# THE LIFE AND DEATHS OF HENRY LEE LUCAS

BY NAN CUBA

Photographs by Kevin Vandivier

I HAD NEVER BEEN INSIDE A JAIL BEFORE, AND ON MY FIRST VISIT I INTERVIEWED HENRY LEE LUCAS. THE DATE WAS JUNE 5, 1984. *LIFE* MAGAZINE HAD HIRED ME TO WORK ON AN ARTICLE ABOUT SERIAL MURDERERS—THE CATEGORY OF KILLER THAT TAKES ITS VICTIMS NOT IN ONE FELL SWOOP, BUT ONE BY ONE OVER AN EXTENDED PERIOD OF TIME. LAW-ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS WERE ALREADY CONVINCED HENRY HAD KILLED SCORES OF PEOPLE, INCLUDING HIS MOTHER AND HIS COMMON-LAW WIFE. THEIR TOTAL WOULD EVENTUALLY REACH 190.

From what I'd read and heard, I expected to face a fiery-eyed imbecile. I was wrong, and even after another 20 hours of interviews spread throughout the next year, I never got so I could anticipate Henry's moods.

It was Carolyn Huebner, president of Texas Child Search Inc., who first took me to the Williamson County Jail. She'd already visited Henry several times, trying to clear up some of her agency's missing-child cases. Henry had been in jail in Georgetown since November 1983 and had received one death sentence and several life terms. Authorities wouldn't speculate when exactly they'd be sending him to death row in Huntsville. Henry was too useful. Droves of investigators were beating a path to his door—so many, in fact, that the sheriff and the Texas Rangers had set up a task force, and the task force had turned the Williamson County Jail into the Lucas Library. By the time Huebner and I arrived, Henry had set himself up as head librarian, keeper of a personal book of horror.

Really, the Williamson County Jail does look a lot like a library, with its two-story limestone walls, Victorian veranda, and louvered upper windows. A historic plaque says it was built in 1889. About noon, we parked the car, climbed the jail's front steps, and stopped at the visitors' window inside. A buzzer sounded and the main door unlocked. I followed Huebner past a series of desks. The young secretaries and sheriff's deputies looked up and offered a country-courteous "hello ma'am." A narrow hallway covered with bulletins about lost children and suspected felons led us to the office of the Henry Lee Lucas task force.

As we entered, a bulky, graying man pushed away from his desk and rose to greet us. Huebner hugged him and then introduced me; this was Sgt. Bob Prince of the Texas Rangers, the task-force member who spent the most time with Henry. A former college football player, Prince has been with the Rangers 18 years. For the past eight months, he'd been away from his family in Waco, staying in an apartment near the jail. Prince and Huebner chatted for a minute, but when Huebner began asking questions about Henry, the Ranger gave only the most superficial replies. Most of his information was confidential, he said.

I read the computer print-outs that papered the office walls and asked Prince about a large U.S. map in the center. A forest of pushpins marked the locations of crimes committed by Henry and his former traveling buddy, Ottis Toole. The print-outs described the deeds: "Strangled with a telephone cord and stabbed seven times." "Shot in the head with a shotgun." From my spot by the office door I could hear an inmate howling upstairs.

A moment later, Sheriff Jim Boutwell stepped into the room, his red nose and gracious drawl vying with a no-nonsense glance. Boutwell has been with the county sheriff's office since 1956. His grandfather had been a Williamson County sheriff, too. In 1966, when Charles Whitman went on his murder spree in Austin, it was Boutwell who circled the UT tower in an airplane to distract the gunman.

The sheriff had originally brought Henry to Georgetown to stand trial for the 1979 "Orange Socks" killing, a case in which an unidentified girl was found murdered and dumped in a ditch along I-35. Then when Boutwell's prisoner began confessing to more and more killings, "I couldn't close my eyes to everything but Williamson County," he said. In November '83, he called in the Rangers.

As we made small talk with the task-force leaders,

a barefoot woman with a nail file in her hand peeked into the office and told us Henry was ready for our interview.

The room next to Prince's had chalky walls and no windows. One wooden table stood in the corner, reminding me of my breakfast nook at home. "We call this Henry's office," Prince said. I focused on two full ashtrays, I smelled the cigarette smoke, and then I shifted my glance to the far corner where Henry was sitting. He wore a pressed white shirt with sleeves folded to the elbows, slacks, dress shoes, and a wristwatch. When Huebner introduced me, I mumbled hello, but I could not bring myself to shake hands.

Henry nodded at each of us, leaned back in his chair, and sipped coffee from a large styrofoam cup. Prince placed a fresh pot in the center of the table and said he would return at the end of an hour. We were to keep the door open at all times. Once he left, I turned on my tape recorder and took out my legal pad.

I started explaining who we were and why we wanted to to talk to him. Henry nodded nervously as he bragged about the lack of evidence found at his crime sites. "Not even footprints," he said and smiled. "I just left the dust from my shoes." Sometimes he would gesture with one hand while describing the treatment of victims, or his ability to recall remarkable details of a crime. Later, as he remembered his treatment by prison officials, he stroked the arm of his chair. "I've been beat by law enforcement. I've been shot by law enforcement. I've had everything there is happen to me." Always his movements were subdued, and his right hand never turned loose of the coffee cup.

I winced whenever he looked at me with his good eye. His left eye, which is glass, droops, and once during a speech about his friend Ottis Toole, Henry wiped the artificial eye with his index finger, then smeared the dribble onto the back of his shirt. Sometimes he would tap his cup on the table or slowly take sips of coffee, but after describing his training with a Satanic death cult in the Florida Everglades, he threw his head back and allowed a real laugh. "There's six organizations and the White House investigating it," he said as he crossed his legs and swiveled his chair, obviously pleased.

Finally, I asked him to describe his childhood: "I heard your mother was a prostitute." He balked, saying he would rather not discuss it. But after some coaxing, Henry opened up, relating shocking accounts of abuse at its extreme. "I've hated ever since I could first remember—back when I was a little kid. I've hated my family," he said. "I just grew up to hate prostitution—is what I grew up to hate." He described how he stabbed his mother to death and added: "She done pushed me beyond the limit of really caring. I don't say it's her fault. It's her life. I was just stretched to a point where I wasn't going to be pushed no further."

After that, he explained what he called his "sexual murders." "They're the ones I killed for sex. That's the reason I killed them—to have sex with them," he said, and flipped his cigarette ash and rocked in his chair. I sat and watched him and listened to it all. But when he told how he had kidnapped 600 children and left them in Mexico, I rattled my paper and gasped. Huebner scowled, and I recovered, requesting a description of the children. As he started recounting a particular incident, Huebner interrupted to challenge: "You know that's one of my cases, don't you?"

"Yeah," he replied.

"Where is she? Is she dead?" Huebner pressed.

"She's dead all right," Henry said.

Toward the end of our hour, Henry talked about his interviews with officers and the numerous confessions. "When I first started, it bothered me," he said. "But they kept convincing me that what I'm doing is right—in helping the other people. 'Course I see that what I've done is wrong. I can't say it's not. There've been a lot of people wrote me letters, and if I've done it, I tell them."

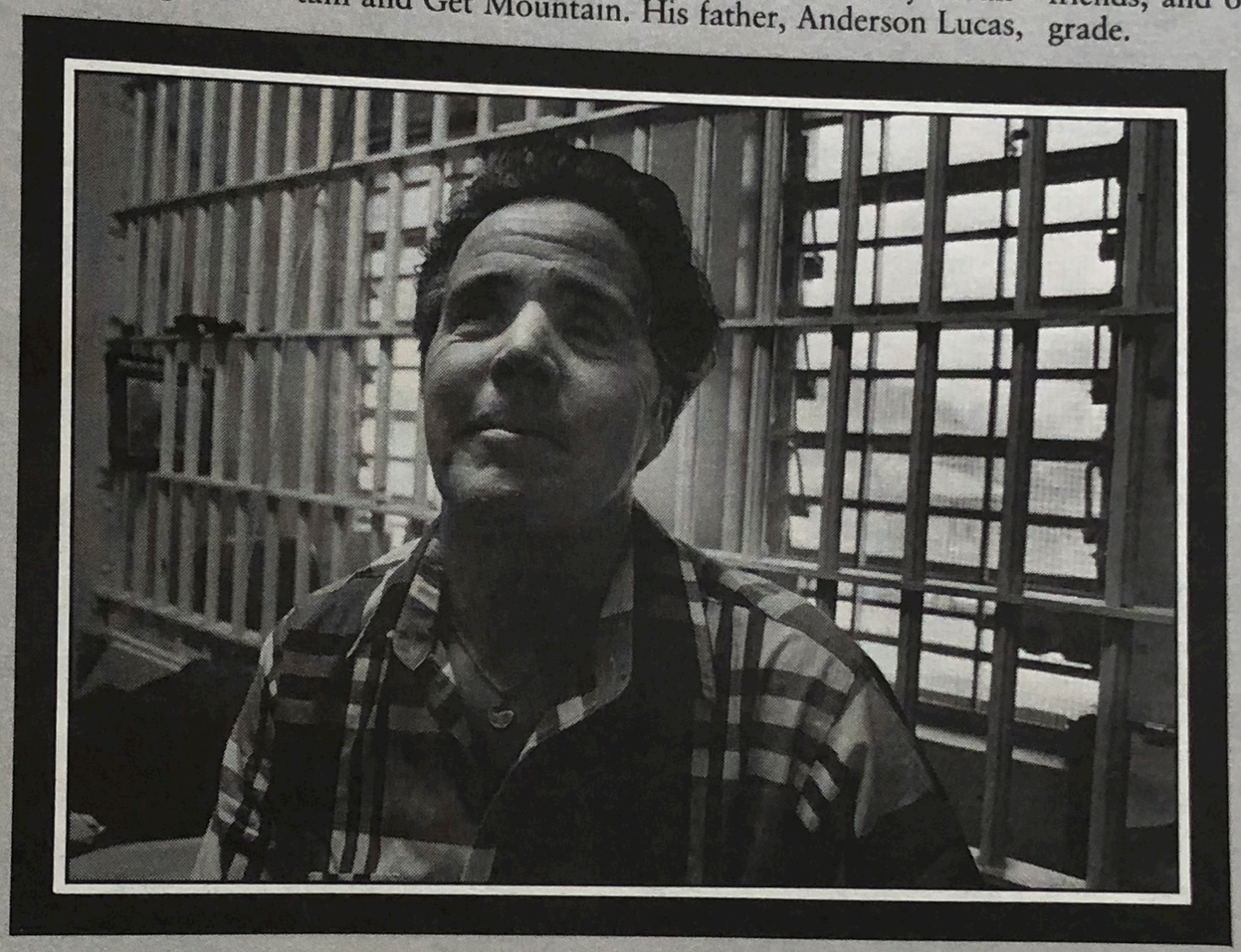
Henry paused as Prince's frame filled the doorway. He ambled toward his prisoner, set a large strawberry milkshake on the table, and announced: "Henry, those officers from California are here to see you. They've been waiting since this morning." Henry nodded at the milkshake. "It's a good thing they brought me that," he said.

We rose to go, but not before asking if we could see him again. He told us he thought it would be all right. Then I reminded him about his appointment with the photographer from *Life*. Carol Huebner spoke up: "I hear you said you'd let them take your picture as long as they'd take it with your arm around me."

Henry sniggered and displayed a mouthful of blackened teeth. "Yeah," he said with a giggle, flashing a peek at Prince.

### 'I DON'T HAVE A MOTHER'

Henry Lee Lucas was born August 23, 1936, in Montgomery County, Virginia, nine miles from the town of Blacksburg in a cleft between Brushy Mountain and Get Mountain. His father, Anderson Lucas, was an alcoholic and a double amputee. Drunk, he had fallen underneath a freight train and lost his legs even before he met Henry's mother. "He hopped around on his ass all his life," Henry says, "sold pencils, and skinned mink for a living."



Henry's mother, Viola Lucas, was half Chippewa Indian. There had been an early marriage, but it had failed, and Viola abandoned her first four children. Soon she married Anderson Lucas. At 35 she bore a son, Andrew; she was 40 and working as a prostitute when Henry came along. A granddaughter describes Viola as "a dirty old woman who chewed snuff, and the kind of person you would not want to be around." Henry says she had two teeth and a violent temper. She frequently beat him, Andrew, and their legless father. "Some people say they gonna give a whipping with a switch or something. She didn't know what a switch was," Henry remembers. "When she went and got a switch, she went and got a broomstick. She'd wear them out."

They lived in a three-room log cabin two miles from the nearest neighbor; there was no plumbing or electricity. Henry, Andrew, Anderson, Viola, and Bernie (her pimp) all slept in the same room. Henry didn't just peek at his mother having intercourse with strangers—Viola forced him to watch.

And more and more he brooded about his mother, wanting to love her. He called her Vi or Viola, but refused to say "Mom." "I don't have a mother," he would tell others. He claims Viola refused to cook for the family, though she would prepare meals for herself and Bernie. The boys and their father were forced to find their own food, which they usually stole from garbage cans or stores in town nine miles away. Whatever it was, Viola always made them eat it on the dirt floor. Henry can recall trying to cook something, he thinks, as early as four years of age. An even earlier memory, he says, is of his mother shooting a customer in the leg, the blood spattering his clothing.

The family made and sold moonshine, Anderson Lucas and the boys tending the still. Both parents drank a large share of the liquor, and Henry's penchant for alcohol ripened around age ten. Periodically, the old man would give Henry a nickel or maybe a quarter, and the boys would scurry to enjoy a movie in town. Once, Henry stole a battery-operated radio from a neighbor, and the brothers lost themselves in episodes of "The Lone Ranger" and "Sky King" and dreamed of leaving home.

