

SPECIAL REPORT 'More Loyal to him than my own family' Killer of mom, dad, sister talks about Jack Walls

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(Editor's note: This is the third and final article in a series about Charles "Jack" Walls III, a former Boy Scout leader in Lonoke who was convicted in 1998 of raping six boys. It details the life of Heath Stocks of Lonoke, a Boy Scout who was sexually abused by Walls for years.)

On the evening of Jan. 17, 1997, Heath Stocks was on his knees in the living room of his parents' Lonoke home with the barrel of a loaded .45-caliber semiautomatic pistol in his mouth.

About 10:30 p.m., his 18-year-old sister, Heather, arrived home. He told her to leave, but she didn't. About two minutes later, their parents, Joe and Barbara Stocks, returned home.

"I remember seeing the back of my mom and my dad, and as soon as I saw my dad, the gun came out of my mouth and 'pow.' I remember seeing my sister in the kitchen. She had the phone in her hand. I don't remember her pushing any buttons. ... I remember looking at my sister and I knew she was gone. All of them were lying on the floor," he said during a recent interview at the Cummins Unit of the Department of Correction.

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Today, Stocks is spending the rest of his life in prison for the murders of his parents and sister.

The deaths shocked the small town of Lonoke. Joe and Barbara Stocks were lifelong residents of the town and well respected. Heather was a pretty and intelligent girl who was popular at school. She also loved her brother, according to poems she had written.

Why would Heath Stocks -- an Eagle Scout, a former football player on a state championship team and an otherwise normal young man -- kill his entire family? No one at the time could understand why.

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It was late afternoon on Jan. 17, 1997, at the Stocks home.

Barbara Stocks was in the kitchen about 4:30 p.m. preparing steak and mushrooms in a crockpot. She and Heather, a cheerleader at Lonoke High School, were preparing to go to a basketball game at the school.

Heath Stocks, then 20, had arrived home earlier that day from Arkadelphia. He had attended Henderson State University in the fall but had quit because of the family's recent financial difficulties and the fact he had "flunked out."

He had been staying with friends in Arkadelphia during the week and had returned home for the weekend.

"Mom said that she'd left me a note saying that Grandmother and Grandfather and everybody and Uncle J wanted me to go out and eat with them," he said during the prison interview.

Heath Stocks left about 5:30 p.m. for dinner with his grandparents, Martin and Dorothy Stocks of Lonoke; his aunt, Bonnie Moody of Cabot; and James T. Stocks of California, Heath's "Uncle J" and Martin Stocks' brother.

The group drove to the Western Sizzlin restaurant in nearby Jacksonville. During the meal, family members remember Heath Stocks talking about some problems.

Recently, he had received a ticket for driving while intoxicated and had been charged with terroristic threatening for confronting a man who had reportedly stolen Stocks' motorcycle helmet. The two charges were going to result in about \$3,500 in fines.

But worse, Stocks was concerned that the charges would keep him out of the Army, which he was planning to join.

He also was concerned that while his parents knew about the DWI charge, they did not know the full extent of the charges against him or how much it was going to cost.

The evening ended when the group returned to Dorothy and Martin Stocks' home, which was near the home of Heath Stocks' family.

While Heath Stocks appeared to be happy when he left, he would later tell police that after he arrived home and he started "getting mad."

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"I was just watching TV. ... I started thinking about all the trouble my dad and I were having, and I started crying and I started getting mad," he said in a statement to police. "I got a .45-caliber automatic pistol that my dad kept in his gun cabinet and another clip. I put that extra clip in my pocket."

Stocks told police he went through the house pulling drawers out of cabinets and chests, spilling the contents onto the floors. "I carried the gun with me as I went from room to room, messing up the house," he said. "All the time I was doing this, I kept thinking and kept getting mad."

"After I messed up the house, I tried to kill myself. I put the barrel of the gun in my mouth, but I couldn't pull the trigger. I did this twice."

