



Framed: Why Michael Skakel Spent Over a Decade in Prison For a Murder He Didn't Commit

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In 1975, fifteen-year-old Martha Moxley's body was found in the backyard of her family's Connecticut home, and a member of America's beloved Kennedy family, then also fifteen, was accused of the crime. What ensued was a media firestorm and a whodunit that transfixed the nation, providing daily debates—and cruel, dinner table entertainment. Now, forty years after Michael Skakel's conviction, his cousin, acclaimed activist and writer Robert Kennedy, Jr., has taken matters into his own hands to get the charges dropped and clear his cousin's name.

This startling expose—a page-turning, true story of murder, romance, and fame—is the story of Skakel's conviction that the public has never before been privy to. It is the product of hundreds of interviews with Skakel and those who knew him, Martha Moxley, and what may have happened the night of the crime, Halloween eve. It also explores why Kennedy believes Skakel has yet to receive a fair trial, and why he demands the original verdict be overturned.

This is a heart-wrenching story with a powerful cast of characters. It opens the doors for the public into what was once a “perfect” Greenwich community and how a crime shook an elite family. Kennedy presents the evidence through enlightening text, photographs, and new interviews, and allows readers to decide, given the facts, what they believe really happened to Martha and if, forty years after his crucifixion, Michael Skakel should finally walk free.

Framed: Why Michael Skakel Spent Over a Decade in Prison For a Murder He Didn't Commit Details

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From Reader Review Framed: Why Michael Skakel Spent Over a Decade in Prison For a Murder He Didn't Commit for online ebook

Laura Hoeman says

Explains a lot

I've read all the books on this crime, including *Murder in Greenwich* and those lesser known. They all make interesting reading, but now this one has convinced me that the others are wrong. I now believe Michael Skakel is innocent. I'm glad it sets the record straight, with new facts the others didn't have.

Gloria Piper says

This is a true story. The Kennedy's didn't know their cousins, the Skakels, because they have little in common. Nevertheless when Michael Skakel is sent to prison for a crime he did not commit, the author, can't help but notice how no evidence exists to convict Michael. It should have been impossible to convict him. Kennedy investigates and discovers a decades long campaign to frame a Kennedy, even if he is a mere cousin.

Inexperienced and inept police work that should have been handed over to the experts, the cover-up of a parasitic lawyer who had handled the Skakel finances for years, other lawyers and journalists out to make a reputation, all add up to inventing the case against Michael. True principled experts are cast aside, their evidence hidden or destroyed. Eventually Kennedy uncovers the true killers, and to this day, they walk free while Michael's freedom is threatened. Will he be forced back to prison after a decade of serving for a murder he did not commit? Will the real murderers be brought to trial? As it stands, other reputations and lives have been destroyed because of the greed and heartlessness of those who should be held to account.

Wealth is no safety net against injustice. How many more innocent people are incarcerated? And why, even when proven innocent, are states slow to release those proven innocent?

Here is a stirring expose with facts laid out. We want to do something to help, even if it is to pray for justice.

David Bales says

Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. makes an overwhelming and compelling case in exonerating his cousin, Michael Skakel, for the murder of Martha Moxley on the night before Halloween, 1975, and has used impressive and methodical detective skills in uncovering who the real culprits might be. Kennedy first wrote a detailed, mesmerizing defense of his cousin in the *Atlantic* magazine in 2003, and this book lays out new and important information that points away from Michael Skakel. A great deal is to be said for the media's role in this affair, the demonization and mischaracterizations that the twenty-four hour a day news cycle creates and the assumptions we make about people that we don't even know. Kennedy is frank about Skakel's, (and others) struggles with substance abuse and gives a great background on the history of the Skakel clan, who being conservative Republicans were in a rivalry with and not personally close with the Kennedys. To describe Michael Skakel as a Kennedy was wholly inaccurate. At the least, Kennedy has again made the case

for at least reasonable doubt and at the most, he's found the real killers. Skakel was convicted of murder in 2002 and released in 2013 after a writ of habeas corpus found that his defense had been extremely inadequate. All who love truth hope that justice is done on his behalf, (and in the memory of Martha Moxley, whose real killer or killers have not yet been brought to justice.)

