

Episode 46: James spent 35 years in prison

David Tyler lives here in the Tampa Bay area of Florida. David is the person who introduced me to James Bain.

James was arrested at age 19 as a suspect in a horrible crime, which you'll learn about in a few minutes. He was convicted for that crime, and sentenced to prison. He spent 35 years in prison as part of his punishment for that crime. James was released from prison on December 17, 2009. David figured out how to get in touch with him, and invited him to a Tampa Bay Buccaneers football game.

What's interesting about this is the story behind WHY James was released. It's not because he finished his prison sentence, or because he convinced the parole board that he was ready to enter society again. James was released because after he had spent 35 years in prison, DNA evidence cleared him of being connected with the crime.

He was innocent.

David Tyler recognized that what James needed now was a friend. They've been close friends now for over 10 years. David runs Forgotten Angels, which is a home for young men who have aged out of the foster care system and need some guidance for their life. And James Bain helps with that.

It's kind of hard for me to even wrap my mind around being out of normal society for 35 years. I mean, that was the mid 1970s. No one had computers, no one had cell phones. Even a lot of televisions being sold then were still just black and white. So you can imagine it was quite a revelation for James when he was released and saw how the world and technology had changed over 35 years.

David introduced me to James a few months ago, at the 10 year anniversary of the day James was released from prison. I asked him if he would like to come on the podcast and tell his story. I hope you enjoy it.

Scott

Where were you living when you were 19 years old?

James

When I was 19 years old, I was living in Lake Wales, Florida. I was in the 11th grade at the time everything occurred.

Scott

Okay, let's talk about what happened that night. Now, this was on the 4th of March, 1974. What was the crime that happened that night?

James

On 4 March, I happened to be down at my friend's house. We were just having fun because we knew where their mother would be at the time this occurred. Normally, she wouldn't come home until 11:30. So, we were out there. It was me and about 5 other guys just doing our normal routine. After that ended, I started walking home to my house which was about 4 houses down

from me. I just walked to the house. I walked inside. I asked my sister what she was watching. She told me, and I just said, "Yeah." So, I laid on the couch for a few minutes. Then, I got on the floor. Once I got on the floor, I went to sleep.

The next thing I knew, my sister woke me up. She told me someone wanted me at the door. "Who would want me at the door?" She said it was the police. "The police?" I said. She said "Yes." So, I got up. I went to the door. They asked for my name. I told them my name. From that point, they told me "If you don't mind, would you go down to the station with me? We've got a small problem that we want to clear up". Without hesitation - not even going to ask my mom and dad who were in the back room - I thought I was just gonna go right down and come right back, but it didn't occur that way. Once they brought me out and took me to the car, they read me my rights, put me in the car, and took me down to the local station. Then, they took me to a room where we sat down about for 30-40 minutes. Then, they started coming in and questioning me. They asked me where I was and what I was doing. I told them but they never revealed that whole time they came in and told me what really occurred. I didn't find out until I was brought to the county jail because they told me once I was in there they were gonna have to keep me overnight. I said, "Keep me overnight!? For what?!". They wouldn't state. They said, "We're gonna keep you overnight. Then, you will be transferred to Bartow County Jail the following morning". So, I stayed there as there was no other choice. Then they transferred me to Bartow County Jail. Once I went to Bartow County Jail, they put me in another room. Then, they came out and started questioning me again. That's when the case unfolded.

Scott

So, when they took you in that night, you were actually under arrest?

James

I guess I was. They didn't state anything to me about what was going on until I went to Bartow County Jail. Once I was in Bartow County Jail, then, they told me exactly what had happened. They told me a kid had gotten raped at a softball diamond out on the pitcher's mound - which was very well known in Lake Wales from all around the counties and other counties that would come out here and play softball. He was taken from a house through Orange Road, out on the baseball diamond. From that point, his clothes were ripped off of him - his pajamas. The perpetrator told him, "If you say my name or try to look at me, I'm gonna kill you". This was what was said in the courtroom. He said, "If you look at me, I'm gonna kill you". He was frightened and scared. He did everything he told him to do. So, once he took him out on the diamond, he forced his head down on the diamond and told him once again, "If you look at me, I will kill you". From that point, he started tearing off his clothes - he had pajamas on that night. He tore up all of his pajamas and boxers, took his penis stuck out, and stuck it in his rectum. That's where my name came about. The perpetrator told him, "My name is Jimmy Bain. I ride a red motorcycle". This was all he told him - he told him once again after he finished ejaculating in him, "If you look at me, I'm gonna kill you". So, he stayed there - he stated this in the trial - until the perpetrator walked away back to Orange Road. Then, he got up and started coming back home. On his way home, he came back into the streets at Orange Road. His parents were already out there waiting. They didn't know he was going to come out at the time. So once he came out, they saw him. He walked up to them and told them exactly what took place out on the baseball diamond.

