

[Transcript] Casefile True Crime / 284: Case 241: Harry & Nicola Fuller

During the winter of 1993, the Melbourne suburb of Frankston was terrorised by a vicious serial killer named Paul Daniel.

Three decades later, Daniel has applied for parole.

To coincide with Daniel's bid for parole, Case Far Presents is launching a long-form series about the case as a reminder that Daniel must never be released.

Researched, written and hosted by award-winning crime writer Vicky Betraydis, the Frankston Murders podcast uncovers new material and new victims stalked by Daniel in the lead-up to the killings.

All 11 episodes of the Frankston Murders are available to listen to right now.

Be sure to follow the Frankston Murders wherever you get your podcasts.

Stay tuned until the end of today's episode to hear the trailer and be sure to follow the Frankston Murders wherever you get your podcasts.

For suggested phone numbers for confidential support, please see the show notes for this episode on your app or on our website.

At 8.34 on the morning of Wednesday, February 10, 1993, a call came through to the United Kingdom's Emergency Service helpline, 999.

When the operator answered, they were met with squeals followed by muffled talking.

Thinking it was a child playing a joke or calling by mistake, the operator asked,

Is Mummy there?

They could hear someone walking around a room on the other line while seemingly opening and closing drawers and cupboards.

This continued for six minutes.

The operator then noted in their system child on the line and ended the call.

Although protocol dictated that these types of calls be put through to the police, nothing further was done.

On the morning of Wednesday, February 10, 1993, Barbara Johnson picked up the phone and dialed the familiar number of her daughter's home line.

She listened with growing frustration as she was once again met with the engaged signal.

Barbara waited a few minutes before trying again.

It was still engaged.

Barbara was starting to get worried. She was incredibly close with her daughter, 27-year-old Nicola Fuller, and the two spoke almost to daily.

But Barbara hadn't heard from Nicola since Sunday.

She'd been trying to reach her since 8.45am, but almost half an hour had passed and she still couldn't get through.

At 9.15, Barbara tried Nicola at work instead.

Nicola was employed part-time as a sales assistant at a shopping centre not far from her home in the British market town of Wadhurst in East Sussex.

But Barbara was informed that Nicola hadn't come in.

Barbara tried not to worry, but she instinctively knew that something was wrong.

It simply wasn't like Nicola to go three days without getting in touch with her parents.

Nicola's home phone remained engaged all day.

By the afternoon, her parents decided to stop by her home to see what was going on.

Nicola lived with her husband Harry on Wadhurst's High Street.

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The newlyweds had recently rented Blackman's Cottage, a semi-detached three-story home nestled on a retail strip among a row of centuries-old buildings.

It was a charming old residence.

Painted stark white with a black roof and small front garden, the front windows overlooked the historic Main Street and surrounding shops.

Guests were welcomed with a plaque adorned with two owls.

It was a quintessential English cottage in a quintessential English village, with a population of only a few thousand people.

At the rear of Blackman's Cottage was a large car park that serviced the shops and adjacent high school.

Both Nicola and Harry's cars were there.

Barbara Johnson and her husband Michael peered through the back door of the cottage.

Their daughter's bag and car keys were sitting on a nearby table.

They knocked, but there was no answer.

Concern washed over the Johnsons.

They called the police and requested someone conduct a welfare check.

Officers arrived just before 6pm.

Nicola's parents followed police to the front of the home.

Everything appeared eerily quiet.

The curtains were drawn and the front door was locked.

Police had no choice but to break it down.

Inside, everything appeared to be in place.

There were no signs of a break-in or a struggle.

But, as officers made their way from the front lounge room to the kitchen, they noticed something sticking out from the doorway of an adjoining utility room.

A pair of legs.

In the utility room, 45-year-old Harry Fuller was sprawled on the floor in a pool of blood.

His body had been propped up against the washing machine, his face covered by a leather coat.

He'd been fatally shot in the back, a single bullet puncturing his heart.

Police made their way upstairs.

On the first floor landing, a trail of blood led them past the fallen coffee cup and ashtray into Harry and Nicola's bedroom.

A blood-soaked quilt lay on the floor.

Underneath was the body of Nicola Fuller.

She'd been shot four times, once in the shoulder and three times in the face.

Nicola's parents were quickly ushered outside.

They couldn't believe what was happening.

It all felt completely surreal as though they were watching a film.

Nicola and Harry had only been married for five months.

They'd met in June the previous year and immediately hit it off.

It was an unusual pairing.

Harry was 18 years older than Nicola and the polar opposite of her personality.

While Nicola was extremely reserved and quiet, Harry was boisterous and charismatic.

She preferred to fly under the radar while Harry enjoyed flaunting the finer things in life.

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He worked as a car dealer and loved showing off his expensive Rolls-Royce and Range Rover. But the pair brought out the best in one another and quickly fell in love.

Within two months of being introduced, they were engaged.

Their wedding was a modest affair.

They tied the knot at a local registry office in the town of Tumberidge Wells before having their union blessed by a reverend at St. Mark's Church.

Nicola's family were concerned about how quickly things progressed, but Nicola was adamant.

Not only was she ready to settle down, she was incredibly happy with Harry.

His zest for life was contagious and he'd helped bring Nicola out of her shell.

Nicola's parents saw the positive influence Harry had on their daughter.

He treated her well and was very protective of her.

They ultimately welcomed Harry into their family with open arms.

Blackman's Cottage was cordoned off as investigators tried to piece together the tragic events that had taken place inside.

It was quickly established that the murders had occurred earlier that morning.

The previous evening of Tuesday, February 9, Nicola had gone out to dinner with Franz.

Harry had picked her up at around 11pm.

None of Nicola's friends had noticed anything unusual about the couple's behaviour.

Both Nicola and Harry had been in good spirits.

They'd spoken excitedly about a holiday in the Canary Islands they had planned for the following week.

Located a few doors down from Blackman's Cottage was a tobacconist and news agency.

