

# S2E11

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## Timeline (1978)

- Feb 24th , Boys go to basketball game
  - 10 PM - Picked up snacks after game
  - 11-12 PM - Apparently sighted by [Joseph Schons](#)
- Feb 25th, Police called by family
- Feb 25th, Car found by forest ranger
- Feb 28th, Forest ranger reports sighting to police
- Feb 28th, Over 5 days, rangers search area
- June 4th, [Ted Weiher](#)'s body found in ranger trailer 20 miles from car
- June 5th, [Jack Mardruga](#) and [Bill Sterling](#)'s remains found on opposite sides of the road 18 miles from car
- June 7th, [Jack Huett](#) backbone found under a bush 2 miles from the trailer

The incident

Wednesday, July 7, 2021 8:01 PM

The **Yuba County Five** were all young men from [Yuba City, California](#), United States, all with mild [intellectual disabilities](#) or psychiatric conditions, who attended a college basketball game at [California State University, Chico](#) on the night of February 24, 1978. Four of them—Bill Sterling, 29; Jack Huett, 24; Ted Weiher, 32; and Jack Madruga, 30—were later found dead; the fifth, Gary Mathias, 25,<sup>ⓘ</sup> has never been found.<sup>ⓘ</sup>

Several days after their initial disappearance, the group's [Mercury Montego](#) was found, abandoned, in a remote area of [Plumas National Forest](#) on a high mountain dirt road that was far out of their way back to Yuba City. However, investigators could not determine why the car was abandoned, as it was in good working order and could easily have been pushed out of the [snowpack](#); it was in. At that time, no trace of the men was found.

After the snow melted in June 1978, four of the men's bodies were found in and near a trailer camp used by [backpackers](#) as shelter deep in the forest, 20 miles (32 km) from the car.<sup>ⓘ</sup> Only bones were left of the three bodies in the woods, a result of scavenging animals; but the one in the trailer, Ted Weiher, had apparently lived for as long as three months after the men were last seen, starving to death despite an ample supply of food and heating materials nearby. Weiher was missing his shoes, and investigators found Mathias' own shoes in the nearby woods, suggesting Mathias also survived for some time beyond the last night they were seen alive.

A witness later came forward, a local man who said he had spent the same night in his own car a short distance away from where the Montego was found after suffering a mild [heart attack](#) trying to push it out of the snow. This witness told police that he had seen and heard people around the car that night, and twice called for help, only for them to grow silent and turn off their flashlights. This, and the considerable distance from the car to where the bodies were found, has led to suspicions of [foul play](#).<sup>ⓘ</sup>

While he was stationed in [West Germany](#) as part of his [United States Army](#) service in the early 1970s, Gary Mathias, a native of [Yuba City, California](#), had developed drug problems. These eventually led to him being diagnosed with [schizophrenia](#) and being psychiatrically [discharged](#). Mathias returned to his parents' home in Yuba City and began treatment at a local mental hospital. While it had been difficult at first—he was nearly arrested for assault twice and often suffered [psychotic](#) episodes that landed him in a local [Veterans Administration](#) hospital—by 1978 Mathias was being treated on an outpatient basis with [Stelazine](#) and [Cogenin](#) and was considered by his physicians to be "one of our sterling success cases."<sup>ⓘ</sup> Mathias supplemented his Army disability pay by working in his stepfather's gardening business. Off the job, outside of his family, he was close friends with four other men, most slightly older than him, who either had slight [intellectual disabilities](#) (Sterling and Huett) or were informally considered "[slow learners](#)" (Weiher and Madruga, also an Army veteran) and who lived either in Yuba City or nearby [Marysville](#). Like Mathias, each man lived with his parents, all of whom referred to them collectively as "the boys."<sup>ⓘⓘⓘ</sup>

The five men's favorite leisure activity was sports. Their families said that when they got together, it was usually to play a game or to watch one. They played [basketball](#) together as the Gateway Gators, a team sponsored by a local program for the mentally handicapped.<sup>ⓘⓘ</sup>

On February 25, the Gators were due to play their first game in a weeklong tournament sponsored by the [Special Olympics](#) for which the winners would get a free week in [Los Angeles](#). The five men had prepared the night before, some even laying out their uniforms and asking parents to wake them up on time. They decided to drive to [Chico](#) that night to cheer on the [UC Davis basketball team](#) in an away game against [Chico State](#).<sup>ⓘ</sup> Madruga, the only member of the group besides Mathias who had a driver's license, drove the group 50 miles (80 km) north to Chico in his turquoise and white [1969 Mercury Montego](#). The men wore only light coats against the cold temperatures in the upper [Sacramento Valley](#) at night that time of year.<sup>ⓘ</sup>

After the Davis team won the game, the group got back into Madruga's car and drove a short distance from the Chico State campus to Behr's Market in downtown Chico. There they bought snacks along with sodas and cartons of milk to drink. It was shortly before the store's 10 p.m. closing time; the clerk later remembered them because she resented that such a large group had come in and delayed her from starting the process of closing.<sup>ⓘⓘⓘ</sup> None of the men were seen alive again after that point. At their homes, some of the men's parents had stayed up to make sure they [returned](#). When morning came and they had not, police were notified.<sup>ⓘ</sup>

Police in [Butte](#) and [Yuba](#) counties began searching along the route the men took to Chico. They found no sign of them, but a few days later a [Plumas National Forest](#) ranger told investigators that he had seen the Montego parked along Oroville–Quincy Road in the forest on February 25. At the time he had not considered it significant, since many residents often drove up that road into the [Sierra Nevada](#) on winter weekends to go [cross-country skiing](#) on the extensive trail system, but after he read the missing persons bulletin he recognized the car and led the deputies to it on February 28.<sup>ⓘ</sup>

Discovery of the car<sup>[edit]</sup>



1969 Mercury Montego 2-door similar to the one used

Inside the car was evidence suggesting the men had been inside it between when they were last seen and when it was abandoned. The wrappers and empty cartons and cans they had purchased in Chico were present, along with programs from the basketball game they had watched and a neatly folded road map of California. But the discovery of the car raised more questions than it answered.<sup>ⓘ</sup>

The first was its location, 70 miles (110 km) from Chico, far off any direct route to Yuba City or Marysville. None of the men's families could speculate as to why they might have driven up a long and winding dirt road<sup>ⓘ</sup> on a winter night deep into a high-elevation remote forest, without any extra clothing and on the night before a basketball game they had been talking excitedly about among themselves for several weeks. Madruga's parents said he did not like the cold weather and had never been up into the mountains. Sterling's father had once taken his son to the area near where the car was found for a fishing weekend, but the younger man had not enjoyed it and remained at home when his father took later trips there.<sup>ⓘ</sup> Similarly, police could not figure out why the men had abandoned the car. They had reached 4,400 feet (1,300 m) in elevation along the road, about where the [snow line](#) was at that time of year, just short of where the road was closed for the winter.

The car had become stuck in some snow drifts, and there was evidence that the wheels had been spun attempting to get out of it. But, police noted, the snow was not so deep that five healthy young men would not have been able to push it out.<sup>ⓘ</sup> The keys were not present, suggesting at first that the car had been abandoned because it might not have been functioning properly, with the intention of returning later with help. But when police [hot-wired](#) the car, it started immediately. The gas tank was a quarter full.<sup>ⓘ</sup>

The questions continued after police towed the car back to the station for a more thorough examination. The Montego's [undercarriage](#) had no dents, gouges or even mud scrapes, not even on its low-hanging muffler, despite having been driven a long distance up a mountain road with many bumps and ruts. Either the driver had been very careful, or it was someone familiar with the road, a familiarity Madruga was not known to have. Nor, his family said, would Madruga have let someone else drive it.<sup>ⓘ</sup> But the car also was unlocked and had a window rolled down when it was found, and they also said it was unlike him to leave the car so unsecured.<sup>ⓘ</sup>

Efforts to search the vicinity were hampered by a severe snowstorm that day. Two days later, after searchers in [Snowcats](#) nearly got lost themselves, further efforts were called off due to the weather. No trace of the men was found other than the car.<sup>ⓘ</sup>

Sightings<sup>[edit]</sup>

In response to local media coverage of the case, police received reports of some or all of the men being sighted after they had left Chico, including some reports of them being seen elsewhere in California or the country. Most were easily dismissed, but two stood out.

Joseph Schons of [Sacramento](#) told police he inadvertently wound up spending the night of February 24–25 near where the Montego was found. He had driven up there, where he had a cabin, to check the snowpack in advance of a weekend ski trip with his family. At 5:30 p.m., about 150 feet (46 m) up the road, he, too, had gotten stuck in the snow. In the process of trying to free it, he realized he was beginning to experience the early symptoms of a [heart attack](#) and went back in, keeping the engine running to provide heat.<sup>ⓘ</sup>

Six hours later, lying in the car and experiencing severe pain, he saw headlights coming up behind him. Looking out, he saw a car parked behind him, headlights on, with a group of people around it, one of which seemed to him to be a woman holding a baby. He called to them for help, but they stopped talking and turned their headlights out. Later, he saw more lights from behind him, this time flashlights, that also went out when he called to them.<sup>ⓘⓘ</sup>

After that, Schons said at first, he recalled a pickup truck parking 20 feet (6.1 m) behind him briefly, and then continuing on down the road. Later, he clarified to police that he could not be sure of that, since at the time he was almost delirious from the pain he was in. After Schons' car ran out of gas in the early morning hours, his pain subsided enough for him to walk 8 miles (13 km) down the road to a lodge, where the manager drove him back home, passing the abandoned Montego at the point where he had recalled hearing the voices originate from. Doctors later confirmed he had indeed experienced a mild heart attack.<sup>ⓘⓘ</sup>

Weiher's mother said ignoring someone's pleas for help was not like her son, if indeed he had been present. She recalled how he and Sterling had helped someone they knew get to the hospital after overdosing on [Valium](#).<sup>ⓘ</sup> The other notable report was from a woman who worked at a store in the small hamlet of [Brownsville](#), 30 miles (48 km) from the spot where the car had been abandoned, which they could have reached had they continued down the road from where they left the car.<sup>ⓘ</sup> On March 3, the woman, who saw fliers that had been distributed with the men's pictures and information about the \$1,215 [\$4,800 in modern dollars<sup>ⓘ</sup>] reward the families had put up, told deputies that four of them had stopped at the store in a red pickup truck, two days after the disappearance. The store owner corroborated her account.<sup>ⓘ</sup> The woman said she identified the men identically as from out of the area due to their "big eyes and facial expressions." Two of the men, whom she identified as Huett and Sterling, were in the phone booth outside while the other two went inside. Police said she was "a credible witness" and they took her account seriously.<sup>ⓘ</sup>

Additional detail came from the store owner. He told investigators that men whom he believed to be Weiher and Huett came in and bought [burritos](#), chocolate milk and soft drinks. Weiher's brother told the [Los Angeles Times](#) that while driving to Brownsville in a different car in apparent ignorance of the basketball game seemed completely out of character for them, the owner's description of the two men's behavior seemed consistent with them, as Weiher would "eat anything he could get his hands on" and was often accompanied by Huett more than any of the other four.<sup>ⓘ</sup> However, Huett's brother said Jack hated using telephones to the point that he would handle calls for his brother Jack from the other men in the group.

