FAMOUS

FAMOUS CASES OF A COURTROOM PSYCHIATRIST

RONALD MARKMAN, M.D. AND DOMINICK BOSCO



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COURTROOM
PSYCHIATRIST



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A L O N E W I T H T H E D E V I L

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RONALD MARKMAN, M. D. AND DOMINICK BOSCO

DEDICATION

To my lovely wife, Nitza, and three wonderful children, Sharon, David and Michael, who provided me with support, assistance, and, above all, understanding through the gestation and birth of this book.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Though this project spanned fifteen years, for the first decade, it lay dormant on a back burner, stifled by priorities, a lack of time, and a general tendency to procrastinate. The last three years required a dedicated concentration equivalent to that of a marathon runner in training. Completion of this book has made it all worthwhile.

Initial thanks must go to Larry Gordon, an artist in his own right, and a fellow Little League father, who lit a needed fire under me by initiating contact with a literary agent. Without his impetus, this book would still be on the drawing boards.

Although much of the data for this book came from personal files and public documents, a number of prosecutors and defense attorneys provided added information in many of the cases reviewed and to them I am appreciative. Special thanks are in order to Deputy District Attorney Al Locher of Sacramento, for his invaluable assistance in finding additional material in the archives on Richard Chase, and to Deputy District Attorney Jeff Jonas, who provided added information on Orlando Camacho.

Many colleagues, family members and friends assisted in reviewing the material. However, I would like to single out several who played a meaningful role either in my professional career or directly in the development of this book:

Russ Galen, my agent, who artfully led me through the literary mazes required to complete this project. Editors Ann Sweeney, who first expressed interest in the project, and Jim Fitzgerald and Ceci Scott, who despite entering the undertaking in midstream, provided valuable guidance and direction.

Dominick Bosco, with whom I spent hundreds of interesting hours, reviewing materials, discussing theories, and conceptualizing ideas, for converting the raw material into an understandable, interesting and readable treatise.

The late Seymour Pollack, M.D., a pioneer in Forensic Psychiatry, with whom I spent my early professional years.

Judges Jack Goertzen, Harry Peetris and the late Marvin Freeman, Commissioner Virginia Chernack, Deputy District At-

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Finally, to everyone else who played a role in this endeavor, many thanks.

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—D.B.

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A L O N E
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A L O N E W I T H T H E M I N D O F T H E MURDERER

Logan, Utah, is not a very big city, especially when compared with Los Angeles, my home. Logan is neat, clean, and well lit. The first thing that caught my eye when I arrived was the crowd of people gathering around a policeman about a half-block away from my hotel. It reminded me of the crowds that movie location sets attract on the streets of Los Angeles. But even those events don't draw as much attention as whatever was going on down the street.

I looked closer and realized that the crowd was watching the policeman write someone a traffic ticket. Going through a red light was a crime worthy of drawing a crowd in Logan, Utah.

There was nothing psychologically unusual about this. People are curious about these events because they need to somehow integrate them into their experience of the world. The people of Logan were drawn to witness the policeman restore order in their community. The people of Los Angeles have a view that is, of necessity, somewhat less tidy than that of the people of Logan. Policemen giving traffic tickets in Los Angeles do not draw crowds.

I shook my head and smiled, and wondered how the good citizens of Logan would fit into their world the event that brought me to Utah.

am a forensic psychiatrist—what many people would call a "courtroom shrink." It's my job to examine and evaluate people

who have been arrested for various crimes. Often, that crime is the killing of another human being. In the more than twenty years I've been a forensic psychiatrist, I've evaluated hundreds of killers for the purpose of describing their state of mind. I guess you could say my goal is to get inside the mind of the killer. I do this by interviewing the person, usually across a small table, alone.

Living in Los Angeles, which has one of the highest homicide rates in the United States, I have plenty of work. I've interviewed mass murderers, serial killers, wife-killers, husband-killers, parent-killers, child-killers . . . every kind of killer you can imagine.

Some have been faces that have made the front pages of newspapers across the country. Some have made their way into our folklore. Others are mere footnotes in the legal journals. Names such as Bianchi, Manson, Corona, Pancoast, are names that are recognized by people everywhere.

