

Preface

For months and months, the search for a single mom's missing child named Caylee, grips our nation, and doubts rise she can be found alive. After five months of searching, Caylee Anthony's body is found a block from her mother's home. The arrest and trial of Casey Anthony for the murder of her two-year-old daughter dominates news for three years. The court of public opinion demands justice, so does the law.

Now, on the anniversary of her "the trial of the century" {*Time* magazine}, a fresh look in to the official record by an award-winning investigative journalist adds new meaning to the term "value-added" in the documentary landscape. This 9hour series rips open the unanswered mystery of who killed Caylee Anthony, and why. A journalist's reporting, sourced exclusively with evidence from the files of prosecutors in Orlando's Ninth Judicial Circuit, unveils for the first time the psyche and motivations of a woman America learns to hate.

This ground-breaking documentary carries the viewer along on a wild ride that begins with the reporter's pull on a tiny string of new information. The investigation takes us on an incredible journey of discovery that reveals a family racked by incest, lies, jealousy, and an existential fear their secrets will surface at any moment into the national conversation. In this sick family environment, tragically, the life of an innocent two-year-old child is expendable. Viewers are immersed in evidence that confirms who in the Anthony family hides the death of two-year-old Caylee.

For the first time, the complete story of the Casey Anthony drama is told, and the conflicted relationships within her family are revealed. It's one mind-blowing revelation after another that takes us inside prosecutors' files to learn there is child abuse in the Anthony home on Hopespring Drive. Then she is arrested by her mother, Cindy.

Beginning with the news of Casey Anthony's arrest, Nancy Grace leads a TV narrative for three years that stirs the public's thirst for vengeance in America's court of public opinion. The Casey Anthony trial is a circus that calls up scenes from the Roman Coliseum where

crowds fight among themselves for seats and demand death for helpless victims in their arena, not to serve justice, but for their own entertainment.

During the trial, George and Cindy Anthony sit beside each other in the courtroom and hold hands. As images of the trial are live streamed from the courtroom, the new evidence gives rise to a new question: Do the Anthony parents expect their daughter will be sentenced to die for a crime for which she is the ultimate victim: infanticide? When the jury finds Casey Anthony not guilty, the foreman reveals in a national interview they believed another member of the Anthony family is the likely killer of Caylee.

There is more.



Casey Anthony with Caylee just after Caylee's birth August, 2005.

The Invisible Stranger

Chapter 1

George & Cindy Anthony Leave Ohio

Rick {Brother of Cindy} Quote: *"Cindy thought George would inherit his dad's business."*

When their names, "George and Cindy Anthony" are spoken today, after more than 30 years of marriage, a whole host of descriptions and opinions rush to the surface. At the beginning of my reporting into the trial of their daughter, here is what I found one news blog commenter writing in reaction to the many news stories about the Anthony family:

"Casey is at the very least complicit in the death of her child and it appears her parents are torn over whether they should attempt to help their daughter or allow justice to be done for their granddaughter. Attention Mr. & Mrs. Anthony: Casey probably stopped being the little girl you thought you knew long before she killed her child. It's time to let her take the punishment like a grown-up."

At the outset of my inquiry, I found *Time* magazine's headline story compelling: Trial of the Century. Their reporter wrote, *"Virtually no one doubts that Anthony was involved in her*

child's death," and then he added, "but if you see murder in Casey Anthony's big brown eyes during a live feed of her trial, you can tell all the world how delectable you will find her execution."

I was captivated by these two narratives that presumed the guilt of a defendant who was ultimately acquitted. My assessment of the public's understanding of the Casey Anthony story started with a concern that the public consensus perspective was informed by a strongly one-sided media narrative. Good journalists know that a one-sided narrative is incomplete.

Statements from the court record referenced throughout *The Stranger Inside, Casey Anthony*, chronicles for readers my own personal journey of discovery toward a balanced narrative. We will take this journey together, although there is no guarantee where our journey will lead us. Welcome to *"The Stranger Inside."*

A balanced narrative, it seems to me, should start at the beginning, which is to say, with the parents of Casey Anthony, George and Cindy, and their home town of Warren, Ohio. As the narrative unfolds, we share a shocking discovery about the Anthony family that surfaces often throughout the story surrounding the death of their innocent two-year-old grandchild, Caylee Marie Anthony. We discover previously unreported roles that George and Cindy played in that tragedy and what they each knew but did not tell detectives investigating the "Trial of the Century," The trial that captured the attention and concerns of a nation in 2011.

