



A Murder In My Hometown

Rebecca Morris

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On a fall evening in Corvallis, Oregon in 1967, 17-year-old Dick Kitchel, a senior at the high school, disappeared after attending a party. Ten days later, his body was spotted by two children as it floated down the Willamette River. He had been beaten and strangled.

The investigation into his murder played out during one of the most dramatic years in America. Life in Corvallis, a college town, had offered a protective, idyllic life to many. But in 1967-68, Viet Nam, a presidential campaign, the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy, and the murder of Dick Kitchel changed that.

His friends thought his death was ignored because Dick was from the wrong side of the tracks. Police and the District Attorney thought that they knew who had murdered the boy but never made an arrest. Decades later, a cold case detective believed he, too, had solved the case. However, once again, justice was elusive.

Now nearly 50 years later, a classmate, New York Times bestselling author Rebecca Morris returns to her hometown to write about how the murder changed the town and the lives Dick Kitchel's friends.

Rebecca Morris is the New York Times bestselling author of *If I Can't Have You – Susan Powell, Her Mysterious Disappearance and the Murder of Her Children*, *A Killing in Amish Country*, *Ted and Ann*, and other books.

A Murder In My Hometown Details

Date : Published May 22nd 2018 by WildBlue Press

ISBN :

Author : Rebecca Morris

Format : Kindle Edition 234 pages

Genre : Crime, True Crime, Nonfiction, Autobiography, Memoir

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From Reader Review A Murder In My Hometown for online ebook

Bella says

I was given a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review through Netgalley

This book was not at all what I was expecting in terms of structure and presentation. I did not care for the way this book was set up in the way it was laid out. At first the little insights into the town life and in the author's life was interesting and then it began to wear thin. A lot of points were hashed out again and again and some of the points did not add to the overall enjoyment of the book.

The Good: It shed light onto a murder that should have been solved and gave a voice to the victim.

The Bad: The author comes across as very white privileged and judgmental in her assumptions about how people feel when they live in 'poor' families.

Lisa says

WAY too much superfluous content

VERY good research and content on the subject of the book, and interesting writing. Kept my attention in a can't-put-it-down kind of way...

BUT I found myself skipping over chunks of content that were more, it seems, personal references and memories of the author having nothing to do with the story. I

I also found myself skipping much of the historical references about the wars and riots occurring at that time. This happened during the 60's. Everyone is familiar with that era -- Vietnam, race riots, Kennedy's assassination and that of King, as well as that of RFK. It seems things like this and the authors personal high school anecdotes were just used as "filler" to make the book longer. There were entire chapters where the content was completely about the authors job as yearbook editor, her own group of friends, her family and her life. Things having nothing to do with the murder of this young, confused and tortured soul. She takes the focus TOTALLY off of this murdered boy whose father would punch him and call him names, making him not want to go home most nights, and turns the readers attention onto herself and her joyful, happy childhood school and family life.

I am so glad they at least seem to know who is responsible for this vicious act. I feel horrible for this life cut so short. What struck me is the disparity in how people described him...they either loved him or hated him, but it seemed he was only hated by his father and other adults. His peers had nothing but good to say about him. However, it also seems he his the misery of his home life very well because his peers described him as being always happy, and very "nice." Almost like he arrived to be the opposite of his father -- unless he was drinking.

SundayAtDusk says

Although I'm not an avid reader of true crime books, I think I've read enough of them to guess this story is not going to be a big hit with true crime readers. The murder isn't compelling enough; it's hard keeping straight all the individuals mentioned; and Rebecca Morris is more into writing a memoir about her hometown and her childhood, than she is about discussing the crime. Personally, her memories about her high school years during the late 1960s, and what was going on in the country at the time, are what I found most interesting in this 200 page book. Not incredibly interesting, mind you, but interesting enough to feel no pain while reading to the end.

(Note: I received a free e-ARC of this book from NetGalley and the publisher or author.)

Michelle Boyer says

Note: I would like to thank author Rebecca Morris, NetGalley, and WildBlue Press for a free ARC in exchange for an honest review of this book. I'm an avid reader of the true crime genre and I'm always looking forward to getting my hands on another book!

Richard "Dick" Kitchel was a 17-year-old high school student who never returned from a party in Corvallis, Oregon in 1967. His body was found 10 days later floating in the Willamette River. It was clear that he had been strangled and that some sort of struggle occurred before his body was dumped in the river (the strangulation killed him and there was no water in his lungs, ruling out drowning). The condition of the body, having been exposed to the river's elements and fish, was not helpful in determining much about the murder. Similarly, since it had been 10 days and no one really knew Dick had been murdered (most young teens have willingly left home, according to the detectives in the 1960s) any potential crime scenes also lacked physical evidence.