With the evidence not pointing to any clear conclusion about what happened the night the five men disappeared, police and

Has the Yuba County 5 case been solved? Learn more about the disappearance

The disappearance at Dyatlov Pass is perhaps one of the most famous snowy mysteries the world over. While scientists today believe that it was likely an avalanche that killed the hikers, others are not quite sure. The reason that we bring it up is because there is an incident largely called the American Dyatlov Pass, which is the case of the Yuba County 5.

On the night of Feb. 24, 1978, five young men with mild intellectual disabilities or psychiatric conditions just . . . vanished while driving home from a basketball game. Four of them would, in the warmer months, be found dead. The fifth, however, remains missing to this day. How did the men die? Will the missing member of the Yuba County 5 ever be found? Here's what you need to know.



MISSING—Jack Huett, William Sterling, Jack Madruga, Theodore Weiher, Gary Mathias, from left. <sup>ⓘ</sup> <sup>ⓘ</sup> <sup>ⓘ</sup> <sup>ⓘ</sup> <sup>ⓘ</sup>

"The boys"

When [you hear of the Yuba County 5](#), they tend to be collectively referred to as "the boys" by those that knew them. Gary Mathias, 25; Bill Sterling, 29; Jack Huett, 24; Ted Weiher, 32; and Jack Madruga, 30 were all friends. All either had some sort of intellectual disability or a mental health issue. All five lived at home with their parents and were bound together by a love of sports.

The five would either play sports together or watch them. Their favorite? Basketball. The five were on a team for the mentally handicapped called the Gateway Gators, who were set to participate in a week-long tournament sponsored by the Special Olympics. Winners receive a trip to Los Angeles for a week. They weren't missing this game. The five were going to see a UC Davis basketball game and come straight home.

Some of them even laid out their uniforms for the team and asked their parents to make sure they woke up on time for the game. This wasn't something any of them were going to miss. But they did. Why? Well, that part is a little less clear.



Heart attack

After the UC Davis team won their game, the five men went to pick up snacks & drinks [for the drive home](#). The clerk remembers this as it was right before closing, so she was annoyed by having to get a large group checked out before closing and heading home herself. It sounds pretty normal right? Well, the last sighting of the Yuba County 5 was...decidedly not.

Joe Shones, age 55, was having car trouble *and* a mild heart attack. His car had gotten stuck in the snow, and pushing it out by himself brought it on. Miles away from help, Shones thought he could flag down help. He saw a group of men, a woman, and a baby walking together, but they ignored him calling for help. Later, he saw what he believed were flashlights. Hours later, Shones felt well enough to walk to get help.

Along the way, he passed a 1969 Mercury Montego, which belonged to the Yuba County 5. Shones later came forward with his story when the news broke about the disappearances, making him the last person to see the five alive. The Mercury would be found last where Shones saw it with enough gas for the five to return home. None of them were dressed warmly enough to go through the rugged dense forest.



So what happened?

The Yuba County 5 remains one of the [most baffling puzzles](#) within the true crime community. Several months later, in June, the body of Ted Weiher was found in a trailer with missing shoes and badly frostbitten feet. The trailer was 19 miles away from the car. About five miles from Weiher's remains, the remains of Sterling & Madruga were found. Madruga still had the keys to the Mercury. Weiher's skeletonized remains were found shortly after. To this day, Gary Mathias remains the only person missing. He had left his tennis shoes behind in the trailer with Weiher's body and had taken the man's leather shoes. Why? Police have no idea. Same when it comes to that woman and baby that Shones saw with the Yuba County 5, though Shones admitted he could have hallucinated everything. He was pretty sick.



Brownsville in a different car in apparent ignorance of the basketball game seemed completely odd of character for them, the owner's description of the two men's behavior seemed consistent with them, as Weiher would "eat anything he could get his hands on" and was often accompanied by Huett more than any of the other four.<sup>[a]</sup> However, Huett's brother said Jack hated using telephones to the point that he would handle calls for his brother Jack from the other men in the group.

With the evidence not pointing to any clear conclusion about what happened the night the five men disappeared, police and the families were not ruling out the possibility that they had met with [foul play](#).<sup>[a]</sup> The eventual discovery of four of the five men's bodies seemed to suggest otherwise, but raised even more questions about what had happened that night, and whether at least one of them might have been rescued.<sup>[a]</sup>

On June 4, with most of the higher-elevation snow melted, a group of motorcyclists went to a trailer maintained by the [Forest Service](#) at a campsite off the road about 19.4 miles (31.2 km) from where the Montego had been found. A front window had been broken. When they opened the door they were overcome by the odor of what turned out to be a decaying body inside. It was later identified as Weiher's.<sup>[a]</sup>

Searchers returned to Plumas, following the road between the trailer and the site of the Montego. The next day they found remains later identified as Madruga and Sterling, on opposite sides of the road 11.4 miles (18.3 km) from where the car had been. The former's body had been partially consumed by scavenging animals; only bones remained of the latter, scattered over a small area.<sup>[a]</sup> Autopsies showed they had both died of [hypothermia](#); deputies speculated that one may have succumbed to the desire for sleep that marks that condition's final stages, and the other refused to leave his side, eventually meeting the same fate.<sup>[a]</sup>

Two days later, as part of one of the other search parties, Jack Huett's father found his son's backbone <sup>[a]</sup> under a *mangazita* bush<sup>[a]</sup> 2 miles (3.2 km) northeast of the trailer. His shoes and jeans nearby helped identify the body. The next day a deputy sheriff found a skull downhill from the bush, 300 feet (91 m) away, confirmed by dental records later to have been Huett's.<sup>[a]</sup> His death, too, was attributed to hypothermia.<sup>[a]</sup> In an area to the northwest of the trailer, roughly a quarter-mile (400 m) from it, searchers found three Forest Service blankets and a rusted flashlight by the road. It could not be determined how long those items had been there. Since Mathias had presumably not taken his medication, pictures of him were distributed to mental institutions all over California; however, no trace of him has ever been found.<sup>[a]</sup>

**Evidence in trailer**<sup>[edit]</sup>

Weiher's body was on a bed with eight sheets wrapped around it, including the head. The autopsy showed that he had died of a combination of starvation and hypothermia. Weiher had lost nearly half his 200 pounds (91 kg); the growth of his beard suggested he had lived as long as thirteen weeks from when he had last shaved. His feet were badly [frostbitten](#).<sup>[a]</sup> almost [gangrenous](#).<sup>[a]</sup> On a table next to the bed were some of Weiher's personal effects, including his wallet (with cash), a nickel ring with "Ted" engraved on it, and a gold necklace he also wore. Also on the table was a gold watch, without its crystal, which Weiher's family said was not his,<sup>[a]</sup> and a partially melted candle.<sup>[a]</sup> He was wearing a [velour](#) shirt and lightweight pants, but his shoes could not be found.<sup>[a]</sup> Most puzzling to the investigators was how Weiher had come to his fate. No fire had been set in the trailer's fireplace, despite an ample supply of matches and paperback novels to use as kindling. Heavy forestry clothing which could have kept the men warm also remained where it had been stored. A dozen [C-ration](#) cans from a storage shed outside had been opened, and their contents consumed, but a locker in the same shed that held an even greater assortment of dehydrated foods, enough to keep all five men fed for a year if that had been necessary, had not even been opened. Similarly, another shed nearby held a [butane](#) tank with a valve that, had it been opened, would have fed the trailer's heating system.<sup>[a]</sup> This behavior, however, was consistent with what Weiher's family members described as a lack of [common sense](#) arising from his mental disability; he often questioned why he should stop at a [stop sign](#), and one night he needed to be dragged out of bed while his bedroom ceiling was burning in a house fire since he was worried about missing his job the next day if he left his bed.<sup>[a]</sup> It also seemed that Weiher had not been alone in the trailer, and that Mathias and possibly Huett had been there with him. Mathias's tennis sneakers were in the trailer, and the C-rations had been opened with a [P-38 can opener](#), which only Mathias or Madruga would have been familiar with from their military service. Mathias, his feet perhaps also swollen from frostbite, could have decided to put Weiher's shoes on instead if he had ventured outside.<sup>[a]</sup> The sheets all over Weiher's body also suggested that one of the others had been there with him, as his gangrenous feet would have been in too much pain for him to pull them over his body himself.<sup>[a]</sup>

Even knowing that four of the five men had died in the Sierra, investigators still could not completely explain what had led to those deaths. They still had found no explanation for why the men were there, although they learned that Mathias had friends in the small town of [Forbestown](#), and police believed it was possible that, in an attempt to visit them on the way back home, the men may have taken a wrong turn near [Oroville](#) that put them on the mountain road.<sup>[a]</sup> For whatever reason the men had left the Montego; they had, instead of going back down the road (where they had passed the lodge that Schons later returned to), continued along the road in the direction they were originally going. Purposeful motion like that is not consistent with the circular patterns traveled by those who genuinely believe themselves lost.<sup>[a]</sup>

The day before the men went missing, a Forest Service Snowcat had gone along the road in that direction to clear snow off the trailer roof so it would not collapse. It was possible, police believed, that the group had decided to follow the tracks it left, through [snowdrifts](#) 4–6 feet (1.2–1.8 m) high, to wherever they led, in the belief that shelter was not too far away. Madruga and Sterling probably succumbed to hypothermia midway along the long walk to the trailer.<sup>[a]</sup>

It is assumed that once they found the trailer, the other three broke the window to enter. Since it was locked, they may have believed it was private property, and may have feared arrest for theft if they used anything else they found there. After Weiher died, or the others believed he had, they perhaps chose to attempt to return to civilization by different routes, overland, on foot.<sup>[a]</sup>

From <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yuba\\_County\\_Five](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yuba_County_Five)>

- [First Article](#)

## The Deaths of the Yuba County Five



It started as a trip to a collegiate basketball game. The five men, often referred to as "boys" by family and friends, were set to play their own basketball game for the recreation center they frequented. The group was excited for the upcoming game they would play in, which was part of the reason their families were alarmed when they had not arrived home the morning after the collegiate game. On February 24, 1978, the story of the Yuba County Five began, and the nightmare of their families did as well (Rossen).

The basketball game, which was at California State University, Chico, ended at approximately 10 PM that night. Jack Madruga, 30, had driven the group in his 1969 turquoise and white Mercury Montego, a car which would be forever associated with this case (Gorney). Madruga was an army veteran, having served in Vietnam, and was particularly close to William "Bill" Sterling, 28. The youngest of the group was Jackie Guett, 24, and the oldest was Theodore "Ted" Weiher, 32, who were as close as Sterling and Madruga. The final member of the group was Gary Mathias, 25, who had also served in the army, but was discharged after drug issues while stationed in Germany and diagnosed with schizophrenia. Mathias left his medication, which he took regularly, behind that night, leading to the belief that he had planned on being home in time to take the next dose. The last time we are sure the five were seen was at a Behr's Market, where they stopped for junk food on the way home from the game. From there, they drove east, despite that their homes were south of the store (Rossen).

