

What happened to Joshua Guimond?

Kylee Williams, Journalist

On the night of November 9, 2002, a college junior at Saint John's University went missing. Gone without a trace, this case has been without new information and has been a cold case for approximately 21 years, 22 years this upcoming November. Why has there been no new information released to the public? Why does no one want to talk about Joshua? There are a lot of questions that arise when the disappearance of Joshua Guimond is mentioned.



Joshua Guimond went missing 22 years ago. (Photo courtesy of Patrick Marker & Public Domain)



This photo is of Joshua Guimond at his high school graduation giving his class president and Valedictorian speech in 2000. Photo courtesy of Public Domain.

Josh to many was a leader. He had high aspirations for his life that he wanted to accomplish after graduating from Saint John's University. From his hometown of Maple Lake, Minnesota, he fought for justice at a young age, knowing he wanted to become a lawyer. He had been Valedictorian and class president of his high school class of 2000.

Known as a "young politician," once he was of age, he wanted to run for president of the United States. He was just 20 years old when he disappeared. He was the co-captain of the Mock Trial team at Saint John's University. He had plans to continue his education at Yale Law School and serve in the Minnesota State House of Representatives.

All of those plans were stopped with an alarming halt on November 9, 2002, at approximately midnight when Joshua was on his way back to his dorm from a party at his friend Nate Slinkard's dorm, where they played cards, drank beer, and socialized. Joshua left without his coat, glasses, wallet, car keys, and without saying goodbye.

Nothing was out of the ordinary on the day of November 9. Joshua started his day off at the library where he worked on his research paper about Alexander Hamilton, and from there he returned to his dorm.



This is a photo of Joshua with his friends Katie Benson and Nick Hydukovich. Photo courtesy of Public Domain.

Having friends Alex Jade and Greg Worden over to his dorm was the norm for this group of friends. They ate dinner together before leaving for Nate Slinkard's at around 11:15 pm – 11:30 pm. It wasn't until the next afternoon that Joshua's friends realized that they hadn't seen him since the night before. He wasn't answering anyone's messages or calls. It wasn't until 10:30 pm, that Joshua's parents were informed that he was missing. Joshua was missing for approximately 24 hours before an official search began.

The main theory that officials began to look into was that maybe Joshua was more intoxicated than initially thought.

Maybe he thought he was fine to walk home, but he lost his way and possibly ended up falling into a nearby lake. The primary lake that they were looking to search was Stumpf Lake, which was the route that Joshua would have taken to get back to his dorm.

