ISSUE NO. 22 · HOLIDAY 2026 THE HOLIDAY EDITION

THE PANHANDLE

Investigator

Holiday Edition

VOTED #1 BEST OF FLORIDA & BEST OF BAY

COVER STORY · ORGANIZED CRIME

Following the Load.

Jerry West tailed a theft ring from North Carolina to Miami to New York. Then Homeland Security moved in.



LOCATE
Six States. Twenty Years.
A toll camera, a tow truck and a booking sheet

UNDERCOVER
The President Was in Town
Infidelity surveillance at an Amelia Island resort

30A
Five Men, One Season
A court order, a gated community and a repair crew

COLD CASES
The Long Game
J.D. Nolin on why some cases take years

JUST FOR FUN
No Cases in the Keys
The wives' vacation report

PLUS: LOBBY GAMES P. 19 · FREE SHADOW TEAM AUDIOBOOKS P. 22

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THIS ISSUE, BY THE NUMBERS

2,000 miles of interstate, roughly: North Carolina to Miami to New York

6 states crossed to find one brother

1 presidential visit, and one very careful investigator

0 cases worked in the Keys (officially)

FROM THE OPERATING PARTNER

Every case is somebody's story.

People ask us all the time what a private investigator actually does. The honest answer is: whatever the case needs. This issue is our proof.

You'll ride along as Jerry West follows a load of stolen product from North Carolina to Miami to New York. Joe Perrigan turns a toll camera and a booking sheet into a front-door address. Jessica Kennedy works a resort pool during a presidential visit, and I'll take you inside a five-man operation on 30A at the height of the season.

J.D. reminds us that some cases take years. Our wives remind us that vacations are not cases. We're working on that one.

Names and identifying details have been changed or left out to protect our clients. The work is real.

From all of us at Nolin, Nolin & Associates, merry Christmas and a safe, happy holiday season.



Jacob Nolin
OPERATING PARTNER

ORGANIZED CRIME · MOBILE SURVEILLANCE

Following the Load

A North Carolina company's products were being sold by people who never paid for them. Jerry West followed the merchandise roughly 2,000 miles to find out where it went.



BY JERRY WEST
SURVEILLANCE TRAINER & INVESTIGATOR

The call came from a company that got its start in North Carolina. Product was walking out the door, and it was turning up for sale at prices no legitimate seller could match. The client didn't need a theory. They needed to know where the merchandise was going, and who was moving it.

PICKING UP THE PRODUCT

We started where the goods were being sold. I set up surveillance on the sellers, watched who was buying in bulk and, more importantly, watched where it went next. On paper it looked like a string of small sales. On the ground it was a supply line: cases of product going out the back, into vehicles and onto a truck.

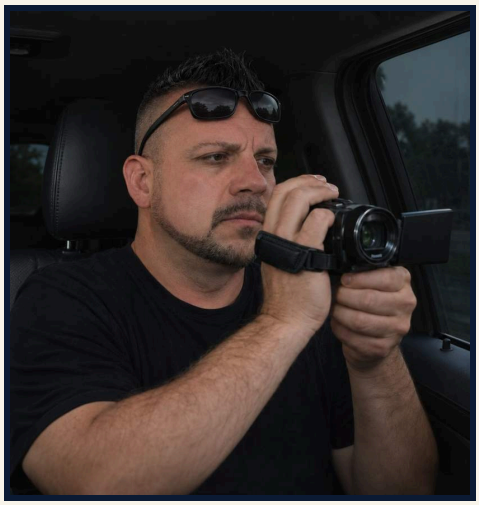
THE LONG WAY SOUTH

Following someone across town is a skill. Following a loaded vehicle down the interstate for hundreds of miles is a test of patience, fuel planning and bladder control. You can't ride their bumper, and you can't lose them at an exit. You keep traffic between you, change lanes like everybody else, and never let them see the same headlights for too long.

