-preservation.