On the morning of the murders, the clerk recalled that Harry Fuller came in just after 8.30 to purchase cigarettes and a newspaper.

Nicola's mother, Barbara, had first tried calling the Fuller's home at around 8.45am, only to find the line engaged.

The owners of the tea shop next door to the cottage recalled hearing three or four loud bangs around 9am,

but they just thought it was the Fullers banging on the wall to tell them to turn their radio down.

Investigators therefore deduced that the shootings had taken place sometime between 8.35am and 9am.

Harry had been shot in the kitchen, his body then dragged to the nearby utility room.

Given that he'd been shot in the back and there were no signs of a struggle, it was likely that he'd been targeted first.

A strange white powder had been sprinkled over his torso.

Next to Harry was a small plastic baggie containing the same substance.

Nicola was on the first floor landing having a coffee and cigarette when the killer struck.

She was still in her dressing gown and holding a towel, possibly on her way to the shower.

Based on the forensics, investigators deduced that Nicola was first shot in the shoulder from behind.

She then turned around to face the perpetrator, only to be shot in the forehead and left cheek.

These two bullets shattered her eye and splintered her skull and jaw.

Still clinging to life, Nicola managed to crawl to her bedroom.

The killer likely heard movements indicating that Nicola was still alive and returned to the room.

They threw a quilt over her head and administered the final fatal gunshot.

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A blood-soaked telephone handset lay next to Nicola's body, indicating that she may have tried to call for help.

Given that no calls had been registered by emergency services, it appeared the shooter had killed her before she had the chance.

Both Harry and Nicola had been shot at close range.

A Hertzenberger brand cartridge case was found outside the utility room.

A ballistic expert determined that it had been fired from a .32 caliber Walther PPK self-loading pistol.

Other than that, the killer left behind very few clues.

A thorough search of the Fuller's home failed to uncover anything significant.

Nothing had been ransacked or appeared to have been stolen, leaving one investigator to conclude, quote,

whoever killed them did so in cold blood.

Wadhurst's High Street was a busy thoroughfare that connected the counties of East Sussex and Kent.

It housed a handful of restaurants, two banks, a butcher, and several other retail stores and businesses.

A high school with over a thousand students was also tucked just off the main strip, just behind Blackman's Cottage,

and pupils often milled around before classes started in the morning.

Yet, during the crucial time window between 8.35 and 9.00 a.m., nobody had witnessed anything particularly suspicious.

Police established a command centre on High Street and set up a tip line appealing for any witnesses to come forward.

An investigator told the media,

Someone out there must have seen these people coming out of this house, if we get any inkling of a description that is really going to help us.

Based on various witness reports, a timeline of events was established.

At around 6.30 a.m. on the morning of the murders, a postal worker had been driving down High Street when he passed Blackman's Cottage.

As usual, the road was quiet before the morning bustle commenced.

The postman was therefore taken by surprise when a car pulled out in front of him from behind the Fuller's House.

It was a blue Ford Escort.

Behind the wheel was a well-built male driver aged between 35 and 40 years old.

The Escort continued north up the main street until disappearing out of sight.

Just over half an hour later, at 7.05, a passer-by on High Street saw two tall, smartly dressed men get out of a cream-coloured Ford Sierra.

They walked up the path towards Blackman's Cottage, but no one saw them leave.

A woman was passing the rear of the cottage just before 8.00 a.m. when she saw a black vehicle pull into the car park.

It had a long bonnet, similar to a Jaguar.

A man wearing a long black coat got out, but she didn't see where he went.

Lloyd's Bank was located on the opposite side of High Street, with a security camera facing towards the tobacconist.

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The footage confirmed that Harry Fuller entered the tobacconist alone at 8.34 a.m., leaving just minutes later.

He didn't appear to have been followed, and nothing else suspicious was captured on the tape.

However, a Jaguar XJS was confirmed to be in the area.

A schoolgirl walked past Blackman's Cottage at around 9.00 a.m. She told police that she heard a door slam and someone then bumped into her.

When she looked up, she saw another man standing by the cottage door.

Based on this and the report of the two men seeing getting out of the Ford Sierra, police considered the possibility that there were two killers.

However, the schoolgirl had been accompanied by a friend who had a different recollection.

She said these events had occurred on different days rather than simultaneously.

News of the murders shocked the community.

Not only was Wadhurst considered to be a quiet, safe village, locals couldn't believe that a seemingly normal couple could be the targets of such a heinous crime.

Although Harry and Nicola were relatively new to the area and mostly kept to themselves, there was nothing about them that raised any red flags.

That was until police started digging into Harry's background, and another pitcher emerged entirely. Harry Fuller hadn't done very well at school.

He was dyslexic, which meant he struggled with reading and writing.

But Harry thrived in other areas.

He had the gift of the gab, was good with his hands, and always recognized a good deal.

Using these skills to his advantage, he worked in the building and roofing trade before moving into car dealing.

He attended auctions and networked, buying used cars he could later sell for a profit.

The business served him well.

The only problem was finding somewhere to store the vehicles.

When Blackman's Cottage became available, Harry was elated.

It meant he'd have access to the large car park at the rear of the property.

But he seemed to be wary about the move.

Neighbours noticed that he wouldn't open the front door without looking out the window first, and he only opened the door for people he knew.

It was possible that he was just being overly cautious.

Most of Harry's business transactions were done in cash, and he wasn't shy about showing it off.

Friends and associates said Harry didn't even bother to carry a wallet, instead carrying briefcases and bank rolls full of cash.

Given the white powder that was scattered over Harry's body, the obvious theory was that the murders could have been drug related.

Investigators considered the possibility that Harry's car dealings were just a front for an illegal cocaine operation.

Some of his business associates had checkered pasts, and one was rumoured to have served prison time for manslaughter.

Even Harry himself had previous run-ins with the law, with prior convictions for dishonesty and burglary.

Some who knew Harry described him as a con man. He was a big talker who liked to exaggerate

things, particularly when it came to his wealth.

