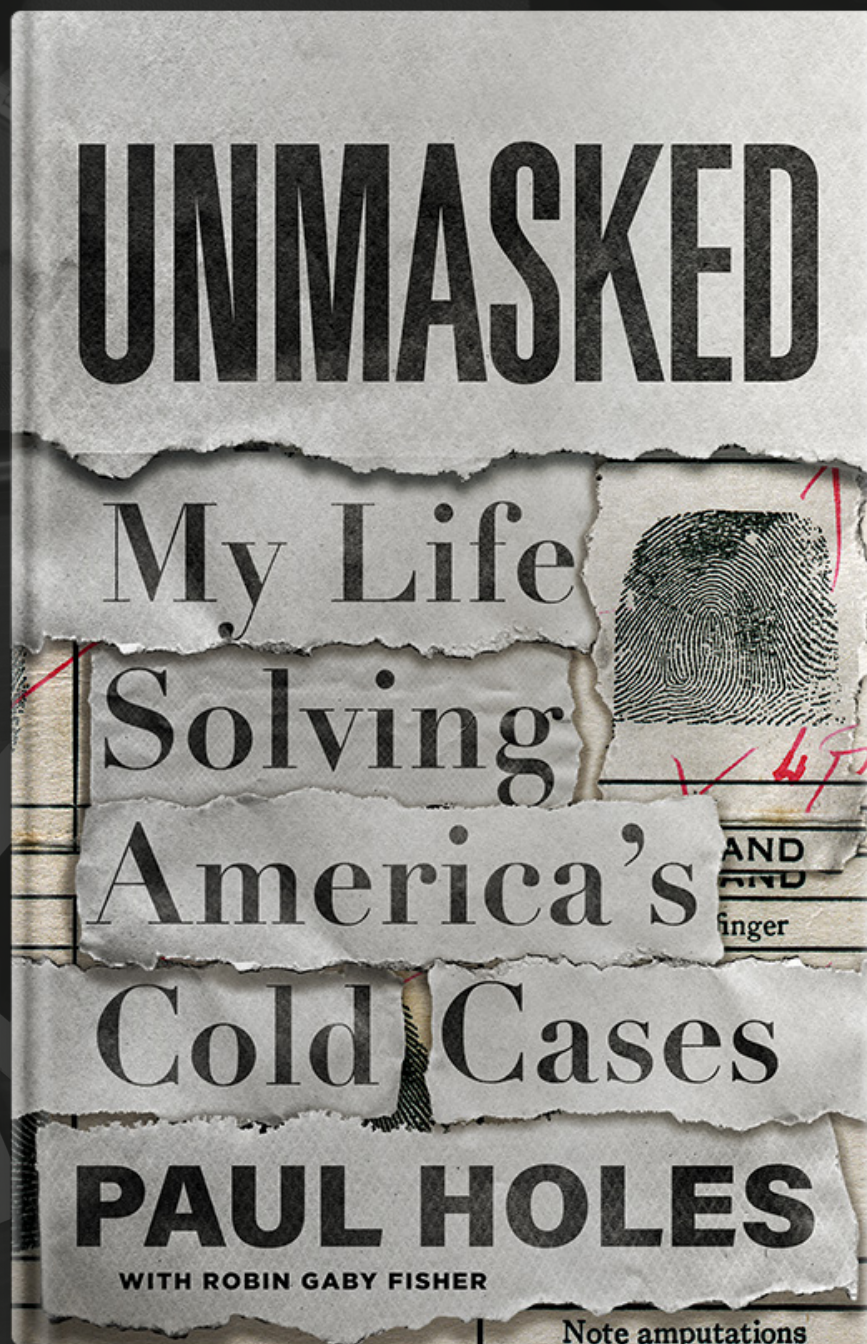


# BOOK CLUB KIT



*“Unmasked is an excellent book club pick thanks to the brilliant self-awareness of its subject, Paul Holes. His willingness to pair the gritty details of his life as a crime solver with his shortcomings gives book clubs a great deal to discuss and dissect.”*

—ORLANDO, FLORIDA BOOK CLUB

**Paul Holes** retired as a Cold Case Investigator after spending over 27 years working for the Sheriff and District Attorney's Offices during his tenure in Contra Costa County located in the Bay Area, California. Having experience in both forensic and investigative assignments, Paul throughout his career specialized in cold case and serial predator crimes, developing and applying investigative, behavioral, and forensic expertise in notable cases such as Zodiac, Golden State Killer, and Jaycee Dugard. Paul is frequently sought out by investigators to consult on the most complex and high profile cases and has played a part in putting several serial predators on Death Row such as Darryl Kemp, Joseph Naso, and Joseph Cordova Jr.



As an FBI Task Force Officer while employed with the DA's Office, Paul teamed with FBI and Sacramento DA personnel to apply innovative technology that identified Joseph DeAngelo as the Golden State Killer, the most prolific and cunning serial predator in U.S. history.

Since the arrest of DeAngelo, Paul has been very involved on the media side continuing to assist law enforcement and victim's families with their unsolved cases, through the television show *The DNA of Murder with Paul Holes* and with the podcast *Jensen & Holes: The Murder Squad*.