Scott

Then, they were looking for him already?

James

Yeah, they were getting ready to look for him with the police since his uncle was the school principal at this time. I knew him from grade school and up. I knew him very well. Actually, we never got along but he knew me by the name "Jimmy" - that's what the perpetrator used during the rape. This is exactly what he said after he found out that it wasn't me through the DNA test. That was what the victim did - he called the Innocence Project and told them exactly what took place that night. He took it upon himself to call to tell them exactly what took place. This is what he told them. He said, "My uncle went back to the school and brought a picture of Jimmy Bain" - he stated this as well during the rape case. The perpetrator had a beard. I had a beard - true enough at that age. He said he was trying to see him but he never could because of the way he was pressing his head into the pitcher's mound. His uncle said, "A Jimmy? Jimmy. Jimmy. Jimmy Bain. That name sounds familiar". So they went to the police station. That name rang a bell to his uncle. He went to the school because he's the principal now. That name rang a bell so he went to the school to get my picture photo at school records and brought it back to the police. They set it on the desk in front of him with the police and asked, "Is this Jimmy Bain?" Apparently, feeling frightened at that time and age, he said, "Yeah". That's how I got involved. You need to remember that this case unfolded two miles away and I was walking along these other people's houses - just four houses down - for months, which was never said during the crime.

Scott

So, that was never brought up during the trial?

James

It was never brought up.

Scott

How long were you in jail before you went to trial?

James

I was in jail for 81 days.

Scott

During that time, what were you thinking? Obviously, you were thinking that this was going to get cleared up, right?

James

Well, I thought it was going to get cleared up before we went to trial.

Scott

At that point, you needed to get a lawyer.

James

Everything. That's what my mom was doing during that process. My mother and father were doing that while I was in jail.

Scott

Were they able to find a good attorney for you?

James

Well actually, they wanted to get one out of Lake Wales but were skeptical of it. So, they got 1 out of Tampa but they said it's best to try to get 1 out of Polk County. So, we got one out of Polk County.

Scott

Was he okay? Did he do a good job?

James

Sir, after looking back on that trial every night for 35 to 37 years, he did a very bad job.

Scott

It sounds like it's such an obvious thing when you've got an alibi like that. Why would he not bring that up?

James

Your guess is as good as mine. My mother paid him so much money that I don't even know, how much they paid him to this day. They took that to the grave what they paid him. In my opinion, he just kept me off death row. That's all he did.

Scott

Do you think he actually thought you were guilty?

James

Well, apparently he did. Considering during the investigation, he didn't even go to the crime scene. He drove by the house with some of my family members - actually, not him but some of the attorneys working for him. They just drove by the house. They didn't go inside for any DNA or anything like that. It wasn't DNA but just searching for a blood sample or signs of forced entry. They didn't do any of that though I subpoenaed 12 people. The state took it upon themselves to subpoena only 4 and I had a feeling something was going to go wrong there. Once the trial started, everything was going through this process of weak A, strong A, and strong B blood types. It didn't seem to matter anyway because I had doctors on my side and doctors on his side speaking about this issue pertaining to the blood type.

Scott

Blood type... okay...

James

Yes, but once they put him on the stand, they asked, "Is the person who did this to you in this courtroom?". They asked him to stand up. He stood up, pointed at me, and told the jury and everybody in the courtroom that it was me who did this to him. I knew from that point I wouldn't get out of this. I was found guilty by a jury of 5 whites and 1 black

Scott

Were you sentenced that day or was it later?

