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STATE'S EXHIBIT #15  
Dan Stidham's professional profile

Professional Profile

J

JUDGE DAN STIDHAM

2207 Linwood Drive
Paragould, Arkansas 72450
Email: danstidham@msn.com
Phone: (870) 236-7600



Education:
Arkansas State University, (B.A., 1984)
University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, (J.D., 1987)

Biography:
Born: Harvey, Illinois, March 3, 1963
Admitted to Bar: 1988
Elected District Court Judge: 2000

Judge Stidham was engaged in the private practice of law prior to becoming a full-time District Court Judge on January 1st, 2008. During his private practice he also served as a Public Defender. He is a past president of the Greene-Clay Counties Bar Association, a member of the Greene County Bar Association, and the Arkansas Bar Association. Prior to taking the Bench full time he was admitted to practice in all Courts in the State of Arkansas, the United States District Court for the Eastern and Western Districts of Arkansas, and the United States Supreme Court.

Judge Stidham is an active member of the Arkansas District Judge's Council. In April of 2007, Judge Stidham was chosen by his fellow District Judges from around the State to serve on the Board of Directors of the District Judge's Council representing the First Congressional District of Arkansas.



As an Attorney, Judge Stidham was twice selected as among the Best Attorneys by the readers of the Paragould Daily Press. He was selected as the Best Attorney in 1998. During his law practice, which spanned a period of twenty years, he accumulated a broad range of litigation experience in Domestic Relations, Personal Injury, Insurance and Criminal law. He was qualified to handle capital criminal cases and tried one of the most well-known criminal cases in Arkansas history in 1994.

That case, a triple homicide in West Memphis, Arkansas, was the subject of a 1996 HBO documentary film entitled Paradise Lost. A sequel to this film, Paradise Lost: Revelations was released by HBO in the spring of 2000. This murder case has resulted in Judge Stidham appearing on National television on several occasions including the NBC Nightly News, MSNBC and Court TV's Prime Time Justice. In 1996, Judge Stidham's experience in the West Memphis murder case was the subject of a cover story in the Arkansas Times Magazine (See the Articles section of this Web site).

Judge Stidham is a frequent speaker on college campuses and at professional meetings around the Country regarding criminal law issues and the West Memphis murder case. He is also currently serving as an Adjunct Professor at his alma mater, Arkansas State University, where he teaches classes on Evidence, Criminal Procedure and other legal issues. He has spoken at various Bar association and Trial Lawyer association sponsored seminars and was an invited speaker at the Inaugural meeting of the Academy of Behavioral Profiling in October of 1999 where he gave a presentation on the "West Memphis Case: A Case Study in Criminal Profiling and the Law." In March of 2004, Judge Stidham was an invited speaker at the "Equal Justice Works Symposium for the Wrongfully Accused." If you are interested in having Judge Stidham speak to your Class, Group or Organization, please see the Public Speaking section of this website.

Judge Stidham enjoys life with his family in Paragould, Arkansas. His personal interests include reading, forensic science and false confession issues, psychology, sociology, political science and philosophy. When he is not on the Bench, he can sometimes be found pursuing his passion for the ocean and offshore fishing in such venues as Venice, Louisiana, Panama, the Bahamas, Costa Rica, Belize and Guatemala. Judge Stidham is also an avid collector of antique fishing lures and vintage books.

One book in his collection was published in 1635 and is entitled the *Humiliation of the Son of God*. It is one of only four known copies in the World. Two of his favorite authors are Ernest Hemingway and John Grisham. His favorite books by these writers offer some parallel, and reflect some of his real life experiences in such works as "*The Client*," "*A Time to Kill*" and "*The Old Man and the Sea*." Judge Stidham hopes to someday be able to fulfill a personal dream of his to be able to travel to, and fish the waters off of Cuba, one of Ernest Hemingway's favorite places to write his short stories and pursue his own passion for fishing.



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## John Grisham, meet Dan Stidham

Fiction pales against a Paragould lawyer's real life trial in a triple child slaying.

Arkansas Times

By James Morgan

Today, three years later, you walk into the Stidham law office in Paragould and so much has changed. For one thing, on this day in midweek the place is quiet. The phone rings regularly, but not incessantly the way it did back then. The reception area has been refurbished, and the lawbook-lined conference room straight ahead is neat and unoccupied--no half-eaten sandwiches, no takeout cartons, no crumpled paper and chewed pencils. The only obvious sign to events past is the large stack of storage boxes marked "J.M." on the conference room floor just inside the door.