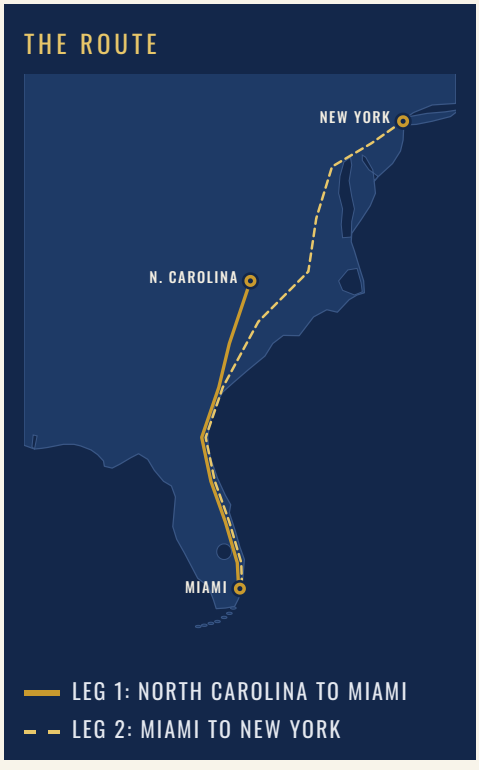
They drove the load all the way to Miami and dropped it. I documented the stop, the handoff and every vehicle involved. Then they turned around and headed north.

CASE AT A GLANCE

ROUTE	North Carolina to Miami to New York
FOUND	A residence and a warehouse full of product
PARTNER	Homeland Security, for the takedown



JERRY WEST, SURVEILLANCE INVESTIGATOR OF THE YEAR, 2021 AND 2022



NEW YORK

We stayed with them all the way to New York, and that's where the case opened up. We located the subjects' residence. Then we found the warehouse. Inside was the answer to our client's question: their product, stacked and waiting to be sold.

BRINGING IN HOMELAND SECURITY

Moving stolen goods across state lines is a federal matter, and a good investigator knows the difference between documenting a crime and making an arrest. We took everything we had to Homeland Security and partnered with their agents for the takedown. Our job was to make sure that when they moved, they already knew exactly where to go and what they would find.

"You never let them see the same headlights for too long."

THE ARRESTS

When the takedown came, two people were arrested in North Carolina and charged with stealing more than $250,000 worth of products, including over-the-counter medicines.

For the client, the mystery was over. The leak had names, a route and an address.

Jerry West is Nolin Investigations' Surveillance Trainer and was named Surveillance Investigator of the Year in 2021 and 2022. He started his career undercover in Escambia County.







PRODUCTS AND BOOKING PHOTOS RELEASED AFTER THE ARRESTS IN UNION COUNTY, N.C. BOTH HAVE BEEN CHARGED, NOT CONVICTED, AND ARE PRESUMED INNOCENT UNLESS PROVEN GUILTY IN COURT.

THE LONG-HAUL TAIL

How we follow a vehicle across state lines

1. Plan before they move: fuel, exits, tolls and rest stops.
2. Rotate positions so no car stays behind them too long.
3. Log everything: time, mile marker, plate and every stop.
4. Obey the law. Speed limits apply to investigators too, and we never use trackers without consent.
5. Hand it off at the right time. When it's an arrest, it's law enforcement's job.

Six States. Twenty Years. One Address.

A brother gone 20 years, and three weeks of digging to find his front door.



BY JOE PERRIGAN
ADVANCED LEAD ANALYST · CERTIFIED DIGITAL FORENSICS EXAMINER



JOE PERRIGAN: "A LOCATE IS NEVER ONE SEARCH. IT'S A HUNDRED SMALL ONES."

The request was simple to say and hard to do: find my brother. The client hadn't seen him in more than 20 years. His last known address was older than most smartphones, and every phone number was dead.

Every clue tells you where to look next. This one crossed six states.

