

What Happened to Maura Murray? - A Missing Person Case With More Questions Than Answers
by Kerry Miller

Route 112 is a dark, lonely, and uninviting road that runs across New Hampshire to the Vermont border.

Why a young college student was traveling toward the small ski town of Lincoln on a winter night in 2004 remains a mystery. What thoughts were racing through her mind as she negotiated the twists and turns of the road we can only guess. And what evil she faced remains unspoken, even though someone knows her fate, but won't give it up.

Before her disappearance in 2004, Maura Murray was a 21-year-old nursing student at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst with her whole life in front of her. Not only did she have close, loving family and friends, she was also a talented runner on the track and Cross-country teams at school and an academic achiever, having made the dean's list one semester. Maura was also planning to become engaged to her longtime boyfriend. Things were looking good. However, things changed drastically for Maura and her loved ones on the evening of Feb. 9, 2004, when she drove her car off the road in Haverhill, N.H. She hasn't been seen since.

Seven years later there are far more questions than answers for Maura's parents, Fred and Laurie, for her siblings, extended family, friends, and her college boyfriend, Billy Rausch.

"It doesn't take me long when I get up (to think about Maura). My daughter is missing. We don't know what happened to my daughter," said Fred Murray.

Police reports and some news stories at the time suggested that Maura was running away or wanted to commit suicide, but those who knew her say Maura wasn't the type to do either of those things. Cape Cod-based lawyer and investigator Terrance O'Connell, who is conducting a private investigation on Maura's disappearance at the request of Fred Murray, believes that Maura was abducted and then murdered not far from where her car went off the road.

North Haverhill resident Susan Champy, who was driving by the scene of Maura's accident while police were investigating, said she also believes Maura was a victim of foul play.

Some, who prefer not to go on the record, have claimed that whether Maura was a victim of foul play or not, the investigation into her disappearance by the New Hampshire State Police has not been conducted professionally or objectively. They say that had the state police acted differently, perhaps Maura would have been found alive or at least the mystery of her disappearance would have been solved.

Because Maura's disappearance is being treated as suspicious and is still an open case, little information can be accessed by the public.

Her friends Liz Drewniak and Katie Jones both said during interviews for the program "Disappeared," which airs on Investigation Discovery and highlights missing-person cases such as Maura's, that Maura had a close circle of friends and if she was having problems she would have turned to them for help. She certainly would not have committed suicide, they said. In addition, from reports that have been made available, there is no physical evidence that she had a plan to kill herself. While she had packed up belongings from her dorm room,

it looked more like she was moving away for awhile -- or perhaps had a plan to meet someone. On her way to New Hampshire, police said, Maura had stopped off for bottles of liquor and a box of wine. These actions could be consistent with someone planning a party or to meet up with others.

While many questions surround Maura's disappearance and much information is uncertain, some things have remained clearer than others, according to the Haverhill Police Department accident report, the "Disappeared" program, and a series of articles, "Maura Mauray, is Missing," from The Express, a newspaper covering Hanson, Pembroke, and Whitman, Mass., written by staff reporter Maribeth Conway in 2007. (The series was also printed in The Littleton Courier, a sister paper of The Express.) Conway was also featured as an information source for "Disappeared."

Sources say that on Monday Feb. 9, 2004, Maura left the UMass-Amherst campus between 3:30 and 4 p.m. She was driving a 1996 black Saturn and went off the road along Route 112 (also known as Wild Ammonoosuc Road) in Haverhill, N.H., at around 7 p.m. (Maura's car had been experiencing mechanical problems before this evening and she was in the process of buying another vehicle). Haverhill is in Grafton County, and one Wild Ammonoosuc Road resident who saw the car off the road called Grafton County dispatch, while another passerby called Hanover dispatch to report the accident. According to the accident report, Haverhill Police Sergeant Cecil Smith was dispatched at 7:29 p.m. from the Haverhill Police Station after the first call was received reporting the car off the road; he was the first officer to arrive on the scene, at 7:46 p.m. The vehicle was facing eastbound in the westbound lane on Route 112, the driver's side of the windshield was cracked, the vehicle had sustained front end damage, and both airbags were deployed. Smith was at the site for a hour two hours before he was dispatched to investigate another incident in the area.