There are, however, some less-than-obvious signs. One is that the name on the outside of the building is simply Stidham Law Firm instead of the former Stidham & Crow. Beyond that, the signs grow even less obvious. To notice those, you'd have to spend some time with the attorney-in-residence here, Daniel T. Stidham. He's a big man, a former high school football player, and he's much younger than you might've expected.

But he's no longer as young as he looks.

On this day in spring 1996, he's just recovering from arguing his notorious client's case before the Arkansas Supreme Court, which ruled against him. Now Stidham has sent off for his credentials to argue before the United States Supreme Court. It's the final chance, the court of last resort. And thus it'll mark the end not simply of a case but a journey, one Stidham began in June 1993 when he and his law partner were appointed to defend a borderline-retarded youth who'd confessed to taking part in one of the most heinous crimes ever committed in the state. It's a journey that began on one relatively well-traveled road--the road of the public-defender obligated to do his best for a client he assumes is guilty--but then the road suddenly veered into dangerous territory. The danger started when Stidham and his partner decided their client was innocent.

As the anniversary of these events neared, I traveled to Paragould to meet Dan Stidham.

The events that would change Stidham's life first presented themselves as white noise, background sounds on a TV set, and then as a phone call out of the blue. The first date was May 6, 1993, a Thursday, and Stidham was visiting his father in Sherwood. They had just come in from fishing when they happened to catch the bulletin on CNN: The bodies of three 8-year-old boys had been found in a drainage ditch in a wooded area off I-40 in West Memphis, and there were rumors of "sexual mutilation."

"Jesus," said Stidham. The image of his own 8-year-old son, Daniel, came to mind.

"It's gotta be gang related," Stidham's father said.

"Thank God we live in Paragould," said Stidham, and the two men went back to putting up their fishing gear. A little over a month later, early in the morning of Monday, June 7, the phone rang at Stidham's house in Paragould. Dan was in the shower. He thought he heard the ring, but he wasn't sure. Still, he suddenly had a sick feeling in his stomach. Nobody called that early with good news. In a minute his wife, Kim, came into the bathroom. It was Circuit Judge David Goodson. Dan went white: He'd taken Friday off to go fishing. Did I forget a court date? he thought.

But it wasn't that. Judge Goodson was presiding that day in Crittenden County, which includes West Memphis. "Dan," the judge said, "I've got to appoint somebody to this murder case over here, and I was thinking of you." He explained that the public defender's office had declared a conflict of interest, so it was necessary to get a couple of lawyers from outside the county to represent each of the defendants. "I'd like you and Greg"--that was Stidham's law partner-- "to represent Jessie Misskelley."

Stidham stood there with a towel around him, the phone at his ear and a puddle at his feet.

In the days between those two events--the TV bulletin in May and the phone call in June--the news from West Memphis had turned exceedingly grim. Almost from the time the three boys' bodies were found, rumors of devil worship and Satanism had been making the rounds. Then on Thursday, June 3, Misskelley, a 17-year-old high school dropout described by those who knew him as "easily persuaded," was questioned by West Memphis police. After failing a polygraph test, he admitted, in a 27-page signed confession, to having been present when the murders occurred. He even admitted running after and catching one of the victims, who'd tried to get away. But he himself hadn't done the killing, Misskelley said. The murderers were two boys he knew--Michael Wayne Echols, 18, and Charles Jason Baldwin, 16. Echols went by the name of "Damien," the name of the anti-Christ character in the Omen movies. All three, Misskelley said, were members of a Satanic cult that sacrificed animals and took part in drunken orgies. On the morning of Judge Goodson's call, at approximately the time Stidham was standing in his house with his towel around him, families all over Memphis and eastern Arkansas were choking on their Cheerios because of the front page of the Memphis Commercial Appeal. It featured a six-column headline--Teen Describes 'Cult' Torture of Boys--and, drawing from Misskelley's statement to police, led the story with this sentence:

*"Two teenagers charged with killing three 8-year-olds choked their victims into un-consciousness, then sexually mutilated one and raped another as part of a cultic ritual...."*

Stidham soon learned the nature of that "conflict of interest" claimed by the Crittenden County public defender--the man was "a God-fearing person" who didn't believe in Devil worship. So what did that say about Dan Stidham?