Former neighbours accused Harry of having conned them out of money by conducting seemingly free repairs to their homes, which he then charged them exorbitantly for.

Harry had voiced concerns about his past to a business associate. He was worried that there were certain individuals who might feel compelled to track him down.

It quickly became clear that Harry was paranoid about something.

The fullers had only been living in Blackman's cottage for five months, but police discovered that Harry had already changed their phone number three times in that period.

The most recent just a week before the murders.

Given there were no signs of a break-in, police were convinced that Harry likely knew his killer and had willingly let them inside.

The white powder found on Harry's body was taken for testing. It wasn't cocaine at all, but sugar.

With no other evidence to support the drug theory, it was quickly ruled out.

But the sugar did provide a clue. It meant that whoever had killed the fullers had likely premeditated the crime, sprinkling the sugar over Harry's body as a red herring.

Not long before the murders, Harry had bought a BMW from another car dealer, which he intended to sell. However, he discovered that the engine and license plates had been changed, till tale signs that the car was stolen.

Harry was indignant. He reported the theft to the police, which ultimately led them to uncover a car-ringing operation.

As a result of the bust, some of Harry's business associates lost money. They were not happy.

The decision to report the theft came back to haunt Harry. Just five days before he was killed, Harry told an officer that one of his embittered associates, Roger Lee, suspected that Harry was the snitch and had started giving him trouble.

Roger Lee was a car dealer and reputed gangster with a proclivity for violence and cocaine. He was known to carry around a shotgun, which he wasn't afraid to threaten people with.

He also drove a Jaguar XJS, similar to that captured in the Lloyds Bank security footage.

Investigators considered the possibility that Roger Lee had gone to the fuller's house to seek revenge on Harry.

They tracked him down to a caravan roughly 20 miles from Wadhurst. Lee was uncooperative and refused to answer any questions.

He quickly became the number one person of interest, but with no evidence to tie him to the crimes, police had no grounds to make an arrest.

Posters appealing for information were plastered at the car auction sites that Harry frequented, but within days of the murders, investigators were considering another angle altogether.

By all accounts, Harry and Nicola had been happily married, but if history was anything to go by, some reported that infidelity could be at play.

This wasn't Harry's first marriage. He'd only recently gotten divorced and had a three-year-old daughter with his ex-wife.

There were also unconfirmed reports of a third failed marriage.

Harry was widely known to be a lady's man. With his head of dark hair, traditional good looks and roguish ways, many women found him to be very charming.

One friend told today that Harry, quote, had a finger in every pie going.

Police couldn't find any evidence that Harry was unfaithful to Nicola. On the contrary, people noted

that he was incredibly protective of his new wife.

He took great care of her and put her on a pedestal. He was always buying her gifts and sending her flowers.

Prior to their wedding, the couple had met with a priest. Harry told him that he was looking forward to a fresh start with Nicola.

Nicola's family loved Harry, but as the skeletons emerged from his closet, they found it difficult not to blame him for what happened to their beloved Nikki.

They had no doubt that Nicola was completely unaware of Harry's business dealings and shady past.

Nicola's father, Michael, described his daughter as an English rose, saying,

She would never do anything to hurt someone. She would have been totally devastated by all of this.

Police considered whether Harry and Nicola could have been the victims of a contract killing.

Had a vengeful business associate hired someone to take Harry out and Nicola was unfortunate enough to be collateral damage.

Or had a scorned lover sought the ultimate revenge on an unfaithful partner.

The lead investigator told the media,

The nature of the killings means the possibility that we are looking at a professional murder cannot be ruled out.

The killer was certainly ruthless in the way he executed his crime.

Harry's family shied away from the media, but on February 15, five days after the murders,

Nicola's parents, Michael and Barbara Johnson appeared at a press conference appealing for anyone with information to come forward.

Barbara sobbed quietly as Michael struggled to get out the words.

His voice shaking, he said.

Whoever killed Harry, Nicola was an innocent witness.

Both families are totally devastated.

Please come forward and trust the police.

I can see no reason why there should be anything to fear.

Meanwhile, police obtained Roger Lee's mobile phone records from the morning of Wednesday, February 10, 1993.

Data confirmed he was nowhere near Wadhurst at the time.

What initially seemed like a promising lead was yet another in a long line of red herrings.

Blackman's Cottage became a makeshift memorial as grieving loved ones and shocked members of the community visited to place flowers on the doorstep.

Inside, the search for clues continued.

Police were especially interested in finding where Harry stashed his money.

Harry had recently gone into business with one of his neighbors.

The woman told police that just 10 days before the murders, she gave Harry £13,000 in cash, a majority of which was in £20 notes.

The plan was simple.

Harry would use the money to buy cars, which he'd sell.

The two would then split the profits down the middle.

In the days following this handover, Harry hadn't made any large bank deposits or significant purchases.

It therefore made sense to assume that at least some of the money would be in his house.

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But police couldn't find any sign of it.

Despite Harry's reputation for flashing briefcases full of money, all they found was a grand total of £210.

However, the search didn't cover something else of interest.

Under a couch in the lounge room, police found an old G-Mark brand answering machine.

Under another couch was a Boots brand answering machine.

Pressing play on the tapes, it became apparent that the Fullers had been recording all of their recent phone calls.

Although no one close to the couple had any explanation as to why they might be doing this, the content of the tapes provided some fascinating insights.

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The Boots answering machine contained several conversations and messages, most of which were run-of-the-mill exchanges between friends, family and business associates, except one.

Harry, it's Colin, the final, undated message said.

The caller was identified as Colin Gabriel, a former car-dealing business partner of Harry Fullers. Police tracked Colin down and asked him about the threatening message.

Colin explained that roughly three months earlier, around November of 1992, he and Harry had a falling out.

He said he'd left the message around that time, and the two had nothing to do with one another since.

Although there was nothing to verify when Colin had left the message, police didn't find anything else to link him to the crime, and he was deemed an unlikely suspect.

They hoped a conversation recorded on the other GMAC answering machine would prove more fruitful.

