

68. Vigilante Mother | Germany

The Evidence Locker

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Synopsis

32-year-old Marianne Bachmeier took the law into her hands by shooting her daughter's murderer in the courtroom on the third day of his trial. What was it that caused Marianne to snap? Revenge? Or was there something more to it? And how would German law enforcement handle this high profile case of vigilante justice?

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Transcript

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Our cases have been researched using open source and archive materials. It deals with true crimes and real people. Each episode is produced with the utmost respect to the victims, their families and loved ones.

Lübeck is a picturesque city in the north of Germany, a hop-skip-and-jump away from Hamburg. With an abundance of medieval buildings and spires standing proud, the city has a fairy-tale-like charm. The Old Town is an island, surrounded by the river Trave on all sides. No wonder this charming city is listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site.

In the early 1980s, Germany was still separated into East and West, with the northernmost state, Schleswig-Holstein falling into the Western part. The official stance was to oppose Communism, but being a city of students, there was a lot of free thinking and revolutionary ideas.

At the heart of all of this, was a local bar and restaurant, called Tipasa. For the most part it was a student hangout, but patrons also included all sorts of people from the fringes of society: dropouts, squatters and outsiders. Fuelled with beer they talked and argued, planned protests against nuclear power plants and philosophized about communist ideals. On a door in the toilet somebody wrote:

“Support the Red Army Faction!”

Tipasa was also the place where Marianne Bachmeier worked as a waitress. She loved spending time in the noisy and electric atmosphere and everybody knew her. She was strikingly beautiful and somewhat temperamental with a magnetic personality. It seemed like everything revolved around Marianne.

But that was not destined to last forever. In March 1981, she calmly walked into a court room at the Lübeck District Courthouse and saw the familiar face of a bearded man: the man that had been giving her nightmares for two years. Marianne reached into her purse, took out a Beretta pistol, aimed it at the man’s back and fired, again and again and again... Eight shots fired inside the courtroom with multiple witnesses seeing how Klaus Grabowski took his last breath.

What was it that drove Marianne Bachmeier to take the law into her own hands on that grey and rainy day in Lübeck?

[Intro Music]

Marianne Bachmeier was born on the 3rd of June 1950 in Sarstedt, Niedersachsen, Germany. Her parents were refugees from East Prussia. East Prussia was an area that was referred to as the Polish Corridor – taken over by Russia and Poland. Towards the

end of World War II, Germans living in the area chose to evacuate the area and arrived in West Germany as Refugees. Marianne's father came from a military background and served his time in the Waffen SS, which was the military branch of the Nazi SS. He was the archetypical authority figure and she grew up in a strict household with staunchly religious parents. Her father drank a lot and spent most of his time at a bar near the family home. Alcohol only fuelled his aggression and theirs was not a happy home.

Marianne was a free-spirited young girl and she often clashed with the conservative values of her parents. There was a short respite from the anguish when her father left them, but it wasn't long before her mother remarried. Marianne was a difficult teen and her stepfather was a tyrant. Her mother blamed her for all the conflict and kicked her out of the home.

Unloved by her hysterical mother, deserted by her alcoholic father and beaten and humiliated by her stepfather, Marianne had an horrific time as a teenager. When she was 16 years old, she fell pregnant. She did not feel that she was up to the task of being a single teen mother, so made the difficult decision to give her baby up for adoption.

During her last years in high school, Marianne's only solace was a boyfriend whom she met at school. Two years after having her first baby, at the age of 18, she fell pregnant again, this time by her boyfriend. She felt insecure and uncertain about the future and did not know if she should keep the baby or not. One night, shortly before she gave birth to her second child, she was sexually assaulted at a disco. Reeling in the trauma and facing the breakdown of her relationship, she decided to give her second baby up for adoption too.

