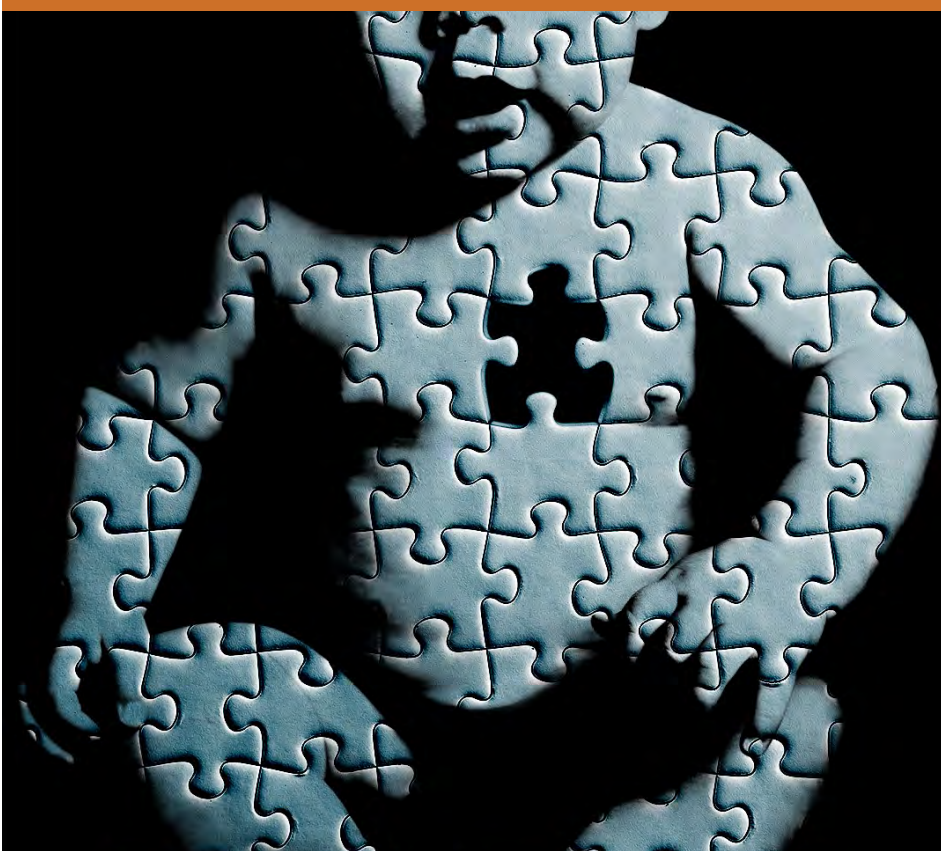


# MoviesEyeC

## WHEN THE PIECES DO NOT FIT

"Where She Lies" digs for the truth

By John Esther



# WHERE SHE LIES

IT CAN TAKE A LIFETIME TO FIND THE MISSING PIECE

GRAVITAS VENTURES AND ZEMMA PRODUCTIONS PRESENT "WHERE SHE LIES" DIRECTED BY ZACH MARION  
WRITER SUZ CURTIS CINEMATOGRAPHER EMMA KRAGEN COMPOSER JAMIE THIERMAN EDITOR RACHEL PEARL  
PRODUCERS FRANK ISAAC AND ZACH MARION EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS LISA & PAUL MANDELL

In 1961, in Chattanooga, Tennessee, 19-year-old Peggy Phillips found herself pregnant. The father was a married man. Pre-Roe vs. Wade, there was no legal option for Phillips other than to carry the baby to term and then give it up for adoption or keep it. Her father, who was already ashamed of his "bastard" grandchild and its mother, had no intention of letting her keep the baby. There were appearances to keep up.

Before dad could set his nefarious plans to give away the child, Darlene died two days after her birth. Or did she? According to Peggy's mother during a deathbed confession, Peggy's parents, along with others, gave away the baby for adoption, only faking the girl's death, including a gravesite with Darlene's headstone on it, so Phillips would not make a stink.

In Zach Marion's documentary, both the narrative that the baby died and that the parents gave it up for adoption seems highly plausible.

These two diverging narratives pretty much start off at Chattanooga Memorial Hospital (where out of wedlock mothers are not allowed -- Phillips had to use a pseudonym to be admitted) where one doctor tells her the baby has died while another doctor takes a highly sedated Phillips to see her baby. Then the death certificate looks suspicious, misspelling Darlene's name.

Over the years Phillips continues to receive conflicting information that feeds both the narratives. Familial murmurs, gossip, and the facts -- at least on first observation, seem to be plausible, thus negating the other narrative. Then there are some weird phenomena going on.

After Phillips is married she tries numerous times to conceive and have a child. After a few miscarriages, her father suggests he could get a "black market baby" for her. She actually says yes to her dad's scheme -- which hardly makes her likable since she could be contributing to a similar scenario for a poor, uneducated, unmarried pregnant woman out there, like she had been -- but then she gets pregnant and gives birth to her second and last child so the plan is scrapped.

In addition, there is a lot of talk about her maternal aunt who had a seemingly staggering

amount of children who died within days of birth.  
Maybe those are the bones in Darlene's grave?

And there are far too many suspicious characters  
Phillip meets once she hires a lawyer.

It all makes for some very interesting takes on  
where the truth lies and Marion takes a deeply  
vested interest in getting to the bottom of the  
grave, er, truth, if necessary.

On a deeper level, "Where She Lies" offers  
a penetrating look into how families trash  
themselves by hiding who they are and what they  
are, pretending or suppressing identities that  
do not conform to socially acceptable behavior.  
Phillips' pious parents negated and dad hated  
what their daughter had become -- while  
seemingly placing no blame or responsibility on  
the father who was a known "womanizer" to his  
wife. It was 1962 in the American south and the  
woman who transgressed the norms of society  
was going to pay before the guy who was faking  
his societal norms. (Sounds familiar, only  
now it is on the national level where a known  
womanizer gets a pass by the evangelicals  
while an accomplished woman who had an affair  
decades ago is called a whore.)

A conversation starter of a documentary that  
still leaves quite a few questions unanswered,  
"Where She Lies" opens via cable and on-  
demand on November 10, 2020.

TOP

# Nat Burns Books

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2017 The Liaison  
2017 The Rustle of Leaves  
2016 The Wittering Way  
2016 Lights of the Heart  
2015 Nether Regions  
2014 Family Issue  
2013 Poison Flowers  
2013 Gospel  
2012 The Quality of Blue  
2012 Identity  
2012 The Book of Eleanor  
2010 Two Weeks in August  
2010 House of Cards

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