

Spring 5-2009

## After the Snow: The Oakland County Child Murders and the Search for the Killer

Julia Cianci  
*University of New Orleans*, [juliacianci@gmail.com](mailto:juliacianci@gmail.com)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uno.edu/td>



Part of the [Other Arts and Humanities Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Cianci, Julia, "After the Snow: The Oakland County Child Murders and the Search for the Killer" (2009).  
*University of New Orleans Theses and Dissertations*. 348.  
<https://scholarworks.uno.edu/td/348>

This Thesis-Restricted is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by ScholarWorks@UNO with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this Thesis-Restricted in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself.

This Thesis-Restricted has been accepted for inclusion in University of New Orleans Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UNO. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@uno.edu](mailto:scholarworks@uno.edu).



After the Snow:  
The Oakland County Child Murders and the Search for the Killer

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
University of New Orleans  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts  
in  
Film, Theater, and Communication Arts  
Creative Writing, Nonfiction

by

Julia Cianci

B.A. North Central College, 2004

May, 2009

Copyright 2009, Julia Cianci

## Dedication

To Cathy King  
Because she is Tim's sister.

To Amy Cianci  
Because she is my sister.

To Patricia Moffitt  
Because she has four sisters.

To Elizabeth Cantore  
Because she has no sister.

To Rose Evaninsky Sokol  
Because she misses her sister every day.

## Acknowledgements

This was tough work, and I couldn't have accomplished it without the amazing support and assistance of many people. Thank you to the University of New Orleans and all my professors, teachers, and thesis committee members for instilling in me a priceless education, both from books and from the streets of New Orleans.

Many thanks to the Ludwig Vogelstein Foundation for awarding me with a generous grant that aided me in completing this work.

Thank you Randy Bates for your gentle guidance and love of language. I slowly learned that what you don't say speaks volumes.

Thank you to Team BSSM for giving me one of the best years of my life. Casey Lefante, you and I share parallel lives. You taught me much about friendship, a willingness to learn, and the imperativeness about New Orleans living. Thank you for your generosity, fierce independence, and creative approach to living our young lives. Trisha Rezende, you are an amazing beam of sunshine. Your happy warmth and genuine laugh have touched my life indefinitely. Thank you for your constant smile and your pragmatic approach to style, in any area of life. Danny Goodman, you are a whirlwind of activity, which I hope you never lose. Your help with my thesis, especially at the end, was invaluable. You lent me not only your amazing editing skills but also a life preserver at a time when I needed both the most. Thank you for your humor which always makes me laugh, your loyalty to your friends, and the constant cups of coffee. I miss and love you all.

Thank you Dave for your support and subtle question, "Did you work on your thesis today?" You made me want to hurry up and live my young life with someone in someplace worth living.

Thank you Elizabeth for our invaluable friendship. I couldn't have accomplished this thesis without your web of friends.

Thank you Amy for letting me tag along. I have been catching up to you my entire life, but you have lived a life worth envying.

Thank you Steven for coming into our lives. We manifested you, though none of us knew it at the time.

Thank you Dad for teaching me about responsibility and about the nature of people.

Thank you Mom for being a person who I strive to be like every day.

Thank you Cathy for letting me come into your home and telling me your story.

## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	vi
Preface .....	1
Chapter One: What Polly Coltman Saw .....	5
Chapter Two: Revitalized .....	11
Chapter Three: The Victims of Oakland County .....	17
Chapter Four: Cathy.....	26
Chapter Five: The Hunt .....	40
Chapter Six: Helen and John Meet .....	47
Chapter Seven: A Slip-Up .....	62
Chapter Eight: A Popular GM Model.....	70
Chapter Nine: Wasser Remembers .....	79
Chapter Ten: Answers .....	88
Chapter Eleven: So Very Close to Home .....	93
Chapter Twelve: Evidence.....	100
Afterword.....	105
Endnotes.....	108
Bibliography .....	110
Vita.....	112

## Abstract

*After the Snow: The Oakland County Child Murders and the Search for the Killer* is a work of nonfiction that recounts the murders of four children who lived in the suburbs of Oakland County, Michigan and the subsequent search for their murderer, the Oakland County Child Killer. The first of the four murders occurred in February 1976 and the last in March 1977. This thesis chronicles the unsolved case and the police investigation that began in 1976 and seems close to a successful conclusion in the spring of 2009. Over the course of the last two-and-a-half years, I have conducted lengthy interviews with Cathy King, the sister of one of the victims, and researched primary sources, the *Detroit Free Press* and the *Detroit News*, as well as other materials. My research also includes the use of Cathy King's private and confidential correspondences with people involved in this case.

Keywords: Oakland County Child Killer; OCCK; Tim King; Michigan State Police; Oakland County; Wayne County; Unsolved Michigan crimes; Children murders; Kidnap.

## Preface

*Childhood is the kingdom where nobody dies.*

Edna St. Vincent Millay, 1937

Tim King was murdered when he was eleven years old, but even in death he continued to live. Neither his family, nor the police ever forgot about him. Though his death and the search for his killer were unspeakably painful for his family—especially for his mother, Marion—Tim’s life was never far from their minds.

Unlike her mother who could never reflect on this crime, Cathy King, however, has spent the last few years openly focused on the circumstances of her brother’s death. For nearly thirty years after her brother’s murder, Cathy believed the police would never solve the case. She forced herself to make do not knowing her brother’s murderer, but through a series of connections these past four years, Cathy slowly realized that this case could be solved. Her determination pushed the police, specifically Detective Cory Williams, in a new direction.

This thesis documents my involvement with Cathy these past two-and-a-half years. She told me the history of the Oakland County Child Killer case, specifically about the case’s volatile history the past three years.

This is a story that people need to know about. A handful of individuals have written about these murdered children, their unknown killer, and the search conducted by the police, but these are all fictionalized books. Though fiction and nonfiction are vital parts to the whole of literature, I strongly feel this story deserves to be told without embellishments. In 1980, Patricia



Welles wrote *Angel in the Snow*, a novel loosely based on the crimes and dedicated to the Birmingham, Michigan Police Department. Michael L. Parrot wrote *The Oakland County Child Killer*, also in 1980. Parrott's book focuses on the crimes but is heavily fictionalized by additional characters and a psychiatrist-turned-hero at the end. Tommy McIntyre wrote a sentimental account of the murders and the search for the murderer in his 1988 novel, *A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing*. Though the book was marketed as nonfiction, he filled his pages with fictionalized dialogue and contrived scenes. McIntyre collaborated with Commander Robert Robertson of the Oakland County task force for his research and dedicated the novel to the Oakland County task force and police officers across the nation. Most recently, Glen Hirshberg wrote *The Snowman's Children* in 2002, a novel which takes place in 1970s Detroit with an unknown murderer stalking children in the area. Though I value these writers' attempts to call attention to this unsolved case, I feel that these four children deserve to have their story told as factually and truthfully as possible. Since no one else has written this story adhering strictly to the facts (except for the newspaper and magazine articles written in the 1970s), this project came as an opportunity for me. As Cathy said to me across her kitchen table, I learned of this story, so I should write about it.

I knew this would be a challenge not only because of the intricate history of the case and the amount of information involved, but because of its tragic significance. In preparation for writing, I read four books of nonfiction dealing with murder—Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*, Norman Mailer's *The Executioner's Song*, Erik Larson's *The Devil in The White City*, and Jon Krakauer's *Under the Banner of Heaven*. These amazing books were especially helpful in how the authors dealt with the complicated topic of murder—detailing crimes, their influences, and

their victims. They also rendered their material in the third-person, yet the writing was rich and full of detail.

There were many obstacles in the factual telling of this story. My critique is that I have not made time to visit Birmingham, Michigan and to see where Hunter-Maple Pharmacy once stood or the locales of the crimes. Because of this, I feel the story lacks a strong sense of detail and description. Another obstacle I soon discovered was that I could not talk to many people involved in this case because it is still an open investigation. All of the police, both past and present, who could have provided a plethora of insight and information were off-limits. Cathy and I decided that I should not contact Helen Dagner, a woman who has dedicated more than a decade of her life documenting the case on her cold case website; this thesis might suggest to Helen Dagner that I was seeking journalistic glory, something she has shunned since learning about the story in 1991. Because I talked only to Cathy, this thesis lacks dialogue. Yet even with this weakness, my strength is my use of primary sources—meetings with Cathy King and her letters and emails to Judi Coltman, Lieutenant Jack Kalbfleisch, Detective Cory Williams, Helen Dagner and their responses. Cathy's collection of xeroxed *Detroit Free Press* and *Detroit News* articles and other publications were another vital source of information.

