

EYES OF A MONSTER – A cold case detective’s relentless pursuit of a serial killer

Beautiful young schoolteacher Olivia Dare Christian was murdered in her Hampton, Virginia apartment on September 4, 1981. She was brutally beaten in a sexually motivated attack, and strangled by the cord of her bedroom alarm clock. The unplugged clock showed the time of death; 7:30 am. Her killer left few clues and the murder went unsolved.

Three decades later, in 2011, Hampton Police detective Randy Mayer opened the dusty cold case file on Olivia Christian’s murder. He became obsessed with unraveling the mystery that seemed unsolvable. In addition to his regular case load, Detective Mayer spent nights and weekends contacting Olivia’s old friends and neighbors as well as re-interviewing former suspects and persons of interest.

Remarkably, Mayer located a witness that was a teenager back in 1981, who observed a suspicious man lurking outside Olivia’s apartment the morning of the murder. Buried in the case file was the composite sketch she had provided to a police artist, as well as a detailed subscription of the suspect’s vehicle. The witness believed she could still identify the man; and could pick him out of a police lineup, even three decades later. “He had the eyes of a monster,” she said.

Detective Mayer then spent hundreds of hours, searching miles of microfilm of old police reports – rapes, assaults and murders that spanned 40 years -- hunting for a killer with the same unique modus operandi. After a four-year investigation, amazingly, Mayer found the man he believed responsible for Olivia Christian’s murder. The man was convicted of several rapes in the 70s and 80s, savage assaults remarkably similar to the attack on Olivia Christian. As Mayer dug deeper into the man’s past, he uncovered evidence that strongly linked him to two other previously unsolved murders: the 1972 stabbing death of librarian Helen Sturges on Hampton’s Chesapeake Avenue, and the 1982 strangulation death of Christopher Newport University student Linda Diane Sykes. Was this man a serial killer?

When Mayer brought the suspect in for questioning he denied involvement in Olivia’s murder, but inadvertently made several statements which implied his guilt. But Hampton prosecutors refused to move forward and indict the suspect for murder. At an impasse, Detective Mayer enlisted the help of FBI special agent Liza Ludovico, and a special prosecutor from the state Attorney General’s office, Phillip Figura. Together, they worked to build a case.

Could the team gather enough evidence to charge Olivia’s killer, now a law-abiding citizen in his 60s? Could the teen-aged witness from 1981 identify him? And if so, would a jury of twelve people reach a conviction in a three-decade old cold case murder based mostly on circumstantial evidence?

EYES OF A MONSTER, by best-selling author Ron Peterson, Jr., is the incredible true story of a detective’s relentless pursuit of a serial killer. Peterson’s previous work includes one of the top 100 true crime books of all time, *Under The Trestle* (2018), currently in the works as a documentary film with Mactavish Pictures; as well as Amazon Top 10 true crime best-seller *Chasing The Squirrel* (2020), which is in development as a television series with Los Angeles-based Urban Legends Entertainment.