

Inside the disturbing mind of Jenner beach killer Shaun Gallon

BY JULIE JOHNSON

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In a phone call from jail in 2004, Shaun Michael Gallon asked his father to get rid of his guns.

The bodies of a young Midwestern couple had been found a week earlier, gunned down in sleeping bags where they camped at a secluded beach near Jenner on the Sonoma Coast. More than a decade later, Gallon would admit he carried a flashlight down a bluff to the sand, saw the couple was asleep and went back to his car for the gun.

“That’s when I snapped. I was like ‘Oh my god, I’m just going to start killing people,’” Gallon told Sonoma County sheriff’s detectives in 2017 during a series of confessions.

When he was arrested on an unrelated weapons charge six days after detectives started looking for the killer, Gallon had already burned the sandals he wore the night he shot them, according to the files.

But he hadn’t disposed of his guns. So his father did it for him.

These details were released in a report prepared by the Sonoma County Probation Department, a revelatory account of the disturbing activities and mindset of Gallon. Through interviews with Gallon, reports from psychologists and details from the Sonoma County Sheriff’s Office’s investigation, the document provides the most comprehensive history yet of Gallon’s life, how his family shielded him from arrest and the way he explained his crimes to law enforcement in confessions.

It would take 13 years before detectives publicly named Gallon as the gunman, though he had been arrested a half-dozen times for various crimes and was long known in the Russian River community as a troubled and isolated man with a reputation for odd behavior and poaching animals.

Last month, Gallon admitted guilt in Sonoma County Superior Court in the killings of Lindsay Cutshall, 22, and Jason Allen, 26, in 2004 on the Sonoma Coast beach, the 2017 shooting death of his brother Shamus Gallon at their family’s home in Forestville and a 2004 bombing that maimed a woman in Monte Rio.

The reasons Gallon gave to detectives for the killings and bombing are both detailed and detached, lacking compassion for the people he hurt. Probation officials concluded Gallon was a narcissist without remorse, noting “the vulnerability of his victims” and stating they “were nothing more than prey to the defendant.”

Gallon told detectives he was tormented by “voices and demons,” and had been drinking heavily the night of the murders.

His crimes went unsolved for more than a decade, though people in his life either knew or strongly suspected he was responsible for killing Cutshall and Allen. The engaged pair were strangers to Gallon, Midwesterners visiting a secluded Sonoma Coast beach on a break from their work as Christian camp counselors in the Sierra Nevada.

A family friend repeatedly discussed her suspicions with sheriff’s investigators in 2005 and ensuing years, telling them Gallon killed animals — harpooning a seal on the coast and shooting a calf — and had asked his

father to get rid of his guns. Sonoma County animal control investigated reports Gallon killed his brother's dog by hanging, according to the filing.

The mother of his second child — he has two, now in their teens, who live out of state — later threatened Gallon in a private Facebook message to turn him in for the killings and collect the \$50,000 reward, according to the report. The report doesn't specify when the message was sent.

David Gallon admitted to investigators he got rid of his son's guns after that phone call from jail "because he feared Gallon was not stable," according to the filing.

So detectives found no firearms when they searched Gallon's Russian River area apartment in August 2004 for evidence in the Jenner beach killings.

Gallon quickly became a suspect after deputies encountered him near a beach in Guerneville a week after the killings, wearing a camouflage jumpsuit with a loaded, stolen gun in his pocket.

Detectives searching his apartment found a five-gallon tub filled with matchsticks, bullets, foot-long sections of lead pipe, fuse cords for explosives, clumps of hair, "copious amounts of blood" in a bathroom and dead animals, including a large shark cut into pieces in the refrigerator and a wild turkey in a trash can, the documents state.

They also found Gallon, released on bail, had shaved off his beard and dyed his hair. When asked by detectives, Gallon denied involvement in the Jenner beach murders. He initially agreed to take a polygraph test, but later declined, according to the files.

Detectives confronted David Gallon, who told them he tossed his son's guns in a pond known locally as "Korbel hole" in the area. A dive team searched the pond waters but found nothing. David Gallon later said he had lied and the guns weren't there, according to the report.

Multiple psychologists over the years described Shaun Gallon as paranoid, according to the filing. Two doctors who evaluated Gallon after his 2017 arrest on suspicion of killing his brother described him as having Schizotypal personality disorder, which often develops in early adulthood and involves anti-social behavior, paranoid thinking and occasional psychosis. A psychologist who assessed Gallon in 2011 when he applied for disability benefits reported Gallon "has loose associations and bizarre thinking" and that "his reality is off," noting he would have difficulty keeping a job.

