Renegade Files®

EPISODE RF150

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App Description

Brian Shaffer vanished after a night out in 2006. Twenty years later, his mysterious disappearance remains unsolved. ~~~ Find all things Renegade Files at TheRenegadeFiles.com.

Topics Covered

Brian Shaffer • Brian Shaffer disappearance • Brian Shaffer missing person • Brian Shaffer 2026 update • Ohio State University • Columbus Ohio • Ugly Tuna Saloona • March 31 2006 • April 1 2006 • security camera footage • CCTV evidence • South Campus Gateway • Clint Florence • Meredith Reed • Alexis Waggoner • Randy Shaffer • missing medical student • surveillance blind spots • rear service exit • Cingular cellphone • Hilliard phone mystery • True Crime Garage • new podcast tip • cold case • unsolved disappearances • true crime mystery

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Intro

Hello and welcome to Renegade Files, your weekly destination for Paranormal Adventures, Unsolved Mysteries, and Underground Culture. I'm your host, Lex Gordon, transmitting from the Jungle Villa Outpost, Deep in the Uncharted Tropics.

This is Renegade Files Episode 150, Brian Shaffer: The Man Who Vanished Without a Trace.

This time on Renegade Files, we're revisiting one of the most baffling unsolved disappearance cases in modern American history.

On the night of March 31, 2006, 27-year-old medical student Brian Shaffer went out with friends in Columbus, Ohio. It was the beginning of spring break, and what started as an ordinary Friday night ended in a mystery that investigators have been unable to solve for more than twenty years.

Despite extensive searches, countless tips, and years of investigation, no confirmed trace of Brian Shaffer has ever been found.

And the deeper investigators looked, the stranger the case became. Not because of what they found, but because of what they didn't find… evidence… not a shred.

Now, twenty years later, new investigative attention has brought some overlooked details back into focus, including a tip sent in to a podcast that the podcasters forwarded to the authorities.

So what happened to Brian Shaffer? Did he leave that bar unnoticed? Did someone know more than they ever revealed? And could the answer to this twenty-year mystery have been hiding in the clues all along?

So join me now as we go through the timeline, the witnesses, the details, and the latest developments in the disappearance of Brian Shaffer, the man who vanished without a trace.

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1 THE CENTRAL PUZZLE | ~4 minutes

- April 1, 2006, around 1:55 a.m., Columbus, Ohio. Brian Randall Shaffer, 27, a second-year medical student at Ohio State University, was recorded near the entrance of the Ugly Tuna Saloona, a second-floor bar in the South Campus Gateway development on North High Street.
- He was speaking with two women just outside the bar entrance. The recording showed him moving away from that visible area, apparently toward the bar. This was his last widely documented camera sighting.
- The bar closed around 2 a.m. His companions left and could not find him. No verified footage showed him exiting through the monitored front route. No subsequent confirmed sighting placed him elsewhere.
- Brian missed an April 3 flight to Miami with girlfriend Alexis Waggoner. Police opened a missing-person investigation. Searches and years of leads never established what happened.
- He was never recorded by surveillance leaving by the front door. There was another service route, but the camera coverage and recordings there were imperfect.

• What happened in the minutes around closing? Did Brian leave without being seen? Who last saw him? What did the camera system actually record? What did the new 2026 research find?

2 MARCH 31, 2006: THE LAST ORDINARY EVENING | ~7 minutes

• When Brian disappeared, He was studying medicine at Ohio State in Columbus. His residence, car, academic responsibilities, and upcoming trip later became important to police as they evaluated whether he had planned to leave for some reason.

• His mother, Renee, had died roughly three weeks earlier, after an illness.

• Brian and girlfriend Alexis Waggoner had planned to fly to Miami for spring break on Monday, April 3. Some early accounts said he intended to propose, but 2026 reporting disputed whether a proposal was planned. It's up for speculation but we cant prove whether he was going to propose or not.

Friday evening: step by step

• Friday, March 31: Brian ate dinner at a steakhouse with his father, Randy Shaffer. Randy later described Brian as exhausted after a demanding period of medical-school exams and family loss.

• We know that later, roughly 9:00–9:30 p.m.: Brian met longtime friend and former roommate William "Clint" Florence at the Ugly Tuna Saloona. Published accounts differed slightly about the initial arrival time.

