

Unsolved with Steve Gregory EPISODE 108

TRANSCRIPT

SEGMENT 1

Announcer

KFI AM 640, heard everywhere on the iHeartRadio app.

Steve Gregory

On any given day in Southern California, hundreds of investigators are working more than 10,000 unsolved cases. That's 1000s of friends and families who have lost loved ones, 1000s of people who got away with a crime, and 1000s of murderers who still walked the streets, killers who may be your neighbor, go to your church, or could be dating a close friend. For the next two hours, we'll highlight cases that have gotten cold baffled investigators or just need that one witness to speak out. This is Unsolved with Steve Gregory.

Los Angeles County Sheriff's case number 008-01156-2814-011. The murder of Mark Leonard. Compton January 18, 2008. Mark Leonard and his wife were trying to finish their workday at the carwash they owned. They had to get to a basketball game at the sports arena. Leonard's son Kawhi was playing in a high school tournament. Kawhi was a junior, but just a few hours before Kawhi his father and stepmother were to leave for the game. An argument happened at their business that turned deadly. Years later Kawhi Leonard would go on to play for the LA Clippers and become one of the best basketball players in the NBA. Handling the case is LA County Sheriff's detective Sean McCarthy.

Detective McCarthy

Mark Leonard was a businessman. He owned a auto detailing business called M&M Star auto detailing was located at the 400 block of Wilmington Avenue in the city of Compton. He had owned the business for several years, had relocated to Compton. It was originally opened in Gardena, but he eventually moved the business to Compton. And it was a Friday night. It was about 6:15 in the evening, Mark was getting ready to close the business. But received the call from a client decided to keep the business open to accommodate the client. During that time that they were working on the client's car, a male wearing a mask walked across Wilmington Avenue, walked up to Mark and shot him multiple times. As he lay on the ground. The suspect shot him several more times. ran back across Wilmington Avenue, entered a vehicle. And by all accounts it was a was believed to be a dark colored Chevy Tahoe and fled.

Steve Gregory

Who was Mark Leonard?

Detective McCarthy

As I said Mark Leonard was a businessman. Owned the auto detailing business, grew up in the Compton/Carson area. Had a few run ins with the law over the years, non violent run ins, narcotics related, run ins with law, but had had worked his way up and had a legitimate successful business at the time of the murder,

Steve Gregory

so what about his stature in the community? Was he well known, well liked?

Detective McCarthy

From all accounts and keep in mind, this was what was now almost 14 years ago. From all accounts based on talking to employees at the business. Mark's wife, other people in the community, he's well liked the business was successful. People liked going there and he was well liked by just about everybody.

Steve Gregory

So if he was well liked, and he is, you know, he had some sort of stature in this community as a business owner. Obviously there was something I mean, it was just a random hit. Was this a targeted hit? What did you get from your investigation?

Detective McCarthy

Well, we definitely believe it was a targeted hit. There's nothing random about this. And as I said, previously, he had had a few run ins with the law growing up into his early adulthood, and it had had to do with narcotics. And at the time of the murder, he had remarried, married a lady who didn't, didn't approve of that lifestyle, encouraged him and had been encouraging him over the years to get out of the business of narcotics. And having a legitimate business was a step in the right direction. He had that for several years. But there was still some connection to the narcotics community, but to a much, much lesser degree. And our investigation in the investigation in 2008, which was two different investigators indicated that this targeted hit involved in narcotic sales.

Steve Gregory

We're talking with detective Sean McCarthy with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department about Mark Leonard, who was killed in 2008. So detective, you sort of touched on it, then, Mr. Leonard's brushes with the law in the past, and you say that all non violence are all his brushes in the past drug related?

Detective McCarthy

For the most part, for the most part.

Steve Gregory

So are we talking about like a like the cocaine dealer or are we talking about, you know, marijuana, what are we talking about?

Detective McCarthy

According to his wife, he he dealt in heavier drugs earlier in his life and earlier in their marriage. But through her encouragement to go straight. He had he had down downgraded and in for the most part, when he did deal in the narcotics world, it was predominantly marijuana. Earlier in his in his narcotics career, it was much heavier drugs, cocaine, for the most part, cocaine.

Steve Gregory

Did he have any connection with cartels? I mean, was there a cartel Nexus here?

Detective McCarthy

from from our investigation. He clearly had connections with mid level cartel people and had connections with them for several years. And a little history. I think it's pretty well known in the law enforcement community that a large majority of narcotics comes through Mexico and Central America into the United States in there, and that's run by cartels, Hispanic cartels. So when it gets in the United States, the whites, blacks, asians have to deal with the Hispanic cartels to get large quantities of narcotics and then distribute them in their communities.

Steve Gregory

More on the death of Mark Leonard, but first, this is Unsolved with Steve Gregory on KFI AM 640. Time now for a news update.

SEGMENT 2

Steve Gregory

KFI AM 640, heard everywhere live on the iHeartRadio app. I'm Steve Gregory and this is Unsolved. If you have a story idea or a tip on one of the cases highlighted on this program, just dial #250 on your cell phone and say the key word "unsolved", or email the team, unsolved@iheartmedia.com. That's, unsolved@iheartmedia.com.

