



## DEATH OF MATTHEW CARRINGTON

NARRATOR: What pressures would keep a friend from calling for help, even when it was a matter of life and death?

In 2005, four fraternity brothers watched, and did nothing to help, as their close friend, 21-year-old Matthew Carrington, died in front of them.

DEFENDANT: I'll live with the consequences [UI] for the rest of my life. My actions killed a good person.

DEFENDANT 2: Nothing I can say here today will bring back Matthew Carrington, or lessen the grief that his family feels.

DEFENDANT 3: His death was preventable. And I will live with the guilt for the rest of my life.

NARRATOR: Why did these four boys do nothing?

DEFENDANT: Every time I think about it, the feelings rush back, and the idea of "what if?" just...stands [out of a] corner. It's not, not leavin'. It's always there.

I have no doubt that if I would have known what I know now that I could have stopped it.

NARRATOR: The story is not unique, but it raises a question: Is there something in human nature that often keeps us from helping?

M: [UI] I can remember when I first heard about the study. Psych 1. Thought, oh, that is ridiculous. How can someone see something happening that they know is wrong; that they know the person standing next to them [know is] wrong; but not take an action?

It's [sickening] to know that I took part in it; that I, that I could have just been the one that stood up.

{BELL RING}

NEWSPERSON: A makeshift memorial of flowers and candles is placed outside the Kai Tau fraternity house for Matthew Carrington. Police say the 21-year-old Chico State student was in the basement of this house, taking part in a fraternity event at 5 a.m. Wednesday morning when his body gave out.

F: Matt didn't have to die that night. It could have all been so different. It could have all been, from the very beginning, when they were all down there; when there was a roomful of guys. It went wrong before they all left.

NARRATOR: Matthew Carrington joined a fraternity, and was undergoing hazing during the spring semester of his sophomore year.

FRAT BOY: Pledge class, two thousand oh four.

FRAT BOY 1: Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo.

FRAT BOY 2: ...see what's goin' on.

FRAT BOY 1: And these are little, uh, pledge brothers you see right here.

M: He wanted to, to join because he, he would get to meet people. He was kinda shy. You know, networking and such. When you're older, I mean, you've got brothers in houses in every college, all over the country, so.

FRAT BOY: Whoooooo! Whoooo!

M: They did some pretty, uh, silly things; more embarrassing than causin' anybody any harm. Like wearin' a miniskirt out in the intersection, or switchin' your T-shirt with a homeless guy, and puttin' his shirt on.

It was nothin' that was gonna get anybody hurt.

FRAT BOY: Oh, isn't that sweet?

NARRATOR: How did these seemingly harmless pranks escalate to the point where Matthew died?

M: Basically, it was the third night of what the fraternity called Inspiration Week; what the pledges call Hell Week.

The pledges — Mike, Matt — [were, arrived] into the basement. And the first thing that they did was undergo just some grueling physical calisthe[t]ics. The young men were then given a five-gallon water jug, which in itself weighed about 42 pounds, and were told to stand up on a narrow bench, standing on one foot. And to drink as much as they possibly could.

M: Matthew at some point became nauseated; vomited; became increasingly confused. The kidneys can only handle so much water, and indeed, you can poison yourself.

F: When you're drinking water, and you're acting drunk, okay, somethin's not right. You know? When you're slurrin' your words; when you're, you know, you can't manipulate things like you normally, something's wrong.

M: [UI]. And J.P. Fickes came in at some point, and they were both intoxicated, and Maestretti was excessively intoxicated. And they basically took over.

FRAT BOY: Actually, to tell you the truth, I don't remember most of it. Uh, unfortunately, I was pretty intoxicated when it happened. I remember making him do pushups. I don't remember why.

FRAT BOY: Matt was at a point where he couldn't do any more pushups. He just all of a sudden dropped. And his, it just seemed like his whole body just tensed up.

F: You've got, well, at this point, four boys down there. It just makes me sick that they didn't think; that they didn't think, something's wrong. So why can't someone say, stop?

