



PHOTO: Anne Penn, true crime author and victims' advocate, in her study where she meticulously researches notorious criminal cases.

Unmasking the Shadows ANNE PENN

A Deep Dive into the Mind of a True Crime Author

Anne Penn has spent a lifetime immersed in the realm of true crime, driven by a relentless pursuit of justice for victims and their families. A multi-generational native of Sacramento, Penn's connection to the notorious East Area Rapist, who haunted her hometown, has fueled her mission to uncover the truth behind unsolved cases. Her five books on the Golden State Killer provide meticulously researched insights into crimes that have left an indelible mark on California's history.

With a robust background in psychology, criminal justice, and addiction studies, Anne Penn brings a unique perspective to her investigations. Her deep dive into the psyche of serial offenders, coupled with her personal experiences and connections to the cases she studies, offers readers an unparalleled view into the complexities of these heinous crimes. Penn's work is not just about chronicling events; it's about understanding the motivations behind them and seeking closure for those affected.

In her extensive career, Penn has delved into some of the most infamous criminal cases, including the Zodiac Killer and the Golden State Killer. Her dedication to uncovering the truth has led to significant revelations and has provided new avenues for law enforcement to pursue. Her commitment to victims' advocacy is evident in her efforts to bring cold cases back into the spotlight, pushing for DNA testing and continued investigation.

Anne Penn's books are a testament to her unwavering resolve to ensure that justice is served. Her latest works, including "What If? Golden State Killer ZODIAC SOLVED" and "Serial Slaughter Zodiac Killer," explore the possible connections between these notorious killers, presenting new evidence and challenging conventional narratives. Penn's meticulous research and compelling storytelling not only engage readers but also honor the victims and their families by keeping their stories alive.

In this interview, Anne Penn shares her journey, from her early fascination with true crime to her current projects aimed at solving decades-old mysteries. Her passion for justice, combined with her expertise in criminal psychology and forensics, makes her a formidable force in the true crime genre. Readers will find in Penn not just an author, but an advocate dedicated to shining a light on the darkest corners of criminal history.

Anne, your extensive background in sociology, addiction studies, psychology, criminal justice, and criminal law provides a unique perspective on the true crime genre. What inspired you to delve into writing about notorious cases like the Golden State Killer and the Zodiac Killer?

Your books not only explore the crimes themselves but also dive into the psychological and sociological factors behind serial offenders. How do you balance the portrayal of these complex individuals while honoring the victims

and their families?

At age 14 I was walking home. I was only two blocks away from safety when I was chased by two men in a truck and almost abducted. The fear I carried from then on was palpable. I realized I could have been taken never to be seen again. I got away by listening to my instincts. I grew up in Sacramento in the 1970's. There were many rapists, serial killers and others committing crimes all around the area. I had always had a fascination with true crime. The first murder I recall was of JFK. I was a child, but the impact was huge. The Zodiac and Manson murders I watched with fascination. Still a child, I tried to figure out how anyone could think they had the right to take someone's life from them and do so on purpose. My relatives worked in different areas of law enforcement and within the criminal justice system. One uncle actually was CHP in Solano county during the time of Zodiac. Later the Original Night Stalker killed my grandfather's son Lyman Smith and his wife Charlene in Ventura, CA. Like everyone for the next 38 years I wanted to

Anne Penn's dedication to true crime is unparalleled, combining meticulous research with a profound empathy for victims and their families.

see the man who was doing such evil things caught. Amazingly the East Area Rapist, Original Night Stalker AKA Golden State Killer are one and the same man. It beg-

ged the question – was he also the Zodiac Killer?

Your books not only explore the crimes themselves but also dive into the psychological and sociological factors behind serial offenders. How do you balance the portrayal of these complex individuals while honoring the victims and their families?

I studied and sought to understand in depth how a serial offender is born. It was my thought as I tracked this serial killer that all of the psychological factors would help me figure out where he might still be (before his arrest). I grew up in this serial killers hunting grounds. I wanted this criminal caught. I was 20-22 when the East Area Rapist was active in my neck of the woods. My intention is to call attention to old cold cases of murder. That way I balance the portrayal of evil and still honor the victims especially by asking that the open cases be solved. I am an advocate for women first and foremost. I fight to get cases in front of DA Investigators and Law Enforcement asking them to test DNA, to solve what cases are still solvable because it matters.

Your books not only explore the crimes themselves but also dive into the psychological and sociological factors behind serial offenders. How do you balance the portrayal of these complex individuals while honoring the victims and their families?

My research process has been to look into historical records and

newspaper articles that invariably tell one what exactly was going on in certain geographical locations during certain time frames. With great research one can see patterns, geographical areas of attack and actually see amounts of crime, close Mo's or even a tell or signature of an offender when they try to confuse Law Enforcement and others. They have a signature one can see even when they throw out red herrings and change what they do. An offender thinks they can confuse Law Enforcement by changing from bludgeon to stabbing to strangling. They think changing jurisdictions will confuse those who search for them. I always do my own research and avoid any outside influences or bias.

In Serial Slaughter Zodiac Killer, you offer new evidence and perspectives on the infamous crimes. What do you hope readers will take away from your exploration of these cases, particularly regarding the impact on the victims and their families?

In Serial Slaughter I present evidence, geographical profiles, MO's and more that tell of crimes that could not only be connected to the Zodiac Killer, but show that he continued to kill as he promised over time, murdering many women and girls. One of the things I hope readers will take away from reading Serial Slaughter is the knowledge that crimes are still solvable, that it is important to bring answers to families, and that crimes against women and girls matter. I present cold cases that can be solved because they have DNA to test. Two murders from this book were solved after I sent

my book to DA Investigators.

Your dedication to bringing answers to families affected by violent crimes is evident in your work. How do you navigate the emotional challenges of delving into such dark subject matter while maintaining empathy for those involved?

I make sure to be aware of how I feel and if I need a break. There are times I can feel the effects of the deep dives into dark histories, but I know that someone needed to document these stories, someone needed to push those in power to solve these crimes even if they are 50 years old. They can do it and solving these crimes is important work. I never lose sight of why I do this work.

Looking ahead, do you have plans for future projects or cases you're eager to explore further? If so, can you provide any hints about what readers can expect next from you in the true crime genre?

My future plans include a book I am currently writing called Unsolved Cold Case Murder Files California. It will be complete August 2024. Also of interest I will write about a few solved crimes in National Parks in California. In addition, coming in June is my fictional analysis and homage to the character Dexter. I have been a huge fan of the series so I have written what I think while thanking all who created the characters for the Dexter series. Dexter fights for justice when the bad guys fall through the inevitable cracks of the criminal justice system.



Anne Penn's compelling works on the Golden State Killer and Zodiac Killer, offering new insights and advocating for justice.