The passerby who called Hanover dispatch was school bus driver Butch Atwood. Atwood had dropped students off at a nearby school following a field trip and was returning home. Atwood lived 100 feet from where Maura's car had gone off the road. He stopped and asked Maura if he could call the police for her. He said she appeared shaken up but wasn't injured, and did not appear intoxicated. She told him she'd called AAA on her cell phone and he didn't need to call police, Atwood left and called police anyway when he got home because he knew cell phone reception was bad in that area and didn't think Maura was able to reach AAA.

From this point on, information is uncertain and speculation abounds. Sergeant Smith noted in the accident report that spots or red liquid were on the driver's side door and ceiling of the car. The report discusses the liquid, with Smith noting, "When the vehicle was towed from the scene ... I recovered a Coke bottle that contained a red liquid with a strong alcoholic odor." Also, according to Helena Murray, a member of the extended Murray family who manages the website <http://mauramurraymissing.com>, a damaged box of Franzia wine was said to be in the passenger seat, but Smith's accident report states that the wine was in the back seat of the car. (Its been suggested that the wine was the red liquid in the Coke bottle, as well as the red liquid Smith found on the car door and ceiling.)

The accident report contains a section where Smith was required to circle an answer from a list provided for descriptions like "type of accident," "fixed object struck," and the driver's "apparent physical condition."

From the provided answers to describe the "apparent physical condition" of the driver, Smith circled "had been drinking." Considering that Atwood stated to police that Maura did not appear intoxicated when he spoke with her and that Maura was obviously not at her car when police came upon it, as well as the fact that the Coke bottle had not yet been tested to see if Maura had been drinking from it, circling that particular answer could be considered questionable.

To answer the "fixed object struck," Smith circled the word "trees." He also noted in elsewhere in the report "evidence at the scene indicated the vehicle had been eastbound and had gone off the roadway, struck some trees "

However, during O'Connell's investigation it was determined that Maura's car never hit trees, but rather a snowbank. O'Connell worked with retired Massachusetts police officer Daniel Parkka, who did a reconstruction of the accident scene.

"The conclusion was that her vehicle never hit a tree because the damage was not even. Damage to the vehicle would have been even if it struck a rigid object, like a tree. The actual damage was uneven -- the hood was buckled and windshield was busted," O'Connell said.

Conway e-mailed SOCO in response to questions about her series of articles to assist with this story. In the second article in her four-part series, Conway retold the story of Faith Westman, the other person, along with Atwood, to call police to report Maura's car off the road. Westman told police she peered out her window and saw Maura's car lodged in a snowbank. This supports Parkka's conclusion that Maura's car did not hit trees.

Conway also recalled some information she didn't include in her series of articles. One item is that there was much speculation about where exactly Maura was headed. Her family attests that she was going to Bartlett, N.H, "Everyone seemed to assume she was driving toward Bartlett; that's something her father felt strongly about. They often vacationed there and Maura was familiar with driving that route. As for why her car was facing the wrong way, I don't know. I remember speculation that she maybe was turning around because of road conditions. But, from my memory, road conditions weren't so bad that night," Conway wrote.

North Haverhill resident Susan Champy, who drove by the scene of Maura's accident, also recalled the road conditions that night. "The weather was cold, 15-20 degrees and maybe light flurries, but I do not remember it snowing that night. Her car did not have any snow on it," Champy said.

When she drove by, Champy remembered noticing that police officers had one of the doors of Maura's car open. She recalled reading in the newspaper afterward that they'd obtained a search warrant the next day to search the vehicle, which made her wonder whether they should have had the door open without first getting a search warrant.

Champy was scheduled to finish work at 7 p.m. at the Loon Mountain Club the evening of Feb. 9, but she left late, at 7:20 p.m., and had a 30- to 35-minute commute home. She drove by the scene of Maura's accident around 7:50 p.m., she recalled, where she saw police and a couple of bystanders near the car.

After learning about Maura's disappearance in the news, Champy said she has always wondered if she may have seen Maura and perhaps been able to give her a ride somewhere or help her, had she only left work on time.

