

Shot in the Dark:

A Cold Case Homicide in the Digital Age



Case Study Blurb

On a dark winter's night, a woman with a burdened mind goes for a stroll in a secluded park. She's not alone. An assailant approaches, fires once, and then disappears. It's the latest in a bizarre string of incidents, three years into a missing persons investigation. Where is Cari Farver? Is she hiding in plain sight? Is someone pretending to be her? The truth will be revealed. This case study covers thousands of hours of investigation as well as traditional and digital forensics, all culminating in a two-week courtroom battle to prove a no-body homicide with hard work, luck, and an unbelievable smoking gun.

This case has seen extensive media coverage and has been featured on episodes of *ABC 20/20*, *Dateline NBC*, Investigation Discovery's *True Conviction*, and Oxygen Network's *Snapped* and *Deadly Women*. It's the subject of the true crime book *A Tangled Web* by author Leslie Rule and a Lifetime movie, *The Disappearance of Cari Farver*. A documentary for a popular streaming service is also in the works.

Presentation Highlights

- 500+ slides featuring large pictures and text, no "Death by PowerPoint" unreadable content
- Two (2) hours for an effective telling of the story, with a five-to-ten-minute break built-in
- Tasteful, law enforcement-gearred humor to keep the audience engaged and lighten the mood
- An introduction section customized for the target audience and venue
- Actual video and audio from suspect interviews, news coverage, and courtroom arguments
- Actual photos from the case file, digital evidence, search warrant execution, and more
- Hits on challenges of proving death without a body and digital evidence of premeditation
- Covers lessons learned by investigators with a frank look at opportunities for improvement

Presenter Bios

Sergeant-Investigator James Doty is a fifteen-year member of the Pottawattamie County Sheriff's Office. He began his career in 2007 working road patrol and has served as a field training officer and crisis negotiator. He transferred to the Criminal Investigations Division (CID) in 2013. In 2018, a year after being promoted to sergeant, Doty was made supervisor of CID. Sgt. Doty holds a bachelor's degree in Psychology and a master's in Justice Administration and Crime Management.

Deputy Ryan Avis began his law enforcement career as a detention officer in 2006. In 2008, he transferred to road patrol where he later served as a field training officer and drunk driving enforcement instructor. Avis joined the Criminal Investigations Division in 2014 where he specialized in sexually motivated crimes and worked as a crisis negotiator. He studied Criminal Justice at Iowa Western Community College. Dep. Avis is currently assigned to the Sheriff's Office Court Security Division.

Special Deputy Anthony Kava is a life-long hacker, digital forensics examiner, cyber-crime investigator, and cybersecurity nerd. He joined Pottawattamie County's IT Department in 2003. In 2009, Kava was sworn in as a Special Deputy and assigned to the Iowa Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force. He transferred to work full-time for the Sheriff's Office in 2017. Dep. Kava holds multiple certifications, mentors students to be hackers for good, and enjoys long walks on the dark web.

Case Study Abstract

This presentation packs a great deal of information into a lively, fast-paced, two-hour talk. Supporting slides, videos, and audio are designed to be visually stimulating to keep attendees engaged while sharing information and lessons learned. We start with a shooting that took place in December 2015, explain the conditions that led to it, and then walk attendees through phases that include the initial missing persons investigation, our revival of the cold case, and bringing the case to trial in 2017.

The case stems from a love triangle. Liz wants Dave all to herself, and she stalks her competition. When Dave begins dating Cari, Liz employs escalating measures to track Cari and learn more about why Dave prefers her. In the end, Liz kills Cari and manages to dispose of her body. There are no witnesses to the crime, no obvious crime scene, no known murder weapon, and, most challenging of all, no body. To throw-off authorities and worried family members, Liz begins impersonating Cari online.

The killer will continue to impersonate her victim for over three years by email, text message, and via social media sites, Internet dating profiles, and even web-based obituaries. Liz will use proxy servers, Virtual Private Network (VPN) services, and apps to hide her location and true IP addresses. She becomes adept at avoiding detection and spins a web that will require in-depth analysis to untangle. Despite multiple chances, Liz never admits to the murder, and Cari's body has never been recovered.

Bringing justice to the perpetrator and closure to Cari's family will require thousands of hours of investigation, countless interviews, dozens of search warrants, a ruse, and a lucky break. This talk provides an in-depth look at the investigation and all the people involved and goes into greater detail than any of the television coverage can. Audiences will learn as they become engrossed in the story.

Contact Information



**Sergeant-Investigator
James Doty**

jdoty@sheriff.pottcounty-ia.gov
712-890-2224



**Deputy
Ryan Avis**

ravis@sheriff.pottcounty-ia.gov
712-310-1997



**Special Deputy
Anthony Kava**

akava@sheriff.pottcounty-ia.gov
712-328-4735



The Cari Farver Memorial Scholarship at Iowa Western Community College keeps Cari's memory alive by helping an information technology student each year in her name. For more information or to donate to the endowment fund, visit:

<https://farverscholarship.org>