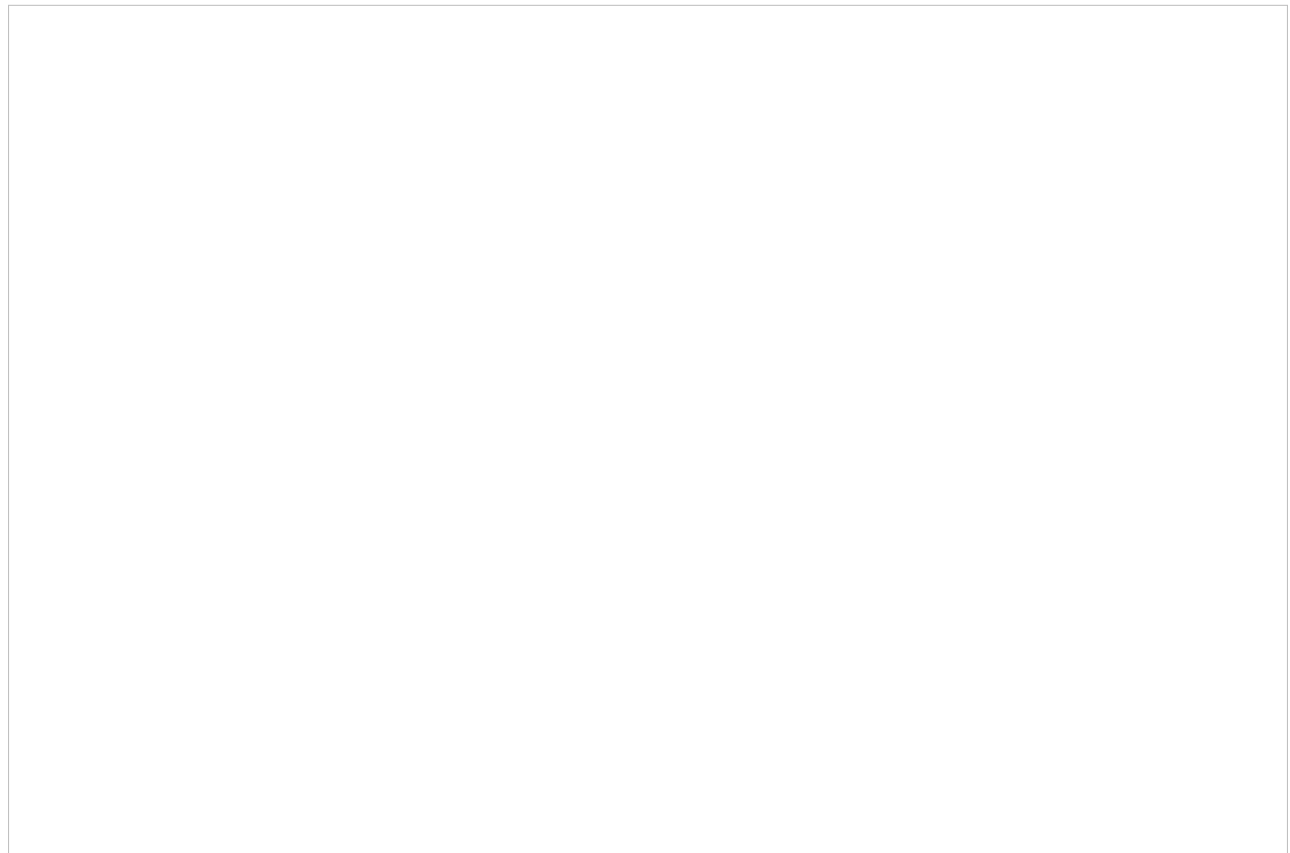
The search of Stumpf Lake consisted of dragging for a body, divers, boats, and underwater sonar boats. From Unsolved Mysteries, Nick Hydukovich (one of Joshua's roommates at Saint John's) says, "Seeing that lake being dragged, was like the most surreal, probably awful memory I have." Winter was coming and the search of the lakes was put on hold until spring came because if the lake froze over, Joshua's body would not surface.

Once fall turned into winter, most of the public searches ceased to continue. That winter Hydukovich was asked how he would feel about another person moving into Joshua's room, which he declined.

Brian Guimond (Joshua's father) was not satisfied with the direction, speed, and attention that the Stearns County Sheriff's Department was giving to Joshua's disappearance. On December 29, 2002, the Guimond family brought in a private bloodhound in an attempt to track Joshua's scent. The bloodhound tracked Joshua's scent from Nate's apartment (Metten Court) to Stumpf Lake, then to Joshua's dorm at St. Maur House, and finally to St. John's Abbey.



This is a photo of Stumpf Lake where the investigators originally thought Joshua's remains were. (Kylee Williams)



Saint John's Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota is where dozens of monks were found to have taken part in inappropriate sexual activity with students. (Kylee Williams)

Saint John's University is a religious college. There is a monastery on campus and some of the monks are also professors at the college. At the time and a little while before Joshua's disappearance, news stories were coming out about sexual abuse allegations related to the monks on the campus at Saint John's.

In February of 2003, a student-athlete brought allegations of misconduct against his professor (Father Bruce Wollmering). The student stated that the misconduct began during a class that met during the fall semester of 2002-2003. Regarding the allegations against Wollmering, an SJU employee wrote,

“We are looking for direction from you as to how you would like to proceed, especially considering the delicacy of this case. The student is very anxious to know what’s going to happen as a result of his complaint.”