"I just might have seen her. I always get out of work on time. That night I didn't; I couldn't leave that job without relief," she said.

From the very beginning of the investigation by New Hampshire State Police into Maura's disappearance, her father has been frustrated by how slowly he feels the investigation is being conducted, the lack of cooperation he's experienced from individual officers, and police theories that his daughter wanted to commit suicide or run away.

Maura disappeared on Feb. 9, but because police did not call him until the following afternoon (even though Maura's car was registered in his name), Fred Murray, a Weymouth, Mass., resident, did not arrive at the scene of his daughter's accident until Feb. 11 at dawn, about 36 hours after she'd gone off the road. A voice message was left on his home phone at 3:26 p.m., on Feb. 10.

From the moment he arrived at the scene of his daughter's accident, Murray began to ask about the first New Hampshire State Police officer who responded (not Cecil Smith, who was the first officer to respond from the Haverhill Police Department). The New Hampshire Police were called in to assist because Route 112 is a state

highway and under its jurisdiction. Murray wanted to know what this officer did, what he concluded, what were the conclusions about where Maura was. Murray still seeks answers to these questions today.

It is uncertain whether the state police officer who responded was off duty or not, and allegedly he never produced a police report.

"What did your guy do?" Fred recalled asking state police repeatedly. "If you let a case get 36 hours cold, you've lost the case. Your guy was my daughter's only chance. I've never had an answer to this question I asked in the first two minutes."

Murray recalled that during the "Disappeared" program the now-retired lieutenant John Scarinza of the New Hampshire State Police, who was assigned to the case in 2004, says Maura left a final note, hinting that it was her suicide note. Murray said the note Scarinza mentioned was actually a two year-old letter written to Maura from her boyfriend and definitely not a suicide note. Scarinza also said that among the belongings left in Maura's car -- aside from school books, directions to Burlington, Vt., and running clothes -- was *Not Without Peril*, a book about hikers who had trekked the Presidential Range in the White Mountains and had either never returned or been badly injured. Maura and her father enjoyed hiking together and had read the book before. At the time police thought the book meant perhaps Maura was planning to run away into the mountains.

"To make matters worse, they deferred attention from themselves by saying she committed suicide, that she was a hypothermia victim. They're blaming my daughter -- suicide is the most popular theme," said Murray. "What keeps me from falling apart is this is what I get mad about."

Murray discovered after doing some searching of his own in the Haverhill area that nearby residents hadn't been interviewed by police, and this was 9 to 10 days after Maura had disappeared, he said. Those people were eventually interviewed on the 11th day, Murray said, because he asked police about it.

"At that moment, my heart just sank," he said. "The best chance my daughter had wasn't extended to her."

New Hampshire State Police Detective Sergeant Sheldon Belanger said he cannot comment on specific details of this case because the investigation is still active. In response to Fred Murray's concerns about the handling of the case, Belanger said they're doing the best they can. When asked when was the last time police investigated any new leads, Belanger responded, "It's being actively pursued. We get calls once or twice a week referencing different things. When a legitimate lead comes in, we are still following up."

Belanger also said that New Hampshire State Police have worked with other agencies on this case whenever possible, including the New Hampshire Cold Case Unit (a division of the New Hampshire Department of Justice), following up any leads they get.

"It's an all-hands kind of thing," Belanger said.

The FBI has never been actively involved, Murray said, something he has continually pushed for.

Belanger said the FBI was never involved because the FBI requires that missing-person cases, such as Maura's, must meet certain parameters in order for them to get involved, and that this case does not meet those requirements.

Belanger said he also doesn't understand why Murray is upset about the first New Hampshire State Police officer who responded. He said there wasn't anything out of the ordinary about it.

"It wasn't long before police were there and more came shortly thereafter" Belanger said.

Initially, Belanger continued, it wasn't immediately assumed that Maura was a missing person. The first action of police was to start with her car being off the road. He recalled similar incidents he's been involved with where a person is drinking and driving, their car goes off the road, and they leave the scene to avoid getting a DUI and usually call police the next day to report it. Belanger said this is a scenario police often consider when a vehicle is found abandoned and off the road.

