

MURDER CASE STUDY
VICTIM: REV. JOHN PATRICK KERRIGAN



Flathead Lake, Montana

MURDERER: UNKNOWN



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Two Disappearances

The Rev. John Patrick Kerrigan had been at the Servants of the Paraclete Center in Jemez Springs.¹ All records of that center have been destroyed.² The reason for his being there has never been made public. Priests who were at Jemez Springs were there for alcoholism, depression, or sexual misconduct. Alcoholism and depression rarely provoke murder; sexual conduct sometimes does.

Kerrigan was transferred from Plain, Montana to Sacred Heart Church in Ronan, Montana. Two days after the transfer, on July 20, 1984, he was last seen in a bakery in Ronan. The next day his clothes were found on Highway 35 on Flathead Lake. His shirt was stained with his own blood and a \$100 bill was in the pocket.

Later his car was found just outside Polson, Montana, near Flathead Lake. The trunk contained a bloody pillow, a shovel, and a box with hundreds of dollars. The car keys were about 30 yards away.³ No other trace of Kerrigan was ever found.

Coincidentally, or perhaps not coincidentally, Curt Holmen disappeared at the same time in the same general area. Holmen was a backpacker and a survivalist. He was married and divorced. On July 22, 1984, he called a girlfriend and told her he would meet her in a movie theater in Missoula. Twelve days later someone found his truck on an old logging road, about 40 miles from where Kerrigan's car was found. There were no signs of violence. Holmen was apparently bisexual.⁴ Holmen's brother thinks there may be some link between the two disappearances, but apart from the same general time, same general location, and possible links to homosexuality, there is no clear connection.

Both cases are unsolved.

¹ Steve Terrell. "Similar Murder Remains Unsolved," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, May 7, 1997.

² Robert Patrick, "Records in Priest Sex Cases Were Destroyed," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, October 17, 2005.

³ Vince Devlin, "Unidentified Body Found in Mission Mountains," *The Missoulian*, February 3, 2007.

⁴ Linda Hunt, "Nagging Doubts Compel Brother to Not Give Up," *Bismarck Tribune*, July 7, 1996.