These allegations were handed swiftly so the news would not reach the public: “Within days, the matter was settled. Quickly.” There were no announcements made, and law enforcement was not contacted. Wollmering was allowed to continue teaching until the end of the 2003 spring semester.

In 2004, Abbot Klassen did not release Father Bruce Wollmering’s name to the public because of the effect that it might have on fundraising and enrollment into the university. Klassen was also worried that Father Wollmering would be connected to Joshua’s disappearance. While Klassen kept Wollmering’s name a secret, Wollmering reoffended.

“When the abuse scandels started, I was so disappointed. Instead of coming clean about the abuse at Saint John’s, they created the Saint John’s Bible Project. It’s premise is pretty much the Pope presenting the university this bible, Oh Saint John’s... what an amazing place! It’s almost this larger than life place. When in reality it is a terrible place with men that have been protecting their own for years and abuse that has been covered up...we know so little about what actually went on there,” Patrick Marker said.

Wollmering had “consequences” for his actions. Those “consequences” included immediate resignation as the chair of the psychology department. When he did announce he was “stepping down,” there was no mention of the misconduct. While Wollmering continued teaching, he was required to make his students aware of the misconduct that was filed against him. There was no evidence to prove that he had made an announcement to his classes.

Over a hundred alleged offenders on the SJU campus, including Father Brennan Maiers, who was also accused of being inappropriate with at least six individuals. A 36-year-old cabinet maker from St. Joesph filed a lawsuit against Father Brennan Maiers in February 1992, claiming that Maiers had sexually abused him when he was a nine-year-old altar boy. The lawsuit was settled in November 1992. Maiers admitted to the abuse and to his arrest in Minneapolis for soliciting a male prostitute.

In April 2011, Saint John’s admitted that 18 members of its community had been rightfully accused of sexual misconduct. By September 2012, the number of offenders had ramped up to 23 members; Saint John’s will not expose those five offenders’ names. According to Behind the Pine Curtain, the truth is that there have been at least 100 alleged offenders on campus.

These are just a few of the many stories that have been brought to light by the website Behind the Pine Curtain written by Patrick Marker, along with the website findjoshua.com. Patrick Marker is now a resident of the Seattle area. He is a survivor of sexual abuse perpetrated by St. John’s Abbey monk, Dunstan Moore. Patrick was a student at the preparatory school. He has written thoroughly about allegations of abuse by Abbey monks. Many men have been abused and refuse to come forward with their stories, still in fear of what the university might do. I had the opportunity to interview Patrick Marker about Joshua’s missing persons case. He is a wealth of knowledge, and he is very passionate about finding answers for the Guimond family.

Shortly before Joshua’s disappearance, he had picked up an interest in the monk allegations that were coming out. Joshua and his roommate Nick would talk about it, and Nick remembers how irritated Joshua would become by just talking about it. Joshua was upset by the fact that those types of things were happening at SJU, and they were being covered up.

According to the Unsolved Mysteries Documentary, Nick told authorities that he believed Joshua was doing research about the monk’s sexual abuse allegations for a research paper. While looking for evidence on Joshua’s computer, there were no documents that had anything to do with the monk’s misconduct.

“I’ve always said, I mean I have had my own thoughts about how it might’ve gone down, but what I am adamant about is that because of the situation that the monastic community was in at the time, they couldn’t afford any more bad publicity, so if, Josh’s disappearance had something to do with the monks, we would be less likely to hear about it from the monastic community. The cover-up and the compromise on campus that remains today, would have prevented them from coming clean about it.” Patrick Marker said.

I believe that if somebody did something to Joshua that had any connection to the campus whatsoever, we're never gonna find him, ever. Not even a body. Ever. Because they're too secretive." Lisa Cheney (Joshua's mother) from Unsolved Mysteries said.

Why aren't people talking about this and going to the authorities to tell them what they know? Saint John's is such a big part, and has been for a couple hundred years, of the fabric of the community and people who go to Saint John's are very protective of that campus. We've talked about 'Bleeding Johnny Red.' It's almost fanatic of the amount of support in that community," said Patrick Marker.