"Initially, the mood was that she had an accident, went away on her own. Not knowing that she disappeared into thin air that doesn't come to light until sometime later," Belanger said. "If they want to disappear, they will."

When the search for Maura started, Murray recalled that a group of private investigators were called in to assist. The leader of the group, he said, was a retired New Hampshire State Police officer, which didn't bring him much comfort. The investigators used search dogs to help comb the area, including sniffing out a nearby A-frame house where apparently the dogs went crazy as if they got the scent of a dead body.

Murray recalls that carpet samples were taken from the house and were supposed to be tested for DNA. The samples were never tested, he said, and the leader of the private investigative group didn't tell the state police about the samples until two and a half years later.

Champy said around the time Maura went missing the A-frame house was being rented by a local man and his girlfriend. The man, she said, was known to have a violent temper and was allegedly a sex addict. She added that it was rumored there were bones and dead dogs at the house, which may have been what the search dogs smelled.

The local man and one of his male friends did snow plowing in the area at the time, Champy added, recalling that while plowing they drove along Route 112 frequently. Strangely, she continued, neither has been seen in the Haverhill area since Maura disappeared. Champy also recalled that the local man was friendly with someone in the Haverhill area court system, which further fueled rumors this man could have had something to do with Maura's disappearance.

"He used to brag about it," Champy recalled.

More speculation has ensued about a rusty, reddish-brown stained knife that a man (who is now deceased) gave to Fred Murray later in 2004, Helena Murray recalled. The knife belonged to the man's brother. The brother had a criminal past and lived less than a mile from where Maura's car was discovered, she said. The brother and his girlfriend reportedly acted strangely after Maura's disappearance.

According to Champy, the man mailed the knife to the Haverhill Police Department, but nothing was ever done with it. "It's been kicked to the curb," Champy said.

Will Delker, a senior assistant New Hampshire attorney general assigned to the New Hampshire Cold Case Unit, said because the case is still being actively investigated he is unable to comment on the status of the knife and whether the man who handed it over or his brother were ever questioned by police, Delker said he also can't comment on the carpet samples from the A-frame house.

Another unconfirmed story has circulated about Maura having another boyfriend in the Haverhill area, whom she may have been going to see. A rumor went around that Maura was linked to a young man who worked at the Loon Mountain Club (where Champy also worked at me time).

The young man apparently had a girlfriend who lived in Manchester, N.H., and the girlfriend turned up missing or dead at the time of Maura's disappearance, according to Champy.

Both Conway and Champy emphasized that this story is pure rumor. Champy, said this story, surfaced a few months after Maura disappeared.

"I think it's just one of those rumors, I asked family and friends and no one had any information to back up the rumors," Conway wrote in her e-mail.

Two more mysteries about this case involve a rag that was stuffed into the tailpipe of Maura's car and a phone call Billy Rausch received on his way to help with the search.

Sergeant Smith found a rag stuffed in the tailpipe of the Saturn during his accident scene investigation. The rag came from the trunk of Maura's car, part of an emergency roadside kit her father had stored in the trunk. According to one of Conway's articles, a Hanson, Mass.-based auto mechanic explained that stuffing a rag into a car's tailpipe can be a way to plug it to check for leaks in the exhaust system, but that it would also stall the vehicle and at some point destroy the engine.

We've all heard of carbon monoxide poisoning as a way, to commit suicide; however, the gas would have to somehow be fed back into the vehicle, through a hose perhaps, which wasn't present in this situation. Considering that the car was experiencing mechanical problems, Fred Murray said at the time that it was possible Maura had stuffed the rag into the tailpipe herself if smoke was coming out of it and she wanted to plug it up.

O'Connell and his team of experts, who've been conducting a pro bono private investigation on this case for the past two and a half years at the request of Fred Murray have their own conclusion about the rag.

During their work on the case, O'Connell's team determined Maura's car had a full tank of gas when it was found off the road on Route 112. Even if Maura left UMass with a full tank of gas in her car, O'Connell said, she wouldn't have still had a full tank by the time she reached Haverhill; she would have had to stop and get gas along the way. It was when she stopped for gas, O'Connell said, that the rag was stuffed into her tailpipe.

