

## **RANSOM EPISODE 2: Questioning Everything**

**Art Rascon:** 24 hours after McKay Everett was kidnapped, the FBI wrote a report summarizing the facts in the case thus far:

[typewriter sounds]

**FBI voice actor:** On September 12th 1995, Samuel McKay Everett was abducted from his residence at 431 Pine Springs Court, Conroe Texas, by unknown subjects at approximately 8:30 p.m. Central Time.

Victim is a white male, born March 1st, 1983. He's 5'1", 100 lbs. Victim has light blue eyes and light brown hair, and has braces on teeth with light blue rubber bands.

Victim's parents Carl and Paulette Everette were at an Amway meeting when the victim was taken. After this meeting, parents went to a local restaurant and the father attempted to telephonically contact his son with negative results. According to the father, he advised his wife that he was going to go home and check on son.

Shortly after he arrived home, he received a telephone call from what he believed to be a white female 30-40 years old, with a raspy voice, who advised "If you want to see your son alive, get \$500,000 in \$100 bills. Mr. Everett asked to speak with his son and her response was "if you ever want to f\*\*\*ing see your son again you better not call the law or make a big deal." Mr Everett demanded to speak with McKay again and the caller hung up.

As of midnight 9/13/95 there have been no calls or contact from subjects.

Interviews with the father have resulted in few leads. One neighbor who resides across the street from the victims observed a gold: or fawn-colored Chrysler or Dodge vehicle depart from victim's residence at approximately 8:35 pm at a high rate of speed. The witness observed a "crown" automobile dealership sticker attached to the rear of the car. (Crown is a chrysler/dodge dealership in the Houston Area).

Victim's father is self-employed and has an estimated net worth of approximately 2 million dollars. However, several interviews conducted reflect that the Everett's may be experiencing some financial difficulty. This was evidenced by an interview with his lawn service that stated Everett has not paid his bill in four months. Comments from other associates also indicate some financial difficulties may exist. Everett is scheduled to be polygraphed.

**Art Rascon:** From KSL Podcasts, I'm Art Rascon and this is Ransom Position of Trust. Episode 2: Questioning everything.

**Art Rascon:** It was the morning of September 14th, 1995. 36 hours since McKay Everett had disappeared. Every hour that passed, the trail leading to McKay grew colder and the chances he would be hurt grew higher, so the FBI worked fast to interview the top suspects. McKay's mother Paulette remembers how the FBI took her husband Carl to polygraph him in the nursery.

**Paulette:** I kept a nursery in the home whether we had a small child or not. And so that was the polygraph room. And so, they took Carl up there.

**Art Rascon:** Polygraphs, or lie detectors as they're sometimes known, are controversial instruments because they're only somewhat accurate and practiced liars can sometimes evade detection. Because of this, they're generally inadmissible in court, but many law enforcement agencies including the FBI still feel that polygraphs are useful.

**Beth Martin 5:14** It's routine you know, when you don't know who you're dealing with.

**Art Rascon:** They say even though polygraphs aren't 100% accurate, they're still useful for screening suspects. When a polygraph result suggests someone might be lying, it raises a red flag and agents can then follow up with further questions and investigation to try to verify the results.

As the FBI polygraphed Carl, Paulette traced back through their relationship and wondered how they'd gotten into this situation. Paulette and Carl had known each other for 27 years. They'd grown up in neighboring towns in Mississippi... Paulette was from Magee, and Carl grew up in nearby Mendenhall. They met in the summer of 1968.

**Paulette:** My sister was dating a guy by the name of Ricky Warren and Carl and Ricky decided they were going to run from Mendenhall to Magee, cause they were both training for football. And Carl ended up in the front lawn. Both of them laid out. And so that's how I met him and we just developed a good friendship.

**Art Rascon:** But there was a 4-year age gap between them.

**Paulette:** He was 15 and I was 19.

**Art Rascon:** So at first Carl and Paulette just became friends. Paulette wasn't sure exactly why but she was drawn to Carl. She felt like she could trust him and she was in need of someone she could trust.

**Paulette:** You know, I realized life is not a cakewalk at an early age. My parents were, they taught me the work ethic. But they were reckless. And there were a lot of us children, and my father was violent. And so I realized, you know, some of the people you should be able to trust, I wasn't able to trust them.