It was their parents that raised the alarm when they didn't arrive home by the next morning. While Mathias was known to occasionally stay out late with friends, the other four were home-bodies with fairly regular schedules (Gorney). They were, for lack of a better word, predictable. The four not being home by morning was extremely unusual for them. Despite the families alerting authorities to the missing men, the abandoned car was not found until February 28<sup>th</sup>. The car still had gas in the tank, and most of the junk food had been eaten except half of a candy bar. The keys were not in the car and a window was left rolled down. Authorities theorized that the car had gotten stuck in the snow and for some reason, the five men who should have been able to get the car out chose to abandon it. According to Madruga's mother, the Mercury Montego was Madruga's prized possession and he wouldn't have driven it somewhere it could have been damaged. The rolled down window also struck her as odd, both leading her to believe that the five had been forced to drive up the mountain (Rossen).

After news broke of the disappearance, a witness came forward. Joseph Schons,



More baffling, Weiher was emaciated. Why was that odd? The trailer had food and propane. He could have survived there, but only a couple cans had been opened. Weiher lived for, at least, eight weeks after his disappearance given his beard growth on his body. No one even covered the window they had smashed to get inside of the trailer. It's...weird. The whole case is weird.

As for getting a real answer in the case, we may never know unless someone talks or, maybe, Mathias is found. Police and the families never ruled out foul play. The internet is divided on whether it was an outside force, Mathias himself, or some sort of accident that led the Yuba County 5 to their deaths & disappearance. It still remains one of the [most baffling cases](#) within the US.

From <<https://filmdaily.co/obsessions/true-crime/yuba-county-5/>>

December 8, 2017

## The haunting case of the Mathias Group (Yuba County Five)

[Mountain Disappearances](#), [Mountain Deaths](#), [Plumas National Forest](#), [Wilderness deaths](#)



GARY DALE MATHIAS, JACK MADRUGA, JACKIE HUETT, THEODORE (TED) WEIHER AND WILLIAM STERLING, DISAPPEARED FEBRUARY 24, 1978, OROVILLE, PLUMAS NATIONAL FOREST, CALIFORNIA. BODIES FOUND JUNE 1978. The Yuba County Five Case (Mathias Group) Background On February 24, 1978, a group of friends from Yuba City in California; Gary Dale Mathias, Jack Madruga, Jackie Huett, Theodore (Ted) Weiher, and William Sterling; set out on a trip to watch a basketball game. They left after it finished and then somehow drove up a mountain into the wilderness and were never seen alive again.

The case has been called the "Mathias Group Incident", the "Yuba City Five Case" and the "American Dyatlov Pass incident". Dyatlov Pass refers to the unsolved deaths of nine hikers in the northern Ural Mountains in the Soviet Union (now Russia) between 1 February and 2 February 1959. The area in which the incident took place was named Dyatlov Pass in honor of the group's leader, Igor Dyatlov. The Russian case is as mysterious as the Mathias Group in California's Plumas National Forest.

The group aged between 24 and 32 years of age, had developmental disabilities and were all enrolled in a day program for mentally handicapped adults. But that did not mean that they were unable to function in society, quite the opposite.

Of the group, Gary Mathias had the most severe mental health He was suffering from schizophrenia and was on medication to control his symptoms. Jack had low I.Q. but hadn't been diagnosed as mentally disabled and both he and Gary had served in the U.S. Army and had driver's licenses. Mathias took Stellazine and Cogentin, both used in the treatment of schizophrenia. Police records showed he had become violent on occasion and was charged with assault twice. After his return from Army service in Germany, he would fail to take his drugs and lapse into a disoriented psychosis that usually landed him in a Veterans Administration hospital. "Went haywire," is how Bob, his stepfather, put it.

Ted Weiher was employed for a while as a janitor and snack bar clerk but quit at the urging of his family, who thought Weiher's slowness was causing problems. Jackie Charles Huett, who had a slight droop to the head, was sometimes slow to respond and a loving shadow to Weiher, who looked after Huett in a protective sort of way and would dial the phone for him when Hyett had to make a call.

Jack Antone Madruga, a high school graduate, and Army veteran was laid off in November 1977 from his job as a busboy for Sunsweet Growers. William Lee Sterling, who was Madruga's special friend and deeply religious, would spend hours at the library reading literature to help bring Jesus to patients in mental hospitals. Gary Dale Mathias was an assistant in his stepfather's gardening business and an army veteran with psychiatric discharge after drug problems that developed in Germany five years before.

On Friday, February 24th, the five men drove about 50 miles north from Yuba to Chico to attend a college basketball game. When the game ended at the California State University at around 10 pm, they stopped three blocks away at Behr's Market, mildly annoying the clerk (who was trying to close up), and bought one Hostess cherry pie, one Langendorf lemon pie, one Snickers bar, one Marathon bar, two Pepsis and a quart and a half of milk.

The search for the Yuba County Five

The next day when they failed to return from Chico, their families became concerned and called the police.

They were supposed to play a basketball game of their own on February 25, part of a tournament, with a free week in Los Angeles if they won. Their clothes had been laid out the evening of the 24th, before they left for Chico with "Gateway Gators" on them, from the Yuba City vocational rehabilitation center for the handicapped where they all played basketball. Weiher had asked his mother to wash his new white high-topped sneakers for the



the five men who should have been able to get the car out chose to abandon it. According to Madrugá's mother, the Mercury Montego was Madrugá's prized possession and he wouldn't have driven it somewhere it could have been damaged. The rolled down window also struck her as odd, both leading her to believe that the five had been forced to drive up the mountain (Rossen).

After news broke of the disappearance, a witness came forward. Joseph Schons, 55, had been on the mountain the night the five men disappeared. According to his story, he had been driving up the mountain to see if the conditions were okay to bring his wife and child up at a later time when his car got stuck in a snowdrift. While trying to free his car, he suffered a minor heart attack (Rossen). Schons claimed that, while resting in his car after his heart attack, he heard a whistling outside. When he left the car, he spotted five men and what appeared to be a woman with a baby in car headlights, and he heard them talking. He called to them for help only for the headlights to turn off and the talking to stop (Gorney). Schons also claimed to have seen two cars, one of which was a pickup truck, and the group got into one of the cars and drive away (Rae). Early the next morning, Schons felt well enough to attempt to get help and left his car, heading for a lodge nearby. Along the way, he spotted the Mercury Montego, but at the time thought nothing of it. The car was 70 miles from the basketball game the group had attended. It was on the road that Schons reported he saw it on that the car was found, also called in by a park ranger (Rossen). The car was in the Plumas State Forest, just past Elke Retreat and sitting at elevation 4,500 feet. Another witness, a woman who owned a store about an hour from the abandoned car, reported seeing five men in a red pickup truck. Two of the men stayed in the truck while two more bought food and one more made a phone call from a phone booth. This is not confirmed to have been the Yuba County Five ("The Haunting Case Of The Mathias Group (Yuba County Five) — Strangeoutdoors.Com").

In early June of 1978, motorcyclists came upon an abandoned forest service trailer 19 miles from the abandoned car with a broken window and an unusual, and thoroughly disgusting, scent permeating the area. Authorities were immediately called and inside, Weiher's remains were found. Weiher had been draped in sheets, eight in total, in a manner that seemed almost ritualistic (Rae). His leather boots were missing from his body, his feet badly frost bitten, and he was emaciated. He had lost approximately 80 to 100 pounds, nearly halving his weight at the time he disappeared (Gorney). It was estimated, based on the growth of his beard and other factors in his autopsy, that he had been living in the trailer for eight to 13 weeks before his death (Rossen). What was unusual was that the trailer was filled with C-rations, only 36 of which were eaten, and freeze-dried meals ("The Haunting Case Of The Mathias Group (Yuba County Five) — Strangeoutdoors.Com"). The opened C-rations, which were military rations, had been opened with an Army P38 can opener, which only Mathias and Madrugá would have known how to use from their time in the army. Weiher's nickel ring, which his name engraved, his gold necklace, his wallet, and a Waltham watch missing crystals were all found on a table in the trailer. The watch was unfamiliar to the families (Gorney). To add to the unusual discovery, there was a propane tank that could have been turned on and would have heated the trailer, as well as matches and plenty of material to start a fire to keep warm. Yet, none of these items had been used (Rossen).

A day later, Madrugá's and Sterling's remains were found 11 miles from the car (Gorney), on the opposite side of the road from the trailer containing Weiher's remains and approximately 4.5 miles from the trailer. Authorities believed that their bodies had simply given up on them as the remaining members of the group continued on. The keys to the Mercury Montego were found on Madrugá (Rossen). Madrugá was found near a stream, having been dragged about 10 feet by animals that were scavenging his remains, lying face up and with his watch wrapped in his right hand. Sterling was not far, in a wooded area, scattered across a 50 foot area. All that was left of his remains were his bones (Gorney).

Huett's remains were found two days later, unfortunately by his father, Jack. Jack Huett found his son's spine, and soon other bones were found in the area. His left leg was found, along with his ripple-soled "Get Theres" shoes. The next day, his skull was found approximately 100 yards downhill from where the rest of his remains had been found by an assistant sheriff. The Huett family dentist was able to identify Huett through his dental records (Gorney). Mathias body has never been found, though his shoes were found in the trailer with Weiher's body, leading to the belief that he may have taken the shoes, which would have been better for the terrain (Rae).

Northwest of the trailer by a quarter mile, three wool blankets from the forest service were found along with a two-cell flashlight. The flashlight was turned off and rusted, but how long it had been there was unable to be determined (Gorney). Schons had claimed to have seen flashlights outside his car while he was still waiting for help to come, though this story is questionable due to his condition at the time (Rae). Several more tips have been called in in the years since the five disappeared, but none have panned out beyond Schons' statement. The families even turned to psychics, who predicted things such as the five had been kidnapped and were being held in either Nevada or Arizona, or that they had been murdered. According to the psychic, the five had been killed in a red house, possibly stained wood or brick, that was two stories and in Oroville, numbered either 4723 or 4753. This home was searched for, but it was found to not exist at all (Rae). Weiher's sister-in-law has her own theory: the five saw something, whether they knew it or not, at the basketball game that night that prompted someone to follow them, or chase them, into the mountains (Rossen).

The Yuba County Five are remembered by their families. Ted Weiher, who had an intellectual disability, was known to have worked as a janitor and at a snack bar for a period of time before his family urged him to quit due to worry about the stress. Jackie Huett, while not diagnosed with any disabilities, was frequently described as being "slow" by those around him. Bill Sterling was known to be a generous person, often volunteering at mental institutions doing things such as reading to patients. He was known to be a man of his faith, often bringing the Bible with him to the institutions. Just like Weiher, Sterling was known to be intellectually disabled. Jack Madrugá was known to be a good friend, and was the only one of the five who could drive. He was also known to be disabled. Gary Mathias was doing well after struggling for a few years with his schizophrenia and had been working for his step-father, Bob, part-time as a gardener at his landscaping business. The five were all part of the Gate Way Project, a project in Yuba County for people with disabilities, and played basketball for the Special Olympics together. On the night they disappeared, none of them were dressed for the weather, which was likely part of their unfortunate fate (Rae).