About 10:15 p.m., Joe and Barbara Stocks stopped by Martin and Dorothy Stocks' house to say goodbye to James Stocks. Martin Stocks mentioned to his son the dinner conversation about Heath's fines.

"He [Joe] became very angry," James Stocks said. "And he stated that he was not going to pay the fines for Heath, that he could just stay in jail."

Money was a sore point for the family at the time. Joe Stocks had been injured several months earlier and had only recently returned to his job driving a truck. The family was still recovering financially from the weeks he had been out of work.

About 10:30 p.m., more than two hours after he had returned home, Stocks was kneeling on the living room floor with the barrel of a gun in his mouth when his sister, Heather, came through the carport door.

When she saw the mess her brother had made of the house, "she was going to call 911 because she thought someone had broke in to the house," Heath Stocks said.

"I told her to leave. She hung up the phone," he said, but she did not leave.

About two minutes later, Joe and Barbara Stocks came home.

"At this time, mom and dad came in the carport door. They both saw how the house was messed up, and I think Mom said call 911," Stocks said in a statement given to Steve Finch of the Lonoke County sheriff's office after the shooting. "I saw Dad with the phone in his hand and I started shooting. I shot my dad first, and I just kept on shooting until Mom, Dad and Heather were all on the floor. I remember shooting my dad in the head after he was on the floor, but I don't remember shooting the others after they were down."

When the shooting was over, his parents and sister were dead. Heath Stocks said he immediately regretted the act. "I tried to bring them back. ... I asked God to bring them back, but He wouldn't."

Stocks said he does not remember everything that happened during the two hours he waited for his family to return home.

"You have to know, if I could remember the details, I would tell you," he said during the prison interview. "I just don't remember. I don't remember the statement I gave to police. I remember that I wasn't upset when I left my grandmother's house. I was fine until I got home."

"I can remember getting up off the couch and getting the gun. I remember getting on my knees on the living room floor and sticking the gun in my mouth."

The day after the murders, police officers found Heath Stocks in Arkadelphia at a friend's apartment. They told him about the deaths and he returned to Lonoke with them. After hours of talking to the police, Heath Stocks admitted he killed his family.

Police also recovered jewelry that Stocks took from the family home and a pair of gloves that he apparently wore when the shootings took place.

Jack Walls of Lonoke, a friend of the family and a well-known and respected Boy Scout leader in the community, volunteered to "house watch" the Stocks' home so no one would vandalize it, according to Dorothy Stocks. "Jack spent at least one night there after the murders," she said.

The remaining members of the Stocks family and their friends were reeling in the days that followed.

"When all of this happened, we were devastated as a family. The police asked to meet with everyone. They did this at a house at Greers Ferry Lake that Barbara and Joe were considering buying," Dorothy Stocks said.

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"Jack Walls attended that, too. The first question he asked was, 'Did Heath implicate anybody in the murders when he was arrested?'"

Walls also was one of the first to visit Heath Stocks in the Lonoke County jail, where he was being held without bond. No one thought the visit was unusual; after all, Walls had been Stocks' Boy Scout leader for years.

In June 1997, before he could be brought to trial, Heath Stocks pleaded guilty to three counts of murder and was sentenced to life in prison. Up to that time, no one had asked Stocks about what might have precipitated such anger towards his family.

But nearly a year later, a Methodist Church minister would tell a hushed courtroom that he knew there was something wrong at the Stocks' house but did not come forward because the conversations he had were "privileged."

Dorothy Stocks said she did not know what was wrong with her grandson at the time of the murders.

"Heath was a wonderful boy. We knew there was something troubling him for a while, but we couldn't figure out what it was," she said. "I just knew, along with our family and including Barbara's mother, that it wasn't Heath, not the boy we knew, that pulled the trigger, and we weren't going to abandon him. Joe, Barbara and Heather wouldn't have wanted us to do that."

Two months after Heath Stocks reported to the Department of Correction, the town, which was still recovering from the loss of the Stocks family, was struck another blow which, at first, seemed unrelated to the Stocks murders.

In late July 1997, a young Lonoke boy told his parents and the police that Jack Walls, his Boy Scout leader, had been sexually molesting him for several years.