Gallon told family members, girlfriends and detectives that he never felt the same after taking a strong dose of LSD around age 21. A psychologist who assessed him said the bad experience with the psychedelic drug likely took place when his mental illness was already developing.

The drug experience halted what Gallon thought would be the start of his adult life, a plan to move to Oregon and start a family, but "then one day this guy comes up and gives us a bottle of acid and then ... everything like ... exploded," and he added "I went crazy," according to the report. He moved back in with his family.

Gallon was partly home-schooled and never finished high school, and the family appeared to isolate themselves from others.

In 2004, David Gallon sought the help of a social worker because he was concerned Gallon would harm his brother Shamus, the report states. But Gallon's mother, Susan Gallon, wouldn't allow the social worker inside

the home. The social worker tried to meet with Gallon elsewhere and stopped by their home on occasion to “offer practical help, such as groceries and making sure his home was heated in winter.” She noted Gallon was “bizarre” and had poor hygiene and living conditions, according to the report.

David Gallon killed himself in 2013. Sometime before he shot himself, he confronted his son with a flier seeking information about the murder weapon used to kill Cutshall and Allen, according to the report.

Gallon claimed he didn’t confess to his father, and would later tell detectives he believed his father’s suspicion he was involved in the Jenner beach murders “was a factor” in the suicide, “like the straw on the camel’s back.”

“I’m sure it didn’t help. It might have been directly why he did it,” Gallon said.

Gallon repeatedly claimed his victims were responsible for the violence he unleashed upon them.

Gallon told detectives he blamed the couple for their deaths, stating they were sleeping on a beach despite a sign barring camping, according to the files.

In the document, Gallon tells officials he killed his younger brother with an AR-15 rifle in 2017 because his brother held a grudge stemming from childhood when Gallon punched him.

“If (Shamus) would have just gotten over it, this never would have happened,” Gallon said, according to the report.

Gallon fashioned a bomb out of an old grenade and put it in a gift box on top of the car of John Robles, a man he had briefly fought with at a bar several years before he tried to kill him in June 2004 — just two months before the Jenner killings. Robles didn’t use his car that morning and it was Parvoneh Leal, the mother of his children, who went outside and picked the package off the roof before it exploded — suffering serious injuries that remain today.

The impact shook the house where Robles and their two daughters were watching cartoons.

Gallon told investigators he and Robles had made up after the fight but the thought of it festered in his mind, and he grew to resent Robles. He told probation officials that if Robles “hadn’t started trouble in the first place, this wouldn’t have happened.”

Gallon also confessed to a late-night shooting near Coddington Mall in May 2004. Gallon told investigators he thought a “gangbanger” was following him around in another car, so he pulled up next to the other vehicle and “raced it” before opening fire with a Sten Mark II submachine gun, according to the files.

Initial police dispatch information indicates a shooting victim was located in the surgery department of a hospital. Police officials Monday didn’t immediately answer questions about whether a victim was identified, and if the person survived.

In his explanation for the shooting, Gallon told detectives that he felt like Mexicans “were at war with me,” the document states.

Detectives assigned to the Jenner killings tracked Gallon down repeatedly over the years to ask him to agree to take a polygraph test. He declined. But he was arrested on other crimes, including an assault of a man with a bow and arrow that sent Gallon to prison in 2010.

Detectives investigated other suspects but kept coming back to Gallon, arresting him on charges like unlawful weapons possession. They searched his home, once finding a dead hawk in a box in the freezer. They investigated reports he had harpooned a seal and shot a calf, then cut off its leg for food, the report said. They recovered weapons buried in his yard and spent shell casings where his family once lived.

They would never find the murder weapon: a Marlin .45-70 lever-action rifle with a sawed-off barrel.

Gallon shot Allen first, according to his confession described in the report. The sound of gunfire startled Cutshall awake, and she sat up, looked at Allen and made a sound before Gallon shot her too, he recalled in the report.

He picked up the spent shell casings and briefly considered digging the bullets out of the bodies, according to his statements.

Instead, he drove away.

Years later, he told detectives where to find decisive evidence in the senseless murders. Deep in a blackberry thicket on the side of a road in Guerneville, detectives found an opened soda can containing seven spent rifle bullet casings plus scraps from a California State Parks money envelope. They were remnants of the inscrutable execution-style killings, just out of reach until a killer confessed.

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