"Behind the Pine Curtain"

"What happens in Collegeville stays in Collegeville"

When the bloodhound that was brought in by the Guimond family continuously hit the same spot at Saint John's Abbey and was going into "intrusive" areas that the general public is not allowed in, Saint John's officials stepped in and contacted the Stearns County Sheriff's Office to tell them to "deal with it." Given the interest that the bloodhound had in the Abbey, Brian Guimond had requested access to go inside the Abbey. His request was denied.

Later, access was granted to enter the Abbey, and the dog found Joshua's scent inside the Abbey near the back of the building, but there was no evidence of Joshua ever found.

"Bloodhounds can be trained to do any number of things. Tracking and trailing old scents, finding human remains, if they're trained for that, but they aren't always accurate. And our office was skeptical of that particular dog team at the time," said Lieutenant Vic Weiss of Stearns County, from Unsolved Mysteries.

Two college-age males Christopher Jenkins (went missing in the Minneapolis area on October 31, 2002) and Michael Noll (went missing in the Eau Claire area on November 6, 2002). Both went missing around the same time that Joshua went missing and were both found within a month of each other. Jenkins was found in February of 2003, and Noll was found in March of 2003. Both of the men were found in bodies of water near the area where they originally disappeared.

This led investigators back to the water to once again search for Joshua's remains. Along with the sheriff's department, Brian Guimond also began to search the lakes in a kayak. "And I just couldn't get over the thought that, what if his body floated up right next to that kayak? I mean what would you do as a father?" said David Unze from Unsolved Mysteries.

After there was no body found, the investigation moved toward the theory that someone who knew Joshua did something to him. "It could have been a friend or a roommate," said Lieutenant Vic Weiss from Unsolved Mysteries. One of Joshua's roommates reached out to the sheriff's office and told them that he had overheard Nick and Joshua arguing earlier that night. The argument is thought to have involved Katie (Joshua's ex-girlfriend). Joshua and Katie dated for four and a half years until their break up in their junior year of college.

Nick and Katie had considered dating about three months after Joshua and Katie had broken up but he had said that they had talked about whether or not this should be the best route. They decided that it wasn't. In both Nick's and Katie's statements, it was mentioned that Nick had a desire to date Katie, which caused the investigators to look into Nick a little more thoroughly. Nick's original statements on his whereabouts on the evening of November 9 varied from Katie's original statement to the investigators.

Nick told investigators he had left Katie's dorm at 2:30 am on November 10. His keycard records on campus showed he keyed into his dorm at 2:42 am. While in Katie's statement, she had told police that he had left around 1-1:30 am that same morning. The amount of unaccounted time is roughly an hour to an hour and a half when the drive from the Saint Ben's campus to the Saint John's campus is only about 7-10 minutes.

Nick declined the offer to take a polygraph test. Before declining the offer, he had texted his Mock Trial coach, (Olga Zenteno), asking whether or not he should accept. Zenteno told him that she would talk to her friend who is a criminal defense attorney about whether or not Nick should take the polygraph. Zenteno quotes her friend in the eighth episode of the Simply Vanished Podcast. Her friend said, "Olga, I've always thought, even when I was a public defender, why help the police do their..." She viewed the polygraph as something Nick shouldn't do. Nick told officials that he would not take the polygraph because "that's not gonna do anybody any good."

The next theory that the police were looking into was that maybe someone at the party did see Joshua before his disappearance. Maybe they chose to conceal something that might be seen as unflattering to them. Maybe they thought this because all of the people at the party had a future and their whole lives ahead of them and their reputations to uphold.

Lisa Cheney from Unsolved Mysteries said, "I believe the kids at the party know more than they say. Josh just got up and said he was going to the bathroom and never came back. And nobody wondered where he was. It doesn't make any sense to me. There's more to it than what they're saying."

"There are a lot of possible suspects who were never looked into, in the monastery and outside the monastery on campus. There are a lot of people that should've been looked at a lot more closely," said Patrick Marker.

