

SNOW NOTES

THE WRONGFUL CONVICTION OF JAMIE SNOW AND HOW THEY GOT AWAY WITH IT

Karen Ballinger Strong Perspective

Karen Strong Interview with Detectives Dan Katz & Rick Barkes, Supplemental Report June 2, 1999

According to Karen, “Mark McCowan asked if Jamie Snow could hide out at their place from the police. According to Mark, he stated that Jamie killed the gas station attendant and that Susan Powel drove the car [...] Mark stated that Jamie shot the attendant over money and that the attendant could identify Jamie Snow [...] Mark moved out of her apartment sometime in 1992 [...] the conversation that she had with Mark took place in 1991 at their residence in Greenwood Trailer Court [...] after the shooting of William Little and prior to Jamie Snow being arrested at Jamie’s sister’s place in Missouri. (Jamie was arrested on 04-24-91.)”

Mark “Stretch” McCowan Grand Jury Testimony August 18, 1999

Stretch confirmed he was living with Karen in the spring of 1991 and he was childhood friends with Jamie, and has not spoken to him since December of 1997. He confirmed he knew Susan Powell since childhood and she also hung around their group of friends. He said he was not with Jamie or Susan on the night of the crime. He said he has never had a conversation with anyone about Jamie shooting William Little, about him hearing shots fired behind the Clark station, about him getting rid of a gun for Jamie, or about him hiding out Jamie. He said he spoke to Jamie about the crime when Jamie told him about how he had to stand in a lineup for it, but Jamie told him he didn’t do it. Stretch said he was at a gas station one day with Jamie and the victim’s friend, Danny Hartley confronted them and said he was going to whip his ass for shooting his friend, and Jamie chased him around with a car jack a couple times, and then they left. He said Jamie drove a silver Cordoba in March of 1991, and he had a gold Trans Am and a white Trans Am. He said he was not at a gathering where there was a toast to William Little. He added that Troy Moews knew of Jamie through him.

Karen Strong Grand Jury Testimony September 8, 1999

Karen confirmed she was in a relationship with Mark “Stretch” McCowan from 1984 to 1994, and she knew Jamie during that time as his friend, and his wife Tammy. She said she did not know Susan Powell personally. She said she worked with Julie Knight for three or four years. She said on the night of the crime, March 31, 1991, she was living with Stretch at Greenwood Trailer Court. She said sometime between the crime and when Jamie was arrested, she had a conversation with Stretch where he said Jamie had killed someone. She said Jamie came to their apartment and asked to stay there for a few days before he went to his sister’s, and he was on the run. She said that Stretch told her that Jamie had shot the kid because he could identify him and he got a minimal amount of money. Julie Knight told her the same thing, and also said Susan Powell was driving the car and other people were in the car. She explained that Stretch knew that Jamie did it because Jamie confessed to him, and she did not allow him to stay at their apartment, she did not see the car that brought him, and has not seen him since.

BPD Recorded Wiretaps

Danielle Roland to Stacy Soule regarding Karen Ballinger Strong

Danielle Roland Affidavit, October 4, 2012

“Karen Strong called me out of the blue and told me she was going to my ex-husband’s and Susan’s place and buying drugs. She told me my kids had been there. At the end of the conversation she asked me how Bruce was holding up with Jamie Snow’s case [...] Bruce was recording my calls I took the tapes down to Teena Griffin and Charles Reynard to hopefully use these to help end visitation with my ex-husband [...] Instead Charles Reynard [...] got an eavesdropping order. They knew I didn’t know Karen, but they told me to come up with reasons to call her, to strike up conversation, and grill her on the case. They had yellow pads and made notes to tell me what to say, asking me to ask her where the gun was. These conversations happened at my house. They used equipment to record these calls.”

Wiretap, June 9, 2000 5:25pm, 12 min

Danielle told Stacy she was going to help Karen with an issue about having her dog in the trailer park. She was using Stacy as a go between, and Karen told Stacy she would testify to everything she knew and saw about Jamie the night the shooting happened, “the right stuff,” in return for the help. Danielle emphasized she wanted Karen to tell the truth. Stacy said Karen said she was pissed off because she knew he shot the kid, but they kept coming to talk to her before he was arrested. Danielle confirmed that they all knew this was for favors between the three of them. She wants to talk to Karen tonight since Bruce won’t be home, and Stacy said she told Karen not to tell Bruce. Danielle said she actually made arrangements for Bruce to be somewhere else tonight. Stacy confirmed, “if Karen can help you, you’ll help her,” and Danielle said she was protecting her husband. They made plans to meet at 8:30pm if Stacy and her husband did not go to play cards. Danielle confirmed she was going to help Stacy with a situation regarding the manager at her trailer park too.