After Marianne left school she needed a job and a place to stay. She worked as a waitress and found that she rather liked the lifestyle of late nights and sleep-ins. In 1972, she was working at Tipasa, in Lübeck's Old Town when she began an on-again off-again relationship with the bar's manager, Christian Berthold. At the age of 22, she was pregnant for a third time. But this time was different, she wanted to keep the baby as she was older and felt she was in a better position to take care of a child. In the years since she had given up her two other daughters she had felt so guilty and empty – she simply could not face losing another one. Christian was not ready to commit to a serious relationship and Marianne decided to raise her child by herself.

Her daughter Anna was born on the 14th of November 1972. After Anna's birth she had herself sterilized, adamant that she never wanted any more children.

At first, everything in Marianne's life centered around her baby. All her friends and patrons at Tipasa knew little Anna and she became part of Marianne's world. However, the novelty soon wore off and Marianne began to struggle with the challenges of being a single mother. She had to go back to work, because she needed the money. So she took Anna with her to work and was reportedly never in a rush to go home when her shift behind the bar ended.

Anna grew up and was known to be a happy and free spirited little kid. Her mother treated her like a little adult and Anna was forced to be self-reliant for many things from an early age. Marianne could be selfish and neglectful of Anna. Working and

socialising at Tipasa was everything to Marianne and Anna literally grew up inside the bar. Patrons of the time remember that the young girl often fell asleep on a bench, while her mother partied. A friend of Marianne's said that Anna was a lively child who never really had a warm home-life.

Marianne realised that the situation wasn't ideal, so she spoke with a married couple whom she knew about taking Anna in as a foster child. This would only have been a temporary situation and no decision had been reached. Marianne was only thinking about it at the time.

For Anna, the only escape from Tipasa, was sporadic visits to the countryside with Marianne and Christian, Anna's father and manager of the bar, who was still in the picture, but not quite a hands-on father or partner for Marianne. There was a late hippie scene in the city of Lübeck and this was the backdrop to Anna's life. There were no rules, anything was okay and night became day as her mother worked and socialised in the night and slept during the day. While her mother was asleep, Anna played outside on the cobblestone streets of Lübeck's Old Town. She spoke to neighbours and played with their pets – everyone knew Anna.

The 5th of May 1980 was not unlike any other days. Marianne was asleep in their apartment above Tipasa. The previous day Marianna and 7-year-old Anna had an argument and things were murky between them. Out of spite for her mother, Anna decided NOT to go to school that day. She decided to walk over to a friend's house to see if she was there, but the friend had gone to school. So Anna entertained herself, playing on the streets and talking to people.

In the afternoon, Marianne had a photo shoot for a local newspaper. She had an unusual car, a Volkswagen van covered in paintings. It caught the eye of a journalist and they wanted to do a story about Marianne and her car.

When Marianne returned, there was no sign of Anna. She went out looking for her, but she was nowhere to be found. She waited till nightfall, then went to police to report her daughter missing.

By the next day, Anna had still not turned up. Marianne knew Anna was mad at her so thought she was hiding a friend's house to make her mother worry. But none of Anna's friends knew where she was. No one had seen her the previous day either.

That afternoon a woman walked into her local police station and told police that her fiancée, 35-year-old butcher, Klaus Grabowski, had confessed to her about a heinous crime. According to the woman, Grabowski had killed little Anna.

The story was unsettling – to say the least. Grabowski was a neighbour of the Bachmeiers and he knew Anna because she often spoke to him and asked if she could play with his cat. When Anna returned from her friend's house on the 5th of May, she crossed paths with Klaus Grabowski on the street. As usual, she greeted him and asked if she could play with his cat. He agreed and the two of them went upstairs, into his apartment. His fiancée lived with him, but she was not home at the time.

Anna was never to leave Grabowski's apartment alive again. Exactly what transpired behind the locked door, can only be imagined. After many hours, Grabowski strangled her with a pair of his fiancée's stockings.