As the story unfolded and local police began investigating the allegations, a horrifying story emerged. After scores of interviews, authorities learned that Charles "Jack" Walls III, now 52 years old, had sexually abused an estimated 100 to 150 boys for about 30 years.

During this 30-year period, none of the victims had ever spoken up, with the exception of the first known victim, who told his father in 1969 that Walls solicited sex from him, and Doug Hogan, who told authorities in 1992 that Walls had solicited sex from him.

Other than Hogan's family and a few friends, no one believed Doug Hogan's claim involving Walls. Hogan, who was 16 at the time, claimed that Walls solicited sex from him during a Boy Scout camp out at the Walls' family farm just outside Lonoke.

Although the incident was reported to the state Department of Human Services' Child Abuse Hotline, the Arkansas State Police and the Lonoke County prosecuting attorney, no one would find that Walls did anything wrong, even though two Boy Scouts told a state police criminal investigator that Walls admitted to them that he had solicited sex from Hogan.

At the time, the only agency that took any action against Walls was the Quapaw Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America in Little Rock.

On Jan. 5, 1993, the council dismissed Walls as a volunteer Scout leader based on Hogan's allegations. Walls appealed the decision, but the council's decision was firm.

Even though his status in Scouting had been revoked, Walls told few people about the council's decision and continued many of his Scouting activities.

With the apparent support of other area Scout leaders, Walls attended the Philmont Scout Ranch in Cimarron, N.M., in June 1993, and posed as Joe Stocks, the identity he had assumed to gain entrance to the ranch. The other Scout leaders and Boy Scouts who went on the trip said nothing about Walls' assumed identity.

"He never really quit Scouting," Stocks said. "He was still doing things like going to Philmont, taking us on camp outs at his father's farm and he was doing it with all of our parents' blessings, even though by that time most of them knew he had been kicked out of Boy Scouts."

"When my dad heard about Doug Hogan's allegations, he said, 'No way. That's a bunch of bull. Jack would never do anything like that.' And Daddy never asked me about it. As far as I know, none of the parents asked their sons about it."

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"Everybody knew Jack, and everybody thought he was the best thing that ever happened for the boys of Lonoke. When the fathers were too busy or out of town, it was Jack who would take care of their boys."

As the Lonoke police investigation continued, the name of Heath Stocks, a Scout and a member of the elite Order of the Arrow and the Brotherhood, started coming up in interviews with other victims.

An Arkansas State Police investigator telephoned Stocks at the Cummins Unit and asked whether Walls had ever molested him. Stocks said Walls had not.

Later, Lonoke Police Chief Charles Peckat went to the prison and interviewed Stocks in person. It was then that Stocks finally admitted he had been sexually assaulted by Walls since Stocks was 10 years old.

During a Jan 22, 1998, victim impact hearing, Heath Stocks testified to a hushed courtroom that Walls had trained him "to kill people." Stocks also told the court that Walls had ordered him to kill his family after discovering that Stocks had told his mother and sister about their relationship.

"[Walls said] take care of the problem. ... If you've got a problem, kill it," Stocks testified.

The Rev. Robert Marble, minister of Concord Methodist Church, where the Stocks family were members, told the court that Barbara Stocks had come to him twice and told him that she knew of her son's sexual relationship with Walls. The last time he talked to Barbara Stocks was Jan. 8, 1997.

"She came in, in total fear of what she had seen and the confrontation with Heath," Marble told the court, referring to Barbara Stocks' saying she had caught her son in bed with Walls and Heath Stocks' admission to his mother that he had a sexual relationship with Walls.

On Jan. 8, 1997, Marble said Barbara Stocks told him that "we need to talk." They never had that talk; nine days later she was murdered.

Marble testified that he went to jail to visit Heath Stocks after he was arrested and visited Stocks a second time at the State Hospital in Little Rock where Stocks was undergoing a psychiatric evaluation.

