

## The Amish Wife: Unraveling the Lies, Secrets, and Conspiracy That Let a Killer Go Free

**Gregg Olsen**

Thomas & Mercer (Jan 1, 2024)

Softcover \$16.99 (395pp)

978-1-5420-1650-6

Gregg Olsen combines the action and mystery of a thriller with an added layer of memoir in his coverage of the murder of Ida, an Amish woman.

On July 12, 1977, a mother in Ohio, Ida Stutzman, perished in a barn fire. Olsen first investigated Ida's death in 1989 for his book *Abandoned Prayers*; when he learned about the sensationalized murder of Eli and Ida's young son, Danny, he was compelled to revisit the case. This personal link adds an intriguing layer of guilt to Olsen's otherwise unbiased narration: If Olsen had asked the right questions to the right people the first time, would Eli still have become a serial killer, and could Danny have been spared?

True crime aficionados will relish in the noir prose. Olsen pokes through documents in midnight diners and makes grand, sweeping statements; he also makes snarky observations, describing Wayne County Sheriff Jim Frost as "indisputably the president and CEO of his own self-admiration society." The pacing is exquisite, with action, tension, and exposition all rolled together in a perfect spiral. Olsen luxuriates in the Amish setting too, vivifying and explaining its system of values and community: the Amish do not speak ill of others, so Olsen was forced to interpret people's facial expressions and what they said between the lines.

Though Olsen recognizes that it's too late to bring Ida and Danny's killer to justice, his text never backs down. Its goal is to reveal the truth, expose those who covered up Ida's murder, and ensure her legacy.

A regretful reporter revisits the Amish serial killer whom he first attempted to bring to justice thirty years ago in this unique, propulsive true crime text.

LEAH BLOCK (January / February 2024)

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