We're at the homicide bureau of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department talking with Sean McCarthy. He's a detective working on this cold case, it's the death of Mark Leonard. The shooting death back in 2008. Detective before break, we were talking about the connection that Mark Leonard had with the cartels and the drug world. So when you were first made aware of this case, and you looked at that sort of connection between cartels and drugs and whatnot, do you immediately jump to that conclusion? Because you said it was a targeted hit? Do you immediately always jump to some sort of a drug related hit or retaliation? What goes through your mind when you see that connection?

Detective McCarthy

Well, we just don't theorize that because this guy was messed up and and victim had connections to drug cartels, that it's automatically narcotics related hit. We had other information in this investigation that led us to believe that the motive for this murder was narcotics cartel related. And we knew, based on prior interviews by other investigators in the 2008 investigation, that there was a dispute earlier in the day between the victim, Mark Leonard and a person that we believe is associated with this cartel.

Steve Gregory

Okay, what? So why don't you talk about sort of that day and how it unfolded.

Detective McCarthy

Earlier in the day, approximately four to five hours prior to the murder. A male Hispanic, arrived at the business. And he was known by not only the victim, but by employees at the business to be a regular client there. He arrived, there was an argument that escalated into a heated argument, and then nearly became physical between the victim and this, this person. The victim's wife, who was working in the office of the business, heard the disturbance. She came out of the business. She intervened prior to it becoming physical, and convinced this client who she knew to leave. He had two associates with him. And all three of them left in this previously described Tahoe. Was this a drug dealer? He was a a collector, distributor who worked for a dealer higher up the food chain, if you will. And he would go out into the community and collect money

Steve Gregory

A runner.

Detective McCarthy

Runner. Yeah, yeah, for lack of a better term. He was a runner.

Steve Gregory

We're talking about detective Sean McCarthy with the LA County Sheriff's Department. So then do you want to identify what cartel or gang he was with?

Detective McCarthy

That is unknown. I don't want to speculate and we could speculate on that based on other evidence that we have. But gang members regularly, it's not uncommon for gang members to work in, in the narcotics world for cartels. But it's not necessarily one gang. That works for one cartel there could be numerous gang or gang members from different gangs working in the capacity of a runner for a cartel that's not uncommon.

Steve Gregory

So let me ask it to you this way, then do you believe that the gang or the cartel that was active back then, is still active today?

Detective McCarthy

I have every reason to believe it still is active.

Steve Gregory

Okay, so then this runner shows up. There's this argument. Do we have any idea what the argument was about?

Detective McCarthy

Yeah, it was about payment for a drug deal. It's a little more complicated than that. But the gist of it is it was a debt that was owed and the runner was there to collect that debt. And it started as a conversation that escalated into nearly physical contact.

Steve Gregory

Okay, so So the runner was there to collect a debt was the debt legitimately owed?

Detective McCarthy

It was what it was owed by associates of Mark Leonard, you and his clientele.

Steve Gregory

Okay, so you're being very, you're being very detective like right now. So now I have to sit here and try to piece it together. So if I'm hearing you correctly, an associate of Mark Leonard accrued a debt, but the runner showed up to collect the debt and Mark Leonard didn't know about it. Correct. More on the death of Mark Leonard, but first, this is Unsolved with Steve Gregory on KFI AM 640. Time now for a news update.

SEGMENT 3

Steve Gregory

KFI AM 640, heard everywhere live on the iHeartRadio app. This is Unsolved. I'm Steve Gregory. We're talking with detective Sean McCarthy of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. We're at the homicide bureau. And we've been talking about the death of Mark Leonard who was killed in January of 2008. And before the break, you sort of you did a very detective like thing in trying to hide some details from me. So I need to find out whether or not I'm on the right path here. So we talked a bit about Mark Leonard, you've already established that he was a mid level drug dealer he bought from cartels and resold. And that one night on this January 18, a runner, if you will, that worked for another gang or another cartel or another criminal enterprise approached mark and said, Listen, well, how much was he? Oh, by the way, what was the debt? How much?

Detective McCarthy

It was in the 10s of 1000s

Steve Gregory

But he approaches Mark. And Mark says, What does Mark say when he says I want my money? What did Mark say?

Detective McCarthy

The dispute started over this person's, this runner's demand to be paid. But the debt was owed by an associate of Mark. Who had worked for Mark in the past. Related to narcotics sales.

Steve Gregory

So Mark wasn't aware of the debt.

Detective McCarthy

No.

Steve Gregory

Oh, okay. So now he became aware of the debt that night at that moment. Okay, so you've got to was he a current or former associate of Mark Leonard's?

Detective McCarthy

he was a former associate of Mark's, but a current friend.

Steve Gregory

Oh, okay. So he used to work for Mark.

Detective McCarthy

in the narcotics in the narcotics world.

Steve Gregory

Okay. So, so he was dealing on the side, without Mark's knowledge. All right. Okay. So then the guy came. So this guy apparently didn't pay his debt.

Detective McCarthy

He used Mark's name to obtain the narcotics, which is why the person was there to collect the debt from Mark, he had used Mark's name to obtain the drugs. And when it came time to pay, and he couldn't make the payment, he used Mark's name. So the runner went to Mark and says, This is your problem. He used your name, and you owe me money.

