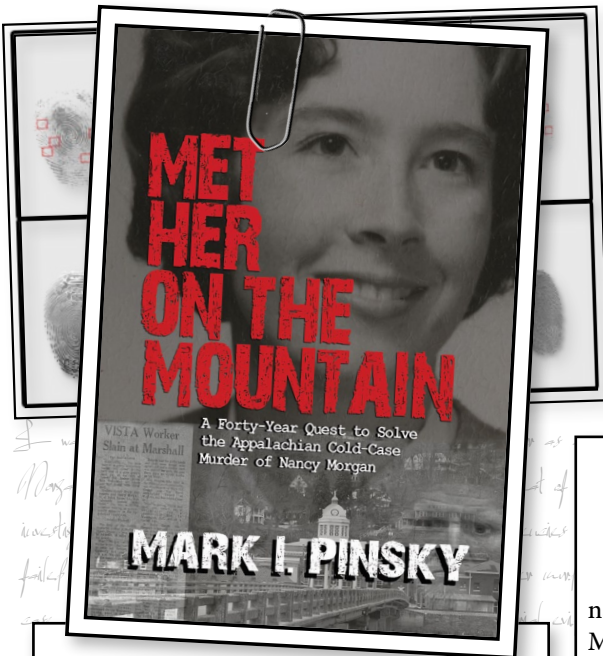


MET HER ON THE MOUNTAIN

A Forty-Year Quest to Solve the Appalachian
Cold-Case Murder of Nancy Morgan

Mark I. Pinsky



ON SALE: OCTOBER 1, 2013

ISBN: 978-0-89587-611-9

True Crime/Murder

Hardcover

\$24.95

6 x 9

278 pages

20 black-and-white photographs

Also available as an e-book



“I was determined to bring her killers to justice. I saw her as a comrade in the fight for social justice.”

In June 1970, federal antipoverty worker Nancy Dean Morgan was found naked, hogtied, and strangled in the backseat of her car deep in the Appalachian Mountains of Madison County, North Carolina. An inept investigation involving local, state, and federal law-enforcement agencies failed to find a clear explanation of the motive or events of her murder. The case was left unsolved.

Years later, after most of the material evidence had been lost or mishandled, one of Nancy’s fellow VISTA workers—the last person known to have seen her alive—became the prime suspect, based on the testimony of one of the county’s most notorious criminals. Did Nancy’s friend and coworker kill her, or was he another victim of the corrupt local political machine and its adherence to “mountain justice”?

When Mark I. Pinsky first read about the murder of Nancy Morgan, he felt an immediate connection to the young activist. Over the next 40 years of his successful career as a journalist and author, Pinsky remained haunted by the questions surrounding Nancy’s murder and continued collecting information that might provide answers.

In *Met Her on the Mountain: A Forty-Year Quest to Solve the Appalachian Cold-Case Murder of Nancy Morgan*, Pinsky presents the evolution of his investigation into Nancy’s murder, delving into her work as an activist as well as the brutal history of Madison County, the site of a Civil War massacre that earned it the sobriquet “Bloody Madison.” A tangled tale of rural noir, *Met Her on the Mountain* is a stirring mix of true crime, North Carolina political history, and one man’s devotion to finding the truth.

A former staff writer for the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Orlando Sentinel*, **Mark I. Pinsky** holds degrees from Duke University and Columbia University. His writing has been featured in the *Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today*. As an investigative journalist, Pinsky covered capital murder cases around the Southeast and worked the religion beat. Though this is his first true-crime work, he has previously published four religion-oriented books, including *The Gospel According to the Simpsons*. He resides with his wife in Maitland, Florida.