**Art Rascon:** Paulette's father was angry and abusive. And Paulette's mother seemed to care more about keeping up appearances than she cared about protecting her children. So, Paulette tried to spend as much time away from home as she could. And after meeting Carl, she started spending more and more time at Carl's house.

**Paulette:** They had a working farm, a true working farm. They had cows and calves, egg-laying chickens, and they had baby pigs everywhere, and I love baby pigs. And so I was just in heaven. It was the typical old southern home, one of those horizontal deep freezes in the dining room, nothing fancy. They weren't fancy people. And so that was a neat place for me to be, mentally and emotionally and it was just healthy.

**Art Rascon:** Eventually Carl and Paulette began dating.

**Paulette:** It just kind of developed over time because it was such an age difference. And then I realized that, you know, for his age, he was at that point in life pretty mature.

**Art Rascon:** Then one day, In 1970, Carl was driving Paulette home.

**Paulette:** Carl's not a severe romantic person. We were riding along and he reached under the car seat and handed me an engagement ring. That was it. He was 17 and I was 21. His mama signed for us to get married and I go What was that woman thinking? And I'm thinking what was I thinking?

**Art Rascon:** Carl and Paulette spent the next 8 years in Mississippi. Paulette got her degree in education and started teaching And Carl joined the National Guard to pay his way through a masters in forestry management. He graduated in 1978 and landed a job in Texas.

**Paulette:** I knew I could find a teaching job anywhere. So we came to Texas because that was where the best opportunity was for him. So this is where we thought we could make our fortune. And we did.

**Amoco clip:** "There are millions of miles of great road in this country and you can drive down any one of them and never find any gasoline like Amoco super premium you expect more from Amoco and you get it"

**Art Rascon:** In 1979, after the Everetts had been in Conroe for about a year, a friend offered Carl a job working for the oil and gas company Amoco. That year, the Iranian revolution disrupted oil production.

**Art Rascon:** But while most of the country was waiting in long lines to fill up their cars the oil and gas industry was booming, and Carl was learning a skill set that was in high demand.

**Paulette:** After about a year at Amoco and getting trained well, the head hunters just really started calling. One said, "We will double what you're making." And it was just too good of a deal not to take.

**Art Rascon:** Finally feeling financially stable, the Everetts decided to start a family.

**Paulette:** You know Carl was really the one that just really wanted to have children in and at one point, we didn't think we'd have any children. So, you know, he was basically a surprise. I was teaching when I was pregnant, and then I started having swollen feet and everything. And Carl, you know, he could not understand pregnancy and he didn't try to. And I just got sicker and sicker and didn't know what it was. And, you know, we just kept telling myself, you know, this will be over soon. But I, you know something wasn't right, you know, so I went to the doctor, and so I had developed Toxemia.

**Art Rascon:** Toxemia, also known as preeclampsia, is a disorder where blood pressure increases dramatically during pregnancy. And it can be deadly for mother and child.

**Paulette:** You know, had to go back the next day to have my blood pressure and everything checked, and he said, That's it, you're in distress. And he sent me home for bed rest. So I had to get a substitute for the rest of the year.

**Art Rascon:** And on top of Paulette's health troubles, Carl called her from a work trip to break some bad news.

**Paulette:** He was up north and he called me and he said they're gonna let me go. One of our friends had snuck in the boardroom and read everything during everybody's lunch break. He called Carl and said you are getting laid off but they're gonna pay for your insurance because they feel sorry for you and Paulette because she's pregnant.

**Paulette:** And Carl said what do I do? And I said, Well, I said, you have anything in your briefcase because the oil patch is ruthless.

**Art Rascon:** The oil and gas industry was cut throat, so Paulette had told Carl to keep some valuable documents in his briefcase. Documents he could use as collateral in case something like this happened.

**Paulette:** And he said, Yeah, I've got something. And I said well tell 'em you're going to throw in a dumpster. I said, You're not gonna walk away. They can buy you out. And I said when they give you a check, go straight to that bank and cash it.

**Art Rascon:** Paulette's scheme worked. Carl used the money from the buyout to start up his own oil and gas business, and on March 1st, 1983 McKay Everett was born. He weighed 6 pounds 8 ounces, and he had big blue eyes.