Erin says

Framed was an entertaining if a bit rambling look at the circumstances that led to Michael Skakel's conviction for murdering Martha Moxley. I had already had doubts about Michael Skakel's guilt & this book just cemented that belief. I think RFK Jr. had good intentions in writing this book but if you thought that his cousin was guilty this book won't change that. He doesn't hide his resentment toward the media & most people involved in the case especially Mark Fuhrman & Dominic Dunne. I personally think RFK Jr's other cousin Thomas Skakel who happens to be Michael's brother murdered Martha Moxley. I would recommend Framed to true crime readers & people who are interested in the Kennedy's.

Rory Costello says

Growing up in Connecticut, I certainly remember the sensation around the murder of Martha Moxley -- but I never really knew that much about it until now. RFK Jr. presents a mountain of evidence to show that there was a miscarriage of justice against his cousin. What's also interesting is to learn about the Skakel family, and how its politics were diametrically opposed to the beliefs of the Kennedys.

The drawback of the book for me is how Kennedy presents his view of who the real killers are. He lambastes the likes of Dominick Dunne for being inflammatory and prejudicial -- but at least to some extent, he does the same thing with his ending. At any rate, there's a ton of reasonable doubt with regard to Michael Skakel's culpability...a ton.

Tressa says

3.5 stars

I read Mark Fuhrman's book back when it came out, and was convinced that Michael Skakel killed Martha Moxley. Now that I've read Framed, I am not so sure. I do understand that different writers will skew the evidence to make it look like their guy is innocent or guilty depending on their agenda (as a Lizzie Bordenphile, I read four different LB books that "proved" that four different suspects killed Mr. and Mrs. Borden), but if the evidence in Robert Kennedy's book is true, it would appear that Skakel was framed. But do we know for sure? No. But if all that evidence had been presented at trial and if Skakel had a better attorney, I don't believe he would have been convicted, especially decades after the murder.

I would have given the book a higher rating but the writing, compared to other true crime books such as Helter Skelter, In Cold Blood, and A Stranger Beside Me, comes off as too dry; and the book's direction seems choppy and to go in circles instead of the evidence being laid out in a linear format (murder/evidence/trial) that allows the reader to take it all in.

Richard says

The page count of this book might seem to be a bit low at 288 pages, but the margins of the hardcopy version are quite narrow, and the paragraphs are often long. The font is smaller than that found in many hardcover books. In addition, the leading (line spacing) is not particularly great, so there is a very great deal of content in the 278 pages of text plus Acknowledgments, Table of Contents, Cast of Characters, Timeline, Introduction and Index. The book also includes 16 pages of glossy photographs, some of them in color, that are not included in the page count, but do add to the clarity of the narration. What I am saying is that this book is extremely comprehensive and rich with content. It is well-written and compelling.

Mr. Kennedy is a thorough investigator. He left no stones unturned in this gripping analysis of the murder of 15 year-old Martha Moxley on Halloween eve in 1975, and of the subsequent wrongful conviction of Michael Skakel for that murder. The book is well-organized, and each principal and potential suspect in the murder is treated individually and with a lot of detail. As you read the book, you will be wondering about the identity of the murderer(s) until near the end of the book, when the identity of the culprit(s) are revealed. The suspense intensifies as much as in any good fictional murder mystery.

Many of us might envy the rich and famous, but after reading of how they are so often victimized by parasites from the legal and journalism professions, we might have second thoughts. The Skakel family was preyed upon to the tune of millions of dollars by two unscrupulous lawyers, and by two gossip writers with no ethics. Michael Skakel spent more than eleven years in prison for a crime that he clearly did not commit, thanks to biased judges, a prosecutor with a taste for fame, and a defense attorney who was more interested in lining his pockets and rubbing elbows with the rich and famous than in winning his case and ensuring that his client received a fair trial. If Michael Skakel had not been a cousin to the Kennedy clan, he probably would never have been accused, much less convicted.

Mr. Kennedy has done what an Army of police, prosecutors, private investigators, biased judges and entertainment luminaries such as Dominick Dunne and Mark Fuhrman were not able to do: convincingly solve the forty year-old murder of Martha Moxley. Unfortunately, it appears that no truly guilty parties will ever be brought to justice for that crime. In fact, Michael Skakel's future now rests with the Supreme Court of the State of Connecticut which, having already rejected his earlier appeals, could easily deny the petition for habeas corpus and send Michael back to prison. How sad for us to, once again, see how utterly our system of justice can fail. Every principled and fair-minded American should read this book. 5 Stars

Lela says

Very, very well researched. Extraordinary details. I hope someone takes notice!

