



## AN INTERVIEW WITH **KENNETH L. MAINS** (AISOCC)

By Lee Mellor

**R**ecently, I was graciously invited to join the American Investigative Society of Cold Cases (AISOCC) by its President and Founder, Detective Kenneth L. Mains. One look at the dream team Detective Mains assembled and I enthusiastically accepted. *Serial Killer Quarterly* contributor, Dr. Katherine Ramsland—who penned “Israel Keyes: Building a Mystery” for issue #1 and issue #2’s “Corll, Henley & Brooks: The Game of Boys”—is also a member.

If there were a real world equivalent of the popular television show *Criminal Minds*, then AISOCC may be the closest thing. Though the society is relatively new, if American law enforcement and the general public realize its full potential, then homicide investigation in the United States will benefit

tremendously. For this reason, I have decided to interview Detective Mains to increase awareness of AISOCC and how it could potentially help suffocated police forces breathe new life into an investigation.

Before I begin, I’d like to point out that Ken Mains is a true force to be reckoned with. A marine-turned-detective with experience investigating organized crime (Bloods, Crips, Mafia etc.) illegal narcotics, financial, property, and white collar crimes; robberies, homicides, cold cases, equivocal death and missing persons, Ken also has a BS in Criminal Justice and has completed graduate work in Forensic Criminology with an emphasis on criminal profiling. Could anybody be more suited to the task of fearless leader?

**Lee Mellor: Please describe AISOCC, and explain its mission.**

**Ken Mains:** The American Investigative Society of Cold Cases (AISOCC) offers a professional, free, non-biased review of any cold case brought to us by law enforcement. We have an elite group of experts, the “best of the best”, to assist in solving cold cases.

The American Investigative Society of Cold Cases is a non-profit, volunteer based organization of professional investigators whose sole mission is to assist in solving cold cases. We use crime scene reconstruction, crime scene assessments, inductive/deductive criminal profiling and reasoning to look towards finding resolutions for cold cases. Collectively, we offer advice and suggestions to law enforcement professionals for furthering their cases.

Our Mission is to actively assist law enforcement, criminal justice and legal professionals in the development of cold case investigations by offering professional, interdisciplinary cold case review, educational opportunities, published peer-reviewed research, broad-based societal outreach programming, and by creating supportive resources for families of victims in the pursuit of truth and justice.

**LM: How did you arrive at the idea for AISOCC, and can you explain the process of transforming this idea into a reality?**

**KM:** The American Investigative Society of Cold Cases (AISOCC) was born in March of 2013. I had just solved one cold case and was embarking on another. I was two years into the investigation and I became stuck. I had run out of leads and ideas to further my investigation. Where could I turn for help? It was at that time I decided there needed to be a place for law enforcement to go when they needed assistance on cold cases. So, after speaking with Vidocq co-founder Richard Walter, whom I have great respect for, I created AISOCC.

I envisioned having the absolute best crime fighters in the world under one roof, battling the staggering amount of unsolved cold cases. I wanted the “cream of the crop” and the foremost names in crime fighting. I wanted AISOCC to always be the place where law enforcement goes when they cannot solve a case. I wanted, and I believe I got the very best in the business of investigating and truth seeking. I wanted there to be an organization that brings together the elite of the elite to review and ultimately solve previously unsolvable cold cases. I wanted that organization to be AISOCC.

For a person who loves sports, it was like assembling the greatest team of crime fighters of all-time. I was like a college football recruiter, making my pitch to the talent and hoping they would decide to become a part of my winning tradition and join my organization. Following unsolved mysteries and true crime as I have my entire life, I knew who the best of the best in cold case investigations were already. However, I researched others whom I didn't know off the top of my head but I wanted. I read their

publications; I talked to their peers and read newspaper articles about them. When I found the professionals I felt were qualified as being the best in the business, I began calling, emailing and soliciting them. I wanted to know if they wanted to be a part of this elite and one-of-a-kind cold case group of crime fighting All-Stars dedicated to solving the unsolved. Almost everyone I contacted wanted to be a part of this endeavor because they too cared and were passionate about these cases as I was.