THE TRAIL

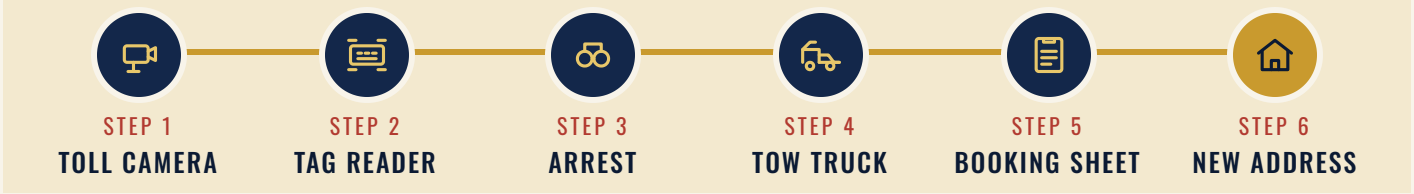
The first real break was a vehicle. Once we tied a plate to him, a toll camera put it on the road, and a license plate reader put it in another state, heading somewhere that made sense.

Then the trail got interesting. He had been arrested for driving without a valid license. When someone is arrested on the roadside, the car has to go somewhere, so a tow truck came. When someone is booked into jail, a booking sheet gets filled out. The booking sheet led us to a new address.

VERIFY, THEN REPORT

Every piece came from lawful sources: public, court and arrest records, and data available to licensed investigators. We verified the address before we reported it. After 20 years, the wrong door is worse than no door at all.

Three weeks later, the client had his answer. What happened next belonged to the family.



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Undercover, Under the Radar

A luxury resort, a cheating husband and a presidential visit. On this case, blending in wasn't just good tradecraft. It was everything.



FEATURING JESSICA KENNEDY
LEAD INVESTIGATOR, SURVEILLANCE OPERATIONS



JESSICA KENNEDY, LEAD INVESTIGATOR, SURVEILLANCE OPERATIONS

Most of our surveillance work comes down to one thing: not being noticed. On this case, not being noticed took on a whole new meaning.

The client suspected her husband was spending time at a high-end resort on Amelia Island, and not alone. The timing couldn't have been trickier. The President was visiting the island that week.

That meant extra security everywhere. Every entrance had more eyes on it, and every unfamiliar face got a second look.

The people protecting a president are trained to notice exactly what an investigator does: someone watching, someone lingering, someone who doesn't quite fit.

So Jessica made sure she fit.

DRESSING THE PART

A sundress from a beach bar won't cut it at a luxury resort. Jessica went with resort wear, good sunglasses, a novel she actually read and a drink she barely touched. Nothing flashy, nothing cheap, nothing memorable.

RESPECTING THE DETAIL

With federal security on the island, the rules were simple. Stay well clear of anything secured. Follow every instruction. Never give anyone a reason to wonder about you.

A private investigator's job is to observe and report. Nothing about this case was worth getting in the way of the people doing theirs.

BY THE POOL

Patience paid off poolside. The subject spent the afternoon stretched out on a lounger with his girlfriend, and they weren't shy about it: hand holding, kisses, and sunscreen applications that went on a little too long.

Jessica documented all of it from the pool deck, just another guest catching some sun. Everything was captured in public view, from areas open to resort guests, with time stamps. That's what keeps evidence usable.