There is a rich resource of social media bloggers who wrote about the father of Casey Anthony: *"George Anthony, poor soul, he can't bear the loss of his granddaughter and I can't blame him. He must have been more of a father to that poor little girl than anyone else in this*

world. The death of a child is certainly the worst thing a parent or grandparent can experience. God rest her soul."

There is more to George's story, much more, than these bloggers' portrayals of him as a grieving grandfather. In fact, we learn early on, the public's perceptions of the Anthony family as a whole are not at all real, not even close.

Soon after George's birth in 1951 his father, Lee, moved the family to Warren, Ohio, a little town tucked into the northeast corner of the state, very close to Pennsylvania's border. His ancestral heritage has Italian and Irish roots. His father, Lee Anthony, along with his mother Ruth, were well known fixtures in the Warren community. George's family eventually totaled six. George has three sisters: Sandy, Kathy and Ruth.

For more than three decades, Lee ran Anthony's Used Car Sales in downtown Warren. He made a comfortable living. George's youngest sister, Ruth, married a local man who did well with his own car business in the same little Ohio town. I learned George himself, tried selling cars after learning the ropes by working with his father after he quit his job as a deputy sheriff for Trumbull County. George's career-move into entrepreneurship proved to be short lived and yielded a surprising result, as I discovered. But I am getting ahead of the story as it revealed itself to this reporter.

George graduated high school in 1970 and dated a classmate named Terry Rosenberger. Terry is remembered as a short, petite, blond girl who continued seeing him after graduation as he enrolled into Youngstown State University, a few miles southeast of Warren.

A couple years later, aged 21 and still a college student, George married Terry. His interest in college {not surprisingly} waned at about that time and he was very much on the alert for opportunities to take his life in some direction other than college. The Trumbull County Sheriff's Department was looking for deputies and he submitted his application on January 14, 1975. To his surprise, he soon received an invitation to pin a sheriff's deputy badge onto his chest. His initial assignment was uniformed police work. The department gave him a tryout investigating stolen cars, and a few homicides, but then he was shortly reassigned back into uniformed police work, which he did for the remainder of his 11-year police career.

His marriage to Terry was plagued with difficulties. They were unable to start a family and the couple seemed to acquire new burdens daily. Terry had serious doubts about his commitment to their relationship. After a few years, her concerns evolved into a visceral distrust. George lied constantly, and Terry must have felt he disrespected her as well.

George Anthony's brother-in-law: *"My sister, Terry, was married to George Anthony during the mid to late 70's. They dated all through high school and were married for about seven years of not so wonderful wedding bliss. She can tell you that George Anthony was a habitual liar. He had to always fabricate his stories, constantly lying; that was the main reason they divorced."*

In 1979, their seven-year marriage played itself out into a mutual consent divorce. Many years later, Terry told a national TV audience, George seemed to have a gene that made him lie about virtually everything.

Two years later, George married another local Warren, Ohio girl, Cindy Plesea {pronounced place-ya}. Cindy was born June 5, 1958, in Warren. Her paternal grandparents were Romanian immigrants. Her father, Alex Plesea, was a proud first generation American and World War II veteran.

The Plesea's were a family that kept to themselves, rarely talking to neighbors. What happened in the Plesea's little midwestern home stayed within their bungalow's four walls. The area's smoke stacks from steel mills and supply chain companies were rapidly disappearing. In the Plesea home, poverty was a stern teacher that admonished Cindy and the entire family to turn a nickel over twice before spending it. Cindy seemed to be marked as a 1970's child growing up in a dying industrial community.

Financial uncertainty was the family's constant companion. For five of the six Pleseas, scratching for enough money to survive seemed to dilute personal ambitions. Cindy was the sixth Plesea child and she was quite different. The family's hardscrabble environment motivated her to a degree like none of her siblings. The security of a good job became a personal priority she embraced and kept all her life. As I discovered, there was nothing in the world Cindy would let come between her and her drive for financial security.