When his fiancée returned home, Grabowski told her about what he had done. She left the apartment immediately and reported everything to police. While she was out, Grabowski packed Anna's body into a cardboard box, loaded it onto his bicycle and took her to a location on the banks of the canal where he buried it in a shallow grave.

When police arrived at his home, Grabowski was gone, but he had left a note. He begged his fiancée not to turn her back on him and said that he would wait for her at his local watering hole, Zolln later that night, so they could talk. Police waited for him to arrive at the bar and arrested him on the spot.

Klaus Grabowski had a troubled past. He had previous sexual offences behind his name, starting in the early 1970s. His first known victim was a six-year-old girl who managed to run away from him. He chased after her and caught up, grabbing her and putting his hands around her neck from behind. She screamed so loud, that he had no choice but to let her go. He was charged with attempted murder and given probation.

Two years later, he was on the prowl again. In 1975 he was charged with the sexual abuse of two young girls. He was given a psychological evaluation, which was read in court, it said:

"On the basis of the convincing opinion of Dr. Hartmanis, the board is undoubtedly certain that the" abnormal sexual instinct of the accused is addictive"... the accused was "aware" of the unauthorized activity, but he was "considerably limited in his ability to prevent it" because of his addiction to the offense".

In 1976 Klaus Grabowski was sentenced to spend time in a psychological treatment facility for sexually abusing the two girls. As part of his rehabilitation, he was castrated. Chemical castration has been a controversial treatment for sex offenders for decades. Offenders are treated with 'stilbestol' a nonsteroidal estrogen with the intention of lowering a man's testosterone. Anti-psychotic drug, benperidol, is sometimes used to reduce sexual urges, but this does not affect testosterone. Unlike castration, chemical castration is reversible.

This procedure has raised many questions. In 1978, for example, the sexologist Professor Sigusch said that castration is only effective to prevent reproduction, not to manage sex drive or the desire to commit a sexual crime.

Grabowski was given a choice: if he agreed to the castration, he would be released. If not, he would have to remain at the institution for an extended period of time. He agreed, the procedure was performed and he was released shortly after.

However, there was no follow up treatment or 'integration help'. At this crucial point he should have had more psychological care and not only be treated from a physical point of view. But he wasn't.

Two years after his release, Grabowski visited a Urologist and requested hormone treatment, that is, to reverse the castration. This treatment was approved by the court because he reported physical side-effects. He also had a fiancée at his side and they

wanted to start a family. To the court, it appeared as if the treatment was successful and that Grabowski had turned his life around.

On the 18th of March and the 25th of April 1980 he was injected with ‘Testoviron’ and prescribed tablets to take at home. He was treated with the understanding that he was receiving psychiatric treatment, but that was not the case. Grabowski had lied to the Urologist about receiving mental health support and the Urologist did not follow up. He later admitted that he knew nothing about Grabowski’s past and only treated him from a physical point of view in the aftermath of castration. His neglect to enquire about Grabowski’s criminal record would come back to haunt him after Anna Bachmeier’s murder.

At the time of the murder, Grabowski had the same level of testosterone as before his castration. Whether this contributed to his heinous deed on the day of Anna’s death, would be a point of contention throughout his trial.

When Grabowski was caught, he told police that he never intended to molest Anna. He denied touching her at all. He said that Anna had provoked the attack when she threatened him. According to Grabowski, she wanted to extort DM5 from him. She said she would tell her mother that he had touched her inappropriately if he didn’t give her money.

Grabowski said that he became angry and fearful. If she were to report him for molesting her, he would go back to jail and his fiancée would leave him... He was not about to lose everything. Who did the little girl think she was – threatening him like that?

He said that Anna was sitting on a chair. He saw a pair of stockings belonging to his fiancée and decided he would use it to strangle her. He proceeded to do so and in the struggle, fighting for her life, Anna managed to fall off the chair, knocking it over. But ultimately, Grabowski was too strong and he overpowered her, pulling the stocking tighter, until she perished.

Police went to the site where Grabowski said he had buried her and found the box. Her little body was hog tied and carefully placed inside. The conclusion was that the killer took his time.