From <<https://symwritestruelibraryschool.wordpress.com/2021/04/05/the-deaths-of-the-yuba-county-five/>>



part of a tournament, with a free week in Los Angeles if they won. Their clothes had been laid out the evening of the 24th, before they left for Chico with "Gateway Gators" on them, from the Yuba City vocational rehabilitation center for the handicapped where they all played basketball. Weiher had asked his mother to wash his new white high-topped sneakers for the tournament saying "We got a big game Saturday. Don't you let me oversleep". The county sheriff's department began searching for the men. On Tuesday, February 28th, a forest ranger found Jack Madrugá's car abandoned the car on an unpaved road near Oroville, in the Rogers Cow camp area, past Elke Retreat, at an elevation of 4,500 feet. The turquoise and white 1969 Mercury Montego was located around a 2.5-hour drive from Chico, in the opposite direction from the route they would have been expected to drive home and way up in the mountains in the Plumas National Forest.



Police found no evidence of foul play at the site of the car, but the car was unlocked, one window was down and the keys were nowhere to be seen. Candy wrappers, milk cartons and basketball programs were in the car but maps were left in the glove compartment. There was no obvious damage to the car, despite the bumpy unmade road, it had around a quarter tank of gas and it was not stuck in the snow. The driver had either used astonishing care and precision, the investigators figured, or else he knew the road well enough to anticipate every rut.



Forest rangers searched the area for five days and found no trace of the men, but soon after the search began, a severe blizzard moved into the area, covering any potential tracks. Around nine inches of snow dropped on the upper mountain. The search teams nearly lost men themselves two days later, as their Snow-cats struggled through the drifts.

#### Possible sightings of the Yuba Five - Joseph Schons

A man called Joseph Schons contacted the police after he heard about the disappearance to say he had seen the men between 11-12 pm on the Friday that the group disappeared. He was driving up the gravel road to his cabin when his car became stuck in the snow and unfortunately, whilst trying to push his car out, he suffered a heart attack. The story from here is a little confusing. In one version, whilst he lay in his car, at about 11:30, he saw two sets of headlights coming up behind him - one was a car, and the other a pickup truck. He got out of his car to flag them down. The two cars stopped about 20 feet from him. The passengers then left together in one car. Joseph spent the rest of the night in his car before walking back down the mountain in the morning.

In a second more mysterious version, whilst inside the car he heard "whistling" noises and saw what he thought were a group of men and a woman with a baby, walking in the light of another vehicle's headlights. Schons called for help and the lights turned off and the whistling sounds stopped. A few hours later he saw flashlight beams outside his car and called out for help again, but immediately the lights went out. Schons stayed in his car until it ran out of gas, then walked eight miles down to get help, passing Madrugá's car on the way. He didn't think much about what he'd seen until he heard about the disappearances.

A woman reported seeing the five men in a red pickup truck on Saturday and Sunday, about an hour's drive from the site of their abandoned car. She owned a store there, where two of the men came in to buy food. One of them made a phone call from a nearby phone booth, and the other two stayed in the truck.

#### Discovery of the Mathias Group Bodies

There was no news for months as the spring snows melted on the mountains. Then, in June 1978, a man riding his motorcycle through the area noticed a broken window on a forest service trailer. The trailer was located about 19 miles up the mountain from where the car was found. 19 miles in heavy snow is quite a hike without proper equipment.

A forest service Snowcat ran up the road to the trailer on February 23rd, leaving a packed path in the snow that the men might have followed.





# Obscure: American Dyatlov, The Disappearance Of The Yuba County 5

FEBRUARY 3, 2020 - R.A.BREWSTER

What would you think if your loved ones decided to go catch a basketball game, something they had done dozens of times before? Would you think that this dinner would be the last time you would see them alive? That what would happen to them would become one of the most disturbing mysteries in American history? For the families of Jack Madruga, Ted Weiher, Jack Huett, Bill Sterling, and Gary Mathias these questions never crossed their minds. They gave their love and wished their boys a safe trip before losing them forever to the night.



MISSING—Jack Huett, Wilton Sterling, Jack Madruga, Theodore Weiher, Gary Mathias, from left.

## The Boys

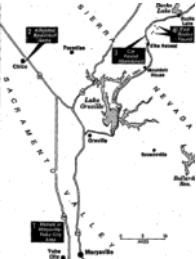
While collectively the five are called "the boys", they were in fact grown men, with Huett being the youngest at 24. They all had developmental disorders or learning disabilities which put them at a lower intellectual level. This made living on their own difficult and all of them lived with family. Mathias was different from the others, he was a schizophrenic. They all knew each other from a program for the disabled they were a part of. Through that center, they formed their own basketball team, *The Gateway Gators*. The boys loved basketball and it wasn't uncommon for them to catch a game in Chico, California which wasn't far from their hometown in Marysville, near Yuba City.



A Montego of the same year as Madruga's. Nothing was out of the ordinary that February 24th in 1978. The boys were in good spirits as they set off in Madruga's Mercury Montego. By all accounts, Madruga loved that car like it was his child and since he was the only one with a license, none of the others ever drove it.

The boys hit up the game and while they cheered on their favorite team, heavy snow started to fall outside. That winter had been a hard one and when the game let out at 10 pm it was really coming down.

## Where It All Went Wrong



They stopped at a gas station for snacks and from there nothing makes sense. Instead of driving the 50 miles south back to Marysville, a route they had taken numerous times, they drove 70 miles east.

The Montego that Madruga loved so much was found abandoned on a mountain road four days later on the 28th. The road was full of twists and turns that ran through heavily wooded areas. In order to even get there, they would have had to have cut through Oroville and crossed a bridge over Oroville lake.

There was no known reason for them to have taken this route. The five were expected home and Mathias hadn't taken his medication (though there are conflicting reports on this.) When the boys didn't arrive home on time their families contacted the police. Law enforcement sent out a bulletin with a description of the five and the Montego. That's when Joe Shores came forward with his odd story.

## Two Pairs Of Headlights On The Road



Inside the trailer, he found the body of Ted Weiher. Search and rescue teams then began combing the area around the trailer.

The day after Weiher's body was discovered, searchers found the remains of Madruga and Sterling. They lay on opposite sides of the road to the trailer, 11.4 miles from the car. Madruga had been partially eaten by animals and dragged about 10 feet to a stream: he lay face up, his right hand curled around his watch. Sterling was in a wooded area, scattered over about 50 feet. There was nothing left of him but bones.

Two days later, just off the same road but much closer to the trailer, Jackie Huett's father found his son's backbone along with a pair of Levis and ripple-soled "Get There's" shoes. An assistant sheriff from Plumas County found a skull the next day, about 100 yards downhill from the rest of the bones which the family dentist used to identify the remains.

Huett's remains were located northeast of the trailer, like Sterling's and Madruga's. Northwest of the trailer, about a quarter-mile away, searchers found three wool forest service blankets and a two-cell flashlight lying by the side of the road. The flashlight was slightly rusted and had been turned off. It was impossible to tell just how long it had been there.

They found no sign of Gary Mathias. His tennis shoes were inside the forest service trailer, which suggested to investigators that he might have taken them off to put on Weiher's leather shoes - particularly since Weiher had bigger feet, and Mathias' feet might have swollen with frostbite.

Although the men's bodies were heavily decomposed, autopsy results determined that they had likely died from exposure.

It appeared that Ted had lived 8-13 weeks after his disappearance based on the length of his beard and around 100-pound weight loss. He weighed just 120 pounds at the time of his death. Several bed sheets in a shroud were tightly tucked over his body, indicating that someone else had been with him in the trailer as he could not have bundled himself up in this manner. His leather shoes were off and missing. A table by the bed held his nickel ring with "Ted" engraved on it, his gold necklace, his wallet (with cash inside), and a gold Waltham watch, its crystal missing, which the families say had not belonged to any of the five men. Ted's feet were also badly frostbitten. But then the story takes an even stranger turn. Inside the trailer, authorities found heavy clothing, matches, playing cards, books, wooden furniture, and other materials which could have easily been used to start a fire. But there had been no apparent attempt to start a fire despite the freezing temperature on the mountain. A propane tank connected to the trailer, which could have provided a ready source of heat and cooking fuel, was untouched. "All they had to do was turn that gas on," says Yuba County Lt. Lance Ayers, "and they'd have had gas to the trailer, and heat."

In a storage shed outside, there was a year's supply of c-rations. These were individual canned, pre-cooked, and prepared meals issued to the U.S. military. The men consumed 36 of the meals but left the majority of them untouched. In addition, there was a huge supply of freeze-dried meals. One of the c-ration cans had been opened with an Army P38 can opener.

"Bizarre," says John Thompson, the special agent from the California Department of Justice who had joined the investigation. "And no explanations. And a thousand leads. Every day you've got a thousand leads."

"There was some force that made em go up there," Jack Madruga's mother Mabel says firmly. "They wouldn't have fled off in the wood like a bunch of quail. We know good and well that somebody made them do it. We can't visualize someone getting the upper hand on those five men, but we know it must have been." "They seen something at that game, at the parking lot," says Ted Weiher's sister-in-law. "They might have seen it and didn't even realize they seen it."

Questions about the Yuba City Five disappearances and deaths. There are many questions about this weird case.

**Why did the Yuba City men get lost that night and end up on the mountain?**

Chico to Yuba City is a straight down Highway 70 through the Central Valley in low-lying land with no snow at this time of the year. A 46-mile drive, around one hour. The car was found several thousand feet up in an area above the snow line in a completely different direction. Why did they abandon the trip to Yuba? Were they forced to go up the Bucks Lane on the way to Palmetto City, did they decide themselves to take a detour or did they take a wrong turn?

**What happened around the car?**

The group's car was left open, with gas in the tank and in working order. Did they somehow leave the car and lose the keys. This could explain the strange story told by Joseph Schons where he said he saw flashlights around a car. Could they have been searching in the snow and been freaked out by his cars for help in this isolated area?

**How did the group end up around a trailer 19 miles from the car?**

Ted Weiher was found in a trailer 19 miles from the car and Madruga, Sterling, and Huett were found in the locality but several miles away. How did they walk in normal shoes without outdoor clothing so far in snow several feet thick? Were the group together and then decided to separate after Ted's death to try and find help?

**Why did Ted Weiher apparently starve to death?**

Some of the rations in and around the trailer were eaten but much of it was untouched. Ted apparently had a slow and agonizing death from starvation having lost over half his body weight. With so much food close by why wasn't he eating. Had the group been abducted and the perpetrator was preventing access to food or was Ted suffering from gangrene caused by frostbite.

From <<https://www.strangeoutdoors.com/mysterious-stories-blog/2017/12/7/mathias-group-from-yuba-city>>

Joe Shores was a man who enjoyed the great outdoors, that night on the 24th he was out checking the route he'd planned on taking when he brought up his family for a camping trip. His car got stuck in the snow on a tight turn and as he was giving it a push Joe's night got a lot worse.