Steve Gregory

So I'm assuming Mark was pretty dumbfounded by that, because that was probably caught him by surprise.

Detective McCarthy

May have been at the beginning. But as as conversation went on, he became angered. And as I said, it escalated nearly in the violence.

Steve Gregory

Okay, so then who was still there was the business. You said the business was open, but it was open for VIP of sorts, right?

Detective McCarthy

No, that was later.

Steve Gregory

That was later in the day. Okay. So they approached the business. And this is going on, it's escalating into this argument. Who was around I mean, Were there witnesses to it?

Detective McCarthy

It was daytime, it was still light out. It was daytime hours, all the employees of the business were there, they witnessed it. They knew this client by by a moniker that nobody knew him by his real name. And that's very common in the criminal world to know each other by monikers but not know each other by real names, because that way, nobody can tell the police who you are.

Steve Gregory

Sure. So what was his moniker?

Detective McCarthy

"Happy",

Steve Gregory

So "Happy", gets into this argument with Mark Leonard. And there are people around anyone witnessing I think you alluded to a couple of times, Mark's wife at the time, so Mark's wife was there, too.

Detective McCarthy

Yes, she worked in the office. She heard the disturbance, the argument, she came out to investigate and intervene when it almost became physical.

Steve Gregory

Okay, so we're talking with detective Sean McCarthy, LA County Sheriff's Department's Homicide Bureau. So then what happened next, after it had escalated? Was there a breaking point?

Detective McCarthy

From all accounts in our investigation, it almost became physical to the point where Mark put his hands on this guy and his wife intervened, because she knew the client, and she knew he was a runner for a drug distributor. And she convinced him to leave so because of her relationship with him, she knew me in the past, she convinced him to leave and it prevented any further violence now he had to the runner had two associates with him. Thugs, if you will, bodyguards, and all three of them then left and entered the dark color Tahoe and left a location.

Steve Gregory

Okay, so then how much time went by before before Mark was shot

Detective McCarthy

Shortly after the confrontation, mark left the business to go to Long Beach to get supplies for the business. And during that time, multiple employees and the victims wife saw the Tahoe on numerous occasions circle the business but but not reentered the business just circle the business. And not only we suspect, but she suspects that they did not see Mark's truck there because he was in Long Beach and there was no reason for for them to stop. Approximately three, four hours later, Mark returns. Now his pickup trucks, they're the same vehicle returns and parks across Wilmington Avenue in a parking lot. And that was noticed by employees. Shortly thereafter, a beige colored champagne colored what was believed to be an Escalade. With large rims, fancy rims, pulls into the same parking lot on the other side of Wilmington and parks next to the Tahoe. And everybody that we have talked to said they knew that vehicle to be owned by "Happy" was very distinct vehicle and everybody knew because happy was a

regular client there that he drove that beige or champagne colored Escalade. The two vehicles sat there for a short period of time. Mark Leonard was standing in the parking lot of his business. He was talking to a client on the phone. A person gets out of the dark colored Tahoe and has a mask on to conceal his identity. He goes to the Escalade converses with the driver that Escalade, which we believe was "Happy" and then walked across Wilmington Avenue. Approaches Mark Leonard produces a gun shooting multiple times and as he lay on the pavement, shoots him multiple more times. He then runs back across Wilmington enters the Tahoe, and both the Tahoe and the Escalade flee on Wilmington.

Steve Gregory

More on the death of Mark Leonard but first, this is Unsolved with Steve Gregory on KFI AM 640. Time now for a news update.

SEGMENT 4

Steve Gregory

KFI AM 640, heard everywhere live on the iHeartRadio app. I'm Steve Gregory. And this is Unsolved. To learn more about this case and others on this program, go to our web page at KFIAM640.com keyword "unsolved". And don't forget to subscribe to our podcast on the iHeartRadio app, Spotify, Apple, or wherever you get your podcasts. We're talking with detective Sean McCarthy with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. And before the break, you sort of gave us the layout of what happened. A man in a mask approached Mark Leonard, gunned him down in front of his own business, and not only shot him once but then shot him multiple times after he fell to the ground. The guy ran back to his vehicle and the two vehicles that were there across the street took off. What happened next?

Detective McCarthy

At that point, that's where the investigation really starts is is the goal. The goal then was I mean, it's pretty clear. And this is a theory right now because we don't we don't have we have very limited evidence. The theory is is that "Happy" - look in the drug world, messages that are sent all the time. And we believe that a message was sent here is when you deal with the cartels. Even if it's mid level or lower level dealing with the cartels, and you don't pay a debt.

and the way the debt was refused to be paid. A message has to be sent to other clients out there if you will. And we believe that for multiple reasons, but one to send a message that Mark Leonard was going to pay for for the refusal to pay to debt. And and we believe at some point after the original argument. "Happy" and his two associates returned and killed Mark Leonard.

Steve Gregory

Even though technically it wasn't Mark Leonard's debt.

Detective McCarthy

Correct.

Steve Gregory

So you say his wife was there, too? And did, did she come out? After the shooting? She heard the gunshots? How was she made aware?

She heard the argument.

She heard the argument and then came out.