Finally, the hardest challenge in writing this story is its subject. Writing about death, especially about the deaths of children, is profoundly difficult— that they were murdered makes it even more so. Slipping into melodrama is tempting, and I found myself having to avoid cliché phrasings and empty adjectives in nearly every paragraph. Though the death of a child is a sobering topic; the murder of a child can become an unbearable tragedy. I had to find a way to combine both the straightforward situation of each child's death along with the severities of their murders. I quickly learned that *death* and *murder* are not interchangeable words. The most

effective way for me to avoid sentimental descriptions was to write objective paragraphs focusing solely on the details and the situation. I would then transition, either immediately or a few paragraphs following, to a more meditative section. I felt that shifting in this way from the objectified to the personal added movement and energy to the writing. I wanted to stay true to the facts, but I also wanted to add a heightened sense of emotion.

I worked on this story for two-and-a-half years, and I could not have written it without Cathy King. Cathy felt that she was not sabotaging the case by telling me about it. On the contrary, she believed that telling others about this case—and the blunders committed by the police—could help the investigation reach an end. The case has been opened for so long and has yet to move successfully forward, and so any attention given may be in the right direction.

What I found most amazing about this story was Cathy King. She was seventeen when her brother was murdered, and she was the last family member to see him alive. She could have allowed guilt, sadness, and anger to consume her, but she persevered. I doubt that I could have lived my life as well as she has lived hers if something like this had happened to my family. I still cannot understand where her determination and tenacity come from. She has raised two children knowing they were never safe; none of us are. She successfully became the best mother she could be in the face of an overwhelming tragedy she has carried with her for thirty-three years.

I believe that Cathy King's determination to not give up on her brother's case, or on the police, will lead to the eventual conclusion of the Oakland County Child Killer case. Cathy King wishes to thank Detective Cory Williams of the Livonia, Michigan Police Department and Wayne County Assistant Prosecutor Rob Moran for their invaluable help.

## Chapter One

### *What Polly Coltman Saw*

Polly Coltman needed a change. Raising four sons on her own had caused her hair to gray, and so she went to the Hunter-Maple Pharmacy on a Wednesday afternoon to buy a box of hair dye.

What happened to Polly at the pharmacy and later at her home troubled her the rest of her life. Two seemingly minor events would permanently shadow that afternoon on March 16, 1977. Polly pleaded with the police, even years later, to pay attention, to write down her story, but they had more important matters to investigate than the urgent concerns of a worrisome divorced mother.

The Coltman family lived on 435 Madison Street, only a few blocks away from the Hunter-Maple Pharmacy, in the pleasant suburb of Birmingham, Michigan. Birmingham was settled in the middle of affluent Oakland County, far enough away from the hustle of Michigan's largest city, Detroit. Polly Coltman's younger sons spent much of their time playing in Poppleton Park, a square grassy area that bordered their house, a convenience that allowed Polly to occasionally check in on her boys and a convenience that she took advantage of that late afternoon.

That Wednesday in March was unusually warm and sunny. Those familiar with Midwestern weather know winter in Michigan never ends in March; it lingers until at least April and makes brief, blustery appearances again in May. But that Wednesday was a spring day, and Polly's youngest son and his friends spent that afternoon after school playing in Poppleton Park, riding skateboards in the Hunter-Maple parking lot, and shooting basketballs at Adams

Elementary school, all three locations each in close proximity to the others. That afternoon, around four o'clock, while the boys were playing in the neighborhood, Polly went to the pharmacy to buy her hair dye. Her four sons and their father would be attending the Ice Capades that evening, and Polly assumed it would be convenient to color her hair while they were away.

Though the pharmacy was only a few blocks from her house, she drove and parked in the back lot. She entered through the back door into the narrow hallway, which lead into the front of the pharmacy. While walking through the hallway, Polly almost collided with a young man who was rushing to leave through the back door. He charged past her, nearly knocking her down, without apologizing or even asking if she was all right. She remembered that he seemed startled by the incident, and even more strangely, that he stared at her until she finally walked away. She was bothered by this incident because it was not every day that such things happened. She did not live in Detroit, after all.

At 4:30 that afternoon, after Polly returned home from the pharmacy and while her older sons were getting dressed for their night out with their father, Polly waited for her youngest son, Tim Coltman, to arrive. He had spent all afternoon, since he finished school, riding skateboards with his friend Tim King and two other neighborhood boys. Her son Tim was supposed to be back home by 4:45, and he was cutting it close. She looked out the window waiting for him to skate up to the house; while waiting, Polly spotted a car slowly drive past her house. Moments later, through another window, she saw the same car pass. Polly's house afforded a broad view of Poppleton Park, and she noticed, through multiple vantage points, that this car was slowly circling the perimeter of the square park. Looking out her kitchen window, she watched the car approach the side of the park. Unable to see the driver, she walked out onto her porch. She saw the car slowly cruise on Madison Street—her street—along the park's south end. The driver must

have turned off Madison and turned right onto Woodward Avenue, then right onto Wimbledon Drive, right onto Oxford Street, and then another right onto Madison Street to make a complete pass of the square park, because he was back in front of her house. He was driving suspiciously slow, Polly thought. And so she stood on her porch and stared him down once he drove past her house. They made eye contact, and he drove on. What was most unnerving for Polly was that he was the young man who had run into her in the drugstore that afternoon, and she felt he now noticed her too.

Tim Coltman arrived home soon after, and her four sons left between 5:15 and 5:30. Polly had the rest of the evening to herself. Neither of these events—the suspicious driver in the neighborhood or the near collision with him in the pharmacy aisle—bothered Polly for the rest of the day. It was not until the next morning that Polly understood who she had likely encountered that Wednesday afternoon on March 16, 1977.

Oakland County ranks as the wealthiest county in Michigan and within the wealthiest thirty counties in the nation. It has a peculiar location, nestled between Detroit and Flint—both industrial, blue-collar communities. While Detroit and Flint house the automotive giants—Ford, General Motors, and Chrysler—and their workers, Oakland County is home to the executives and the elite.

Polly and her sons lived in Birmingham, one of the more comfortable communities of Oakland County but definitely not the most prestigious one. That distinction was reserved for Bloomfield Hills, Bloomfield Township, and Bloomfield Village, all of which were bordering suburbs of Birmingham. Polly and her sons lived in a modest house close enough to Adams Elementary School so that her younger sons could walk there. Less than a mile away lived Tim

King. Tim Coltman and Tim King were good friends. They were the youngest boys of their families and both had three older siblings. They sat next to each other in school, rode bikes and skateboards together, and played in Poppleton Park throughout the years.

No one, except for maybe one or two men, knew that Wednesday afternoon would be the last day that Tim King played in Poppleton Park and skateboarded with his friends and Tim Coltman. Thursday morning—a day after Polly’s incident with the stranger in the pharmacy and in her neighborhood—marked the beginning of the official search in response to Tim King’s disappearance. Polly would never again feel carefree about letting her sons play in the park or walk to school or skateboard in the neighborhood. Nearly all parents in Birmingham suddenly felt differently about their neighborhood and about their children’s safety. Birmingham was not a place where children were kidnapped. Yet it had become one.

What Polly witnessed that day in the pharmacy and in the park should have been cornerstones in a criminal case prosecuting a felon for Tim King’s abduction and murder. And yet Polly Coltman’s story went nowhere.

On the first full day following Tim King’s disappearance—Thursday, March 17, 1977—Polly phoned police and gave them her story. They never contacted her again. Polly’s phone call may well have been one of a hundred concerned phone calls the Birmingham Police received in those first few, intense days following Tim King’s disappearance. Inundated with such calls, they could have hastily documented and overlooked her story as just another potential lead. A few days after Tim’s disappearance, police canvassed the neighborhood, and Polly assumed the officer in her neighborhood was coming to talk to her about her initial phone call. He was, however, unaware of her previous contact with the department but jotted some notes and told her

that someone would get back to her. No one did. And the only people involved in the case who talked to her son, Tim Coltman, and the other neighborhood boys who had played with Tim King that day were reporters. The police overlooked statements—albeit those of a ragtag bunch of eleven-year-old boys—from the last people who spent a considerable amount of time with Tim King and in the area where Tim was last seen.

Over the next twenty years, Polly periodically called the Birmingham police and other authorities to try to tell her story again, but they would never give what she offered the credit it deserved. Perhaps the police assumed a skilled serial kidnapper and murderer would not be so foolish as to stalk his prey in daylight, or perhaps Polly's story was scribbled on a scrap of paper that was never seen again.