• Brian and Clint visited other bars along the campus / High Street area, with some accounts describing a trip toward downtown or the Arena District. Later summaries described drinking and taking shots, but we don't know exactly how much the guys drank that night.

• Brian contacted Alexis that evening. In 2026 local reporting, the message concerned seeing her Monday at the airport for their Miami trip. Some detailed accounts placed a call around 10 p.m.; the solid points were that the trip was planned and the two had contact that evening.

• We also know that after midnight, they met Meredith Reed, described as a friend of Clint. Meredith drove Brian and Clint back to the Ugly Tuna and went inside with them.

Saturday, April 1: recorded re-entry

• About 1:15 a.m.: Surveillance recorded Brian, Clint, and Meredith arriving at South Campus Gateway and taking the escalator toward the upstairs bar.

• It was nearing last call at The Ugly Tuna but it was still busy inside and music was still playing. Brian and his friends got separated at the bar, and accounts differed on precisely when they last saw each other.

• About 1:50am Brian was seen outside the bar entrance speaking with two women, identified later as Brightan Zatko and Amber Ruic. Accounts and spellings vary.

• A security camera shows Brian moving back toward the bar entrance. It doesn't show the women reacting to anything unusual, or anyone following Brian. But it also doesn't capture his actual re-entrance into the bar's interior.

• About 10 minutes later, at 2am, The bar closed. Brian's friends Clint and Meredith left with the crowd, looked around for Brian, never found him, and eventually assumed he had gone home or left separately.

3 THE CAMERAS AND THE FIRST 72 HOURS | ~10 minutes

The problem with the familiar "impossible disappearance" headline

• Unlike popular versions of the story, The widely shared entrance and escalator video clips don't show a continuous view of every doorway, hallway, interior room, or exit.

• South Campus Gateway had a public entrance and escalator route, as well as a rear service or employee passage. That rear passage connected to another hallway and, at the time, a construction area with outside access.

• According to new police reports this year, rear-area camera coverage had been unreliable. Some cameras reportedly captured still frames rather than continuous video, and recordings could be overwritten. Nothing we have as video evidence rules out Brian leaving by one of the back exits. No one knows why he might have done so.

• Investigators also considered whether Brian could have slipped out through the front without being recognized, perhaps obscured by others leaving, or maybe disguised. Medical students are under extreme pressure sometimes, and the death of someone as close as a mother can impact both mental health and decision making at the best of times.

SO as the weekend unfolded, on Saturday and Sunday, April 1–2

• Friends couldn't reach Brian by phone. Alexis checked his apartment. His car was still there, no apparent disturbance in the apartment, and no explanation for his whereabouts.

• We know that his girlfriend Alexis visited his apartment Saturday afternoon and remained concerned through the weekend. Accounts differed on exact check-in and call times; no precise minute-by-minute sequence was ever established, at least in what has been made public by the police.

• Family members, friends, and Alexis repeatedly tried to contact Brian. The weekend passed without a trace. Alexis hoped he was somewhere making last minute arrangements for their trip.

Monday, April 3

• Brian never arrived on Monday for his flight to Miami with Alexis.

• Brian’s father Randy contacted Columbus police, and the missing-person investigation moved forward. The Columbus Police department took up the case.

• Officers began reviewing security recordings, interviewing Brian’s friends and bar patrons, and searching the building and surrounding areas, including service passageways, construction spaces, dumpsters, nearby streets, and waterways.

4 THE INVESTIGATION: WHAT WAS FOUND AND NOT FOUND | ~8 minutes

Initial search and evidence

• Investigators reconstructed Brian’s movements before roughly 1:55 a.m. from surveillance, witness accounts, and phone contacts. They were unable to produce a confirmed image of Brian after the final bar-entrance sighting.

• The police studied the bar and its building and the surrounding South Campus Gateway / North High Street area.

OPTIONAL MEDIA INSERT | 30–60 seconds of surveillance footage audio or a brief on-air description. This is a visual CCTV clip, so use it only if the actual audio helps, or describe what the footage shows. Preview the footage and check rights before use.

Find the surveillance clip: https://youtu.be/Fz50sB89uG8

• The investigation also found that there was no financial activity in Brian’s accounts after his disappearance. His phone was also never found, so it seems to have vanished with him.