"He didn't tell me anything about their [Heath Stocks and Jack Walls] relationship, other than the fact that when I asked him... why, he said, 'Jack told me to do it' on both occasions... to kill his family."

Marble told the court he never came forward because he believed his conversations with Barbara and Heath Stocks were "privileged."

Walls pleaded guilty to five counts of rape and no contest to the rape of Heath Stocks. He was sentenced to four life sentences, one of which was for Heath Stocks; and two 40-year sentences.

Those sentences were recently overturned by the state Supreme Court because, among other things, Circuit-Chancery Judge Lance Hanshaw of Lonoke said during sentencing that "I do not have to believe Heath Stocks' testimony to know that he was your finest creation, and perhaps most vulnerable victim, and to know that he became what you taught him to be. I only know that, in the very least, you are indirectly responsible for the deaths of Joe, Barbara and Heather Stocks."

Walls has never made a statement to police. He did make a statement in court in which he apologized to the victims and their families.

"... At this time, words of apology would ring somewhat hollow, but I wish there was something I could do or say to these victims and my family that would somehow relieve some of the pain and suffering I've done," he said. "I wish that there had been something or some kind of help for people like me before the fact instead of always after."

Walls has not publicly acknowledged Stocks' claims that Walls played a role in the murders of his family.

"He has denied to us that he had anything to do with those murders," said Jon Johnson of Jacksonville, one of Walls' attorneys. "We can't say anything more than that right now because of the appeal of his sentences. Once we get past that, we will have something to say, and Jack might talk as well."

Police said they never investigated Stocks' allegations.

"It was Heath Stocks' word against Jack Walls'," Lonoke Sheriff Charlie Martin said. But he never asked Walls about the allegations or investigated Heath Stocks' allegations against Walls, Martin said.

"Maybe I should have, I don't know," he said.

State police spokesman Bill Sadler said investigators were aware of Stocks' allegations about Walls.

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"State police investigators met with Heath Stocks and Special Prosecutor Betty Dickey prior to Jack Walls' trial. It was at that time that Heath changed his story. He alluded to someone else being involved in the murders of his family."

Sadler said the state police did not investigate the allegation.

"As far as what decision was made about any charges or pursuit of charges, address those questions to the special prosecutor," Sadler said.

Peckat said that he could not pursue the murder investigation because the Stocks murders occurred outside of the city limits, where he has no jurisdiction.

Peckat would learn that Stocks was first sexually molested by Walls during a camp out at Damascus. Walls plied Stocks with alcohol and then forced Stocks to have oral sex with him, Stocks said.

When the incident was over, several Scouts emerged from a nearby wooded area where they had been watching. It was then that Stocks learned that he was not the only Scout being sexually molested by Walls.

"When they came out of the woods, the guys said, 'Welcome to the group,' " Stocks said. "At first I thought, did those guys see what happened? I was so young. I just didn't get it.

"But finally I realized everything was normal. The next morning, nobody was looking at me weird. It was the opposite. I knew something special had happened, and now I had Jack and I was part of a 'group.' "

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Stocks had joined the Cub Scouts and later the Boy Scouts at the urging of his parents.

"As a kid, I was always in trouble," he said. "I had attention deficit disorder and [was] on Ritalin by the time I started school. I just couldn't do anything right in my daddy's eyes. He thought Scouting would help me. He didn't have a clue what was really going to happen."

As Stocks progressed through Scouting, he eventually became "Walls' pick," he said.

The sexual abuse occurred regularly, and a twisted relationship eventually developed between Walls and Stocks that ended only when Stocks went to prison for the murder of his family.

"Jack was a friend, father, mentor to me. I almost thought of him as a god," Stocks said. "I loved him. He accepted me. He gave me what no one else would give, especially my father.

"Jack approved of me the way I was. He accepted me and he loved me, too. I called him 'dad' and he called me 'son.' That was our relationship. I told Jack everything. There was nothing left out.

"Jack never threatened me not to tell [about their sexual relationship]. I knew he was threatening the other boys. He'd say, 'I'll kill you if you tell' to some of the other boys. But he knew I wouldn't tell.