James

Actually, I think they sentenced me about a month later. Everybody came in the same as they did in the trial, which as you see was to no avail. My final sentence was a mandatory quarter, meaning you have to do 25 years before you're eligible to see the parole board. From the way the state saw it, a mandatory quarter life sentence had no limitation on getting out of prison.

Scott

You can see the parole board after 25 years.

James

Yes, which I did get a chance to see but that, as well, was to no avail.

Scott

Can you talk about that first day that you went into prison?

James

Well, that was 1 of the most horrible experiences I had ever gone through. It was like being on another planet. That's just how it felt to me. I was young. I don't know what or how to do anything. I was just snatched off the street and put in this atmosphere. I just did more looking and trying to find a way to fit in there. Mainly, I stayed around people I knew cause I knew a few people that were in the prison from Lake Wales. I kind of just hung around them over that period of time as a couple of months, then years went by.

Scott

How did you adapt during those first few months?

James

It took me at least 10 years before I found myself knowing that I wasn't gonna get out of there. So, I had to do the best I could to try to hang onto my health, my sanity, and my dignity. This took about 10 years.

Scott

So, it took that long for you to come to that realization that this was real?

James

Correct.

Scott

Were you ever attacked in prison?

James

Sir, that's the first thing you've got to look out for. In prison, from a simple look or a brush, you've got to defend yourself - because you're normally on your own. Now, I had so many fights in there because to me - that atmosphere, through all those years - it was like being on the Serengeti. On the Serengeti, only the strong survive.

Scott

Obviously, you had some friends that you made in prison.

James

Yes.

Scott

However, you also had some enemies, probably?

James

Oh yeah. You always have those because it's a close environment. The main thing about the prison system you probably never comprehended is the tension. It always has tension in there. When you have an 18-year-old boy or police telling you what to do, you got to do exactly what they tell you to do. A kid just got a job in the system. Now, just try to picture that. He's telling you what and how to do it, and that's the main thing about that issue. There is tension.

Scott

I can imagine it would be bad enough for the people that are in there that know they should be in there.

James

Yes.

Scott

I guess it doesn't do any good to try to explain, "Hey. Wait a minute. I'm innocent. I'm not supposed to be here".

James

No. These people at the classification office see you twice a year for progress. They look at your record and try to judge to see how you're doing. "Are you in a program? Are you going to school? Are you doing your job?" These are just the records they keep through the years.

Scott

Did you join a gang?

James

Oh no. No. I've never been in a gang. I never even dreamed of getting into a gang.

Scott

I've heard, sometimes, people will say, "When you go into prison, you've got to join a gang or a group so that you can be defended or they can help you."

James

That's so very true. Now, since the early 80s, it was a thing. It was even worse than now.

Scott

Back then, you didn't need to?

James

No. We called it was a "homeboy" thing during the era I was in there. If you had a problem with somebody, normally, your homeboy was gonna help you out, in a sense, with your problem. All the times I got into a problem and tried to do it myself in that way, it won't show a sign of weakness although I was a very small person. If you could stand on your own, they understood that. I don't mean the police but the inmates.

Scott

You got to earn their respect.

James

Oh, yeah. Yes, you better earn it.

Scott

What prisons were you in throughout that time?

James

I was in six of 'em sir. Okeechobee was the last one I was in before I left. I spent 15 years at Polk. That was the longest I was at 1 facility.

Scott

Was that the first one?

James

No, that was the second one.

Scott

Why did they move you from one prison to another?

James

Well, that's something they've been doing since the early 80s. Now, it's very common to do it because they don't want you to get too familiar with the staff. Believe me, we can get up on staff. It doesn't take long. Well, I'm living proof that you can get up on the staff.

Scott

What does that mean? Can you explain that?

James

That means if I can pay you to do anything or to bring me something, I could get you to do anything for me. The bottom line is "If I could persuade you..." - that's the keyword. You're looking for persuasion and that's going on every day. That's why they have to try to move you around after a certain amount of years.

Scott

What kind of stuff would the staff bring in?

James

Anything I can talk you into bringing, sir.

Scott

Like what? What would you want?

James

Anything. Normally, it would be drugs.

Scott

When an inmate wants a staff member to bring drugs in, it's so that they can sell that to other inmates or they can use them for themselves.

James

Use it themselves and sell it.