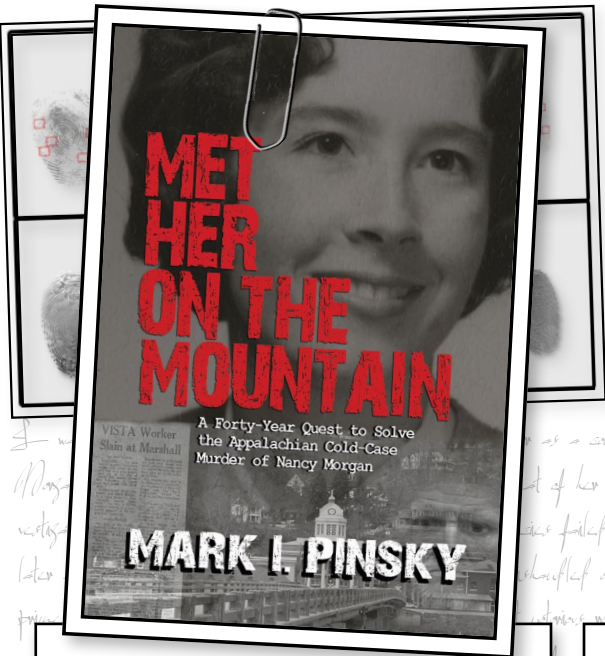
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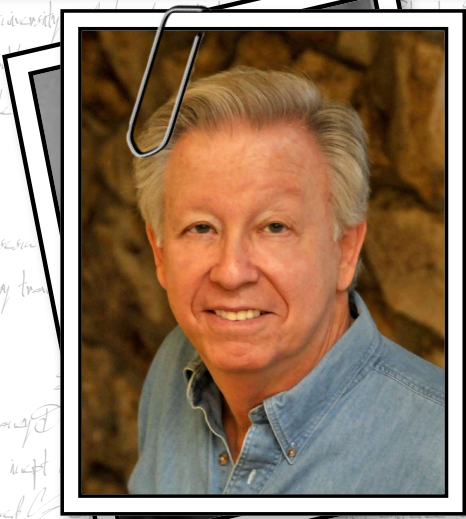
Mark I. Pinsky's passion for journalism began during his time as a staff member for the campus daily newspaper at Duke University.

Inspired by the idealism of the 1960s, and armed with degrees from Duke and Columbia, Pinsky enjoyed a successful 40-year career in journalism. He worked as an investigative journalist for the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Orlando Sentinel*, covering the crime and religion beats. He has also contributed articles to magazines such as the *Nation* and the *Progressive*, as well as to newspapers like the *New York Times*, *Newsday*, *USA Today*, and the *Wall Street Journal*.

It was during his time at Duke that Pinsky heard about the murder of Nancy Morgan and felt an immediate connection to the young activist with the VISTA program in the Appalachian Mountains. Over the next 40 years, he remained intrigued by the unanswered questions surrounding Nancy's death. *Met Her on the Mountain* is Pinsky's presentation of his investigative efforts into what really happened the night of Nancy Morgan's death and who should be held responsible.

Though *Met Her on the Mountain* is Pinsky's first true-crime title, he has authored four books focusing on religion: *The Gospel According to the Simpsons* (Westminster John Knox), *The Gospel According to Disney* (Westminster John Knox), *A Jew Among the Evangelicals* (Westminster John Knox), and *Amazing Gifts* (Alban Institute).

Pinsky now teaches as an adjunct professor at the University of Central Florida in Orlando. He is married to Sarah M. Brown, a photographer, teacher, and social worker, with whom he has two grown children. They live in Maitland, Florida.



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"This is true-crime reportage at its absolute best: skillfully told, passionate in its clarity, and unrelenting in its pursuit of the truth behind a brutal mountain murder. Pinsky has created a classic."

—Phyllis Tickle, author of *The Spirit of the Age*

"This remarkable book is at once a diverting murder mystery, a classic study of the art of detection, and an intricate inquiry into the nuances of legal and journalistic ethics. It also is a classic of social anthropology, in which the death of one young woman in a remote North Carolina county illuminates a clash of cultures that resonates throughout the whole of America. I read this book straight through, which doesn't happen very often, and days later was still pondering the meaning of 'reasonable doubt.' What makes *Met Her on the Mountain* so much more intriguing than other whodunits is that all the characters are real people, and so is the detective. Mark Pinsky is a sleuth of the first order—an Appalachian Simenon who understands the deepest mysteries are those of the human soul."

