

Our Experiences Relating to the Steven Avery Saga & “The Club” Operating in Manitowoc County

Intro

For years Dave has been sharing this information both off and online. What follows is a detailed statement. The bulk of it is from Dave about his direct experience and thoughts on what happened. Dave dictated the statement and his wife, Sandra, transcribed it. The last few paragraphs regarding Halloween 2005 include events that Sandra and Dave both witnessed.

Assault in 1985

On the afternoon of July 29th, 1985 Dave was riding a jet ski with a friend on Lake Michigan just off the shoreline of Two Rivers, Wisconsin. Two Rivers is a small town in Manitowoc County adjacent to the town of Manitowoc. This location has a large, sandy public beach with a jet ski launching area.

Dave was attentive to what was happening on the beach & road because local residents had been complaining to police about noise from jet skiers. That day he noticed what struck him as extra activity on the road next to the beach. He observed several city of Two Rivers police squad cars and at least one unmarked county Sheriff's vehicle. *(Dave knew the unmarked cars – anyone could drive by the Sheriff's open lot and see them).*

While out on the water Dave saw a man speaking to the friend he was hanging out with that day. He thought it might be a cop. So he rode his jet ski into the beach to find out what was going on. The man who'd been speaking to Dave's friend had left. Dave's friend told him that the guy (who turned out to be Penny Beerntsen's husband) said he was going to call the cops. Dave's friend explained that the man was concerned about his wife. She'd been jogging north on the beach and hadn't returned in the time frame he expected. He'd not been able to locate her. Mr. Beerntsen wasn't gone long before he returned to the beach. At the same time, a Two Rivers Police officer named Charlie Clough (sp?) arrived. Dave had seen Charlie Clough driving through the area earlier. The two approached Dave and his friend. Mr. Beerntsen suggested that Dave should ride his jet ski up the shoreline to look for his wife. The police officer said he didn't feel Dave needed to do this. However, Dave thought it made sense to go look and he did.

Dave rode the jet ski north along the shore. As he traveled north from the launch area he observed a man and a woman walking on the beach carrying a white towel. Dave didn't know their names but he recognized them as being local. They were on the beach in an area where there are houses close by. The lay of the land is as such: Heading north from the municipal beach in Two Rivers there is a residential area for about ¼ mile. After that there are no houses close to the beach – it is state land which consists of beach, dunes, a strip of swampy forested area, and then a road (county hwy O).

Dave proceeded on the jet ski for about 6 miles north along the shoreline until he arrived at Molash creek. This did not take long as the jet ski could go about 30-35 mph. Near the creek Dave saw another man and woman so he pulled in to speak to them. He explained he was looking for a woman jogging down the beach...had they seen her? They stated "Yes"...they had seen her. She'd run past them and then turned back to the south jogging towards the public beach in Two Rivers.

Dave again took off on his jet ski going south. Dave estimates he rode about 4-5 miles when he saw a woman in a mad run from the sand dunes. She was running as if for her life. Her swimsuit top was missing and she was covered in blood. The couple Dave had seen earlier walking with the white towel were sitting on the beach in front of the location where the woman (Penny Beerntsen) was running. They were looking at Dave. He pointed to the dunes behind them as he was driving towards the shore. At this point, the couple on the beach saw Ms. Beerntsen. Dave drove his jet ski up onto the beach so fast that he lost control and was flung off. He got up and was on the scene as Ms. Beerntsen ran past him to the couple who covered her with the towel. Around this same time, Mr. Beerntsen and Two Rivers police officers, Charlie Clough and Bill Bero (sp?) ran up. Ms. Beerntsen was embraced by her husband and was sobbing and very upset. Dave asked the police what had happened. They told Dave she was assaulted by a man. Dave grew up in the area and was familiar with the trails between the beach and the road. His first thought was to go after whomever had done this to the woman and catch the guy or at least get a license plate from any cars that might be on the road. So he took off running up the dunes. The dunes were high enough that a person standing on the beach could not see over them to the area beyond. As Dave crested the first dunes the police behind him were frantically yelling "NO, NO" and for him to stop and return to the beach. Dave halted on top of the dune and it was at this point he witnessed several men in the area behind the dunes. One man was to the south of Dave about 20-30 feet. This man was lying prone on the dune peeking over the top toward the scene on the beach. Dave isn't positive but thinks he was wearing a suit (like a business suit). Another man was standing about 20-30 feet to the west of Dave. He got a good look at this man. He appeared to be picking things up from the ground but stopped when he saw Dave. Dave says he was bug-eyed, mouth gaping open with surprise as they made eye contact. He also looked a lot like Gregory Allen. (Of course Dave did not know about Gregory Allen at the time. However, after seeing his picture years later Dave immediately said that he looked like one of the guys he saw in the dunes.) Closer to the woods (further west from Dave) there were a few other men who seemed to be walking in the direction of the woods. All the people were dressed in plain clothes. No uniforms.