Scott

How does the inmate pay a staff person to do that?

James

Well, they could do a money order or give him his telephone number so they could send a money order to him. With a certain number, he could call that inmate. He would give him the call and, then, they would wire money over that way.

Scott

Like a friend on the outside could pay?

James

Yeah, correct.

Scott

All right. Okay.

James

There's always a connection if I could get you to do it.

Scott

Usually, convictions for crimes against a child are especially bad in prison. They're very horrible. Did the other inmates know what you were convicted for?

James

Actually, after so many years of being in there, I went in with the theory of fight. So, I had to put my life at risk with what we call the jailhouse lawyers. The moment I got in there sir was when I went to fight. I met quite a few of them through the years. Also, you can't lie to them because once they start filing your paperwork and something comes back that you didn't tell them, you're at risk. So you have to be honest with them, or you could pay them.

Scott

You're talking about paying the staff, the guard?

James

No, paying the inmate to do your paperwork for you. You gave them cigarettes, canteen items, that kind of stuff.

Scott

So, those inmates that filed the paperwork are the ones you're paying just to keep quiet?

James

Correct, because they're so busy doing theirs that they wouldn't accept that from you or anyone. Just do your paperwork cause everybody doesn't go in there with education to try and fight their cases.

Scott

So, most of the other people in the prison didn't really know what your real charge was then.

James

Actually, the guys who did my paperwork had to know. I wasn't gonna keep it from them but I had to take the risk. You need to remember there are always risks involved there.

Scott

So, you were counting on them not to let that get out?

James

I had no other choice if I'm gonna get out of prison, sir. I had to take that risk.

Scott

Were you ever in special protective custody in prison?

James

Oh no. No, none of that. All that came later in the years.

Scott

What was it that finally happened, that enabled your case to be reopened?

James

Like I told you, I'd been writing and writing with so many writs. Throughout the years, there was this one particular writ - when I wrote over at Okeechobee - where they told me that I'll be coming back to the county jail and having my case heard. Now, these people from the Innocence Project, even back then, would get a weekly journal every month. It indicated cases fitting to be unfolded in Florida systems. They looked at these weekly journals if there was any way they could help guys with their cases. So, when I got in contact with him, the gentleman was actually going to another country. He was on his flight when he decided to pull out his weekly journal to look at the cases getting ready to be unfolded this upcoming month. He saw mine. He looked at it and he said, "Oh. Maybe this guy needs some help". He stated that as soon as he got to the place he was going he called back the Innocence Project in Tallahassee and told them if they could look into my case. After he got my name and my DC number, within 8 months of our first call, I was released. It took them 8 months.

Scott

There was a change in the law about DNA testing wasn't there?

James

There were so many things they were using against me, sir.

Scott

However, it was the DNA that was the deciding factor?

James

Oh yeah. That was the deciding factor but they first had to go through the paperwork with the state. That's why they were trying to do as much as they could to get them not to do it. It's just that you can't stop somebody outside - they were mainly lawyers. You can't stop them because, believe it or not, through the years, he was telling me that everything in my case was destroyed. Can you believe that?

Scott

All the evidence was destroyed?

James

This was what these chain gang lawyers were telling me through the years - all my evidence was destroyed - but as soon as they got involved-

Scott

The Innocence Project?

James

Yeah. As soon as the Innocence Project got involved, in less than 2 weeks, they found the boxers in the archive in Bartow storage.

Scott

These were the boxers that the little boy was wearing that night?

James

It was the boxers that the little boy was wearing and the same clothing I was wearing.

Scott

That's just amazing that it was in storage all the time.

James

They were right about the record though. All that was destroyed but the boxes and the clothing they took that night from the both of us were still there. They were separated though. That's where they found the DNA from the boxes that excluded me.

Scott

So, it was somebody else's.

James

Yes, but you've got to remember this DNA - then and now - is a powerful tool because that could have saved the state a lot of things. In my own case, I came to find out that I could have brought the dots together with this DNA. It can either free you or lock you - that's what I mean. If you have something you're not talking about or don't want to talk about, they would drill you, sir. They're like the military. Every time they would call and want to see you, they would ask you, "Do you want to take this test? But you don't know the obstacles until afterward." That's what they would try to tell you. They will tell you directly in your face, "You might have something else that this thing could bring up". Sitting there talking to these people, you could tell them anything to try and convince them, but I've come to find out that DNA is gonna do 1 of the 2. It is going to lock you or free you. I told them each time they came, "I want to take it."