Detectives relied heavily on testimonies of individuals that had seen Dick that night. They began to piece together information, listened to various theories about what could have happened to Dick, but unfortunately... the case went cold.

Author Rebecca Morris gives a voice to Dick, opening up the case and discussing what she recalled at the time of the murders. This did indeed happen in her hometown and she knew several of the individuals that were involved in the investigation. Towards the end of the book, it becomes clear that 40 years later another cold case investigator began working on the case. While there is a strong belief that (someone whose name I will not spoil here!) was involved in Dick's murder (even if accidental)... the case still has not been officially solved (this isn't a spoiler).

There are some great things about this book. First and foremost, I really do appreciate when local individuals get involved with investigations because people within the community often have access to testimony that investigators may not. A murderer is more likely to tell their barber a key piece of evidence as opposed to a detective. Also, authors that are writing about their hometowns and/or events that took place as they lived through them are often not as cold as "outsiders" who tend to give a lot of fact, but not much "heart" when discussing crime.

Secondly, I always enjoy (which is an awkward word when discussing true crime) hearing stories where

silenced victims get a chance to have a voice. It seems like a lot of people in Corvallis were perfectly fine with Dick's death--he was, perhaps, a bit of a troublemaker. He liked to drink (this was common for teens in the 1960s). He had anger issues and he and his father were often fighting. He had bullied at least his stepbrother and probably others. So on the surface, sure, maybe you think that you wouldn't miss Dick much either. BUT there are other things about Dick that Morris makes more apparent so you can understand that even if Dick was a dick (I couldn't resist), he still didn't deserve to be murdered. His case *should* be solved.

However, there are some "issues" that I have with this book that I deducted some stars for when I decided to sit down and rate the book. Please note, I think a 3-star review is an "average" review and think that "average" books are perfectly acceptable and still worth reading. I'd suggest that in my opinion, about 90% of books out there are 3-star books. It takes a little more to get me to give 4 or 5 stars.

My biggest issue was that Morris, at times, was a little too close to traveling down the memoir road. While I appreciate her insight, and it is needed, there were often times (entire chapters, really) where she was discussing her own views of Corvallis and/or her own experiences--and I felt like there were times where Dick and his murder were completely absent. Some background information about an author is good, especially when they were around during the events and want to establish themselves within the story. However... too much makes a reader begin to wonder... how much of this is 'true crime' and how much of this is 'memoir'? I think areas where the book falls too far into memoir (and information about Morris) are tempting to skip over, and distract from the story I came to read about--Dick.

Still, this book does a decent job of explaining why Dick's case remains unsolved. There are several factors--the most important seemingly being that there is a lack of physical evidence. I, perhaps like the author, feel like detectives/investigators could have done a bit more to get the case solved. After all... they have a strong inclination about who murdered Dick, but never fully pursued that avenue. It is unfortunate, because Dick's case does deserve some closure. But perhaps this book is the first step towards that closure, because now readers know is story.

april lewis says

Extremely slow and redundant....

I tried really hard to read this book after reading the reviews but I just couldn't muster up the enthusiasm to do so. I suppose those readers who rated this higher than 3 stars must be extremely familiar with the story.....I just found it to be extremely slow and at times redundant. I finally gave up after completing only 34%.

Barbara says

This was a good book. Although, if you are looking for true crime, be aware that yes, it is true crime, but also a memoir. The memoir part is a good addition for most of the book, giving you a "you are there" perspective.. Then, there are several chapters in a row where the murder & victim aren't mentioned at all &

it's all about the author's memories & the history of the times.. Not what I was expecting in a true crime book, but it did make me think that this is how life really is. Time, & life, go on.

The layout & flow of the story were really good. I especially enjoyed the end with the "where are they now" updates & pictures of the people involved from the time (1967). I also liked how the author got the 2 detectives & the DA together all these years later to discuss the case..

It's a sad story, but well told. I even enjoyed the memoir parts, just thought there was a little too much of that aspect. This could have been a novella, or part of a true crime compilation, like Ann Rule's True Crime Files. Still think it's a well told story & worth the read.

Thank you to NetGalley & Wildblue press for providing me with a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Doug Phillips says

After completing this one, I was not quite sure what I had just read. Being an Oregon resident living not too far from Corvallis, there was great promise in this book telling the true-crime story from 50 years in the past.

Unfortunately, I am not so sure that the murder in question here was sufficiently rich enough with content to warrant a complete book. I could see this account condensed somewhat and included in some sort of true crime anthology. Ms. Morris includes ancillary material involving her family's history (which admittedly does pertain to the area), history of Corvallis, and other side-trips that don't seem to add a great deal of context to the murder of Dick Kitchel.

This is a title with the WildBlue Press imprint. I am glad to see that this publisher is focusing somewhat on true crime as a genre. I hope that other works do a better job of immersing readers in to the real fear and intrigue of true crime reporting.