In a small town, the chance to work on high-profile criminal cases doesn't come along every day. "You pretty much take anything that crawls in the door," Stidham says, laughing the laugh of one who has come to know the gap between dreams and reality. When he was a kid, Stidham's hero was Perry Mason, and you didn't see Perry drawing up a will. Perry Mason inspired Dan Stidham to become a lawyer. "Every case was different," Stidham says, "and it was never boring." As a young attorney, Stidham adopted a new hero, F. Lee Bailey, whose courtroom presence and brilliant cross examinations had made him a legend. In 1992, Stidham and his partner, Greg Crow, went into practice together. Both were 29 years old. Fortunately, Crow was perfectly happy doing wills and divorces. As for Stidham, though he managed to be involved in a handful of murder cases in the years prior to 1993, the dry fact of small-town law settled over him like the dust on a Paragould summer day.

And yet, when Judge Goodson phoned that morning, Stidham felt unsure. He asked the judge if he could discuss it with his law partner, and because of the nature of this particular case, Goodson agreed. Dan hung up and tried to reach Greg, but couldn't. He told Kim what Goodson wanted. There'd been a period early in Dan's and Kim's marriage when they'd had problems because he spent so much time on his work. Since then, she'd reached a kind of separate peace with the life of a lawyer's spouse. If Dan was looking for Kim's vote, she knew what it had to be. "Do it," she said. "This is the kind of case you love."

That wasn't exactly true. His client had been involved in a supposedly Satanic child killing, and he had confessed. But there were two upsides: One, Dan hadn't been appointed to represent Echols or Baldwin. And two, all Stidham and Crow had to do was get Misskelley ready to testify, and, because he was crucial to the prosecution's case against the actual killers, to work out the best plea bargain they could. He told Kim it really wouldn't take as much time as it appeared.

As Dan got dressed, Kim thought of their oldest son, Daniel. Though only a second grader, he kept up with current events. He somehow absorbed the news, even if he was playing with his toys across the room. That's the only thing that worried Kim. They would have to sit Daniel down and talk.

When Dan got to the office that morning, Greg was already there. "Guess what," Dan said, pouring himself a cup of coffee. Greg was floored by the news, and by the implications of it. "Do you think people will understand that we were appointed?" he said. "Oh, sure they will," said Dan.

And about that time the phone started ringing--Peter Jennings, 20/20, Dateline, Time, The New York Times, and on and on, for hours. The two lawyers spent the rest of that day fielding calls about a case they knew only from the newspapers and TV, and about a client they'd never even laid eyes on.

Their first official act was to have Misskelley moved to a jail closer to Paragould. As Stidham and Crow were led down the corridor to meet their client for the first time, Stidham reflected back to the pictures of Misskelley he'd seen in the news. The image that stuck was his haircut, how bad it was. It was a cross between a Mr. T. and a Gomer Pyle style. In the coverage Stidham had seen, Misskelley looked big and bad and mean. Stidham got butterflies in his stomach as they neared the cell. He'd never met a Devil worshiper before. He expected to come face to face with Charles Manson.

What he found astonished him. "Here he was, a pitiful dwarf of a kid, sitting on a picnic table in the center of his cell wearing an orange jumpsuit that was too big for him. He didn't look up or say anything. He just stared at the floor." Among the several home-done tattoos on Misskelley's body was this one on his left arm: F.T.W. When Stidham asked what it meant, Misskelley said it stood for "fuck the world."

Stidham and Crow interviewed him, and though Misskelley seemed unable to describe the murder in a narrative of his own, he could answer questions that were put to him. He told the lawyers three important things that day. One, yes, he was there when the murders occurred. Two, the police had told him he was going to die in the electric chair (never mind that Arkansas no longer used that form of capital punishment). And three, when Stidham asked him to tell which of the three victims was castrated, Misskelley insisted that it was the blond boy, which was wrong.

Dan gave him five bucks to get a jail haircut before the first hearing.