On Henry's first day of school, he had long blond hair and wore a girl's dress. His teacher, Annie Hall, sympathetically cut his curls and dressed him in pants. Viola, Henry claims, was furious and abused the teacher in reprisal. During the year, Miss Hall often brought the neglected boy sandwiches to eat at school and sometimes took him home for a hot meal. "I think she was responsible for my first pair of shoes," he remembers fondly. But he cannot recall having any friends, and one report states he had to repeat first grade.

When Henry was around seven, he says Viola took him into town, then pointed to a strange man and touted him as Henry's natural father. Later, when Henry questioned Anderson Lucas, the truth came out. Anderson was not his real father. That same year, according to Henry, because he was slow to retrieve a piece of wood, Viola struck him in the back of the head with a board. He insists he lay at home unconscious for almost three days before Bernie took him to the hospital, claiming the child had fallen off a ladder. Following the injury, Henry says, he was often dizzy, had blackouts, and felt as though he were floating through the air. It was also during this time that Viola, Henry remembers, shot and killed his pet mule out of spite, then whipped her child for causing the expense of having the carcass hauled away.

About a year later, Henry and Andrew were playing in the woods, attempting to make a swing from a grapevine. Henry was holding the vine while Andrew tried to cut it with a knife. The blade cut upward, accidentally slicing across the bridge of Henry's nose and left eye. Though Henry was hospitalized for six months, his mother came to see him only once. For a long time, he saw only shadows, and since his peripheral vision was also affected, he tended to walk sideways.

Slowly, though, the eye began to mend, and Henry returned to school. Annie Hall purchased books with large print so that he might continue learning to read. Then Mrs. Glover, another teacher there, reached to strike a misbehaving student, missed, and accidentally reopened Henry's wound. Henry lost his eye.

According to several official sources, at 13, Henry had his first sexual encounter, with the wife of his half-brother. "It was just sex," he told a psychologist. It was neither satisfying nor exciting—"just negative feelings," he said. "I just went along, but I didn't feel it was right." The same records say this half-brother introduced Henry to bestiality. They would cut the throats of animals, then have sex with them. "It satisfied me," Henry said. "It was just sex, that's all. It was just to have sex."

Other reports say that as a young teenager, Henry did a lot of stealing. "I started stealing, I guess, as soon as I was old enough to run fast," he said, "'cause I didn't want to stay at home. I figured if I could steal, I could get away from home and stuff."

When he was 15, Henry did something even worse. In March 1951, he says, he cornered a 17-year-old girl at a bus stop, carried her up an embankment, tried to rape her, then strangled her. "I had no intention of killing her," he said. "I don't know whether I me or what. That was my first, my worst, and the

hardest to get over. I just couldn't take what happened. I would go out sometimes for days, and just every time I turned around I'd see police behind me, and I'd be looking behind me and watching. Everywhere I'd go I'd have to be watching for police and be afraid they were going to stop and pick me up. But they never did bother with me."

Less than a year later, his father died. Henry blamed Viola for Anderson Lucas' death. "He went out and lay in the snow to get away from watching her. That's what made him die. He laid out in the snow and caught pneumonia, and he was drunk and died."

### BITTER AS BITTER CAN BE

After Anderson Lucas' funeral, Henry felt no attachment to the cabin in the woods. Andrew had escaped earlier by joining the Navy, so no one he cared about remained. There were reports of Henry window-peeping, and, he says, he often stole food and slept under people's houses. Then in March 1952, authorities charged him with breaking-and-entering and petty larceny. He was convicted and sent to the Beaumont Training School for Boys in Virginia. He claims he liked the place, experiencing for the first time the luxuries of plumbing, electricity, and television. Records, however, describe frequent attempts to run away and trips to juvenile detention. He says he met his only childhood friend there, a black boy who sometimes sneaked off with him. One report mentions Saturday-night homosexual encounters. Henry was released from the Beaumont Training School in September 1953 after a year-long stay, and one doctor's report states that Henry said he then went and raped his 12-year-old niece.

**ON WHY HE STABBED HIS MOTHER:**

***"She done pushed me beyond the limit of really caring. I don't say it's her fault. It's her life. I was just stretched to a point where I wasn't going to be pushed no further."***

For a while, he worked as a farm laborer or yard hand. But in June of '54, just nine months after leaving the Beaumont school, Henry was found guilty of breaking-and-entering and burglary and sentenced to four years in the Virginia State Penitentiary. He was 18, and, as he now likes to point out, Viola never came to his trial. While in prison, Henry worked in the chair factory, in the tailor shop, and on the road gang. On May 28, 1956, he and a companion escaped from the work crew, stole a car, and drove to Ohio. When they ran out of gas, they took another auto and slipped into Michigan, where they were finally apprehended. During his time on the run, Henry says, he met Stella, a girl he soon grew to love.

In July, Henry did a 13-month term in the Chillicothe, Ohio, Federal Reformatory for transporting a stolen auto across state lines. He served his time as an elevator operator and was eventually transferred back to the Virginia State Penitentiary to complete his sentence there. When discharged in September 1959, Henry was 23.

He worked as a farm hand for a couple of months in Virginia, afterwards deciding to stay with his favorite half-sister, Opal, in Tecumseh, Michigan.

Soon Viola came to visit her daughter, but mostly she came to take back her son. She was tired of doing things for herself, and she followed Henry to a bar to tell him so. The date was January 12, 1960, and Henry was there with his girlfriend Stella, celebrating and making wedding plans. Viola interrupted, and she and Henry got into a screaming match. Stella became irritated and called the marriage off. Henry grew more furious and stalked back to Opal's. Viola followed him, he says. It was late at night; they were both drunk. Viola started cursing, insisting he come back home with her. She accused him of getting too intimate with his half-sister. Suddenly Henry's mother smacked him with a broom.

"I guess it was about 12 o'clock at night when she finally made me so mad that I hit her," he said. "All I remember was slapping her alongside the neck, but after I did that I saw her start to fall, and I decided to grab her. But she fell to the floor, and when I went back to pick her up, I realized she was dead. Then I noticed that I had my knife in my hand, and she had been cut. I got scared and turned out the lights and went outside and drove back to Virginia. I only stayed there one day, and I started to worry about my mother and wondering if she had been found. I left Virginia and started back to Tecumseh to give myself up. I was picked up by the police in Toledo, Ohio, and was later returned to Tecumseh. It was a terrible thing to do, and I know that I have lost the respect of all members of my family, but it was just one of those things, and I think it had to happen."

Henry was found guilty of second-degree murder, and the judge sent him to the State Prison of Southern Michigan for 20 to 40 years. His first year there, he wrote a letter to Opal saying he was going to kill himself. He kept hearing his mother's voice, he said, telling him to do bad things and reminding him of his destiny of death inside prison walls. He sliced his wrist with a razor and later cut open his stomach. This time the doctors paid attention and placed him in the Ionia Mental Hospital, where he remained for four-and-a-half years.

In 1966, he was transferred back to prison, with one official writing to the parole board: "Would say he is making good progress. I am impressed by his growth." Another report stated: "He is grossly lacking in self-confidence, self-reliance, will power, and general stamina. . . . He does not have the courage to blame others for mistakes or misfortunes [and is inclined] to engage in aggressive social behavior aimed at alleviating some of his discomfort."

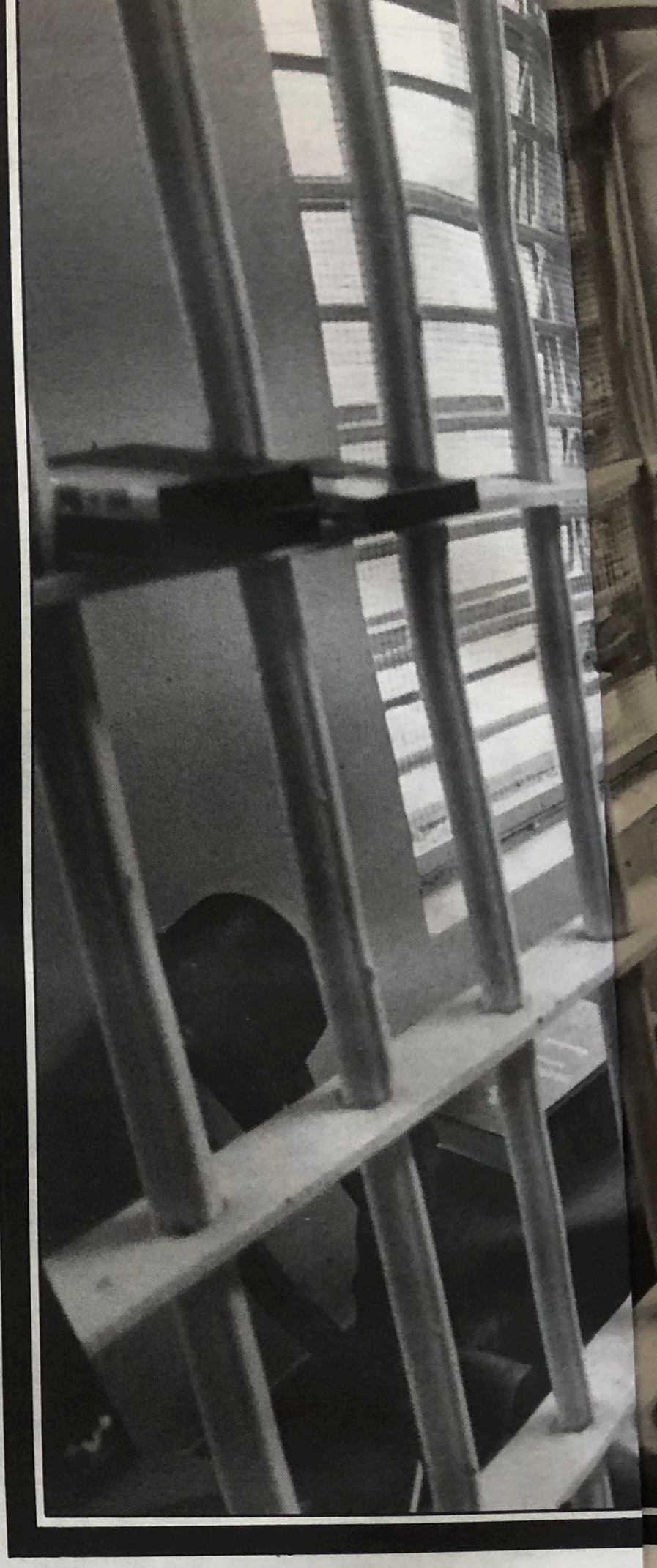
Henry says that he warned officials not to free him from prison, that he was certain of his homicidal tendencies. But the prison was overcrowded, and in June 1970, Henry was released. That same day, Henry claims, he killed two women, leaving one body only a block from the prison door. (Authorities have not confirmed these cases.) "They know now I meant what I said," he smirked. And what made him do it? "I hated everything. I was as bitter as bitter can be."

### AFTER THE HOUSE OF PRAYER

Some of the incidents in Henry's history between his 1970 release from prison and his arrest in Montague County, Texas, 13 years later are hazy. For some of that time, he stayed with another half-sister, Almeda, in Maryland. In August 1971, he returned to Michigan, but soon ran out of his prescribed thorazine. He says this lack of medication made him restless. The next month, he approached a 15-year-old girl walking to school and told her to get in his car or he would shoot her. An approaching school bus saved the girl, but a judge gave Henry four to five years in the Michigan prison.

Records show that he was released for the second time on August 22, 1975, and that he went back to Maryland and half-sister Almeda. On December 6, he married Betty Crawford, his deceased nephew's widow, and they lived in a trailer near Almeda until July 1977, when Henry reportedly molested his two stepdaughters.