29-year-old Marianne Bachmeier was informed about her daughter’s murder that night. Police felt that Marianne’s reaction was rather strange. She did not want to speak to police and refused to go to the morgue to identify the body of her daughter. Police had never experienced a reaction like this and did not quite know how to approach the situation.

The news destroyed Marianne and she struggled with feelings of guilt. She hated herself for considering giving Anna into her friends’ care and she could not forgive herself for the fight she had with Anna the day before she disappeared. But none of that could undo what was done.

At Anna’s funeral, Marianne made sure it was everything but a traditional, religious ceremony and arranged for a Pink Floyd song to blast loudly in the church.

The months leading up to Grabowski's trial felt like an eternity. Marianne had been through a lot of hardship in her own life, but the death of her daughter was not something she was going to get over and move on. She went through spurts of public meltdowns and other times she closed herself into her apartment. The Tipasa crowd supported her as best they could, but Marianne was inconsolable.

In March 1981, Grabowski's trial kicked off at the District Court in Lübeck. During the first days of the trial statements were made about Anna Bachmeier's life, stating that she pretty much grew up on the streets. Her mom was a waitress who worked late into the night and slept most of the day. Anna did not go to school as often as she should have done. It was during this time, that she met Grabowski, she knew him and talked to him sometimes.

But Grabowski was not simply a kind neighbour and friend. Despite denying that he had abused Anna in any way, he DID kill her.

Marianne Bachmeier made sure that she sat in the front row of the courtroom, she wanted to look at the monster who had taken her daughter from her. She often spoke out and even shouted "Say something, you pig" on one occasion.

People who witnessed her behaviour felt that Marianne encouraged the drama in the courtroom. She seemed to like having the attention on herself, the grieving mother who was wronged by the accused. Be that as it may... Sitting through a trial like that must be every parent's worst nightmare, perhaps she could have been met with more compassion, who knows.

Court testimony was very difficult to listen to. Grabowski told the court about Anna's last moments and exactly how she died. She was seated on a chair and he approached her from behind. He said:

"I heard something come out of her nose, I was fixated, then I could not stand the sight of her body any longer."

On the second day of the trial, the urologist who had treated Grabowski in the months preceding Anna's death, Dr Volker vom Ende was called to testify. He had a lot to answer for, as he operated against normal procedure. He said that Grabowski told him he had been castrated because he was merely an exhibitionist – he failed to disclose to the doctor about the two sexual crimes he was charged with. On learning this, the doctor should have followed up to determine if he had a criminal history. Later on, Marianne Bachmeier and Anna's father, Christian Berthold filed a lawsuit against the doctor for negligence. The outcome was unsuccessful as they could not find an expert witness to testify that there was any wrong-doing on the part of the doctor.

The issue of Grabowski's castration as a measure to prevent him from re-offending, became a much-discussed topic in the media at the time of his trial. Questions were asked: was German law adequate in dealing with sex offenders. It seemed like there was no unequivocal law and that the punishment was somewhat erratic. Offenders had the option to be castrated, but not everyone choose to do so. Those who opted for castration was given their freedom and allowed to resume their normal lives, without anyone monitoring them.

On the second day of the trial, police officer Rother described the scene where Anna's body was found. The fact that Anna's small body was hog tied caused a stir in the courtroom.

Later in the day, according to the court in Lübeck, Marianne Bachmeier misunderstood a conversation between the presiding judge Hopp and the Klaus Grabowski's defence attorney. She thought that Grabowski would make a statement the following day. Having heard his version of events, blaming Anna for wanting to blackmail him, Marianne dreaded having to listen to his testimony.

Marianne, who had suffered abuse before – from a violent father and stepfather and being the victim of sexual assault in her teens – was infuriated about this. To shame the victim, especially a young child, was inexcusable.