It's unfortunate that, in our society, killers can become celebrities. Our morbid fascination with them is simple human nature —we're curious about killers, almost drawn to them. We want to know more. There is something inside them that is also inside us, and we are attracted to them so we can find out what that something is. That is not the unfortunate part—in fact, it is because of this curiosity that I have written this book. What is unfortunate is that, in turning killers into celebrities—if infamous ones—we obscure our view of them. By definition, celebrities are people who are different from us, distant, and somehow better for their glory. This gets in the way of satisfying the very curiosity that draws us to killers—that allows us to see our own reflection in their faces.

For this reason, although I have included a chapter about what I believe is an untold part of the Manson Family story, I have passed over such "celebrated" and much-written-about cases as Bianchi, Corona, and Pancoast. It is sometimes easier to get closer to the psychological and legal realities of the lesser-known cases, though the horror and brutality of the murders themselves may be even more intense than in the famous cases.

For example, I was one of the first psychiatrists to see the "Hillside Strangler" after his capture. Kenneth Bianchi and his cousin were found guilty of molesting, torturing, and strangling

twelve women in California and Washington. But, in my opinion, the case of Lawrence Bittaker and Roy Norris (included in this book), though it received less nationwide fanfare, had at least as much impact and contains within it as grisly and horrific a vision of the dark depths of human nature. And perhaps a sharper view as well, since the story is not clouded by the folklore and controversy that often accumulate around famous cases.

In the Hillside Strangler case, the public's fear and horror were encouraged to build up gradually as body after body was found and reported in the press. Bittaker and Norris were so vicious, and their acts so cruel, that the hideous nature of their crimes was hidden from view until they were apprehended. And the horror still haunts the people involved in that case.

I also played a role in the Manson Family-Tate-LaBianca murder case. I not only evaluated three of the Manson Family murderers, but also Sharon Tate's husband, Roman Polanski, when he was charged with a sex crime years later. Charles Manson himself has become a folk figure in American culture, so I have not attempted to tell his story. However, less is known about Tex Watson and Leslie Van Houten, two kids who were "the boy and girl next door" if any ever were. I have found it more absorbing to explore how they became murderers-and what happened to them afterward, for I believe this gives us a better look at how close we all are to the act of homicide. It's easier to identify with Leslie and Tex because we are more like them than we are like Manson. By looking at their stories, we may get a keener feel for how Manson, himself, molded his flock and transformed them into killers. As for Polanski, I find his role as "celebrity victim turned sex criminal and outcast" powerful and gripping.

The physical evidence was partly circumstantial: Vicki Morgan, the beautiful mistress of Alfred Bloomingdale, was found lying next to him with her head bashed in. The murder weapon, a baseball bat, was found nearby with Pancoast's fingerprints on it. Pancoast confessed, but then recanted. Then he claimed videotapes had been made of some of Vicki and Alfred's more tender

moments. My interview with Marvin Pancoast supplied evidence of that most convoluted of all sexual worlds that Vicki Morgan, Alfred Bloomingdale, and Marvin Pancoast inhabited. But it was not more baffling than the world inside Orlando Camacho's head, a chaos that turned malevolent and ultimately led to the killing of his young wife. Camacho's crime was more bizarre and brutal in many ways, but it never reached national attention.

And while the deadly result of Pancoast's confusion was making headlines, to the north there was a young man whose own sexual confusion would eventually bear a deadly fruit. Yet Kevin Green did not come out of the underworld of Hollywood and the Sunset Strip, but out of a middle-class suburb in the Bay Area.

was also called in on the Juan Corona case, after the farm contractor was convicted of murdering countless numbers of migrant workers and burying them in mass graves. Corona's original defense was that the evidence was circumstantial and that he hadn't committed the murders. When that didn't work and he was found guilty, the defense decided to explore the possibility of an appeal based on psychiatric grounds—that Corona was insane at the time of the murders. The prosecution called me in to examine Corona and to get my opinion on the viability of that defense. In preparation, I examined the material from the police records and trial transcripts and told the prosecution that, based on what I saw, there was no evidence—or psychiatric data—to prove that Corona suffered from a mental disability that would mitigate his responsibility for the killings. He may have been insane, but I said that unless I examined him or saw new information, for legal purposes there was no suggestion that he was mentally disturbed. After I presented my position to the prosecutor, the defense decided not to pursue a mental defense.

