

Mystery

Military Mysteries

Military Mishaps

DAVID COX

A Few Good Men is hardly a classic, but the legal drama on film was actually based off of a play by the same name. The play enjoyed a few hundred performances around the world and high reviews. Both the film and the play were written by Aaron Sorkin, but the film had a much bigger team and budget. The movie was released in 1992 whereas the play premiered in 1986.

So what connection does a play and its more well-known brother on film has to David Cox? David Cox was a marine involved in a “Code Red” (hazing) incident at Guantanamo Bay. The incident inspired A Few Good Men, but was exaggerated in its film and play adaptations. As a result, Cox, and other marines, would sue the filmmakers.

For those unfamiliar with the film and/or the incident, in 1986 Cox and 9 other Marines were involved in a hazing of one of their comrades. Their target was William Alvarado, a private who as informing higher ups about misconduct of fellow marines. Blindfolded and gagged, they forced Alvarado down and it was Cox who about to give him a haircut. He hesitated only because it was apparent to Cox that Alvarado was no longer struggling and his face had turned blue. Alvarado was sent to Miami posthaste for recovery and recovery (in the film the hazed marine dies).

The ten marines were given a choice: fight the charges or accept dishonorable discharges; only Christopher Valdez, their commanding officer, was given an honorable discharge by accepting the plea bargain. Three others, however, would fight the charges, Cox being one of them. Cox and his lawyer went for a superior orders defense (more well known as the Nuremberg defense), which proved to be successful, and he was charged with simple assault and sentenced to time served in the brig. This meant he was able to return to service almost immediately as he had been detained for a little over a month already. He was honorably discharged in 1989.

The dawn of the mystery begins with the dusk of his military career, however. Cox saw the film and was irate. In an interview with the Natick Bulletin he said, “If I hadn’t known the truth, it probably would’ve been the best movie I’ve ever seen in my life.”

He filed a lawsuit, following his firm conviction that the film had misled and misrepresented the event.

Yet the lawsuit went nowhere. Elaine Tinsley, his girlfriend, arrived at the apartment the two shared in the evening of January fifth. His truck was parked in the driveway

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and their pet rabbit was hopping around in the kitchen. Cox was nowhere to be found. Months passed and there was no clue as to where David disappeared to. It was highly unusual for him to take off without notifying others.

Cox's body was found in April 1994 when a canoeist spotted a sneaker sticking out of a pile of branches. He investigated further and made the unfortunate discovery. Cox had been shot four times, with one shot in the back of his head, and the rest in his side.

There are peculiarities about his death that should result in leads, but so far, have been dead ends. He was wearing his Marines jacket, and two new investigators on the case claim that most former marines don't wear their military clothes in public. Cox was part of the majority and he never wore his military clothing in public.

The day he went missing, there was a snowstorm. A meteorologist drew up a chart that concluded that 8 inches of snow fell the day before. He was wearing his sneakers in deep snow? Or was he ferried to the location via motor transportation? Since he was in the middle of the woods with inappropriate footwear, but warm military clothing otherwise, and the likelihood he was driven to his place of death (or dumped there), it's probable he got into a car with someone he knew.

Alternatively, he was pressured to get into a car and hastily threw on whatever he could, which happened to be sneakers and his military jacket. In this case, he was not expecting company the day he disappeared. Cox would not have walked into the woods with someone he was not familiar with. If it was a hit by someone he didn't know, it would have taken place at his apartment. It's likely the murder was planned by someone close to him, possibly a former marine involved in the Hazing Incident.

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JEFFREY DIGMAN

Jeffrey Digman was a U.S. Marine who was quite far into his career. A captain at 28,

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he shared a house with a fellow soldier. A few months before his next promotion, Jeffrey was in Puerto Rico. Digman was not happy about the transfer, but by Christmas he was in a relationship with Lucy Garcia, an accountant. Garcia once remarked that Digman was “a very quiet person....so serious.”

After Christmas, Digman flew back home to San Diego. He was to return to Puerto Rico on January 22, the Sunday Super Bowl. At 6PM neighbors reported the sound of a car backfiring. Later that night, Digman’s roommate and Garcia returned home to find his car still parked in the driveway, despite the fact he was supposed to have left earlier. The roommate found Digman’s body with a single gunshot wound in his head. His blood alcohol level was three times the legal limit and there was gunpowder on his right hand. The death, unsurprisingly, was ruled a suicide.

Digman’s father, William Digman, was doubtful of the police’s conclusion. An investigation performed by the Navy came to the same conclusion as the police. This was the second refusal of the suicide ruling from William. Digman’s parents and a private investigator looked further into the death themselves and concluded he was murdered. The trajectory of the bullet did not line up for a killing shot. Additionally, Digman was left handed. There was also an unexplained smear of blood above Digman’s body. A year after his death, his parents requested a second autopsy and while a few injuries were brought to light, the medical examiner claimed the injuries were not significant enough to support a homicide ruling.

