



It Can't Happen Here: The Search For Jacob Wetterling

Robert Dudley

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Anyone who was living in the Midwest in the fall of 1989 was familiar with the Jacob Wetterling kidnapping. The story was all over the news. There were newspaper articles, television news stories, posters, billboards, and buttons. Jacob was everywhere, but he couldn't be found.

"It Can't Happen Here" is an investigative and historical chronicle of Jacob's case from several perspectives. It is a well-documented journey that begins with the day of the abduction and the massive media following. The book recounts the support of the local community, and offers a glimpse of how Jacob's kidnapping spawned significant progress toward the safety of all children through the efforts of the Jacob Wetterling Foundation. The book then moves on to a detailed presentation of the investigative effort to find Jacob and his kidnapper, and concludes with an examination of several individuals who were investigated in the case.

"It Can't Happen Here." Those are four seemingly defiant words, and at one time they offered what many considered a sense of immunity from the growing horrors of society. In reality, the phrase was merely an empty promise, and it represented the immediate collective reaction to the shocking truth that was realized in St. Joseph, Minnesota, after the night of October 22, 1989.

What happened to Jacob Wetterling changed the world. No longer were the small towns in the Midwest considered immune to the horrors of the exploitation of children. The search for Jacob Wetterling has been unlike any other search for a missing child.

The purpose of this book is to accomplish two primary objectives. First, the kidnapping of Jacob Wetterling is an incredible, true story, one that is as compelling and mysterious as any such crime could be. Jacob's story is in many ways stranger than fiction. For every question that has been answered during the course of the investigation, it seems that the answers have led to more questions. It is a complex story that has been longing to be told, and never to be forgotten.

Second, the case of Jacob Wetterling's kidnapping is a solvable crime. Someone has the answers, or that one piece of information, however small, which could help solve Jacob's case. This book contains a significant volume of information, including a glimpse of several individuals who have been investigated, and several promising but forgotten leads that developed over the course of the investigation. Ultimately, the goal of this book is to not only tell the story of the search for Jacob Wetterling, but also to provide some detail or trigger someone's memory of that one bit of information that could help solve the case. If this book is put into the hands of the right person, I truly believe it actually could help.

It should be noted that this book was written without input from the Wetterling family or the Jacob Wetterling Resource Center. Family members were not interviewed for the book, nor was their input sought. As a research and investigative work, my goal has been to make this book an objective, unbiased work. Relevant quotes attributed to Wetterling family members or acquaintances, and persons associated with the Wetterling investigation are credited to their respective media sources, and are included for emphasis and continuity.

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