Detective McCarthy

No, let me correct. I'm talking about the original incident, the she heard the gunshots, and then she came out. And she cradled her husband and begged him not to die. She was pregnant with their child at the time I don't I believe she was like eight months pregnant. And now she was in fear of not only losing her husband, but not having a father for her child.

Steve Gregory

This case, is still technically unsolved, but you have what you would consider a suspect in mind.

Detective McCarthy

Yes, the simple goal here is, and we've been trying to do this for three years is identify "Happy". And we potentially have a solvable case. No guarantees. But until we identify "Happy" we have no chance of solving this case. And people in the drug world are very careful about exposing one of their associates, even though they just killed somebody. And we have had no luck in identifying happy to this point. And I gotta be honest with you. If you would have told me three years ago, we would not we would not have identified "Happy" by now. I would have I would have said no way we would have had identified by now. So go here's identify "Happy" now we got a chance to solve this case.

Steve Gregory

Just so I'm clear. You believe "Happy" the one that had the argument with Mark Leonard in the very beginning, the argument escalated. You believe "Happy" that kept circling around looking you know just checking the place out, but happy called a hitman basically "Happy" called somebody?

Detective McCarthy

This is what I believe in. I believe that during the original argument, there was two associates, bodyguards, thugs, that were with "Happy". They were all in the Tahoe, the dark Tahoe when they were returned, "Happy", apparently was in his own vehicle that everybody knew the beige Escalade. And the two associates were still in there. So I believe one of the two associates is the one who had the mask on and walked over there at the direction of "Happy" or the encouragement of "Happy".

Steve Gregory

it wasn't an outsider coming in to do the work. It was someone within his own crew did it.

Detective McCarthy

I believe I believe that's the case.

Steve Gregory

Now, anytime you get somebody associated with a cartel like this, you as a detective, any investigator in the United States always has to fear that these people could escape to Mexico. Is that the case here?

Detective McCarthy

Yes.

Steve Gregory

You believe that that's possible, or it's already happened?

Detective McCarthy

I believe that it's possible, but I'm hopeful that it hasn't happened, and that we will get him identified before he has that opportunity, but we're at the point in this investigation where we're willing to take that risk.

Steve Gregory

There's a connection here and wanted to talk about Mark Leonard's son Kawhi Leonard, at the time. Mark was supposed to be closing up a shop that day right to go watch his son play basketball.

Detective McCarthy

Correct.

Kawhi was not the famous superstar basketball player that he is now. He was a I believe he was 16 years old. He was a high school. Up and Coming basketball player who is on the night of the murder involved in the CIF championship. I believe it was played at the sports arena and on the USC campus. Mark and his wife were going to attend the game. They were going to close the business a little early. Mark got a phone call from another client and asked to detail his car Mark agreed to do that kept the business open. And it was killed during the time that, they remained open. He would have probably been on his way to kawaii game. If he wouldn't have accepted the request of his client, doesn't mean there wouldn't have been violence later on. But that particular night he probably would have attended Kawhi is game and I believe Kawhi team won that night but then they lost the next night and lost the championship.

Steve Gregory

More on the death of Mark Leonard, but first this is Unsolved with Steve Gregory on KFI AM 640 Time now for a news update.

SEGMENT 5

Steve Gregory

KFI AM 640, heard everywhere live on the iHeartRadio app. I'm Steve Gregory and this is Unsolved. We've been discussing the murder of Mark Leonard, who was killed in front of his business in 2008 in Compton just a couple hours before he was supposed to go see his son Kawhi Leonard play in a high school basketball tournament. Detective before the top of the hour before break, you were sort of going over sort of the woulda, coulda shoulda, talking about Mark Leonard son Kawhi, who was only 16 at the time was playing a championship game. And that night, and Mark was supposed to go to that game. Tragically, he didn't make it. Do you happen to know at all? How Kawhi was notified about this? Did your detectives make that notification? How would he have found out?

Detective McCarthy

My partner Rich Tomlin and I were not the original investigators. One of the original investigators recruiting passed away. And the other one, Frank Jr. retired. I don't think we had any discussions. First of all, our responsibility at a crime scene of a murder is if we do make notification, it's technically the coroner's job to do that. But sometimes we are forced into that. That night, the next of kin witnessed

the murder. So there was really no need to to, to contact Kawhi by law enforcement, because Jacqueline, his wife was I was a witness to the murder. So next to kin had been notified, she was a witness to the murderer.

Steve Gregory

So obviously Kawhi was made aware of it, I'm sure but to this point, just to be clear on the family structure Kawhi lived with his birth mother in Moreno Valley, Riverside County?

Detective McCarthy

Moreno Valley, and he attended Martin Luther King High School, which is in Riverside.

Steve Gregory

And then he spent some of the time with His father, Mark.

Detective McCarthy

Yeah, according to family members, Jacqueline, his wife Kawhi, as a young young child would play at the business he spent a lot of his summers in Compton with his dad. And then as he got older he would he actually worked in the business

Steve Gregory

helping his dad at the car place at the Detail Shop. . But detectives have never really talked to Kawhi because he's not connected. I mean, the only reason that people talk about it, obviously it's because of he's a celebrity. But I mean, really Kawhi has no role in this other than he was an unfortunate family of a victim.