The officers behind Dave were greatly agitated and yelling at him, so Dave turned and walked back down to the beach. The officers there told Dave that Ms. Beerntsen had been "passed out" and that they (the police) had people over there and they didn't want Dave to mess up the crime scene.

At this point, Dave got back on the jet ski and proceeded south to the Two Rivers public beach. Ms. Beerntsen was escorted down the beach to an ambulance that was waiting. Dave doesn't recall filling out an official statement but does remember the cops implying that he (Dave) didn't need to do anything further because he didn't witness anything significant. The Beerntsens later sent Dave a thank you note and gift certificate for use in their candy store in Manitowoc. Dave learned through the media that Steven Avery had been charged in the assault and details that were presented to the public. He also heard talk from locals that the "Good Ole Boys" club was taking care of the situation to ensure Steven Avery was sent to prison.

Naked Pictures – The Club

Not long (a month or two) after the incident on the beach Dave was at Two Rivers Tire and Muffler where he worked. A co-worker approached Dave and said a man (he called him by his name) wanted to speak to him. This man was and is a prominent member of the community. **SIDE NOTE:** *We've not stated this person's name. We feel this individual is very influential, having held office in local and state politics and we are concerned about backlash.*

This man spoke to Dave and told him that “We” would like to invite you to join a special men’s club. He showed Dave polaroid photographs. In them were naked men, some of whom Dave recognized. There were at least 2 high school teachers and a junior Ramblers football coach. They appeared to be engaged in sexual acts. There were multiple men in each photo...It appeared a kind of group sex party was going on. The guy told Dave that club members met at various hotels and venues in the area and not to worry...sometimes they got girls. He stated that many business owners and prominent people were in this club and that it was advantageous to be a member. He said Dave should come and talk to him to let him know if he wanted to participate. Dave was freaked out by this (he was 19 at the time) and didn’t know what to say. He put the guy off and said he’d get back to him. Afterward, Dave recalls feeling stunned. He was mystified as to why this guy would show him these pictures and invite him to join this “club”. It was extremely weird.

First Learning About a “club”

Now we’re going to go back in time to describe incidents that happened when Dave was a kid. He feels that they also relate to this “club” and are relevant to painting a picture of the culture that is part of the Manitowoc county area.

On several occasions when Dave was between 4 and 8 years old he was the victim/witness to domestic violence. These acts were committed against his family by a police officer. In one of the last and most dramatic of these incidents, Dave and his family (single mother and younger sister) were forced to go into hiding because the police officer who committed the acts could not be located. Dave and his family left town and hid out at a Catholic-affiliated retreat in northern Wisconsin. Despite the police, a priest, several nuns, and a guidance counselor being involved and aware of the specifics of the incident the events seemed to get covered up. It was later implied to Dave not to worry...the “Good Ole Boys Club” had taken care of it.

Fast forward to Dave’s freshman year in High School. After Dave quit football two boys on the team began to bully Dave. One of the boy’s fathers was rumored to be a big shot in this “Good Ole Boys Club”. These two began spreading rumors about Dave’s mother. They said the boy’s father (the one rumored to be in the “club”) had made derogatory claims regarding Dave’s mom. The stigma of this followed Dave throughout his school days. Later on in the 90s Dave had another run in with this father in regards to the club...keep reading.

Dave’s Dungeon

In 1986 when Dave was 20 he bought a bar in the city of Manitowoc on 21st & Hamilton Streets. The bar was called Dave’s Dungeon. It was in the basement of a building the top portion of which consisted of apartments. The place wasn’t open for more than a few weeks when a man came in

while Dave was bartending. Dave didn't know the guy. He sat at the bar and ordered a few beers. He explained to Dave that he was sent by the "club" to speak to him. He went on to say that Dave needed to go to the basement of the Eagles Club (located in Manitowoc) to join this club. He didn't say who Dave was supposed to see...only where he should go. He was insistent that Dave must join this club. Dave asked him why. Why should he be interested in joining this? The guy then explained how it worked. Essentially he described racketeering to Dave. He didn't call it that...but it was the textbook definition. Dave told this fellow sure....just to get him to leave him alone. But he had no intention of going to join anything.