The 49 minutes of audio recordings on this device had all been captured within two days of Harry and Nicola's deaths.

One conversation had been recorded the night before, while Nicola had been out dining with friends.

In it, Harry sounded jovial and good-natured as the male caller asked him how he was doing.

Very well indeed, Harry responded. Couldn't be better.

The man told Harry that he'd popped over to see him the previous evening at around seven o'clock.

The lights were on, so he knocked, but there was no answer.

Harry said he'd been at the gym.

The two then arranged a meeting for eight o'clock the following morning.

The man agreed to come to the fuller's home. Harry responded warmly. You're a gentleman. Don't let me down. See you in the morning, my darling.

The caller was equally cheerful, ending the conversation by saying, Chow for now.

Although it was a casual, seemingly light-hearted conversation between friends, it raised some red flags.

Harry Fuller wasn't known to be a morning person, so why was he agreeing to such an early morning meeting?

Furthermore, if the caller had indeed visited the fuller's home at 8am as the pair planned, it put him at the scene of the crime within the key time period of the murders.

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While this didn't necessarily mean the caller was involved, it meant they could be a vital witness. The investigators had to go by was the caller's first name, Steve. He was the only caller on the GMAC answering machine who they couldn't identify. They began compiling a list of all the steves known to Harry Fuller, or anyone with that name who may have come into contact with Harry in recent times. Given that the fullers had only changed their phone number the week before the murders, it meant only a select few had been given their latest number. But, with such a large network of friends, acquaintances and associates, the list of potential steves soon grew to dozens of individuals. Police attempted to track down and question each one while keeping their knowledge of the recorded phone call a secret. Each one denied having any knowledge of Harry or Nicola's death. A £10,000 reward for information was announced, but still the mysterious Steve remained silent. The reality was that no matter how beloved Harry Fuller was, he also had an abundance of enemies. The various lines of inquiry made it difficult to ascertain which was the right path. While police had no shortage of leads, three weeks passed with no major breakthroughs. They sent a letter to every household in Wadhurst providing an update on the case and continuing their appeal for information. Then, one investigating officer had an idea. He picked up the telephone handset that had been found beside Nicola Fuller's body and pressed the redial button. Perhaps it would lead them to Steve or to another key person Harry or Nicola might have spoken to prior to the crime. The answer on the other end of the line surprised him. Emergency, which service? There hadn't been any record of an emergency 999 call being placed from Blackman's Cottage. Neither police nor paramedics had been summoned to the property on the morning that Harry and Nicola were killed. Investigators now realised that Nicola might have succeeded in calling for help after all. They obtained a recording of the calls that had come through to 999 on Wednesday, February 10, 1993. At 8.34am, a call was placed from Blackman's Cottage. The caller didn't speak and only made squealing sounds down the receiver. The answering emergency services operator interpreted these sounds to be that of a child playing around and disconnected the call. Police realised the muffled cries had actually been Nicola Fuller. The gunshot to her head that had shattered her jaw had also severed her tongue. She was trying to ask the operator for help but was unable to speak clearly. It was while she had the operator on the line that the killer placed a quilt over Nicola's head and administered the final fatal gunshot. Unaware the call had gone through, the killer continued walking around the house, opening and closing drawers. When Nicola's family found out about this, they were shattered. The Wadhurst police station was roughly 200 yards from Blackman's Cottage.

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If Nicola's call had been patched through, they believed she could have been saved, or at the very least, the killer could have been caught in the act.

Nicola's parents met with British Telecom, the company responsible for handling the calls, demanding an explanation and public apology.

The request was denied.

By April 1993, two months had passed since the double homicide, and police were no closer to making an arrest.

They decided it was time to reveal their full hand.

A segment about the case was aired on CrimeWatch, a popular BBC television program that created reconstructions of major unsolved crimes.

In it, police released an edited audio clip of Harry Fuller talking to the elusive Steve, with Steve's name cut out.

A detective who worked on the case told viewers,

It's absolutely crucial that we find this man. We haven't found him, and he hasn't come forward.

There may be some reason for that, but we really need to find him, and I'd ask anybody that's listening tonight who either recognizes his voice, or thinks they recognize his voice, to please make contact with us.

Alternatively, if the man concerned is listening and he himself wants to contact us to eliminate him, then please do contact us.

A woman named Sheila was watching the segment at home.

She thought she recognized the voice as her brother-in-law, Steve Young, but she couldn't be sure.

Sheila decided to sleep on it.

The next day, she called Steve Young and asked if he had spoken to Harry Fuller on the night before the murders.

Steve said no. Sheila was baffled. The voice had sounded so much like him.

She urged her brother-in-law to contact the police anyway, just to eliminate himself from the investigation.

Steve Young was Harry's insurance broker. The two had known each other since the early 80s, but had lost touch over the years.

They'd only recently run into each other again and started a business relationship.

About two weeks into the Fuller murder inquiry, police had questioned Steve Young as part of the routine probe into Harry's business dealings.

Steve said their relationship was purely professional. They didn't have a friendship outside of work. They'd last spoken about five days before the murders, when Harry called Steve to discuss a cover note that was about to expire.

Steve claimed he was in his office on the morning of Wednesday, February 10, 1993, and that his secretary could verify his whereabouts.

There was nothing about him that aroused police suspicions, so he wasn't looked into any further.

But Sheila wasn't the only one who recognized the voice.

Around the same time, an anonymous mail called the police tip line stating,

The voice is Steve Young.

Two days after the crime watch episode aired, two officers were dispatched to interview Steve Young at his office.

Before they had the chance, they were called back.

Young had just walked into the Sussex police station and identified himself as the caller on the tape. He'd also handed police a two-page statement in which he admitted that he'd initially lied to the interviewing officers.

Young explained that one of his clients had a Porsche they wanted to sell.

He'd told Harry Fuller about it, and he was interested in checking it out.

On the evening of Tuesday, February 9, Young called Harry to arrange an inspection for 8am the following day.