Detective McCarthy

Correct. We have...Look, we know based on the media's portrayal of Kawhi, he's a very private person. And because of his private lifestyle, and the fact that he had no role in this investigation at all witness, informants, he had no role in this. There was we didn't feel the need to interfere in his life. If he would have reached out to us and wanted to talk to us about this case, we would have been more than happy, and we still would be more than happy to talk to him about it. But we're going to respect his private lifestyle.

Steve Gregory

Okay, that said, let's talk about what you want from the public. Who are you looking for? What do they look like? And what do you need the public to do?

Detective McCarthy

As I said earlier, the goal here is to identify "Happy" first and foremost. From all accounts he's a male Hispanic at the time of the murder, he was in his late 20s or early 30s. Fast forward 14 years he'd probably be in his mid 40s. Now, Hispanic, not necessarily and I use this in quotation he didn't look like your your street gangster look more like a low profile like a lot of the dope dealers. Narcotics dealers look, but he had ties to gangs we know he had ties to gang.

Steve Gregory

tattoos?

Detective McCarthy

I don't want to get into that only because we've gotten conflicting. So we've gotten conflicting descriptions of tattoos. So if I put out he had this tattoo, but other witnesses describe that and we've always a somewhat distinctive tattoo. Other other people didn't describe it. I don't want to put out and then people say why no guy with that tattoo. You don't want to miss I don't I don't want to miss I wanted to find "Happy" is the key. In the reality here. We're looking for help from people that may need help themselves, and what I mean by that is we're talking about the narcotics world, mid level and cartel type people. They don't easily cooperate with law enforcement.

Steve Gregory

Sure.

Detective McCarthy

Unless they're in a compromising position themselves.

Steve Gregory

Well, you talked about you know, what a typical, just a mid to low level drug person drug dealer might look, can you be a little more descriptive on what that person might look like?

Detective McCarthy

What your average? I mean?

Steve Gregory

I mean, I caught a semi clean cut, or do they? Are they well kept? Are they not well kept?

Detective McCarthy

The best way I can describe it without getting into too slang words is Mexican national looking type of people that they can blend in not only in the regular communities that we're talking about here, but also function in the game world also.

Steve Gregory

Okay, so so they blend in, they are able to just look like normal people on the street.

Detective McCarthy

Correct.

Steve Gregory

And in particular, selection or sections of communities, they can blend in very nicely.

Detective McCarthy

Smart narcotics. Involved people fly under the radar, they they blend in. In most cases.

Steve Gregory

Vehicles. You described the champagne beige color, any anything else about that vehicle?

Detective McCarthy

The problem with that vehicle? Well, it had fancy rims. The problem with that vehicles, we're talking 14 years ago, that vehicle is likely long gone. What we're hoping for is somebody says, "Happy", beige Escalade, I know who that guy is. That's what we're hoping for. And and I stress we're looking for

"Happy". But if anybody knows who is to associates, we're which we have no idea. We don't have a moniker or anything. I certainly would love a phone call or a tip on who they might be. Because likely one of those two associates are the trigger man in this.

Steve Gregory

This area down in Compton, that you were talking about. Is there. Is there a particular is it what gang area is that known for what gain has that territory?

Detective McCarthy

Competent Tortilla Flats.

Steve Gregory

Compton Tortilla Flats. Okay,

Detective McCarthy

That's the area we're talking about.

Steve Gregory

Okay. Detective McCarthy, thank you so much for your information. Appreciate it.

Detective McCarthy

Thank you.

Steve Gregory

Coming up next, we go to Compton, where we meet Jacqueline Leonard, Mark's widow and the stepmother of Kawhi Leonard. But first this is Unsolved with Steve Gregory on KFI AM 640. Time now for a news update.

SEGMENT 6

Steve Gregory

KFI AM 640, heard everywhere live on the iHeartRadio app. I'm Steve Gregory and this is Unsolved. Jacqueline Leonard, married Mark in 2003. She is credited with putting Mark on the straight and narrow. So I asked her if she established any conditions for Mark before they were married.

Jacqueline Leonard

No, I actually roll with the punches.

Steve Gregory

Okay. Okay. Were you a little afraid?

Jacqueline Leonard

No. And I'm gonna tell you why, Mark is such a big intimidating person that I felt safe. And so many people had so much respect for him, that I felt safe. And I think for me now, I just lost my mind. It wasn't around with him, but I never was afraid. I was not afraid. But I knew this is not something that could continue.

Steve Gregory

Yeah. And by the time you realized, after I only see for lack of a better term after the honeymoon period.

Jacqueline Leonard

Yes, reality kicked in.

Steve Gregory

And you're like, okay, so because I was told that you were, you know, everything was going well, that you really had Mark, headed toward the right path and right direction.

