

The trial of todd kohlhepp



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Introduction

Todd Kohlhepp shocked the upstate of South Carolina when law enforcement found him holding a woman against her will in a shipping container on his property. Upon this discovery law enforcement found several dead bodies buried on his property. While in custody for these crimes Kohlhepp admitted to several other murders that occurred in 2003 at Superbike Motorsports. The case had been considered cold up until his confession.

Finding Kayla Brown

Kayla Brown had gone missing along with her boyfriend Charlie Carver. Law enforcement obtained warrants for AT&T in order to gain access to her cell phone information. Upon gaining the information, law enforcement was able to use it to determine that her cell phone had been used on Kohlhepp's 95-acre property. Once they were able to determine the location, law enforcement went to the property to search for her. Had law enforcement not used technology they may never have found her, the bodies, or that Kohlhepp was in fact a murderer. He would have continued on killing people and burying them on his property.

Once law enforcement entered the 95-acre property they were able to find Kayla. She had been locked inside a metal shipping container and chained by the neck in order to prevent her from leaving the container. Spartanburg County law enforcement rescued her and she was able to provide more information about her disappearance, her boyfriend, and Todd Kohlhepp. She and Charlie Carver had been hired by Kohlhepp to clean, and the acceptance

of that job turned into a nightmare for Kayla who had been held against her will and sexually assaulted and claimed Charlie Carvers life.

Finding Charlie David Carver, Johnny Coxie, and Meagan Coxie

Kayla Brown told law enforcement that Kohlhepp had buried bodies on his property, that Kohlhepp himself showed her the graves and threatened to kill her and bury her there as well should she attempt to escape (CBS NEWS, 2016). Law enforcement took Kohlhepp to his property where he showed them where the bodies were buried. Law enforcement also physically searched the 95-acre property in order to determine if there were more bodies buried there than Kohlhepp was admitting to. They found no additional bodies on that specific property.

Admission of Guilt for the 2003 Superbike Motorsports Murders

In 2003 four people were found murdered in Superbike Motorsports. The case had been considered a cold case because more than a decade had passed with no new investigative information for law enforcement had come to light. Every year on the anniversary of the quadruple murder, local news would run the story asking their viewers for any information they had concerning the murders, and asking those members of the public to come forward. Law enforcement, who had investigated the Superbike Motorsports murders had seen Kohlhepp's name before, on a customer list belonging to Superbike Motorsports.

After his arrest, Kohlhepp told investigators that he had committed the Superbike Motorsports quadruple murders. Investigators were wary of

believing him; however, he knew information about the murders that had never been released to the public. He knew details of the murders that only the murder would know. After more than ten years, the cold case had been solved. Now, Kohlhepp was starting to look like a serial killer.

Media Coverage of Kohlhepp

Serial killers have long since captured the attention of the American public. They want to the ' how' and the ' why' when it comes to them. When the news broke about Kohlhepp it appeared to come out of nowhere, which served to capture the attention of the American people, both those who lived locally to where he had been arrested and those in a broader national sense. The media quickly latched onto the story, dubbing him a serial killer.

Local Coverage

The media in the Upstate of South Carolina showed a live feed for their viewers, of law enforcement searching Kohlhepp's property. Locals sat and watched, waiting to see if more bodies were going to be found. The local media focused on Spartanburg County Sheriff Chuck Wright, and how he was handling the investigation. Locals knew that there would be local families receiving some bad news and they came together to support one another as a community.

National Coverage

The national media focused on Kohlhepp's history. The national viewers learned that he had been a real estate agent, had never been married, had a pilot's license, and that he had been in legal trouble before (CBS NEWS, <https://assignbuster.com/the-trial-of-todd-kohlhepp/>

2016). Once the victims had been identified, the national media ran with the story of the lone Kohlhepp survivor, Kayla Brown, recounting the horrors she survived. In addition, they focused on those who had not survived. This included the retelling of the 2003 quadruple murder at Superbike Motorsports.

Trial

No Trial

Usually, with a high profile case like Kohlhepp's there is a trial. Serial killer trials being shown on television is not unusual, the public got their taste of them when Ted Bundy's trial occurred. They expected the same in this case. However, prosecutors spoke to the families of those he had murdered as well as to the survivor, and decided to offer a plea deal instead of taking him to trial. The feelings of the victims' families and the survivor were not the only reason a trial did not occur.

The state had considered taking Kohlhepp to trial and seeking the death penalty (Cary, 2017). Death penalty trials take a very long time, potentially years, to get through before a verdict is reached. It also allows for years of motions and hearings before a convicted person is put to death. South Carolina has the death penalty, but it is not often used. In fact, the state of South Carolina has more than 30 people on death row (Cary, 2017). Many of those people on death row have been there for more than 15 years.