Clouds of controversy still hover around the Corona case, so I have not written about it. However, the story of Richard Chase, the "Vampire of Sacramento," is complete. And though our view of the mind of the murderer at work may be obscured in the Corona case, the grisly facts of the Chase case are chillingly clear.

Though John Zimmerman never made the national front

pages, his crime, too, was about as shocking and cruel a display of the mind of the murderous psychopath at work as any of the more famous cases, and because I evaluated Zimmerman face-to-face, I am able to bring *you* face-to-face with him, too.

The killing instinct does not spare close relatives; people who share bonds of love are not immune. Remember, the first crime in the Bible is a brother slaying a brother. As a matter of fact, of the twenty thousand or so homicides committed in the United States every year, a large proportion are between the closest of relatives—husbands and wives, parents and children. Nevertheless, despite the fact that husband-wife killings are common, when death came visiting the home of Lou and Laura Schindler, as you will see, the irony outstripped astronomical odds.

Torran Meier, Barry Braeseke, and Eric Chapman all have one thing in common: they all focused their deadly instincts on their parents. Beyond that similarity, their stories are as different as can be. Together, they demonstrate how demonic the legal system is. The boy whose crime was the most brutal came the closest to not being punished at all.

Fumiko Kimura, Norma Jean Armistead, Arlyne Genger, and Priscilla Ford are together in one chapter because their stories demonstrate how a murderous rage can arise out of an emotion as normally beneficent as motherhood.

As it can, as well, out of fatherhood. Which brings us back to relatively pristine Logan, Utah, where I was about to become involved in what may be the most bizarre case of my career.

Jason Nelson was a fourth-year seminary student in the Mormon Church. He was an excellent student, as well as an accomplished teacher. On the previous Friday a demonstration videotape had been made of his teaching an undergraduate class. I saw that tape. Though Jason was over six feet tall, his spare 142 pounds gave him the appearance of being smaller than he actually was. Jason was animated and skillful in handling the class. He was alert, lively, engaging—a very able and interesting teacher. His emotions were steady and positive, he engaged the class in dialogue to clarify issues, he knew what he was talking about, and easily won the class's attention and respect.

Jason was in his final year of school at Utah State University, planning to become a full-time teacher at the seminary. In addition to teaching, to support himself and his family he worked part-time as an attendant at two different service stations, one owned by his father and one owned by his father-in-law.

Jason was married and the father of an eleven-month-old son, Paul, whom he called the "light of my life." His wife Ruth was expecting another child in just two more months. She had miscarried her first pregnancy.

On Sunday, November 22, 1981, Jason, Ruth, and Paul spent the afternoon and early evening with Jason's parents, six brothers, and two sisters. One of his brothers was about to leave on a missionary journey to Sweden, and another had just returned from his missionary work in Taiwan. Jason, the oldest son, had already performed his missionary service, in San Diego. After dinner the young family left and drove to have dessert with Ruth's parents. There was nothing abnormal about the day, although Jason had been suffering from a migraine headache. These headaches had started when he was in high school. They didn't come that frequently, but when they did they often lasted a week. During his missionary tour of duty he had suffered three or four intense bouts of migraine. And just the previous Wednesday he had suffered what he described as "the worst" migraine of his life. Jason had gone to a chiropractor for these headaches and was told that they were caused by low blood sugar and a displaced vertebra in his neck. The headache returned briefly that Sunday, but it was gone by evening.

Jason and Ruth got along fine that day, as they usually did. The couple had met before he went away on his mission to San Diego. When he returned, they dated for a year and then married. Their marriage was not without disagreements, but they would usually end with Jason admitting that he was wrong to argue.

After dinner, the family sat down to watch *Mary Poppins* on television. During the movie, Jason realized that the story and characters had an important message for him concerning his faith. But his in-laws didn't seem interested in the movie, let alone its special message.

Jason had received these special messages before. Several