Time passes. A month or two goes by. Into the bar walks the junior Ramblers football coach. This was one of the naked guys in the pictures Dave was shown after the assault on the beach. The guy is friendly to Dave but starts reeling off the same speech as the man who'd been in there before. Dave needed to go to the Eagles club and join this "club". Dave has the Ah Ha moment...this football coach guy was in the naked pictures...this is all part of the same "club". This reinforces Dave's desire NOT to become involved with whomever it's so important he go see in the Eagles basement. Dave blows the guy off, telling him sure, he'll go down there. Not!

Over the year that Dave was actively tending his bar the same guy from the naked photos came in several times. On each occasion, he adamantly requests that Dave go join this club. He practically begs Dave. Telling him things like, "You don't want to get on the wrong side of these guys". Finally, the last time Dave encounters this fellow he becomes belligerent. He starts yelling and waving his fist at Dave. Before storming out of the bar he tells Dave he'd better take care of joining or else "something is going to happen". There were other people in the bar at the time who witnessed this. They even asked Dave what the guy's problem was.

Something to add: Shortly after Dave opened the bar, a series of challenges began to surface. He faced lawsuits from three different individuals, and the city's housing authority was pressing him about issues with the building's apartments. To make matters worse, there were incidents of burglary and vandalism. While it might have been only a string of bad luck, Dave can't shake the feeling that it could've been connected to his refusal to join this 'club'.

Mary Ann

About a year after Dave opened the bar he hired Mary Ann Dehne. Mary Ann had operated a bar called Pat & Mike's just down the road from Dave's Dungeon. She began bartending and then proposed managing the bar. Dave was pleased with the job she did and she took over the bulk of day-to-day responsibilities. Mary Ann began reporting to Dave that a few men were repeatedly coming in and harassing her. She told him these guys kept telling her that Dave had to join the "club". Dave told Mary Ann to blow them off. On the last day Dave spoke to Mary Ann in person she said she was sleeping with a gun because she was so fearful of these people. Dave suggested they go to the police to which Mary Ann responded, "They are the police." Dave was preparing to travel to upstate Wisconsin on a hunting trip so he told Mary Ann he'd figure out what to do when he returned. On Nov 15, 1988, Dave set off on his trip. He was gone for about a week and half. During that time he was unreachable by phone. Upon his return his mom told him that Mary Ann had been found dead in her apartment (in Manitowoc) on the day Dave left. He couldn't believe it. He called a friend to go with him to Dave's Dungeon. The bar was a mess and ransacked. It looked like it had been the scene of a big party. Everything of value was gone. All the liquor, beer, many fixtures, money.

Mary Ann's boyfriend (Dave doesn't remember his name) happened to drive by the bar and saw Dave's car parked outside. He stopped in and explained to Dave that he'd been the one who found Mary Ann. He came home and discovered her lying in bed, covered in blood, dead, with a gun on the nightstand. The boyfriend claims he called the police and when they showed up they immediately handcuffed him. They suspected he killed her due to all the blood. He wasn't cuffed for long and they released him. He told Dave they deemed the death a heart attack. Dave didn't get further details about that incident. The boyfriend went on to tell him about the huge, free for all party that had taken place. It had occurred the weekend after Mary Ann's death. He said he didn't know who opened the bar and/or started the party but apparently there were possibly hundreds of people there. After this Dave decided to go talk to Mary Ann's teenage son. He didn't provide any useful details either. Dave did contact the police to report what had happened at his bar. He was informed there was nothing that the police could do. Dave was forced to declare bankruptcy and that was the end of Dave's Dungeon. In the years after Dave crossed paths with individuals who claimed to have been at this party. Several times he heard that people from the "club" were at the party giving everything away. So was this the "Something is Going to Happen" that Dave was promised by the naked football coach guy?

Another Invitation

In the mid-90s (estimates it was 1995) Dave again experienced a brush with the "club". He'd been invited to a local supper club (bar & restaurant) by friends. He suspected these friends were knowledgeable about the "club" and he'd recently been asking them about it. They'd consistently avoided answering. On this night after the restaurant crowd had thinned the friends told Dave they had a surprise for him. They led him over to some people sitting at another area of the bar. As he approached a man introduced himself. It turned out he was the father of the kid who'd spread the rumors about Dave's mom in high school. This guy said he wanted to invite Dave to join a special club. After realizing who the guy was Dave told him to get bent. He also confronted him about the rumors regarding his mom, and the harassment he and Mary Ann had been subjected to by this "club". The man seemed stunned and Dave headed out of the place. His friends caught up with him at the door and told him "he had to go back". They were adamant that Dave should make nice and that he couldn't refuse this invitation. Dave asked them why he should. They said for jobs/work/money. He explained why he had no use for the guy handing out the invite and basically told them no thanks and he left.