For the next few weeks, Stidham and Crow worked on absorbing the case--and on balancing its demands against their responsibilities to their other clients. As the Arkansas summer began in earnest, most of the national media had disappeared--gone off to chase the next hot story--and life suddenly felt almost calm again. Dan was still at home at night. He'd obviously talked with Daniel, who raised the subject one day with Kim. He seemed to understand that Jessie Misskelley had the right to a trial just like anybody else, and that it was his daddy's job to make sure that happened. Kim was relieved--and proud. But the apparent calm was just that--an illusion. Outside Stidham's house and law offices, the little town of Paragould was churning.

Word began filtering in that some residents were less than happy with these local boys' representation of Jessie Misskelley. One of Dan's friends called. "What the hell are you doing?" he said, and told him most people thought Dan and Greg had volunteered for the job. "You need to let everybody know how it happened."

Then the Cub Scout problem appeared. Soon after he'd taken the Misskelley case, Dan had been asked to become a pack master. Growing up in Paragould, Dan had gone all the way to Eagle Scout. Now that he had sons, he wanted to pass along that legacy. He'd told the officials that he might run into a time crunch--but he was game if they were. So they had a few meetings, in which Dan outlined his plans for the scout pack. Then one day one of the officials called and said he didn't like some of the decisions Dan had made as Cub leader--and that maybe it would be better for him to step down until after the trial. Dan didn't buy that explanation. One of the victims had been killed in his Cub Scout uniform, and Dan figured some people just couldn't stomach Stidham's role in the murderers' defense.

On the way to the office one morning, Dan made his regular stop at the grocery store to pick up the newspapers. When he stepped out of his car, somebody from across the parking lot yelled, "Child killer!" Stidham spun to look, and saw the grinning face of an old friend and fellow attorney, Brad Broadway. "Thanks a lot," Stidham said. "You scared the hell out of me."

"You tall-building lawyers will do anything for money," laughed Broadway. It was a joke about the fact that Stidham & Crow were housed in the only two-story law office in town.

Stidham laughed along, but he suspected his friend's jokes reflected the feelings in the community. After he got his papers and was getting back in his car, Brad said, "You better get you a bullet-proof vest for Court."

Clearly, Misskelley's testimony was the prosecution's strongest case against the other two defendants, and they felt confident playing it. A deputy prosecutor told Stidham they'd found blood on a shirt in Misskelley's trailer, and that the DNA had matched that of one of the victims. When Dan asked him about it, Misskelley said it was his own blood—he'd cut himself on a Coke bottle.

In every meeting Dan and Greg had with their client, Misskelley never wavered from his story. He'd written a letter to his father, however, in which he'd denied doing what he'd confessed to the police:

*Dear Dad And Lee,*

*I miss both of ya'll I can not stand in here much longer I will go crazy Y'all know I did not do it I am not that crazy I miss ya'll a lot tell Susie I love her With all my heart ya'll tried to get me out I quit smoking I got a TV and I got a Bible and I quit cousing My stomache has been hurting me I watch the news last knight and I cry and cry....I hope that ya'll don't hate me because I did not do it I was with Rickey Deese the day it happen I was ruffin Please try to get me out I will die in here....*

*Love,  
Jessie Jr.*

Dan chalked the letter off to fear and embarrassment, and went on with his preparations. Around the first of July, Dan arranged for Jessie Sr. to visit his son in jail. He let them have a few minutes together, and then Dan raised the subject of whether Jessie would testify against the others in exchange for leniency. "What kind of deal are they going to offer?" asked Jessie Sr.

"It'll depend on how bad they need him," Dan said.

Suddenly, Jessie Jr. sprang to his feet. "Daddy!" he said, "I wasn't there! Them cops made me say that shit! You gotta get me out of here!"

It made Dan furious. "Why did you tell me you were there if you weren't?" he demanded. "Are you afraid to admit it in front of your father?"

"I ain't afraid of nothing!" screamed Jessie.

The day ended with Dan and Jessie Sr. leaving, and Dan telling Jessie he'd be back when he was ready to tell the truth.

KIM CAN STILL see the look on Dan's face the night he told her the news. They'd sat down to supper, and then Dan had rolled up his sleeves and helped get the kids bathed and ready for bed. Life seemed remarkably normal—except for the expression on Dan's face. All evening long, he had looked, in Kim's word, "dazed."

And then, once the children were down, he told her. "Kim," he said, "Jessie Misskelley is innocent. He didn't do it. I don't think any of them did."