Wiretap, June 17, 2000 9:35pm

Contents of call not provided

Wiretap, June 28, 2000 8:46pm, 9 min 30 sec

Stacy said Karen can talk on the phone at 9pm and gave Danielle Karen’s phone number. Danielle said it would be good because Bruce won’t be home. Danielle said she will continue to work on getting Stacy’s problem taken care of. Stacy asks Danielle what is wrong, and Danielle says nothing, she is just tired and beat. Danielle advises Stacy to hold off on typing a petition about the trailer park manager until she talks to her. Stacy says let her know what Karen says, she would like to help. She says she had to call 911 the day before to get the cops to help look for her children, they walked home alone and got lost, and it was horrible. Stacy talked about how Karen and her husband are having a problem with that trailer park manager because Karen’s dog is a pitbull, that got loose in the trailer park, and it is against regulation at over 12 inches tall. Danielle tells her to make notes of everything that happens in the trailer park involving the manager and the dog situation, she is doing the best she can to help both of them, so Karen can keep the dog and Stacy can get rid of the manager, so no one gets kicked out of the trailer. They say they appreciate each other’s help. Danielle says again she does not want Bruce to hear her on the phone with Karen and get upset or make comments in the background, she says she will call Stacy back when she gets off the phone with Karen.

**BPD Recorded Interview with Detectives Dan Katz and Rick Barkes
July 11, 2000**

Karen agrees she has had a lot of time to think about this since testifying at the Grand Jury, and she came back at their request to tell them more. She said she remembers that on March 31, 1991, Stretch and she went to his mother's for Easter dinner and it was over by 3pm, they went home, and between 5 and 6pm Stretch left the house. She can't remember if he was with Jamie or not when he left, it's possible someone picked him up. She saw him between 10 and midnight, she was sleeping in the front room and he woke her up, asked if Jamie could stay a couple days because he was in trouble and needed a place to stay. She said, "no absolutely not". She walked to her bedroom and saw Jamie standing through her backdoor with a car behind him. Stretch asked again and she said, "no absolutely no way," and she went into the bedroom, laid down, and went to bed. Stretch stayed and Jamie did not. She said she is not sure if Stretch said a female drove him home, it could have been. She said Jamie was wearing a white collared shirt and a ball cap. That night Stretch did not explain why Jamie needed to stay, except he was in trouble, she figured he beat up his wife.

Karen said her and Stretch broke up a week or two later, they were arguing and she did not like his friends. She said before she moved out they talked again, she was asking why Jamie needed to stay, Stretch said he was in big trouble, that he killed the kid at the Clark gas station when he robbed him. Stretch told her that Susan was the driver (but she stutters and asked detectives if that was her name, if Susan was the name of the driver), she was with Jamie, Jamie went inside, she was the driver. Karen said Stretch told her the kid could identify Jamie and that's why he shot him. She does not know why that station was picked to be robbed, and Jamie did what Jamie does. Stretch said Susan sat in the car and waited for Jamie, but he did not say where it was parked. Karen explained that other people told her the car was parked behind the building, the gun was thrown over the spillway, and the car was smashed.

Karen said Stretch never said if he was involved himself. She said Jamie was not allowed in her residence, but he could be on the property, but if he knew she was home, he left. He knew how she felt about him and that he was not welcome at all. She said Stretch and Jamie were best friends since they were kids and were together a lot.

Karen said she knows Susan but not personally, and she has seen her on a few occasions in the same car as Jamie when they arrived to pick up Stretch, and sometimes Jamie's wife was in the car. She said she probably saw Jamie, Susan, and Tammy together in a Pinto a week before the crime while going down the highway in passing. She said when Susan would come with Jamie, Susan always drove, that Jamie did not drive because he did not have a license. She said she had also seen them in a darker car similar to a Charger before with Susan driving it. Karen said her and Stretch, her and Jamie, or her and Susan or Tammy have not discussed the case since she broke up with Stretch. All she knows is what she observed about who has been driving the car and the few things she heard.

Karen was asked why she told them originally in 1999 that they lived together until 1992, but now she says it was two weeks later that she left. She said she can't remember if she left when Stretch went to prison, but she knows it was 1991 she moved out to take care of her grandma.