Polly Coltman died thinking about Tim King. None of her sons, especially her youngest, Tim, would talk about the case or Tim King. Polly found a willing audience only in her daughter-in-law, Judi. Days before Polly died in 1997, she told Judi about a box of important papers in her basement that she needed help moving. Judi thought nothing of that admission, just a concern of a delirious woman on her deathbed, but when cleaning out the basement of Polly's house—by then in Ann Arbor, Michigan—Judi and her brothers- and sisters-in-law found a box full of newspaper clippings about Tim King. She had saved everything relating to his case. Her son was with Tim the night he was abducted, and his case subsequently became too close for Polly to ignore. Though police ignored Polly for nearly twenty years, Polly never forgot about Tim.

The Michigan State Police and various other police departments may deny what Polly saw that afternoon in 1977. But that night, when her sons were sleeping in their beds as were most people in Birmingham, Michigan, Tim King was missing. He didn't come home the next



night either. He was last seen that Wednesday evening in the Hunter-Maple Pharmacy. And murdered less than a week later.

Tim's story is a tragedy and a shock, yet his story is also similar to the disappearances and deaths of three other Oakland County children. To date, police attribute four murders to the still unknown Oakland County Child Killer (OCCK). For thirteen months—from February 1976 until March 1977—the suburbs within Oakland County lost four children to kidnapping and murder. Two boys and two girls—from the ages of ten to twelve—were abducted and killed. Aspects of each child's disappearance and manner of death are similar enough for police to claim their murders are connected and serial. Tim King was the last victim.

## Chapter Two

### *Revitalized*

I learned of Polly's story through Tim King's eldest sibling, Cathy King. After hearing of Cathy's story, through a mutual friend of ours, I wanted to meet her and understand the effects such a tragedy could have on a family. I also wanted to understand how a serial crime of this magnitude could go unsolved, even though Tim's disappearance sparked one the most intense kidnapping investigations of the 1970s. Thirty-three years is too long for this case, for any case, to remain unsolved. And for thirty-two years, Cathy endured the fate of existing as a victim—waiting for answers and remembering her eleven-year-old brother's life while, at the same time, trying to forget his death. I wanted to tell her and her family's story and the story of the uneven effort to capture the killer who devastated and changed their lives.

My purpose in this narrative is to document the case from the day of Tim King's disappearance in 1977 to the case's current status in the spring of 2009. The case has had a contradictory history through the years—sometimes seemingly forgotten and sometimes in the spotlight. It stagnated for nearly three decades, and then it was the object of a surge of energy and interest within the last few years. There is a diverse group of people who are deeply involved in trying to solve this case, and they have all had an influence, however minor, in this story. My aim is not so ambitious as to solve the case: I only want to tell the story.

In January 2007, I first started talking to Cathy King over the phone. That month when we first spoke was two months shy of the thirtieth anniversary of Tim's death, and the entire Oakland County Child Killer (OCCK) case had not successfully moved forward in the past

thirty-one years. The most promising development for the King family, the other victims' families, and for the OCCK case as a whole was a renewed effort toward solution in 2005.

In February 2005, Michigan State Police (MSP) revitalized the case due to new tips and examined past evidence with newfound vigor and more advanced technology. The twenty-nine-year anniversary also ceremoniously marked the transfer of the OCCK files to the MSP Metro North Post in Oak Park, a suburb divided by Oakland County and Wayne County; filing cabinets and boxes containing all the information police acquired throughout the twenty-nine years were finally returned to the locales of the crimes. There was also a sense of familiarity in this case; MSP Assistant District Commander Robert Robertson led the original task force in 1977, and now in 2005, his son MSP Detective Sergeant David Robertson and MSP Detective Sergeant Gary Gray would lead the OCCK task force. Though Captain Robertson could not solve the case in the late 1970s, his son would now have an opportunity to carry out his father's work.

For the past twenty-nine years—from 1976 to 2005—Michigan State Police and the numerous police departments in Oakland County claimed to have researched nearly every lead handed to them by the public and other law enforcement departments. Then in 2005, Richard Lawson, an aging man with a long criminal past who was grasping at a lighter prison sentence, gave police a tip that jump-started the case to its new status.

Detroit's Cass Corridor—a rectangular area bound by Interstate 75, Lodge Freeway, and Warren and Woodward Avenues—hit a rough period in the 1970s. It declined into a hodgepodge of crime, drug trafficking, and pornography. Ford, Chrysler, and General Motors experienced difficulties competing against foreign automotive companies, managing union members, and staying afloat with rising gas prices. The three automotive giants slashed their workforce,

causing Detroit to hit a low with employees out of work and crime on the rise, and Cass Corridor experienced the worst of these troubles. Hourly motel rooms, deteriorating apartment buildings, and empty storefronts lined its dirty streets. The houses still standing were empty shells with glass-less windows showing smoke-streaked walls and busted floorboards. The notorious Cass Corridor helped define Detroit's image as a hard and broken city.

Related to the daily crime plaguing the neighborhood, Cass Corridor housed a large pornography ring. During the thirteen months of the Oakland County murders and the months following Tim King's death, the Michigan State Police, local police departments, and concerned parents turned suspicious attention to Cass Corridor and its underground child pornography activities. In close proximity to Oakland County—around twenty miles away—Cass Corridor was a logical place to investigate. And police did look there, but they found nothing that lead to the OCCK. Police would have had an easy time attributing the crimes to a felon from Cass Corridor, but they found no evidence there. To the chagrin of citizens who expressed concern, their reputable neighborhoods were the next place to look.

Finally, in 2005, police found a connection between another cold case and the OCCK case. The hard work and ingenuity of one Michigan detective helped piece together information from these two unsolved cases. Detective Sergeant Cory Williams of the Livonia, Michigan Police Department solved a murder committed by Richard Lawson, a former Livonia taxi driver. Richard Lawson killed his boss in 1989 and then fled Michigan and settled in California for the next fifteen years. Detective Williams solved the cold case in 2005 and flew to California to arrest Lawson. While searching through his past criminal records, Detective Williams read a comment Lawson had made to police when he was pulled in on a robbery charge in Pennsylvania in 1989. The comment meant nothing to the local Pennsylvania police, but Lawson's declaration

that he knew who was responsible for the “Snow Murders in Oakland County” meant a lot more for Williams. “Snow Murders” is a street name for the OCCK murders; all four children’s bodies were dumped in various locations outdoors in Oakland County after a heavy snow fell in the area. Though Detective Williams was a teenager at the time of the OCCK murders, he remembered them well because he grew up in the area and later worked for the Livonia Police Department. After Williams read Lawson’s declaration in his old files, it became imperative that Williams find out who it was. The name Richard Lawson grudgingly provided to Detective Williams was that of Theodore “Ted” Lamborgine, an autoworker who lived in Detroit during the time of the murders.

Soon after Richard Lawson’s declaration in 2005, police arrested Ted Lamborgine in Parma Heights, Ohio, his home for the previous twenty-eight years. Lamborgine soon evolved into a main suspect due, in large part, to his criminal history: he paid young boys for sex in Detroit during the early and mid-1970s. Also, Lamborgine had requested an employment transfer from his auto factory in Detroit to one in Cleveland in 1978, less than a year after Tim King’s murder. Fitting the suspected profile of the killer, Lamborgine was gay, fanatic about cleanliness, and a newly-religious zealot who spent his time in Ohio, after his retirement, passing out religious pamphlets. Lamborgine was the most promising suspect to date.

Ted Lamborgine, however, would not accept responsibility for the Oakland County killings. Prosecutors offered to reduce his sentence if he took a polygraph test on the OCCK murders—whether he passed or failed the test. Though Wayne County charged him with a laundry list of criminal sexual conduct charges stemming from the molestations he committed in Wayne County—all unrelated to the OCCK case—prosecutors had to wonder why Lamborgine was not taking the bait they were handing him. Even if he was cleared from the OCCK case,

Lamborgine still faced a lengthy prison sentence for his other criminal convictions (as did Lawson). Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy applied pressure on Lamborgine by releasing his photo and his criminal record to the press, hoping to push him towards a confession. By making his crimes public, prosecutors knew that Lamborgine would not survive the hierarchy of convicts in prison—child molesters exist on the lowest rung. If he confessed to the OCCK case, county prosecutors promised to arrange a new identity for him in a lighter-security prison. Yet Lamborgine would not take the plea bargain.

To date, Lamborgine has been convicted of twelve counts of criminal sexual conduct with persons under the age of fifteen—all unrelated to the OCCK case—and Lawson has been convicted of five counts of criminal sexual conduct with persons under the age of thirteen and convicted of one count of homicide. Both men are serving life sentences in correctional facilities in Michigan. They claim no connection to the OCCK case.