In 1976, she was the last of her family to graduate as a Harding Raider from the only high school in Warren. It was named, appropriately it seems, Warren G. Harding High School. Many of her high school memories are from the school's Latin Club. Those of a certain age will recall

those students who embraced Latin studies generally were considered serious and intelligent students. Cindy was both.

She emerged from her high school experience with a strong work ethic. Her personality was grounded by an iron will that was always firmly in evidence. As she approached high school graduation, she found no encouragement from her parents that she should entertain hopes of enrolling into college. She learned what it meant to be on her own from the day of graduation. That was no problem for Cindy who responded to challenges fortified from a deep personal ambition to leave the poverty of her childhood a distant memory.

Her mindset was firmly fixed and looking toward a future that was of her own making. Her competitiveness was never far below the surface. It drew exposure unmistakably and often during multiple challenges in her life. Social media commentary will one day anoint her as the alpha female leader of the Anthony family.

After graduating Harding High a few days past her eighteenth birthday, she enrolled directly into a three-year RN nursing program, paying her own tuition at Trumbull County Memorial Hospital. In 1979, she graduated near the top of her class with an RN certification. She focused on pediatrics in nursing school and later broadened her career field into general nursing. Two years after receiving her RN certification, she went to work for a local orthopedic surgeon.

It seems destiny was at work drawing the futures of George and Cindy together. In 1979, the year George and Terry divorced, they opened a new chapter in their lives. George was

seven years her senior and single again; Cindy, just twenty-one, was stepping into a long, anticipated career in nursing.

Within a few months, George's sister, Kathy, was hospitalized at Trumbull Memorial. Cindy drew the assignment as her nurse and on a visit by George to see his sister the two met in Kathy's room. Their encounter generated a get acquainted date, and a whirlwind courtship. The following year they married in the nearby community of Niles, Ohio.

Her ambition carried her from the hospital career environment of Trumbull Memorial to a head nursing position with the top private clinic in town, Sterle Orthopedic clinic. This 23-year-old nurse was justifiably proud of her status. She was just two years out of nursing school and already had a top nursing position. Just married to a sheriff's deputy in the little town where she grew up, she carried a swell of confidence that was not missed by her nurse colleagues. She seemed to have no doubts she was on a path that would leave the insecurities and poverty of her little frame house in Warren far behind.

In the first Spring of her marriage, Ms. George Anthony learned she was pregnant. November 18, 1982, the birth of her son, Lee, marked a glorious next step forward into this young woman's future. She embraced the challenges of being a new mother and a career nurse. The economic reality in her Warren, Ohio community meant plenty of other nurses would be waiting to step into the career position she claimed for herself at Oscar Sterle's orthopedic practice. She never doubted the need to work hard to protect her career. This pretty brunette, now a first-time mother, told Dr. Sterle she would return to the clinic fulltime immediately after Lee's birth. She wanted it all. The importance of protecting what she has is a responsibility never lost upon Cindy.

Georgee enjoyed being a deputy and playing the part of a law enforcer. He liked patrolling the little communities around Warren and the status that came with his police job. According to his first wife, his law enforcement uniform was a mask he used to hide behind.

Three years into his second marriage and despite having an infant son to provide for, George abruptly turned in his badge to the Trumbull County Sheriff's department on January 28, 1984. Cindy was shocked to learn she was suddenly the family's primary source of support. That was a role she kept all her life as the wife of George Anthony. Some of the defining moments in Cindy's marriage throughout the years that followed involved choices she made when faced with doubts and uncertainty George introduced into her world. The Anthony's ultimately will face decisions no one could have anticipated for this small-town nurse and her former deputy sheriff husband.

One of the questions from the Anthony's early years in Ohio is why did George suddenly quit the sheriff's department? Inquiries to the Trumbull County sheriff were met with the press release that his records were destroyed in a flood. No one in the department has anything to say about former Deputy, George Anthony.