Legendary homicide detective Lt. Joe Kenda, from Investigation Discovery's show *The Homicide Hunter*, joined; then Mark Safarik, famed FBI criminal profiler whom I knew from his television show, *Killer Instinct*. Next was Dr. Henry Lee, the most famous crime fighter and forensic scientist of all time. Then, Jim Clemente, FBI profiler and writer for *Criminal Minds* and Dr. Cyril Wecht who sat on the Warren Commission who investigated the assassination of John F. Kennedy. Next was Dr. Robert Keppel who investigated and obtained a confession from the most famous serial killer of all time, Ted Bundy. Dr. Werner Spitz, the foremost forensic pathologist of our generation, DNA expert Suzanna Ryan, Forensic Psychologist John Liebert, crime scene Reconstructionist Dr. Laura Pettler,

## ... KEN MAINS IS A TRUE FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH.

Legendary FBI profiler Mary Ellen O'Toole, and the list goes on and on. These are just a few of the professionals who became a part of AISOCC and are dedicated to providing expert insight in order to help solve the unsolved.

So, in a very short time, I assembled the absolute very best cold case investigators to tackle these unsolved cases. In my humble opinion, this is without a doubt, the very best cold case organization with the most elite investigators and professionals ever assembled under one roof. Hard work, dedication and desire will let you accomplish the impossible! The victims need a voice. I am not afraid to stand up and be that voice! That's my story and the roots of the foundation for the formation of the American Investigative Society of Cold Cases (AISOCC).

**LM: Currently who belongs to the organization and how is it structured?**

**KM:** Our organization is broken down into various sections and committees. First is the Review Board which look at every single case and it consists of the best in the business, period. They include Lt. Joseph P. Kenda, BA, Mark E. Safarik, MS, Laura Pettler, PhD, Werner Spitz, MD, John A. Liebert, MD, PC, W. Jerry Chisum, BS, Suzanna Ryan, MS, D-ABC, Robert D. Keppel, PhD, Thomas Young, MD, Henry Lee, PhD, Cyril H. Wecht, MD, JD, James Clemente, JD and Mary Ellen O'Toole, PhD.

In addition to this, we have a consulting committee that is broken down into a multitude of disciplines. These consulting members look at cases on a case by case basis, dependent upon the case. We have the Behavioral Science Committee where criminal profilers and behavioral experts such as Anthony Meoli, Chris Kunkle and Ann Burgess work. We have the Forensic Science Committee where DNA, serology, and finger-

## THE VICTIMS NEED A VOICE. I AM NOT AFRAID TO STAND UP AND BE THAT VOICE!

print experts such as “Bode DNA” CEO Michael Cariola, Dave Pauly and Leslie Hammer reside. The Medicolegal Committee is where the forensic pathologists fall under to include Anthony Falsetti and Marianne Hamel. Academia Committee is where scholars who can provide insight on homicide, patterns and research but are not practitioners such as yourself [Lee Mellor] and Silvia Pettem. The Investigative Committee, where centuries of homicide experience reside with former and active homicide detectives, to include Steve Hodel the ‘Black Dahlia Avenger’, David Lambkin and Thomas Hall of the ‘Cold Case Cowboys’. Lastly we have the Legal Committee where attorneys who have experience in cold case prosecution give their advice on how to successfully prosecute these older cases. We have so many experts that it is hard to list everyone.

**LM: Can you tell us which cases AISOCC has looked at so far? Have there been any developments in these cases as a result of AISOCC’s involvement?**

**KM:** AISOCC has reviewed a handful of cases since our inception. We have provided the law enforcement entity that asked for our help with options and suggestions in order to find resolution in those cases. Because they are ongoing cases, I cannot comment on what was found or what the cases are but I will say in every case AISOCC has found something of key importance that was overlooked.

**LM: If you could present any unsolved series of homicides in American history to AISOCC, which case would you choose and why?**

**KM:** There are many “famous” cases that intrigue me, including “closed” serial homicides. I am fascinated by Ted Bundy because he was one of the originals whom a lot of profilers have patterned serial killers after. I am intrigued by the Jeffrey McDonald case and how the investigators came to a resolution in charging him with the murder of his family, and his continued denial of the crime. I am thoroughly baffled by all the missing people there are in the world and how many can probably be attributed to foul play and maybe even serial homicide.