On Friday morning the 6th of March 1981, day three of Klaus Grabowski's the trial, was a cold and rainy day in Lübeck. There wasn't a lot of people in the courtroom as the doors only opened to the public five minutes before the start of the session. Klaus Grabowski was led inside from a side-door and taken to his chair in the dock. He sat down with his back to the entrance.

Marianne Bachmeier entered the courtroom and commented on how few people there were. Her friends suggested they waited outside in the hallway for another couple of minutes. Marianne began heading for the door, then changed her mind. She turned around and calmly walked over to where Grabowski was sitting. With the short distance of only a couple of yards between them, she pulled a 22. calibre Beretta from her purse, aimed it at Klaus Grabowski's back and opened fire. She fired eight shots of which seven hit her daughter's murderer in the back. He had no chance of survival and simply slumped over on the desk in front of him, then fell over, onto the courtroom floor, dying moments later, before a doctor could make it to the scene.

Marianne threw firearm aside and gave herself over to an officer of the court without any resistance. At this point, she reportedly said:

"I wanted to shoot him in the face. Unfortunately I hit him in the back. I hope he's dead."

Marianne's ex-boyfriend, Anna's father (Christian Berthold) witnessed the incident and muttered:

"She did it. She actually did it."

This was to become one of the most famous cases of vigilante justice in Germany, ever. Marianne Bachmeier's act of revenge provoked huge reaction from the media and the public. Everyone with kids, could completely understand why she did it, many people said that if they were in her shoes, they would have done exactly the same thing. Some even went so far as to say they would have done worse; shooting did not cause enough suffering.

Overnight, everyone in the country knew the name: Marianne Bachmeier. She was referred to as the 'Revenge Mother'. Photos of the attractive 32-year-old were on the front pages of newspapers and magazines.

She received flowers from strangers. One bunch of flowers had a card with a note, saying:

“To You, From a Grandfather, who would have done the same thing. You are not alone. Courage.”

Many Germans also saw it that way. Within a week after the act they had donated 100,000 Marks to the account of a support association for Marianne Bachmeier, with the intention of paying for her legal fees.

It was an eye-for-an-eye justice, that the public felt could be justified, due to the nature of Grabowski’s crime. Ironically, because Grabowski died in the course of his trial, he had not yet been proven guilty. So in the eyes of the law, he died an innocent man.

Prosecution had a tough task on their hands in the case against Marianne Bachmeier. She could not be pardoned, because once you open the door to vigilante killings, anyone and everyone would take the law into their own hands. However, there was a lot of pressure from the public to have mercy on her.

All eyes were on prosecution to see how they would approach the case. Bachmeier was released soon after her arrest, but was taken into custody on the 14th of August, because law enforcement received information that convinced them she was a flight risk. While in custody awaiting trial, over the span of about 15 months, she attempted to take her own life five times. Doctors and psychologists called for her release, fearing she would suffer “irreparable mental and spiritual damage”.

Marianne refused to co-operate with the court appointed psychologists and they tried various strategies to encourage her to open up. Some of these strategies were rather brutal, an approach to ‘break her’ into talking to them. The court ruled that she should remain in a psychological facility until the commencement of her trial.

To convict her of first degree murder, prosecution had to prove whether she had planned the attack or not. They noted Christian Berthold’s comment shortly after the shooting, when he exclaimed:

“She did it, she actually did it.”

This made it clear that Marianne did not simply snap in the moment, she had most likely planned the shooting and discussed it with Christian.

Investigators determined that Marianne had purchased a gun and practiced shooting target in the cellar of Tipasa. This allegation was made by regulars of the bar.

Marianne admitted that she bought the Beretta from someone at Tipasa and kept the firearm hidden at Anna’s grave. She said that after Anna’s murder, she felt unsafe and acquired the gun for self-defence, not to commit murder. She was not of the intention of shooting Grabowski.

Today, of course one has to walk through a metal detector when entering a courtroom in Lübeck, much like security measures at airports. In 1981, there were no security checks in place at the courthouse. Marianne was able to take a firearm into the courtroom, without any detection.