After Joshua disappeared, his dorm room was not locked down so anyone could come in and out as they pleased because investigators did not see it as a crime scene initially. Joshua's father and uncle stayed in his room the days following his disappearance. His uncle logged onto Joshua's computer periodically throughout those days. Brian then decided to remove all of Joshua's belongings from his dorm about two weeks after his disappearance.

In the days that followed Joshua's disappearance, the investigators were still looking for additional physical evidence. Joshua's computer was not a piece of evidence until after the initial investigation. Brian permitted investigators to search through the computer. They realized that someone had used an internet washer several days after his disappearance. The internet washer that was used had never been used on Joshua's computer before so that led to some suspicion around his computer and who had downloaded the washer.

Lieutenant Vic Weiss took Joshua's computer hard drive to the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension where he could use their technology to search through the computer. He realized that the computer washer could only be used for deleting cookies and browser history; it would not wipe out large amounts of data.

While searching through the computer, they found a large amount of activity messaging happening on Yahoo! Personals. They found three accounts that could be linked to Joshua. Two of the accounts were reportedly used for him to chat online with men and portray himself as a female. "The examination of Joshua's computer leads me to believe he might have had some secrets he didn't wanna share with people," said Lieutenant Vic Weiss from Unsolved Mysteries.

"He might have been exploring his sexuality,... And nobody that we interviewed really had any belief or information or any indication that he was homosexual or transgender," said Lieutenant Vic Weiss.

"I don't think Josh was gay. I never got that impression from him. I wasn't aware of him exploring anything like that, while we were together when I knew him," said Katie Benson, Joshua's ex-girlfriend, from Unsolved Mysteries.

The evidence that was collected from his computer led investigators to believe that Joshua possibly scheduled a meet-up with someone that night which would've explained why he got up from the party and left without saying anything.

Saint John's Life Safety reports introduced a new piece of evidence to the investigation: the orange Pontiac Sunfire. The places around campus that are known for meet-ups and hookups were consistent with where this vehicle was being seen. The information included in the incident report was that while Saint John's Life Safety pulled up behind the Pontiac Sunfire, a college-age student jumped out of the front passenger side and ran into a nearby wooded area. There was another report replicating the first, but neither of the reports could identify the college-aged male.

The Life Safety officer was able to record the license plate and vehicle description and had a verbal report with the driver, which concluded that he was “dropping off a student on campus.” The investigators had an interest in finding the vehicle to see if there would be forensic evidence, to identify whether or not this individual had any connection with Joshua, but before they could find that out the vehicle had been crushed at a local scrap metal facility.

The most likely theory that the Stearns County Police Department has been following most recently is that Joshua’s computer activity, and his presence on Yahoo! Personals might have played a part in his disappearance. It seemed that Joshua was on dating sites or trying to meet people.



The Stearns County Police Department reached out to the public for help to identify these men. Photo courtesy of Stearns County Sheriff’s Office.

In an interview, Patrick Marker said, “I hope it doesn’t take a deathbed confession by law enforcement, a monk, a friend, or a classmate to solve this crime. I think that is probably what is going to end up happening, and that’s too bad for Joshua and everybody on campus,” said Patrick Marker.

“Holding onto these secrets is bad for the soul, anyone who has information about this or other cases, sometimes you think that you are being protective and sometimes you think that you’re being quiet for the right reasons, but please people need to shine a light on dishonesty and the problems of the past,” Marker said.

“If you have any information on Joshua, the college, the monastery, or anything related to that time period come forward with it, because it is going to link it to something else,” said Marker.

This article was written to bring Joshua's story to light once more so there will hopefully be more movement on this case, and so that Joshua and his family can obtain justice. Call the Stearns County Sheriff's Department at 320-259-3700 if you have any information about Joshua Guimond. You can submit tips anonymously on the "Simply Vanished" website or via their tip line at 415-969-LOST (5678).

This is a link to Brian Guimond's GoFundMe to help hire new investigators and further his research.