—T. D. Allman, author of *Finding Florida*

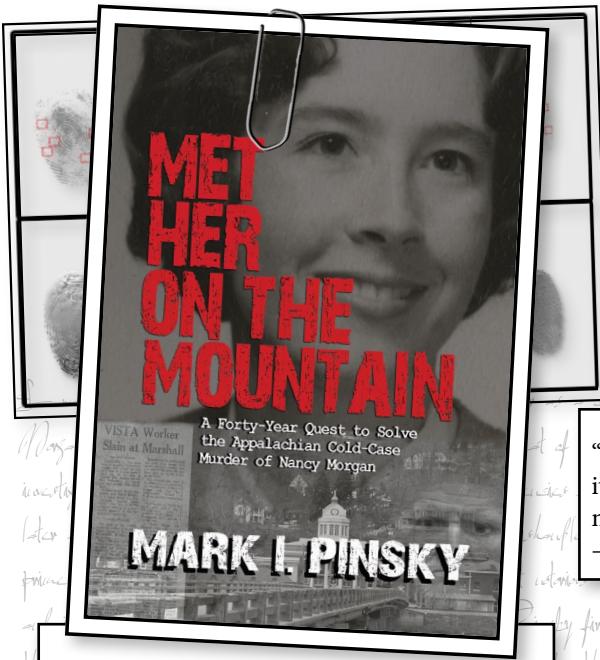
"A fascinating and compulsively readable chronicle of one man's forty-year obsession with an unsolved murder. Pinsky's meticulous research, relying heavily on interviews, translates into a beautifully nuanced study of culture clash, machine politics, and the sometimes hobbled pursuit of justice in a small mountain community"

—Vicki Lane, author of the *Elizabeth Goodweather Appalachian Mysteries*

"Mark I. Pinsky has delivered a powerful narrative of mystery, death, and tragically squandered idealism in this tale of murder and mayhem in North Carolina's western mountains. But this is more than a whodunit: it is an enthralling journey into the heart of an isolated rural community burdened with a dark legacy of violence and soul-sapping corruption. Pinsky writes with great sensitivity to mountain mores, and filigrees his page-turning story with a veteran reporter's eye for both the intricacies of rural politics and the insidious vitality of human deceit."

—Fergus M. Bordewich, author of *America's Great Debate: Henry Clay, Stephen A. Douglas, and the Compromise That Preserved the Union*

ADVANCE PRAISE



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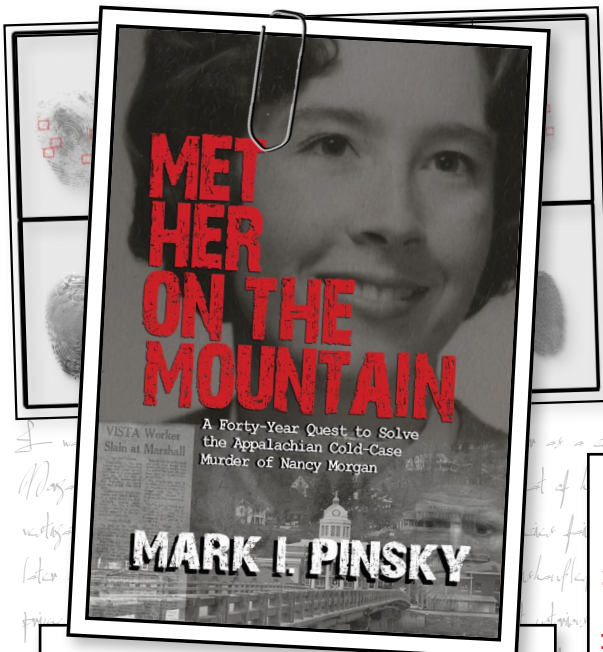