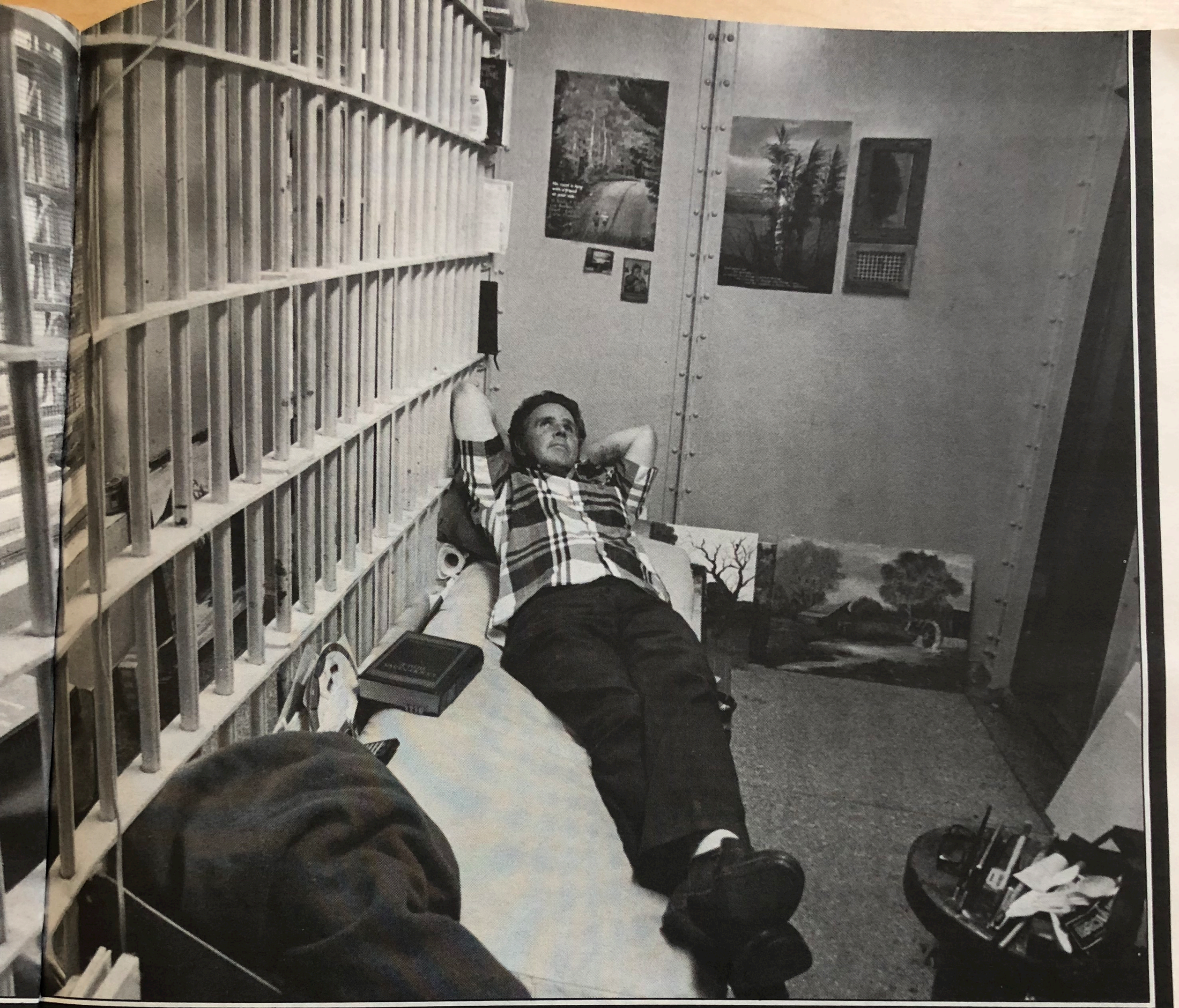
No one is sure when Henry met Ottis Toole; they both have changed their stories. However, witnesses say that in 1979, Henry lived in Jacksonville, Florida,



with Ottis' family—Ottis, his niece Becky, her brother Frank, and Ottis' mother and stepfather. Neighbors remember Henry as a quiet loner who cared for the children, assisted people with roofing problems or car trouble, and spent most days sitting on his front stoop smoking cigarettes and drinking coffee. He says now he was roofing and selling junk during the week, while stealing and killing on the weekends.

When Henry first got together with Ottis Toole's niece Frieda (Becky) Powell, he was 40 and she was nine. He cared for her as a father would—bought her food and clothing, made certain she attended school. But as they spent more time together and Becky matured, their relationship changed; it shifted from parent/child to man/woman.

Later, after Becky's grandmother died, the couple, along with her brother Frank and Uncle Ottis, took to the road. Often they would use Becky as bait for truck drivers or unsuspecting roadside residents; no one refused to assist the innocent-looking girl. Authorities say that once while traveling through Smith County, Texas, the teenager knocked on an elderly woman's door, requesting water for her over-heated car. The lady was trusting and generous; she invited the whole family in and even cooked breakfast for the bunch. And while Henry and Ottis reportedly raped, beat, then shot her with a 20-gauge shotgun, Becky and Frank finished their eggs and watched a soap



opera on TV.

Eventually, though, Henry says Ottis began acting a little too weird, doing things he didn't approve of—like mistreating Becky, mutilating bodies, even barbecuing and eating human flesh. He claims they fought and separated.

Finally, Henry and Becky decided to settle in California. Henry took odd jobs. Twenty years before, while serving time for the murder of his mother, he had taken a course in auto mechanics and worked in the chair factory. The skills came in handy, and in California, a middle-aged couple, Mr. and Mrs. Jack Smart, hired him at their antique-refinishing shop in exchange for Henry and Becky's room and board.

In time, Mrs. Smart decided Henry would make just the needed handyman for her 80-year-old mother, Kate Rich, who lived in the northeast Texas town of Ringgold, east of Wichita Falls. The Smarts bought bus tickets for Henry and his common-law bride.

Kate Rich was an energetic old widow. Though she had difficulty walking, she still sewed quilts, craved fresh catfish, and delighted in frequent visits from her many children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, most of whom lived nearby. When Henry and Becky knocked on Kate's door with messages from the California daughter, Granny Rich ushered them in.

Before long, however, the couple's dingy clothes, backwoods talk, and strange behavior began making Kate's relatives nervous. Besides, they said, the handyman seemed either not too handy after all or just plain lazy; he mostly smoked cigarettes and drank coffee or beer. Finally, the family reached a decision: The two weirdos had to go. Henry and Becky consented, and the next day, they went looking for a new place to stay.

Henry and Becky were trying to hitch a ride near the Ringgold bus station when a preacher, Ruben Moore from Stoneburg, ten miles south, picked them up and drove them to his House of Prayer, a converted chicken farm inhabited by a small fundamentalist group. Moore owned a roofing company, and Henry and the preacher agreed the couple could live in one of the shack apartments and use the communal kitchen. In exchange, Henry would work for the roofing company. He and Becky moved in immediately. Moore and the others treated the couple kindly, and Becky was happy there; she played house, attended Sunday services, and visited Granny Rich when she could.

Considering their close contact with the House of Prayer, it was not long before Becky got caught up in religious goings-on. Renouncing her life of sin, in August '82, she decided to leave Henry and go home to Jacksonville, Florida. Henry could join her if he would only mend his unrighteous ways. They argued,

**In the Georgetown jail, Lucas lived comfortably, spending his free time reading, painting, and watching TV. The adjoining passageway doubled as a private sitting room for special visitors, including Sister Clemmie.**

and Henry finally said okay, she could go, but he was going with her. So without telling anyone, they gathered their belongings, slipped out of the House of Prayer, and started hitching rides toward Florida.

The air was hot and sticky, and when night fell they found themselves in Denton County. In an open field they spread a blanket and shed their clothing. Henry set his large knife within reach—for protection. Then they began to argue again.

Henry didn't really want to go back to Florida. He wanted to live with Moore and the others at the House of Prayer. Becky was determined to go home. Their voices got louder. Then Becky did it: She hit Henry hard across the face, and without thinking he heaved the knife into her chest, slicing her heart and

Leaving his wife and children behind in Waco, Texas Ranger Sgt. Bob Prince moved to Georgetown to work with the task force and, he says, to serve as Lucas' "security blanket."

killing her. When he realized what he had done, he wept.

Later, he felt he should bury the body, so he removed a ring from her finger, cut her into pieces, put all but the legs in two pillow cases, and placed her in a shallow grave. Then he tied a belt around Becky's legs and dragged them into the brush. For the rest of the night and on several return visits, Henry talked to his sweetheart's remains. He told her that he was sorry he had killed her and that someday, somehow he would join her. He didn't care what happened to his mortal self; he grew more reckless.

### 'DONE ME SOME TERRIBLE THINGS'

After murdering Becky, Henry returned to Ruben Moore and the others at the House of Prayer. They asked him about the girl. Henry said he and Becky had been resting between rides at a truck stop. Becky started talking to a driver, and before Henry knew it, she was gone. Henry appeared calm and unconcerned, so the group did not press for details.

Later, one Sunday evening during the first part of September, Henry announced he was taking Granny Rich to church. He went to her house in Ringgold, but it was still early, so they decided to drink some beer and talk awhile. Henry drove a few miles into Oklahoma, stopped at a beer joint, and bought several six-packs to go. They drove and drank and talked for almost two hours, until it was too late to make the church service.

Henry started back toward Kate's house, then suddenly turned off the highway and continued across a railroad track toward a desolate, pumped-out oil patch. And for some reason—maybe Kate asked about

**ON HIS EARLY LIFE OF CRIME:**

***"I started stealing, I guess, as soon as I was old enough to run fast, 'cause I didn't want to stay at home. I figured if I could steal, I could get away from home and stuff."***

Becky—Henry stabbed the old woman to death. Once Kate had stopped breathing, Henry cut an upside-down cross between her breasts and had sex with the body, afterwards dragging it to a culvert and lodging it there with a two-by-four. He buried her undergarments a slight distance away and returned home.

But this time, relatives and friends grew anxious about the disappearance of widow Rich, and everyone knew Henry had been the last person with her. Someone complained to William Conway, sheriff of Montague County. Conway, who admits to the nickname Hound Dog, checked the National Crime Information Center computer and discovered Henry had a record. But even after repeated questioning, Conway could not get enough on Henry to arrest him.

Henry eventually tired of Conway's snooping and left town, telling everyone he was going to search for his girlfriend. Maybe, he said, Granny Rich might be traveling with her. From Ringgold he drove to California, back to Kate's daughter and son-in-law, the Smarts. On the West Coast, someone noticed blood on his car seat and contacted local authorities. California police asked Henry some questions, even contacted Sheriff Conway. The Texas lawman told them he was sure Henry had killed Kate Rich, but no one knew the widow's blood type. Henry went free.

Henry spent the rest of October bumming eastward through Illinois before returning to Montague County. Finally Sheriff Conway located a 1981 Maryland warrant for a probation violation and hauled Henry in. Results of a polygraph test showed Henry wasn't telling the whole truth about Kate Rich, but it wasn't enough to arrest him for murder. What happened to Kate? What happened to Becky? Henry played the innocent, a victim of Becky's infidelity and Sheriff Conway's harassment. Maryland refused to pay the expenses for extradition, so Conway grudgingly had to let his suspect go.

Still, he hadn't given up. In January, Conway persuaded Henry to submit to another polygraph test—again the results were less than damning. But Henry was getting nervous anyway; the persistent sheriff was coming too close. Fearing someone might stumble onto Kate's remains, Henry drove to the culvert, retrieved the decomposing body, and carried it back to his shack at the House of Prayer. He stoked up the wood stove outside, hacked the body into pieces, and patiently cremated it for three days, hauling the ashes out to garbage piles for regular pickup. Job done, he started back for California, only to have his car break down in Tucumcari, New Mexico. He called Ruben Moore and asked him to come pick him up. The preacher agreed, but before leaving, he alerted Sheriff Conway that Henry was on his way back to Montague County.

On June 11, 1983, Conway persuaded Moore to turn in the .22-caliber pistol Henry had given Moore for safekeeping. Since it is a felony for any ex-prisoner convicted of a violent crime to possess a firearm, Conway followed up with a warrant for Henry's arrest. Henry was drinking coffee in the communal kitchen at the House of Prayer when the sheriff found him.

"How you doing?" Conway asked.

"Well, it don't look like I'm doing too good," Henry replied.

Conway showed him the warrant and then drove him to the county jail. As the sheriff strolled away from Henry's cell, the prisoner whispered, "Sheriff, you sure know how to put a man down."

Henry now claims he huddled in a cell called an icebox, a room whose airconditioning is purposely turned up high. The man who smoked four packs a day and drank coffee by the pot was not allowed either, even though he offered to buy his own. "They's something I've got to have," he now says. "Without them I just get angry. I get disgusted at the world, myself, and anything I come in contact with." So he tried to hang himself with a pair of stockings, and he slashed his wrists as well. He stayed at a hospital briefly in Wichita Falls, but was returned to the Montague County Jail. In a couple of days, he broke down and called the jailer, Joe Don Weaver, to his cell.

"Joe Don," he said, "I've done me some terrible things." Henry described having seen a beautiful light in the corner of his cell, feeling a hand on his shoulder, and sensing (not hearing) a voice say, "Confess your sins against man, and I will forgive you."

Whatever the reason, Weaver knew Henry was ready to talk, so he told the sheriff to come quickly. They gave Henry his requested cigarettes and coffee, and soon he started telling his dark tales of murder. He began with Kate Rich—the stabbing, the sex, the hiding of the body in the culvert, the fear of being caught, and the tedious cremation in the stove. Then he couldn't stop himself—he had promised the voice that he would confess. He continued with a description of young Becky's murder. He told them about his numerous visits to the murder site and how he talked to her about his remorse and about Becky's and his plans for a new life. "It was more or less general, what you'd say, man-and-wife conversation," Henry said.

Without pause, in the same monotone, the prisoner asked for paper and pencil, then began drawing faces of other women he claimed he had killed—some 40 in all. The eyes were large, the lashes long, and he included pieces of jewelry they had worn. These were his first attempts at artistry, but he instinctively dabbled shadows along cheekbones and in the hollows of the necks with cigarette ash. Next to the pictures he scrawled seven pages of notes, his initial attempts to recall the infamous crimes:

*one killed in new*
*york*
*light Brown Hair*
*Blue eyes*
*5-6*
*135 lb.*
*New York*
*Buffalo*
*would*
*Have Been*
*Strangled*
*with white cord*
*gold ear*
*pins*
*had dress*
*on light blue*
*inside apartment*
*Joanie*
*white pretty teeth*
*with gap in front*
*Top Teeth*
*Blue eyes small pin*
*ear*
*hair below shoulders*
*through over*
*Bridge*
*with head and fingers*
*missing*

Henry even tried to say that at age 13, he had killed Annie Hall, his Virginia school teacher, but officials





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later found her living with relatives in Austin. Henry then said he was just testing the officers, toying with them the way he did with his victims. He wanted to see if they'd follow up on his leads. Then during the arraignment in Wichita Falls for Kate Rich's murder, Henry loosened up even further.

"I killed Kate Rich," he began, then added as an afterthought, "and at least a hundred more."

October 1, 1983, Henry pled guilty to widow Rich's murder and received a 75-year prison sentence. He was then transferred to Denton County to stand trial for Becky's death. His attorney asked the jury for a verdict of voluntary manslaughter rather than murder; Henry sobbed during the closing remarks.

