

All of what's pasted below comes from [here](#). Hope it might be somewhat helpful since we are introduced to so many people. I bolded the names. Feel free to add more in the comments, since this obviously does not cover everyone. I've seen some suggest that we should have some sort of crowdsourcing effort to put all of this information together in a more digestible way; I hope this contributes. (edit: I made another post similar to this one which includes a timeline from 1983 to 2015, you can see that [here at this link](#))

Here's a guide on the key people involved in one of Wisconsin's most famous court cases.

Penny Ann Beernsten, Manitowoc woman, married to a prominent local businessman, is beaten and raped in July 1985 while running along the Lake Michigan shoreline near Two Rivers.

Denis Vogel, Manitowoc County District Attorney, charges Avery with the rape. He convinces a jury of Avery's guilt. Years later, officials disclose that Vogel knew about Gregory Allen, the real rapist. Criminal complaints surrounding Allen were found inside of the prosecutor's file on Avery.

Gene Kusche, the Manitowoc County chief deputy sheriff under Sheriff Tom Kocourek. Kusche draws a composite for Beernsten and that composite plays a key role in Manitowoc County's prosecution of Avery.

Steven Avery, a lifelong resident of Manitowoc County, has family that ran an auto salvage yard. In 1985, the Manitowoc County Sheriff's wrongly theorizes that Avery committed the brutal rape along the lakeshore. Avery, 23, professes his innocence and produces 16 alibi witnesses at the time of his jury trial in Manitowoc County. Nevertheless, the jury convicts him. After spending 18 years in prison, Avery is freed in 2003 after DNA evidence proved his innocence.

Gregory Allen, a notorious sexual predator, was under suspicion for a number of sex crimes in Manitowoc back in the summer of 1985. Then-sheriff Tom Kocourek and then-prosecutor Vogel overlooked Allen as Beernsten's rapist even though her description of her attacker more closely resembled Allen rather than Avery, who was only 5-foot-1.

Judge Fred H. Hazlewood, Manitowoc County Circuit Court, presides over Avery's December 1985 trial. The jury mistakenly convicts Avery and he sentences Avery to 32 years in prison. Hazlewood has since retired.

Tom Kocourek, sheriff of Manitowoc County for more than 20 years, retiring in 2001. Back in 1985, Kocourek asked that Avery's photograph be used in a photo array shown to the rape victim. Kocourek is later named as one of the defendants in a \$36 million federal lawsuit brought forward by Avery.

Judy Dvorak, a Manitowoc County Sheriff's deputy, visits the rape victim at a local hospital and Dvorak makes up her mind that the rape victim's description of her attacker sounded like Avery. Avery, who was married with several children, had no history of sexual violence at the time.

Peggy Lautenschlager, Wisconsin's Attorney General in 2003, directed the Wisconsin Department of Justice to investigate the merits of the 1985 wrongful conviction of Steven Avery. The DOJ released an 18-page report on Dec. 17, 2003, finding "there is no basis to bring criminal charges or assert ethics violations against anyone involved in the investigation and prosecution of this case.

Manitowoc County Sheriff's **Lt. James Lenk** and **Sgt. Andrew Colborn** were suspected of becoming aware of evidence during the 1990s that Avery did not commit the 1985 rape and ignoring the information, while Avery remained in prison. In October 2005, less than three weeks before **Teresa Halbach** is murdered, Lenk and Colborn were questioned during a sworn deposition connection with Avery's \$36 million lawsuit against Manitowoc County. After Halbach disappeared, Lenk and Colborn thrust themselves into the investigation, focusing on Avery. Colborn interviewed Avery the same night Halbach is reported missing. Lenk interviewed Avery the next morning. Lenk approached Halbach's vehicle after it was found. Lenk found the keys to Halbach's vehicle inside Avery's bedroom in plain view after officers from Calumet County, the state Division of Criminal Investigation and Two Rivers Police Department apparently did not see them in previous searches.

Kenneth Peterson, sheriff of Manitowoc County at the time of the Halbach's murder in 2005. Back in 1985, Peterson incorrectly arrested Avery for the rape Allen committed. Twenty years later, soon after Avery's arrest for Halbach's murder, Peterson told a T.V. station it would have been "a whole lot easier to eliminate (Avery) than it would to frame him." Peterson retired as sheriff in 2007.

Patrick Willis, the Manitowoc County Circuit Judge who presided over Avery's 2006 murder trial, which was held in Calumet County in Chilton. After the jury convicted Avery of Halbach's murder, Willis sentenced Avery to life imprisonment.

Brendan Dassey, a special education student at Mishicot High School and Avery's 16-year-old nephew. At the time of Halbach's murder, Dassey and his mother lived on the Avery family property. A few months later, investigators press Dassey to implicate his uncle as Halbach's killer. Dassey was convicted as

an adult with being a party to sexual assault, first-degree intentional homicide and mutilation of a corpse. A Manitowoc County judge set a parole eligibility date of Oct. 31, 2048.

Len Kachinsky, an Appleton attorney who was appointed as Dassey's public defender. Several months into the Halbach murder case, Kachinsky was decertified by the Office of the State Public Defender for "failure to provide competent representation." Kachinsky allowed his incarcerated 16-year-old client to be interviewed by police investigators without an attorney counsel being present. When Dassey goes to trial, he is represented by **Ray Edelstein** and **Mark Fremgen**.

Ken Kratz, district attorney for Calumet County in 2005 who became the special prosecutor in the Halbach murder case. Kratz secured the convictions of Avery and Dassey. Kratz's tenure as prosecutor ended in 2010 after The Associated Press reported that Kratz sent numerous sexually explicit text messages to a 25-year-old woman while he was prosecuting her ex-boyfriend for a crime. Kratz, who was in his 50s, called the woman a "hot nymph" and advertised himself as "the prize." Kratz's law license was suspended for four months.

Dean Strang and **Jerome Buting**, the two criminal defense attorneys hired by Avery to defend him against charges that he murdered Halbach and burned her body. Avery insisted he was innocent of the murder and was being framed by the Manitowoc County Sheriff's Office in retaliation for filing a \$36 million lawsuit against the county. Avery settled with the county for \$400,000. He used the money to hire Strang and Buting, who were highly regarded criminal defense lawyers.

Tom Fassbender, a Wisconsin Division of Criminal Investigation investigator, and **Mark Wiegert**, a sergeant at the Calumet County Sheriff's Office interviewed Dassey in connection with the slaying of Halbach. Fassbender and Wiegert were the key detectives who secured Dassey's arrest and conviction.