Despite owning the gun, she denied ever having done any target practice. However, she was a very accurate shot. She was able to remove the Beretta from her handbag, remove the safety and shoot in one, swift and seamless action. She stood only about 11 feet (or 3.5 metres) behind Grabowski. He was a big man and an easy target, who did not see the attack coming. Experts believed that she must have had at least SOME prior knowledge in handling firearms, because of the calm and collected execution of the shooting.

On the 2nd of November, 1982, she was charged with murder, because she had gone to the court room, with her firearm, in a pre-meditated plan to kill her daughter's murderer.

It was quite the scoop. Marianne was a very attractive, well-spoken woman who had the support of many people in the community. The cameras loved her and the public sympathized with her.

Marianne Bachmeier's defence team argued that the shooting was a spontaneous reaction, caused by the emotional turmoil of the trial. Marianne said that it was her understanding that Grabowski wanted to make a statement on that day. She thought he was going to tell more lies about her daughter and how she had provoked him. Marianne decided to put an end to it all. Killing Grabowski was an act of defiance at its strongest: taking the law into her own hands INSIDE a courtroom with multiple witnesses: law enforcement officers, journalists and members of the public.

Prosecution reminded the court that Marianne, who had risen as the femme fatale, Revenge Mother of Germany, was a neglectful mother. They pointed out that seven-year-old Anna was often left to her own devices and that Marianne had taken the first steps to arrange foster care for her. But when her daughter was taken from her by Grabowski, she killed him. Prosecution felt that her act was not driven by revenge. Why would she avenge the death of a neglected child whom she was about to sign over to the care of someone else? Perhaps she was paralysed with guilt, or was the killing a reaction to set someone right for taking something that was HERS?

The bar where Marianne worked, Tipasa, fell under media scrutiny for being a strange place where undesirables drank beer and talked about revolutionary ideas. Many articles did not hold back, stating that a bar like Tipasa was no place for a child. Some people felt sympathy for Marianne: she was a single mother and did what she could to get by. Working as a barmaid was all she had ever known. Tipasa was her home-base, she felt safe and supported there and never felt like she was exposing Anna to anything dangerous.

With so many opinions about Marianne Bachmeier, her life and the crime she committed, her trial was a case of national interest. Four months after she was charged, on the 2nd of March 1983, her trial began. The trial lasted 25 days and various witnesses were called to testify. The courtroom was packed – the audience was mostly made up of women, mothers, who came to attend the trial, in support of Marianne. In fact, there were so many people that they had to change location to another hall in the State Building that seated 200 people.

During her trial, Marianne became somewhat of a celebrity. It was remarkable how she posed for the cameras and lapped up the attention. Usually, defendants charged with murder try to avoid photographers, but not Marianne. This did not sit well with a lot of people. Although she had a lot of support, there was something smug in her demeanour.

Before, she was someone who lived on the fringes of society. This circumstance, put her in a new world – she was no longer invisible and downtrodden. All eyes were on her: beautiful and fierce, NOT weak anymore.

When it was time for the verdict, everyone was on the edge of their seats. It could have gone either way, nobody had any idea which way the court would rule. In the end, the murder charges against her were dropped. Instead, she was convicted of manslaughter and unlawful possession of a firearm and sentenced to six years in prison.

Prosecutors were outraged. In their view, it was a straight-forward case of malice aforethought. She was in no imminent danger in the moment, she was also not provoked at that precise moment. Grabowski sat with his back to her and did not threaten her. Marianne later openly admitted that she had the pistol in her handbag when she went to court the previous two days too. The fact that she had brought her firearm into the courtroom – prosecution argued – showed intent.