"[The killing] happened suddenly, it happened immediately, and it happened involuntarily," Henry's attorney, Tom Whitlock, explained. "I think it happened in such a way it was strictly an accident." But the jury of seven men and five women didn't go for it. On November 10, 1983, they deliberated for about two hours before finding Henry guilty and punishing him with a life sentence for stabbing the girl.

### THE ORANGE SOCKS MURDER

Back at the Denton jail, Williamson County Sheriff Jim Boutwell was waiting for Henry with a bench warrant. Sheriffs Conway and Boutwell had kept in touch on Lucas for several months. There was a murder case in Williamson County that really seemed to fit Henry. The victim was a girl who was strangled and left in a roadside culvert—with no clothes and no name.

A motorist driving up I-35 had found her on Halloween 1979, sprawled face down, hugging the dirty concrete. The only thing she had on was a pair of dusty, pumpkin-colored socks. Sheriff Boutwell dubbed her Orange Socks. He was determined to find out who killed her.

There were other details, of course, and Boutwell would review them often, hoping the threads would pull together into real clues. The unknown hitchhiker was in her mid-20s, a Caucasian with reddish-brown hair. She had venereal disease and tiny scars on her ankles resembling infected insect bites. She wore a silver abalone-inlaid ring, her only possession. She carried no purse, no credit cards, no driver's license. Her teeth were perfect, and x-rays showed no mended bones that could help identify her to friends or kin.

Sheriff Boutwell couldn't leave the Orange Socks case alone. He saw it as a part of something bigger, something much worse. Every year more bodies kept turning up in the ditches and fields along I-35. The highway had become a virtual dumping ground. By October 1981, Boutwell had a list of 20 unsolved cases. That fall four years ago, with the assistance of the Texas Rangers and the crime-analysis section of the DPS, Boutwell organized a meeting in Austin to pool information on the interstate homicides. From border to border, Laredo to Gainesville, 29 officers from a 500-mile stretch of I-35 came together to examine photographs, compare MOs, study police reports and evidence. Their victims were teenagers, hitchhikers, vagrants, business people, and women with car trouble. They had been shot, beaten, strangled, dismembered; there was even a hit-and-run. Yet nothing gelled. Must be truck drivers, some of the lawmen said. Still, no one came any closer to clearing their cases—until two years later when Sheriff Conway called Sheriff Boutwell.

Boutwell and Henry first met in Montague County the day after Henry's arraignment for the murder of Kate Rich. The Williamson County sheriff chatted with Henry for a while, nice and relaxed, offered him a cup of coffee, then read him the Miranda warning and showed him a photograph of Orange Socks' face—lying on the ground, eyes closed after death. But Boutwell was careful, he now says, to cover the neck area so that Henry could not see how she had died. Henry stared at the girl for a minute and then said, "Yeah, that one was a hitchhiker, and she would have been a strangle."

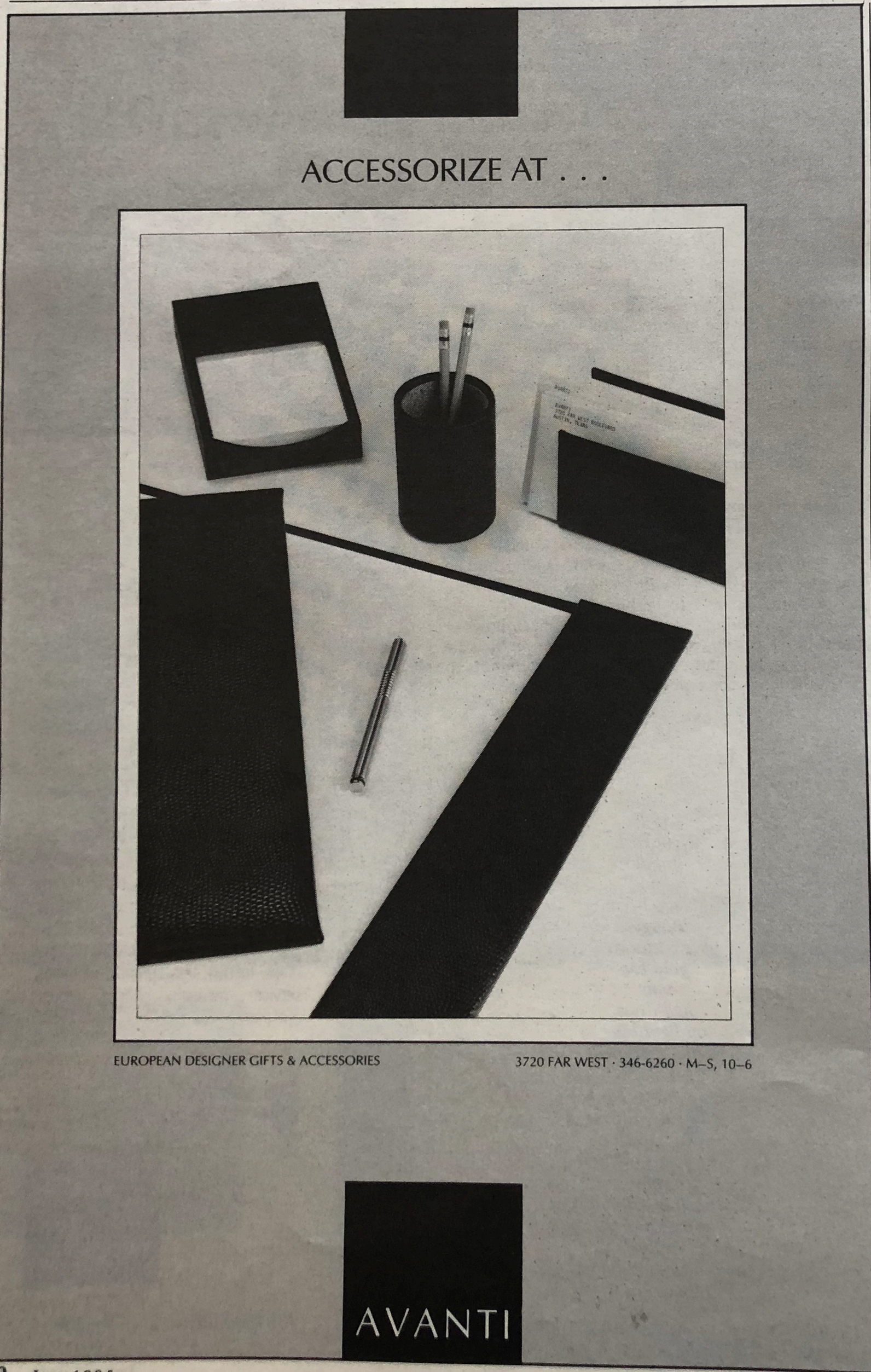
Henry described this case and numerous others, giving Boutwell a tally of 156 murders nationwide. When the sheriff returned to Georgetown, he scurried to cross-check his findings. As best he could figure, Henry knew what he was talking about. On August 1, two months before the Kate Rich trial, Boutwell brought Henry to Georgetown for arraignment in the Orange Socks homicide. During the brief visit, Boutwell took time to drive Henry and his court-appointed attorney, Don Higginbotham, to a culvert Henry had pointed out the day before. Henry said again that he killed Orange Socks, and he had done it on his own. Sheriff Boutwell was careful to make it legal and filmed it all on videotape.

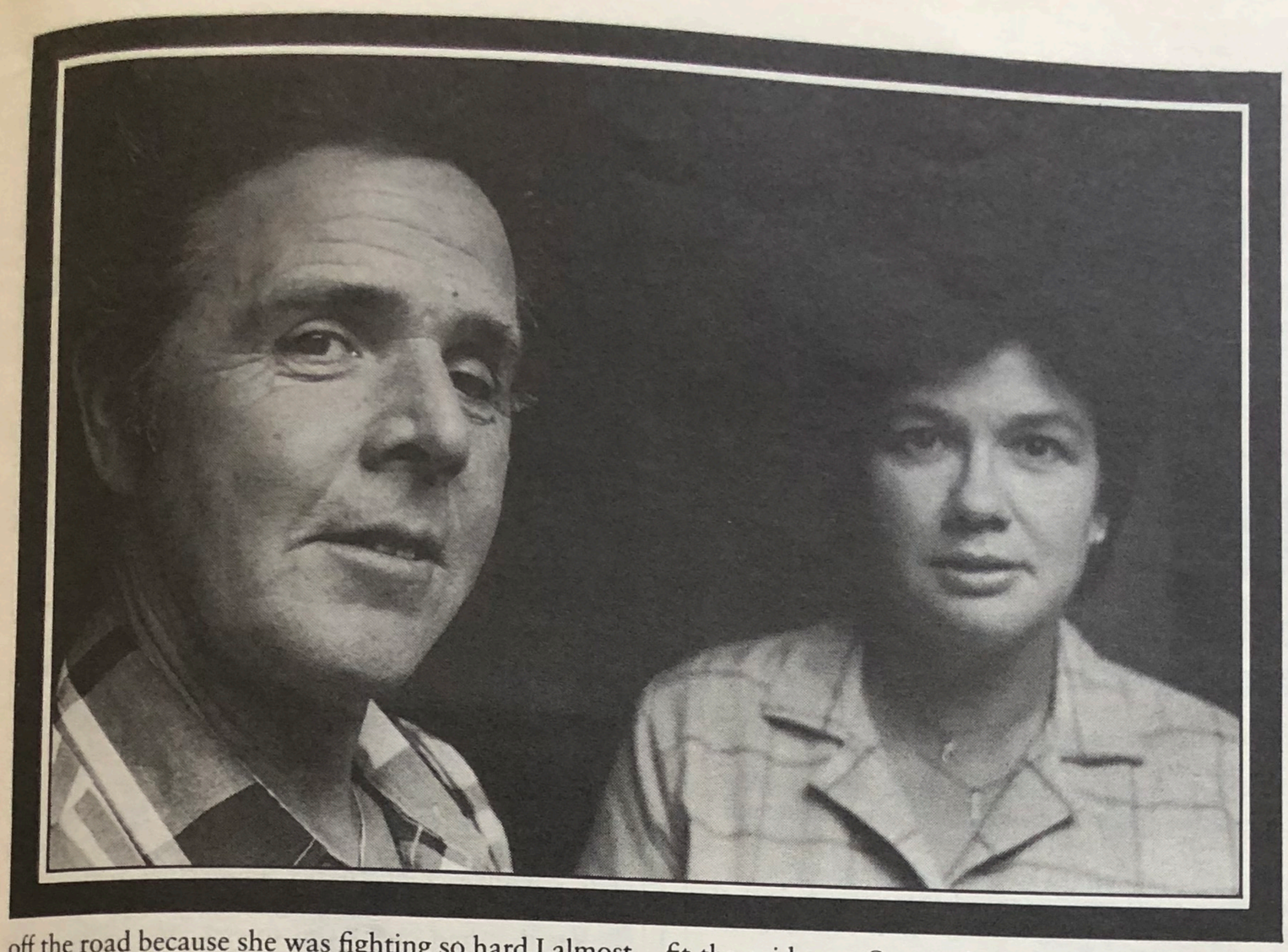
"I picked her up in Oklahoma City," Henry said to the camera. "Then we drove around awhile. We stopped and had sex—voluntary. That one time we had sex, I wasn't satisfied. She put her clothes back on, and we stopped and ate at a truck stop. . . . We started to go back south. We took 35 South. And after we came back 35, why, I asked her to have sex with me. She said no. . . ."

At this point Higginbotham interrupted and advised his client not to continue because he could be given the death penalty if convicted for a rape followed by murder. But Henry went on.

"It's something I've got to do for myself," he replied. "When somebody lives with something for 33 years like I have, trying to get help for it, why, if they can't get it any other way, they just have to take what's coming to them. I just can't go on like I am unless I do make a statement. I've already tried to kill myself. They ain't going to do nothing but kill me for me. I can't live with it."

So Boutwell told him to continue. "Well, we were talking about sex," Henry said, "and she told me, 'Not right now.' She went to jump out of the car, [and] I grabbed her and pulled her back in the car. We drove for a little piece further than that, and I pulled



Lucas and Sister Clemmie Schroeder became soul mates. "He's like a brother," says the Catholic layworker who baptized Henry with a cup of water.

off the road because she was fighting so hard I almost lost control of the car and wrecked. . . . After I pulled over, why, I choked her until she died. I had sex with her again. . . . I pulled her out of the car, and I dropped her into the culvert."

The sheriff asked him if there was something that bothered him about having sex with the girl the second time. "The last time it was the Kotex. She had a Kotex on. . . . It just wasn't sex to me."