Victoria Haugen says

I wasn't in the Pacific NW in the late 60's, I was still down south with my parents, being a baby ;).

I now live in Clark County, WA, a couple dozen miles north of Portland, Oregon, so I now know the area fairly well.

I hadn't heard of this story, and it's so sad and shocking to hear of something like this happening. But, as we know, this kind of thing has happened since the beginning of time. As much as we want the world to be filled with only good, it just keeps going more and more to the dark side.

A lot of other big news was happening in 1967 & 68, and for this to be at the top of the news speaks volumes.

Enjoyed both writing and narration, I think it's a great true crime book :)

I was given this free review copy audiobook at my request and have voluntarily left this review.

Valerity (Val) says

This is a good book by true crime writer Rebecca Morris about a murder that happened in her hometown of a young man, Dick Kitchel 17, who disappeared after a party in the fall of 1967 in Corvallis, Oregon. Eventually, a body was spotted ten days later floating in the Willamette River by two children and was pulled to shore and taken to be autopsied.

The case dragged on for many years with lots of suspicions and turned into quite a big cold case with multiple suspects. Many others thought it was the guy who dropped him off in town. Many thought he made it home and was subjected to one last fatal beating by his own father. But what turned out to be the real story after nearly 50 years of investigating and checking into the story?

You'll have to read it to learn how it turned out, as I did. An advance digital copy was provided by

Netgalley, author Rebecca Morris, and the publisher for my unbiased review.

Wildblue Press Publication: May 22, 2018

I also enjoyed another book Morris wrote titled “Ted and Ann” about serial killer Ted Bundy and a young victim suspected of being an early kill of his that went undetected for a long, long time.

My Bookzone blog at Wordpress: <https://wordpress.com/post/bookblog20...>

Merryl Todd says

3.5 stars

This book is true to its marketing. It is a book about the authors return to her hometown almost 50 years later, to write about the murder of a classmate and how it changed the town and the lives of the victim's friends. Aficionados of true crime – this book may not be for you as it is really a memoir/murder mystery book.

For most part Rebecca manages the segues between the crime and anecdotes of her life, the town and the people touched by the crime quite well and the book flows, and reads, well with the exception of one annoying blemish.

When writing about true crime it much easier for the reader to follow the investigation if the author can maintain a chronological order – especially when we are talking about events in a single day.

The chapter, The Partygoers, starts at midnight with detectives visiting the home where the victim had last been seen alive, then jumps to a long sequence with the victim's girlfriend which you find out pages later is taking place at 11:00pm and then goes back to the midnight visit with bits of how the body was discovered that morning in the middle. As this occurs very early in the book when you are trying to get your head around just who is who in the book it would read better if the events were sequential.

It was an enjoyable read and I would read more from this writer.

Stephanie says

The true crime genre is my guilty pleasure! I have read dozens of TC books, tend to gravitate to the 364.1523 shelf in the public library, and in my local used bookstore, I head straight for the back wall, lowest shelf. Thanks to Wild Blue Press and NetGalley, I got a copy of *Murder in My Hometown* by Rebecca Morris in return for my honest review, and I was happy to indulge in my guilty pleasure.

Honestly, I had never heard of Ms. Morris, although she has co-authored several TC books with Gregg Olsen, including *A Killing in Amish Country*, *If I Can't Have You*, *Overkill*, and *Bodies of Evidence*. On her own, she also wrote *Ted and Ann*, a book that explores whether a young girl who disappeared from Tacoma, WA, in 1961, might have been Ted Bundy's first victim.

Ms. Morris grew up in Corvallis, OR in the 50s and 60s. And in 1967, 17-year old Dick Kitchel, a student at Corvallis High School, disappeared after leaving a party where he may or may not have fought with someone. His body, beaten and strangled to death, was found a couple of weeks later floating in the Willamette River.

The book that I expected was a thorough exploration of the victim, the crime, and the investigation -- and all those are included in the book. We learn that Dick was from a violent and very unhappy home: his father didn't report him missing for quite some time, and never expressed any sadness over his death (making the father a suspect for sure). Corvallis was a college town, and the high school kids tended to be divided into two groups: those who were in some way affiliated with Oregon State University and those who weren't. Dick's family was in the latter camp, which many of his friends thought resulted in the police almost ignoring his murder and just barely investigating it. So, what really happened?

Dick was definitely given a ride from the party, and left with three other guys. The driver dropped off the other two first, then he claimed he dropped Dick off downtown. This sounded fishy to some people because Dick's treasured jacket was left in the car, and Dick NEVER went without his jacket. The driver of the car was definitely the primary suspect, and both the police and the DA thought they knew he was guilty of the crime. But there was never an arrest and the murder remains unsolved.