Scott

Right, because you knew you were innocent from the start.

James

Oh, I know. Yeah, I knew from the beginning.

Scott

So, the Innocence Project was able to get access to DNA testing and that's what excluded you as the source.

James

Correct. Okay, correct.

Scott

So, my understanding is that it led to a motion to declare you innocent?

James

Oh yes. Yes.

Scott

Then, were you released?

James

No. I wasn't released, even then. After they found out that it wasn't me, I was still in the prison system. Do you know who came and did the DNA for me while I was in the system? It was the state that came. The state came right before I was getting ready to go back to trial. They came back about 2 weeks before I was getting ready to go back to try to test it here. They wanted to test me themselves. They called me upfront and told me they wanted to swab me. They wanted to test me. They told me everything they wanted to do at home. I said, "Go ahead. Take it". So they did their test. Believe it or not, less than about 15 minutes before I was gonna go see the judge, they had stipulations put in. However, within that 15 minutes, the state came and made the same conclusion that it wasn't me. They had in mind to probably put a monitor on me - that's what the lawyers told me because they weren't sure what it was going to do. That was until the state came in and made their conclusion within 15 minutes before I went out. That's when the judge told me on my way out, "You are cleared of everything".

Scott

I've seen this video in the courtroom where the judge declared you innocent and you were free from that moment.

James

Oh yes. Yeah. The lawyers for the DNA stated if they were gonna try to have me out before Christmas which they were able to do.

Scott

Let's listen to what happened in court that day.

Man 1

We've talked back with the Florida Department of law enforcement - who have been absolutely terrific in expediting the testing of the evidence that was submitted - and they have excluded Mr. Bain as the source of the semen on the victim's underwear. They found no indication of serological value on the defendant's pants or underwear. He's just not connected. There's a differential so based on that, the state of Florida, along with the defense, would like to file with the court a joint motion to vacate the sentence. The State of Florida would also like to file them

just to make sure there's no misunderstanding. Notice in all the processes, in this case, that we will submit to the court order vacating the judgment of this sentence.

Man 2

Gentleman, is there anything else before I sign the order? Hearing nothing, I'll go ahead and sign this. Let me get a pen somewhere. I have now signed the order, sir. You are a free man. Congratulations! (Clapping)

Scott

What was the first thing you did after you were released?

James

Well, the first thing I wanted to do was get home to my mother. My mother was ill. There were a lot of health problems throughout the years. That's why she wasn't able to be there at the courthouse on the day of my release, but she made a good statement. She watched it all on TV until I got to the house.

Scott

How far away was it from her house to the courthouse?

James

It was about 54 miles from Bartow to Tampa.

Scott

So, she saw it on TV and she knew you were on your way home?

James

Oh yes. She knew.

Scott

She had to be pretty excited about that.

James

Oh, she was.

Scott

I'm sure you were too, obviously.

James

Yes, I was.

Scott

What was your first meal when you got out?

James

Well, my first meal was what they brought to the courtroom, which was chicken and something else. They brought pizzas but I didn't really care for pizza. That's what they brought in though.

Scott

Wasn't there a soda that you were you were looking for?

James

Well actually, the lawyer made a good statement about the choices that I had. He brought a Dr. Pepper and a Mountain Dew. He said, "Now you got a choice. Which one do you want? Or instead you can have both".

Scott

What did you notice when you got out? What change had happened the most that you could see?

James

Sir, you've got to remember when I got out- I mean I went in in 1974. Nixon was just getting ready to be impeached and they just had landed on the moon prior to 1968. You could imagine what had changed in that time was so much. How do you even think of what has changed? It was mainly people - there are more people now.

Scott

How do you mean that?

James

There are more people on the planet because medicine got better than it was in 1974. Cars went aerodynamic. Anything from planes, boats, motorcycles, all this kind of stuff went aerodynamic. So, you can imagine me just trying to walk from one place to the next street. I was scared because of all this traffic moving. Everybody's zooming. Nobody ever missed me unless I said something, walking past them. They were just going forward. That's all they know. I was even scared to cross the street without somebody watching out for me. So, I didn't go very far away from the house. I would just go forward, right outside the door, and look down the streets.