As Young made his way to Wadhurst the next morning, he was unexpectedly held up by roadworks.

By the time he arrived at Blackman's Cottage, it was around 20 past 8.

The curtains were drawn, so he assumed the Fullers were still asleep.

Young said he knocked on the door, but there was no answer.

He walked down High Street to waste some time before returning to Blackman's Cottage at around 8.40am.

The curtains were still drawn, and again, his knocks went unanswered.

Steve Young was adamant he hadn't seen or heard anything suspicious at the property.

When he found out that Harry and Nicola had been murdered, he was shocked.

He claimed to have contacted the police to see if they wanted to question him, but his call was never returned, so he just assumed his statement wasn't of any interest.

By the time police visited him as part of their routine questioning, he'd heard about Harry's shady business dealings.

Young claimed he lied about his whereabouts on the day of the murders because he was afraid for his own safety.

For investigators, there was nothing about Steve Young that raised any red flags.

Aged in his mid-30s, the married father of two was a well-educated, law-abiding citizen with no criminal record.

By all accounts, he was a doting husband and supportive parent.

A pillar of the community, he helped to run his son's under-11 football team and was enthusiastically involved in the local drama club.

Just a few months earlier, he'd stolen the show with his comedic acting skills during the village's Christmas pantomime.

He was respected by the community and clients alike.

Still, it was hard to comprehend why he hadn't approached the police straight away.

The officer who questioned Young early on in the investigation had noted him as relaxed and normal, with nothing in his demeanor arousing any suspicion.

They couldn't help but wonder if he had something to hide.

Steve Young agreed to be formally interviewed.

He admitted that he probably wouldn't have come forward if the recording of his call with Harry hadn't been aired on Crime Watch.

And that he hadn't seen anything that could help with the investigation, he simply didn't want to be involved in any way.

When asked whether he had access to any firearms, Young said he was the treasurer of a local rifle club.

He owned several guns, each of which were legally licensed, a shotgun, a revolver, and three pistols. None of them were 32-caliber pistols, the type used in the Fuller murders.

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Even though they had no evidence to link him to the crime, police suspected Steve Young knew more than he was letting on.

They placed him under arrest while further investigation was conducted, treading carefully with Young in a bid to keep him talking.

Police looked into Steve Young's movements on Wednesday, February 10.

After leaving Blackman's Cottage, it was a typical working day for the insurance broker.

He had some meetings, spoke with some business associates, and chatted on the phone with his wife.

In the evening, he attended a meeting at the Freemasons Lodge, where he was a member.

He'd been his normal self, nobody had noticed anything strange about his behaviour.

A warrant was obtained to search Young's home and office.

While he'd already admitted to being a gun enthusiast who was legally licensed to own multiple weapons, police were shocked at what they found.

In addition to the firearms Young had already disclosed, they found deactivated grenade launchers, bayonets, replica submachine guns, combat gear, masks, and even fake number plates.

One of the illegal guns, a loaded 9mm automatic pistol, had been stashed underneath the bed of one of Young's children.

The search also uncovered thousands of rounds of ammunition.

When the collection of arsenal was laid out, it filled the size of a squash court.

While this was deeply troubling, one weapon was notably absent, a .32 caliber pistol.

Young had already told police that he topped up his ammunition supply by reloading.

This is a common practice used by gun enthusiasts to save money.

Instead of purchasing mass-produced ammunition, one can collect empty cases and then assemble the individual components, including gunpowder, primers, and bullet heads.

Police found Young's reloading machine.

The markings on his reloaded ammunition was compared to the ammunition recovered from Blackman's cottage.

They looked remarkably similar.

When the police asked Young what car he drove to Blackman's cottage, he was oddly cagey.

He ummed and arred before saying it was probably his white Volkswagen Golf.

The police looked for the car at Young's home and office.

It wasn't there.

They asked him where it was, and he said he'd recently taken it to a mechanic to have some work done.

Police tracked the Golf down, only to discover that Young had only taken it in the day after the segment about the Fuller's murders had aired on CrimeWatch.

A mobile telephone inside the vehicle was confirmed to have made a call to the Fuller's home at 8.10 on the morning of the murders.

Although the Volkswagen Golf was a popular model, Young's vehicle was unique looking, with distinct modifications, including alloy wheels.

This made it easy for investigators to differentiate it from other white cars when reviewing the security footage taken from Lloyd's bank.

They focused on the times that Steve Young claimed to have arrived and departed from the area, 8.20 and 8.40 am.

But there was no sign of the Golf.

They viewed the footage captured earlier and later than the times Young had given.

Sure enough, they found the car.

He'd been caught in yet another lie.

With the circumstantial evidence mounting against Steve Young, the biggest question was, why would he want to kill Harry and Nicola Fuller?

He had no known grudges with either of them, nor was there anything to suggest any kind of romantic involvement.

In fact, he barely knew them.

Police asked Young about his financial situation.

He responded it was pretty tight.

This soon proved to be a major understatement.

Steve Young was deep in debt.

He'd inherited his home from his father, but had since taken out several mortgages, which had overdue payments.

His insurance brokerage was trading insolvently and hadn't turned a profit in eight years.

Instead of using his client's money to pay their insurance premiums, Young was using it to pay off his own debts.

With no funds left over to pay the insurance companies, his brokerage was under threat of being shut down.

His financial situation was deemed critical.

All up, Young owed over £100,000 to multiple friends, family members and businesses.

The provincial insurance company was one such business.

Young owed them £13,500 in backdated premiums.

Police discovered that just two days before Harry and Nicola were killed, a representative from provincial had called Young.

He said he'd be coming to Young's office on Wednesday, February 10 to collect the outstanding debt.

If he didn't pay up, they'd no longer do business with him.

The appointment went ahead as planned.

Young handed over a check for £6,000, which cleared with no problems.

Police discovered that Young kept a detailed record of all the people he borrowed money from.

There was no record of him having borrowed a large sum of money before this meeting.

This raised the obvious question, where did he get his money from?