**Paulette:** As blue as blue could be.

**Art Rascon:** Paulette quit her job teaching and after recovering from the delivery, she helped out with Carl's oil business. She ran the day-to-day operations from their home, while Carl traveled and did field work. And for a while, things were good between Carl and Paulette.

**Paulette:** And as long as there was some struggle we worked together well. And then, the more money that we seem to make the less dependent on each other that we were the less compatible. We didn't have that struggle, we didn't have that common goal. And so that was kind of where I think our marriage began to break down and we had McKay when I was almost 34. And, your focus changes a lot. You tend to put the child absolutely first. And then your marriage kind of limps along here and there because you're putting your child first.

**Art Rascon:** And now, with the son she'd always put first missing, all the wealth she and Carl had acquired felt hollow.

**Paulette:** All of this is fun. And it's nice to have. My greatest prize was my son.

**Art Rascon:** And with the FBI polygraphing the husband she had always trusted, and with all her friends as suspects Paulette was questioning everything.

**Paulette:** There're days still now 27 years later, I still go, "What happened?" I asked myself that probably every week... What in the world happened?

[break]

**Art Rascon:** Carl passed the polygraph the FBI said there were no signs of deception and Paulette says she never suspected he was involved.

**Paulette:** I never did. What I did kind of wonder, you know, because he was out with the police like, you know, they were going to solve it in five minutes. And you know, I just, I had fallen totally apart. I was no good to anybody. And they never even bothered asking me for a polygraph.

**Art Rascon:** At this point in the investigation, Paulette didn't know who she could trust FBI agents had started looking at all of the Everett's close friends.

**Bob Lee:** We were starting to compile leads.

**Art Rascon:** Bob Lee was one of the FBI agents working the case.

**Bob Lee:** Obviously, you look at the family first, you also look at friends. Others that may have had some knowledge of the family's activities. We tried to get a list of the people who were at the Amway meeting, and also people who were scheduled to go to the Amway meeting, but

didn't show up. So we compiled that list. We also tried to get a list of people that McKay knew that he might unlock the door for or let in if he was alone, and his parents were gone.

**Art Rascon:** The next suspect on the list was a man named Ric Metts. You actually heard him briefly on the last episode. He was one of the family friends who'd called to enquire about McKay.

**RM:** Carl, It's Riccy. Hey, is McKay not home?

**Paulette:** Ric. We met at church. He was trying to find himself. Couldn't figure out what he wanted to do with life, and we let him wash windows, plant flowers, cut the yard, anything, you know, just help him out. He used to come over and take care of the pets. And he did have a key. He fit the profile. They said, You know, because he was still with his mama, never married. And duh duh duh and so that left him as, you know, Person of Interest.

**Ric Metts:** I did have a key to their house. I did babysit that child occasionally, when they would go away even overnight stays, I would go and stay at their home.

My name is Ric Metts. In 1995 I had just started working with the Montgomery County appraisal district. I was around them quite often going to dinners. And then I got to where I helped them work in their yard and do odd jobs around their house. They were just a lot of fun.

**Art Rascon:** On September 13th, the morning after McKay disappeared, Ric got a phone call.

**Ric Metts:** I'm at work. And Margaret Jett, who was the librarian at his school, also a church member. She calls me and says, "Riccy, I understand McKay has been kidnapped. Do you know anything about it?" I knew nothing. So I told her to call her back. I hang up.

**Art Rascon:** That's when Ric called the Everett's.

**Ric Metts:** Ms. Jett called and said somebody kidnapped him?

**Carl Everette:** we're trying to figure that out but we're waiting on a phone call.

**Ric Metts:** Well, I'm at work if you need me, bye.

**Art Rascon:** After getting off the phone with Carl, Ric says he found himself unable to work. He says he was shocked by the kidnapping and wanted to help however he could.

**Ric Metts:** So I just clocked out at work and drove to their home. And nothing was out of the ordinary except a motorhome was in the back driveway. So I thought oh, they have visitors.