A vital note in this more than thirty-three-year-old case is that Wayne County's Livonia Police Department has made strides toward solving the case, while the various Oakland County police departments have not. The Wayne County Prosecutor's Office has the ability to charge Lamborgine—or any other person of interest—with Tim King's murder because his body was dropped in Livonia, Michigan, which is a part of Wayne County and not neighboring Oakland County. Cory Williams, a Livonia detective, is, therefore, able to work on this case because the killer dropped Tim in Wayne County. The bodies of the other three victims were found in various suburbs in Oakland County. The one strength this case has had these past thirty years is that various Oakland County police departments, the Michigan State Police, and Wayne County's Livonia Police Department share jurisdiction over Tim's case. Solving Tim's murder

would point to the murderer of the previous three children. The OCCK task force is located in Oakland County under the supervision of MSP Detective Sergeants Gary Gray and David Robertson, and Detective Cory Williams works for Livonia Police Department in Wayne County and is also part of the task force.

Though the Lamborgine lead did not connect to the OCCK case, Detective Williams has remained steadfast in his efforts to solve the OCCK case. While it was initially plausible that Lamborgine could have a connection to the OCCK case because of his involvement in child pornographic rings and his criminal sexual conduct charges, people involved in the case including Cathy King and Detective Cory Williams now believe Lamborgine's denial is the truth.

Even through Lamborgine turned out not to be the murderer, his case led Detective Williams to the OCCK trail. It was Richard Lawson's desperation for a lighter sentence in an unrelated case that drew Detective Williams there. Since 2005, Detective Williams has combed through old evidence, tips, and suspects that other police officers may have overlooked. Two years later, in the summer of 2007, through a series of coincidences, Detective Williams discovered a lead from the original OCCK files of 1977. He learned of two tips—specifically #278 and #279—worth investigating.

Both leads were dated some months before Tim King's death.

## Chapter Three

### *The Victims of Oakland County*

Oakland County lies just north of Detroit and supports automotive industries and international businesses. The county is home to the employers and their employees of these massive companies. 8 Mile Road, a dividing line running east and west, separates Oakland County from Detroit's Wayne County. Not only is 8 Mile Road a boundary between counties, this major thoroughfare also serves as a racial divider between the heavily African-American population of Detroit and the white suburbs to the north. Michigan has these boundaries—some man-made and others more organic—which differentiate one group of people from another. 8 Mile Road divides the city from the suburbs, and the Detroit River separates the United States from Canada.

Oakland County and Wayne County also display drastic disparities. Whereas Oakland County is one of the thirty wealthiest counties in the nation, Wayne County's fluctuating unemployment rate has always exceeded the national average. Detroit and Wayne County's decline is not unique. Detroit is a city that prospered due to the automotive industry and fell victim when large portions of that industry left. Detroit's story has similarities to those of the steel mill towns scattered throughout western Pennsylvania and the south side of Chicago, and the coal mines of Kentucky. Once the manufacturing jobs left, Detroit and the nearby city of Flint experienced economic and social hardships. But many of Detroit's surrounding communities fared better than the city. Oakland County is not, and never was, as dependent on the manufacturing aspects of the automotive industries as were Flint, Detroit, and parts of Wayne County. Oakland County never experienced the extreme unemployment and crime rates of its



two major, bordering cities. Due in large part to proximity, though, the towns of Oakland County are not completely immune from the crimes more common in Detroit and Flint.

Though the name sounds sensationalized, *Oakland County Child Killer* is an accurate term. Police connected four child murders to this killer who operated within the Oakland County suburbs. All four children were taken from various suburbs in Oakland County and their bodies (except Tim King's) dumped days later in other parts of the county. Police tacked maps to their station walls, colored pins dotting last-seen locations and abandonment sites for the dead bodies. The victims' ages differed, as did their appearance. In a circumstance not typical of serial murders, the killer took two boys and two girls and held them for different lengths of time. Even the murderer's method of killing differed: three children were smothered, and one child was shot. But there were enough similarities between the crimes for police to make a solid connection. The four children were taken in the cold months of February, December, January, and March, respectively. Snow was on the ground when the children's bodies were dumped, and two were kidnapped on Sunday afternoons and two on Wednesday evenings. The evidence police found consisted of synthetic carpet fibers on all four children's bodies, dog hairs on both boys, and human hairs on one of the girls and on Tim. Each child was held alive for a period of time and fed and washed regularly; this consideration from a kidnapper and murderer was strangely unorthodox.

Twelve-year-old Mark Stebbins was the first victim. His mother reported him missing Sunday evening, February 15, 1976—nearly thirteen months before Tim King's disappearance. Mark left a party at an American Legion Hall in Ferndale, Michigan earlier that afternoon and never made it home. Four days later, on the cold morning of February 19, a man spotted Mark's

body next to a parking lot dumpster in Southfield, Michigan. Mark had a severe, circular blow to the back of his head, yet his clothes were not blood-stained. Some police speculate that either a trunk lock coming down onto his head during his initial struggle or the barrel of a double-barrel shotgun could have made such a gash. His cause of death was suffocation by smothering.

Ten months later, on December 22, twelve-year-old Jill Robinson left her home in Royal Oak on an early Wednesday evening to bike to her father's house in Birmingham. Like Mark, she was held captive for four days. Her body was sighted a day after Christmas off the side of busy Interstate 75, near the 16 Mile exit, at 4:30 in the morning. Her murderer had placed her on her back, still wearing her backpack, on the snowy highway shoulder; like Mark, Jill wore the same clothes she had on when she went missing. Except now, hers were covered in blood. At the time of her reappearance, police did not connect her murder with Mark's. Because Jill left home in Royal Oak after having an argument with her mother about chores, police treated her initial disappearance as a runaway and not a kidnapping. Their causes of death as well as their genders differed, and their deaths were months apart. Mark was smothered while Jill suffered a 12-gauge shotgun blast to the right side of her face. The details surrounding her murder also seemed dissimilar to the details surrounding Mark's because his body displayed evidence of rape and Jill's did not.

There was a lingering aspect, however, about Jill's case that police did not know how to handle. The previous year, Jill's mother sent her to a therapist because Jill was having fears about being shot in the face by an unknown man. After Jill's death, her mother released an initial recording over a radio program of Jill telling her therapist about her fears. Police, therefore, have three speculations as to why Jill was shot. One: Jill told her killer about her premonitions of being shot in the face, and thus the killer fulfilled these fears to make a more shocking statement.

Two: Jill's killer could have heaved her smothered, dead body over his shoulder, and when he dropped her, the leftover air in her lungs expelled a moaning sound. The sound startled the killer, and so he shot her to confirm her death; the shotgun used to kill her could have been the same gun that delivered the contusion to the back of Mark Stebbins's head ten months earlier. Or three: Jill may have bitten the killer and he shot her in the jaw to destroy her teeth. If he were caught, the wounds Jill inflicted upon the killer could lead to a connection since she had dental records. At that time, though, police had drawn no solid connection between Mark and Jill's deaths.

Not until the third murder did police connect the three murders as serial. The third victim, Kristine Mihelich, disappeared less than a week after Jill's death. On the Sunday afternoon of January 2, 1977, ten-year-old Kristine walked to the 7-Eleven store near her home in Berkeley, Michigan to buy a popular teenage magazine. Her mother reported her missing three hours later. Her body was dumped nineteen days later in a snowy roadside ditch in Franklin Village, in plain view. A mail carrier spotted her the morning of January 21. Like Mark, she had been smothered. She had a faint bruise under her left cheek, which suggested that the killer could have used his forefinger and thumb to close her nose and the bruising resulted from his middle finger pressing against her cheek. On the day of her discovery, the Oakland County Task Force was finally activated.

Tim King was the fourth and final victim. He was abducted Wednesday evening on March 16, 1977. One similarity between the last two OCKK abductions was that eyewitnesses had seen Kristine and Tim immediately before their abductions. A female store clerk remembered selling Tim a candy bar at the Hunter-Maple Pharmacy, and another woman recognized his description from the news a few days after he was abducted. This witness had

seen Tim holding his skateboard and talking to a man standing near a blue Gremlin automobile in the Hunter-Maple parking lot Wednesday evening. These sightings did not help Tim, however. His body was dumped six days later on the night of March 22 in a ditch off the side of a quiet road in Livonia, Michigan. He, too, had been smothered. Autopsy reports showed that he had been fed a meal of fried chicken only a few hours earlier.

On the morning of March 22—a few hours before Tim’s death— Oakland County police departments announced a plan to perform random car searches throughout the county starting at midnight that night. This new development might have alerted the killer, and so he disposed of Tim, before midnight, in Wayne County, not Oakland. This minor misstep of the killer’s would prove vital in solving the case. Unbeknownst to the killer, he would now have two jurisdictions searching for him.

