

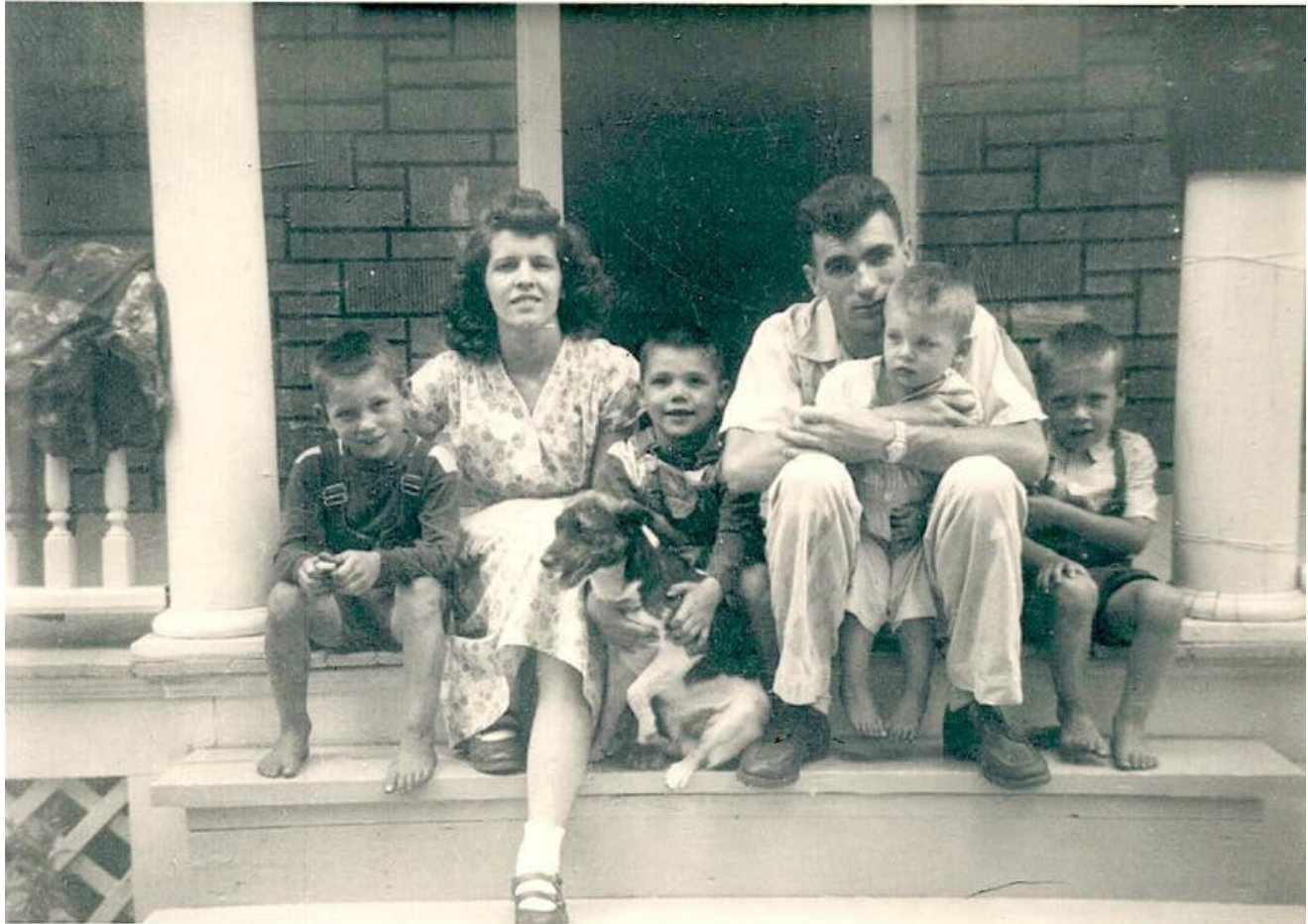
Three Minneapolis boys went missing in 1951. They're still gone.

Wednesday, December 18, 2019 by

Hannah Jones

in

News



This is the Klein family of Minneapolis around 1950, the year before sons Kenneth Jr., David, and Danny Klein disappeared without a trace.

Jack El-Hai

On November 10, 1951, three brothers—Kenneth Jr., David, and Danny Klein—left their north Minneapolis home to go to Farview Park, just a few blocks down the street.

Their older brother, Gordon, age 9, was supposed to catch up with them after he re-stitched his old knife sheath, which may just be the most 1951 sentence ever written.

In the decades to follow, that delay would haunt young Gordon Klein. There was no way he could have known that when he arrived at their meeting spot under the old oak tree, his little brothers would be gone. Police, dogs, and even the Boy Scouts hunted for them and only found two woolen caps (which may or may not have been theirs) discarded on the Mississippi River ice. No bodies. No clues. No nothing.

That was the long and short of the story when Jack El-Hai came into the picture. The freelance journalist contacted the family and wrote a piece about the disappearance in 1998. But like the Kleins, he was also haunted by how much he didn't know. He'd end up revisiting the case decades later and

[publishing a book](#)

(<http://www.startribune.com/new-book-revisits-68-year-old-case-of-three-missing-minneapolis-boys/563454812/?refresh=true>),

on the subject (

The Lost Brothers: A Family's Decades-Long Search

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El-Hai also tried something new, with the help of TPT:

Long Lost

, a true-crime podcast companion to his book. Four episodes are out, with more on the way.

If you listen to podcasts at all, you've probably dabbled in true crime pieces like these. For a while,

Serial,

which reexamined a 1999 murder in Maryland, was the only podcast that existed as far as mainstream pop culture was concerned. Locally, American Public Media's

In the Dark

has looked deep into the 1989 Jacob Wetterling abduction and, in its second season, shed light on a Mississippi man's

[decades-long murder trial saga](#)

(<https://www.apmreports.org/story/2019/12/16/curtis-flowers-bail>).

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The genre of long-form, detail-oriented crime stories thrives on emotional pull and suspense. The listener keeps downloading installments because she hopes for answers—or, at least, closure.

Long Lost

wastes no time managing expectations. El-Hai confesses he still does not know what happened to the Klein boys.

“Unlike a lot of other true crime stories, this case is so far without a solution,” says the author. But maybe his investigation will loosen the lid for someone else—jog a memory or reveal a snag in the official account. Maybe it's merely a monument to how one family heals and moves forward after “catastrophe.” One thing El-Hai says surprised him most was the family's eagerness to share its story of grief.

Unlike in a book, the case file in a podcast is always open. El-Hai says he is still learning, still looking into more leads. Maybe the caps were on the river were a red herring, left by a kidnapper. Maybe a former playground worker, who later came under investigation for the murder of three Chicago boys, was involved.

As each episode has been released, El-Hai's been surprised by new tips and leads flowing in from listeners. He's been contacted by people who lived in the neighborhood at the time of the disappearance, even people who had lived in the Klein home. He says he feels “tantalizingly close” to uncovering something.

If he doesn't reach it in episodes five or six, he says, no matter. He can always release a bonus episode. A podcast is only done when there is no more story to tell, and this particular story isn't over yet.

You can find

Long Lost

on its

website

(<https://www.tptoriginals.org/series/long-lost/>),

or on your preferred podcast listening app.