

GET A CLUE ABOUT JAY J. ARMES AND SON— TEXAS DETECTIVES

WRITTEN BY: DIANE ADAMS | PHOTOS COURTESY OF: JAY J. ARMES III

It was not actually a dark and stormy night when we tracked down one of the Lone Star State's greatest detective duos. Still, it did result in some fantastic insight into the professional life of a private detective. It took some sleuthing, but *Texasliving* has the inside story on detective Jay J. Armes III, and his famous father, Jay J. Armes, the prosthetic-handed investigator and actor who helped solve the kidnapping case of Marlon Brando's son, among many other accomplishments.

Jay J. Armes Sr. was born in El Paso in 1932. When he was eleven, he was involved in an accident resulting from playing with railway torpedoes. As a result, he lost both hands to amputation. Armes was made of tough stuff, however, returning to school only four weeks post-surgery. He graduated high school and obtained degrees in psychology and criminology from New York University via correspondence courses. After a brief stint as an actor, Armes opened a private investigation agency called The Investigators, where his son, Jay J. Armes III, got his start in the business.



FOLLOWING AFTER HIS FATHER

We put Jay J. Armes III under our magnifying glass to find out why he took up his father's investigative mantle and what he does every day at 'the office.' "My father, Jay J. Armes Sr., started his investigative firm (The Investigators) well over sixty years ago," Armes said. "My father is considered by many to be one of the greatest private investigators in the world. From the time I was a small boy, I would see my father coming back from headline-making cases all over the world, i.e., England, Africa, Mexico, Canada, etc. When he returned, he would tell us about his cases and how he solved them, and I would frequently go on surveillance with him starting when I was five years old. That work's danger, excitement, and mental aspects absolutely fascinated me. So I always knew in my heart that as soon as I was able, I would work with my father as an international private investigator. I've been doing this work continuously now for 36 years."



The Armes father and son team worked together for over 33 years in El Paso before Jay III moved to Dallas and founded his own firm, Armes International. "My goal is to continue to develop my skills and resources in order to offer my clients the broadest range of services and the most advanced investigative techniques available," Armes said. "My ultimate goal is not to be the biggest PI firm; I simply want to be the best at what I do. Working side-by-side with my father, I have always had big shoes to fill, but I believe that my body of work, accomplishments, and success in this industry speaks for itself. I have resolved countless cases which have made either national or international headlines."

A CASE TO REMEMBER

When asked about a memorable case, Armes detailed a tale of kidnapping, ransom, and millions of dollars in cash that could make a good movie. The case involved the kidnapped brother of a wealthy client in Monterrey, Mexico. Both Jay J. Sr. and Jay III, working with their team in Mexico, devised a plan to rescue the victim, who was experiencing torture and appeared on video pleading for his life. The kidnapers were professionals, many with backgrounds in law enforcement. The client was instructed to withdraw the 25 million dollar ransom from multiple banks and to show up for an exchange with the kidnapers. The money was taken to a warehouse owned by the client, where it could be counted and prepared.

Armes described the scene: "The client's brother was a former politician, and he had over 25 Mexican federal agents waiting inside the warehouse, all armed with machine guns. Although this was contrary to our instructions to the client, the client's older brother insisted on having these men there. As my men and I switched out the real money with bait money, installed hidden GPS trackers, tested the equipment, and carefully boxed the bait money in a stack of boxes, we could all feel the eyes from every single Mexican agent burning holes in the back of our heads. As we looked at their faces around the room, and saw them whispering to each other as my men counted and prepared the money, we could instantly tell that each and every one of them was thinking very intently about how they could do away with us and take that 25 million dollars for themselves."

"It was an extremely tense and uncomfortable situation," Armes said. "[...] I actually had two of my men, one on each side of the room, watching the federal agents watching us just to make sure that they didn't put a bullet in our backs while we were preparing the ransom money. In the end, we were able to apprehend two of the kidnapers at the money drop. They led us back to the rest of their group and the safe house, where the victim was being held with his eyes and hands bound by silver duct tape. We recovered the victim unharmed, and our client did not pay one penny of ransom money. That was a great case with a great result," Armes recalled.

GADGETS GALORE

Every good detective carries gadgets that amaze. As you might expect, Armes's enthusiasm for the subject is boundless. "From the time I was a small boy, I have always been a little obsessed with gadgets and weaponry," Armes confided. "Eventually my obsession turned into a business which I started in 1986. [...] I carry night vision, thermal imaging, body-worn video, wireless and covert video, counter-surveillance gear, GPS tracking systems, ILock picks, and every type of self-defense product you can imagine. If there is a current favorite gadget, it would probably be a new immobilization device called the BolaWrap® 150. Simply put, this is quite literally something that you would see Batman carry on his utility belt. The BolaWrap® is a non-lethal, remote restraint device that electronically discharges a Kevlar® cord to restrain noncompliant individuals from a range of 10 to 25 feet. When discharged towards the subject, the device shoots out a Kevlar cord and weighted barbed ends, which fly through the air towards the subject, wrapping around their legs making it virtually impossible for them to run or flee. Very cool," he explained.

"My father is semi-retired now, and I still assist him on the larger cases," Armes said. "Crime and criminals continue to evolve, as does the sophistication of their crimes. They have become more adept at using technology to assist them in victimizing people, in concealing their crimes, identities, and location."

It is a challenging and dangerous business, private investigation, and while not always as glamorous as the television depicts, it does have some heart-racing moments. However, the Armes father and son team has captured something special in their shared love and expertise for hunting down bad guys that makes them as close to a real-life James Bond story as you will probably ever find. Who knows, maybe on some night when the wind rattles along the housetops, we can curl up and read more about these two intrepid bloodhounds. It would, no doubt, be worth the read.