## A Conversation with Paul Holes

**Many readers are familiar with your work on the Golden State Killer case, which you helped solve in 2018. How has this case impacted your career and personal life?**

I started getting involved in what became known as the Golden State Killer case back in 1994. My interest in the case started out more akin to a passing hobby, but the last 10 years, it turned into a raging passion that consumed me. This case was one that I took on — no boss at the Sheriff's Office assigned it to me, so it was not considered part of my job responsibilities. I had to work on my obsession whenever I could, often at home, taking me away from family.

While at work, I would sneak out of the office to track down leads, always anxious that my bosses would find out I was halfway across the state when they thought I was in my office. The obsession (after I became attached to some of the killer's victims and family members it turned into an obligation) would take over all my thoughts, both at work and at home. I neglected my family and my own mental health.

No question, capturing DeAngelo was an accomplishment I'm proud of, but most readers are unaware of the toll that working a case of this magnitude for so long had on me. The book will give readers insight into what I was exposed to during my career, along with the all-consuming nature of the Golden State Killer case, and how those factors really had a negative impact that will stay with me for the rest of my life.

**How do you think exposure to this work has affected your emotional well-being at work and home? And how do you cope?**

I struggle to remember how I thought and felt prior to starting my career. I know I was naive and ignorant to the realities of violent crime. I wonder how different a person I would be if I had chosen a different career path or didn't focus on serial predator cases. I do know that what I experienced utterly changed me.

This work is traumatic but often in an insidious way. The trauma typically is not acute, like a soldier experiences in war or a patrol officer deals with after making a life-or-death decision. When I started to recognize the impact the decades of work had on me, it drove me to see a therapist not too long ago. She described it best: The trauma I experienced is akin to a slow bleed from multiple cuts inflicted over the years that never heal. Her insight explained why I will be reviewing yet another tragic case and start to cry, when that didn't happen before, why I can't fully engage in my marriage or in being a father. I never have let those bleeding cuts close, and I continue to make more, because I must continue to do what I do best — work cases.

**True crime is having a real moment, and so is the idea of the citizen detective who uses social media and Internet forums to help solve crimes. Does this have any impact on how the professionals work?**

I have a long and complex history with online sleuths, starting with my foray into the Zodiac series back in the early 2000s and then with the explosion of interest in the Golden State Killer case. Some are very skilled and contribute a great deal to the case. Many have the best of intentions, but their efforts can cloud the investigation and consume resources. A few are outright dangerous.

With the Golden State Killer and Zodiac cases, the citizen detectives became overwhelming, each pursuing their own thoughts on the case, developing their own "POIs," and trying to get the attention of the official investigators. I often received 30 communications from these individuals per day. Some looked at me as their personal private investigator. At a certain point, I realized that the leads they were generating were not going to solve the case, so I stopped communicating with most so I could focus on what I knew would solve the case — genealogy. That change obviously worked out, but many in the sleuthing community became bitter once I no longer responded.

Online sleuths do have a place in an investigation, but they must be focused versus left to their own devices. My podcast Jensen and Holes: The Murder Squad does just that. We educate listeners about aspects of a case then give out assignments, and that is likely the best way for law enforcement to use this kind of resource.

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. From the Golden State Killer to Laci Peterson's murder, Paul Holes worked on several high-profile cases throughout his career. Were you already familiar with any of them, and if so, what new details about these cases surprised you? Which case did you find most interesting?
2. Holes writes about how it's okay to be interested in serial killers, but that it can be damaging, especially for victims and their families, when people celebrate these criminals. Did Holes' points challenge your perspective? Why do you think there is such a public fascination with serial killers?
3. Using DNA evidence from private genealogical companies to track down criminals has been a controversial issue for years. After reading about how this technology helped identify perpetrators like the GSK and Carla Walker's killer, what is your opinion about this method, and do you have concerns?
4. Throughout his career, Holes often had to hide his work from higher-ups who devalued cold cases. He also found that politics and a lack of cooperation between jurisdictions slowed the capture of the Golden State Killer. Were you surprised by these obstacles within the system?
5. Holes speaks about how his desire to give the victims' families closure often led to him neglecting his own home life. If you were in his position, do you think you would have made similar sacrifices?
6. Holes is very open about his experiences with anxiety throughout *Unmasked*. How did this openness and vulnerability impact your perception of him and of detective work?
7. "In a way, [Michelle McNamara] was the Golden State Killer's last victim." What did you make of McNamara's role in the search for the GSK? If you've read McNamara's book, *I'll Be Gone in the Dark*, did *Unmasked* change how you viewed her role in the case?
8. Holes talks about how his search for the Golden State Killer went from being a passion to an obsession. Where do you believe the line is between these two?
9. After reading *Unmasked*, do you think you have what it takes to work in this field?

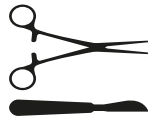


# KEY PLAYERS IN A CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION



## 911 DISPATCHERS

911 dispatchers are responsible for answering emergency calls and dispatching the relevant agencies to respond to civilian emergencies.



## CORONERS

Coroners study the body postmortem to determine cause of death.