Steven Avery Again

Steven Avery gets exonerated for the assault on the beach. He's released from prison on September 11, 2003. Dave sees this playing out in the media and can't believe it. Once again the events he witnessed on the beach that day in 1985 are fresh in his mind. As time passes Steven Avery files his lawsuit, etc. Dave and Sandra follow the news coverage. Dave looks forward to further investigation into the crime on the beach. He's always felt there was something off about the things he saw that day. That along with all that Dave has experienced regarding this "club" is certainly enough to have him very curious about what in the hell is going on in the community.

On the evening of October 31, 2005 Dave and Sandra load their bicycles into the back of their truck. They drive from their home in Two Creeks to Two Rivers where they park by Walsh Field and unload the bikes. They ride around town checking out the Halloween decorations and getting some exercise. As they are heading back to their truck they pass through the parking lot of Patsy's Hwy

42 Mobile Mart. At the gas station Dave spots Steven Avery. Dave says to Sandra, "Look, there's that Steven Avery." The two stop their bikes on the edge of the gas station parking lot and watch him for a few minutes. He's driving a dark colored larger Ford truck. He's wearing a red and white jacket. He seems to be filling gas cans (the red plastic type). There also appears to be a blonde female with him. Sandra mentions to Dave that it looks like Steven Avery is doing pretty good. Dave and his wife leave the area and continue back to their truck. Time: not sure of exact time. It was soon after dark.

In the following days Dave and Sandra hear about the disappearance of Teresa Halbach. After Steven Avery is charged with her murder the two call the Manitowoc Sheriff's Dept. to report what they saw on Halloween. Sandra also typed up a letter that they mailed to the Sheriff's Dept. The two were never contacted by or asked for further statements by the Manitowoc Sheriff's Dept.

So there it is. Dave's story of events has not changed over the many years he's been talking about this. It is the truth and the details are as remembered to the best of our ability.

FAQ, Clarifications:

- Have we shared our information with the attorneys?
- Info has been shared with Mr. Strang, Mr. Buting, & Ms. Zellner.
- Initially in 2005 we called the Manitowoc County Sheriff's to report seeing Avery on 10/31. We also mailed a typed statement/letter reporting having seen him to the Sheriff Dept.
- The FBI has also been contacted & provided greater detail (including additional names) experiences had by Dave and Sandra.
- In regards to the 1985 incident: The people Dave saw behind the dunes had to be there at the same time that Penny Beerntsen was running for her life from the dunes to the beach. Dave saw them behind the dunes within less than five minutes after he witnessed Ms. Beerntsen run from the same area. The only way those people could reach that location was a trek of about a mile through swampy woods along a winding, rough trail. There is no way the police could have been aware of her location before she ran from the dunes....unless they somehow already knew where she was at. Which would raise some serious questions. Also...Ms. Beerntsen ran from the area where these people were. If they were police/sheriff's why did they not see her? Why did she not run to them?

A point to clarify in regards to the 1985 incident. Dave saw what seemed to him as extra police presence that day on the beach. **Dave noticed this extra activity BEFORE Ms. Beerntsen's husband had contacted the police to report his wife missing.** The extra police were around BEFORE Penny Beerntsen had been reported missing.

Does Dave think Steven Avery/Brendan Dassey are innocent or guilty? Dave has never said he feels one way or another. The evidence presented in the trial does not in his opinion prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. There was ample reasonable doubt. The trial did not seem fair. The investigation was highly suspect and seems to have lacked proper scope.

What do we think the information we've shared will produce? We don't know. We would hope that it would aid in investigations that should be conducted.

Why are we sharing it? Because it relates to this situation and it could be helpful in learning the truth. No matter who is guilty or innocent of what....the truth should be the objective. Truth and real justice as prescribed by the law.

Sandra & Dave feel that the Steven Avery saga is only the tip of the iceberg as far as what is/has been happening in Manitowoc county and beyond. There's no telling how many others have been victimized by the corruption that is prevalent in the area.