Jacqueline Leonard

Absolutely. And when I told him, what is it that you want to do? I watched him go through a depression. It was hard to watch, because I felt like this was my fault that this man is like this. I told him, I said, Look, he said, I always wanted a carwash. I said, Okay, take all the money that we have. And go find your place and open your car wash, if that's gonna make you happy, because I had to talk to him in terms that he understood what I was trying to tell him or teach him. I told him, if you can run a drug empire, and you

have a product that you're selling, and you have a better product than everyone else, and you have multiple employees, you have businesses here, there and there, you can run a legitimate business, it's the same concept. But from having a product is not good, dangerous, you can go to prison, you can die, you're hurting people, you get some that you enjoy, and do the same thing. He could count money in his head, like 1000s of dollars. I was amazed by that lateral, you know how much money that is just by looking at it. And he said, okay, and that gave him motivation. And he will leave every day and he came home. He said, I found it. I said, you found a car wash he said, Yeah. And he will go down and I had pictures of Mark working on that car wash from the ground up himself. He was that proud of it, because he had a project and then he can finally see himself coming out of that lifestyle. Because now the money's coming in the same way it was where you were doing that. But you can stand outside, you're legit. You don't have to be ashamed of what you do no more, and you're on the front line. And he built that carwash, and from all the people that Mark knew, and I knew I know, a lot of people myself, that carwash doubled and tripled money within a year. There was a line all the way like a mile long, just to get in that carwash. And he was outside. He was on Friday, he was legit and I knew that was some he always wanted. It's like being a drug addict. Nobody in the kindergarten said, hey, when I grow up, I gonna do drugs. No, nobody raises their hand what's going to be when you get to be an adult, um, sell drugs? No, that's not a drink for anyone. And he was finally able to hold his head up and people weren't like he to sell drugs or whatever the case may be. My parents were absolutely livid that I married him. So now you can stand up and look my dad in the eye. You can look my mom and you can look my kids, your kids in the eye like Daddy is legit. So it was a big deal. I taught him about God. To the point he started praying on his own in the morning. He had never knew anything about that. Nothing. Everything Steven it was wrong in the world. Mark That was good. Like it was okay. He is just like you're running around here. I wouldn't like a bandit. So I will read Scripture to him and when he didn't understand I broke it down from it took things to be a good person in the world. Things to God will bless You let me show you how God bless you. He started praying on his own and he had changed. That's why when Mark got killed, it was so hard for me. But I knew my assignment was done with him because God had told me as put you in his life, he's not going to receive me from no one but you because He loves you so much to get him, right. So when he actually got killed, I was like, my job was done. He was saved. So I knew he wasn't gonna burn in hell, he died a good person.

Steve Gregory

Well, let's just go to that date, then. January 18 2008. How was that day? What how did that day start?

Jacqueline Leonard

that day started. We got up in the morning, we worked together to all the time I was the face, he would always say is beauty and the beast, I put the beauty up front, she's going to get all the people in and I just stand in the back and I run everything. And so we will go to work together. And he got up that morning. He was in such a good spirit. And we stopped and got cappuccinos. And that day, it just was a beautiful day. But I was I we had just found out I was pregnant two weeks before. And so he had gone the day before to the grocery store, he bought all kinds of fresh fruits and orange juice for me. And he said, I want you to eat and be healthy. And you know, because we're gonna have a baby, we tried for

five years. He had non Hodgkins lymphoma cancer before. So we thought, Hey, that's not gonna happen. You know, we're not gonna have a baby at once. As soon as we let it go, boom. You know, I ended up pregnant. So he was just like, on cloud nine. He had caught his cousin in Chicago, Josh, and tell Joe, hey, she's pregnant, I'm gonna have a little boy and I'm gonna name him Zion, because that's where Jesus used to go to talk to God. And I remember thinking, Oh, my God, listen to him, because he was even he was talking about God. I was like, Oh, my God, I listened to him. So we got up that next day, and we went to work and I had made tacos the night before. So I brought like 12 Tacos to work. And him and my, one of my, one of our employees, they were fighting over the tacos, and I'm like, Oh, Mark, give him six, because he can eat like 12 tacos in one city. I'm like, give him half this enough. So we laughed and played all day. We prayed that morning, and he got a phone call. And he got up. And he went, and he walked away. And when he came back, he was a totally different person. But he told me everything all the time, he would keep me in on everything. And he took me an office and he said, I just got a call from one of his friends. And he had gone cold market stopped selling drugs, just probably marijuana but like hardcore drugs. He stopped, but he was the connection. So he could say our call to connect and then you can go meet that person or whatever but at some

Steve Gregory

but it's important to note though Jacqueline, he was phasing out of that life.

Jacqueline Leonard

Absolutely. Yes.

Steve Gregory

So he was he was it was a slow it's almost like an addict, kind of

Jacqueline Leonard

weigh yourself off with me. He was completely legit.

Steve Gregory

More on the death of Mark Leonard. But first, this is Unsolved with Steve Gregory onKFI AM 640 Time now for a news update.

SEGMENT 7

Steve Gregory

KFI AM 640 heard everywhere live on the iHeartRadio app. I'm Steve Gregory. And this is Unsolved. We've been talking with Mark Leonard's widow Jacqueline about the incident that led to the shooting death of her husband. She says Mark had gone legit, but a former associate screwed it all up.

So he was out of the was out of business?