Ann Marie (Lit·Wit·Wine·Dine) says

That it is better 100 guilty Persons should escape than that one innocent Person should suffer, is a Maxim that has been long and generally approved. - Benjamin Franklin, letter to Benjamin Vaughn dated March 14,

On the evening of October 30, 1975, Martha Moxley, a beautiful fifteen-year-old girl residing in the prestigious Belle Haven enclave of the very affluent town of Greenwich Connecticut, was brutally murdered so close to her own home her mother believes she may have heard her screams.

The following morning, her friend finds her body bludgeoned and stabbed. The weapon is a golf club which has been wielded with such force it has broken in three. Her pants and underwear have been pulled down around her ankles, indicating a sexual assault, though in the days to come we will learn that her hymen remains intact and there is no evidence of semen found on or near her body.

There are suspects aplenty. The neighbors, the neighbor's tutor, the ill-tempered boyfriend, the rapist gardner, the weirdo next door. Some witnesses even report seeing large, hulking figures slinking about in the night, inspiring such fear that they hid until the coast was clear and then ran to the safety of their homes. Residents are sure the forensic evidence will narrow the search and a stand-out suspect will come to forefront. Police will swiftly match the evidence with the suspect, corroborate eyewitness testimony, and elicit a confession. Sadly, that does not happen. Alibis will be corroborated. Polygraph and sodium pentathol tests will be passed and failed. There will be a devastating loss of physical evidence and other catastrophic investigative failures. The case will become cold.

But even as the case turns and stays cold, one family will remain under a cloud of suspicion. The Skakels, the Belle Haven neighbors of the Moxley family, will provide police, the media, and the general public with two suspects. Initially, however, it is Michael's older brother, Tommy, who is considered the more likely perpetrator. In fact, it will be years before Michael is considered a suspect. I won't reveal all of the information on the various suspects or all of the contradictory evidence but it's my belief that there were other suspects who deserved at least the same amount of attention given to the Skakel boys. It seems some were only given a cursory glance while some were not given any attention at all. It was no secret that the Skakels were a wealthy and powerful family. But rather than making them off-limits and impenetrable as some have suggested, it seemed to have made them more of a target to those who considered them suspects. In 1991, the Greenwich PD announced they would be reinvestigating the case. What ensued between this announcement, Michael's arrest and conviction, and his being granted habeas corpus relief in 2013, was a media and judicial three-ring circus the details of which you must read to believe. Due at least in part to the inadequate representation Michael received, a whole laundry list of factors, including the disregard of the established time of death and solid alibi Michael had for that time, and credibility of the only witnesses testifying against Michael were ignored, resulting in Michael's conviction.

This book isn't simply the story of the crime and trial, however. It's also the story of Michael and the Skakel family. Some of the details may surprise you. That's all I'll say about that.

This book is a must-read for anyone who has been interested in the Martha Moxley case. It is also an important illustration for us all that miscarriages of justice can and do occur when the need for results, power, fame, and money supersede the need for justice.

Though I was left with a few unanswered questions, I felt *Framed: Why Michael Skakel Spent Over a Decade in Prison For a Murder He Didn't Commit* provides a compelling case in support of Michael Skakel's innocence. Of course, the author is Michael Skakel's cousin. (Perhaps we wouldn't be so familiar with this case if it were otherwise.) But even a biased presentation of facts (and I'm certainly not saying there is one

here) could not change things such as time of death, lost physical evidence, and the concealment of exculpatory evidence.

I feel that I should mention that I have not read any other books regarding this case, fictionalized or otherwise, including those by Dominick Dunne and disgraced former L.A.P.D. detective Mark Fuhrman. Therefore, I have no basis to compare the arguments for or against any suspects or information in previously published books.

We must always remember that despite gut feelings, rumors, and personal disdain and prejudice, the American criminal justice system is based on one's innocence until guilt has been proven beyond a reasonable doubt. The burden of proof rests with the prosecution in a court of law - not with the media, tabloid or otherwise. And certainly not with the rumor mill, those with a personal ax to grind, or those out to make a quick buck on someone else's misfortune.

