

WHY DO THEY DO IT?

DIANE AND RACHEL STAUDTE



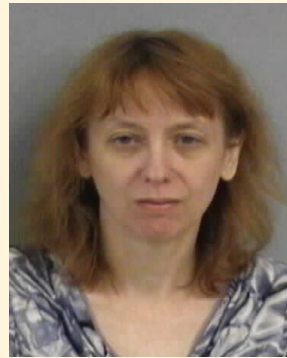
In an ABC 20/20 interview, Sarah Staudte stated that “she [her mother, Diane] had this journal that she wrote . . . her thoughts. She wrote the deaths of Shaun, my brother, and me. And that’s what worried me . . . I was shocked.” According to medical examiners, in April 2012, Mark Staudte, Sarah’s father, died of “natural causes”; five months later, her brother’s death was ruled as being due to “prior medical issues.” Both bodies were cremated.⁵⁷ In June 2013, Sarah was taken to Cox South Hospital in Springfield, Missouri. While she exhibited flulike symptoms, the doctors discovered that her kidneys and brain were deteriorating. After running a number of tests, doctors still could not determine the cause of her kidney and brain failure. While she was hospitalized, Springfield police detective Neal McAmis received an anonymous tip. The caller stated that Diane could be responsible for Sarah’s illness and might also have been involved in the deaths of Sarah’s father and brother. Following this tip, Detective McAmis went to the hospital. One of the doctors stated that he was suspicious that this was a possible poisoning case. He further noted that Sarah was essentially given a “zero percent chance” of living; the question was not whether she was going to die, but when. The detective also talked to a nurse, who commented that Diane was acting strangely, given the severity of the situation. Diane was joking about Sarah’s condition and was talking about her upcoming Florida vacation.⁵⁸

Subsequently, Detective McAmis brought Diane Staudte in for questioning. During a four-hour interview, Diane admitted to fatally poisoning her husband and son as well as poisoning her daughter. She, along with her then 24-year-old daughter Rachel, had put antifreeze in Coca-Cola and Gatorade. During her taped interview, Diane made some startling comments in reference to why she had poisoned her family members. She stated that she “hated his [her husband’s] guts.” Below are portions of the interview between Detective McAmis and Diane regarding her son, Shaun:

“He was almost to the point of inappropriate at times,” Diane Staudte said. “I mean he would walk into the bathroom if the door was shut. I mean just really bizarre stuff.”

“He was such an interference and a bother that you just said you can’t take it anymore?” McAmis prodded.

“He was more than a bother,” Diane Staudte said.



Greene County Sheriff's Office via AP

Diane and Rachel Staudte.

“More than a bother, OK. Would a pest, would that be a good word for it?” McAmis asked.

“No, it was more than that,” Diane Staudte said.⁵⁹

Further into the interview, when asked about poisoning her daughter, Diane Staudte stated that Sarah was unemployed and therefore could not financially contribute to the household.

Detective McAmis then interviewed Diane’s daughter, Rachel Staudte. Rachel stated that her mother initially brought up the idea, but soon after Rachel also became involved in the poisonings. When asked why she wanted to kill her father, Rachel stated, “[I]t was for a little peace.” When asked about her brother, she said, “Shaun, because he was annoying.” Finally, when asked about her sister, Sarah, Rachel stated “Sarah was just nosy. Very nosy.” Rachel told the detective that they were planning to poison her then 12-year-old-sister.

Diane Staudte was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole; Rachel, since she agreed to testify against her mother, was also sentenced to life, but she will be eligible for parole after serving over 42 years in prison.

Sarah Staudte did survive, but she suffered serious brain injury. She now has a guardian and lives in an assisted living facility.⁶⁰

THINK ABOUT IT:

1. How does a mother involve her own daughter in the poisoning of family members?
2. If Diane and Rachel had not been caught, how many more individuals might have been poisoned?

In this text, we will be presenting what some may consider “high-profile” crimes. These are crimes that have received a great deal of media attention due to the individuals involved and/or the horrendous nature of the offense. In some instances, such as the Diane Staudte case, these types of crimes go beyond the question, “Why did she do it?”