"There is no doubt in my mind that this beautiful nursing student stopped at a gas station, someone stuffed a rag in her car (in the tailpipe), which helped contribute to the disabling of her vehicle. The airbags were deployed, she was not seriously injured, she was abducted," he said.

Aside from theories about the rag in the tailpipe, many are also mystified by the phone call Billy Rausch received on his cell phone on Feb. 11, 2004. While traveling from Oklahoma to New Hampshire to assist with the search for his missing girlfriend, Billy Raush had turned his cell phone off while going through airport security. He turned his phone on afterward and had a new voice message. The voice message is a woman breaching, sniffing, and whimpering. According to Helena Murray's account of events, many, including Rausch, believe it was Maura. Rausch called the number back, but couldn't reach a person because whoever called had used a prepaid calling card issued to the American Red Cross. Before Maura got a cell phone, she used to use prepaid phone cards to call Billy in Oklahoma, and Billy's mom gave Maura two prepaid cards at a previous Thanksgiving dinner, said Raush 's mother, Sharon Rausch, during an interview included in "Disappeared."

To begin to understand why Maura's disappearance is so puzzling, it helps to know the events that led up to her leaving the UMass Amherst Campus when she did. Helena Murray provided SOCO with a recap of the events leading up to Maura's drive to New Hampshire.

On Thursday, Feb. 5, 2004, at 10:20 p.m., while Maura was working at her on-campus job at Student Security, she spoke with her sister, Kathleen on the phone. Kathleen later recalled that the two talked about guy problems and that there was nothing unusual about the conversation.

Maura received another phone call while still at work, at 1 a.m. all Friday Feb. 6, after which she became upset. She was escorted back to her dorm room by her supervisor. Fred Murray arrived at the UMass Amherst campus on Saturday, Feb. 7, to visit his daughter. He planned to stay overnight in the area and rented a motel room. Maura lived with her mother growing up, but always maintained a close relationship with her Father. The two went shopping for a used car for Maura because her vehicle at the time, a 1996 black Saturn, had been experiencing mechanical problems.

Also all Saturday, Maura and her father ate dinner along with one of Maura's friends at an Amherst restaurant. After dinner Maura dropped her father off at his hotel room. She borrowed his car that evening and drove herself back to the UMass campus to attend a dorm party with her friend. At 2:30 a.m. on Sunday, Feb. 8, Maura left her friend's dorm room and started to drive her father's car, a brand new Toyota Corolla, back to his hotel. On the way, she went off the road on Route 9 in Hadley, Mass., striking a guardrail. No charges were filed by police and damage to the vehicle totaled \$8,000. Fred Murray recalled that at the time Maura was shaken up and apologetic about the accident.

Maura called her boyfriend at 4:49 A.M. from her father's cell phone. Later on Sunday, Fred rented a car, dropped Maura off at her dorm, and headed to Connecticut for work. That was the last time he saw his daughter.

Maura spoke to her father on the phone at 11:26 p.m. Sunday night. They spoke about getting the necessary forms from the registry pertaining to the accident and decided to discuss the matter again on Monday night.

A search by then-New Hampshire State Police Troop F Commander Lieutenant John Scarinza of Maura's computer hard drive revealed that sometime later Sunday night she searched online for directions to Burlington, Vt.

On the day of her disappearance, at 12:55 p.m. Maura called for information about renting a condo in Bartlett, N.H. The call lasted for three minutes and she did not rent a condo. At 1 p.m. she sent Rausch an e-mail saying that she didn't feel like talking to anyone but that she would call him later that day. She also called 1-800-GOSTOWE at 2 p.m., but the number was out of order.

At 4 p.m. (or earlier) Maura sent an e-mail to some of her professors and her boss, in which she wrote that she would be out of town for several days due to a death in her family. There was, however, no death in her family. A dorm mate of Maura's reported seeing her leave campus between 3:30 and 4 p.m.

After she left the campus, Maura's first stop was at an ATM, where she withdrew \$280 from her bank account. According to Helena Murray's account, the surveillance footage from the ATM shows Maura was alone. Maura's second stop was at a liquor store, where she purchased a box of Franzia red wine and bottles of Kahlua, Bailey's, and vodka.