The strain from trying to push his car out brought on a [mild heart attack](#). Joe was forced to



climb into his back seat to hold out against the storm. While he lay there he saw a set of headlights come up the road.

He got out and tried to wave down what seemed to be a pickup truck but they kept on. Joe followed after them, shouting for help and eventually came upon what he claimed was a group of four men and a woman with a baby. They were illuminated in the headlights of another car but when he called out to them, the lights died and no one came to his aid.

Back at the car, he waited until the storm died down and he felt well enough to trek to a mountain lodge he knew was around 8 miles away. On the way, he passed Madrugá's empty 1969 Montego. He realized it must have been the second pair of headlights he'd seen with that group of people from before. Police followed his report, as well as that of a forest ranger, to the car and the mystery only deepened.

### Out Into The Cold Night

The car was empty and filled with wrappers from the snacks they had bought. Inside the glovebox was a selection of roadmaps, seemingly untouched. Reports conflict on if the police had to add gas to get the car to start or if there was still fuel in the tank but either way the car had to be towed.

Investigators figured that the car had gotten stuck in the snow, much like Joe's had. What puzzled them is why the boys weren't able to get the car going. All of them were in good shape and should have been able to push the car out easily. Instead, they had abandoned the Montego and made their way into the woods. The five had dressed for a quick night out, not a hiking trip.

Searching those woods proved no easy task as the area was already covered in heavy snow. To make matters worse the woods were dense and some trails inaccessible. Still, they searched for those beloved boys. Ground crews, helicopters, psychic mediums, the families raised a reward of over two thousand dollars for any information. Nothing came until June and it wasn't what anyone had wanted to hear.



A group of motorcyclists were out enjoying the good weather when they came across a remote forest station. These stations were used by the forest rangers in the event of an emergency. They were stocked with food, warm clothes, they even had their own propane generators. This one, the bikers found, had been broken into.

Inside they found Ted Weiher's emaciated body under a bunch of thin sheets. His feet showed extreme frostbite. They judged by beard and fingernail growth that he'd lived at least 8 weeks from the time he'd left the car (though this was a rough estimate). What didn't make any sense to them was the condition of the station.

It was virtually untouched. The place was stocked with enough food to have fed all five for a year, but only 12 cans had been opened. Outside there was a generator that had never been turned on and a full fuel tank. Weiher's leather shoes were missing but they did find a pair of tennis shoes that were later identified as belonging to Gary Mathias. The forest station was roughly 19 miles away from where Madrugá's car was found.

A further search of the grounds revealed the bodies of Jack Madrugá, Bill Sterling, and Jack

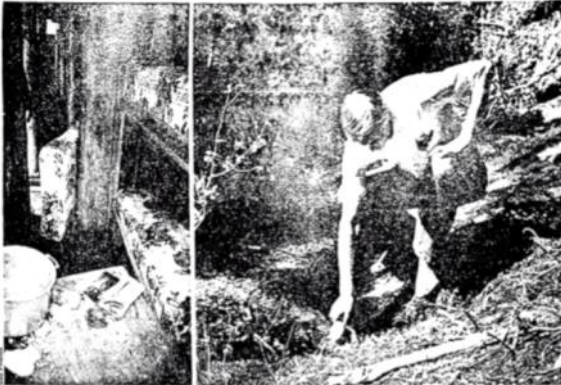


Huett. They were all around 4 miles away from the station and seemed to have died from the cold. The station and their bodies were located between where Daniel Zink Campground and Little North Fork Campground are today. To date, the body of Gary Mathias has not been found.

From <https://rabrewster.com/2020/02/03/obscure-american-dyatlov-the-disappearance-of-the-yuba-county-5/>

## 4th Body Is Found In Rugged Plumas County Forest

**By WALT WILEY**  
**See Staff Writer**  
**HICKS LAKE, Plumas Co. —** Searchers Wednesday found a fourth body from a group of five missing relatives Marysville area men who have been missing since February in the tiny forested country near here. A sheriff's spokesman said the body had not been identified, but it was found in the area of the Daniel Zink campground near where the body of Theodore C. Weiher, 21, of Glendale, was found Sunday. The spokesman said radio contact with the searchers is poor, and he could get no further details, except that the crew reported it found evidence that led them to believe they were on the trail of finding the fifth man in the group. The bodies of William Sterling, 28, of Yuba City, and Jack Madrugá, 28, of Lincoln, were found by searchers Tuesday on a road about 25 miles from where Weiher was found dead in a U.S. Forest Service trailer Sunday. The body found Wednesday is believed to be one of the two still missing from the five: Gary Mathias, 26, of Glendale, and Jack Huett, 26, of Marysville. The men disappeared after traveling to a college basketball game in Ohio Feb. 18. Their car was found abandoned in the snow on the remote Overville-Quincy road the next day, about 12 miles from where the bodies were found. Lt. Kenneth Mickelson, search coordinator for the Butte County sheriff's office, said his searchers in February combed the area around where the car was found for several miles, but were unable to get to the area where the bodies were found. he working their way down and out of there," explained Mickelson. With the discovery of the fourth body Wednesday, Plumas County Sheriff Douglas Thomas called for mental aid from 12 Northern California counties, and it is expected that 20 or more searchers from other counties will join the 11-member Plumas search team today. Tim Dean of Quincy, a volunteer working in the search with his tracking dogs, said it was one of his dogs that led to the discovery of two bodies Tuesday. "We were driving down that road and he hit on that snow from the back of the pickup. It was that that caused us to stop there," said Dean. The two bodies were found beside a paved stretch of logging road in the remote country, leading Mickelson to speculate that Sterling and Madrugá perished there while Weiher, Mathias and Huett proceeded on to the camp where Weiher's body was found. "Judging by the amount of food eaten, you could conclude that all three of them were at that trailer for a while, then the other two left," said Mickelson. He said blankets, a flashlight and cigarette lighter found down the road beyond the trailer site made him think the others, or one of them, had left in that direction. No one commented with the case could speculate on what caused the men to drive to such a remote location. One leave on foot uphill through snow to their death. Officers have found no evidence of foul play with any of the bodies, and a coroner's report on Weiher said he died of pulmonary failure caused by exposure. Agency reports on the



A weary Sgt. Bob Hopkins of the Butte County Sheriff's office, right, slips his map for a drink of water from a creek at the search site. He left

in the interior of the trailer where the body of Theodore Weiher was found Sunday.



## Gary Mathias

Monday, July 12, 2021 5:00 PM

- **Missing Since**02/24/1978
- **Missing From**Oroville, California
- **Classification**Lost/Injured Missing
- **Sex**Male
- **Race**White
- **Date of Birth**10/15/1952 (68)
- **Age**25 years old
- **Height and Weight**5'10, 170 pounds
- **Clothing/Jewelry Description**A beige t-shirt with the words "Gateway Gators" across the chest.
- **Medical Conditions**Mathias has schizophrenia and takes the antipsychotic medications Cogentin, Prolixin and Stelazine on a weekly basis to control his mental illness. He is high-functioning, but if he is placed in a stressful situation, his functioning deteriorates. Mathias has a history of drug abuse and violent behavior and caution is advised when approaching him.
- **Distinguishing Characteristics**Caucasian male. Brown hair, hazel eyes. Mathias wears eyeglasses and will have double vision without them. He has a small birthmark on the right side of his chin.

From <<https://charleyproject.org/case/gary-dale-mathias>>



Gary Mathias

Gary was 25 and from Olivehurst, CA. He lived with his parents and worked for his stepfather's gardening business. While all four of the others were close friends for multiple years, Mathias was new to the group. All five had met through the Gateway Projects which was an organization for the intellectually disabled, Mathias had just joined it the year prior while the other four had joined it years prior. The others had documented intellectual disabilities; for example, Ted Weiher was described by his brother as lacking common sense, the brother mentions a story where he had to carry his brother out of their burning house because his brother refused to get up because he had to rest before work the next day.



Mathias, however, did not have any documented intellectual disabilities in the same way the other four did. He had been a football player in high school and served in the military following graduation. He did have a problem with drugs and was first put into a psychiatric facility during his sophomore year of high school after a bad hallucination trip. He would later be medically discharged from the military for paranoid schizophrenia.

## Gary Mathias, one of the five young men from Yuba County, has never been found, could he have something to do with that nights events?

[Unresolved Disappearance](#)

☞Hello fellow true crime enthusiasts.

I wanted to see what you all thought about Gary Mathias and the fact that he was never found during or after the search for the five young men who went missing in the Plumas National Forest after leaving a basketball game in Chico, CA. If you are not familiar with the case you can find a video [here](#) :) about the Yuba County 5 :) ...

*"On Feb. 24, 1978, five mentally disabled men from around the rural outpost of Marysville – a dot on the map 40 miles north of Sacramento – vanished into the night on their way home from a Chico State basketball game."*

Recently I discovered a number of articles that somewhat, kinda eluded to the fact that Gary had a shady past and it wasn't until recently, before they went missing, that he began hanging out with the boys and started to become a part of the group. They had all met at the Gateway foundation, which was a organization for the intellectually disabled. Gary had just joined the group while they other men had already been in it for years. According to the most recent article I found about the case, The others had documented intellectual disabilities; Gary Mathias however, did not have any documented intellectual disabilities. He was a trouble maker and had more than his fair share of police encounters/crimes, he wasn't AS in constant need of assistance and guidance like the other boys. He was even in the Military for some time before being medically discharged for paranoid schizophrenia. In other words, he was still kind of the outlier, the odd one out.

After being discharged from the Military he started having frequent run ins with the system. Apparently one time, while in jail, he punched a jail guard in the face. That same month while staying with his cousin and his cousins wife, Gary's cousin caught Gary fondling his wife while she was passed out from medications she was using to treat an illness. He threatened to call the police on Gary if he didn't leave the house, to which Gary responded that he wanted to go back to jail. It didn't stop there, oh no, this time in Stockton, he was arrested and then sent to a psychiatric facility. After 2 days he decided to escape by climbing through a drainage pipe walking and occasionally hitchhiked the 80 miles back home. Once after having left California to live with his Grandmother in Northern Oregon, his mother would call and beg him to come home, his response to this was to hang up on her. That is so sad to me. I wonder why he didn't want to talk to her? But after a few weeks he changed his mind and decided to return home with his mom in California. When he arrived, he was dirty and smelly, telling his mom that he had just walked all the way from Portland, OR to Yuba County, CA. To survive the trip he would steal milk bottles from porches and eating dog food during the 540 mile trip. If this is true, that he actually walked all the 540 miles and survived on Dog Food and Milk from porches, he is crazy, insanely over qualified to survive a possible wrong turn in the forest, to getting lost in the forest, to not dying in a forest outside where you live.

And then after getting back home with his mom he moves on to his next crime. After shooting methamphetamine and "dropping Bennies," or swallowing tablets of the amphetamine Benzadrine, according to case files, Gary broke into the home of a couple who were sleeping only to wake up and see Gary Mathias standing there, looking for a ring that belonged to Satan and to collect rent money for the month, claiming the property belonged to him.