Not until Kristine Mihelich’s death—the third murder—did police understand that they were working with a serial kidnapper and killer. The similarities in the cases are that the four children were taken either on a Sunday afternoon or a Wednesday evening in a suburb of Oakland County. They were bathed during their captivity, their fingernails trimmed, and their clothes laundered. They were all abducted in or around parking lots and modestly populated areas, and they seemed to go almost voluntarily with their captor. There were also sinister differences in the crimes. Mark and Tim were repeatedly raped, while the two girls were not. In addition, no blood was found on Mark’s clothing (except smudges on his underpants), even though he suffered a serious cut on his head. He was either wearing different clothes that did not belong to him or no clothing during that injury. Kristine’s pant hems contained road salt, yet her mother claimed her pants were washed the night before, and there was no snow on the ground when she was abducted. When her body was found, Kristine’s pants were also tucked inside her

boots, though her mother claimed she always wore them outside her boots, and the tie on her wrap-around shirt was tied in the front, though Kristine always tied it in the back, herself. Because police could not find serious signs of struggles on any of the children's bodies immediately prior to their deaths—though this does not negate the earlier bruises and marks on their bodies—the theory of the police is that each child was bathed before death. According to this theory, once the bathing was complete, the killer came behind the child with a bath towel. The towel kept their arms pinned to their sides while the killer's hand covered their noses and mouths.

The known fact remains that Mark Stebbins, Jill Robinson, Kristine Mihelich, and Tim King suffered painful deaths—and their deaths lingered in front of them before they had to submit. I wonder if they struggled, or if after days of abuse, they finally succumbed and accepted death as a reprieve. I imagine them fighting for their lives, eyes wide until the very end, and then their eyelashes fluttering shut in calm consent.

Something was tragically amiss in Oakland County in the late 1970s: other disappearances and killings occurred, some more famous than others. Without connection to the Oakland County child murders, three girls ranging in age from fourteen to sixteen were mysteriously killed. Their murders had enough variation from the OCKK murders for police to rule out a connection, but their brutality and lack of motive scared residents. A passerby found the nude body of sixteen-year-old Cynthia Cadieux in the town of Bloomfield; she died of a fractured skull and her body showed evidence of rape. She was the first victim in a spiraling trend of murders that plagued the county for the next year and a half. She was killed on January 16, 1976. Only three days later, another killing occurred. Fourteen-year-old Sheila Srock was raped and shot to death in

Birmingham. Lastly, in August of 1976, fourteen-year-old Jane Allen hitchhiked from her home in Royal Oak to her boyfriend's house in Auburn Heights. Her body was found four days later in the Miamisburg River in Ohio. Police eventually solved Cynthia Cadieux and Sheila Srock's murders, and their only connection to the four Oakland County child murders is the similar location and time frame.

As these Oakland County murders of 1976 and 1977 gained national attention, newspaper readers across the country were perhaps surprised to see Oakland County in the limelight again. While the OCKK child murders received headlines from 1976 and 1977, it was only seven months earlier—July 30, 1975—that Oakland County made international news. Jimmy Hoffa, the infamous and former Teamster president and supposed organized crime accomplice, disappeared from the Machus Red Fox Restaurant parking lot in Oakland County's affluent town of Bloomfield Hills.

Police have yet to find Hoffa's body and speculations as to his whereabouts range from entombment under Giants Stadium in New Jersey to burial somewhere on a farm in Milford, Michigan. Over the past thirty years, convicted Mafia hit men have vied for the prestige of having 'offed' Hoffa, and many convicted prisoners have lead police on wild goose chases in the hope of receiving lighter sentences. Seven years after Hoffa's disappearance, police issued a death certificate, even without evidence of his corpse. Hoffa's story is a mix of conspiracy, myth, and fact, and many believe his death is due to ties with local organized crime.

Receiving an undisclosed tip, FBI agents ransacked a horse farm in Oakland County's Milford Township in May 2006 searching for Hoffa's body. For over a week, dozens of FBI agents, forensics specialists, Michigan State University archeologists and anthropologists, and police cadaver dogs laid siege to the eighty-acre, fittingly named Hidden Dreams ranch. News

stations lined the property's perimeter and helicopters flew overhead as agents overturned a horse stable and excavated massive holes throughout the acreage. In the end, the FBI found nothing.

The town of Milford enjoyed its local fame; the Dairy Queen's marquee read "To Find Hoffa, Look in the Yellow Pages Under Cement," and people sported t-shirts with "The F.B.I. Digs Milford, Do You?" on their chests. The FBI and police spent thousands of federal dollars and news organizations gave mass media attention in their quest to uncover a thirty-year-old corpse; many, however, already speculate who Hoffa's killers are. One can only ask why finding the body of a man rightly assumed dead in Oakland County is more important than looking for a child serial killer. Finding the OCCK serial killer could provide important answers and far vaster information about the motivation and methods of serial killers; finding Hoffa's body would be of comparatively slight value. Had the FBI given the other towns in Oakland County the attention, resources, time, and money that Milford was given in one week, the OCCK case might have been solved.

A series of mass murders in the 1970s, some well known, and others not, plagued the country. The Zodiac killer and Charles Manson's murders of the late 1960s were still notorious, and David Berkowitz's Son of Sam killings and Ted Bundy's as-yet undetected rampages were occurring at the same time as the Oakland County child murders. Also still fresh in Michigianians' minds were the murders of seven young women in the Ann Arbor area committed by John Norman Collins from 1967 to 1969. But these Oakland County murders were not inflicted upon adults with some awareness of danger or sense of self-defense. These were children who seemingly went willingly with their abductor during waking hours. They were

housed, fed, and bathed, and they vanished as abruptly as they reappeared. The Oakland County Child Killings was one of the most wrenching and intensely investigated child serial cases in the nation in the late 1970s. Three decades later, the police are examining new leads.



## Chapter Four

### *Cathy*

The exact date of that cold March night in 2007 escapes me. Cathy and I lived only twenty miles apart, she in the same Illinois town where I attended college. I knew exactly where I was driving, but I still clutched the directions in my gloved hand. I left my house when snow only dusted the streets, but I left Cathy's house in a blizzard.

The day was March 16, 1977, and Cathy King thought about Jerry Lewis. She wore a green gossamer dress and heeled shoes with straps around her ankles. Later that evening, three of her girlfriends picked her up and drove twenty miles away to Dearborn, Michigan to see the famous King of Comedy.

The eldest of four children, Cathy was seventeen and in her senior year of high school. Earlier that month, her father and she visited a college she was interested in attending the coming fall. But now, a few weeks later, her interest was in a night out dressed up with her friends. The rest of the house was empty. Her brother Chris was babysitting for a family in a nearby neighborhood, and her brother Mark was at his junior high school's play rehearsal. Their father was delivering legal documents for a client, and their mother went along to sign as a legal witness. Only Cathy and Tim, her youngest brother, were home and both were getting ready to leave.

Cathy sat on the living room couch and buckled her shoe strap around her ankle. Tim walked into the room, wearing his favorite red Birmingham Hockey League jacket and green

corduroys, and said, “You look really pretty.” The statement surprised Cathy because she had taken childish abuse and torment from her three younger brothers over the years. Tim then asked her for some money because he was saving his for a prized warm-up suit he had had his eye on for months. Cathy laughed and replied that he only buttered her up with a compliment before he told her what he wanted. Working as a part-time waitress while still in school, she kept a jar of tip money in the house. She let Tim take some change from the jar so he could go buy a candy bar at Hunter-Maple Pharmacy, a small drugstore amidst a strip of storefronts four blocks from their house. She told him to hurry home because their parents would soon be back, and this was the first time Tim was allowed to stay home alone. She would be gone before he got back from the store, so she would leave the front door cracked open for him. Tim left a few minutes later.

Cathy’s friends eventually arrived, and the car full of teenaged girls sped away from their hometown of Birmingham, Michigan. After the show, the girls stayed in Dearborn, visited a bar, and lost track of time—the drinking age was eighteen then. They arrived home in Birmingham at 2:30 in the morning, long past their curfew. Cathy and her friends pulled into the driveway. Every light burned in her house and a police car was parked on the other side of the driveway. Convinced they were all in trouble, Cathy walked up to her house as her friend’s car screeched away.

The moment Cathy walked into her house alone, her mother’s shoulders slumped with the truth. Cathy was the last hope for her parents. They thought perhaps Tim was with her. He hadn’t been with Chris when he came home from babysitting or with Mark from rehearsal.