"What we had was special. I was more loyal to him than to my own family," Stocks said.

As his relationship with Walls grew, so did the chasm between Stocks and his family.

"I would spend five or six hours [at a time] talking to Jack about my problems," he said. "I can remember sitting in the chair in his living room. He would have a lamp on over the chair he sat in so I couldn't see his face. The light was shining on me.

"I told him about my problems with my daddy. I told Jack that I wanted my daddy to accept me, to compliment me even if what I had done wasn't perfect but I had tried. I asked Jack how I could get my daddy's attention, especially in the early years.

"I guess this is what makes it so hard today," Stocks said as he buried his head in his hands. "Jack knew what was missing in our lives. Everything that we wanted from our families, he gave it to us. He pushed our families away because he was giving everything to us.

"It's hard to explain. All I can say is I trusted him completely and totally."

When Stocks would go home, he and his father would have problems, he said.

"My daddy was away a lot on a truck," he said. "When he came home, I was in trouble for something, always. I was the man of the house while he was gone and when he got home, I'd always done something wrong. And then I would get punished because of it.

"He would punish me with anything he could get his hands on -- a swing set chain, a belt, a switch from a weeping willow -- and he'd whip the hell out of me. For me, the lesson was to be petrified of my father and not trust him and know that no matter what he said, he would always be against me.

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"I didn't like him to touch me and I never believed him the few times he told me he loved me. The only time he became emotional and told me he loved me was after he beat the hell out of me. I was the one that had blood dripping off my butt and legs."

Stocks said he was angry with his father because "I was never good enough. I wasn't like Heather. [I] flunked out of college... wasn't smart, wasn't ever good enough for him."

The anger eventually turned to hate, he said.

"Every time he hit me or pulled down my pants and underwear and whipped me until I couldn't sit down, punched me, I just really couldn't take it. ... I wanted to kill him. I hated him so much. ... I tried to love him, but I just couldn't."

By this time, family members knew something was wrong in Heath Stocks' life.

"My family was trying to figure out what was wrong with me," he said. "They'd ask him [his father] and he'd tell them one thing and then he'd tell me the opposite."

As the years passed, Walls told Stocks that he had special plans for him. Stocks would later admit that Walls was training him to be an assassin.

"That is what he was training me for," Stocks said. "That is what he wanted me to be, kill people for him, for money. Whoever and whenever."

"Jack told me he wanted me to go into the Army or be a Navy Seal, either one would prepare me physically, but he had me ready mentally. He was teaching me how not to have a conscience. He told me I couldn't have a conscience, I couldn't love anything. If I had to kill, I had to just do it and no second thoughts, just do it and it didn't mean anything."

But Walls wanted Stocks to have allegiance to at least one person.

"The whole idea was I was suppose to go in and kill, like, a family, a father, a mother, a child, no one spared. No conscience allowed, he said. Go in, get out and forget about it. And remember, he'd say, 'You did it to help me. To protect me.' "

Stocks said Walls wanted Stocks to be "something that Jack wanted to be, but didn't have the heart to be."

The sexual abuse never stopped.

"The molestation has bothered me more than once over the years," Stocks said. "But it was like a scale. By the time I was 14, I think I really realized it was wrong. ... I wasn't a homosexual, but in order to keep Jack, I knew that it had to continue."

"I could see that this was wrong," he said, referring to the sexual abuse. "But... the approval, the acceptance, the love, was outweighing the bad because I was getting so much of what I need from Jack that I wasn't getting at home. At that time, to me, if I lost Jack, I would have lost everything. He was my family, my life."

Stocks said he shared every aspect of his life with Walls. As the boy grew into a young man, he confided in Walls about his girlfriends. Walls told Stocks not to trust girls.

"He told me what kind of sex to have with them, who I should go out with, everything. He even tried to get me to bring my girlfriends over so he could have sex with them, too," Stocks said.

"I always had trouble with girls in high school. My first dealings with love came when I went out with a girl in high school that I'd had a crush on since I was in the seventh grade. I thought I was in heaven when she went out with me. But she broke up with me and went out with other guys.

