



THE CASE THAT
SHOCKED AMERICA

COULD HE GO FREE?

FOR 47 YEARS **JEFFREY MacDONALD** HAS INSISTED HE DIDN'T MURDER HIS FAMILY. NOW AN APPEALS COURT WILL DECIDE IF THERE'S EVIDENCE TO PROVE IT

By **NICOLE WEISENSEE EGAN**

MacDonald (in 2004) says he had no motive to kill wife Colette and their daughters.



From the beginning Jeffrey MacDonald's story has remained the same: Four intruders, he says, entered his family's home in Fort Bragg, N.C., on Feb. 17, 1970, killed his pregnant wife, Colette, 26, and their daughters Kimberley, 5, and Kristen, 2, and left him with head injuries, several stab wounds to his chest and a partially collapsed lung. But in 1979 the former Green Beret surgeon was convicted of murdering his family and sentenced to three life terms. "I don't think," MacDonald told the judge at sentencing, "the court heard all the evidence."

Since that day he hasn't stopped fighting to get all that evidence—plus new details he and his defense team say they have discovered—back before a court. On Jan. 26 the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond, Va., will hear oral arguments on whether

MacDonald, now 73, has finally gathered enough "clear and convincing evidence" to prove his innocence. "Our hope is the truth will set him free," says Hart Miles, one of MacDonald's attorneys. U.S. Attorney John Bruce declined to comment, saying, "It is the practice of our office to litigate the case in court . . . rather than through the news media." New evidence, the defense says, points to intruders: alleged confessions from two other suspects and DNA test results on hairs found underneath Colette's body and beneath one of Kristen's fingernails as well as on her bedspread that don't match anyone in the MacDonald family.



Wrongly accused? MacDonald in 1970.

No one believes in his innocence more than his second wife, Kathryn, 56, whose website (themacdonaldcase.org) brought forward new witnesses. "My resolute confidence in Jeff," she says, "is based on verifiable fact." ●

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Watch *People Magazine Investigates After Show: The Accused*, starting Jan. 9 on *People/Entertainment Weekly Network*. Go to people.com/PEN, or download the PEN app on Apple TV, Roku, Amazon Fire TV, Xumo, Chromecast, iOS and Android devices.