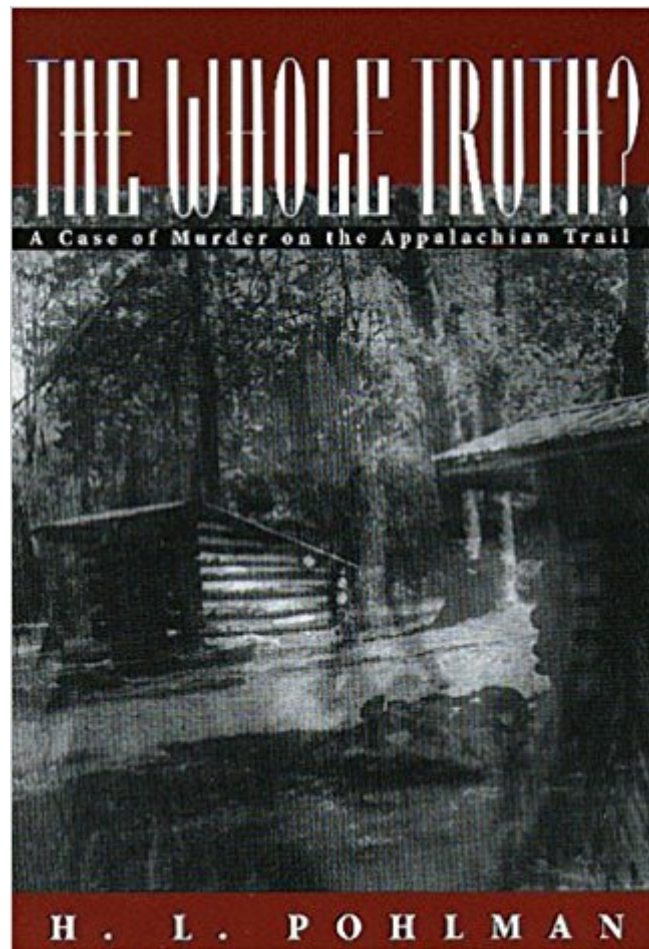




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The Whole Truth?: A Case Of Murder On The Appalachian Trail



Synopsis

On May 13, 1988, Stephen Roy Carr, a so-called mountain man living in Michaux State Forest in south central Pennsylvania, shot two female hikers while they were making love at a campsite near the Appalachian Trail. Rebecca Wight died at the scene. Claudia Brenner, despite five bullet wounds, survived to testify against her attacker. In this book, H. L. Pohlman reconstructs the dramatic story of this murder case and traces its disposition through the criminal justice system. Drawing on interviews with participants as well as court records, he closely examines competing interpretations of the evidence. Was the attack a hate crime? A sex crime? A class crime? At the same time, he shows how a broad range of substantive and procedural issues—from the rights of the accused to evaluation of potential mitigating circumstances—can influence the assessment of culpability in homicide cases.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

paper 1-55849-166-X A death-penalty trial is lent a fascinating air by its very low-profile, routine nature in Pohlman's (Political Science/Dickinson Coll.) careful, revelatory delineation of the legal process. Here is a lucid narrative of a typical murder trial, written to give the average citizen a taste of how our legal process works when not turned by the media glare into a prurient sideshow. This case concerns the murder of one young woman and the shooting of another while they were camping in central Pennsylvania. There is no doubt as to the murderer (he confessed), but there certainly is about the extent to which he was responsible for his actions. The question of the jury's impartiality is raised by the fact that the victims were gay: would this rural, conservative, religiously

inclined venue deal the death penalty to a local mountain man for his violence against two out-of-state lesbians? Truth and justice fade behind a fog of legal maneuverings that Pohlman, remarkably, illuminates without putting the reader to sleep: lawyers battles regarding evidence disclosure and jury selection, a question of the defendants diminished capacity and a ``Twinkie-style defense, and questions about the degree of nuance in categories of criminal guilt. Pohlman also does a good job portraying the human weaknesses of the lead players, from the district attorney, for whom ``avoiding the anxiety of `Godlike' decisions was more important . . . than avoiding the infliction of a punishment that in his own opinion had no legitimate purpose," to the savvy judge who nonetheless displays outrageously misplaced confidence in the defendant's understanding of what is happening to him at his plea-bargain session. Pohlman ably spotlights tough legal nuts (does the adversarial judicial system facilitate or hinder the truth; are the conflicts raised by this legal process inimical to fairness and propriety) that, while hardly new, are so fundamental to our notion of justice, they strike reflective chords every time they are raised. -- Copyright ©1998, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"A thought-provoking account of a senseless crime. It will provide those troubled by our country's imperfect criminal justice system much to think about." •Legal Times