George didn't have any good options for a new job. He was by his own choice, an out of work, ex-cop. Cindy's marital model developed from an understanding she gained early in her marriage. The family needed a decision maker, and George's unpredictable behavior clearly excluded him. Cindy talked to him encouragingly about how well his brother-in-law, Chuck Eddy, was doing with a car lot business in Warren. His sister, Ruth, also married a guy with natural sales ability and his car sales business eventually rivaled George's father's success.

As Cindy surveyed her options in the little Ohio community, she saw a chance to put George into a position where he could take over his father's lucrative car business, and she wasted no time pulling strings to make that happen. Cindy's brother, Rick, recalls her thought processes and strategy after George unexpectedly quit his police job.

Rick Plesea {Cindy's brother}: *"Cindy wanted George to go into the car business with his dad. Cindy thought having a car dealership would make them a lot of money. His dad was going to retire in a few years."*

She convinced George to ask his father for a job selling cars at Anthony's Auto Sales. The couple shared a private anticipation that within a few short years George could take over his dad's cash cow. Like many used car lots, Anthony's Auto Sales had a tiny trailer for an office, with not much elbow room. Desks, chairs and filing cabinets intruded on what little space there was to walk around, stand, or talk with each other. There was one panoramic window offering father and son a broad lens to view the inventory of cars spread out in front of them.

The tiny office space generated constant friction between them however, usually over how to run the business. George was impatient, eager to take decisions that would mark a transition from Lee's operation to his own. Lee resisted his son's aggressive maneuvers to assert control; after all, Lee built the business from scratch 30 years ago. Before long, their close working relationship resurrected old, suppressed grievances between them. Then, George had a bad day. Cindy's brother, Rick, once again gives us a glimpse into what transpired.

Quote Rick Pleasea: *“Within the first year they got into a fight at the lot and George put his father through a plate glass window.”*

Truthfully, his father might have been killed. George was close to being arrested by his former colleagues in the sheriff’s department. The charge could have been attempted murder. Lee told his son to please just go away. Once again unemployed, after turning in his badge with no job prospects, he seemed to some observers as reckless. Indeed, for the rest of his life George will be unable to keep a job for long and he never develops career expectations.

The fight with his father elevated him into a community-wide subject for gossip. Cindy felt the embarrassment deeply especially because she was the one expected to put out marriage fires though she wasn’t responsible for causing them. When she heard about the fight at her father-in-law’s business, she must have felt crushed. One can imagine Cindy feeling on some days as though the whispers about George grew to a deafening roar. She no-doubt had moments where she felt like his issues were diminishing her as well.

All of this was a major down side for Cindy’s marriage. Her husband's impulses were surfacing as an item of public gossip. She never anticipated George’s issues could break out of their large, extended family into the broader, gossipy community in her small Ohio hometown. Just as significant for Cindy, the nurses at Sterle’s clinic could leverage George’s scandals against her. The public perception of Cindy’s husband plunged from law enforcement officer, to out-of-work ex-cop, and now someone who assaulted his own father. She took time to plan. Ultimately, she doubled down on her investment in the marriage. Cindy’s decision is always “go for broke.”

This second marital crisis started a learning process for Cindy that taught her how to react and protect her personal security when her husband's impulsive nature introduced serious risk into her world. Her crisis management skills found ways to leverage resources and work around obstacles that transformed difficult situations into opportunity.

Aggravating the financial issues Cindy was dealing with from of an out-of-work husband, on March 19, 1986, she gave birth to a daughter named Casey Marie. It was an easy pregnancy, but the addition of her second child during this latest family crisis was a complicating economic factor in the Anthony home.

George was out of work, and with two children, her own career security became more of a concern. Underlying George's second job crisis was an absence of career ambitions. Thoughts about supporting his wife and children got trumped by something in him that made him surrender to irrepressible impulses. Cindy fought to salvage her future from her husband's latest, and this time, violent incident.