A check of Steve Young's bank records confirmed that he'd deposited £6,000 into his business account on the morning of Wednesday, February 10, just after Harry and Nicola were killed.

The deposit was made in £20 notes, just like the unaccounted for payment that Harry Fuller had received from his neighbour.

Young had also paid off an outstanding phone bill of £360.

The police asked Young where he got this cash from.

He explained that a friend had lent it to him two years ago and had been hanging onto it in case of an emergency.

Meanwhile, an officer searching Young's office found a single 32-caliber Hertenberger bullet.

A ballistics expert examined it and determined it had been shot from a Walther PPK self-loading pistol.

[Transcript] Casefile True Crime / 284: Case 241: Harry & Nicola Fuller

The same as the gun used to kill Harry and Nicola Fuller.

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When pressed, Young maintained his innocence.

He explained that he'd once reloaded some 32-caliber ammunition for another member of his gun club, but had never owned such a weapon himself.

It was no use. He'd been caught in too many lies.

Steve Young was formally charged with the double murder of Harry and Nicola Fuller.

Police dubbed him the Ice Man for the way he was able to go about his life immediately after the crimes as though nothing had happened.

Harry and Nicola's families were stunned.

Young lived just down the road from Harry's brother, Tom, and they sometimes ran into each other at the local pub.

He couldn't believe that such an apparently normal person could commit such a heinous crime.

To Nicola's family, Young was a complete stranger.

Her sister Michelle told Crime Watch,

I found it hard to believe that their insurance broker would have access to guns, let alone that he would commit such a crime.

It didn't seem to fit the character or the sort of person you assume an insurance broker to be.

But then, what is a murderer like? What job do they do?

In the first week of May, three months after they were killed, Harry and Nicola were laid to rest in separate ceremonies.

Their funerals suited their personalities. Harry's a large event and Nicola's modest and private.

Nicola's funeral took place the day after Harry's at the same church where the pair's marriage had been blessed just eight months prior.

The presiding reverend told the Kent and Sussex courier,

You cannot make sense of a nonsense like this. It is hard to do anything other than stand together in sorrow and sadness.

Steve Young's trial for the double murder commenced in late February 1994, just over a year after Harry and Nicola were killed.

The prosecution's case was relatively straightforward.

While the evidence against Young was circumstantial, they said his dire financial situation gave him motivation to target Harry Fuller, who was known to carry large sums of cash.

By setting up a meeting with Harry about his client's Porsche, he established an explanation for his presence at Blackman's Cottage.

His access to firearms gave him the means to carry out the crime, while the discovery of similar bullets to those used in the murders proved a link.

His changing stories and the lies he told to police were further proof of his guilt.

Nicola Fuller was a victim of collateral damage. Young had shot her purely to avoid her identifying him as her husband's killer.

The defence disputed this entirely.

If Young's sole motive was financial gain, there were plenty of other people who could have targeted Harry Fuller for this same reason.

What about his other enemies and scorned business associates?

And if all Young wanted was a quick cash grab, why not break in and rob Blackman's Cottage when

nobody was home?

If Nicola wasn't a target, why didn't he organise to meet Harry at a different location or when he was alone?

The courtroom was tense as Steve Young took the stand in his own defence.

In an unexpected twist, he provided a brand new account of the events that unfolded on the morning of February 10.

For the first time, Young gave an explanation for the 8.10am phone call between himself and Harry Fuller.

He claimed that he called Harry upon his arrival to Blackman's Cottage because the curtains were all drawn and there was no response when he knocked on the door.

The call apparently woke Harry up. Harry told Young to give him some time, so Young waited in his car.

A short while later, he noticed that a curtain had been opened. He knocked again, but still there was no response.

He walked to the rear of the property in case Harry had decided to wait for him in the car park.

When he got there, he saw that the back door was slightly open.

Young looked inside and saw Harry lying on the ground.

He rushed inside and felt for a pulse, but there wasn't one.

At first, he assumed Harry had a heart attack, but he then noticed blood was coming from Harry's head.

A cartridge case was lying nearby.

From his experience with guns, Young said he recognised it as being from a 32 calibre bullet.

For the first time, Young admitted that he had once owned a replica .32 Walther PPK pistol.

He said he'd purchased it from a Chinese mail order five years prior, but had since sold it to someone else — Harry Fuller.

Young claimed that in the months before Harry was killed, he and another man approached Young at his office, asking if he could help Harry purchase a gun for protection.

Young sold him the Walther PPK, along with some of his reloaded ammunition.

Young said that upon realising Harry was dead, he panicked.

He immediately fled outside.

Looking back at the house, he saw an unfamiliar face of a boarding male in the upstairs window.

Young dialed 999, but then paused.

Harry Fuller had been killed by the very weapon that Young had sold him illegally.

Fearing that he'd be incorrectly linked to the crime or that his life would be in danger for being a witness, he made the difficult decision to keep what he saw to himself.

In the weeks following, Young said that an anonymous male called his office multiple times making threats against him and his family.

His fear was so immense that he was compelled to lie and put on a façade of calm when questioned by the police.

The defence presented the possibility that another of Harry's enemies had entered Blackman's cottage that morning.

Perhaps Harry had drawn his gun on the assailant, who managed to take hold of the weapon themselves, and then used it to kill the couple.

The prosecution disputed this.

Had someone gone to the Fuller's home with the intention to kill, common sense dictated that they would have brought their own weapon.

Also, Harry had been shot from behind at close range.

It was unlikely he would have turned his back while a gun was being aimed at him.

Young's story about selling Harry his Walther PPK along with some of his reloaded ammunition also seemed suspiciously convenient.

He'd only mentioned this after becoming aware of the fact that 32 caliber ammo had been uncovered in his office.

After four weeks of testimony, the jury deliberated overnight before delivering its verdict.

For the murders of Harry and Nicola Fuller, Steve Young was found guilty and given two life sentences.

A motion in the courtroom was mixed. Some of the victim's loved ones cheered while Young's wife broke down in tears.