Karen is asked why she originally told them in 1999 that this conversation with Stretch took place at their apartment between the crime and when Jamie was arrested on April 24, 1991, and now she's saying it took place within two or three days after the crime. She says she can't remember, it wasn't very much longer, it was close, within a week of the crime. Karen agrees that it was in the newspaper a lot but says she never brought it up to Stretch.

Karen said she is racking her brain trying to figure out if Stretch was there or not, and some things just don't jive and don't look very good for Stretch, or Jamie, or Susan, and if she thinks of anything else before trial she will let them know.

Karen Strong Testimony, Snow Trial January 9, 2001

Direct Examination via Teena Griffin

Karen confirmed she lived in Bloomington with her husband Kevin and four stepchildren, and that Mark "Stretch" McCowan is her ex-boyfriend (p 5, lines 3-19).

Karen confirmed she was living with her boyfriend Stretch in an apartment at Greenwood trailer court on March 31, 1991 and she knew Jamie through him (p 6, lines 11-24).

Karen said she and Stretch were at his mother's house for Easter dinner on March 31, 1991 and they went back to their apartment around 4 or 5 in the afternoon and Stretch left their home between 5 and 7pm, returning between 10pm and midnight. She said she was asleep on the couch in the front room when Stretch came in and asked if Jamie could stay there for a few days. She said she saw Jamie at the back door wearing a t-shirt and a ballcap. She said she saw a car out there and she did not allow Jamie to stay there. She said they left together (p 7-10).

Karen identified Jamie in exhibit photos number 53 and 56 and says he looked similar back in 1991 (p 10, lines 13-24 & p 11, lines 1-3).

Karen stated that she first spoke to authorities about this just a year ago, and has since remembered this encounter took place on the night of the crime (p 11, lines 4-20).

Cross Examination via Frank Piel

Karen confirmed she first found out that Bill Little had been shot on Easter Sunday of 1991 the next day, from the newspapers, and she always knew that the encounter with her, Stretch, and Jamie took place the night of the crime, but she never told anyone that specific date because no one ever asked her for it and she didn't think it was important (p 14).

Redirect via Teena Griffin

Karen confirmed that she connected the shooting of Bill Little to the encounter with Stretch and Jamie after a second conversation with Stretch about it, but she never told authorities until they asked her (p 15, lines 7-24 & p 16, lines 1-5).

**Mark "Stretch" McCowan Testimony, Snow Trial
January 11, 2001**

Direct Examination via Frank Picl

Stretch confirmed he has known Jamie as a good friend for 25 years and was not present with him at any time on March 31, 1991 (p 6, lines 7-16).

Stretch said he was not at Jamie's house in 1993 where any beer was poured out in memory of Bill Little, and he has never been with Dawn Roberts at the same time as Jamie (p 6, lines 18-24 & p 7, lines 1-5).

Stretch confirmed Karen Strong was his live in girlfriend on Easter of 1991, and he did not on that night or within a couple days ask her if Jamie could stay with them (p 7, lines 6-22).

Stretch confirmed that he has known Ed Palumbo for 15 years, and when he was in prison the prior summer, he had discussions with other people about Ed having a bad reputation for lying and making up stories, that he tried to be something that he's not (p 8, lines 3-21).

Stretch confirms that in Joliet Correctional Center, since day one of intake, there were phones available to use on the yard every day and in the galley once a week, and there were writing supplies available. He confirmed there was access to contact guards as well (p 9, lines 10-24, p 10, & p 11, lines 1-16)

Stretch confirmed he knew Dan Tanasz and worked with him at a tree service in Florida with Jamie in 1996, and he was never at a discussion with him where the robbery and murder of Bill Little came up (p 11, lines 17-24 & p 12, lines 1-16).

Stretch confirmed that he was not at a party at Brian Whitmer's house on Easter of 1991 (p 14, lines 8-10).

Stretch confirmed that Jamie has never worn an earring in his left ear, he did not rob the Clark station on Easter Sunday, and Jamie did not tell him he did either (p 14, lines 15-24).

Cross Examination via Teena Griffin

Stretch confirmed that he has been incarcerated for parole violation, residential burglaries, bringing contraband into a penal institution, diving while license revoked, and delivery of cannabis (p 18 & 19).

Stretch confirmed he has known Ed Hammond, Ed Palumbo, and the Hendricks brothers for a long time (p 20, lines 5-8).

