

# The Murder of Pedro Corzo

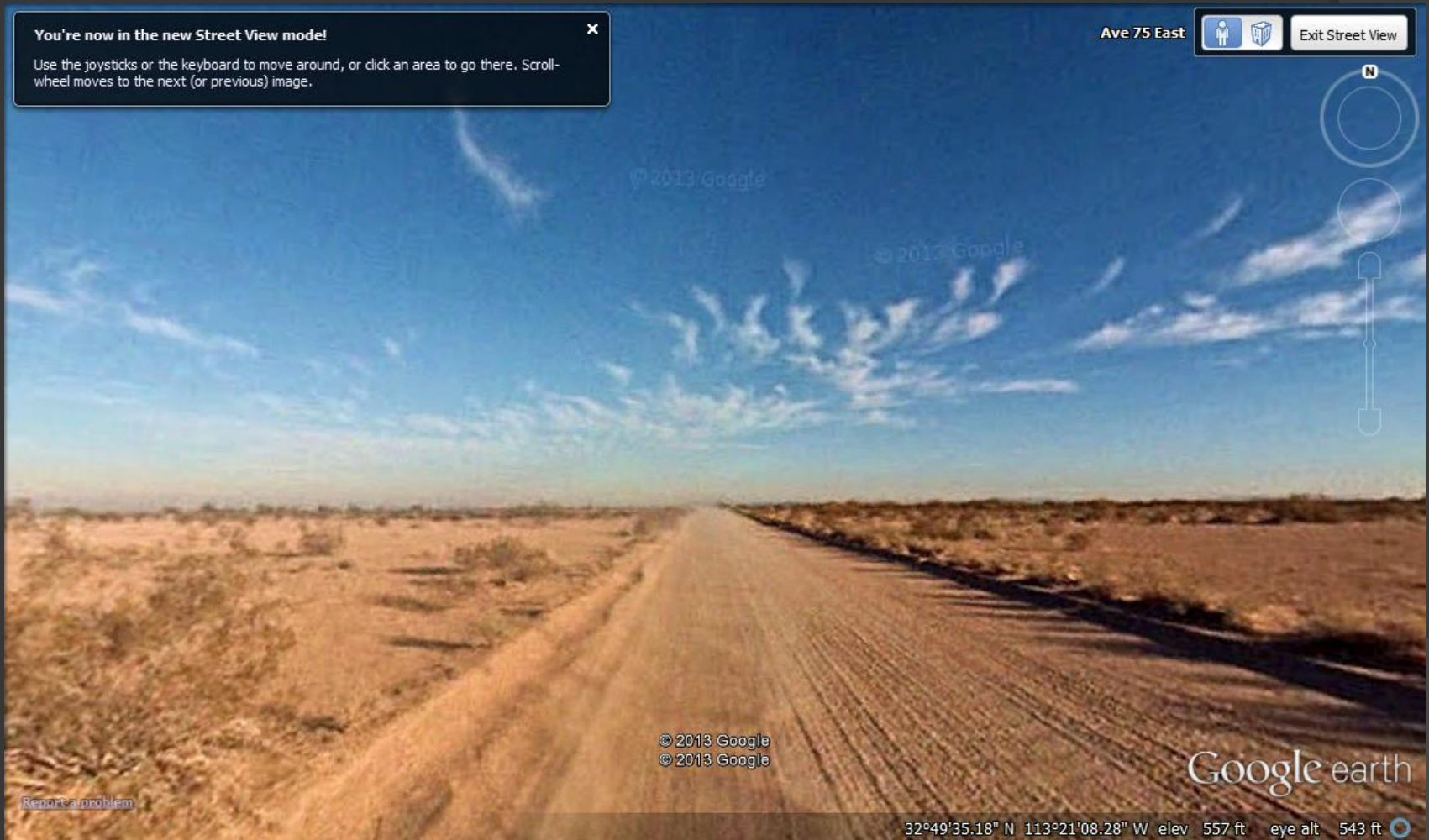
January 9, 2004  
Dateland, Maricopa County, Arizona

# Dateland, Maricopa Co., Arizona



Imagine a lone man driving down a gravel road in the desert country of rural Maricopa County, Arizona. Its just after New Years, January 9, 2004 . The day is sunny and the air is a warm 65 degrees. There is really nothing around him except sand and sagebrush and an occasional arroyo. He has driven this way many times and he's probably thinking about his upcoming meeting with company farm workers or maybe his pregnant wife at home.

# Dateland, Arizona



As he's driving this flat country road, he see in the distance, something in the roadway. As he nears the object, he realizes there are boulders in the road, blocking his way. Unsure of the land bordering the roadway, he decides not to drive around them but to stop and see if he can move the stones. He thinks how very odd it is that these stones are here, in the middle of nowhere. As he gets out of his vehicle, stands contemplating what he needs to do, a shot rings out, and 35 year old Pedro Corzo, a Del Monte Foods executive, falls to the ground dead. Pedro will never see his 3 year old daughter or the son the expected in just a few months.