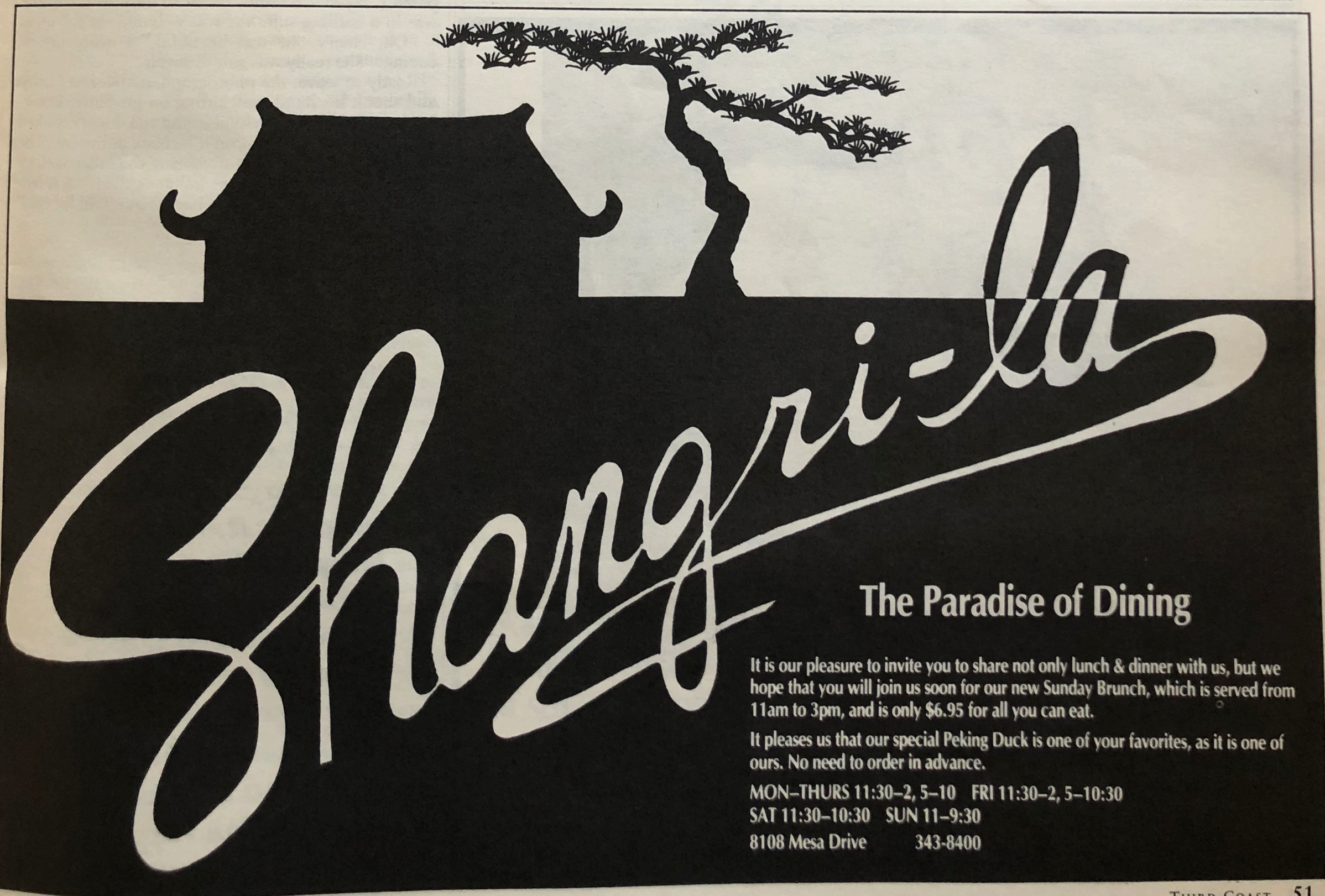
"And you weren't satisfied either time, is that correct?" Boutwell asked. Henry nodded.

As videos go, it was a perfect wrap. Henry's story fit the evidence: Orange Socks had eaten just before being strangled, she showed no evidence of having been raped, and she was wearing a sanitary napkin fashioned of paper towels.

Following the trials for Kate's and Becky's murders in October and November, Boutwell brought Henry back with him to Georgetown. Don Higginbotham was granted a change of venue for the Orange Socks trial, and the drama played to a packed house in San Angelo the following spring. On April 13, 1984, a jury found Henry guilty, and he was sentenced to die by lethal injection.

The second time I saw Henry, I brought the *Life* photographer with me for a photo session that lasted most of the day. I led the Italian photographer and his French assistant into Boutwell's office and introduced them to the sheriff and Sgt. Prince. Mounted on the sheriff's desk was an enormous rattlesnake curled in a striking position. On the wall was a mock diploma declaring the sheriff a graduate of "The Henry Lee Lucas School of Psychology," Henry Lucas, instructor.

Henry, wearing street clothes and a large cross on a chain, stayed seated across the room. He wasn't handcuffed. The photographer shook Henry's hand as we all began to settle in our chairs. We discussed arrangements for several different pictures, finally deciding to take the first series at the culvert where the motorist had found Orange Socks. The photographers and I decided to meet Boutwell, Prince, and Henry there. As we piled into our rented sedan, my Italian friend asked, "Was that the killer sitting with us in the office?" I giggled. He had been chatting with Henry for almost an hour and couldn't believe that such a quiet,




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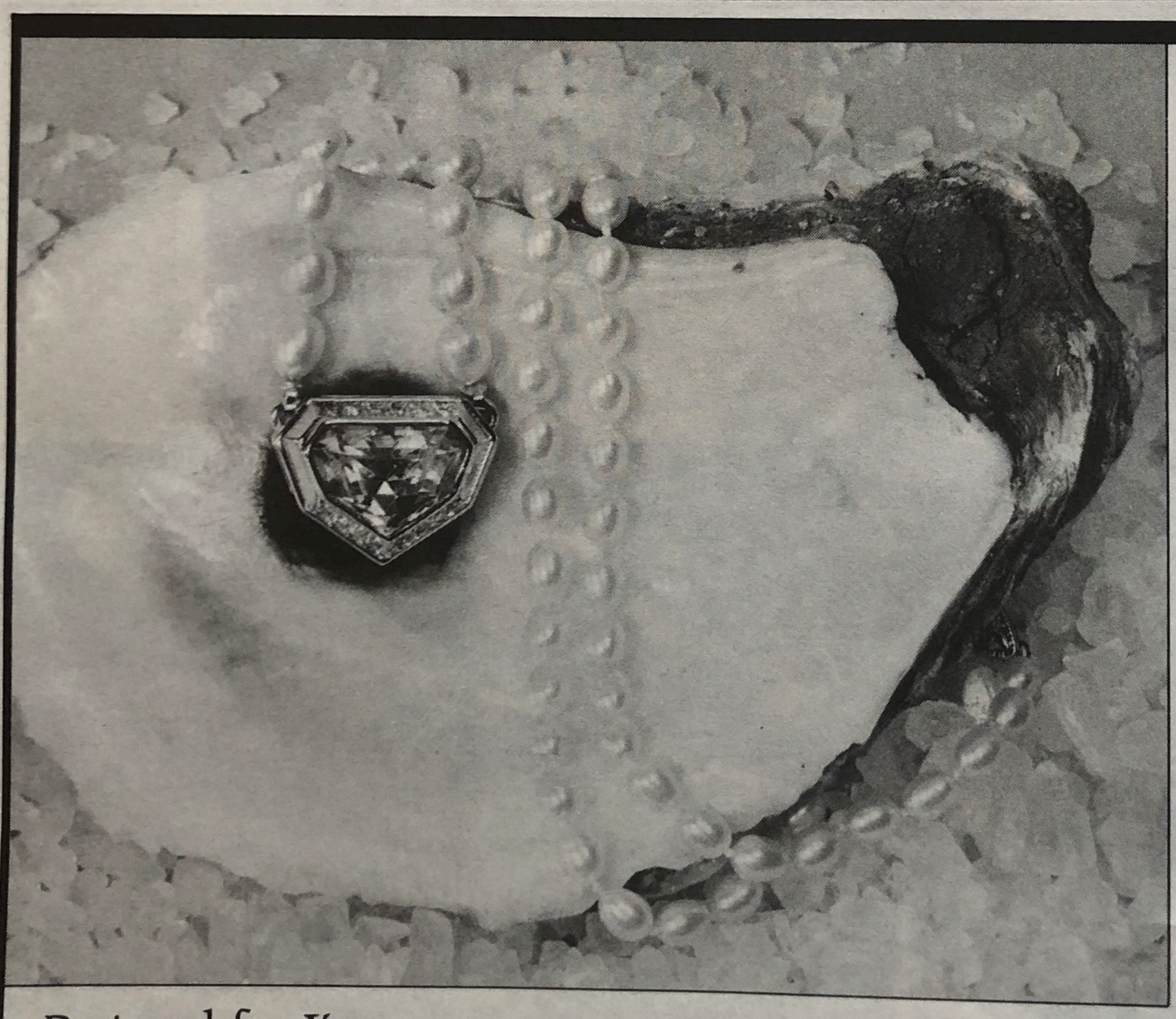
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courteous man could be the madman Lucas. "And is he going to be put to death for what he's done?" he asked.

"Yes, I'm certain that he will be," I replied.

At the culvert Prince was chuckling, too. "See that old burlap bag down in there," he asked me, pointing near the spot where Orange Socks had once lain. I nodded. "As we pulled up, Henry motioned to it and told me, 'Look, Bob, there's another body,' and I had to check twice before I realized what he was doing." Everyone laughed, joining in on Henry's little prank.

Quickly the photographers got to work, positioning the three men and snapping their cameras—just like a famous model's fancy photo session. But our celebrity was frowning, almost scowling, and I thought I'd try to lighten things up a bit. "Henry, this is an important picture. You ought to smile more."

He flashed me a glance. "Naw, that's not what they want. I'm supposed to look mean for this one."

Whatever we asked for, Henry obliged. He was quiet and agreeable. I took notice and commented on it to Prince, who explained in a whisper: "When he's in a good mood, there's no one more cooperative. But when he's not, you'd better look out."

Back at the jail, the photographers took more pictures, asking Henry questions to keep him relaxed and attentive. I heard his answers and marveled. Trancelike, he was reciting many of the macabre stories that had once been so shocking to me: tales about his childhood, lectures about the devil's consuming evil. But this time, no one paid much attention.

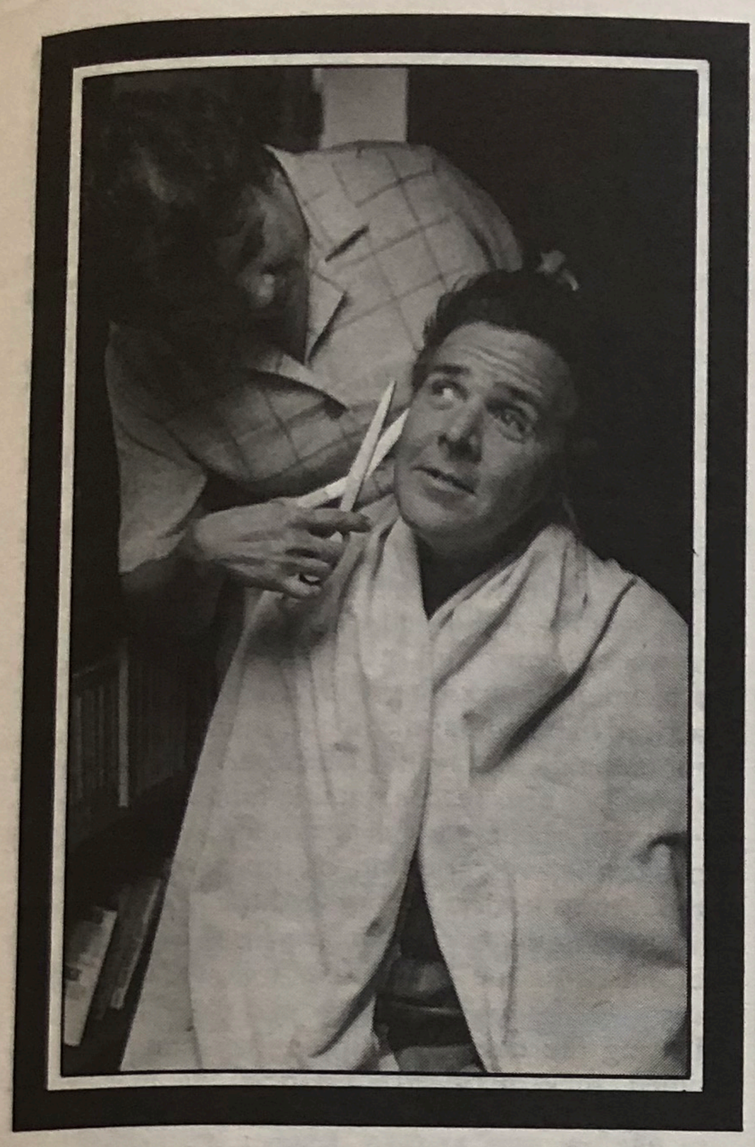
We took the final set of photographs in Henry's cell, a five-by-ten chamber he has filled with books, paintings, letters, and other personal junk. The Italian wanted to take a few pictures of me with the killer, so we posed together on the bunk. Afterwards, as my friends were removing the large lights and other equipment, Henry brought out his treasured snapshots of Becky to share with me. One was a group photo of Becky with her younger brother and grandparents, taken at a family picnic in the country. Becky was in a bathing suit. She was only nine at the time.

"Oh, Henry, she was beautiful," I heard myself cooing. "She really was simply lovely."

Ready to leave, the photographers thanked Henry and shook his hand. Still sitting on his bunk, knowing he would be left behind in the cell, Henry looked up and smiled. "I'll bet you'll be back at the end," he said, taunting the Italian. Realizing the killer was referring to execution day, the Italian replied, "Yes, Mr. Lucas, I would like to come back if you will let me."

**ON RECEIVING THE DEATH PENALTY:**

***"When somebody lives with something for 33 years like I have, trying to get help for it, why, if they can't get it any other way, they just have to take what's coming to them . . . I've already tried to kill myself. They ain't going to do nothing but kill me for me."***



Under Clemmie's care, Henry became a model inmate. She brought him food, washed his clothes, and even cut his hair.

drew a diagram of the interior, which was correct."

The big problem the task force faced—other than the fact that they had so many murders and only Henry and Ottis as suspects—was that the two vagabonds left few witnesses and even fewer calling cards. Indeed, the task force's file of physical evidence was rather slim. Police found one of Henry's fingerprints at the scene of a motel murder; they discovered a victim's fingerprint under the lip of the ashtray in Henry's car. They also have the car Henry used in a hit-and-run and a gun Henry stole from a murdered police officer and later used in a killing in Oklahoma.