• Over the years, police have reportedly received thousands of tips. Most have been dead ends.

• One was a reported sighting of Brian at a convenience store in early April 2006. Police compared surveillance video from the store with other images and their known case timelines, and determined the person was not Brian.

• Some timelines mentioned an apartment break-in later that April. Investigators reportedly found no connection to Brian’s disappearance. It never became central evidence.

People and recurring internet claims

• Clint Florence, one of the friends Brian was with at the bar, was, of course, a key witness. Some reports say he declined a polygraph, which might sound incriminating, but declining a voluntary polygraph isn’t in-and-of-itself evidence, and Clint was never charged with anything.

• The two women near the entrance were among the last people recorded interacting with Brian, but no reliable evidence made them suspects.

• This was a case where the armature Online detectives raised some of the most original questions. They dove into theories about the band, other patrons, employees, and alleged altercations that night at the bar. But the online speculation is only that.

• The police did a thorough forensic reconstruction and they were unable to established that Brian was killed inside the bar and carried out. That scenario remains a theory.

The phone puzzle

• from April through September 2006: Brian's girlfriend, Alexis Waggoner, continued calling his cellphone, hoping that eventually he might answer. Ordinarily, her calls went straight to voicemail, as you might expect if his phone was turned off, its battery had died, or it couldn't connect to the network.

But then in September 2006, Approximately five months after Brian disappeared, something unusual happened.

Alexis called Brian's phone, and instead of immediately reaching voicemail, she heard it ring three times.

She tried again, and the phone continued ringing before eventually going to voicemail.

Other family members and friends reportedly called and heard ringing, too.

Nobody answered.

For Alexis and the family, this raised the possibility that Brian's phone had somehow been switched back on, and that maybe he was alive with it somewhere, or the someone else had it and was using it.

For years, reports connected the incident to a cellphone tower in Hilliard, Ohio, roughly 14 miles northwest of Columbus. But researchers discussing the case in 2026 disputed that account. They said the phone never actually pinged Hilliard during the September incident, and that the ringing resulted from an overloaded cellular tower transferring the call.

The guys on the podcast True Crime Garage, and their episodes on the Brian Shaffer Timeline go deeply into the phone call analysis, so that’s a good resource if you want the technical deep dive into that.

MID-EPISODE RFA PATREON MENTION

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5 THE MAJOR LEADS AND 2026 REVELATIONS | ~9 minutes

Fall 2008 and the enduring family toll

- Brian’s father Randy Shaffer spent the next 2 years searching for his son and pursuing leads before his accidental death in 2008.

2021 renewed public appeal

• On March 29, 2021, Ohio's Bureau of Criminal Investigation published an age-progression bulletin with photos and an updated likeness. It described Brian as approximately 6 feet 2 inches tall, with brown hair, hazel eyes, and a Pearl Jam logo tattoo on his upper right arm. An FBI ViCAP listing gave an estimated weight of 160–165 pounds.

• The bulletin asked the public to provide information to Columbus authorities.

• On February 27, 2026, the podcast team at True Crime Garage that I mentioned before said they had received a detailed tip with names and timeline information after their series on the subject. The team described it as unusually specific, the name of someone allegedly responsible for some foul play in the case of Brian's disappearance.

• In March 2026, the podcasters forwarded the tip sent to them, to the Columbus police, and according to the True Crime Garage guys, the detective recognized the same name from a tip submitted to the case shortly after Brian disappeared in 2006. The person was never publicly identified.

• The report also described a search warrant that police had executed for a basement near Lane Avenue, related to an earlier theory and address. Investigators opened an area of floor that appeared disturbed and found an old buried heating-oil tank, not Brian.

• As of the time of this recording, the tip has not solved the case, identified remains, or produced an arrest.

6 COMPETING EXPLANATIONS AND THE OPEN CASE | ~6 minutes

Possibility A: Brian left by an incompletely monitored route

• Reason this possibility remaines open: the rear service and construction route existed, the camera coverage was incomplete, and no video established that Brian stayed in the bar. Missing evidence: proof he actually used that route and proof of what happened afterward.