Jacqueline Leonard

He was out of that. And I don't know, a friend of his went behind his back and went in, got some drugs. And when he got the drug, he didn't pay the people. But Mark knew both parties. He didn't pay. And he told these people that he lost it, he took a loss on it. And it was like a nice amount of money. Knowing him, he didn't have this money, he ran to Mark now to say, Hey, I'm gonna need you to smooth this over. Because they know you. And I knew then I said, this is a problem. So I told Mark, hey, he got himself in this. He went behind your back, do not help him. You don't call and get involved in this? And he said, No, I you know, I know him. I got to help him because at the time and Compton, our carwash was in Compton. There was a racial war going on the Hispanic, Mexicans, against Blacks. So it's like Mark had a good relationship with these Mexican people. Now, if he didn't help his friend who was a black man, he had to it's almost like, No, I can't let that happen. And I didn't even try to resolve the situation. He's black. And from there, he called the Mexican people up there, and they had this long talk. And the guy, when he brought it to Mark, he came to the carwash. But when the Mexican people came to them to have this discussion about how this all went down, he went and he stood way across the parking lot in the corner. And I watched him because something told me this is gonna go bad. I started praying, Stephen, nowhere weapon formed against Mark will prosper, because I can see this is going downhill fast. So as I'm looking out my office window I'm watching voices are starting to escalate, Mark's getting closer in these people's face, their comment animated and I'm thinking, Oh, my Lord, this is getting out of control that it prompted me to pray. And they got in each other face, I don't know what was said, and Mark, pushed the Hispanic guy, the little leader or whatever. And in street culture, you cannot put your hands on a made person. It's almost like the mafia, you know, and this guy was high ranking, I think and whatever gang or whatever he is affiliated with. And when he pushed, he pushed. Mark was so big he had hands the size of a baseball mittens like his hands, were really the size of a mitten. And the force flung the guy, and I'm watching. And then the guy get gets off of the wall. And he's coming in. Mark brought up his hand, and he was about to hit him. And I know if he hits this guy, and he's this angry, he could likely kill him because of the size of his hand, and the strength. So I ran outside my set, I called his whole name. I said, Mark Leonard, don't you do that? And he looked at me, and he said, a few words. And they jumped in a car and they left. And he went in the office with me. And his, like, I messed up. And I'm like, What do you mean by that? Here's like, I put my hands on him. I messed up. He knew immediately, Stephen. And for, like, the first time I saw fear in him, and I've never seen that before. And I knew this is a problem. So he comes in, the guy eventually said a few where he leaves and we're in the office, and I see Mark pacing back and forth. He's like, scared, and I've never seen that before. And that scared me. And I'm like, Well, what's going on? And he kept just saying, I messed up, I messed up. Now he took one of my employees and he said, I'm going to the house. He said, I'm going home. I'm going to get the gun. And now I know this is really serious. So as Mark is gone, this truck that they were in keeps going back and forth, back and forth. And I'm thinking, Oh, why did they keep doing that? Why aren't

you doing that? But they know his car was gone. But they kept going back and forth like they were looking for him. And I had my stomach I was just so

anxious because I saw him scared I never seen now always felt so safe, always felt so sick. This big guy, you know, he's protecting us. And he was having little sidebar conversations with employees. And when he got back before he left, and he got back, he brought the gun, he put it in the office. And I said, Hey, the truck keep going back and forth. He was like, Yeah, I'm like, yeah. And so he's I aint worried about it, because I guess he felt safe. He had the gun here. Like, it's, I'm happy and I don't know what he was thinking. But we went on with our day. We went on with our day. So it's almost like,

Steve Gregory

What time of the day is this?

Jacqueline Leonard

This is about 1:30 In the afternoon. So we proceeded on with our day we went to run some errands. I remember pulling out of the parking lot and turning it to go out onto the main street. And he looked at me and he said, You know what I love you said I love you too. And he's like, give me kids my game kit. He said, Okay, let's go. This is like, looking back now. It was just something in the air or it was just premonition like a premonition, like, it's almost like how the world is prepping, things are going down a certain way. Because it would this is what's gonna happen. So later on that night, we were laughing. My our good friend Rita was there. Rita is like a good friend of ours, she's very close to Mark. And she was there. And we were just laughing and talking. And we were going to close. Now if you read any articles, if you talk to anybody else. Mark would always say this his first famous line, "one more car", and I was like no, I we want to go. It's I know just one. And a guy that had the business across the street from where our previous car was was, had a auto body shop. But he also grew up in the neighborhood. We knew him. We knew his kids. And he called and now it's about seven. It's about seven o'clock, because Kawhi was playing the High School Championship at the sports arena. So we were getting ready to go to Kawhi's game. It was a big game. It's like the High School Championship. And so he's the guy called that we know. He said, Hey, man, I'm selling this Suburban. I need to get it washed real quick. You know how to make it look good. And I'm like, no, no, no, we got to go. We gotta go. We got to get to the game. And the guy was like, come on make man I really need this tonight because it's dark now. We're trying to close to go to Kawhi's gang. And a Mark said, Okay, hurry up, bring it. So a lot of guys they got their stuff together. We washed this one truck.

Steve Gregory

Coming up the final moments of Mark Leonard's life. But first this is Unsolved with Steve Gregory on KFI AM 640. Time now for a news update.

SEGMENT 8

Steve Gregory

KFI AM 640, heard everywhere live on the iHeartRadio app. I'm Steve Gregory, and this is Unsolved. Jacqueline Leonard was there the night, her husband Mark was shot in the parking lot of their carwash in Compton. She remembers seeing someone come through a gate.