The official search for Maura began on Wednesday, Feb. 11, 2004. Maura's family, the Rausch family, police, and New Hampshire Fish and Game personnel combed the area of Route 112 where her car was found and BOLO (Be on the lookout) messages were sent to neighboring towns. Billy Rausch also told police about the mysterious phone call he received while going through security at the airport on his way to New Hampshire.

Well into the process of interviewing potential witnesses, Maura's father recalled, New Hampshire State Police said that Maura was reportedly spotted four miles down the road shortly after her accident. A man reportedly saw Maura between 8 and 8:30 p.m. The person believed to be her was wearing jeans, a dark coat, and a light-colored hood.

"They accept this is true. She was seen down there. All they had to do was go around the corner and grab her," her father cried.

A police dog was given a pair of Maura's gloves to search for her scent. The dog tracked her scent 100 yards east of where her vehicle was found. Police believe this suggests she was picked up by a passing vehicle.

While Delker can't comment on specific details about the case, he was able to provide more insight into the investigation of Maura's disappearance than the New Hampshire State Police were able to.

In response to Maura's father's concerns that people in the area weren't interviewed by police right away, Delker said that isn't true from what he remembers. "Police spoke to a number of people early on. In some missing person cases police don't get involved right away. (In this case) police were involved fairly early on," Delker said.

There doesn't seem to be anything suspicious about the first state police officer to respond to the scene of Maura's accident. Delker said, echoing Belanger's statements. "From my understanding of the case, there wasn't anything out of the ordinary. Police took appropriate steps to try and locate her quickly," Delker said.

While Maura is still classified as a missing person, Delker said, her case is also included on the Cold Case Unit's list of unsolved homicides.

"It isn't classified as a homicide. (But) if they suspect foul play in a missing-person case it's included on the Cold Case (unsolved homicide) list," Delker said. "The investigation developed information that raised a question as to whether Maura Murray disappeared as a result of foul play."

Delker added that it isn't beyond the realm of possibility that she wandered off and her body hasn't been found yet. He said whenever the Cold Case Unit receives a legitimate tip on this case, it follows up.

"Since the inception of the Cold Case Unit in December 2009, we have received a number of tips about this case. Some we've been able to follow up on and others we're still in the process of evaluating," Delker said.

O'Connell and his team of experts have come to their own conclusions about Maura's disappearance. O'Connell met Fred Murray through a friend while doing investigative work on another missing person case.

O'Connell's team of investigators includes Anne Marie Myers, director of the Molly Bish Foundation, forensic anthropologist, and member of the Boston medical examiners' office; Craig Ackley, a retired FBI agent formerly in charge of the FBI Behavioral Analysis Unit and an expert in criminal behavior; Daniel Parkka, a retired Massachusetts police officer who did a reconstruction of the accident scene; and Carla Meyers, a retired New Hampshire attorney.

"Fred was all alone. That was two and a half years ago. I had been following the case anyway," O'Connell recalled. "It was obvious to me Maura was not a runaway and not a candidate for suicide. I reviewed all the information about Maura's case -- what went on the week before, the weeks and months after the search. I reviewed all the media attention. I was able to collect facts and information."

On Nov. 20, 2010, O'Connell and his team came to a conclusion about what they believe really happened to Maura on Feb. 9, 2004.

"The search for Maura in Haverhill conclusion is something very bad happened to Maura right at her car. She didn't run away, she didn't commit suicide," O'Connell said. "She was taken against her will. Sometime shortly thereafter she was killed."

O'Connell added that even if Maura got into a passing vehicle, as police suggested, and even if it was of her own free will, he feels strongly that she was abducted after that.

"People don't just disappear. We know our children, what they will do and would not do," O'Connell said. "The car is registered to a UMass student, it's in the middle of nowhere- think foul play, somebody grabbed her. Just don't rush to the conclusion that this was an everyday run-of-the-mill motor vehicle accident."