Although Nicola's family were relieved, her father told reporters, the verdict doesn't change things for us at all. We can't bring Nicci back, but this does take an evil person off the streets.

Harry and Nicola's loved ones could finally begin the healing process.

But for one member of the jury, the nightmare was just beginning.

For weeks after the trial, 24 year old juror Adrian lay awake at night, plagued with a secret.

Something had happened during the trial that didn't sit well with him. He was torn.

Did he keep it to himself, or did others have the right to know the truth?

Adrian deliberated internally before eventually seeking legal advice.

Most solicitors didn't want to get involved, likely because it was illegal to repeat anything that jurors told them.

But as the weeks went by, Adrian could no longer live with the knowledge of what had happened behind closed doors.

The night before Steve Young's verdict was delivered, the 12 member jury had been sequestered to a hotel to deliberate.

This is standard practice in many countries.

It ensures that jurors have minimal access to the outside world, thus preventing exposure to external influences or information while they reach a decision.

It had been a long four weeks for the jurors.

Not only were they conflicted as to whether or not Steve Young was telling the truth, they'd also had to sit through the six minute recording of Nicola Fuller's thwarted attempt to call for help.

It took an emotional toll.

Once the jurors were in the hotel, they sat down over dinner and had a few drinks to try and unwind. The atmosphere quickly became more relaxed.

People joked around and engaged in casual conversation, lifting the mood considerably.

An entertaining conversation arose about seances and who among them had participated in one before.

A seance is a meeting in which people attempt to communicate with the spirit world.

While the concept of contacting the dead has been around for centuries,

it wasn't until the late 1800s that the very first device was sold to facilitate communication between

the living and deceased.

Known as a Ouija board, the device consists of a flat board displaying all the letters of the alphabet, the numbers zero through nine, and the words yes, no, and goodbye.

At the bottom is a small heart-shaped plank known as the planchette.

To use a Ouija board, two or more people gather round the board, gently placing their hands on the planchette.

They then ask questions and watch as the planchette moves around the board, spilling out messages from the other side.

The Ouija board is a controversial device.

Some view it as a valuable means to communicate with the spirit world,

while others believe it's a satanic tool that can open menacing portals into the unknown.

Scientists believe the so-called messages received on a Ouija board are simply the result of the user's subconscious.

To skeptics, the planchette isn't moved across the board by a spiritual being, but by the users themselves.

Whatever the truth, most people tend to agree on one thing. Ouija boards are not to be messed with.

The group of jurors laughed and shared stories about their experience with seances before retiring to their rooms for the 11pm curfew.

Adrienne was feeling quite tipsy and went straight to bed.

But a small group, one man and three women, weren't ready to call it a night.

Intrigued by the conversation about seances, they gathered in one of their hotel rooms and decided to hold one of their own.

They fashioned their very own Ouija board out of paper using a wine glass as the planchette.

The foursome then sat around the board, each of them placing their fingers on the base of the glass.

They asked if there were any spirits present.

The answer was yes.

The group asked the spirit to identify themselves.

The planchette moved across the board from letter to letter, finally spelling out the name Harry Fuller.

The group grew tense.

The designated leader asked, who killed you?

They watched in silence as the wine glass slid across the board, eventually spelling out the words, Stephen Young did it.

The leader asked what they should do.

The response, vote guilty tomorrow.

For some of the women, it became too much.

They started to cry, thinking they'd taken things way too far.

The seance ended and the group retreated to their respective rooms, tormented by what they'd done.

The next morning, Adrian heard them discussing it over breakfast.

He couldn't believe they'd actually gone through with it.

At first, he thought it was funny.

But when Steve Young was declared guilty later that day, Adrian wondered whether a miscarriage of justice had been served.

Four weeks after the trial, Adrian couldn't live with the knowledge anymore.

He wrote an anonymous letter to the Crown Court, detailing the antics at the hotel and requesting that Steve Young's conviction be quashed.

Shortly after, he approached the News of the World tabloid and gave them the full exclusive story, saying,

This is someone's life we're dealing with. I was astonished that these grown-up people had played this child's game.

News of the World published the story under the headline, Boo's Dirty Jokes and the Ouija Board. It quickly became a media sensation.

A jury is expected to reach a verdict based on the facts presented at trial, not on potentially unreliable external information.

Being swayed by external influence or attempting to acquire further evidence was potentially a criminal offence.

Adrian's allegations were therefore treated with utmost seriousness.

The full investigation was launched to determine whether those who held the seance had attempted to pervert the course of justice.

The four jury members insisted that the decision to use the Ouija Board had been nothing more than a poor decision fueled by alcohol.

Despite some of their emotional reactions, they each viewed the whole thing as a joke and were adamant that the answers given by the so-called spirit had nothing to do with their decision to convict Steve Young.

It took six months of questioning and deliberations before the court declared that while the jury had misbehaved, nothing criminal had occurred.

Steve Young's legal team appealed his conviction based in part on the jury's misbehavior and the court agreed. A retrial was ordered.

The court's opinion provoked some fascinating discussions for the legal community.

Law professor Gary Slapper discussed the issue in the Times newspaper, saying,

Suppose the jurors in the hotel had sought advice from their God through prayer, would such a course of action invalidate their decision.

They would, after all, be consulting something non-corporeal and something other than the evidence in the case.

The divine and superstitious oracles both rely on the faith of the juror.

Will the court of appeal be able to argue that consulting a God for guidance is permissible, but that consulting any other non-corporeal entity is not allowed?

Harry and Nicholas' families were eager to put the trauma of the trial behind them and move on with their lives.

When they heard that Young's conviction was overturned, they were gutted.

Harry's family couldn't believe that a man proven guilty in court could get a retrial on what they viewed as such a, quote,

Silly, silly thing.

Nicholas' family didn't think they could get through it a second time around.

They were furious that the media had latched onto the sensational Ouija board story, saying that the jurors had made a complete mockery of their daughter's death.