Hours before Cathy arrived home, Marion, their mother, and Chris drove around the neighborhood and to Tim’s friends’ houses hoping he stopped over or was there spending the night. It was ten or eleven at night, and they didn’t want to call. They finally pulled up to Tim

Coltman's house, the last friend Tim had played with that day, and saw all the lights off. Chris offered to knock on the door, but his mother knew it was useless. Marion did not need to call or ask Tim's friends in order for her to realize he wasn't there. The whole neighborhood was quiet, and she was forced to realize her son was gone.

The police officers bombarded Cathy with questions. They wanted to know why the door was cracked open. They thought, maybe, the perpetrator entered the house and took Tim against his will. Cathy told them she left the door cracked open because she would not be home when Tim got back from Hunter-Maple, and he did not have a key. They wanted to know when Cathy saw him last. She gave him some money, she told the police, and Tim left at dusk when it was still light out. She didn't leave with her girlfriends until 7:45 that evening.

Not knowing what else to do after the police left, Cathy called the local hospitals and asked if any young boys had been dropped off. A futile attempt, as the police had already done that, but she needed to feel useful.

The next morning, police officers went to the Hunter-Maple pharmacy and the other storefronts and questioned the store clerks; one clerk remembered selling a candy bar to a young boy around 8:00 P.M. They found Tim's basketball in his elementary school parking lot, three blocks from his house. The police assumed that after leaving the house at around 7:30 in the evening, Tim played basketball by himself in the Adams Elementary parking lot, went to Hunter-Maple, bought a candy bar, and was kidnapped around 8:30. Police realized that Tim's disappearance was very similar to those of the other three children elsewhere in Oakland County. Two of those abductions occurred on Sunday afternoons and one on a Wednesday evening. Tim was also taken on a Wednesday. Police speculated that all four children were kidnapped from business parking lots.

The Birmingham Police Department decided that at least one officer would remain in the Kings' house, twenty-four hours a day, to shield the family from media visits and prank calls and to run defense for the department.

The next morning, the King children went to school while their parents made a televised plea to the abductor, asking him to return their son. Cathy's friends tried to console her and tell her Tim probably ran away from home, that he would come back, that he would be found. Cathy's school, Seaholm High School, was abuzz with the announcement of Tim King's disappearance. She should have spent the day performing in the school's mock United Nation trials, but she couldn't concentrate on that or dodge the worried questions and comments from her classmates and teachers. Not able to finish the rest of the day, Cathy left school early. Driving home in her car, she spotted low-flying helicopters criss-crossing the town. At that moment, she knew something very ugly was happening. She felt her stomach drop as she realized police were searching for a missing body, not a missing child.

Cathy stayed home for the rest of the week, preferring the seclusion of her house and talking with the police officers on duty. The worst part of the waiting was answering the door to concerned neighbors and friends. They came bearing pies and casseroles and faces that expressed inconsolable sadness. Cathy found herself consoling the neighbors instead. Her brothers continued to attend school and once at home again, to hide out in their shared room; Tim's bed stood empty next to Chris and Mark's. With no understudy, Mark performed in the school play on Saturday. Cathy stayed home with her mother, helping her answer questions from the media and police, sidestepping overbearing neighbors, and heating all the food—seemingly endless amounts kept pouring in. That week was Cathy's first experience with sleep deprivation. Her days and nights were indistinguishable from one another. She read the newspapers cover-to-

cover, which only made her feel worse. Slowly grasping the similarities between Tim's abduction and those of the other three children, the King family gradually lost hope.

Tuesday evening, six days after Tim's abduction, Cathy was up late watching *The Johnny Carson Show* with her mother and some neighbors. Chris and Mark were asleep, and their father was in his room listening to the radio. They had finished watching the 11:00 P.M. news, and Johnny Carson came on at 11:30. Cathy sat close to the television set, watching the camera pan in on Johnny's smiling face. He told some jokes and twisted his face in that renowned wide smile and cast-up eyes. He shrugged and started shuffling the white cards in his hands. Teletype appeared at the bottom of the screen; it read "Body of Boy Found in Roadside Ditch." Time stopped for a moment, and no one breathed. Then Cathy's father flew out of his bedroom, having heard the broadcast over the radio. The neighbors fled from the house. About an hour later, the Birmingham Chief of Police and the King family's priest came over and officially gave them the news. Marion King went with the police to identify her youngest son's body at the morgue the next morning.

Tim's body was discovered on Tuesday night, March 22, 1977. The police now had four murder victims and eight different crimes scenes; each child was kidnapped and disposed of in a different location in Oakland County; only Tim was dropped in Wayne County.

A few days before the funeral, Cathy and her father's friend and colleague drove all over the city looking for a light blue warm-up suit in a size ten in which to bury Tim. Tim had been saving his money to buy his own light blue warm-up suit and was planning to go out with his mom the next weekend in March to purchase one. In the 1970s powder blue tuxedos and light blue cars were the norm. Tim had been specific over the past few months, both about the color

and in saving his money. Since he never got the warm-up suit, it became a necessity for the family to buy him one now. A black jacket and tie, though appropriate for a funeral, was not familiar to an eleven-year-old boy, and Barry and Marion King thought Tim would prefer the light blue warm-up suit. But everything Cathy and her father's friend found was either the wrong size or not the right color. At their last effort in a varsity shop, they found a warm-up suit but in navy blue. It looked too big, but the store clerk told Cathy, "You'll have growing room." Cathy and her father's friend looked at each other for a long moment. Cathy was speechless for the first time in her life. Though it was the wrong shade, they bought the navy blue warm-up suit and left.

The day of the funeral, the King family arrived at the funeral home before the service started. Tim's casket was left open for them. Cathy looked down at her brother and noticed how much bigger he looked even though, at eleven, Tim was small and slight for his age. The autopsy, her mother explained, left the body swollen. She noticed all the make-up he had on and how artificial it made him appear. The left side of his forehead was heavily bruised, the types of bruises that could be made by a fatal blow; the makeup did a poor job concealing the bruises so Tim was shifted slightly on his left side to hide them. To Cathy's surprise, she noticed Tim wore a light blue warm-up suit. Her father's friend had not given up and had driven all through Detroit and its suburbs looking for a light blue warm-up suit, size ten. He finally found one.

The police and the family agreed on a closed-casket service; sinister rumors had been circulating that funeral prayer cards from Mark Stebbins's funeral in February of 1976 were found on the body of Jill Robinson at her funeral, and Jill and Mark's cards were found on Kristine Mihelich's body. The police set up surveillance to take photos of every person attending the church service and funeral home. The police asked the King family not to cry or show outwards signs of grief; the killer might be present, they explained, and causing grief and pain

was his goal. Mark and Chris kept to themselves and sat with their eyes cast down. Too angry to cry, Marion jabbed her husband in the ribs when tears started to roll down his face.

After the service, church members and friends organized a luncheon in the basement of the church. The Kings walked downstairs, and Marion turned to her family. "I have to get out of here," she said. They thanked everyone and turned to leave without ever sitting down. They went home and slowly realized there were no police officers, neighbors, and family in their house. They were alone for the first time in over a week.

Grief and anger became undistinguishable for Cathy. She realized how preventable Tim's death was and how that made it all the more tragic. She kept thinking that perhaps she could have seen him skateboarding down the street, or playing basketball, or even talking to the killer in the Hunter-Maple parking lot. She was sitting in the front seat of her friend's car when they left for the comedy show, so she could have witnessed, she imagined, the whole event take place. For the next week, she continually looped the memory of her car ride over and over in her mind, hoping each time she would see Tim out of the corner of her eye riding his skateboard, or approaching the pharmacy, or even talking to a man standing near a blue Gremlin. She thought that maybe her parents had seen Tim, and they didn't even know it. At around 8:30 P.M. the night Tim was abducted, their parents were sitting down to dinner at Peabody, a local restaurant. Peabody and Hunter-Maple were across the street from one another, the restaurant facing the front of the pharmacy. Their son was abducted only a few hundred yards from them.

Eventually their days stopped seemingly turning into their nights. The police gave them a new phone number. The winter months passed, and the snow melted. They slowly adjusted to their old routines, while at the same time starting new lives. They had faith that the police would find Tim's killer.

\*

I was shaking snow out of my hair and stomping my boots on the welcome mat when, catching me unaware, Cathy opened her front door and embraced me. She and I were at eye-level, neither of us are tall, and I thought what a strong woman she was. A gust of wind could have blown her away, but she would not let it. When she was seventeen years old, she easily could have blown away.