Cindy's son, Lee, was turning five, and Casey was just two. Away from the clinic, Cindy took time to stay at home as a brief refuge to bring her emotions under control. In retrospect, she recalled, "*It was beautiful.*" She used the time to plan. She came up with an idea to apply for a bank loan against their house and use the money as a stake for George to start his own car business. The couple no doubt found comfort from their new ground rule that put Cindy in charge of planning the important decisions in their marriage. This first business investment revealed ambitious expectations from Cindy. They selected a site very close to Lee's business

and took some pleasure by poking a finger in the old man's eye with a competing location virtually next door to Lee's thriving sales lot. Cindy approved the site and name on the sign, "George Anthony's Car Sales." She found comfort by beginning to let herself hope George's new business would be a success.

She would soon be in for another disappointment. All she knew, everything George told her was that his new business was doing well. She received positive feedback week in and week out. Then suddenly George rocked her world again. In little more than a year all the bank money she borrowed for his car business was lost. Cindy faced bankruptcy with the likelihood that this time she would lose their home to bank foreclosure. The Anthony's literally had nothing left.

Cindy's marital history seems shaped by the confluence of George's need for emergency lifelines and her commitment to keep her marriage to him intact. For as long as she could, Cindy continued making two mortgage payments on their modest home from her salary at the clinic. Income she depended on from George's car sales business was missing. Now, each passing month meant an extra bite out of her paycheck. She found herself facing a looming financial and emotional disaster.

Her decision to marry George was made with the expectation of a dual income marriage and a partner to help raise their two children. Cindy's choice to stay with George seemed like a security blanket of sorts, to protect her career and her independence. There may have been other reasons to stay married to George. Perhaps she found his impulsive nature appealing. Maybe an edgy relationship provided release from the restrictive discipline she carried with her

from her family's childhood poverty in Warren. His temper, recklessness, and secretiveness may have been a mischievous attraction for Cindy. What is certain is that she is resourceful; she is, for sure, a fighter.

As she battled to keep her emotions under control, she must have found herself reflecting on George's impulsive decision to resign as a deputy, his near arrest after a fight with his father, and now his failed business and as a result – her own looming personal bankruptcy. With the added burden of two young children to raise, Cindy must have felt pushed to her emotional limits. The new reality for her was that she had nothing left, except burdens from her marriage. She sought legal advice to protect what little she could from the looming bankruptcy. Inevitably the bank foreclosed on their loan; her little home with a picket fence in her hometown was gone.

In the Spring of that year, 1989, she surveyed her options. Cindy's parents, Alex and Shirley, moved away from Warren and settled into a little town north of Orlando, Florida called Mt. Dora. Staying in her little Ohio hometown was no longer an attractive choice. George's behavior burned bridges in the community. Her personal credit was ruined, and her career status at the clinic must have seemed hopeless. How could she keep her job as lead-nurse at the orthopedic clinic after the bank threw her out of her own house?

As things shook out, the Ohio steel town proved to be a crucible that took a young, malleable Cindy Plesea and forged her into Cindy Anthony, a woman with an iron will. She was at that moment, a remarkably confident and capable woman who began planning a way out of the crisis that came from George's serial threats to her security.

Bankruptcy left the Anthonys virtually penniless. Her first move was to cultivate a closer relationship with Rick, her brother. She talked him into loaning her \$10,000 cash. Her adroit business skills were nothing short of remarkable. In a short time, she bought a new home in Florida despite bad credit. She convinced the Sunshine State home sellers to let her assume their home's existing mortgage and she negotiated a low down-payment.

Next, she secured a nursing position at a top medical clinic in Orlando, the Jewett Orthopedic Clinic. Jewett counted the Orlando Magic basketball team among its high-profile clients. She needed to find a job for George in Orlando, so she placed him at the arena where the Orlando Magic pro basketball team played. He took a minimum wage security guard's job. All of this she managed to accomplish while still living in the little hamlet of Warren, Ohio, and hearing sounds from a proverbial wolf at her door.

It seems reasonable to conclude that Cindy, alpha family leader, sensed George morph into her omega. His emotions seemed to rise and fall in cycles. When his impulsive behavior caused problems, he had the capacity to change into a meek, almost passive soul. Cindy had a strategy to save herself {and her marriage} from the failures he seemed to constantly introduce into her life. He offered no challenge to Cindy's decision to move the family to Florida. The thing about George is, no one can be sure what seeds were growing inside of him that could suddenly blossom into the next crisis.