The judge, on the other hand, felt that justice was served. In his opinion, Marianne Bachmeier did not pose a threat to society. He felt strongly that the killing was a spontaneous act, caused by the trauma of the court hearing in the proceeding days. One witness claimed that there was a folder with evidence of Anna's grave in the courtroom and that Marianne saw it shortly before shooting Grabowski. For the judge, that was enough of a trigger to have caused an un-premeditated attack.

Marianne was able to walk out of the courtroom as a free person, as she was only required to go to prison at a later stage. Marianne was put on suicide watch and spent the first 18 months of her incarceration in a psychiatric facility. She was released in June 1985 after serving three years.

Some felt the punishment was too harsh, while others felt it was too light. The Allensbach Survey gives a good insight into public opinion on the matter: 28 percent of citizens felt that the sentence was appropriate, 27 percent reckoned it was too harsh while 25 percent felt she got off too lightly, the remaining 20 percent were undecided.

The question was raised: what would the sentence have been, had Grabowski killed a brother or a husband? Would the nation still have felt the same amount of empathy? Does that mean a grieving mother has more rights than say a grieving spouse? Isn't murder still murder, regardless of the circumstances?

The death sentence was abolished in West Germany in 1949, after World War II. East Germany ended capital punishment in 1987. In 1980, the city of Lübeck was a part of West Germany, which means at the time of Grabowski's trial, the death sentence was not on the table. In one interview Marianne Bachmeier said that SHE wanted to be the one who punished Grabowski, she did not want to leave it in the hands of the judicial system.

She did admit in another interview, this time with 3nach9 that once Grabowski was dead, she felt like she could breathe again. She said that she was sorry that it had happened, but she did not feel sorry that he was dead. She said:

“I can’t imagine that I would have shot this person if he had turned around and said that he was sorry about what he had done.”

She regretted that it had to happen, but she did not regret doing it. It’s significant that she never showed any remorse. She never had a moment where she came out and said: what have I done?

In an interview on German talk-show, Fliege, she said that she had shot Grabowski in the pursuit of justice. She was also desperate to stop him from spreading any more stories and untruths about her daughter. The story about Anna blackmailing him. For 5DM.

She did not want to avenge Anna’s death, but wanted to prevent Grabowski from making a statement that she felt was the most extreme insult.

Big question was the motive. It was obvious that any parent facing their child’s murder probably wish them dead. But what pushed Marianne over the edge? Hark Bohm, writer and director of the bio-pic, ‘The Bachmeier Case – No Time for Tears’, concluded that Marianne’s life had no meaning up until the point when her daughter was murdered. Suddenly she found herself in the limelight. In an attempt to make the most of her time in the spotlight, she needed a grandiose gesture, to give meaning to her existence. Whether she did this because she was desperate for attention or because she wanted to remain on the centre stage a while longer, would be anybody’s guess.

Marianne sold her life story to German magazine, Stern for 250,000 Deutsche Mark. She used the money to pay off debt owing for legal fees. The magazine published a series of articles which laid the foundation for a second film about the case, called ‘Anna’s Mutter’ or Anna’s Mother. The two films were released in Germany in 1984 and ran in cinemas concurrently.

In the late 1980s Marianne got married and moved to Nigeria with her husband who taught German-language at a German camp. They divorced in 1990 and Marianne decided to move to Palermo, Sicily where she worked as a caregiver at hospice. She said that she did not want to return to Lübeck, because there she would only ever be known as ‘Anna’s Mother’.

When she was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, she returned to Germany. She asked NDR reporter, Lukas Maria Böhmer to film her last days alive for posterity. This macabre visual diary of Marianne preparing for death, showed how desperate she was for public attention and sympathy.

She passed away on the 17th of September 1996 in Lübeck at the age of 46 and despite her wish to be buried in Palermo, she was laid to rest in the same grave as her daughter, Anna. Forever memorialising her as Anna’s Mother, exactly how she did not want to be remembered...

If you’d like to read more about this case, have a look at the resources used for this episode in the show notes.

Also visit and like our Facebook Page at facebook.com/evidencelockerpodcast to see more about today's case.

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