Scott

What do you do after you've been in there for so long? You can do whatever you want. Did you have a plan? What did you want to do?

James

No, nobody has a plan when they come out. You're just trying to fit back in. That's why it's very different if each one of us gets out today. There will never be 2 same people coming out the same, at the same time. That atmosphere can do a lot of damage to you, sir.

Scott

How long did it take you to adapt to being on the outside?

James

Well, sir, in not much time. I don't know why. It didn't take much time.

Scott

Have you had any contact with the victim or his family?

James

After he personally found out that it wasn't me, he took it upon himself to call the Innocence Project and told them, once again, exactly what took place that night in that county jail. They were shocked.

Scott

Have you been able to talk with him at all?

James

No. Actually, I told him I would love to talk to him but believe it or not - can you believe this? - his father had some kind of thing over him. This gentleman was 47 years old when I got out and he was still afraid of his father. His father and mother had been separated for many years already. Now, how can you let somebody still have some kind of hold over him? He didn't tell me directly but I could tell from his conversation with the people from the Innocence Project. I told him I would love to meet him face to face but he told them, "I would love to do it myself but my father-- you're 47 years old!" I don't know.

Scott

Yeah, he must want to talk and have some things to say to you. I mean, it was his testimony that was the biggest part of what sent you away.

James

Correct. I guess he just wanted to clear his conscience. That's why he called.

Scott

I've heard you say that you're not angry with anyone for all of those lost years. Why? How can you not be angry?

James

Sir, because you need to remember I'm from the Serengeti. I never said it to you but I've said it to other people that I was in a place to kill people as well as myself. It was "kill or be killed by someone" because of the tension. It's just so much tension, sir - a look, a bump, anything. Even back then, how could you go through a system without having words and rubbing up against somebody? That's why I told you prior that I've had many fights, but I'm thankful that I didn't lose a body part. By that, I meant getting stabbed, burnt, gas, or any kind of thing that would leave some serious damage on your body, and I give all those things to God. That's why I felt the moment I got out of prison - for the first 2 hours of being bombarded by the media and my family - there was nobody else that could've gotten me through that, but Him. That's why I gave all that anger away. That's when I became spiritual because I couldn't have done this without Him.

Scott

It's almost miraculous to think that you could lose that much time of your life and not have some bitterness about it.

James

Yeah, I have to be blessed because I've watched people all around me die over a simple look, a bump, or a rub. This is often what you'd find out on why they killed a person.

Scott

What would you say to someone that's in prison right now? What would you say to them? What advice would you have for that person that's innocent?

James

They got a better way of doing it. Now, all you have to do is reach out to these Innocence Projects around the country. They don't have to go with a chain gang lawyer. They've got numbers now - they could get from the library - but they just have to wait until the cases get heard. They are being bombarded every day by these requests around the globe.

Scott

Yeah. There are Innocence Project chapters in every major city.

James

Oh yeah. They're everywhere. That's why we do what we do, going to speak and trying to get the world to be aware of this.

Scott

So you work with them to promote their cause now?

James

Oh yes. Believe it or not, I'm their leader here in Florida. I'm their spokesman. When the rest of the guys got out, they then went on with their lives outside the stadium, which makes sense. To me, this is where I could give back.

Scott

So you're having a part in getting other innocent people out?

James

Oh yeah. When the gentlemen are getting out, they would call on me to be there to comfort the guys who are getting out.

Scott

Do you help them to fit into society after they're released?

James

Well, if I can. Yeah. I tried to do as much as I could but we have - what we call - a social worker, that does that very well here in Florida very well.

Scott

It was because these guys need to find work and a place to stay.

James

That's another thing we tried to do around the country as well. We tried to get social workers in other systems for these Innocence Projects, which requires money and that's something they don't have. So, everything given to them is normally donated.

Scott

This Innocence Project is actually a nonprofit, a 501C3?

James

Correct.

Scott

How are they funded? Do they just have people donating to them?

