

CASE STUDY

THE WEAVERS

Ward "Pete" Weaver Jr. was a long-haul truck driver, so he was away from home for lengthy periods of time. In 1978, Pete Weaver was sentenced to prison for a rape conviction. Later, in 1981, Pete Weaver was sentenced to 42 years in prison. He had picked up two runaways; he arranged for a friend to shoot the 18-year-old man and himself repeatedly raped the 15-year-old girl. Weaver Jr.'s truck routes corresponded to 26 unsolved hitchhiker homicides, but he was never charged with those cases. While Weaver Jr. was in prison, he confided to a cellmate that he had murdered another couple. He had beaten 18-year-old Robert Radford to death with a pipe and then kidnapped, raped, and strangled Radford's 23-year-old fiancée, Barbara Levoy. After killing Levoy, Weaver Jr. buried her behind his rented house in Oroville, California, where he later covered the grave with concrete and built a deck.⁵ Weaver Jr. came from a family of extensive violence. He was known to be cruel to his siblings as well as animals.⁶

Ward Francis Weaver III, known as "Little Pete," is the son of Ward Weaver Jr. Like his father, he is a violent man. He was sentenced to three years in prison for assaulting his pregnant wife. After his release, Ward Weaver continued to be involved in volatile relationships. In 2001, he, along with his girlfriend, moved to Oregon City. One of his daughters befriended classmates at a middle school. These friends would regularly sleep over at the Weaver household. In August 2001, Weaver was accused of attempting to rape one of these girls, Ashley Pond. The claim was not immediately investigated by police. On January 9, 2002, Ashley disappeared. Two months later, another classmate, Miranda Gaddis, disappeared. Their whereabouts were unknown until Ward Weaver's son Francis dialed 911 because his father had raped his (Francis's) girlfriend. In that 911 call, Francis stated that his father

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Flowers and letters placed at a fence bordering the crime scene that became a community memorial for the two slain Oregon City girls. Ward Weaver's house is seen in the background.

claimed to have raped and killed the two girls and buried them under a concrete patio. Subsequently, Miranda Gaddis's body was found in a shed in the backyard; Ashley Pond's body was buried under the concrete.

Francis Paul Weaver was the stepson of Ward Francis Weaver III. He was the person who turned his stepfather in during the 911 call. In March 2016, Francis Paul Weaver was convicted of the death of Edward Spangler. He, along with two others, had killed Spangler as a result of a drug deal that went bad. While not the actual shooter, Weaver was convicted and sentenced to life for his involvement.⁷

This case study brings up numerous questions, particularly those that focus on how someone's family can influence his or her behavior. Were these men "born" violent, or was violence something they learned firsthand?

THINK ABOUT IT:

1. Do you think that these men learned these violent tendencies from others in their family?
2. What other factors may have influenced these men (e.g., peers)?