> ***"The goal isn't to hide. It's to be so ordinary nobody remembers you."***

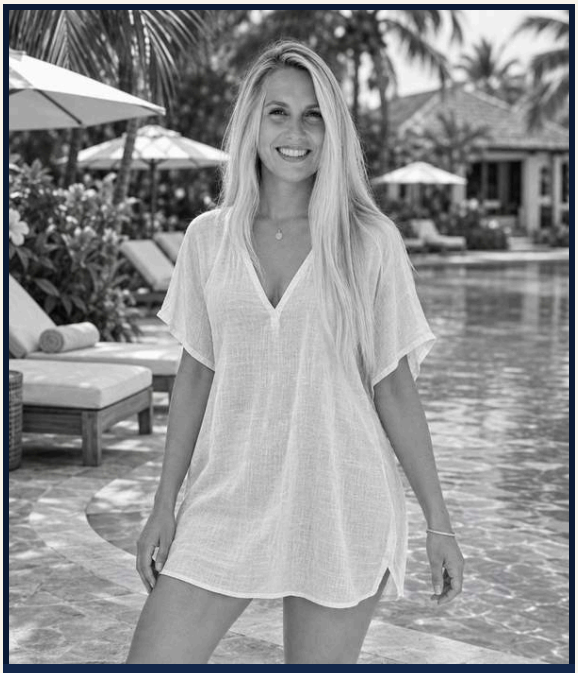
FACTS, NOT SUSPICIONS

The client didn't want a scene, and she didn't get one. She got what she hired us for: clear, lawful documentation of what was really going on, so she could decide what came next.

CASE AT A GLANCE

WHERE	A luxury resort on Amelia Island
WHEN	During a presidential visit
COVER	Just another resort guest
EVIDENCE	Time-stamped photos and video, all in public view
RESULT	Facts for the client, no scene

Jessica Kennedy leads surveillance operations for our Amelia Island office, which also covers Jacksonville. Her earlier Amelia Island case, "Sundress Surveillance," ran in our Winter 2026 issue.



JESSICA'S RULES

Blending in at a luxury resort

1. Dress one notch above the crowd, never two.
2. Carry a prop that explains you: a novel, a spa robe, a cocktail menu.
3. Be pleasant and forgettable. Tip well, chat briefly, move on.
4. Your phone is your camera. Everyone takes pictures at a pool.
5. Know when to call it a day. If someone with an earpiece looks twice, you're done.

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Discreet surveillance from the investigator who wrote these rules.

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Our Northeast Florida satellite office, backed by our Panama City main office. Surveillance operations led by Lead Investigator Jessica Kennedy, with the full Nolin team behind every case.

INFIDELITY	CHILD CUSTODY	UNDERCOVER OPS
SURVEILLANCE	MISSING PERSONS	BACKGROUND CHECKS

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Five Men, One Season

Peak season on 30A. Gated communities. A five-man crew in work shirts, and an out-of-state sex offender who wasn't supposed to be anywhere near those kids.



BY JACOB NOLIN
OPERATING PARTNER



JACOB NOLIN, OPERATING PARTNER, ON 30A

If you've ever tried to drive 30A in July, you already know our first problem. Peak season means bumper-to-bumper traffic, packed beach accesses and gated communities where a strange car parked on the street gets noticed fast.

The case was serious. An out-of-state sex offender was under a court order that barred him from being around his girlfriend's children. The concern was that he was ignoring it, in a vacation town where nobody knew him.

THE CREW

One investigator in a parked car doesn't last long in a gated community, so we didn't send one. We ran a five-man team working undercover as a repair crew. A work truck and a crew in matching shirts is about the most invisible thing there is. Nobody questions the guys fixing a fence or hauling tools down the street.

CASE AT A GLANCE

WHERE	30A, Walton County
WHEN	Peak season
TEAM	Five investigators
COVER	Repair crew
PARTNER	Local security contact
RESULT	Subject taken into custody

THE INSIDE CONTACT

Gates were the other problem. We partnered with a contact who runs security in the area, and with his help we had full, authorized access to the gated locations where the subject was spending his time. That access was the difference between guessing and knowing.

DOCUMENTING THE VIOLATION

Over the course of the operation, we documented the subject with his girlfriend's children: exactly the contact the court order prohibited. Every observation was logged with the date, time and location, and backed by video.

> *"A work truck and a crew in matching shirts is about the most invisible thing there is."*

A MONTH LATER

A month later, I testified by video. The judge reviewed the evidence and took the subject into custody.

I've been part of a lot of cases. This is the kind I don't take lightly. Those kids were the reason the court order existed, and they were the reason we were there.