Instead, the state offered life without the possibility of parole to Kohlhepp, which he accepted only seven months after his arrest (Gross, 2018). The fact

there was no trial angered many people and once could say it was controversial. There are those who wanted to see him get the death penalty for the crimes he had committed. Many people thought that he should have been confronted in a court by the family members of the people he had murdered.

In the end, however, the state had the final decision as to whether or not he would be offered a deal and Kohlhepp himself could have declined the deal and chosen to take his case to trial. He did not. The only way to address this as a controversy would be to make the death penalty in South Carolina one that does not allow for extended periods of time between sentencing and execution, or the total banning of the death penalty. Other than those two options, the controversy boils down to subjective opinions.

Sentencing

Kohlhepp accepted a plea deal offered by the state of South Carolina in order to avoid the death penalty. He was sentenced to seven continuous life sentences. In addition, he was sentenced to 30 years for sexual assault and 30 years for kidnapping. The families of his victims were accepting of the sentencing because it provided them closure, as well as, knowing that this sentencing meant he would die in prison. He would not fight his sentencing nor would he be able to win a possibility of parole. It was over.

Lawsuit Hearings

Even though Kohlhepp's sentencing was over, his court appearances were not. Kayla Brown and the families of his victims filed civil suits against him.

They won. Kohlhepp's estate was ordered to pay the families and the surviving victim. The 95-acre plot of land and the house was set to be sold at auction, the proceeds of which were to go to the victims' families and Kayla Brown. It is unclear if the civil lawsuits will continue.

Hollywood

Hollywood took to the story. Kohlhepp's story was made into a series titled '*Devil Unchained*' which was featured on the ID channel. Hollywood has always turned gruesome serial killing into movies, Kohlhepp's story being no different than Ted Bundy, John Wayne Gacy, or Jeffrey Dahmer. The fascination for Kohlhepp was that he was a modern day serial killer, whereas the others were prominent in the 1970's and 1980's. Unfortunately, serial killers hold the imagination of the American viewing public, and an actual movie about Kohlhepp's crimes is something that is not totally out of the realm of possibility.

Reaction of Residents in Upstate South Carolina

Those who live in the Upstate of South Carolina were shaken to the core when Kohlhepp's crimes were brought to light. He was well-known as a realtor and those who knew him thought of him as nice guy. It was a shock to the community of Spartanburg, Greenville, and Anderson to know that such a monster walked among them, and walked among them for more than ten years after committing the Superbike Motorsports quadruple murders. Like any location where serial killers are found, the Upstate of South Carolina does not want to be synonymous with the actions of Kohlhepp, but sadly only

history will show if their desires are achieved or if they become known as the home of serial killer Todd Kohlhepp.

Social media, in a local sense, was brutal in regards to Kohlhepp, but it was brutal in a way that many would not have assumed. If one goes onto social media, for instance, Facebook, and they locate posted stories about Kohlhepp and read the comments, there are many that are not geared towards him, instead they attack the victim Kayla Brown. It is disturbing to read locals post such things. Much of the local social media attention is not focused on Kohlhepp or his crimes, but on vilifying Kayla.

Conclusion

Todd Kohlhepp shocked the Upstate of South Carolina and the nation when his crimes were discovered. The discovery of Kayla Brown and the bodies of the others found on his property were something no one could foresee occurring, due to the fact Kohlhepp had a good reputation in the area. His admission of guilt surrounding a cold case involving the murder of four individuals at Superbike Motorsports brought healing to the community. For more than 10 years, they had no idea who had killed those people inside their place of employment.

The fact that Kohlhepp did not have a trial is one that splits the opinions of the general public. Some people are glad he did not have one; it spared the families of the victims from a long drawn out trial process. In addition, his sentencing ensures that when he does eventually leave prison it will be in a pine box. Others are upset because they feel that he should have been

sentenced to death for his crimes. He killed seven people, and no one really knows for sure if he killed others (Said, 2017).

Kohlhepp's mother is adamant he has not killed anyone else; the Sheriff of Spartanburg County in South Carolina believes there are no other bodies but cannot be totally confident because of the amount of travel in Kohlhepp's past. Unless Kohlhepp admits to more murders and tells law enforcement where to find the bodies, society may never actually know if there are more Kohlhepp victims. Even if victims are found, unless he says he killed them society may never know that actual truth.

Kohlhepp's sentencing was the right thing to do. It spared the families of seven victims from having to endure a trial. It helped get the media attention off of them and they were able to start their journey to healing. In addition, it provided the families and the general public with the knowledge that he would never get out of prison and he will die there.

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