What could happen is if one person says, this guy is in real trouble; you call 911; you do this; you do that: Everybody will buy that definition; will start to react; uh, will be helpful. The thing is balanced on a knife edge. But sometimes it falls. And nothing happens.

FRAT BOY: His hips moved a little bit, and he just seized up. And Mike said, uh, oh my god; uh, I think he bit his tongue. And then he said, somebody needs to call an ambulance.

I was turning on my cell phone [when I was ga-] walking down the stairs, and was typin' in 911 when I saw Mike at the bottom of the stairs. I had it typed into my phone. All I had to do was press the green button.

And he said, it's okay, you don't need to call 911. Matt's just sleeping. You know, I hit, I hit the red button, and canceled it out.

And then he was snoring. It just sounded like he was snoring.

FRAT BOY: I remember that, thoroughly. I remember the sound of him snoring. I remember thinking, no, he's sleeping.

M: The snoring was certainly not sleeping. It would have been a result of water intoxication, uh, and of pulmonary edema, which is basically the lungs filling with fluid. Approximately an hour after he had been left to sleep it off, he was not breathing.

F: Did nothing for an hour, [UI] lay there. Then they realize he's not breathing. Then all of a sudden, it's like, call 911! Well, god, I, at this point they do. But at this point, now, it's too late.

M: Matthew was pronounced dead, uh, approximately 27 minutes after arrival in the, uh, emergency department.

MATT CARRINGTON'S FATHER: When we got there, they took me and Debbie in the back, and we were still hopin' that when they pulled that sheet over his head, it was gonna be another kid; not yours. Just [the], bad as that sounds, there was just a chance it wasn't our son. And as soon as they pulled the sheet up, and we seen his hairdo, you know, it was...

MATT CARRINGTON'S MOTHER: {Crying} I was just screaming, no, not Matt! Not Matt!

NEWSMAN: The four ringleaders in the fraternity hazing and torture death of 21-year-old

Chico State student Matthew Carrington accepted responsibility; all four, some through tears, pleading guilty.

FRAT BOY: Guilty.

FRAT BOY: Guilty, sir.

FRAT BOY: Guilty.

FRAT BOY: Guilty.

NEWSMAN: All four were given jail time. Most culpable: 22-year-old Gabriel Maestretti, sentenced to a year in jail for involuntary manslaughter. Twentyfive-year-old Jerry Lim and 19-year-old John Fickes sentenced to six months as accessories to manslaughter.

M: Matt trusted 'em to, to help him out, if he is gonna get into trouble, 'cause he wasn't worried about gettin' into trouble with just drinkin' water. When it was time for help, they didn't step up, and he didn't get any help.

NARRATOR: Nearly a year after Matthew's death, Debbie visits three of the four fraternity brothers who remain in jail, serving time for involuntary manslaughter.

DEBBIE: I don't think they're bad kids. I think they just made bad choices, [and a, and a] terrible, terrible mistake. You know, that we're all gonna live with for the rest of our lives.

It's just hard. {sigh} I start all of my days crying for Matt, 'cause I just miss him so much. And I think of all you guys. And I think of the pain that you must be feeling, having to live with that.

CONVICT: For like the whole year, it was just...one day bein' played over and over; that night, bein' played over and over again in my head.

CONVICT: I find it hard to forgive myself. I don't know. It's like the only thing that makes me feel better is to like hate myself.

M: It's sad [in, uh] of itself that you want, you want retribution, just so it can be over with.

M: What it's hard for us to realize is the power that situations have over us, to cause us to act in certain ways. It was not the case that they had been horrible moral failures. It's the case that they're like the rest of us, caught up in situations, influenced by the situations, reacting.

CONVICT: I believe that there's all different kinds of people. And that a certain kind of people take charge in situations. Unfortunately for Matt, none of us were the type of person who took charge and told people what to do. We just found ourselves looking at each other, waiting for someone to step up. And nobody did..