Jacqueline Leonard

And this figure came through with a all gray, like sweatsuit with the hood on, and he has something on his face. And I kept looking, and I said, he's walking at a fast pace towards us and I said, "Who the hell" and before I can say who the hell was that? He pulled out his gun. And he started firing. And he's close to us. And I remember Mark said, "run, you're pregnant, run". And he pushed me to run. And I ran inside, he was behind me. Rita was what got him, I think before both of us and I ran, we had a little storage room, and I went in the storage room. And then I say, Mark's not behind me. I'm like, Oh, God, he's still out there. So I came out of the storage room, and we have all windows across the front of the building. And when I came out, I'm looking at Mark's down laying on his stomach, and the guy standing over him, and he's just shooting into his body. And I'm standing there looking because I wanted to go out there. But I'm like, if you go out there, he gonna kill you, too. Y'all got kids, and you're pregnant. And so I'm watching. And we were watching a movie, Mark and I maybe four months previous to this, and it was showing a guy get killed. And they shot him in the head. And I remember saying, Oh, I could never see nothing like that. Oh, my God. I said, that would just be... I said, Well, I could never watch nothing like that. So as I was looking out the window, while the guy was standing over him, Steven, he took his hood. And he put it over his head. Like if he shoot me in the head, I don't want my wife to see that. And I was I couldn't believe what was happening. Like he shot him 15 or 16 times standing over him. All of a sudden, his gun is slid back. And I said he's out of bullets. He's out of bullets. So I ran out there. And I got on his back. And I said, Mark, you got to make it. You got to make it. What about us? What about me? What about the kids? What about the baby? But I knew from previous nursing. There's no way you can be shot that many times with the three feet in between you and somebody shooting you that many times and you survive. And everybody started coming out and the neighbors came and one of the neighbors is like you gotta get off his back, get off of him. And I'm just thinking this Friday, the last time I'm gonna see him.

It was troubling. I can't even remember a lot of stuff. It was so it happened like that. And I'm thinking, Oh my God. And so the ambulance came. The police came, they took Mark away, they don't let you go with them anymore. I thought it's better to jump in the back. So I thought I was gonna get in and they were like, No, you can't go. And they took him to Harbor UCLA by now is the carwash is surrounded where people could go work went out like they just shot big Mark. It was so many people out there, Steven, it was people like they were at a sporting event or something. And we were all still there. And then the sheriff come and I'm like, I need to get to my husband. They like no, you gotta go straight to the station, which I hope they changed, you know, to let somebody go at least have a last moment with a loved one. And they made me go to the station and I remember sitting there thinking, please God,

Please God, let them tell me he's okay. Even if he's paralyzed. So I'll take care of them. I come from a nursing field, please God and I remember the detectives coming in. They asked me who I worked on who I was and I was like, how's my husband. They said he didn't make it. And that was the most devastating thing in the world to me. And I just remember thinking this is not real. So, I've always felt like that guy had he not brought that problem to my husband. Even though looking back to date, things don't happen the way it's already written. But at that moment, I blamed him. Because you brought this problem. Mark is there defending you. Or they had put a hit on him or something, you know, and it's just, I've always felt like, I want justice, Kawhi had a game that night, they had to tell him, his daddy has been murdered. They had to call his daughters, his mother, Otter people, they loved him - to kill somebody in the street, like a dog, and nothing will hurt him. He was he had changed his life. He had gone all the way he was, like, showing up to audit events for the kids. He was taking the kids to play basketball. He was like the model husband, and father. And then when he gets it together, he's gone. With four years after that, you know, he was so proud of all he had accomplished and our family was on track. And for that to happen, it just like somebody ripped our life away, our family fell apart after that I have a son that never seen or would know his dad. And so I've always wanted justice I've always wanted who killed him to go to trial, and go to prison. Because when you kill someone, you don't just kill that person. You change the course of several people lives. He prayed for Zion Monson. He was so happy he named him two weeks previous. You kill my husband and my son don't have a father, you show you don't have the right to do that without being punished. His kids had a hard time. My kids had a hard time, I ended up getting shot after that, behind all this, it had to fight for my life. I want the person that felt like they had the right to kill my husband, it hurt so many people change the course of the future to be punished. I want to see that person. I want to look that person in the eye and tell them what you did. Whether they accept it or not, whether it means anything or not, I need to get it off of me. I need to do this for him. Because if it was me, he would shake the whole world to find out who did something his wife, and he deserved that. Because he was a good person. And he changed his life. And nobody deserves that.

Steve Gregory

Well, that's gonna do it. If you have a tip dial #250 on your cell phone and say the key word "unsolved". And don't forget to download and subscribe to our podcast on the iHeartRadio app. Unsolved with Steve Gregory is a production of the KFI news department for iHeartMedia Los Angeles, Robin Bertolucci, program director Chris Little news director. The program is produced by Steve Gregory and Jacob Gonzalez. The digital producer is Andro Mammo. The field engineer is Tony Sorrentino, and the technical director is David Callaway. Coming up next it's Coast to Coast but first, this is KFI AM 640. Time now for a news update.