The retrial of Steve Young for the murders of Harry and Nicholas Fuller went ahead eight months

later in front of a brand new jury.

For three weeks, Harry and Nicholas' loved ones had to endure the harrowing evidence for a second time.

But once again, the jury unanimously found Steve Young guilty for both murders.

The judge called him a cold-blooded killer who had committed the crimes for his own personal gain before serving him with two life sentences.

When asked if he had anything to say, Young simply stated,

I'm innocent, my lord.

Outside court, Harry's brother Tom told reporters,

Steven Young is an animal who should be put down. I would like to see hanging brought back for people like him.

You can hardly explain what it has been like for both families to go through this ordeal.

It's like someone having their hand in your guts and slowly pulling them out.

Some struggled to comprehend that an upstanding family man like Steve Young could be compelled to commit such a callous crime, no matter his motivation.

Theories remained that he wasn't the only one at the Fuller's house on February 10, 1993.

There was still the matter of the witnesses who had reported seeing two mysterious men approaching Blackman's Cottage on the morning of the murders.

Although these sightings were never confirmed, it fueled ongoing speculation that Steve Young could have been working with one of Harry Fuller's enemies, either by force or out of financial desperation.

Given Young's access to firearms, his clean criminal record, and his rapport with Harry, Young arguably made a desirable partner for someone who wanted to cause more harm to Harry than simply taking his money.

It was even theorised that Young could have agreed to help set up the meeting, not knowing what was about to transpire.

But no evidence was ever uncovered to support this, and no one else was ever charged in relation to the crime.

The trial of Steve Young has made history as one of the high-profile examples of juror misbehaviour.

Decades later, the behaviour of the jurors is still questioned.

Harry Fuller's brother Tom felt the original jurors should be punished for what they did, saying,

We all went through months more agony because of them.

Detective Graham Hill, who worked on the Fuller murder investigation, told the ABC,

This is making an absolute mockery, and it's the most serious type of trial you can ever have.

There is no element of humour in it at all. There's no frivolity in it at all.

And yet those four members of the jury made it into a laughing stock.

University of Melbourne Law Professor Jeremy Gans wrote a book centred around the case, titled, *The Ouija Board Jurors, Mystery, Mischief and Misery in the Jury System*.

In it, he explores other cases of jury misconduct, concluding that there was nothing exceptional about the Ouija Board jurors other than the tabloid media attention.

Gans disputes the general perception that the jurors were making a mockery of the Fuller case and treating the hotel sequestering as a party.

Instead, he points out that they had to sit through disturbing evidence, including the failed 999 call from Nicola, which would have been incredibly traumatic.

Professor Gans told the ABC,

Whatever was going on in that hotel room probably wasn't good times for the jury, but perhaps something else, coping with what they were hearing.

Gans' book also provided a revelation.

In 2004, Young's new defence team hired a forensic audiologist to analyse the six-minute recording of the 999 call placed by Nicola Fuller.

They determined that after Nicola was killed, footsteps of two different people could be heard rummaging around Blackman's Cottage, whispering to one another.

While the whispers were unintelligible, one word was clear.

Here.

The stress of Nicola's death and the ongoing litigation took an enormous toll on the health of her parents, Barbara and Michael, who were both aged in their mid-50s.

Within a two-year period of the legal proceedings, Barbara suffered from a heart attack and Michael from a serious stroke.

They missed Nicola immensely.

Small things served as daily reminders from her favourite songs to the way she always bussed in any patch of sun she could find.

Barbara told CrimeWatch,

When I sit out there, in my garden in the sunshine, I think I can see her there in the lounge.

Nicola's sister Michelle looked after her parents while also trying to manage her own grief.

She was haunted by nightmares of her sister's final moments, telling CrimeWatch that the thought of Nicola crawling to the phone for help that never came kept her awake night after night.

Michelle said,

At least 100 times a day, I want to pick up the phone to Nikki, or I think I must tell Nikki that, but I don't accept that she's not there.

I have to accept that one day I'll see her.

I get through each day on the strength that one day, I'll be able to ask her how she is.

In June 1993, Elizabeth Stevens, 18, was murdered on her way home from the bus stop.

Her death began a seven-week reign of terror for the people of Frankston.

I remember thinking, like, how can it happen to someone that's fought so hard to get away and have a good life?

A serial killer was on the loose. No one was safe, not young mother Debbie Freem, 22, taken on a trip to the shops, nor Natalie Russell, 17, murdered on her way home from school.

Then two detectives came in and they just said to Brian and myself, can we go somewhere private?

We went into the bedroom and they said, I'm sorry to tell you, it's Natalie.

The serial killer, Paul Denier, was captured and sentenced to life in prison.

On appeal, he was granted a 30-year minimum sentence.

And I guess I saw in his face that, yeah, I'm a spy of the new sort of thing. He was proud of what he had done.

Fast forward 30 years and Denier has applied for parole.

Award-winning crime writer Vicki Petraitis was on patrol with police the night the final murder took place.

As a true crime author, I found myself right in the heart of Frankston doing ride-alongs with the local police when the murders were happening.

[Transcript] Casefile True Crime / 284: Case 241: Harry & Nicola Fuller

She wrote the best-selling book, The Frankston Murders, which has never been out of print. Vicki has revisited the case in a long-form podcast to remind the world why Denier must never be released.

Denier isn't just dangerous where young women are concerned. He is dangerous to all women, babies, schoolgirls, friends, strangers, older women, everyone.

The Frankston Murders podcast uncovers new material and new victims stalked by Denier in the lead-up to the killings.

The woman policeman turned to me and said, you should take a ticket in tax as much as to say I was the luckiest person around.

Vicki interviews prison guards, police officers, family members and people caught in the periphery of a serial killer.

He has not learnt his lesson. He has not changed. He has not become remorseful. He has not repented or even apologised.

A scale of 1 to 10, I'd easily put him as a 20. It's about far off the scale.

The Frankston Murders is the latest podcast from Case File Presents, available now, wherever you get your podcasts.