From <[https://www.reddit.com/r/UnresolvedMysteries/comments/fn7l3q/gary\\_mathias\\_one\\_of\\_the\\_five\\_young\\_men\\_from\\_yuba/](https://www.reddit.com/r/UnresolvedMysteries/comments/fn7l3q/gary_mathias_one_of_the_five_young_men_from_yuba/)>

## Gary Mathias

**Mathias** wore thick coke bottle glasses, he had incredibly poor eyesight and without them he was very close to seeing double His poor eyesight was due to a mishap where he had fallen out of a moving car after he opened the door. He had a terrible head injury and was blind for four days and his vision never fully returned

**Mathias** hadn't shown any sign of mental illness a child, it's suspected that this accident may have been a prominent factor in its onset

**Mathias** was a big fan of the **Rolling Stones** and prior to his disappearance he had been the **lead singer** of a local rock band called the **Fifth Shade** for some time. According to his sister they had even won a **Battle of the Bands** at the **Yuba-Sutter Fairgrounds** once

At the time of his disappearance, **Mathias** was a dating his high school girlfriend **Lisa**



From <<https://www.thehumanexception.com/l/the-yuba-county-5-revisited/>>

# Schizophrenia

Monday, July 12, 2021 6:00 PM

**Schizophrenia** is a [mental disorder](#)<sup>[13]</sup> characterized by continuous or relapsing episodes of [psychosis](#).<sup>[5]</sup> Major symptoms include [hallucinations](#) (typically [hearing voices](#)), [delusions](#), and [disorganized thinking](#).<sup>[7]</sup> Other symptoms include [social withdrawal](#), [decreased emotional expression](#), and [apathy](#).<sup>[5][14]</sup> Symptoms typically come on gradually, begin in young adulthood, and in many cases never resolve.<sup>[3][7]</sup> There is no objective diagnostic test; the diagnosis is used to describe observed behavior that may stem from numerous different causes. Besides observed behavior, doctors will also take a [history](#) that includes the person's reported experiences, and reports of others familiar with the person, when making a diagnosis.<sup>[7]</sup> To diagnose someone with schizophrenia, doctors are supposed to confirm that symptoms and functional impairment are present for six months ([DSM-5](#)) or one month ([ICD-11](#)).<sup>[7][11]</sup> Many people with schizophrenia have other mental disorders, especially [substance use disorders](#), depressive disorders, [anxiety disorders](#), and [obsessive–compulsive disorder](#).<sup>[7][15][16][17]</sup>

About 0.3% to 0.7% of people are diagnosed with schizophrenia during their lifetime.<sup>[18]</sup> In 2017, there were an estimated 1.1 million new cases and in 2019 a total of 20 million cases globally.<sup>[2][19]</sup> Males are more often affected and on average have an earlier onset,<sup>[2]</sup> although some large reviews have not found gender differences in the prevalence of the disorder.<sup>[20][21]</sup> The likely causes of schizophrenia

include [genetic](#) and [environmental](#) factors.<sup>[5]</sup> Genetic factors include a variety of common and rare [genetic variants](#).<sup>[22]</sup> Possible environmental factors include [being raised in a city](#), [cannabis](#) use during adolescence, infections, the [ages of a person's mother or father](#), and poor [nutrition during pregnancy](#).<sup>[5][23]</sup>

About half of those diagnosed with schizophrenia will have a significant improvement over the long term with no further relapses, and a small proportion of these will recover completely.<sup>[7][24]</sup> The other half will have a lifelong impairment.<sup>[25]</sup> In some cases people may be repeatedly admitted to hospitals.<sup>[24]</sup> Social problems such as long-term unemployment, poverty, homelessness, exploitation, and victimization are commonly correlated with schizophrenia.<sup>[26][27]</sup> Compared to the general population, people with schizophrenia have a higher suicide rate (about 5% overall) and more [physical health problems](#),<sup>[28][29]</sup> leading to an average decrease in [life expectancy](#) by 20 years.<sup>[10]</sup> In 2015, an estimated 17,000 deaths were linked to schizophrenia.<sup>[12]</sup>

The mainstay of treatment is [antipsychotic](#) medication, along with [counseling](#), job training, and [social rehabilitation](#).<sup>[5]</sup> Up to a third of people do not respond to initial antipsychotics, in which case the antipsychotic [clozapine](#) may be used.<sup>[30]</sup> In situations where doctors judge that there is a risk of harm to self or others, they may impose short [involuntary hospitalization](#).<sup>[31]</sup> Long-term hospitalization is used on a small number of people with severe schizophrenia.<sup>[32]</sup> In some countries where supportive services are limited or unavailable, long-term hospital stays are more common.<sup>[33]</sup>

From <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schizophrenia>>



# Stelazine

Monday, July 12, 2021 6:24 PM

## Uses

This [medication](#) is used to treat certain mental/[mood disorders](#) (such as [schizophrenia](#), [psychotic disorders](#)). [Trifluoperazine](#) helps you to think more clearly, feel less nervous, and take part in everyday life. It can reduce aggressive behavior and the desire to hurt yourself/others. It may also help to decrease [hallucinations](#) (hearing/seeing things that are not there). Trifluoperazine is a psychiatric medication that belongs to the class of drugs called phenothiazine antipsychotics. It works by helping to restore the balance of certain natural substances in the [brain](#). This medication has also been used for the short-term treatment of [anxiety](#). However, there are safer drugs to treat anxiety that should be used first before trifluoperazine.

### How to use Stelazine Tablet

Take this [medication](#) by [mouth](#) with or without food, usually once or twice daily or as directed by your doctor.

Dosage is based on your medical condition, age, and response to treatment. In children, the dosage is also based on [weight](#). To reduce your risk of side effects, your doctor may direct you to start this medication at a low dose and gradually increase your dose. Follow your doctor's instructions carefully.

Take this medication regularly to get the most benefit from it. To help you remember, take it at the same time(s) each day.

Although you may notice some medication effects soon after starting, it may take 2 to 3 weeks before you get the full benefit of this drug.

Do not stop taking this medication without consulting your doctor. Some conditions may become worse when this drug is suddenly stopped. Also, you may experience symptoms such as [upset stomach](#), [nausea](#), [vomiting](#), [dizziness](#), and shakiness. To prevent these symptoms while you are stopping treatment with this drug, your doctor may reduce your dose gradually. Consult your doctor or [pharmacist](#) for more details. Report any new or worsening symptoms right away.

Tell your doctor if your condition does not improve or if it worsens.

From <<https://www.webmd.com/drugs/2/drug-6572/stelazine-oral/details>>

## Side Effects

Drowsiness, [dizziness](#), [lightheadedness](#), [dry mouth](#), [blurred vision](#), tiredness, [constipation](#), [weight](#) gain, and [trouble sleeping](#) may occur. If any of these effects persist or worsen, tell your doctor or [pharmacist](#) promptly.

Dizziness and [lightheadedness](#) can increase the risk of falling. Get up slowly when rising from a sitting or lying position.

This drug may cause muscle/[nervous system](#) problems (extrapyramidal symptoms-[EPS](#)). Your doctor may prescribe another [medication](#) to decrease these side effects.

Tell your doctor right away if you notice any of the following side effects: feelings of [anxiety](#)/agitation/jitteriness, drooling/trouble swallowing, restlessness/constant need to move, shaking (tremor), shuffling walk, stiff muscles, severe [muscle spasms](#)/cramping (such as twisting neck, arching back, [eyes](#) rolling up), mask-like expression of the face.

Remember that your doctor has prescribed this medication because he or she has judged that the benefit to you is greater than the risk of side effects. Many people using this medication do not have serious side effects.

Tell your doctor right away if you have any serious side effects, including: difficulty urinating, decreased [cough](#) reflex, swelling of the feet/[ankles](#), butterfly-shaped [rash](#) on nose and cheeks, [joint pain](#), [skin](#) discoloration, [eye/vision](#) changes, feeling unusually cold or hot, signs of [liver problems](#) (such as yellowing [eyes/skin](#), persistent [nausea](#), [vomiting](#), [stomach/abdominal pain](#)), signs of infection (such as fever, persistent [sore throat](#)), easy bruising/bleeding, signs of [anemia](#) (such as severe tiredness, fast breathing, pale [skin](#), fast heartbeat), mental/mood changes (such as worsening [psychosis](#), unresponsive/catatonic state).

From <<https://www.webmd.com/drugs/2/drug-6572/stelazine-oral/details>>

# Cogentin

Monday, July 12, 2021 6:57 PM

## Uses

[Benztropine](#) is used to treat [symptoms of Parkinson's disease](#) or involuntary movements due to the side effects of certain psychiatric drugs (antipsychotics such as [chlorpromazine/haloperidol](#)). Benztropine belongs to a class of [medication](#) called anticholinergics that work by blocking a certain natural substance (acetylcholine). This helps decrease muscle stiffness, [sweating](#), and the production of [saliva](#), and helps improve walking ability in people with [Parkinson's disease](#). Anticholinergics can stop severe [muscle spasms](#) of the back, neck, and [eyes](#) that are sometimes caused by psychiatric drugs. It can also decrease other side effects such as muscle stiffness/rigidity (extrapyramidal signs - [EPS](#)). It is not helpful in treating movement problems caused by [tardive dyskinesia](#) and may worsen them. Benztropine should not be used by children younger than 3 years.

## How to use Cogentin Tablet

Take this [medication](#) by [mouth](#) as directed by your doctor, usually 2 to 4 times a day with meals and at [bedtime](#) or as a single dose at [bedtime](#). Your doctor may start you at a low dose and increase your dose slowly to find the best dose for you. The dosage is based on your medical condition, age, and response to therapy.

If you are using the oral solution, measure your dose with a special measuring spoon or device. Do not use a household spoon because it may not provide the correct dose.

Take this medication regularly in order to get the most benefit from it. To help you remember, take it at the same times each day.

Take this medication at least 1 hour before antacids containing [magnesium](#), aluminum, or [calcium](#). Allow at least 1-2 hours between doses of [benztropine](#) and certain drugs for [diarrhea](#) (adsorbent antidiarrheals such as kaolin, pectin, attapulgite). Take this medication at least 2 hours after [ketoconazole](#). Antacids and some drugs for [diarrhea](#) may prevent the full absorption of benztropine, and this product may prevent the complete absorption of ketoconazole when these products are taken together.

If you are taking this medication for side effects from another medication, your doctor may instruct you to take it on a regular schedule or only as needed. If you are taking this medication for [Parkinson's disease](#), your doctor may change the dose of your other [medications](#) (such as levodopa). Follow your doctor's instructions closely.

When this medication is used for a long time, it may not work as well. Talk with your doctor if this medication stops working well.

Though it helps many people, this medication may sometimes cause [addiction](#). This risk may be higher if you have a substance use disorder (such as overuse of or addiction to drugs/alcohol). Take this medication exactly as prescribed to lower the risk of addiction. Ask your doctor or [pharmacist](#) for more details.

