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Crook, cop he shot are now friends

Thirty-one years after a former Jackson resident shot a trooper, a new film documents their story.

By Johanna Love

In the three decades after Jackson Hole resident Mark Farnham shot state trooper Stephen Watt five times the two have become fast friends. Now their story is making it to television.

Farnham was living in Jackson in 1982 when, motivated by deep debt, he decided to rob a bank in Craig, Colo. During Farnham's escape, Watt pulled him over. Farnham shot him.



CHANCE FILMS / COURTESY PHOTO

Former Jackson resident Mark Farnham, who in 1982 shot Wyoming State Trooper Stephen Watt after a bank robbery, is serving a life sentence. Watt, now a state representative, visits him regularly in the Wyoming State Penitentiary. The film "Unlikely Friends" features their story as it explores restorative justice.

"Some days I have to forgive him two or three times."

— Stephen Watt
FORMER TROOPER, NOW A STATE REP

It took Watt more than three years, he said Tuesday in a phone interview from his home in Rock Springs, but he forgave Farnham. He visits him in the Wyoming State Penitentiary several times each year.

No longer a trooper, Watt has spent more than two decades trying to get the felon released from his lifelong prison sentence.

At 9 p.m. Monday, the cable channel Investigation Discovery will air the documentary "Unlikely Friends." It explores the idea of restorative justice, which focuses on helping victims and offenders heal.

Those without expanded cable can visit UnlikelyFriendsForgive.com after the air date to purchase a DVD.

Watt, whose story is a big part of the film, is excited for people to see it.

"The only thing worse than being shot five times is if nobody ever benefited from it," Watt said. "Restorative justice is something that's been missing from our system for so long."

Many people in prison can twist around logic in their heads, Watt said Farnham told him on a prison visit long ago. So they blame their victims.

"He said, 'I can never do that,'" Watt said, "because every time I talk to you, every time I see you, I have to remember what I did to you."

Two governors have helped reduce Farnham's prison sentence, but Gov. Matt Mead rejected the parole board's latest recommendation for leniency, Watt said, so a pardon by Mead seems unlikely "unless God changes Gov. Mead's heart."

Watt says becoming a Christian helped him forgive Farnham. The convict has been punished enough, he said.

"I think our justice system is missing a huge thing" by not emphasizing victims' suffering, Watt said. "The second an offender can blame their victim or never see their victim cry

over what was done to them or hear about the nightmares they have ... we're just lining up for more victims to happen."

Now serving his third term in the Wyoming Legislature for House District 17, Watt is permanently disabled from the shooting. He's supposed to use crutches all the time and occasionally needs a wheelchair.

He hasn't been able to feel his legs below the knee since the shooting, and a bone infection led to surgery that removed most of the bones in his right foot. His bowel ruptured, probably from a bullet hole that was missed by doctors, he said.

He's a diabetic and can't exercise to help control the disease. He lost an eye.

That's just the physical, Watt said. He faces psychological demons every day: flashbacks, nightmares.

Yet he forgives the man who hurt him. He does it a lot.

"Some days I have to forgive him two or three times," Watt said, "on a real bad day. Forgiveness is something that goes on forever."

WEATHER PICTURE



PRICE CHAMBERS / NEWS&GUIDE

	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.	Mon.	Tues.
Date	Oct. 16	Oct. 17	Oct. 18	Oct. 19	Oct. 20	Oct. 21	Oct. 22
Sunrise	7:38 a.m.	7:39 a.m.	7:40 a.m.	7:42 a.m.	7:43 a.m.	7:44 a.m.	7:45 a.m.
Sunset	6:39 p.m.	6:38 p.m.	6:36 p.m.	6:34 p.m.	6:33 p.m.	6:31 p.m.	6:30 p.m.

Snake flow @ Flagg Ranch:
350 cfs, 100% avg.

Snake flow @ Alpine:
2,060 cfs, 14% avg.
<http://waterdata.usgs.gov/wy/nwis/rt>

Jackson Lake 18% capacity
<http://www.usbr.gov/pn/hydromet/burtea.html>



Full Moon
October 18



Last Quarter
October 26



New Moon
November 3



First Quarter
November 9

	HI	LO	PRE
October 9	58	22	
October 10	54	30	.01
October 11	48	29	
October 12	50	20	
October 13	44	31	.08
October 14	39	34	
October 15	44	20	

Courtesy National Weather Service

THIS WEEK

Textile trade

Ladies who have no mall at their disposal have to get creative. Clothing swaps, also known as "naked lady parties," are a hot fashion trend in the valley. Women clean out their closets for the benefit of their friends and acquaintances.

See Valley cover.

Plants prep for fall

As trees shut down their chlorophyll factories in preparation for winter, the colors of other chemicals in the leaves enjoy their few weeks of glory. Find out what's behind the foliage display and plan to attend a botany talk.

See Valley, page 10B.

Historic scoring

The Jackson Hole High School Broncos defeated the Green River Wolves 64-48 on Friday in the highest scoring game in Wyoming prep football in 83 years. The win also puts the Broncos one win away from a playoff berth.

See Sports cover.

Youngster bags bighorn

Adam Kroger had the hunt of a lifetime, stalking bighorn sheep in the rugged Absaroka Mountains with his father and grandfather. His dad bagged his ram and then, the next day, Adam, 12, got one, making him one of the youngest people to legally shoot a bighorn in Wyoming history.

See Sports, page 3C.

Fallen skier feted

Friends of freeskier Shane McConkey were so moved by the man's joie de vivre that they undertook a massive filmmaking project after his death in 2009. "McConkey" has its Jackson Hole premiere tonight at the Center for the Arts.

See Stepping Out, page 2.

Applause for arts activists

On Thursday the valley arts community will honor arts philanthropists Jade and David Walsh and collaborative artist Bronwyn Minton at the annual Awards for Creativity celebration.

See Stepping Out, page 9.

Crazy sexy

Kris Carr was told to get herself ready to die after a cancer diagnosis in 2003. Ten years later she's still here, telling people how she didn't give up, and why they shouldn't either.

See Stepping Out, page 6.

Dancing stars

People who dance for a living and people who prefer to sit it out practiced for months and then hit the floor to benefit programs at the Children's Learning Center.

See Stepping Out, page 11.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"That was so sexy I need a cigarette."

— Dancing with the Jackson Hole Stars master of ceremonies Mark "Fish" Fishman (see story on page 11 of Stepping Out).