Michael is currently awaiting a decision as to whether or not he will be re-tried for the murder of Martha Moxley.

4.75/5 stars

Thanks to Skyhorse Publishing for providing me with a free copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Grady says

All men make mistakes, but the good man yields when he knows his course is wrong and repairs the evil. The only sin is pride.' —Sophocles.

New York author Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. has published 'Crimes Against Nature', 'The Riverkeepers', 'Judge Frank M. Johnson, Jr: A Biography, and two children's books 'St Francis of Assisi', American Heroes: Joshua Chamberlain and the American Civil War and Robert Smalls: The Boat Thief. His articles have appeared in The New York Times, The Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, The Wall Street Journal, Newsweek, Rolling Stone, Atlantic Monthly, Esquire, The Nation, Outside Magazine, The Village Voice, and many other publications. His award winning articles have been included in anthologies of America's Best Crime Writing, Best Political Writing and Best Science Writing. He serves as Senior Attorney for the Natural Resources Defense Council, Chief Prosecuting Attorney for the Hudson Riverkeeper and President of Waterkeeper Alliance. He is a graduate of Harvard University, studied at the London School of Economics and received his law degree from the University of Virginia Law School. Following graduation he attended Pace University School of Law, where he was awarded a Masters Degree in Environmental Law. He is a Clinical Professor and Supervising Attorney at Pace University School of Law's Environmental Litigation Clinic and is of counsel to Morgan & Morgan, a nationwide personal injury practice. He is co-host of Ring of Fire on Air America Radio. Earlier in his career he served as Assistant District Attorney in New York City. His awards are copious.

Kennedy's style of writing, while obviously steeped in research and legal knowledge, is at the same time as fluid as any novelist today. This book is fact, not fiction – and that pertains not only to the wrongful conviction of Michael Skakel for murder, but also of the corruption of the legal system. Much of what Kennedy writes may not be what the reader wants to believe – that our court system is deeply flawed not

only on the part of lawyers and judges but also on the manner in which cases are tried, relying on witness and jurors who may not always be impartial. It is terrifying on many counts. As one critic so aptly summarizes, FRAMED 'recounts the blunders of investigators, the misconduct of prosecutors, the perjury of witnesses, the legal ineptitude of judges and defense lawyers, and the failings of a criminal justice system that cares more about defending a conviction, even one that is wrongful, than in delivering justice.'

Kennedy places his survey of this monstrous error in four parts: The Stage, The Suspects, The Victims, The Frame, The Witnesses, The Lawyer and The Ghosts. In that framework the case unfolds as described in the synopsis: 'On Halloween 1975, Martha Moxley was found brutally murdered outside her home in swanky Greenwich, Connecticut. Twenty-seven years after her death, the State of Connecticut spent some \$25 million to convict her friend and neighbor, Michael Skakel, of the murder. At Michael's criminal trial, the State offered no physical or forensic evidence, no fingerprints or DNA, no eyewitness linking Michael to the killing. The trial ignited a media firestorm that transfixed the nation. Kennedy, with meticulous research and reporting, proves that Michael Skakel did not and could not have murdered Martha Moxley. He chronicles how Skakel was, nevertheless, railroaded amidst a media frenzy by the devious actions of a crooked cop, a trio of mendacious writers, a treacherous family lawyer nursing a secret grudge, a narcissistic defense attorney obsessed by the spotlight, a craven prosecutor gone rogue, and a parade of perjuring witnesses. Kennedy also shows how he tracked down the likely killers, a pair of ghosts who moved in and out of Greenwich and whose presence was detected by neither police nor press during 30 years of costly yet shoddy investigation. Today, those men walk free. This startling expose—an explosive exploration of murder and fame—is the tragic true story of Skakel's conviction that the public has never heard. It is the product of hundreds of interviews with Skakel and those who knew both him and Martha Moxley. Kennedy gives us a real-life thriller with twists and turns, and finally answers the 40-year-old question, "Who killed Martha Moxley?"

Brilliant writing and a must read for everyone concerned about the status of the legal system in our country.