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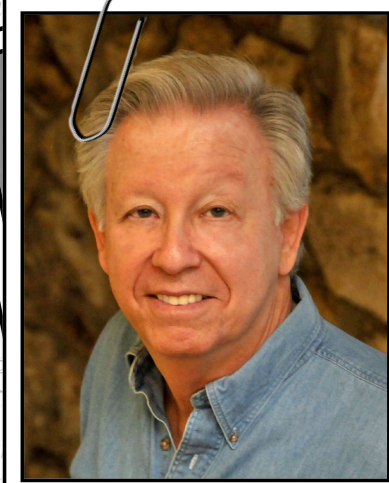
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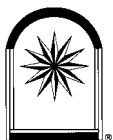
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Investigation Timeline

- 1940**—E. Y. and Zeno Ponder enter Madison County politics. Over the next 30 years, they assemble a far-reaching political machine.
- Fall 1969**—Nancy Morgan moves to Madison County, North Carolina, to begin service as a VISTA worker.
- June 14, 1970, 1:30 p.m.**—Nancy is last seen by Madison County locals at the general store.
- June 15, 1970, 3:30 a.m.**—Nancy leaves Ed Walker's house. He is the last person to report seeing her alive.
- June 16, 1970**—Nancy misses a VISTA fundraising meeting. VISTA workers and Madison County locals begin searching the area.
- June 17, 1970**—Nancy's body is discovered in Tanyard Gap, North Carolina.
- June 18, 1970**—Mark I. Pinsky reads about Nancy's murder on the front page of the *Durham Sun*.
- November 1970**—Madison County sheriff Roy Roberts resigns. E. Y. Ponder is elected the new sheriff on a promise to solve Nancy's case.
- March 22, 1971**—Nancy's case is closed by the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation.
- 1978**—Mark I. Pinsky first visits Madison County.
- Spring 1984**—Johnny Waldroup, a key witness from the original investigation, changes his story, implicating Ed Walker as the prime suspect in Nancy's murder.
- April 27, 1984**—The Madison County district attorney reopens Nancy's case.
- August 20, 1984**—Ed Walker is indicted for the rape and murder of Nancy Morgan.
- Fall 1985**—Ed Walker is brought to trial and acquitted.
- 1986**—E. Y. Ponder loses his reelection campaign for sheriff of Madison County.
- 1996**—Mark I. Pinsky begins visiting Madison County regularly to investigate Nancy's case.
- May 1998**—Prison inmate Richard Johnson, a Madison County local, confesses to the murder of Nancy Morgan.
- 2009**—Richard Johnson retracts his confession.
- October 1, 2013**—*Met Her on the Mountain*, in which Mark I. Pinsky tells the story of his 40-year quest to solve Nancy Morgan's Appalachian cold-case murder, is published.

CLASSIFIED

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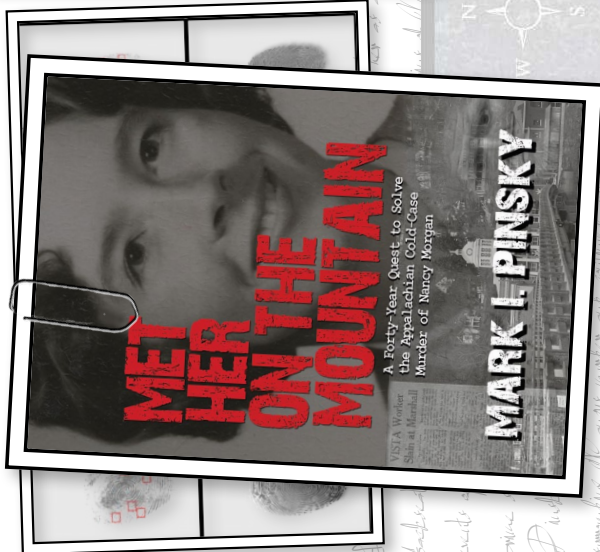
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