He doesn't agree with any one thing Troop F had to say about Maura, O'Connell said, echoing Fred Murray's sentiments about how the case has been handled by New Hampshire State Police. The rag that was stuffed in the tail pipe of Maura's car, the fact that her car had a full tank of gas, and other elements of basic police work have been ignored, he said.

"They (New Hampshire State Police) never did it right. The rag stuffed in the tailpipe of the car, he (the first state police officer to respond to the accident scene) never photographed the scene, never searched the scene. He never bothered to call the father, the registered owner of the car. He knew a female was operating the vehicle that night because Butch Atwood just called," O'Connell stated.

O'Connell has not held the state police in high regard ever since a meeting he had with Scarinza and New Hampshire State Police Detective Sergeant Chuck West on May 27, 2004. At the time O'Connell had just finished his investigation into the death Patric McCarthy, another case he worked on before Maura's. West and Scarinza were the lead investigators on McCarthy's case for the state police and were initially also the leads on Maura's case. The New Hampshire State Police determined Patric had died an accidental death. However, O'Connell and his team determined Patric was in fact murdered.

From O'Connell's recollection, what happened at the meeting is an example of the attitude the New Hampshire State Police had about Patric McCarthy's death and Maura's disappearance.

O'Connell wanted to get the FBI to persuade the state police to reopen Patric's case, in the hopes that it would officially be determined that he was murdered. On May 27, 2004 he arranged a meeting at the FBI office in Bedford, N.H., with four FBI agents, one US attorney, and West. Upon concluding a three hour presentation on his findings about Patric's death, O'Connell was told by FBI agent Jay Fallon, "You've convinced the FBI this case stinks of foul play." O'Connell recalled looking over at West, who said, "I told you before, Terry, unless you've come up with substantial evidence we are not going to reopen this case."

O'Connell also recalled that before the meeting, he introduced himself to West in the hallway outside the room where the meeting took place. He said West had a smirk on his face when he spoke. "You Massachusetts people keep getting lost up here," West said. O'Connell said he responded, "Patric didn't get lost up here, buddy."

This attitude of "Oh, Patric just got lost" or "Maura just ran away or maybe she committed suicide" is unfortunately how the state police approached both cases, O'Connell said, almost as if they didn't care.

"Scarinza said there was no evidence of foul play. The problem with his erroneous conclusion is that it tends to lead to tunnel vision. It precludes you from investigating a case with an open mind," O'Connell said.

Now, in April 2011, O'Connell and his team are in recovery mode on this case and are looking for Maura Murray's body.

"We're certain she is within a five-mile radius. She was murdered. We're looking for her body," O'Connell said. "We've searched around one pond in Haverhill with a Quincy, Mass., dive team. We plan to search the pond again shortly."

Through the past seven years some unconfirmed sightings have been reported, Helena Murray recalled. In June 2006 someone reported seeing a girl who looked like Maura, accompanied by an older male, at a Cumberland Farms convenience store in Hillsborough, N.H. The person said the girl was apparently mouthing "help me."

The sighting was not reported until a few months later after the person saw photos of Maura on a television program.

Another sighting was on the day of her disappearance, between 8 and 8:30 p.m. A resident of Swiftwater, N.H., reported seeing a young person moving on foot along Route 112 about four to five miles east of where Maura's car went off the road. The witness said the person was wearing jeans, a dark coat, and a light-colored hood. When the witness approached, the young person ran off quickly.

The Murray Family also dismissed a claim by a psychic in 2004 that Maura had been murdered. While it has been more than a rocky road for Maura's family and friends, the police, and the private investigators who've worked on this case, the bottom line is answers are needed.

At the time of her disappearance Maura was described as 5'7" tall, weighing 120 pounds, with shoulder-length brown hair. She was last seen wearing a dark-colored coat and jeans and carrying a backpack. To find more information about Maura, to find news about her disappearance or offer support, visit www.mauramurraymissing.com, www.myspace.com/mauramurraymissing2, or the Maura Murray Missing Group page at www.facebook.com.

Witnesses or persons with information should contact Cold Case Unit, N.H. State Police Major Crime Unit in person at 33 Hazen Drive, Concord, N.H. 03305, by phone at 603-271-2663 or by e-mail to coldcaseunit@dos.nh.gov.