Paul says

This is an incredible book. It's reminiscent of *In Cold Blood* in that the perpetrators are only found after years of red herrings and false accusations, and the certainty of their perpetration is found in the specificity of the memories of those who witnessed the murder and didn't dare to speak up. The difference between this book and *In Cold Blood* is that the latter is a classic, and this book, while very well written, can't come up to the sheer poetry of Capote's book. Another difference is that the cops caught Dick and Perry, whereas in this narrative, Michael Skakel is unjustly imprisoned for more than 11 years (and appears to have to return to prison as of a recent judge's ruling).

The whole story is one of the tabloid press creating a false narrative based on a loose association with the Kennedy family, because Ethel Kennedy was a Skakel. The Skakels virtually disowned Ethel for marrying into the liberal Kennedy family because they were highly right-wing. The two families had almost no contact with each other over the years. The author, in fact, even though he was Bobby and Ethel Kennedy's son, had never met Michael Skakel his entire life until he got involved in this case.

There are many culprits. Besides the tabloid press and tabloid TV shows, there was an entirely incompetent defense lawyer who drained the Skakels of more than a million dollars while living the high life as a TV celebrity and partier only to lose the case. In the lawyer's case, it was sheer cupidity. In the press's case, it

was ratings and dollars and the titillating (and entirely untrue) fascination with the Kennedys' mishaps. There is also huge blame to be charged to the Greenwich, Connecticut, police department, which lost scores of evidence and maintained crackpot theories about how the murder of Martha Moxley had to have happened. Michael Skakel, a 15-year-old neighbor of Martha's, was railroaded, and because of the intransigence of the police and the self-righteousness of the judges, no one was willing to admit that they had botched the case. The two killers, whom Kennedy identifies by name, are still unindicted and living presumably carefree lives. No one has been willing to look into the fraudulent evidence used to convict Michael Skakel.

This is an infuriating book, all the more so because it appears that justice will never be done, and the true story will never get out, nor the true perpetrators brought to justice.

Chris Bartle says

I found this book to be entirely convincing on the subject of Michael Skakel's innocence. But, more powerful still, it demonstrates conclusively that there was more than enough reasonable doubt to acquit Michael, so that it is damningly clear that the justice system was manipulated, to the everlasting guilt and shame of those who participated in his conviction. These include irresponsible, even vicious, celebrity mongering journalists like Dominic Dunne, Mark Furman and Nancy Grace, and utterly incompetent, ego and agenda-driven police and slimy prosecutors. There is much here that has been elided or avoided in other accounts, and the book delivers new facts and new thinking on a multitude of issues. Aside from the awful fate that Ms. Moxley suffered, perhaps the most affecting parts of the book concern the damage that was done in the aftermath of the murder to those affected by it and the inexcusably unprofessional investigation that followed. I hope that the Crawford Mills and Geoff Byrne families can feel some redemption, and I hope that some of the poison of envy and hate for the Skakel family will be drawn out when people understand the family's history and read the book's careful and comprehensive research of the events around the night of the murder. The book represents prodigious effort, and tells unvarnished truth about those wild days.

Nikki says

Heart-wrenching.
Smartly written.
Couldn't put it down or stop talking about it!

Krista says

Before I review this book, I have to admit that I came to the case at its heart (the Martha Moxley murder) with a firm belief in Michael Skakel's guilt.

That said, I'm attempting to review this book as objectively as possible, given that Robert F. Kennedy is arguing for his cousin's innocence. I do in fact find that he makes several compelling arguments (the location of Michael that night, a possible confession from another party, the strength needed to break a golf club, the weakness of Michael's defense lawyer, and so on.) But the book is set back by two items: 1.) RFK Jr. is frequently over-the-top in his denunciation of various opposed forces. I certainly understand why he doesn't like Dominick Dunne or the CT police, but his constant references to how they "lied," or how they're

bottom-feeders, and so on, are just tiresome. I'm not persuaded of a conspiracy just because the author repeatedly says there was one. 2.) The book seems to be going into various directions, rather than telling one coherent story. It would have been stronger with a tighter organization, less excessive interpretative commentary on the "other side," and a more singular argument as the focus of the book. As it is right now, the book seems to be arguing for a mixture of bad luck, bad defense, bad cops, bad parenting, and more in the case--and that is just too much for me to buy.

Peter Brown says

Sad story of the justice system - but very well told!

I thoroughly enjoyed the book. Having said that, it is very disturbing view of the justice system. Michael had a bad attorney and the prosecution used the framework of a disgraced former policeman to get a wrongful conviction.