**LM: Ken, you’ve had a long and distinguished career as a homicide investigator. Can you please describe to our readers what this lifestyle is like?**

**KM:** A detective is different than any other position or job. It requires that you be well versed in many disciplines to include behavioral and forensic sciences, investigations, forensic pathology and knowledge of the legal profession.



You, as a detective, see human beings at their most vulnerable position ever in life... and that is death. You, as a detective, have to meet the parents of these dead humans and tell them you will do everything in your power to solve this case. It is a huge responsibility. You look in their eyes, but peripherally you see the pictures of their dead son or daughter on the walls behind them and it makes you feel for the parents. I don't care how 'hard' you think you are, it will always tug at your heart. These family members have a different look in their eyes. They have a look of desperation. They look at you and they put their entire faith in you. They want you to solve this case. How can you not be motivated by that? So in turn, you work that case until you die! That's what I do. I do it for the victims who don't have a voice. I do it for the family and friends of the loved ones because that is what Detectives do.

**LM: What are the challenges you face both professionally and personally?**

**KM:** The challenges of cold case investigations and homicides are plentiful, but one is always head and shoulders above the rest: turning it off. Going to bed at night and continually thinking of ways to solve the case or who may have done it or what you could be doing better to solve the case. For me, personally, you never turn that off. I think all great homicide detectives are like that. You never turn it off and you can't separate your personal life from work. Those victims stay with me when I am eating dinner with my family. The crime stays with me when I am grocery shopping, which is just how it is. I just can't turn it off.

**LM: What do you consider to be the highlight of your career?**

**KM:** There are so many things that have happened during my career that I just am humbled by. It isn't the awards of 'Officer of the Year' plaques or the newspaper articles or anything like that. It is the respect shown to me by other great 'crimefighters'. When Dr. Werner Spitz tells me that he respects me because of my knowledge about cold case investigations or when Vincent Bugliosi sends me a hand written letter praising my efforts, those are the accolades I will remember and forever cherish.

Yet, perhaps the most gratifying is when a homicide victim's sister or mother comes to you and say publicly, "There is no one else in the world I'd rather have investigating our loved one's death than you." There isn't a better professional compliment I could get.

**LM: Have you ever worked a serial homicide case?**

**KM:** I have reviewed past cases, but I have not investigated an active serial case. Or I have and just don't know it.

**LM: Let's play politician for a minute. If you were allowed to make any alterations to the way police investigations and the criminal justice system are currently funded, managed and conducted in modern America, what would you change, and why?**

**KM:** That is too broad so I will narrow it down to cold cases. I would love to have one institute to investigate cold cases. Detectives have far too much going on actively to work these cold cases. That is why they become cold to begin with. What people don't realize when they [Detectives] get assigned a murder case, their other work doesn't stop. They continually have robberies, abductions, property crime, embezzlements and other crime that continue to come onto their desks. So I would

**... AS A DETECTIVE, SEE HUMAN BEINGS AT THEIR MOST VULNERABLE POSITION EVER IN LIFE... AND THAT IS DEATH.**

create a professional cold case institute, that's sole purpose is to investigate cold cases for law enforcement. This institute would be funded by the federal government, grants, donations, etc. and would be made up of Behavioral Sciences, Forensic Sciences, Academia, Legal, Medicolegal and investigations (sound familiar)? That is my goal at AISOCC: to be that institute where we conduct investigations, conduct forensic testing, teach law enforcement and prosecute these cold cases. This one entity would free up investigators from other departments and allow us to work on the cold case backlog.

**LM: Is there anything else you'd like to tell our readers?**

**KM:** Yes! There is good and evil in this world, and most of the time evil will win, especially in the justice system. The justice system is set up that way by having the prosecution prove a case beyond a reasonable doubt. However, eventually, as in all things, good will triumph over evil. So, just because the bad guys have gotten away with it for years and years, doesn't mean that evil prevailed. AISOCC is here to even the playing field and hold the responsible party(s) accountable for their deeds. AISOCC is like a group of crime fighting superheroes and we have come to do battle against the murders, rapists and other horrendous villains of the world. It is good vs evil in the purest sense. Good will reign supreme and justice will prevail because of the dedicated crime fighters and truth seekers of The American Investigative Society of Cold Cases! So sleep tight America, AISOCC is watching your backs!