And, as I said, the story of Dick's disappearance and the subsequent investigation is told in the book, and I appreciated the writing of that part. But the author gave equal weight to BOTH parts of the title: in addition to the murder, she provides a thorough look at her childhood and her hometown. Long passages (chapters, even) are dedicated to her experiences growing up in Corvallis. No offense, Ms. Morris, but a mention of the social climate, history, or political leanings (as well as what was going on in the country at large in 1967-68) as they related to the story of Dick's murder would have been plenty. I'm not really interested in the details of your childhood, and while the writing is good and I enjoyed much of the detail about Corvallis, that is totally not what I expected. It doesn't seem like the killing changed the town, or if it did, it wasn't at all clear. All the details about the author's upbringing, etc. would seem to belong in an entirely different book.

Two stars. I will read more of her books, and hope for a stronger editor or a more focused exploration of a crime.

Stephanie Borders says

Dick Kitchel was a senior in high school in 1967 when his bloated and blackened body was found in a local river. Detectives worked with what little information they had to try to solve the murder, but over 50 years later, Dick's murder remains unsolved. Dick hung around with a rough crowd, including a young couple whose home he visited on the last night he was alive, when they were throwing a party. Could any of the party attendees have killed Dick? Likewise, Dick was being raised by his severe, surly father, Ralph Kitchel, who displayed some questionable behavior after his son was killed. Was Dick beat to death by his father?

Rebecca Morris, author of *A Murder in My Hometown*, was a classmate of Dick's, so she had a personal insight into the case. In that sense, she brought a very personal perspective. Although not personal friends with Dick, Morris was able to evoke the setting in which this tragedy took place, and included some personal photographs, such as yearbook pictures, that added a lot to the story.

A Murder in My Hometown is divided into three sections. The first section deals exclusively with Dick's murder in October 1967 and the immediate aftermath, including the investigation and any leads that came forth. The second section was titled 1968 and focused on the second half of what would have been Dick's senior year of high school. This section felt like it could have belonged in a separate book. It was nice to get a glimpse of what life would have been like for Dick had he lived, and it gave an all important look at the culture of the 60s, but there was no flow from this section to the section preceding it as well as the section following it. The last section takes us to "modern day" (2008), where the case is being re-investigated. As is often the problem with cases so old, many of the key players had died, and memories had ceased being as sharp.

As far as true crime goes, I was invested in this story. I knew there was a good chance that there was no resolution to the case, which isn't a problem for me as a reader, and although it can be problematic to some, I think there is enough there so that the reader doesn't feel slighted. Overall, I wish the book had felt more cohesive. I can see why the book was broken up in sections, but it wasn't successful.

Melanie says

Dick Kitchel disappeared on October 11, 1967. His body is found in the nearby river a little over a week later. Though the police trace his actions leading up to his disappearance, they don't have enough evidence to charge the likely suspect.

I thought this book would be right up my alley, but it turns out, it's more memoir than true crime. It wavers between a mishmash of facts, laced with tons of snippets of what the author remembers about the time period. Most of the book is unrelated to the actual crime. If you're from the area and time period, it might be for you.

I received this book from netgalley in exchange for a review.

BAM The Bibliomaniac says

Many thanks to Wildblue Press for the free copy of this book in exchange for my unbiased review.

On October 21, 1967, the body of seventeen-year-old Dick Kitchel was dragged out of Willamette River

after having been missing for ten days. Small I'm stature and from the wrong side of the tracks, the police had often been called to his home to break up fights between him and his father. He was known as a tough guy and had recently been arrested for drunk driving. The last anyone had seen of him was at a get together the weekend he went missing. Observations differed, but there had at least been a heated discussion and a ride off the property. How did he die? And who did it? This book sets up the answers quite well.

I didn't have the feeling of suspense when I read this. I basically knew who it was. I just wanted him caught. That's what kept me driven to finish. That's what was crushing. Dickie seemed like a sweet kid in the wrong place at the wrong time. And his dad was a punk. I couldn't stand him. The ending broke my heart

Simone Perren says

I was lucky enough to be sent this book by NetGalley and WildBlue Press for an honest review so a big thank you to them!

Dick Kinchel was murdered and 10 days later his body was found. His father hadn't reported him missing for four days after his murder and he had had a fight at a party the night he went missing. This is a difficult one because I enjoyed the true crime element of this book! Reading about what happened in the lead up to and after Dick's death was the best part of the book.

Personally I found the author's background information about her life to be a little too much. I understand she lived in the town where Dick was killed but I think it took away from the true crime element and there were large portions of the book where Dick's murder wasn't even mentioned. I think a bit of reorganising the structure of this book could vastly improve it.

Overall I enjoyed the author's writing and take on this crime.