As the file of evidence built up, the task force assumed patterns would begin to emerge. Very few ever did. Henry left his victims in bedrooms, shallow graves, alleys, convenience stores, liquor stores, trash bags. He said Ottis and he killed with pistols, rifles, shotguns, table legs, vases, knives, hammers, tire tools, two-by-fours, axes, telephone cords, vacuum-cleaner cords, nylon rope, their own automobile. "Every way known to man," Henry claimed, "except poison."

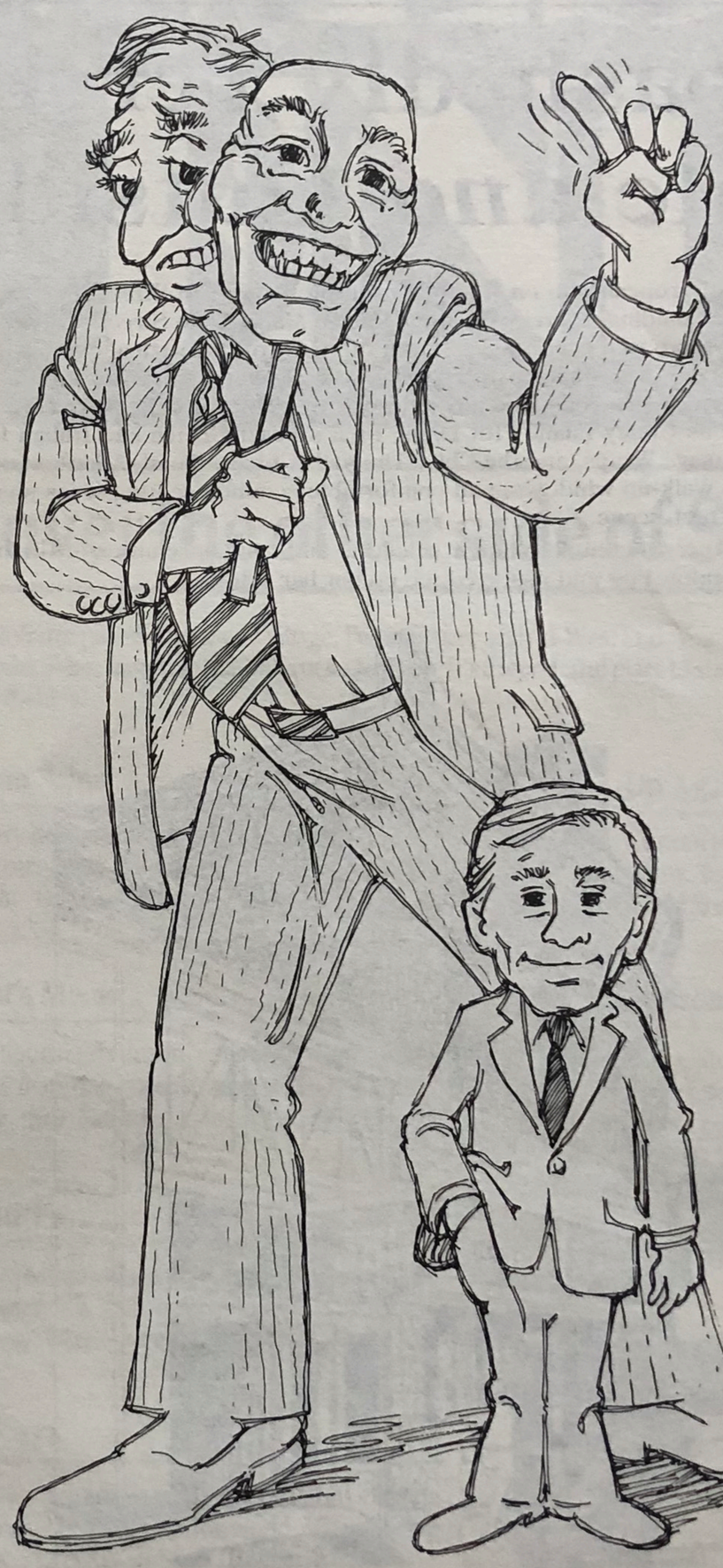
### THE CHILL OF DEATH

From its formation the day after Thanksgiving 1983 to its sudden disruption in April '85, the Lucas task force fielded inquiries from more than 1,000 investigators representing 875 agencies from 40 states and Canada. Eventually, the line of visitors grew so long Prince had to book them six months in advance; he kept a record of all written requests and most of the phone calls. Always before a case was confirmed, Prince would load Henry on a specially reserved DPS plane and fly to the scene of a crime. Occasionally, they'd be gone for a week. "Lucas' damn social calendar is booked solid," defense attorney Don Higginbotham finally remarked. "Regular extradition procedures don't even work anymore. You've got governors calling governors."

And each time investigators claimed they had closed a case, they would leave Prince with a synopsis of the crime. One by one, the diligent Ranger added them to his master list, recording dates, locations, methods. By April, Prince had a list of 190 cases cleared by visiting agencies, though he says if he had gone by Henry's word alone, the list would have had something like 3,000 names on it.

In the Austin area, 14 homicides were attributed to Henry; in Texas, the total exceeded 100. An Austin couple was shot to death during a robbery of their liquor store. A young boy who had run out of gas along I-35 was found fully clothed, his pants unzipped and soiled with semen; Henry had shot him ten times, police say. His girlfriend was found 60 miles away in Waco, fully dressed, unmolested, and shot six times with a .22. A 34-year-old woman was traveling from Kansas to San Antonio for a job interview when her car broke down near Austin; Henry says he stabbed her 35 times. He supposedly discovered an elderly lady in her home during a burglary, beat her with the receiver of a telephone, strangled her, and then sexually violated her with a vacuum-cleaner hose.

Henry also claimed that Ottis Toole once accepted an assignment for a contract killing of an elderly wealthy couple who owned a large ranch in Bastrop County. Ottis and Henry split $10,000, stabbed the pair, then carried the bodies out on a door; officials never found the couple. "Lucas led me to the ranch house," Sheriff Boutwell said. "I had no idea where it was, and he directed me to it with no prompting whatsoever. Then, before we went into the house, he

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There were, however, a couple of macabre trends: All of the victims were apparently strangers—a pattern for all serial killers—and at least 30 of them were found nude except for their socks. (At least one psychologist relates this detail back to Henry's legless father. Others see an obvious connection between Henry's victims and his mother.)

"Most of the girls I picked on the highway turned out to be prostitutes—selling themselves to truckers or people along the highway," he said. "I have always since I was a kid hated prostitutes. Some of the girls I'd force in the car, some of them I'd just ask to come with me. I don't have no problem getting a person in the car. The others—well, I didn't leave no witnesses."

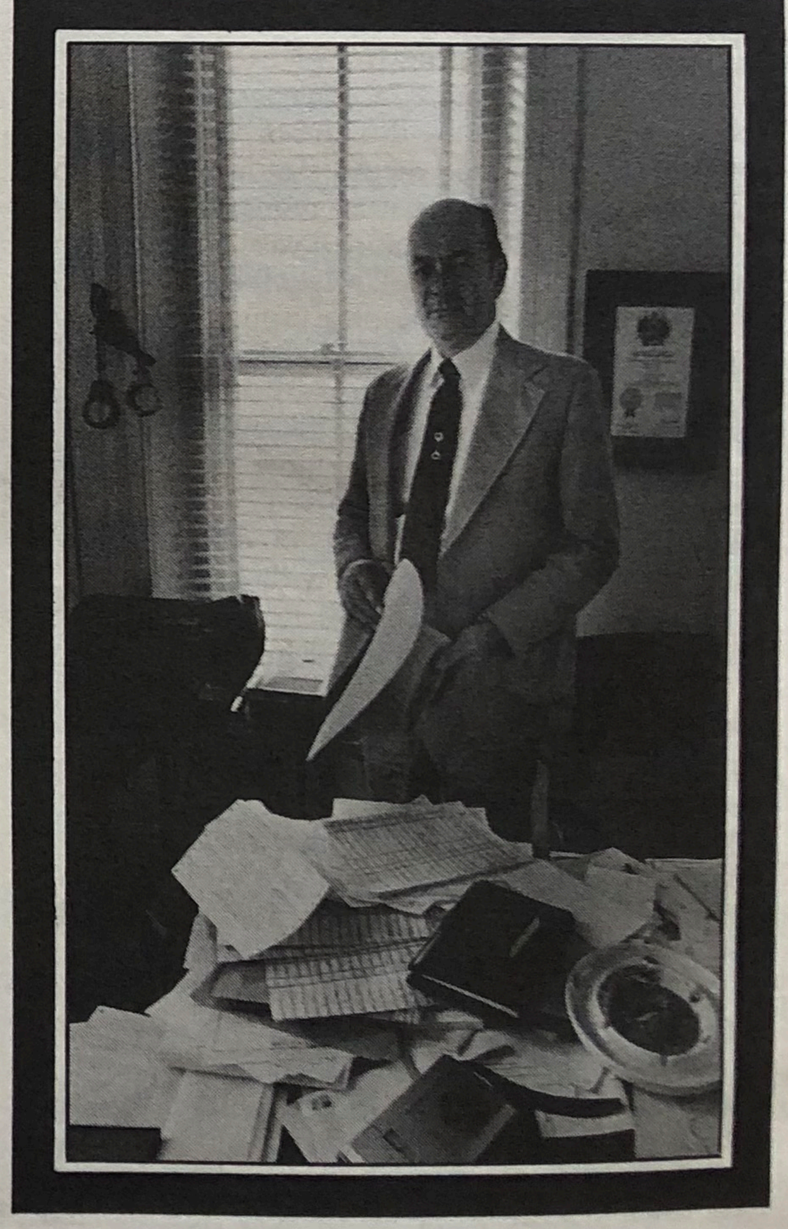
Henry said he received a signal when a person was targeted for death: A chill would sweep his body, actually lowering his temperature, and the victim, usually female and most likely riding with him in a car, was sure to die. "There were times," he once explained, "when I'd feel the chill come over me, and I'd stop the car. I'd open the door and tell that girl to get out. 'Just don't ask questions,' I'd say. 'Just get out.' I don't know why I'd do it."

In another interview, he elaborated: "I didn't really see the killings themselves at the actual time they were happening. It's like, say, you're walking down the road—half of me will go this way and the other half'll go that way. The right-hand side didn't know what the left-hand side was going to do. I can see myself there, committing the crime. In other words, I can't visualize the person. I can draw pictures now, but not then. I couldn't tell you what side of the street I was on back then. I stayed on beer. I stayed on marijuana, acid, angel dust, black beauties, thorazine—that's about what I lived on. I was drinking before every one of my killings. I just wanted to stay high all the time. I was never sober. I'd go from one to the other and wouldn't even think about the first one I killed. I never had no feelings for that person. You don't think of them as a person. There's nothing that even resembles a person when the crime happens. There's just an image. It's something that if you look at it you say, 'Well, that don't even exist.' It's as though you're a hundred miles away from there, yet you're still doing the crime."

Henry attributed his most heinous crimes, "the crucifixion killings," to the devil and "his doings." He claimed he was trained by a Satanic cult in the Florida Everglades sometime after getting out of prison and before hitting the road with Becky.

According to *The Hand of Death*, a 1985 book Henry co-authored with Louisianan Max Call, there were 200 inductees in his class, representing six different nations and all ethnic and social groups. His first week, Henry said, he began teaching a class in the techniques of killing with a knife. He said they practiced hand-to-hand combat, studied law-enforcement manuals, and memorized radio-communication codes. They also read a Satanic bible, and since the participants believed that acts of perversion would provoke the reincarnation of the devil and glorify Satan, group leaders encouraged the practice of sodomy, homosexuality, sadomasochism, bestiality, and necrophilia at the orgies that followed each black mass.

During the devil-worshipping ceremonies, Henry claimed, they sacrificed kidnapped children or traitorous members on an altar within a sacred circle. He said dancing worshippers carried the victim in on their shoulders while the group chanted, "*Ambe iske ho a secco.*" A high priest, called the Hand, wearing a hooded cloak walked through rings of fire to the al-



Williamson County Sheriff Jim Boutwell, who led the Lucas task force, admits his prisoner got some special treatment. "But we never pampered him," he says.


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**ON HIS FEELINGS TOWARD VICTIMS:**

***"You don't think of them as a person. There's nothing that even resembles a person when the crime happens. There's just an image. It's something that if you look at it you say, 'Well, that don't even exist.' It's as though you're a hundred miles away from there, yet you're still doing the crime."***

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tar, then slaughtered the victim, and everyone was required to taste the blood and flesh. Henry left the training camp after seven weeks, he said, to carry out the orders of a superior, Don Meteric.

On his first missions, Henry claimed, he kidnapped small children and dropped them at a large sheep ranch just across the Mexican border. As a reward, his superiors tattooed a scorpion on his hand. As he progressed in the cult, he said, he was given tattoos representing different rankings: first a snake, then the hands of the devil with a cross. None of these are visible on his body today, however. Henry claims that when he converted to Christianity, they vanished.

Sgt. Prince and the task force were not sure what to make of Henry's Hand of Death stories. But then, Prince kept reminding, the task force's job was never to clear cases. "We are coordinators only," he said.

In fact, Prince, his assistant Clayton Smith, and Sheriff Boutwell rarely sat in on Henry's interviews with visiting investigators. Instead, they would brief officers before each session, telling them not to give Henry any information about the victim or the case. The suspect had to come up with the specifics on his own.