Still postulating a homicide case, his parents proposed the theory it was related to his work in the Marine Drug Testing Unit. Digman had tested people and they were turning positive. There was evidence of dealers as well in the Marines, but nobody was charged or caught and Digman was reportedly upset over this. He kept his reportings in a safe, which was not in his room when he was found dead. Furthermore, the Army ruled his death as “undetermined”. If Digman committed suicide and nobody else was in his house that night, why was his safe missing? Although it isn’t impossible for left-handed individuals to use a gun with their right hand, it certainly is odd, but what is more surprising is the size of the wound. Forensic and ballistic experts hired by the Digman family concluded that the wound was too small and inconsistent with the only weapon found at the scene: a .44 revolver.

Strangely, the first coroner to examine the body concluded that the wound was “near contact”, not “star-shaped” as described by Ted Gunderson, “for the trajectory of the bullet to line up with Digman’s body, he would have been forced into an awkward position....the path of the bullet would have been about 10 inches above his head....he would have had to be leaning well over and then would have fallen to the floor.”

Despite the fact the coroner described it as “near contact”, which implies the gun barrel as not pressed against his head unlike most suicide victims, it was still concluded to be a suicide.

Furthermore, blood splatter analysis by Gunderson resulted in another inconsistency being pointed out. If he shot himself, the splatter would not have

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been the way it was on the wall. The mattress was disposed of and never examined and the bullet used to kill Digman was never located. If there was a bullet lodged in the mattress, it would never be found now. The pistol found at the scene, the one allegedly used by Digman, was not conclusively tied to his suicide either.

Despite the missing evidence, lack of information by the first examination by the coroner's office, and strange ballistic conclusions, it was ruled a suicide three times, twice by the police, and once by the Navy. At the very least, it could have been reported as undetermined, but instead it only leads credence to the theory that it was a murder and covered up by the navy by skeptics. Digman was known to drink heavily when alone, so the only theory that seems possible for suicide is that he shot himself in a bizarre position while in a stupor, but there is no evidence of that occurring. Even if that is the case, why was the gunshot wound inconsistent with the magnum? If he shot himself with a smaller gun, why was it not present at the scene? There was no motive for a suicide, so the only possible explanation for it would be in the midst of a drunken state.

Even under the pretenses that it was a suicide where he positioned himself in a very strange, but possible manner and the smaller gun used in his suicide along with the bullet was in the mattress and never found, the missing safe does not fit into a suicide theory. This isn't even going into the chances that it was lined up so perfectly that the gun and bullet disappeared into the mattress and his positioning was so precise despite the barrel never making contact that it perfectly lined up a lethal shot anyway. That position would involve laying down on the bed with the barrel of the gun inches away from the temple, so Digman wouldn't be entirely sure that the barrel was even aimed at his skull. The theory is extremely contrived and almost too coincidental to be concrete. It would be a near perfect suicide for the circumstances to line up the way they did if it were the case. Given that the gunshot was inflicted upon his right temple, can an incredibly inebriated man be trusted to make that shot unless he was lucky? It isn't impossible for him to have killed himself this way, but it is unlikely.

The inconsistencies, the missing evidence, and the experts at odds all add up to a mysterious case. Was it a cover-up by members of the Navy because of Digman's reports? Or was it a tragic suicide that happens to be strange in nature?

"The Mysterious Death of Jeffrey Digman." Unsolved Mysteries, unsolved.com/gallery/jeffrey-digman/.

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LT. PAUL WHIPKEY

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Lieutenant Paul Whipkey was stationed in Fort Ord, California, before being transferred to Nevada. The reason for his transfer was simple: he was to fly an observation plane during an atomic bomb test. Unfortunately, this caused him to lose all of his teeth, blotches and black moles on his skin, and warts on his hands. Furthermore, his personality seemed to change and he became paranoid. He returned to Fort Ord not long after. Not long after that, he mysteriously vanished. In 1982 the Army Board for Correction of Military Records held a three-day hearing and came to the conclusion that he died the day after he disappeared. It went on to add that his "unauthorized absence was unavoidable" and his death "was incurred in the line of duty."

Whipkey said he was going to go for a drink in town, but a few hours later he checked into a motel in Mojave, California. The next day, he bought 14 gallons of gas. After that, he was never heard of again. The day after, Carl Whipkey, his brother, became suspicious and called Fort Ord. Apparently, officers were packing Paul Whipkey's belongings into crates to be shipped home. This made Carl very suspicious as it was not typical for this to occur. Five weeks later they found Paul's car abandoned in Death Valley. The Army board claimed he meandered into the desert and perished to extreme heat. Carl believes his involvement in the nuclear tests resulted in his death and the mysterious disappearance is a cover up of more sinister secrets kept tightly by the military.

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