Possibility B: accident after leaving

• Reasons investigators and observers considered an accident: the late hour, reported drinking, and nearby streets, construction spaces, and potentially hazardous areas. Missing evidence: remains or a physical reconstruction that confirmed an accidental death.

Possibility C: foul play

• Right off the bat foul play was considered because of the obvious reasons like the abrupt disappearance, failure to contact loved ones, missing a planned trip, and the possibility of movement beyond the cameras. But no conclusive physical evidence was ever found to indicate a crime had occurred that night at the bar, or in the surrounding areas.

Possibility D: voluntary disappearance

• We have to consider the possibility of a voluntary disappearance. No remains have ever been recovered, and Brian had experienced serious personal stress. He left behind medical studies, a promising relationship, his car, and he never made any subsequent ordinary communications, and he seemed to spend no money. If he did disappear on his own, he left behind a lot and did a remarkable job of vanishing.

So let's Conclude on the evidence

• The strongest documented points remained these: Brian was last publicly captured on camera around 1:55 a.m. April 1, 2006; his friends could not find him; he missed the planned April 3 flight; and decades of investigation yielded no confirmed later sightings.

• The major correction to the legend is that the recordings never established a sealed building or proved he could not have left. Coverage gaps, a rear passage, and possible movement outside the camera views, are real factors in the case.

• The most significant new information reported in 2026 concerned the repeated name described by a tipster, earlier post-disappearance cellphone-location work, and a basement search. But none of these have resulted in any answers.

• Question for the listener: Once the familiar claim that Brian disappeared inside a bar is stripped back to what the cameras do and don't show, does the real mystery begin beyond the last recorded image? I'd say yes.

• What do you think happened here? Some foul play, or he snapped and vanished on his own? Leave a comment and tell me what you think.

Ending Sign-Off

Thank you sincerely for exploring Renegade Files Episode 150, the disappearance of Brian Shaffer, with me.

Subscribe or Follow the show now, so together we can meet here next time and explore the deepest stories of Covert Culture, UFOs, Aliens, Hauntings, Cryptids, Conspiracy Theories, and Unsolved Mysteries.

I'm so glad to have you in the Renegade Files Crew.

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Thank you to the RFA Agents on Patreon. You make this show possible.

Until next Wednesday, I'm your host Lex Gordon ...

Stay Wild, Midnight Child!

RESEARCH LINKS | OFF-AIR REFERENCE ONLY

FBI ViCAP missing-person entry / identifying details https://www.fbi.gov/wanted/vicap/missing-persons/brian-shaffer/

Ohio BCI official age-progression bulletin, March 2021 https://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/Files/Briefing-Room/News-Releases/BCI/Volume-17-Number-02-Missing-Person-Brian-Shaffer-A.aspx

Uncovered case timeline / first 72 hours https://uncovered.com/cases/brian-shaffer

A&E 2026 case review and witness / camera background https://www.aetv.com/articles/brian-shaffer-disappearance-2006

614NOW 2026 new tip / cellphone triangulation / basement report https://614now.com/2026/hot-topics/holy-hell-how-do-you-know-that-name-researchers-podcasters-unveil-new-details-in-brian-shaffer-case

614NOW February 2026 tip announcement reporting https://614now.com/2026/hot-topics/something-about-this-is-different-true-crime-podcasters-tease-potential-brian-shaffer-update

614NOW 2024 retrospective: phone ringing and local reporting https://614now.com/2024/hot-topics/at-18-year-anniversary-brian-schaffers-disappearance-remains-a-mystery

614NOW 2019 retrospective: witnesses, CCTV and local details https://614now.com/2019/hot-topics/news/unsolved-ohio-the-bizarre-disappearance-of-brian-shaffer-from-ugly-tuna

People 2026 case retrospective https://people.com/brian-shaffer-disappearance-what-to-know-11937962

True Crime Garage part 1, 2026 chronology https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/brian-shaffer-20-years-missing-timeline-part-1/id1062418176?i=1000749159218

True Crime Garage part 4, CCTV discussion https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/brian-shaffer-20-years-missing-cctv-footage-part-4/id1062418176?i=1000749277740

Media reference, Dateline-era CCTV clip (preview and rights check) https://youtu.be/Fz50sB89uG8

Production note: Case research outline is adapted from the supplied RF150 notes. Source links are off-air. Check newer case developments and media-use rights before publication.