Do not increase your dose, use it more often, or use it for a longer time than prescribed. Properly stop the medication when so directed. Some conditions may become worse when the drug is suddenly stopped. Your dose may need to be gradually decreased.

It may take 2-3 days before the benefit of this drug takes effect. Tell your doctor if your condition lasts or gets worse.

From <<https://www.webmd.com/drugs/2/drug-13533/cogentin-oral/details>>

## Side Effects

Drowsiness, [dizziness](#), [constipation](#), flushing, [nausea](#), nervousness, [blurred vision](#), or [dry mouth](#) may occur as your body adjusts to the [medication](#). If any of these effects last or get worse, tell your doctor or [pharmacist](#) promptly.

To minimize dizziness and [lightheadedness](#), get up slowly when rising from a sitting or lying position.

To relieve [dry mouth](#), suck (sugarless) hard candy or ice chips, chew (sugarless) gum, drink water, or use a [saliva](#) substitute.

Remember that your doctor has prescribed this medication because he or she has judged that the benefit to you is greater than the risk of side effects. Many people using this medication do not have serious side effects.

Tell your doctor right away if you have any serious side effects, including: [high fever](#), decreased sexual ability, severe [stomach/abdominal pain](#), difficult/painful swallowing, difficulty urinating, [weakness](#).

From <<https://www.webmd.com/drugs/2/drug-13533/cogentin-oral/details>>

## Bill Sterling

Monday, July 12, 2021 5:03 PM



### Bill Sterling

**Sterling** was close with **Weiher**, having known him for **8 years**. One of **Weiher's** favorite thing was to call **Sterling** and read him funny-sounding names from the newspaper  
While close with **Weiher**, he considered **Madruga** his best friend

**Bill** was very religious and was known to visit people in mental hospitals and read the Bible and other religious texts to them.  
He loved to read and spent a lot of time at the library "*doing research about mentally handicapped people*"

From <<https://www.thehumanexception.com//the-yuba-county-5-revisited/>>

### Bill Sterling

Bill was 29, from Yuba City, CA. He was very close with Jack and a deeply religious man who lived at home.

From <<https://www.abovetopsecret.com/forum/thread1257477/pg1>>



## Jack Huett

Monday, July 12, 2021 5:08 PM



### Jackie Huett

Jackie was 24, of Marysville, CA. He also lived with his parents and was diagnosed with mild learning disabilities. Ted and Jackie were inseparable.

From <<https://www.abovetopsecret.com/forum/thread1257477/pg1>>

### Jackie Huett

**Jackie** lived on a farm with his family, where he'd play with his beagle, **Beau**, and dirt biked around the property **Huett** thought of **Weiher** like a big brother and the feeling was mutual. The two were inseparable **Weiher** would often make phone calls for **Jackie** because making phone calls caused **Jackie** to become anxious. He could not read or write. He was very shy and had a speech impediment. It was reported that Jackie had an **IQ** of around **40**. His mother **Sara** was quoted as saying:

*"He was a delight," "He was just slow, but real happy."*

From <<https://www.thehumanexception.com/l/the-yuba-county-5-revisited/>>

## Ted Weiher

Monday, July 12, 2021 6:00 PM

### Ted Weiher

**Weiher** was incredibly friendly with everyone he met. As an adult, he would often wave excitedly at strangers and would become upset for hours if they did not wave back at him, believing that he had done something wrong.

**Ted** once bought **\$100** worth of pencils for no particular reason.

#### **Ted's mother:**

*"Ted was a very loving person. He loved life, and he loved people."*



From <<https://www.thehumanexception.com//the-yuba-county-5-revisited/>>

### Ted Weiher

Ted was 32 years old from Olivehurst, CA. He was diagnosed as having a learning disability. He lived at home and had recently worked a few jobs but quit when his family thought his slowness was causing problems

From <<https://www.abovetopsecret.com/forum/thread1257477/pg1>>

## Jack Madruga

Monday, July 12, 2021 6:00 PM

### Jack Madruga

#### **Madruga served in Vietnam in 1968**

Called '**Doc**' by his friends and family, his most prized possession was his **1969 Mercury Montego**. He would never allow anyone but himself to drive it. According to his mother, was never diagnosed as "mentally retarded" but was generally thought of as "slow." According to his family, **Jack** was able to manage his own finances.

#### According to **Jack's** nephew **George Madruga**:

*Jack "was an intelligent and sensitive man. Just extremely shy in social situations."*

*"Jack's favorite TV show was I Love Lucy. He liked to laugh at all the comedy shows of the time. He also enjoyed game shows, and we would play board games for hours."*

*Jack also liked to listen to Motown music. His favorite group was Diana Ross and The Supremes. As George Madruga puts it, "He loved the music he could dance to."*



From <<https://www.thehumanexception.com//the-yuba-county-5-revisited/>>

#### Jack Madruga

Jack was 30 years old and lived with his parents in Marysville, CA and had been laid off from his job as a busboy a few months earlier. He had undiagnosed mild learning disabilities. He did, however, have his driver's license and owned a turquoise and white 1969 Mercury Montego that was his pride and joy. It's the car they would take on their fateful trip.

From <<https://www.abovetopsecret.com/forum/thread1257477/pg1>>



## Joseph Schons

Monday, July 12, 2021 6:02 PM

### SIGHTINGS

In response to local media coverage of the case, police received reports of some, or all of the men being sighted after they had left Chico, reports of them being seen elsewhere in California or the country. Most were easily dismissed, but two stood out.

Joseph Schons of Sacramento told police he inadvertently wound up spending the night of February 24–25 near where the Montego was found. He had driven up there, where he had a cabin, to check the snowpack in advance of a weekend ski trip with his family. At 5:30 p.m., about 150 feet up the road, he, too, had gotten stuck in the snow. In the process of trying to free it, he realized he was beginning to experience the early symptoms of a heart attack and went back in, keeping the engine running to provide heat.

Six hours later, lying in the car and experiencing severe pain, he told police, he saw headlights coming up behind him. Looking out, he saw a car parked behind him, headlights on, with a group of people around it, one of which seemed to him to be a woman holding a baby. He called to them for help, but then they stopped talking and turned their headlights out. Later, he saw more lights from behind him, this time flashlights, that also went out when he called to them.

After that, Schons said at first, he recalled a pickup truck parking 20 feet behind him briefly, and then continuing on down the road. Later, he clarified to police that he could not be sure of that, since at the time he was almost delirious from the pain he was in. After Schons' car ran out of gas in the early morning hours, his pain subsided enough for him to walk 8 miles down the road to a lodge, where the manager drove him back home, passing the abandoned Montego at the point where he had recalled hearing the voices originate from. Doctors later confirmed he had indeed experienced a mild heart attack.

From <<https://www.abovetopsecret.com/forum/thread1257477/pg1>>

## Joseph Schons

that game for anything," his mother said. "He had gone to the Special Olympics playoffs in Los Angeles last year and had gotten Sally Struthers' autograph. He even had his basketball clothes all laid out in his room."

Adding to the mystery, a Sacramento man apparently saw the

**He told his wife he had seen a pickup truck behind the car.**

Mercury coupe between 11 p.m. and midnight Friday, Feb. 24.

The man, Joseph Schons, had become stuck in snow while driving the mountain road to check his cabin, and suffered a heart attack while trying to push his auto back onto the road.

Schons told officials initially that he had seen two sets of headlights, one that of a pickup, come behind him about 11:30 p.m. as he lay in his car in pain, trying to keep warm.

He said he got out and yelled for help, but that the several persons parked about 20 feet behind him then

drove away in one car.

This week, however, Schons admitted he was not certain about the second vehicle.

"I was half-conscious, not lucid, hallucinating and in deep pain," he told The Times Thursday.

"Whether I half-saw or half-imagined the second vehicle, I just don't know." But he said he was certain about seeing the Mercury.

Early Saturday morning, Feb. 25, Schons managed to walk eight miles back down the road to a mountain lodge where the manager drove him home. Schons' wife later took him to a local hospital.

Schons said he told his wife he had seen a "pickup" behind the car but does not remember now why he said that.

Imogene Weiher said that her son would have responded to a call for help. "Ted and Bill Sterling once helped a person get to a hospital who had overdosed on Valium," she said.

Regarding a possible pickup truck, a second person said she saw the five men in a red, 1950s-model pickup about 2 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 25 in the Brownsville area of Yuba County,

[LA Times March 10 1978](#)

**Schons** as you will remember was the man that had a heart attack and was stuck on the mountain the same night the men went missing. While his report seemed to be considered quite reliable and is widely cited, there may be more to the story than originally cited

There are many differing versions of **Schons** account and its hard to say if this was due to reporting errors or that **Schons** had kept changing his story (or a combination of both) regardless, a closer look at **Schons** gives a better idea of his character and raises some questions

One of the discrepancies is how he got home the next morning. One account says he got a ride at the lodge back home, where his wife would take him to the hospital. But in another account, he was taken from the lodge to the hospital. And interestingly in one account he claims he saw a pickup truck behind the Montego. When asked about it later he said he didn't "remember why he said that"

*"I was half-conscious, not lucid, hallucinating and in deep pain. Whether I*

Joe Shones was having a heart attack. The 55-year-old Californian had felt fine just a few minutes previously, navigating his Volkswagen on a desolate mountain road near Rogers Cow Camp in the Plumas National Forest to [see](#) if weather conditions were good enough to bring his family along for a weekend excursion the following day. But as he drove further into the night, snowdrifts slowed his tires. When he got out to push his car, the exertion brought on a searing pain in his chest. It was February 24, 1978, and Shones was miles from help.

As he sat in his car wondering what to do, he noticed two sets of headlights, one belonging to a pickup truck. Hoping he could flag down the passerby, he exited his vehicle and began screaming for help. He would later say he saw a group of men, one woman, and a baby. They continued walking, ignoring him. Hours later, back inside his car, he saw what he thought were flashlights. When he went back outside to yell into the darkness, no one responded to the sound of his voice.

Hours into his ordeal and with his car still stuck and now out of gas, Shones felt well enough to begin walking down the mountain road and toward a lodge roughly eight miles away. He passed a 1969 Mercury Montego, but the vehicle had no occupants.

Perhaps, Shones thought, it belonged to the group he had seen earlier.

At the time, Shones was [preoccupied](#) with his own emergency. But authorities would later realize the biggest story to emerge from that dark, desolate road wasn't his brush with death. It was the fact that Shones had likely wound up being the last person to see Ted Weiher, Gary Mathias, Jack Madruga, Jack Huett, and Bill Sterling alive.

From <<https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/532063/bizarre-hell-disappearance-yuba-county-five>>

*half-saw or half-imagined the second vehicle, I just don't know."*

From <<https://www.thehumanexception.com//the-yuba-county-5-revisited/>>

## Theories

Monday, July 12, 2021 6:02 PM

### How Did It Happen?

#### An Enemy Within



Many speculate that the threat the group faced did not come from without but from within. Gary Mathias was the newest member of the boys and he had a troubled past. There are reports that he was hospitalized in high school after a "bad trip" brought on by drug use. He had been discharged from the military after going AWOL and assaulting a police officer while naked. His defense for this was simply:

"I've been in the Army and I don't like it, and I thought if I hit a cop, maybe they'd let me out."