**Art Rascon:** Ric walked right by the FBI's mobile command post and knocked on the Everett's front door.

**Ric Metts:** No one answered. So I just took my key and opened it and let myself in. And when I got to the kitchen bam, this huge African American man steps in front of me stops me and asked me who I am and where I was going. I told him who I was, I said I understand McKay's been kidnapped. And I asked to speak to Paulette. And he said well, I don't know she can speak to you. I said, if you let her know Ricy's here she'll speak to me. So he pointed to the bedroom and I walked to the bedroom and there was Paulette in bed, couldn't speak. She just mumbled.

I told her I had to go back to work if she needed me to call me. And she just shook her head. Yes. As I passed back by the kitchen, they asked for my phone number. I gave it to them. I didn't really figure I was a suspect I get back to work. And within 10 minutes, my supervisor came and said, Ricy, there's someone here wants to talk to you? Well, I step out in the hallway and they're not there. I said. Who is it? And he said, they're in the boardroom. I said they? He said, Yes, it's about McKay. I said, Oh, my God. So I went to the boardroom, and there were seven FBI agents in there.

Listen, and everybody has a job, but they were rude bastards. They wanted to know what I knew about it. And I'd tell them I know nothing. They had me write down everything I had done the night before. From when I left to work until I went to bed. Thank God, we were having a birthday party at our home for my sister. I just kept telling them, you know, the Everette's are part of Amway. If anybody's done anything, it was someone from Amway. And I wasn't too far off.

**Art Rascon:** Remember, Amway is the multi-level marketing program that Carl was involved with. And McKay had disappeared while Carl was hosting an Amway meeting at the bank downtown.

**Ric Metts:** Have you ever been to an Amway meeting? Well, let me tell you, it's wrong. They take people like the Everett's to have big lush, nice things, nice home, and they invite these no one's these people that have nothing into their home and say, Look what Amway has done for me. Well Amway didn't do that sh\*\*\* for them, nor many people. But you invite total strangers off the street to your home like that, you're asking for trouble.

**Art Rascon:** Ric says the FBI agents kept grilling him.

**Ric Metts:** While the agents had me at work. There were six more here at our farm. They took feed out of my feed van, I guess looking for body parts? I don't know. They didn't have a warrant or anything. We didn't have anything to hide so my dad just says, Well, sure here, help yourself.

**Art Rascon:** After the FBI finished interrogating Ric, they told him they wanted to polygraph him

**Ric Metts:** I don't have a problem with it. But I'm not going anywhere or moving another second until I call my attorney because I feel that I could be getting framed for something that I have no

clue and haven't done. Then they said, just drop all that and tell us what you did with him. I'm like, Oh, God, this is not going good.

**Art Rascon:** Ric thinks part of the reason the FBI was so hung up on him is because it was an open secret that he was gay, at a time when that was still taboo in Texas.

**RicMetts:** Because I'm single, because I was over 30. Because I fit the mold of a pedophile? F\*\*\* that. That's stupid. But I quickly realized this is not about you. It's about a boy. And usually, when a kid is kidnapped it is a close friend or family member. I know that for a fact from watching TV, and I was a close friend, not a family member, but I was closer than most of their family members.

**Art Rascon:** Ric talked to his lawyer about the polygraph.

**RicMetts:** And she goes, You don't have to do that. I said, I have nothing to hide. And I'm going to do it. She said Rici, you know we can't trust any of these people. I said I know but I haven't done anything just I feel I have to do it. So I went and did it. The Polygraph machine was like, makeshift with a bunch of boxes all over the place and a plastic table.

**Art Rascon:** The polygrapher asked Ric to walk through what he had done the night before, and again Ric recounted he'd been at his sister's birthday party.

**RicMetts:** I mean, down deep I knew that it was gonna be okay. I was pissed off as hell but I knew it's gonna be okay. And I hadn't done anything. But then all of a sudden, I kind of get scared and say, yeah, there's innocent people in jail, too. So you've got to just stay calm and answer their questions.

**Art Rascon:** Ric maintained that he knew nothing about the kidnapping. How despite being a close friend of the Everetts, he hadn't even heard about the kidnapping until the school librarian had called him that morning. The polygrapher finished with his questions and told Ric he was free to go.