"I was crushed and here was Jack telling me, 'Don't fall in love with a girl. You'll only get hurt. Don't trust a woman, you'll only get hurt.' And damn if that didn't happen. He said, 'I told you so. Why didn't you listen to me?' He built me up and crashed me down. 'I want you to do this and I want you to do that. When you don't do it, you're over here crying and upset. Why? Because you didn't do what I told you to do.' "

"There wasn't any part of my life that Jack didn't control" by the time Stocks was in his teens, he said.

"It is hard to realize now that I told him every detail of my life," Stocks said. "It didn't matter whether it was dating matters or family matters, Jack expected me to come back to his house and give him every detail of what happened."

But once Stocks left for college, he started to change.

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"By the time I went away to college, I found a girl," Stocks said. "She was so special, and I fell in love with her. That's the only time I ever can remember that I got mad at Jack.

"He told me to get rid of her, as in break up with her. She was a threat, he said. I couldn't be attached to anything or anyone if I was going to be a killer. He even told me how to break up with her so it wouldn't hurt her so much.

"I resisted, and he finally told me to either break up with her or kill her. I broke up with her, just like he told me. Then I started going out with girls and started just having sex with them. I couldn't feel anything towards anybody but Jack at that point."

By this time, Stocks said he was tormented and angry all the time, but he couldn't understand why.

"I treated my family bad," he said.

Finally, during Christmas break in late December 1996 and early January 1997, during an argument with his mother, Stocks told his mother and sister what Walls had been doing to him sexually.

"I was going nuts inside, but still I didn't want to lose Jack," Stocks said. "I don't know why I told them, but I did.

"I didn't tell them much. I just knew I wanted it to be over, but I think I knew it never would end."

And then the guilt set in, Stocks said.

"After 10 years of total loyalty to Jack, I had betrayed him," Stocks said. "I went home the next weekend and told him what I'd done. I know now it was a mistake.

"He was outraged when I told him. 'You're supposed to protect me and you betrayed me,' he said. He told me to deal with it. I caused the problem, now kill the problem. He told me to kill my family."

The next weekend, Stocks murdered his family.

Today, Stocks said he does not remember the details of the murders. He remembers becoming angry and admits he shot his father.

"Now it's like a bad acid trip," he said. "It's something I try to forget every day of my life."

Stocks admits that he remained loyal to Walls even after he went to prison. It wasn't until Peckat started talking to him, he said, that he began to change his mind.

It was a slow change, Stocks said. Even during a victim impact hearing in January 1998, after Walls was charged with raping six boys, Stocks told the hushed courtroom that he loved Walls.

Stocks said he is over his relationship with Walls and wants Walls punished for the murders of his family, "as much as me, if not more."

"If Jack didn't want my family to be dead, they wouldn't be dead," Stocks said. "Jack was the focus of my life. Everything was done for Jack because he said it was to be done that way or to make him happy.

"I'm beginning to figure things out," he said.

There is a push on to get Stocks' case back into court.

Betty Dickey, who served as special prosecuting attorney in the case against Walls, wrote a letter to Gov. Mike Huckabee saying she had uncovered "information relevant to the 1997 murder charges to which Heath Stocks pleaded guilty. In the course of our investigation, I learned that the public defender knew or should have known about Jack Walls' involvement in the murders."

In the letter, dated Dec. 30, 1998, Dickey said she is "strongly convinced that Heath Stocks was not afforded a fair trial, nor adequate representation." She asked that Stocks' case be reviewed for possible clemency and suggested that other legal steps could be taken.

Dickey pointed out in her letter that she is not "advocating the defendant's release, only that I, as an officer of the court, uncovered critical evidence that should have been brought out in the 1997 murder case, but wasn't."

When asked what he would do if he had it all to do over again, Stocks is candid.

"I don't want to go home, now," he said. "What happened was wrong. I admit it was wrong. And as much as Jack had an affect, I'm the one that pulled the trigger."