After his discharge for schizophrenia, he was brought up on charges for assault with intent to rape after being found astride his cousins sleeping wife. This was later dropped thanks to a plea deal struck up for his battery of the police officer from before. He continued to use drugs and get into barroom brawls. While his mental illness made his sanity a shaky concept, it did not diminish his capabilities.



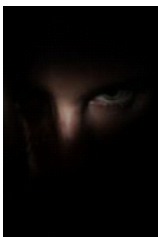
Straight out of [Shawshank Redemption](#)

Mathias had escaped several mental institutions since 1973. Sometimes slipping away when allowed outside, other times he would pull a stunt like something out of a movie. Such as the time he broke out of his cell and escaped through a drainage pipe.

Mathias was no stranger to roughing it either. After he tried and failed at community college he moved away from Yuba City for a time to live with relatives in Portland Oregon. His parents pleaded with him to return and after weeks he showed up on their doorstep in a mess. He'd walked over 500 miles to get back to them. He claimed that he'd stolen milk off porches and pilfered dog food along the way to sustain himself.

While he had managed to maintain a job with the help of his stepfather and regular dosing of his medication, there was always the risk he could "go haywire" again. Could that be what happened that night? Could he have snapped and convinced the others that they were being followed and that's why they ended up on that mountain road so far from home? Maybe once the car got stuck he bolted and the others followed him to their frozen end.

#### But What If They Were Followed?



Another leading theory ties in with the account of Joe Shores. For some sports fans, emotions run a little too hot and the impaired are often easy targets. Could the boys have angered a fan of the rival team and had some sort of altercation that spilled out onto their drive back? Some also think that the woman with a baby has much more significance.

Could she have been running from someone and the boys picked her up after their trip to the gas station, only to put themselves in the crosshairs of her pursuers? Then again, the whole sighting could have been a hallucination brought on by Joe's heart attack.

#### Poisoned

#### THEORIES

Even knowing that four of the five men had died in the Sierra, investigators still could not completely explain what had led to those deaths. They still had found no explanation for why the men were there, although they learned that Mathias had friends in the small town of Forbestown, and police believed it was possible that, in an attempt to visit them on the way back home, the men may have taken a wrong turn near Oroville that put them on the mountain road. For whatever reason the men had left the Montego; they had, instead of going back down the road (where they had passed the lodge that Schons later returned to), continued along the road in the direction they were originally going. Purposeful motion like that is not consistent with the circular patterns traveled by those who genuinely believe themselves lost.

The day before the men went missing, a Forest Service Snowcat had gone along the road in that direction to clear snow off the trailer roof so it would not collapse. It was possible, police believed, that the group had decided to follow the tracks it left, through snowdrifts 4-6 feet high, to wherever they led, in the belief that shelter was not too far away. Madruga and Sterling probably succumbed to hypothermia midway along the long walk to the trailer.

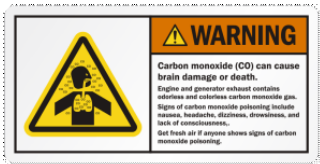
It is assumed that once they found the trailer, the other three broke the window to enter. Since it was locked, they may have believed it was private property, and may have feared arrest for theft if they used anything else they found there. After Weiher died, or the others believed he had, they perhaps chose to attempt to return to civilization by different routes, overland, on foot.

In my personal opinion, I believe Gary Mathias was responsible for the disappearance and eventual death of the other four. Given his diagnosis and past violent episodes, it is a good possibility that he may have had another schizophrenic episode that may have caused him to lead the others into the mountains, eventually getting lost. But the thing that strikes me most about this case is the fact that one of the victims apparently starved to death in a cabin full of food. Even if Mathias left and told them not to eat the food for some reason, at some point, after days or weeks, they'd probably break and eat something, right? Starvation is an excruciating way to die, and I'd imagine it would take an impossible amount of willpower to restrain from eating for that long when there is food within reach. Then again, the bit about one of the boys having to be carried out of a burning house because he wanted to keep sleeping suggests that maybe they would not have given in to hunger if they believed there was reason not to.

What happened to Mathias? Why was his body ever found?

From <https://www.abovetopsecret.com/forum/thread1257477/pg1>





One interesting theory may explain why they left the Montego and the state they would have been in. Carbon Monoxide poisoning can occur in a car if the exhaust becomes obstructed. The five could have gotten the car stuck in such a way that the tailpipe was partially blocked. Or, some unknown fault could have occurred to the exhaust system. This would have caused carbon monoxide to build up in the cab as they ran the engine to stay warm.

CO poisoning can cause dizziness and confusion, along with a host of other issues. This would have left the boys disoriented and in such a state they could have made the fatal choice to leave the car to seek help. CO poisoning from running a car in the cold is shockingly more common than one might think and even today has led to several [unfortunate deaths](#).

## What About Ted Weiher?

Personally I find the CO poisoning to be the most likely. None of the theories explain why the Yuba County Five decided to take that route. However, there may be an explanation as to what happened to Ted Weiher in that station.



Whatever the reason, Weiher and Mathias both made it to that forest station. If the others made it there as well and later on left or never made it at all is unclear. Weiher's feet showed advanced frostbite and it would be safe to say he was not in a good state. Stressed, in pain and possibly brain-damaged, it would have been all too easy for him to slip into Mathias's madness.

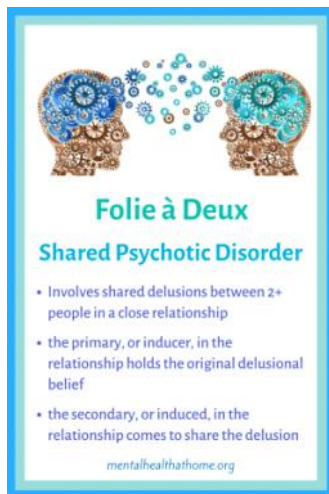
*Folie à deux* or "a madness shared by two", is an obscure mental condition where the delusions and paranoid beliefs of one person become shared with another. A rather famous modern case of this would be of Sabrina and Ursula Eriksson. Twin sisters who, after meeting each other one day, went on to kill a person and throw themselves into traffic over and over. (Their bizarre story became the subject of a documentary, [Madness In The Fastlane](#).)

I feel that in the days they were in the station, Mathias became unhinged and suffered an insane break. Be it that they were being pursued or something else altogether, his paranoia spread to Weiher. This madness locked them both in the station and drove the strange decisions that kept the two from warmth and food.

When Weiher's body finally gave out and Mathias was left alone, he covered his friend as best he could. He then traded shoes with the dead man and made his long walk into the unknown.

From <https://rabrewster.com/2020/02/03/obscure-american-dyatlov-the-disappearance-of-the-yuba-county-5/>

## What Is... Folie à Deux



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In this series, I dig a little deeper into the meaning of psychology-related terms. This week's term is shared psychotic disorder, also known as folie à deux.

Folie à deux is the more commonly recognized name for what the DSM-5 calls shared psychotic disorder. It's a rare condition that involves shared delusions between two or more people who are in a close relationship. The primary, or inducer, in the relationship holds the original delusional belief, and then the secondary, or induced, in the relationship comes to share the delusion.

### How it develops

The disorder was first identified in the late 1800s. In 1942, psychiatrist Alexander Gralnick proposed four subtypes of folie à deux based on how the shared delusions came about:

- *folie imposée* (imposed psychosis): the primary imposes the delusional beliefs on the secondary
- *folie simultanée* (simultaneous): both people were psychotic to begin with, and came to share a delusion
- *folie communiquée* (communicated): the "normal" secondary maintains the delusion after separation
- *folie induite* (induced): a psychotic person adds new delusions to another psychotic person's delusional system

### Risk factors

Several risk factors contribute to the development of folie à deux, including:

- lengthy relationship with strong [attachment](#), usually family members
- social isolation
- personality traits or disorders: [histrionic](#), dependent, [schizoid](#), schizotypal, [neurotic](#), emotionally immature, passivity, suggestibility, suspiciousness
- untreated mental illness in the primary in the relationship; most common diagnosis is delusional disorder
- cognitive impairment in the secondary
- stressful life events
- communication difficulties
- female gender

### Cases of folie à deux

More than half of reported cases involve either mother-daughter or sister-sister pairs. The primary plays a dominant role, while the secondary plays a submissive role. In some cases, the entire family becomes involved, and an 11-member family suicide reported in India was suspected to be due to shared psychosis.

There was a fascinating case report in the Archives of Sexual Behaviour that described a married couple involving a female primary and male secondary. The shared delusional belief was that the husband was being financially exploited by a mistress (whom he worked with) and was being given drugs and forced to have sex with her. While he did not have memories of events his wife described, he was entirely certain that they occurred and didn't question any of it.

### Treatment

In terms of treatment, perhaps the biggest challenge is getting the pair (or system) to accept the need for treatment. The atypical [antipsychotics](#) aripiprazole and quetiapine appear to be most effective for medication treatment. One would guess that a lifetime of therapy would probably need to be thrown into the mix as well.

This condition sounds like a bit of a Freudian wet dream. In psychoanalytic theory, unresolved Oedipus/Electra complex issues leading to jealousy or abnormal sexualization of the relationship are thought to contribute to the development of folie à deux.

I vaguely recall when I worked in inpatient psychiatry there was one patient that was part of a suspected folie à deux, but I've never encountered a clear-cut case.

It's fascinating the things the mind can do.

From <<https://mentalhealthathome.org/2019/09/13/what-is-folie-a-deux/>>

**Folie à deux** ('madness [shared] by two'), also known as **shared psychosis**<sup>[1]</sup> or **shared delusional disorder (SDD)**, is a [psychiatric](#) syndrome in which symptoms of a [delusional](#) belief, and sometimes [hallucinations](#)<sup>[2]</sup> are transmitted from one individual to another.<sup>[3]</sup> The same syndrome shared by more than two people may be called *folie à... trois* ('three') or *quatre* ('four'); and further, *folie en famille* ('family madness') or even *folie à plusieurs* ('madness of several').

The disorder was first conceptualized in 19th-century French psychiatry by [Charles Lasègue](#) and [Jules Falret](#) and is also known as **Lasègue–Falret syndrome**.<sup>[4]</sup>

Recent psychiatric classifications refer to the syndrome as **shared psychotic disorder (DSM-4 – 297.3)** and **induced delusional disorder (ICD-10 – F24)**, although the research literature largely uses the original name.

This disorder is not in the current DSM ([DSM-5](#)), which considers the criteria to be insufficient or inadequate. DSM-5 does not consider Shared Psychotic Disorder (Folie à Deux) as a separate entity, but rather, the physician should classify it as "Delusional Disorder" or in the "Other Specified Schizophrenia Spectrum and Other Psychotic Disorder".

From <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Folie\\_%C3%A0\\_deux](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Folie_%C3%A0_deux)>



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Monday, July 19, 2021 8:49 PM