The Rangers even gave officials advice about interrogation techniques. "The good-guy/bad-guy role that officers traditionally use with suspects won't work with him," Prince told visiting investigators. "When you go in and talk with him, you talk conversationally, one-on-one, like two police officers, or two bankers sitting down talking about business. . . . There's no interrogation to it at all. If at any time when you're talking with him you indicate that you disbelieve him concerning any particular case, you'll ruin your credibility with him, and you might as well stop the interview. Normally, he will stop the interview if anyone calls him a liar or indicates their disbelief.

"He'll play games with you," Prince continued. "He's played lots of games with us. . . . He'll tell us about a case in one county and it'll really be three counties over, just to see if you really do your homework, to see if you're really interested in solving the case and if you're really a professional officer. It's extremely frustrating to work with him."

Perhaps the touchiest part of the task force's job


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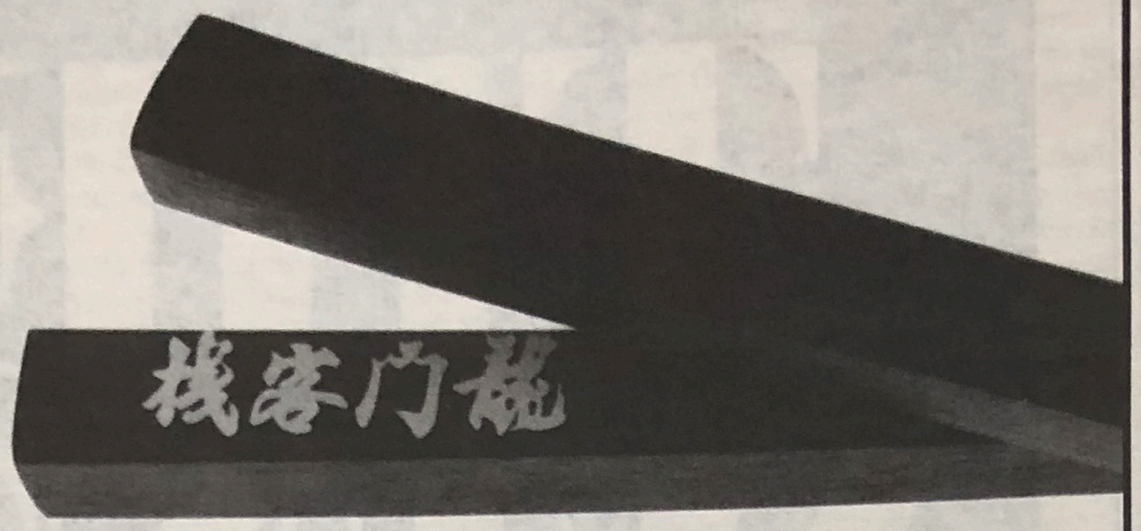
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**ON COOPERATING WITH POLICE:**

***"I just pray that when I confess the last crime that all the memories of everything will be taken from me. But I just have to keep moving on, because if I get stuck, I won't be able to finish."***

was the handling of written queries. Many law-enforcement agencies could not afford to send officers to the jail unless they were reasonably certain of Henry's involvement in a case. This required the Rangers to conduct preliminary interviews with Henry. On these occasions, Clayton Smith handled the questioning and videotaped everything. A typical session would begin with Smith simply asking Henry if he remembered anything about the region the crime had been committed in. This would usually trigger Henry's memory, but if it didn't, Clayton showed the prisoner a photograph of the victim—one not taken at the crime scene. Following each interview, Smith would send his report and videotape to the out-of-town officers so they could decide whether to pursue the case. It was hard for the task force not to tip Henry off to at least some of the details. He was too good at the game.

"Henry is obviously an institutionalized person," Sgt. Prince said. "He knows how to make the system work." He knew that if he gave the task force what they wanted, they would give him what *he* wanted: a private cell with a color television set (paid for by the jail ministry), stationery, paint supplies (he gave paintings as gifts to favored officers), and books. The task force also allowed him to wear street clothes and keep an empty billfold, comb, handkerchief, and wristwatch. He had all the coffee and cigarettes he wanted because their effect seemed tranquilizing, and Henry expected these conditions to be repeated at any jail where he had to stay overnight.

"I've been involved in law enforcement for 18 years," Prince said. "I have a professional relationship with Henry. I respect and appreciate what he is doing now. It's not like what he's done in the past. He's getting very little in return—an opportunity to stay in the Williamson County Jail rather than death row. But there are going to be no tears in my eyes on execution day."

### THE HAND OF SISTER CLEMMIE

After the session with the *Life* photographer, I visited the jail at least a dozen times, including five more interviews with Henry. I was well into my research when I met Sister Clemmie—Clementine Schroeder, the Catholic lay minister at the Georgetown jail. An attractive, middle-aged brunette, Clemmie has three children and, until recently, was married to a music professor at Southwestern University. During Henry's stay in the Williamson County Jail, she visited him several times a day and tended to most of his personal and spiritual needs. "A woman wounded him, so the Lord sent another woman to help him heal," she said.

Clemmie believed God called her to her jail ministry. The idea at first was frightening; she had never been inside a jail. But just a few months before Henry arrived, she forced herself to visit the jail several times with another woman. Then she and her sister began praying the infamous Henry Lee Lucas would

be sent to the Williamson County Jail. Clemmie believes that Henry's eventual presence in Georgetown was preordained and that she is a tool in one of God's great plans.

When Henry arrived, however, the sheriff told Clemmie she could not go near him. She was disappointed but always walked past his cell on her way to minister to the other inmates. Then during Henry's first Christmas there, Clemmie brought Bibles to all the prisoners, with the exception of Henry. Yet, when she counted her books, the box contained one extra, and she felt it was a message she could not ignore. She decided to sneak the Bible to Henry; she didn't care what the sheriff said.

"Mr. Lucas, you know you are demon-possessed to do all those horrible things you did," Clemmie said through Henry's locked steel door. Suddenly, a small flap opened, and the prisoner replied, "No, I'm not. I was, but I'm not now." He told her about his conversion, the light and voice in his Montague cell. Then he asked her to baptize him, and she agreed. He filled a paper cup with water from the cell sink, then she reached through the slot and poured it over his head, praying. Afterward, they held hands; they were trembling as Clemmie whispered, "I've never felt such love before."

Clemmie said that after she baptized Henry, he asked her why she had never visited him as she did the others at the jail. Clemmie told him about Boutwell's ground rule. He'd see about that, Henry said to her. In a few days, Clemmie got a call. The sheriff told her she could counsel Henry, but the responsibility for her safety was her own. Clemmie eagerly agreed. Boutwell allowed her to sit on a chair in a small space in the hall outside Henry's cell; then he locked them both into this two-sided compartment.

"The first time I came in and they shut that steel door—*bang*—and turned that key . . . well, I didn't know," Clemmie said. "Henry and I sat there, and I said, 'Ah, Henry, let's pray.' And he said okay, and so I started praying for protection. Then I said, 'Now, if you get an urge or something, call for something—just give me some kind of warning.' He started laughing. He said, 'It doesn't happen like that.' I said, 'Well, don't you just get kind of an urge to kill?' I thought it was like an urge to smoke or something. I didn't know."

Clemmie said that after her first session with Henry, he wrote her a letter. It read: "I cannot put into words how good it feels that I know I would never kill or hurt you." The second time Clemmie saw Henry, she asked him what he had meant. "I didn't know if I would still have that in me where I couldn't help but want to do it," he answered. "There is nothing inside me. That feeling is gone. There's nothing there controlling, forcing, pushing me." Clemmie listened to him and cried.

"It is hard for me to picture Henry anything but being tender, loving, and caring, because I never saw this other side of him," she says today. "Every day if he wanted to he could have killed me. One time I had a crick in my neck, and he was rubbing it 'cause I couldn't move my head. . . . I mean he could have killed me."

Instead he confided in her. One time after he had finished talking to investigators about a murder case, he told Clemmie: "You know, I didn't even know that person, and you just wonder how sweet of a person she really was, and what was taken from her, and what she really meant to someone. I can't dwell on it though 'cause there's more." Henry wept and blew his nose. "I just pray that when I confess the last crime that all the memories of everything will be taken from me. But I just have to keep moving on, because if I get stuck, I won't be able to finish."

### 'I'M IN A BLACK HOLE'

In April Texas Attorney General Jim Mattox ordered Henry taken from the Williamson County Jail and moved to Waco, and he directed District Attorney Vic Feazell and the McLennan County grand jury to investigate the Lucas task force. Henry had gone beyond the limit. Nobody could have killed *that* many people, the AG reasoned. Something funny must be going on up there in Williamson County. Jumping on the bandwagon, Hugh Aynesworth, a reporter for the *Dallas Times-Herald*, dug up an early interview in which Henry said the only person he ever killed was his mother.

The task force, though, was ready for the storm. Prince and Boutwell both say it was only a matter of time before public skepticism caught up with the investigations. They have been among the first to acknowledge that some of Henry's cases might not be airtight. Visiting detectives came in all shapes and sizes—and their level of professionalism varied as well.

Admittedly, says Prince, "there are some questionable cases, but there are reasons that each one was cleared." The most highly criticized of Henry's confessions was his admission to the August 24, 1975, stabbing death of Deborah Sue Williamson in Lubbock. The victim's parents, Joyce and Bob Lemons, are convinced Henry is not responsible, citing inconsistencies between the facts and his recorded statement. Henry described the victim as a woman with light-brown hair, five-foot-four, 135 pounds, 20 years old or older. Deborah Sue Williamson was 18, had platinum-blond hair, was five-seven, and weighed 110 pounds. Henry said the house was white and that he entered through a sliding glass door; the house was olive and Williamson had the door secured. Henry claimed he and Ottis chased, stabbed, raped, and killed the woman inside the house; the murder took place in the carport. The Lemons family also believe officers coached Henry while he was attempting to direct them to the crime scene. And finally, the date, August 22, 1975, is only two days after Henry's recorded release from the State Prison of Southern Michigan. Did he do it? Is it even possible? Or could Lubbock officers be purposely fixing the case?

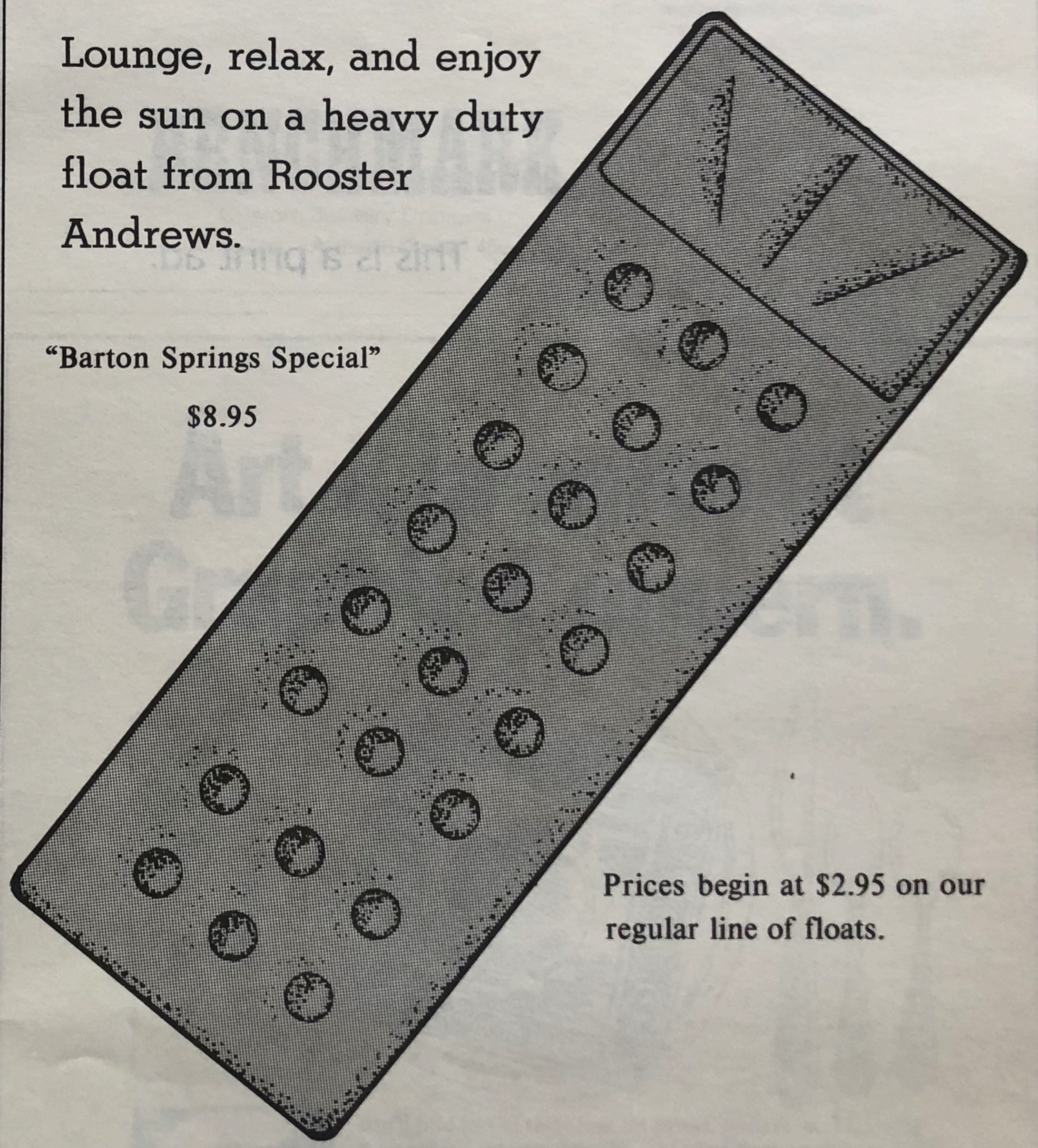
"We have no doubts that Lucas is the one who committed the murder," Detective Sgt. Travis Lincecum


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of the Lubbock Police Department said. "We know what's right. Some facts are only known to law-enforcement officials." Whatever the details (and they cannot be released since the case is pending), they were sufficient to satisfy a grand jury and persuade the district attorney to file capital-murder charges.