# From Mo to AZ to MT



This is the true story of how police departments in three states, hundreds of miles apart, came together to solve the murder of Pedro Corzo.

# Timeline





# St. Charles County Sheriff



On January 13, 2004, I began what I believed to be another routine runaway juvenile case. At the outset, the only thing that set this case apart from the hundreds of others I had worked were that there were two brothers missing, instead of the usual one. They were allegedly in the company of their adult cousin, Justin Harrison. As my investigation continued, there were several facts which made this runaway case troubling. Through interviews I learned that the three boys had gotten matching tattoos, had shaved their heads and were possibly enroute to Dateland, Yuma County, Arizona. They were possibly armed with shotguns and an SKS rifle and were reportedly travelling to this area to go "house hunting". When questioned, "house hunting" was described as breaking into homes and if confronted, shooting the occupants of the house. This information was disseminated through the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) and was also attached to Harrison's vehicle license plate should the vehicle be stopped. At the time we did not have the advantages we have now of tracking cell phones and pinging cell towers because cell phones were less common. Additionally, none of the boys had any credit cards in their possession that might have enabled us to track them by their purchases.

# ALERT

Nicholas E



Joshua



W/M DOB: 4/29/87, 5'6" 125 lbs.  
Blond Hair (head may be  
shaved), blue eyes. May have  
tattoo in "pretzel" shape lower  
back or upper arm.

Justin A. Harrison



W/M DOB: 1/23/81 6'8" 185 lbs.  
Brown hair (head may be  
shaved) blue eyes. May have  
tattoo in "pretzel" shape lower  
back or upper arm. May be  
armed.

Missing juveniles, Nich and Joshua may be in the company of Justin A. Harrison who is driving a Faded Blue 1985 Chrysler New Yorker, Missouri Registration for '05 414SPZ, VIN: 1C3BT56E6FC123734. Harrison may be armed with SKS assault rifle and other shotguns. Reportedly enroute to Turtle Back Mountain area of Dateland, Yuma County, Arizona. Harrison has made statements that they plan to burglarize homes in desert and will shoot anyone who resists. May be camping in area. Harrison reportedly received a less than honorable discharge from Army in 2002 or 2003.

**St. Charles County Sheriff's Department**

**Detective Marsha Corley DSN 598**

**Call 1-800-822-8017**

January 13, 2004

LOCATER  
Poster Alert

LOCATER  
Poster Alert

Nicholas, Joshua and Justin left St. Peters December 30, 2003 in Justin's 1985 Chrysler New Yorker enroute to Arizona.



# 1985 Chrysler New Yorker



exemplar

# Montana Highway Patrol



On January 14, 2004, Trooper Toby Baukema of the Montana Highway Patrol stopped Harrison's vehicle in Billings, Montana. Upon running the vehicle's license plates, he discovered the information provided regarding the possibility of weapons and that the vehicle may contain runaway juveniles from Missouri. Justin gave Bakema permission to search his vehicle and the Trooper did locate guns in the trunk. He seized the guns and took all three of the boys back to his department for further investigation. Trooper Baukema contacted me and asked me to clarify the information on NCIC hit. I told him all that I had discovered during my investigation and that the juveniles' father had assured me that he would travel to wherever the boys were located and bring them back. The problem that Baukema was faced with is that there was no secure juvenile facility that would take runaway juveniles and since there was no evidence of any crime having been committed, his only option was to place them in an insure facility from which they would most probably leave.

Trooper Baukema said he would separate the three boys and talk to each of them individually to ascertain whether any crimes had been committed. Baukema placed the youngest, Nick, in a room by himself and began talking to him. The longer he talked, the more dejected Nick became, slinking lower and lower into his chair and refused to make eye contact. Finally Trooper Baukema asked him if anyone had been hurt during the days the boys had been travelling across the United States. Nick hung his head, began to cry and said “yes”.



# Trooper Toby Baukema



*Trooper Toby Baukema; 15*

Nick tells Trooper Baukema that while in Dateline, Arizona, Harrison left him and his brother, Josh, at a rest stop. When Justin returned he was driving a Dark Blue 1995 Ford Explorer and in the cargo area of the Explorer, was a dead body.

Nick said he and Josh followed Harrison back to the rural area where they buried the body, tried to burn the contents of the vehicle and left the Ford Explorer a half mile away.

# 1995 Ford Explorer



exemplar

# Maricopa County Sheriff





Upon hearing this revelation, Trooper Baukema made contact with authorities in Yuma County, Arizona to find out if there was any truth to Nick's story. Authorities there in Yuma said they didn't have any unsolved murder, but believed that possibly Maricopa County detectives were investigating a homicide. Baukema then made contact with detectives in the adjoining Maricopa county and learned of the murder of Pedro Corzo.



Suzanne Starr/The Arizona Republic

Shelly Corzo, wearing black in center and surrounded by family, pleads for public help Thursday to solve the slaying of her husband - around the same time Montana authorities took three people into custody.

At the same time the events are playing out in Billings, Shelly Corzo, the newly widowed wife of Pedro, went on the news begging for anyone who had information regarding her husband's death to come forward.