HOW IT UNFOLDED

1. **THE SETUP** — Five investigators in position, working as a repair crew
2. **THE ACCESS** — A security partner provides authorized access to the gates
3. **THE EVIDENCE** — Contact with the children documented on video
4. **A MONTH LATER** — Jacob testifies by video
5. **THE RULING** — The judge takes the subject into custody

COURT-READY, OR IT DIDN'T HAPPEN

What makes evidence hold up in front of a judge

1. Facts, not opinions: who, what, when and where.
2. Video that shows context, not just a moment.
3. Lawful collection, so it can't be thrown out.
4. An investigator ready to testify, in person or by video.

RUNNING A TEAM OP

A five-person operation needs roles: a lead, an "eyeball" with the direct view, rotating cars, someone on documentation and someone watching the watchers. On 30A, add one more: whoever is holding the ladder.



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The Long Game

Some cases are solved in a week. Some take twenty years. J.D. Nolin on the patience, the people and the persistence it takes to bring a cold case home.



BY J.D. NOLIN
MANAGING PARTNER · RETIRED MAJOR, BAY COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE



J.D. NOLIN WITH A STACK OF CASE FILES

I spent more than 33 years in law enforcement, more than 20 of them in the criminal investigation division of the Bay County Sheriff's Office. If those years taught me anything about cold cases, it's this: a case doesn't go cold because people stop caring. It goes cold because the trail stops talking. The art is getting it to talk again.

READ IT LIKE IT'S NEW

The first thing I do with a cold case is read everything, start to finish, as if I'd never heard of it. Reports, photographs, evidence logs, the notes scribbled in the margins. Somebody wrote down a name years ago, and nobody ever followed up. That name might be the whole case.

TIME CAN BE ON YOUR SIDE

Time works against a fresh case. With a cold one, it can work for you. Relationships change. The friend who lied for someone years ago isn't a friend anymore. Marriages end. People get older, get sober, find faith or simply get tired of carrying a secret. A witness who wouldn't talk then may be ready now.

LET TECHNOLOGY CATCH UP

Evidence that told us nothing years ago can say a great deal today. Forensic science has come a long way, and so have records, databases and the digital trails people leave behind. Part of working a cold case is asking one question over and over: what can we test, search or check today that we couldn't back then?

PATIENCE IS A SKILL

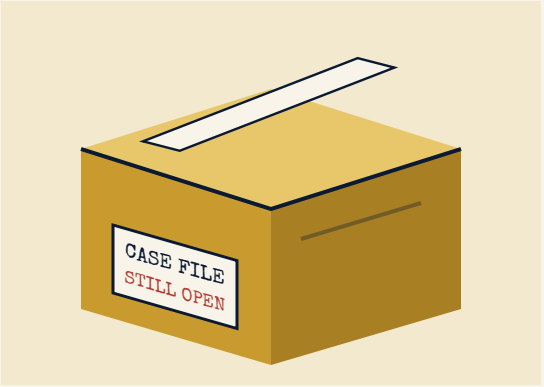
Some cold cases take months. Some take years. A few take decades. You keep a case alive by working it steadily, coming back to it and never assuming you've heard the last word.

In our Fall issue I wrote about "Buried Secrets," a 1988 Bay County case. Cases like that stay with you, and they remind you why you don't quit.

> ***"A case goes cold because the trail stops talking. The art is getting it to talk again."***

FOR THE FAMILIES

Behind every cold case is a family that never stopped asking questions. They deserve investigators who won't stop either. If your family has an unsolved case, we'll sit down with you, review what exists and tell you honestly what can be done.



J.D.'S COLD CASE RULES

1. Read the whole file like it's brand new.
2. Find the people whose lives have changed.
3. Retest, re-search and re-interview.
4. Write everything down. The next investigator will thank you.
5. Never promise a family an outcome. Promise them effort.

Have a cold case? Here's what helps us start.