**Ric Metts:** When I was leaving I said well, will I hear from you again? He goes hell no. Go home and don't worry about this. It's gonna be okay. Our pastor at the time he phoned me and he said Rici They're not accusing you. They are trying to find McKay. I said, I understand all that but what rubbed me the wrong way is, if I was such a close friend and I wasn't really being accused, why was it that the librarian is the one who called me?

**Art Rascon:** Ric was offended that the Everett's hadn't reached out to him to help search for McKay.

**Ric Metts:** And all these other bastards all knew about it, and they were all over their house. I was being talked about, why I'd do something so stupid? I was just turned off by all of it. And again, I still was not pissed, I wasn't mad at 'em. It just was, I don't know. It changed everything.



**Art Rascon:** Paulette says it was obvious that Ric was hurt by the whole situation.

**Paulette:** He was crushed. He was crushed. And it was very hurtful. What they were doing was a process of elimination. It was just trying to eliminate as quickly as possible so they can move on to find who had McKay. You have to when the child is involved. As hurtful as it is. You have to.

**Art Rascon:** Because time was slipping away, and unless investigators found a new lead soon so were their chances of ever seeing McKay again.

**[break]**

**Art Rascon:** On Thursday September 14th, at 1:30 pm, the Everetts held a press conference in front of their home. 40 hours had now passed since McKay had disappeared, and every passing moment felt more crucial than the last. With friends and neighbors beside them, Carl and Paulette stood in front of TV cameras and pleaded for McKay's life.

**Carl Everette:** McKay, if you're watching this tonight son, just understand that we're trying everything we can to get you back home safely. And we are gonna get you back home safely.

**Paulette:** Whoever holds you captive. I pray for God's mercy and God's grace on their soul. Please let my son go. He's all I have.

**Carl Everette:** His mother almost died bringing him into the world. We're about to die trying to get him back.

**Newscaster:** Authorities believe the people who took McKay were driving a goldchrysler-like car with four doors. If you have information the FBI wants to hear from you.

**Paulette:** All sorts of thoughts raced through my head. I wondered if McKay had eaten that night, if he was still alive, did he get any food? Where did he lay his head? Did he didn't get a bath? Did he have clean clothes? And what did he feel? Was he angry, fearful? crying? totally out of control emotionally? What? You know? There are kids that are abducted for sexual exploitation. There are children physically mentally emotionally starved. We were up 24/7. I slept very little for days. And I would be just walking to the house pacing like a caged up animal. And I would pace and pace. We could imagine anything, and we did

**Art Rascon:** While some investigators had been busy trying to eliminate Carl and Ric as a suspects, others were looking for new clues.

**Lloyd Diaz:** You know, the agents were doing just getting the lay of the land to try to identify somebody that possible people that weren't where they're supposed to be, where were they, you know, things of that nature, and that's what they started doing.

**Art Rascon:** Lloyd Diaz was one of the FBI agents working the case.

**Lloyd Diaz:** We had agents going out to speak to these individuals saying, "Hey, why aren't you? You weren't the meeting?" this and any other? And most everybody said, Oh, well, I was whatever, right? And if it was kind of something we were leery about, we'd go to another step. And so this one guy, Hilton Crawford, he was a real close friend of the family. In fact, from what I understand Mackay called him Uncle Hilty.

**Art Rascon:** Hilton Crawford, was the friend who was supposed to bring some new recruits to the Amway meeting the night McKay disappeared. But Hilton hadn't shown up to the meeting that night.

**Art Rascon:** As detectives continued to investigate Hilton Crawford's name seemed to keep coming up. Here's FBI agent Bob Lee.

**Bob Lee:** There were some things that we were finding out that made Hilton, what we would call a person of interest today.

**Art Rascon:** But Hilton had an alibi for the night of the kidnapping he'd been off on a work trip. He managed a small security guard company with contracts across east Texas, and he said his employees could vouch for him.

**Lloyd Diaz:** We wanted to polygraph him. And he said was he's going to come in. But he's real busy. Won't be but a couple of days.

**Art Rascon:** Hilton said he needed to deliver paychecks or else his employees wouldn't get their money by payday. But he said he would be available in a few days for the polygraph. Paulette had met Hilton Crawford soon after she'd moved to Texas. Back when Paulette was a first-grade teacher in Conroe, she'd taught across the hall from Hilton's wife Connie.