Stretch confirmed he never heard Jamie discuss the William Little Clark station robbery homicide or any Bloomington robbery case (p 22, lines 6-13).

Stretch said Jamie discussed the composite drawing with him saying it did not look like him (p 24, lines 2-5).

Stretch said he never had a conversation with Karen Strong about Jamie's involvement in the William Little shooting, that Susan was the driver, and he never asked her if Jamie could stay at their apartment (p 25).

Offer of Proof Via Piel

Stretch claimed that Detective Katz brought him downstairs a few days prior and asked him if he was going to testify or plead the fifth, and he interpreted that as an intimidation tactic to discourage him from testifying (p 26, lines 15-24).

Karen Strong Rebuttal Testimony, Snow Trial January 12, 2001

Direct Examination via Teena Griffin

Karen specified that Stretch asked her if Jamie could stay at their place because Stretch said he was "in trouble" because he "had shot the kid in the robbery," and she added that he said Susan was driving the car (p 6, lines 18-24, & p 9, lines 4-16).

Cross Examination via Frank Piel

Karen said she first told the authorities about this conversation with Stretch about 6 months prior when she was notified to speak to them. She confirmed that she was right there in Bloomington with access to a phone and writing supplies for the past ten years, and knew about the open investigation from the newspapers, and that Jamie was indicted in 1999 (p 9, lines 22-24 & p 10).

Karen specified that the night of the crime, Stretch told her Jamie was in a lot of trouble and needed a place to stay, then a couple says later, said he shot the kid, and then after his arrest in April, said again that's why he wanted Jamie to stay. She claimed there were many conversations about it but those three were the important ones (p 12 & p 13, lines 1-10).

Karen said she didn't notify police because she didn't want to be involved (p 13, lines 11-13).

Redirect Examination via Teena Griffin

Karen said the first time she spoke to the police in 1999, she told them about parts of the conversation she had with Stretch, and that makes it longer than 6 months since she first told this account (p 13 & p 14, lines 1-3).

Karen said she did not sleep the prior night and she was scared (p 14, lines 4-19).

Recross Examination via Frank Piel

Karen said she can't remember when she told authorities and the grand jury about the conversation she had with Stretch (p 16, lines 1-10).

Karen was asked but unable to answer due to an objection if she ever told Mark Huffington that she did not have that conversation with Stretch (p 16, lines 15-18).

Further Redirect Examination via Teena Griffin

Teena Griffin pulled out Karen's Grand Jury testimony and had her confirm she did tell them in 1999 about the conversation with Stretch (p 17).

Mark "Stretch" McCowan Rebuttal Testimony, Snow Trial January 12, 2001

Direct Examination via Frank Picl

Stretch claimed that he did not tell Karen on the night of the crime that Jamie was "in a lot of trouble," and he absolutely did not say it a couple days later, or after Jamie's April arrest (p 88, lines 22-24 & p 89, lines 1-15).

Stretch claimed Karen was a regular crack cocaine user in 1991, and that it was a bad habit that she still had (p 89, lines 16-23).

Mark Huffington Affidavit December 21, 2009

"I grew up with Karen Ballinger, now Karen Strong. She and I were close. We called each other brother and sister. In 1991 I was locked up. When I later got out, I saw Karen all the time. She and I talked about Jamie Snow's case many times. We saw each other every other day. We had several conversations in 1995 + 1996 and again in 1999 about the case. Karen told me that the night Bill Little was killed, Mark McCowan – who we called Stretch – woke her up when he came home. They stayed together at the time. She told me that was all she knew about the case – that she didn't know anything else about it. She said she and Mark hadn't talked that night. If Karen said anything else about the case, or Jamie's involvement in it, she would have told me. We were close. When I later heard she testified, I was shocked. She told me she didn't know anything so I don't know what she could have testified about."

Mark "Stretch" McCowan Affidavit January 8, 2010

"I am absolutely positive that I never told Karen Ballinger that Jamie Snow confessed any involvement in Bill Little's murder to me. I know I didn't tell her that because it is not true. Jamie and I never talked about anything like that."

"I know that Karen testified that Jamie told me this and that I told her about that conversation. This is a lie. I know that her boyfriend at the time had several DUIs, and I heard that she had a cocaine arrest at that time. I think her testimony came because she was working off that arrest. I know Mike Angelos was arrested for cocaine, and she was the only woman who came to his door to buy cocaine."

"I don't think Jamie's attorney ever asked me about why Karen would have lied about me telling her Jamie had confessed."