"A death-penalty trial is lent a fascinating air by its very low-profile, routine nature in Pohlman's careful, revelatory delineation of the legal process. . . . Here is a lucid narrative of a typical murder trial, written to give the average citizen a taste of how our legal process works when not turned by the media glare into a prurient sideshow." •Kirkus Reviews

"An unusual and provocative view of both the workings of the criminal justice system and its social context. In particular, Pohlman's probing of the cast of characters exposes the complexities of decision-making that emerge in a criminal investigation, in a prosecution of this magnitude and in the defense of a person accused of murder and facing the possibility of the death penalty." •Janet Rifkin, University of Massachusetts Amherst

I was 7 years old when this happened and lived only a few minutes away from the AT and the murder site. I remember vividly when all of this happened because we were no longer allowed to hike the AT or any of the neighboring trails for safety concerns. It was the event that made my uncle start carrying his 9mm with him when he took us hiking the following summer and every summer since. I remembered the events and how they changed my life when I was 7 and going back when I was 32 and reading about the shootings from a more legal and logical perspective was interesting. I know and have met personally many of the key players detailed in this even just because I've lived

my entire life in Adams County. The book was great. It is well written and covers the events well. The author does a good job of stating facts and the opinions and thoughts of those involved (although Claudia B. would not participate) without preaching their own beliefs and opinions. I've always known the area to be a very conservative and Republican part of PA, but to read some actual letters written to the legal players saying it was essentially "God's will" that these women be shot because they were gay was amazing to me. It really shed some light onto the public mindset of 1988 that I didn't understand as a child and am horrified by now. Good read though...especially for locals in the Franklin, Adams, Cumberland County areas.

This is a good book. It exposes some of the extreme prejudice against lesbians. To stalk and murder a woman because she is gay is beyond fanatic hatred. If you're a lesbian this book will outrage you. Once you realize how vulnerable you can be it will make you really mad, and more careful.

it was ok ,would liked to have heard more about the trail.it' s a sad way to die. I don't agree with the lifestyle of the girls. but the killer got what he deserves. the cops done a good job.

Pohlman, a political science professor, has done an excellent job of shedding light on the inner workings of the criminal justice system and raising issues with which every thoughtful American should be concerned. I read this book in two sittings and found it fascinating. The story is dramatic, the writing tight and clear, and the treatment of the issues even-handed.

This is an excellent book. It details the shooting of Rebecca Wight and Claudia Brenner, two lesbians hiking near the Appalachian Trail in Adams County, Pennsylvania. When Stephen Roy Carr, the "mountain man," saw them engaged in sexual activity, he shot at them with a .22 caliber rifle, killing Wight and injuring Brenner. What follows is a reconstruction of those events, Carr's subsequent capture, and the legal proceedings that followed. Pohlman does an excellent job describing the events that occurred that day in the woods in May 1988 - so well that it reads like a murder mystery. He is also equally strong in presenting the legal issues at hand. Did Carr shoot the women because of his anti-homosexual beliefs, or was he simply jealous? Could the victims and their families expect justice in a conservative small town such as Gettysburg, PA, where the jury could conceivably lessen Carr's crime because of their own anti-homosexual beliefs? The author makes good use of interviews with the prosecuting and defense attorneys in the case, as well as

with the State Police officers associated with the investigation. One quickly realizes that what would appear to be an open-and-shut case - no one really believed Carr *didn't* shoot the women - can easily develop into a complicated web of legal issues. This happens as easily in small-town America as it does in O.J. Simpson's L.A. I grew up in Adams County, and I was in junior high when this incident happened. I remembered hearing about it and even remember seeing it in the local newspaper. For me, it was incredibly interesting to go back as an adult and read about these events. Just recently, I was able to use the author's description of the crime scene to retrace the steps Brenner and Wight took on that fateful day. That should give you some idea as to how detailed this book is.

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