It took Kim's breath away. She sank into a chair. "Explain this to me," she said.

Jessie Misskelley Sr. had become something of a pain. Every time Dan and Greg turned on the news, there was "Big Jessie" talking to the press, telling them a story about his son having been wrestling fifty miles away in Dyess, Arkansas, when the murders were committed. And yet Little Jessie kept telling Dan the story he'd told the police. Dan figured the father was just in denial.

One day in early September Dan and Greg were over at the Crittenden County courthouse for a hearing, and Jessie Sr. came to see them. He urged them to go check out the story about Dyess. There were a dozen or so people wrestling with Jessie, the father said, and they would corroborate the story.

Then, on that same day at the courthouse, another thing happened. Dan and Greg ran into the deputy prosecutor, the man who'd told them earlier about the bloody shirt from Misskelley's trailer. There had been a mistake. The blood matched Jessie's. Dan and Greg looked at each other: Damn, they thought. Jessie had told them the truth. Maybe they ought to go interview those people about Dyess.

When they did, the witnesses told them just what Jessie Sr. said they would. Why, Dan remembers wondering, would all these people perjure themselves for Jessie Misskelley?

They went back to Jessie and asked why he hadn't told them about Dyess. "I thought you was cops," he said. "I didn't want to die in that electric chair."

Suddenly the stakes had skyrocketed--and yet their duty, as they now saw it, was greatly complicated by the small matter of their client's confession.

Never mind that some things in it--such as Misskelley's statement that the children had been killed at noon when in fact they'd been in school--hadn't added up. Stidham was becoming more and more suspicious of the confession and the methods that may've prompted it, and also of the mental capacity of his client. He realized that he had to begin speaking to Jessie as though he were a 5-year-old.

The day Misskelley pleaded Not Guilty, a man named Ron Lax approached Dan and Greg and asked if they wanted to have lunch. Lax, a private investigator from Nashville, Tennessee, had been working for Damien's attorneys. Lax "has strong feelings about the death penalty," Stidham says.

During lunch, Lax said, "Have you ever heard of Dr. Richard Ofshe?" He pronounced the name Off-shay. It didn't matter--neither Dan nor Greg knew who he was. Lax went on to explain that Ofshe, a professor of social psychology at Berkeley, was an expert with cults--he'd consulted with a news team that later won a Pulitzer Prize for investigating Synanon. More to the point, he was an expert on brain-washing, police interrogations, and "false confessions," and had worked on the Oregon case of a man who had "confessed" to his daughter's recovered-memory charges of rape. In the Oregon case, he had been hired by the prosecution--and then had decided the man was innocent. He found that he could tell the man stories his daughter was supposed to have told Ofshe--though Ofshe had never even talked with the daughter--and that, after a few hours, the man would confess to those allegations.

Lax sent Stidham a file on Ofshe, including a New Yorker piece on the Oregon case. Reading it, Dan suddenly felt hope. He called Ofshe, who agreed to look at the transcript of Misskelley's confession. When he called Stidham back, he said, in these exact words, "That's the stupidest fucking confession I've ever seen."

The Misskelley trial was scheduled for the first of the year, 1994. On a cold December day, Dan met Ofshe face to face in Paragould. He looked like a professor--bushy gray hair, bushy gray beard. But his voice was soft and soothing. They drove together through the delta to the jail where Misskelley was housed. Dan introduced them and left them alone.

Nervously, he waited. And waited. And waited some more. After four hours, Ofshe emerged from the interview. They got in the car for the drive back to Paragould. Dan held himself in as long as he could, but a couple of blocks from the jail he blurted it out: "Well?"

Ofshe smiled at him. "He's innocent," he said.

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With Ofshe's input, Stidham began to understand how someone like Misskelley could confess to a crime he didn't commit. "Children want to please," Stidham says, "and he's essentially a child. The police are authority figures. When they told him they had a machine that said he was lying, and that if he didn't tell the truth he would fry in the electric chair, he complied. Give me thirty minutes and I could get Jessie Misskelley to confess to shooting JFK."

On the way home, Ofshe suggested Dan get an outside expert to look at Misskelley's failed polygraph test. Dan said he was a little nervous about doing that--what if he didn't like the results? "I'll never forget what Ofshe said next," Stidham says: Don't be afraid, Dan. Your client is innocent.