## CRIME ANALYSTS

Crime analysts research trends, identify patterns, and help with criminal profiling on specific cases.



## CRIMINAL PROFILERS

Criminal profilers are investigators who study evidence and data to create a criminal profile of suspects in a case.



## CRIMINALISTS

Criminalists are forensic scientists who use their scientific expertise to solve crimes.



## DETECTIVES

Detectives use all the evidence surrounding a criminal case to identify suspects.



## FORENSIC TOXICOLOGISTS

Forensic toxicologists help solve crimes by analyzing biological substances and detecting drugs and other toxins.



## FORENSIC PATHOLOGISTS

Forensic pathologists study body tissue to determine the cause of death.



## GENEALOGISTS

Genealogists use DNA technology to find common ancestors and relatives – an invaluable tool to potentially pin down criminals through their relations.

# NOTABLE CASES

'78

## CYNTHIA WAXMAN, MORAGA, CA

Eleven-year-old Cynthia Waxman was murdered in Moraga. The case went cold until 2005, when DNA evidence linked her killing to convicted criminal Charles Jackson.

[LEARN MORE >](#)



'91

## JAYCEE DUGARD, CALIFORNIA

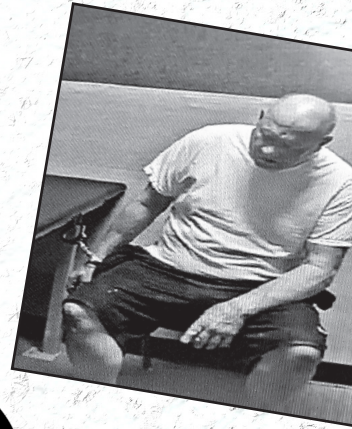
In 1991, Jaycee Dugard was abducted from her school bus stop in South Lake Tahoe, only to be found 18 years later in a rundown backyard in Contra Costa County. [LEARN MORE >](#)



'74

## CARLA WALKER, FORT WORTH, TX

Seventeen-year-old Carla Walker was abducted, raped, and murdered after attending a Valentine's Day dance with her boyfriend. The case went cold for decades until 2020, when the case was finally solved using genealogical tracing. [LEARN MORE >](#)



'86

## GOLDEN STATE KILLER, CALIFORNIA

First known by the names the Original Night Stalker (ONS) and the East Area Rapist (EAR), the Golden State Killer is one of the most notorious criminals in recent history. DNA evidence and genealogical technology were vital in tying together his crimes and leading detectives to his capture in 2019. [LEARN MORE >](#)

'97

## NEAL & BRENDAN ABERNATHY, HERCULES, CA

Neal and Brendan were shot and killed in their home, and the case remains unsolved. Authorities agree that the victims were most likely killed by someone who knew the family. [LEARN MORE >](#)

'98

### LISA NORRELL, PITTSBURG-ANTIOCH HIGHWAY, CA

Lisa Norrell was a 15-year-old girl from Pittsburg, California, who was killed while walking home from her friend's quinceañera rehearsal late one night. Four women were murdered within a six-week period in Pittsburg, a group of homicides Holes refers to as the "Pittsburg cases." [LEARN MORE >](#)



'99

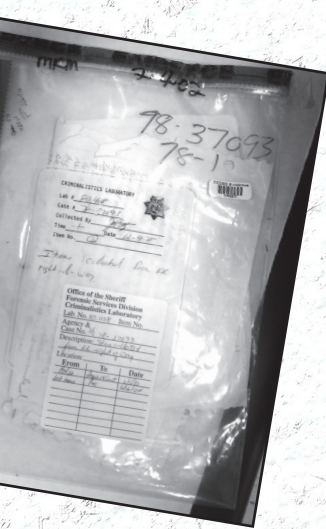
### EMMON BODFISH, ORINDA, CA

Holes describes this as the strangest case of his career. Emmon Bodfish was a trans man whose murder remains unsolved. [LEARN MORE >](#)

'03

### ERIC LOUIS HOFFMAN, PITTSBURG, CA

Hoffman was killed by his sister's boyfriend, career criminal Earl Foster Jr., who was finally caught after he murdered a detective. [LEARN MORE >](#)



'03

### LACI & CONNER PETERSON, CALIFORNIA

Laci Peterson went missing on Christmas Eve 2002, when she was eight months pregnant with her son, Conner. In April 2003, both their bodies washed ashore in the East Bay, and Dr. Alison Galloway determined they had died the day they went missing, evidence that led to her husband, Scott Peterson, being found guilty. [LEARN MORE >](#)

'05

### PAMELA VITALE, LAFAYETTE, CA

Pamela Vitale, a movie director, was murdered inside her home by her teenage neighbor, who was caught after DNA evidence was found on her foot. [LEARN MORE >](#)



If you decide to adopt *Unmasked* for your book club, we would love to hear about it! Please let us know by emailing us at [reader@celadonbooks.com](mailto:reader@celadonbooks.com) or post on social media using the hashtags **#CeladonBookClub** and **#UnmaskedBook**.

Thank you for your consideration.

*Your friends at Celadon Books*