Subsequently, all three of the boys, Justin Harrison and Josh as adults, and Nick as a juvenile are extradited to Arizona to stand trial for murder.

Fingerprint evidence found at the scene was determined to come from the three and in June, 2005, Justin Harrison pled guilty to First Degree murder and is now serving a life sentence without the possibility of parole.

# Arizona Inmate Justin Harrison



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Inmate 196233  
J HARRISON

Last Name	First Name	Middle Initial	Birth Date	
HARRISON	JUSTIN		01/23/1981	
Gender	Height (inches)	Weight	Hair Color	
MALE	77	200	BROWN	
Eye Color	Ethnic Origin	Custody Class	Inmate / Detainee	
BLUE	CAUCASIAN	5/4	INMATE	
Sentence (yyymmdd)	Admission	Prison Release Date	Max End Date	
LIFE	06/24/2005		LIFE	
Cur. Absconded	Hist. Absconded	Release Type	Most Recent Loc.	Unit
--	--	RECEIVED AT	ASPC Eyman	ASPC Eyman SMU I
Community Supervision/ Parole	Last Movement	Commitment Status	Status	
N	02/10/2012	COMPLETE AND VERIFIED	ACTIVE	

Earned Credit Release Date is provided for guidance. Confirmation can be sought by contacting



## Area teen awaits trial in killing

**The history:** Peter Corzo, 36, was ambushed on an isolated desert road in Arizona.

**The sentences:** Justin Harrison is serving a life sentence, while charges against one teenager were dropped.

**What's next:** Joshua Ashton, 18, of St. Peters, is in custody on first-degree murder charges.



**Harrison**  
Serving life  
sentence



Awaiting trial

By Tim Bryant  
ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Intent on murder, Justin Harrison of Wright City said he and his 16-year-old cousin wrested boulders onto Gas Line Road, an isolated stretch of desert west of Phoenix. Then they waited.

Later that day — Jan. 9, 2004 — Pedro Corzo, 36, arrived in his Ford Explorer. After Corzo got

out of his SUV to move the boulders blocking his way, Harrison and his cousin opened fire with an SKS rifle and a .22-caliber rifle, authorities say. Corzo died of multiple gunshot wounds.

Two days later, searchers found Corzo's body in a shallow grave near the roadside campsite used by Harrison, then 22, his cousin and the teenager's 15-year-old brother.

Corzo's SUV turned up about a half-mile away.

According to an account of the killing, filed in Maricopa County Superior Court and agreed to by Harrison, he and his cousin blocked the road with boulders as part of their plan "to stop any vehicle and murder the occupant." Corzo, who had been visiting produce farms in his job as a Del Monte

Fresh Produce Co. manager, happened to come along.

Harrison and his cousin, Joshua Ashton, 18, of St. Peters, have been in custody since Jan. 15, 2004, when a state trooper stopped them and Aston's younger brother near Billings, Mont. The brothers have since taken different paths.

PLEASE SEE **TRIAL** | C7

Joshua elected not to plead guilty but to chose instead to go to trial. On May 8, 2007, Joshua was convicted of two counts of first degree murder and sentenced to two life sentences without the possibility of parole.

# Arizona Inmate Joshua \*\*\*\*

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Inmate 217096  
J

Last Name	First Name	Middle Initial	Birth Date	
	JOSHUA		04/29/1987	
Gender	Height (inches)	Weight	Hair Color	
MALE	68	195	BROWN	
Eye Color	Ethnic Origin	Custody Class	Inmate / Detainee	
BLUE	CAUCASIAN	5/4	INMATE	
Sentence (yyymmdd)	Admission	Prison Release Date	Max End Date	
LIFE	05/08/2007			
Cur. Absconded	Hist. Absconded	Release Type	Most Recent Loc.	Unit
--	--	RET.FM.COURT	ASPC Florence	ASPC Florence Central Unit
Community Supervision/Parole	Last Movement	Commitment Status	Status	



# Facts from Appellant Case State of Arizona, Appellee

v.

Joshua \*\*\*, Appellant

Memorandum Decision 1 CA-CR 08-0917

“...convictions and sentences arise from his participation in a murder committed in furtherance of a plan Appellant concocted with Harrison to overthrow the government. This plan commenced on the night of January 8, 2004, with a trap set on a remote highway to lure a passing motorist from his or her vehicle in order to test whether Appellant and Harrison had the nerve to kill; a skill the two thought indispensable to their ultimate goal. When the victim exited his vehicle to clear some boulders placed on the highway by Appellant and Harrison, he was shot and killed by the two men.”

Lawrence F. Winthrop, Judge  
Arizona Court of Appeals



The youngest of the three, Nicholas, was not charged in Arizona and was granted immunity in exchange for testifying against Justin and Joshua. He was subsequently returned to Missouri where he has lived a crime free life despite the fact that his father, who was so eager to travel anywhere to bring him back, was himself convicted of sexually molesting several of his daughters, Nick's sisters.

# From Mo to AZ to MT