KIM AND HER girlfriends have always had a Girls Night Out. Once a month they meet at some restaurant in Paragould and treat themselves to a long, leisurely meal without worrying about getting home to take care of husbands and kids.

Mostly, Kim's friends had simply been curious about the case. They found it all very exciting. They wanted details. But on this particular Girls Night Out, one of the girls had something else to say. She wasn't one of Kim's best friends, but Kim liked her. Everybody was chattering away, and suddenly this woman spoke up. "There's one thing I've never understood," she said. "How can Dan defend this boy, knowing what he's done?"

"Well," said Kim, "Dan believes he's innocent." She still remembers how wide the woman's eyes grew.

Dan knew about Warren Holmes, because he had testified in a Florida trial in which the judge had thrown out a defendant's confession. A former Miami police detective, Holmes had also analyzed polygraphs for the Warren Commission in the JFK assassination, had worked on the Martin Luther King Jr. and the Boston Strangler cases.

Dan dialed, and the voice that answered was as unfriendly as Ofshe's voice was soothing. But Dan persisted, spitting out his story as concisely as possible. Three days later, the phone rang in Stidham's office. The voice was friendlier this time. "Dan," said Warren Holmes, "he passed--he had no knowledge of the murders. The only question he flunked was, 'Do you use drugs.'"

In mid-December, Kim dropped by the law offices. While she was waiting to talk with Dan, she overheard one of the secretaries talking with someone on the phone. "No," the secretary said, "we're not taking any more cases unless they can wait until spring."

Oh boy, thought Kim, This is going to be tight.

Sure enough, Dan began mentioning money. Not much, but more than usual. "Just get what we need, and no more," he would tell her. And then he would go back to his law books.

Christmas was hard that year. Dan and Greg took off Christmas Day, but Dan says he really wasn't there. The previous month, the lawyers had tried to convince the Court that Misskelley was retarded, and so was legally incapable of waiving his rights to an attorney before making his statement to police--and also shouldn't be executed if he were to be found guilty. A psychologist had tested him and declared him to have an IQ of 72, which is borderline. Sixty-five or below is retarded. The doctor found that Misskelley was aggressive, insecure, and lived in a kind of schizoid world. "When he's under stress, he rapidly reverts into fantasy and can't tell the difference between fantasy and reality," the psychologist said.

Four days before Christmas, the judge ruled that Misskelley wasn't legally retarded. The state could seek death if he were convicted.

In hearings leading up to trial date, Dan and Greg fought to have Misskelley's 27-page statement to police dropped from the evidence. "Our defense is that it's a false confession and that it was psychologically coerced," Dan told the press.

But three days before the trial, the judge ruled that jurors could hear Misskelley's confession. The judge also ruled that Warren Holmes could criticize Memphis police, but, because lie detector tests aren't admissible in court, Holmes couldn't state his opinions based on polygraph results.

Kim Stidham has always kept a journal. It's her way of sorting herself out from the give and take of every day. This was her entry for Friday, January 28th, 1994:

The Misskelley trial has been hearing testimony for 3 days now. Danny will start calling witnesses Monday. Danny seems to be holding up okay. He's just having a hard time sleeping. I feel like the boys may be showing a little stress. They are pretty clingy to me & Daniel is acting up @ times. I try to keep them from hearing the graphic details, but they pretty much know it all.

Richard Ofshe would testify in the trial, but the judge placed strict rules on what he could and couldn't say. Stidham explains that Ofshe wasn't allowed to base his opinions on talking with Jessie, because Jessie didn't testify. But the bottom line was this: "The judge refused to let Ofshe state that, in his opinion, the confession was a product of coercion by the West Memphis police."

KIM STIDHAM'S JOURNAL--February 4, 1994:

Jessie Misskelley was found guilty of one count 1st degree murder and two counts 2nd degree. Danny's glad he didn't get capital murder, but feels bad that he's in jail at all. He'll appeal. I wonder what the real killer thinks about this....

Dan came home early that Friday--came home right in the middle of the afternoon . He took off his suit and put on jeans, and he didn't go back to the office. He played with the baby, and then with his sons when they got home. After supper, the whole family drove out to Wal-Mart.