**Paulette:** We would always have our beginning of the year and ending of the year parties at her home, she had a lovely home.

**Art Rascon:** Paulette remembers meeting Hilton at one of those parties. He was a jovial guy confident. He'd worked for two decades as a police officer and sheriff's deputy in nearby Beaumont He'd even once run for Sheriff and nearly won. But he had also recently moved to Conroe with his wife and two children. Where he opened a security guard business and started coaching little league.

**Paulette:** I thought he was hard working, you know, cause he always seemed to have something going on.

**Art Rascon:** Back when Paulette was teaching, the two families would see each other often.

**Paulette:** Our hallway had six teachers on it. We'd get together as a group just go out to dinner. And our husbands would go and that's kind of how we, you know, got to know each other – more on a family basis.

**Art Rascon:** The Crawfords were around 10 years older than the Everett's and their children were already in high school by the time McKay was born, but the two couples got along. Carl in particular hit it off with Hilton who reminded Carl of one of his older brothers. Hilton was tall he'd been a high school basketball star. And though he'd put on some weight, and was now balding, he still had the swagger and charm of an athlete. And he enjoyed watching sports and betting on games

**Paulette:** He'd bet you if the sun was gonna shine tomorrow. I'm serious. I'm serious. And then he go well, you know that sunshine and even if it's behind a cloud.

**Art Rascon:** Hilton would frequently go on trips to Vegas with his friends, and Carl would sometimes tag along.

**Paulette:** Back when I was still teaching. Before I had McKay.

**Art Rascon:** After McKay was born, the couples grew apart. Paulette quit teaching, so she didn't see Connie as often. And Carl got busy running his business. But Paulette says she felt like they were still on good terms with the Crawfords.

**Paulette:** They were always you know, hey McKay, how you doing? hugging him and everything.

**Art Rascon:** And McKay loved Uncle Hilty.

**Home video:** [doorbell rings]

**Paulette in Home video:** "It's Hilton"

**Art Rascon:** A home video of Paulette's shows Hilton stopping by their house on Christmas morning to give 4-year-old McKay a gift...

**Hilton in Home Video:** "Santa claus is here..."

**McKay in Home Video:** "What do you got in there"

**Hilton in Home Video:** "I don't know"

**McKay in Home Video:** "Open it"

**Art Rascon:** The video shows McKay open the present and lift a big brown teddy-bear out of the box.

**Carl in Home Video:** "what's in it?"

**Art Rascon:** He flashes a smile at Hilton, and then holds the bear tight against his chest

**Carl in Home Video:** "what is it?"

**McKay in Home Video:** "Teh-dy Bear"

**Carl in Home Video laughs**

**Art Rascon:** After McKay disappeared, Hilton was one of the first people Carl called. Because of Hilton's background in law enforcement, Carl thought he might have good advice about what to do. But Hilton wasn't home.-His wife Connie told Carl that she didn't know how to reach him but she would pass on the message if he called. The morning after the kidnapping, Hilton called Carl back. You actually heard this call in episode 1.

**Hilton Crawford:** Carl, It's Hilton. What in the world's going on?

**Carl Everette:** Hey Hilton, I don't know I'm trying to find my son this morning.

**Hilton Crawford:** I called Connie this morning about 6 o'clock. What in the hell happened?

**Carl Everette:** Somebody kidnapped him last night?

**Hilton Crawford:** Are you serious?

[pause]

**Carl Everette:** Where you at?

**Hilton Crawford:** I had a meeting in Silsby this morning and I'm heading back right now.

**Carl Everette:** Come see me after a while.

**Hilton Crawford:** I'm coming to your house, I'm coming straight there.

**Carl Everette:** Alright, see you later.

**Art Rascon:** But Hilton hadn't come straight to the Everetts house. In fact, none of the Everetts' friends had seen him since the kidnapping. So where was Hilton Crawford? And what had he been doing the night McKay disappeared?

[dramatic pause]

**Art Rascon:** Next time on Ransom

**Nancy Kahn:** I mean he was really devastated and disgusted at the same time, and just very hopeful

**Donnie Miller:** So here we are 12, 1 o'clock in the morning, whatever it was. She opened the door, she's in a nightgown, and she never made eye contact.

**[Credits: Amazing Grace Plays]**

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