Cathy invited me into her house that evening and told me the beginning of her story. She talked to me about her parents, her three younger brothers, and her childhood home in Birmingham. She remembered what she wore the last night she saw Tim. Many women save the clothing they wore on the significant days of their lives—their wedding gowns, prom dresses, or solemn, black suits. Cathy still may have her wedding gown or the dress she wore to her brother's funeral; I do not know. But like the clothes of many women whose wedding gowns end up in their daughters' dress-up boxes, Cathy's green, gossamer dress—the dress she wore when Tim last spoke to her—is in her teenage daughter's forgotten toy chest. She remembered the awful weather Michigan endured the week Tim was missing, and how the sight of slushy, gray snow still makes her cringe. She meekly acknowledges Saint Patrick's Day and how other reminders—dirty snow, boys on skateboards, blue Gremlins, and more—signify elements related of Tim's death. She was seventeen when her brother was murdered, and she was forty-seven when I met her. She thinks about Tim every day.

We sat on her living room couch facing a large bay window. She talked, and I watched as the trees were buried under drifts of snow. At first I didn't want to be there. I thought forlornly of the slow, drive home and how I should have come a day sooner or—for that matter—any day after the storm had passed. But once she began her story, the snow made sense to me. It is a



silent, white layer covering up all the land's imperfections, if just for an hour or two. The best part of a cold, brutal winter is the fresh snow still white and impenetrable. But it soon turns to slush, cast away on street corners by cars and passersby; this is the worst part of winter, the hold of cruel weather too bitter to forget. Tim's body was abandoned in a ditch on a snowy night. Soon after the police were called to the scene, too many feet had trampled the snow around him. The ditch he lay in—once soft and white under his body—was soon an icy, muddy mess.

Cathy showed me a newspaper article published two days after Tim's body was found. On Thursday, March 24, 1977, *The Detroit News* printed a photograph of the crime scene. The reporter interviewed Les Davis, the man whose property Tim was found on, and photographed Davis as he pointed to the ditch on his property on Gill Road, near 8 Mile Road in Livonia, Michigan. He knelt and pointed his finger, but his face grimaced at the camera. The photograph is in black-and-white, and the foreground is visible; the snow had all melted and turned the ground to mud. Les Davis told the reporter that he had not slept in days. The reporter emphasized that Davis was a retired paratrooper from World War II, but the sight of the murdered child was too much for him. Part of the article reads as follows:

*The Detroit News*  
March 24, 1977  
"Finder of Tim's Body is haunted by sight"

Davis paced the floor from living room to kitchen as he talked. He sat only momentarily with his drink.

"I'll tell you about that ditch," he said. "I clean it out quite often. If I didn't, my septic tank would back up. I've found everything you can imagine in there. Last summer I even found a stolen motorcycle."

He sagged wearily on the couch.

"It's not that I haven't tried to sleep—I have. It's just that every time I try, I keep seeing that kid lying in the frozen mud.

"They're all gone now. All the police and the reporters—even the barricades. But I still can't shake it...I think I'll see that kid for the rest of my life."

In the remainder of the article, Davis recounted that Tuesday night. He let his cat out at 10:30. Minutes later, two young men knocked at his door. They stopped in the road, they told him, because they didn't want to hit the cat. Once stopped, they saw a body. Davis then called the police, and within minutes they arrived. He used his flashlight to help guide them to the body. Tim's skateboard, the one he rode when he was kidnapped, lay a few feet from him. He wore his red Birmingham hockey jacket, his shirt, corduroys, and sneakers.

The police expected this call. One criminal psychiatrist in particular, Dr. Bruce Danto, speculated that Tim was kidnapped because snow was in the forecast and his body then abandoned once the snow fell. Tim's abduction occurred in March; the kidnappings and murders of the three children before him also occurred in the winter months, and their bodies were dropped after a snowfall. Theories swirled around Oakland County—both from credible professionals and local citizens—about why the killer struck only in winter.

*The Detroit News* and *The Detroit Free Press* interviewed Dr. Danto multiple times throughout the next few weeks; Detroit's *Sunday News Magazine* called him the city's "Eager Psycho-Sleuth" and devoted four pages to his story. Printed on Monday, March 21, 1977—five days after Tim's abduction—*The Detroit Free Press* ran an article re-quoting Dr. Danto from his televised appearance over the weekend. Both in the televised announcement and in the newspaper article, Dr. Danto made the statement that the killer "is a squirrel-kind of killer who strikes when it snows" and "picks kids up like a squirrel picks up nuts in the wintertime, and then he drops them (dead) on the road." He used the squirrel analogy hoping to entice the killer onto Squirrel Road where police had been hiding all week. Dr. Danto's comment was further heightened when the killer dumped Tim's body on Gill Road, and Dr. Danto then compared the killer to a fish.

Even with the media-wide attention surrounding Tim's week-long disappearance and the task force's decision to let Dr. Danto into their fold, the police developed no solid leads and made no arrests. While the police were working non-stop throughout the Oakland County neighborhoods, the King family escaped into their home.

Cathy continued to tell me about the first week Tim was gone. One aspect the King family never anticipated was their responsibility to comfort others and share their grief with people who they did not want to. They continually reheated dishes of food from one guest to feed another. The house was never quiet while one policeman stood on duty and filtered the countless phone calls. Cathy, being the eldest and the only daughter, ran the household while her parents were occupied with police numerous times that first week, either in their house or at the station. Cathy dutifully hosted the mourners at the door. She played a vital role in maintaining some stability for her family that most people, most seventeen-year-olds in particular, should not have to play.

She told me about Tim. He was in a transitional stage in the middle of sixth grade, wanting to no longer be a child but a young man on the brink of his teenage years. The youngest of four, he did not want to be *Timmy*, but *Tim*, a more suitable name for an eleven-year-old who found himself competing for the attention of and validation from his three older siblings. He was small for his age, not yet having hit his growth spurt, with brown hair and brown eyes, freckles splayed across his nose, and a slight gap between his front teeth. He loved to ski, play baseball and basketball, and ride his skateboard. Hockey was his favorite sport, even though he admitted he was not very good. In the beginning of the sixth grade, he won an award at his school's science fair and was rehearsing the part of Mike Teavee (the precocious television addict) in the school's production of *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*. She told me again how he was

saving all his money for a light blue warm-up suit and how excited he was that the next weekend he and his mom were to purchase one. He shared a large bedroom with his two older brothers.

Tim's disappearance and murder were documented a hundred times over by Detroit's two newspapers and numerous, smaller publications. Though his mother, Marion, trusted the police and never questioned their authority, she could never talk about Tim's death and the subsequent investigation. Since the day Tim was abducted in 1977 until her death in 2004, Marion saved all the newspaper and magazine articles she could find that were in any way related to the event. She kept entire newspaper sections and occasional clippings on the top shelf in the hallway closet; they filled boxes tied with string. Marion needed some way to purge the pain and anger she felt. Tim was never far from her mind, and she would reminisce about him to her friends and family. But his death was off-limits, even to her husband and children.

Cathy photocopied all those articles and the occasional recent ones. She handed me a binder—three inches thick—full of Tim's artwork, his school photos, countless newspaper and magazine articles all in chronological order, stacks of her private correspondences with detectives over the years, and website print-outs. She also told me her story about her first week without Tim which is not printed anywhere except in police files, and those facts are only fragmented and matter-of-fact.

When I left Cathy's house later that night, the entire neighborhood was whited out. She and her husband stood on their porch in the dark and waved goodbye to me as the light from their opened front door illuminated them from behind.

The roads were indistinguishable under winter's white blanket. I stared at the traffic light's blinking red arrow, waiting for my chance to turn left onto the entrance ramp. Flashing

orange light filled my car and bounced off the dashboard from two snowplow trucks behind me. The arrow turned green, and a few other cars and mine rounded the left corner slowly. The roads were icy and all lane markings obscured by sleet. I knew where I was going, though. I had made this drive a hundred times before.

One of the snowplow trucks sped past me in the middle lane. Before I knew where the second plow was, it came up alongside me. I saw flashing orange light and heard the scrap of steel against concrete. Then I saw blackness. A wall of ice and snow covered the car and windows. I took my foot off the accelerator and coasted for a moment. I slowly steered farther to the right for I knew a wide shoulder accompanied the merging lane. The car rolled to a stop, and I put it in park and stared ahead at the windshield wipers crushed under a wall of sleet and snow. They looked pathetic, like two broken wings caught in mid-flight. I sat enveloped in snow.