James

Correct. That's why we speak each and every chance we get, sir. Everywhere we go, we have to try to get somebody to help us because the DNA test costs \$2,000 to \$3,000 for one person to take.

Scott

Wow, I didn't realize that.

James

Well, you have to know the scenario behind them. So that's why we have to get out and do a lot of fundraising. I just came from 1 this past Sunday. So, we are forever doing that around the country.

Scott

It's a good arrangement. I mean, it worked out well. They got you out and free. Now, you're helping them in return.

James

Oh yes. That's my second job besides my family.

Scott

James, what's your life like today?

James

After I got out, I met a lady on my sister's job, which is in Tampa. There was a big job pool. My sister had been there for at least over 30-something years as she watched my case unfold on TV. The company had invited me to come and take a tour through their place of business. On my way there, I went to meet with my sister - which had been 30-something years since we saw each other - and she wanted to walk me through the whole building. She let me see what they did and what they've been doing - I got a chance to do all that. On my way out of the building, I met the lady of my life.

Scott

How did you meet?

James

Well, we just met as I was on my way out of the building. I looked at her. She looked at me. She was Hispanic. So, we caught each other's eyes. We got a chance to talk but I couldn't - the people in the plant were translating for us

Scott

That's because she speaks Spanish only?

James

Yes. She had only been in this country for 5 years at that time we met. So, they had someone personally translate for me. As a matter of fact, 2 of her sisters - and they are so very close to

us even today - translated for us. I told her I would like to talk to her. We got a chance to talk and I said to her that day we met, "We'll see how things go". Now, here we are, practically going on 9 years. From that one conversation, I told her, "We'll see how things go". Then, we got married about a year or so later. Yeah. Now, I have a 7-year-old son. We have a 13-year-old daughter who was 3 at the time I met her mother. I'm not the biological father but I did get a chance to meet him once. However, she sees me as her father now, which she didn't understand very well at the age of 3 but now she knows.

Scott

It seems like when you were inside, it would have been hard to imagine what your life would be like now.

James

I tell her that each and every day to her and the children because they're able to understand.

Scott

You have been out now for how long? 10 years?

James

10 years, in about a month now.

Scott

I know that's when you and I met. It was the end of the 10-year anniversary. Correct? Our friend David had a few people over and celebrated the 10-year anniversary of your release.

James

Correct.

Scott

The sad part still is that there are some innocent people still in prison.

James

Yeah, that's the most key thing to this whole conversation. That's why we do what we do.

Scott

So, you're doing everything you can to get them out.

James

Oh yes.

Scott

All right. I'm sad that it happened to you but your attitude and outlook are incredible.

James

It is not my time, sir. It's His time. I couldn't have done it without him.

Scott

Big thanks to James for coming on here and telling his story.

I also want to say thanks to David Tyler for connecting me with James. As I mentioned at the top of the show, David runs Forgotten Angels, and you can check out their work at ForgottenAngelsFlorida.org.

And one more thank you to my friend Bruce, a fellow podcaster, who connected me with David. I love having this great network of amazing people.

And speaking of amazing, you need to listen to my friend Margot! I met Margot recently at Podfest, a big podcaster conference in Orlando. I told her about my podcast, and she told me about her podcast, and now we're big fans of each other's shows! Hers is a true crime show called Military Murder. I'll let her tell you about that, but seriously, listen to her show and tell me what you think of her style and the way she tells a story. I think she's great.

And I'll see you in two weeks!

Margot

Hi, true-crime recruits! I am Margot, host of Military Murder, a show where I have combined my love for the military and my love for true crime to bring you military true crime cases. It's like true crime but, instead, of crimes committed by "Joe Schmo". The cases I cover are committed by private or veteran "Joe Schmo". Don't worry, you don't have to know anything about the military to listen. You just have to be a true crime enthusiast. On the show, I've covered the gruesome 1993 love triangle that led to a soldier's decapitation, and the infamous 2007 case of an astronaut who drove cross country - allegedly in a diaper - to confront her romantic rival. Most recently, I covered serial killer BTK who was an Air Force veteran. I hope that you will join me and my true crime army every Monday as they navigate these military true crimes. You can find Military Murder everywhere you listen to podcasts, including Apple, Stitcher, and Spotify. Now, go subscribe and listen right now.