BRING WHAT YOU HAVE

CASE NUMBERS
Any report or case number, and the agency that worked it

NAMES
Victims, witnesses, suspects and the original investigators

A TIMELINE
Dates, places and anything your family has written down

DOCUMENTS
Letters, news clippings, photos and court papers

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"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."
Matthew 5:9

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NOLIN, NOLIN & ASSOCIATES INVESTIGATIONS IS PROUD TO SUPPORT BCLEO

No Cases in the Keys

We took our husbands to the Florida Keys with one rule: no working. Here's how long that lasted.

BY BRITTANY AND JODI · MARRIED TO JACOB AND JERRY

Rule number one was written on a napkin before we left the driveway: NO CASES. No surveillance, no "just checking something," no radio chatter and no reading license plates out loud. Jacob and Jerry both signed it. We had it laminated.

MILE MARKER 50. Jerry announced that a white SUV had been behind us since Key Largo. There is one road. Everyone has been behind us since Key Largo.

CHECK-IN. Jacob asked the front desk which rooms had the best view of the parking lot. We asked for the best view of the ocean. We won.

DAY ONE AT THE BEACH. They picked chairs with "good sightlines." We moved the chairs. They moved them back. The chairs moved more than the tide.

HAPPY HOUR. A man at the bar told the bartender he was in town "on business." Jerry leaned over and whispered, "He's not." We confiscated Jerry's margarita for 15 minutes.

SNORKEL TRIP. Jerry is a certified master diver, so he went under first and came up with a full description of everyone on the boat. Jacob counted the exits. The fish were left alone.



BRITTANY AND JODI, OFFICIALLY ON VACATION. FISH CAUGHT: UNCONFIRMED.

SUNSET AT MALLORY SQUARE. Beautiful. Peaceful. Then Jacob said, "See the guy in the hat? Watch his hands." He was a street performer doing magic tricks. We had to explain that the tricks were the point.

THE LAST NIGHT. We asked for their favorite part of the trip. Jacob said the sunset. Jerry said the guy at the bar, who was "definitely not here on business."

FINAL SCORE	0	?	2
	CASES WORKED (OFFICIALLY)	NOTES TAKEN	SUNBURNED NECKS (FROM FACING THE PARKING LOT)

Next year we're going somewhere with no parking lots. Suggestions welcome.

ASK THE INVESTIGATOR

Your Questions, Answered

The questions we hear most often, answered by the people who work the cases.

Q. Can I put a GPS tracker on my spouse's car?

Not without consent. In Florida, secretly tracking another person's vehicle is a crime, and it can hand the other side a criminal complaint in the middle of your divorce or custody case. Let licensed investigators document it the legal way, with surveillance.

J.D. NOLIN, MANAGING PARTNER

Q. How long does it take to find someone?

It depends on how cold the trail is. Some locates take a day. The six-state case in this issue took three weeks. The more you can tell us, such as a full name, date of birth, old addresses, vehicles and friends, the faster we move.

JOE PERRIGAN, ADVANCED LEAD ANALYST

Q. Will the person I'm investigating find out?

Not from us. Discretion is the whole job. We don't confront subjects, and your details stay confidential.

JESSICA KENNEDY, LEAD INVESTIGATOR

Q. Can you get someone's phone records or text messages?

No, and be wary of anyone who says they can. Getting someone's phone records through trickery is a federal crime. What we do is lawful research, surveillance and court-ready documentation.

JOE PERRIGAN, ADVANCED LEAD ANALYST

Q. Will your evidence hold up in court?

When it's gathered lawfully and documented properly, yes, and we'll testify to it, in person or by video. That's the difference between an investigation and a hunch.

JACOB NOLIN, OPERATING PARTNER

Q. Do you work cases outside the Panhandle?

Yes. Our main office is in Panama City, with satellite offices in Pensacola, Navarre, Fort Walton Beach, Destin and Amelia Island, remote investigators from Orlando to the Florida Keys and investigators covering 10 states. (Our wives would like it noted that the Keys investigators are not us.)

JERRY WEST, SURVEILLANCE TRAINER

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Got a question for the team? Call (850) 899-2717. Educational information, not legal advice. Talk to a Florida attorney about your specific situation.