While Kim went through the check-out, Dan stayed back and watched their daughter toddle around the displays and run through the aisles. Kim remembers the evening as kind of surreal. While she was checking out, three different people came up and told her they'd seen the news and that they thought Dan had done a good job.

And then Kim would look over her shoulder at the big man playing with the child in the aisles, and it was hard to reconcile that person with the one these women had seen on TV. The TV Dan had seemed so busy, so pressured. The Wal-Mart Dan looked out of place, at loose ends, like he was just passing time.

By April, three months of no billing "hit like a freight train," says Dan. He and Greg had to re-finance their law practice, and Dan had to borrow money for income taxes. Finally, in November 1994, the judge awarded Stidham & Crow \$19 for every one of the 2,000 hours they billed on the case. Their usual rate is \$100 per hour. "It really made me mad," says Kim. "I felt like they were being punished for deciding the kids were innocent and then fighting for them."

But Dan and Greg had problems besides the money. Some things had happened during the pressure of the case, and eventually the partners decided their lives were headed down different paths. In October 1995, they decided to dissolve the partnership. "But we're still great friends," Dan says.

As for the Stidhams, they've had to get to know one another again. Dan still dwells on one awful moment right after the trial, when Daniel wanted his father to play but Dan said he had to go to the office and work on the appeal. "You love Jessie Misskelley more than you love us," Daniel said. Dan broke down and cried. Recently, though, Dan asked Kim and the boys if they thought he'd spent too much time on the case, and they said no--not for what was at stake. "We've all developed more respect for each other," Kim says. "The kids have seen their father work hard for something important. They've learned to stand up for what's right." Not long ago, Dan overheard his boys talking with a neighbor kid. They were telling who their heroes were. "Michael Jordan," said the boy from next door.

Then Daniel spoke up. "My dad," he said.

Not everyone--by a long shot--agrees that Dan is right, of course. Kim says it irritated her to hear what some men said to Dan's father: "Oh, poor Dan. He thinks this kid's innocent, but he's not." Her own mother has been noticeably quiet on the subject, and Kim gets the feeling from her mother's friends that they think Dan is wrong. Finally, says Kim, "I don't know what my friends say when I'm not there."

As for Dan himself, he continues to prepare the appeal he hopes to make before the U.S. Supreme Court. But his biggest post-trial problem has been adjusting to having so much time again. To take up some of the slack, he's started reading John Grisham novels. He says he finds them very much like real life.

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## Attorney investigating famous murder case to speak at FHS

Fort Hays, Kansas

Friday November 18, 2005

By: Amber Saueressig

A murder case is about to be discussed on campus. From 5 to 8 p.m. on Thursday in Rarick Hall, room 201, and from 1 to 6 p.m. on Friday in the Memorial Union Ballroom, nothing but justice studies, investigation clues, depression, anger, sexual molestation and death will be on the tip of everyone's tongue. The past shall come forth again.

In 1993 an incident occurred in West Memphis, Ark. Three boys each eight years old, were found in a ditch full of mud alongside Interstates 40 and 55. Murder was not the only incident recognized. One had been sexually mutilated and each was obviously brutally handled until their death.

For less than a month, police looked for a killer and a reason. Soon, a teenager came forward, claiming that he and two others had completed the killing in relation to a satanic cult.

Dan Stidham was the attorney of the teenager who came forward, Jessie Miskelley. He will speak about the video being shown; he will be emphasizing the twists and turns of the murder case.

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Overall, the video will be discussing a multitude of issues involved in the case, showing the viewers what pros and cons took place.

It will contain information about the case and the processes that took place throughout it. Some that will be included are false confessions, police interrogation techniques, criminal profiling, satanic panic and other legal issues.

<!--[if !vml]--><!--[endif]-->The documentary that will be shown is called Paradise Lost 2: Revelations. It, and similar shows/interviews, have been viewed on HBO (in 1996 and 2000), NBC Nightly News, MSNBC and Court TV's Prime Time Justice. Stidham's biography of the case was a cover story in 1996 in Arkansas Times magazine.

Both events are open to all students, faculty, community, people involved in any form of law enforcement and others. The question to be answered is, "Can an innocent person be convicted?" Walking out with an opinion, feelings about the incident and a better understanding for law, justice, criminal issues and more is hoped to be inevitable. The documentary was shown last night, with the discussion following on Friday.

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