But there are more examples. Henry confessed to the November 6, 1981, killing of a convenience-store clerk in Little Rock, Arkansas. A prosecuting attorney in the case said Henry couldn't have done it, producing an insurance-policy purchase receipt that proves Henry was in Florida at the time. During an August 1984 court hearing, Henry insisted it must have been dated wrong. "I've told the people," he said. "If they don't want to believe it, that's up to them. As far as I'm concerned, it's over."

Betty Crawford, Henry's former wife, doubts another case. She says Henry could not have murdered Elizabeth Ann Price on April 10, 1976, in Lubbock, either. Crawford told authorities she was living with him in Maryland at the time, and Henry's half-sister Opal agreed.

And what about the confusion surrounding the date Henry and Ottis met? They are jointly accused in the 1975 Williamson murder in Lubbock, yet Henry said frequently they did not know each other until 1979.

Likewise, there are still a few wrinkles left in the Orange Socks case, the only murder for which Henry received the death penalty. Ottis' videotaped confession does not exactly match the one Sheriff Boutwell took from Henry. Boutwell taped Toole in the Williamson County Jail in December 1983, three months before Henry's trial. The film begins with Boutwell reading Ottis the Miranda warning and showing him the photograph of Orange Socks. Ottis claims he was in the car when Henry picked the girl up in Oklahoma City. They stopped to eat, then continued on toward Georgetown. While Henry and Orange Socks had intercourse, Ottis watched and masturbated. Ottis adds that when they were back in the car, Henry was driving and "I was sitting in the back seat. I leaned over the seat and choked the shit out of her."

"Did Henry choke her any?" Boutwell asks.

"I'm real sure that he did."

This videotape describing Ottis' role in the Orange Socks killing was never admitted as evidence in the trial, though both the prosecution and the defense say they were aware it existed.

Perhaps this is the sort of glitch a grand jury should pick up on, but Prince and his colleagues say it's not safe to assume that the attorney general's office or a brand-new task force would have any better luck getting to the bottom of Henry Lee Lucas. "I don't think we'll ever know how many people he killed," Prince has said. Don Higginbotham, the lawyer hired to defend Henry, says his client will probably go down in history as "the biggest liar in the world."

The problem is that Henry is different things to different people. His technique is to control others through his submissiveness. For Clemmie, he is a man of the spirit. For Prince, he is a fellow investigator, helping to crack cases. In front of Sheriff Boutwell, the keeper of the jail, he plays the dutiful son. If pressed by a reporter to admit he never killed all those people, Henry knows how to deliver the magic quote. He tells each of these people what they want to hear—and in each situation, he, too, believes what he's saying. And when there are discrepancies in his story or he appears to know impossible things, he gives credit to his sixth sense—"being able to communicate through God."

Henry's medical records confirm this tendency toward vacillation. The psychologist who administered two days of testing of Henry prior to the Orange Socks trial said: "Overall, Mr. Lucas appears to be an insecure and inadequate individual who is needy of approval and attention. He has a long history of anger and hostility toward women, dating back to his early experiences with his natural mother. He sees himself as a victim of his desires and impulses, but is able to control himself when not under significant stress. However, during times of duress, his controls do break down. . . ."

When Henry went to Waco for the McLennan County investigation, Clemmie repeatedly asked him to tell the truth about the murder cases. Finally, she told him: "Henry, you know I love you. Did you or didn't you kill those people?" Henry felt divided; he didn't know whose story he was supposed to regurgitate. He looked at her and replied: "I thought I did it, but now I don't know. I don't know."

As his audience increases to include grandstanding attorney generals and aggressive DAs, Henry's agenda has become confused. Don Higginbotham remembers how Henry got all twisted up during the Orange Socks trial. "His thought processes," says the defense attorney, "probably went something like this: 'I promised Becky over her dead body that I would meet her in heaven. If I kill myself, I cannot get to heaven, ergo I cannot meet Becky. If the state kills me for a crime that I did, that is just justice or fair—I still can't get to heaven. If, however, the state kills me for a crime I did not do, I have tricked God—I will get to heaven. Therefore, I will confess to something I did not do; I will keep confessing to it. When my attorneys try to present an alibi defense—or any defense—I will thwart all of their efforts by going back to the sheriff and somehow putting a stop to any defense I might have.'"

By all indications, Henry was not sure what the McLennan County grand jury and District Attorney Jim Feazell wanted of him. When Sister Clemmie finally talked to Henry after he'd been transferred to Waco, he told her: "I'm in a big black hole, and it's getting smaller and smaller. Pretty soon there's going to be nothing left of me." She also said Henry told her to beg Sheriff Boutwell to rescue him.

The grand-jury investigation wound down in June, and Henry was once again moved to Williamson County, though authorities are saying this time it won't be for long. Before the AG's intervention, the task force was already getting ready to fold up its

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***And when there are discrepancies in his story or when he appears to know impossible things, he gives credit to his sixth sense—"being able to communicate through God."***

tent. All that is left is for authorities to get a couple more death-penalty convictions. A likely case is the combination rape/murder of an El Paso woman. Officials say they have over 100 pieces of corroborative evidence, including Henry's description of an item he stole from the house and later sold, a witness' description of the car, and a composite drawing of the suspect. After that, perhaps one more conviction with a completely different set of circumstances. Then on to death row in Huntsville. The idea is to close off any chance for escape. Even if one death sentence is overturned, there will still be one or two more.

Of his fate, Henry is characteristically philosophical: "I'm thankful God gave me a chance to leave this world without sin. And if it's what He chooses, then I'll die with peace of mind, knowing where I'm going. What I do, it'll be for Him—it'll be for the people. And no matter how much suffering I might have to do, I don't care anymore, 'cause if that's what He wants, that's what I have to live by. And if the people out there will all understand that what I'm saying and doing now is all for Him, not for some selfish or unforgiving reason. . . . It's what He wants that I'm going to do."

### THE NUMBERS RUN TOGETHER

In May of this year, as reports trickled in about the problems with the task force and Henry's chameleonic behavior before the grand jury, friends began asking me if I still believed all the stories I had heard about Henry. No, I said, I didn't believe *all* the stories, but that wasn't the point and it never had been the point. Some of the investigating agencies undoubtedly had been hasty; but several hundred lawmen could not all be wrong. I had seen and heard enough to believe that Henry had killed and killed again until the numbers had all run together. The task force, the attorney general, the grand jury, and the media were all engaged in a game of theological hairsplitting. No one was doubting whether hell existed; they were each just trying to guess how hot it was down there. And for me to believe that Henry was real, I had only to remember my last trip to see him.

It was before the task force was so abruptly interrupted. Henry had agreed to undergo a battery of brain and neurological tests, and Sgt. Prince and Sheriff Boutwell had cleared the way for a visit to a Dallas hospital. Henry would fly up in the DPS plane; Clemmie and I would drive. But first we all gathered at the Williamson County Jail. Standing on either side of his cell bars—Clemmie and I on the outside, the prisoner, of course, within—the three of us held hands, forming a human chain that wove between the steel. Henry prayed: "Please protect Nan and Clemmie, Lord, from all those hitchhikers on the highway." I bowed my head and listened, but all I noticed was his hand in mine and how very strong it seemed. ☆

*Nan Cuba is a San Antonio-based freelance writer. She is currently working on a book about San Antonio homicide detective Frank Castillon.*


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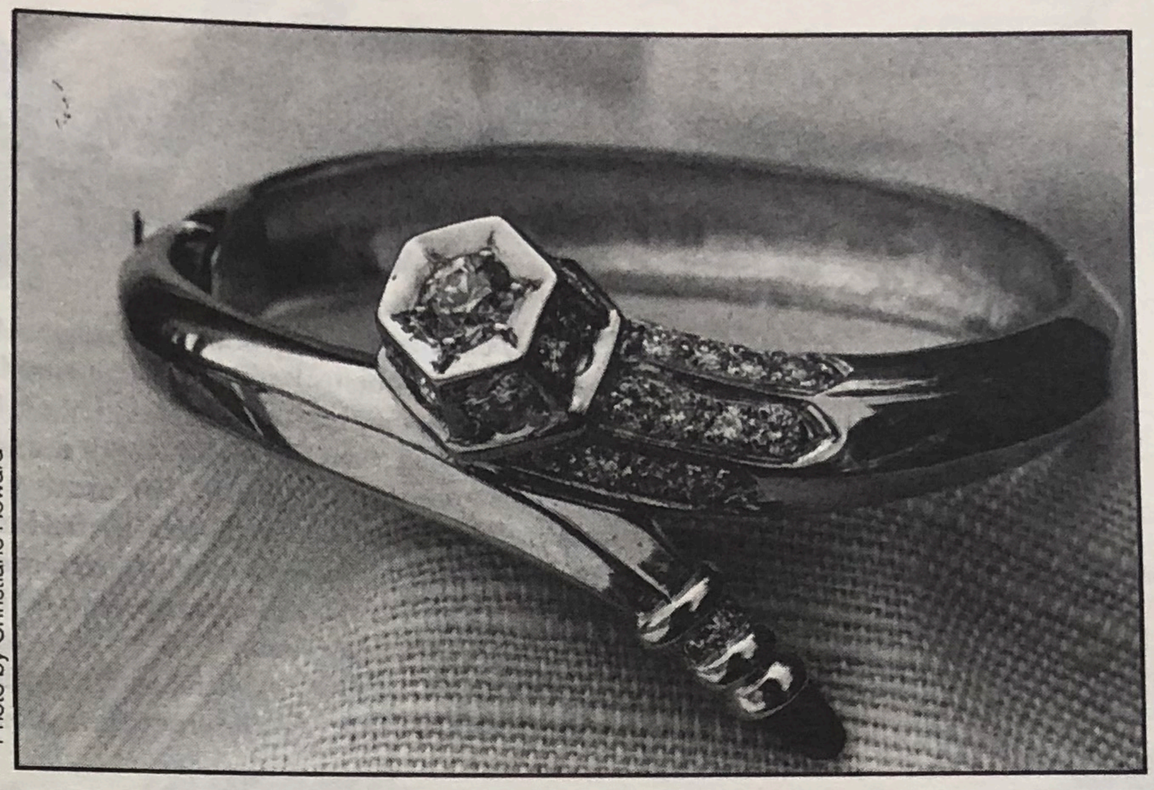


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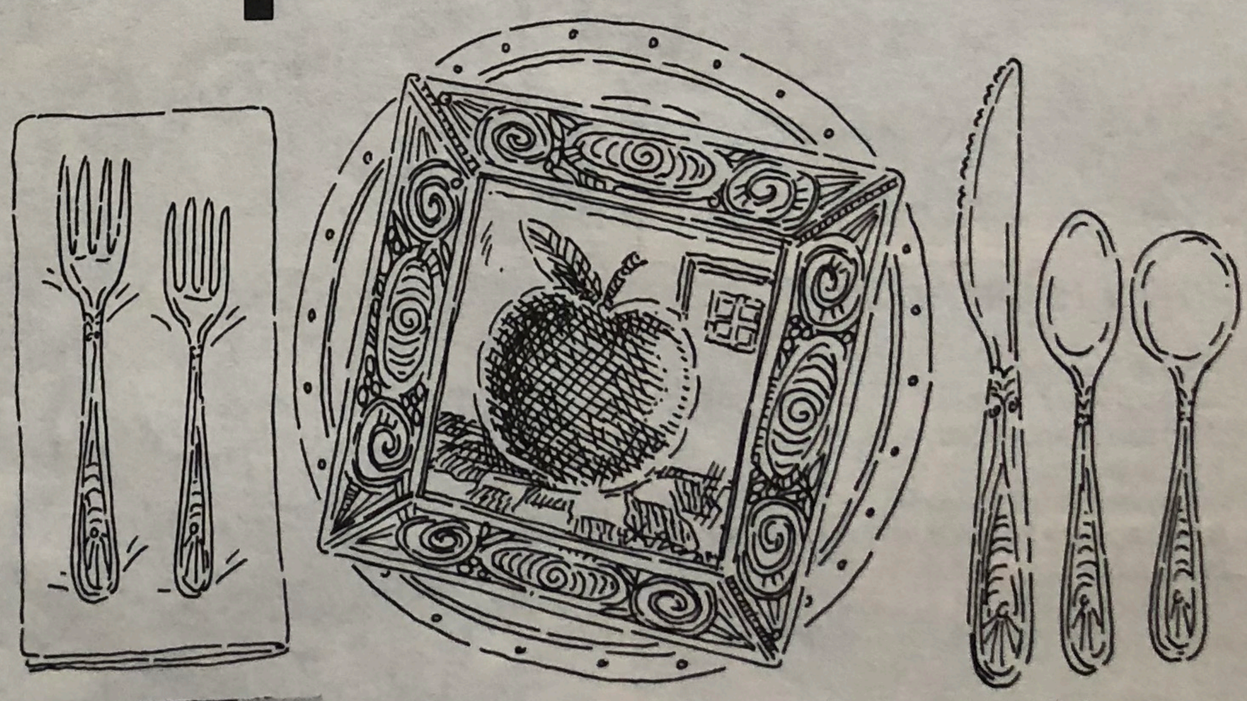
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