Spot the Difference

Surveillance is all about noticing what changed. Picture B has 8 differences from Picture A. A good investigator finds them all in under three minutes.

PICTURE A · THE SEASIDE MOTEL, CHRISTMAS EVE, 11:42 P.M.



PICTURE B · SAME MOTEL, TEN MINUTES LATER. FIND 8 DIFFERENCES.



FOUND: ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

ANSWERS ON PAGE 21

The Case of the Missing Ring

At a beachfront wedding reception, the bride's grandmother's ring vanished from the gift table between **8:00 and 8:15 p.m.** Four people were seen near the table just before it disappeared. Our investigator took their statements and checked every one. One alibi doesn't hold up. Can you find it?

Uncle Ray

FATHER OF THE BRIDE

"I never left the bar. Ask anybody."

WE CHECKED: The bartender has receipts for Ray's drinks at 8:04, 8:09 and 8:14.

Tasha

MAID OF HONOR

"I was in the restroom fixing the bride's dress from 8:00 until 8:20."

WE CHECKED: The bride says Tasha was with her the entire time.

Dale

PHOTOGRAPHER

"I was down on the beach shooting the sunset. Check my camera."

WE CHECKED: His camera's photos are time-stamped 7:56, 7:58, 8:02, 8:17 and 8:19.

Mia

COUSIN OF THE GROOM

"I was on the dance floor all night."

WE CHECKED: Her dance partner says they danced from 7:55 to 8:25 without a break, and the DJ's video shows her at 8:10.

THE EVIDENCE

1. A trail of sand leads from the boardwalk to the gift table.
2. The empty ring box turns up in a trash can by the dessert table.
3. Sunset that night was at 8:09 p.m., the best ten minutes of light all evening.

YOUR VERDICT

Who took the ring, and which two clues give them away?

ANSWER ON PAGE 21

YOUR CASE NOTES

Investigator's tip: an alibi is only as good as its time stamps.

Crack the Code

TEST 1 · THE CODED NOTE

An investigator left this note for the team. Every letter was moved **three places forward** in the alphabet (A became D, B became E). Write the real message in the blanks.

W K H W U X W K L V R Q H

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

F D O O D Z D B

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

TEST 3 · MEMORY CHECK

No flipping back. From this issue:

1. What did Jerry follow from North Carolina to New York?
2. How long did Joe's six-state search take?
3. What was the 30A team's undercover cover?

TEST 2 · FIND THE 3 MISTAKES

A sloppy surveillance log can sink a case in court. This one has three mistakes. Can you spot them?

SURVEILLANCE LOG · CASE 22-117 · INVESTIGATOR #4

2:05 PM	Subject leaves home in a gray Honda, plate PI-2717.
2:20 PM	Subject parks at the gym and goes inside with a gym bag.
2:15 PM	Subject walks out of the gym and gets back in the car.
3:40 PM	Subject arrives at a restaurant in a blue Honda.
4:10 PM	Subject leaves the restaurant, plate PI-2771.

Got them all? You think like an investigator.

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ANSWER KEY FOR PAGES 19 TO 21 (TURN THE MAGAZINE OVER)

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE: The moon is a crescent. A star is missing. Door 12 is now 17. Room 11's window is dark. VACANCY became NO VACANCY. One coconut is gone. The plate reads PI 2711. The cat left the roof.

THE CODE: THE TRUTH IS ONE CALL AWAY.

THE MISSING RING: Dale, the photographer. He has no photos from 8:02 to 8:17, right through the 8:09 sunset he says he was shooting, and he's the only one who was on the beach, which explains the sand at the gift table.

THE LOG: He leaves the gym at 2:15, before he arrived at 2:20. The gray Honda turns blue. The plate changes from PI-2717 to PI-2771.

MEMORY CHECK: 1. A load of stolen products. 2. Three weeks. 3. A repair crew.

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Merry Christmas

AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM ALL OF US AT NOLIN, NOLIN & ASSOCIATES

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