I eventually unfastened my seatbelt, and it took three, solid smacks with my shoulder before the driver's side door would budge under its heavy burden. I was out in the dark and the cold on the side of the highway as cars slowly passed. I eventually cleared enough snow away to see out of the windows but left the rest of the car shrouded in its awkward gray, snow drift. I stood next to the car and briefly looked at it parked on the wet, dirty highway shoulder, but then I looked past it. On the other side of the black highway was a brief stretch of land and trees completely covered in white. Those two images, alongside each other, created such a stark contrast. And then I realized how temporary the snow actually was. It could only do so much. It could conceal a few secrets, but not for long. It also disclosed some, like tire tracks.

I pulled into the driveway later that night and thought about my own situation. I sat in the car with the dull beam of the headlights illuminating the garage and stared at the snow still stuck to the hood of the car. Little pools of water collected at the base of the windshield. The car

became cold again, but I was not ready to get out yet. I had spent three hours listening to the story of an eleven-year-old's life and death, yet I had been indignant at an irresponsible snowplow driver. I did not know how to direct my anger at a killer whose name or face I did not know. It was much easier to be mad at a truck driver and think about my own brief experience of injustice than it was to be overcome with grief about the murder of a young boy. My anger was misdirected.

## Chapter Five

### *The Hunt*

On Sunday, March 20, 1977, while Tim was missing for the fourth day, *The Detroit Free Press* quoted two police officers who had “been working on [Tim King’s case] 10 hours a day, six, sometimes seven, days a week.” These officers were among the many who constituted the Oakland County task force, a specialized group of police who were solely devoted to solving the murders of Mark Stebbins, Jill Robinson, Kristine Mihelich, and now Tim King. The task force was activated after Kristine Mihelich’s death.

The newspaper headlines and articles documenting the first four days of Tim’s disappearance illustrate the discrepancy between what the media and what the police wanted the community to believe. The police were still indicating that Tim’s abduction was solely that, or even that he ran away from home; they publicized no connection to the other OCKK murders. The newspapers, however, had other purposes. They made no assertion that Tim was going to be the fourth victim in the OCKK case or the seventh victim in just over a year of child murders, but they wanted to show that it was a likely possibility. Since Tim’s disappearance was not officially reported until Wednesday at midnight, it was too late to make Thursday morning’s headline. Friday morning’s headline, therefore, read “Missing Birmingham Boy Hunted,” which was what the police wanted. The subtitle, however, read “6 Child Murders Still Unsolved.” The number included both the three Oakland child murders and the murders of the three teenage girls. In less than a week, Tim would bring the count to seven.

\*

Oakland County citizens reading those articles knew that Tim was another murdered victim in a spiraling downward trend, even before Tim's body was found. Not until Saturday, March 19 did the police announce in a *Detroit News* article that they were "certain" that Tim was kidnapped and not a missing or runaway child, though one may be unsure about what exactly constitutes a child as missing. He was not misplaced somewhere. Did the police think that he wandered off alone and could not find his way back home? Did they think this for three days? One speculation as to why the police did not want to immediately connect Tim's disappearance to the other OCCK murders was because the police were conducting their own muted investigation and search for the killer.

Unlike in the first three kidnappings and murders, there were a few leads in Tim's abduction. Police had a tip from the woman who was in the Hunter-Maple pharmacy parking lot and had seen a young boy, fitting Tim's description, talking to a man. Her description of Tim that Wednesday evening fit the family's description—he was wearing a red hockey jacket, green Levi corduroy pants, and white sneakers, and he was slight for his age, four feet tall and sixty-three pounds with brown hair and brown eyes. The witness then gave the police a description of the man seen talking to Tim. This composite sketch became the backbone of the case during the entire length of Tim's abduction and for months later. He was reported as a young man in his mid-twenties to thirties with shaggy, brown hair and thick, muttonchop sideburns with a fair complexion and husky build. The police sketch artist drew a profile of him, though he looks like countless young, white men living in the 1970s or even 1990s for that matter. He was wearing a rust-colored sports coat and dark pants. The most telling detail, however, was the witness's description of his car—a blue AMC Gremlin with white-walled tires and white hockey stripes.



Both *The Detroit News* and the *Detroit Free Press* publicized this sketch on Saturday, March 19, making certain that this man was described as a “person of great interest” and not a suspect. Printing that headline gave this “person of great interest” enough time to turn himself in, police assumed, because by Sunday, the police changed this man’s status to the “prime suspect.” After the media released the police profile of this prime suspect, nearly all of Michigan was on the lookout for a man with shaggy hair and a blue Gremlin.

The American Motors Corporation (AMC) worked with the Michigan State Police, Oakland County’s Sheriff Department, the prosecutor’s office, and local departments in locating the elusive car. The AMC Gremlin had a short-lived but prosperous life in the United States. Between 1970 and 1978, AMC manufactured more than 600,000 Gremlins. It now stands as an iconic car of the 1970s, and it was Michigan’s most sought after car during Tim’s abduction. Around two hundred Gremlins were registered in Oakland County, and police talked to nearly every owner.

The tension in Oakland County during the week of Tim’s abduction was heightened after Tim’s death. Parents started driving their children to and from school. Bus drivers could only let children off the bus if their parents or known guardians were waiting at the stops. If students walked to school, they did so in groups under watchful eyes of neighbors. Police received calls from people reporting children forced into cars by strangers. Those strangers would turn out to be the children’s parents. One such report turned out to be a child struggling not to get into his parent’s car to avoid a trip to the dentist. There was widespread paranoia, perhaps rightly so. The police were inundated with tips leading nowhere, and even though they were besieged with information, they had the manpower and money, they claimed, to follow nearly all of them. Even so, one can imagine that, however large the filter was to sift through the logical and suspicious

leads, police were still overwhelmed. Their special phone lines for documenting OCK tips were always busy. Their shifts turned from eight hours to twelve hours a day. They combed the community but found nothing.

No one, however, was treated as tersely as the unfortunate Gremlin owners of Oakland County. In an article in the *Detroit News* entitled “Oakland parents tense after killing,” one such blue Gremlin owner, Paul Morton, claimed that he had been “stopped five times by the police in five different cities [...] every time they stop me, they make me feel like I’m the murderer.” Another blue Gremlin owner complained to the Birmingham Police that he too had been pulled over numerous times. The article reports “two minutes after he left the station, another officer on patrol stopped him.”

The hunt for the blue Gremlin came to naught. The police cleared each Gremlin owner off their suspect list as none of the owners matched the psychological profile of the killer. Following Tim’s disappearance, many had put forth their own theories about who would kidnap and murder children. But not until a team of psychiatrists, psychologists, and law enforcement officials composed a profile did both the police and the public have something to work with. The profile posited that the suspect was a white male because his lack of ethnicity would call no attention to him in affluent Birmingham, he was between the age of twenty-five and thirty-five, a comforting age to a young boy or girl, and he was intelligent enough to know how to kidnap a child and elude police. The profile also posited that he did not drink alcohol or take drugs. But there was a more disturbing aspect to the profile—the suspect was fanatical about cleanliness as all four murdered children had recently been bathed, their fingernails cleaned, and their clothes laundered. The suspect had a white-collar job allowing him freedom of movement. He also had strange sexual perversions.

After police discovered Tim's body, they redirected their energies toward finding a shred of a lead to point them in the right direction. A task force of over two hundred detectives tried many different routes—random car searches, stake-outs at gay bars throughout the Detroit area, advertisements in underground sex magazines to attract pedophiles, pressure on police “snitches” or informants about any knowledge of the Oakland County murders, heavy police traffic in both the deteriorating Cass Corridor and Coolidge Corridor, and a list of all the registered Gremlins in Oakland County. These efforts, a police officer admitted in a *Detroit News* article, “accomplished little.”

According to the same article, throughout the task force's investigation during the week Tim was gone and at least a few days after his body was found, police had held and questioned only two men. The newspapers do not indicate if those men were even arrested, and both were let go after questioning by proving they had legitimate alibis and passing a lie detector test. With a two hundred-man team and an entire county on the lookout, the police had nothing.

Looking through the stacks of newspaper articles thirty-two years after Tim's death, I am struck by the lack of evidence. The case's revitalization in 2005 has been the most promising development in all of these years. There is the possibility of overlooked suspects and hidden leads, but thirty-two years is enough time for the public to forget the case, suspects to hide from police, and evidence to be covered up.

The *Detroit News* printed Barry and Marion King's pleas to the kidnapper the weekend before Tim was murdered. Both pleas are agonizing but also simple in their requests: treat Tim kindly, talk to him, make sure his cold does not get any worse. Even with the series of child murders in Oakland County that past year and a half, I wonder if these letters to the killer were a

rarity for all of Michigan's readers in 1977. Child kidnappings generally were not as prevalent then as they are now in the twenty-first century, so are we immune to them? Are Barry and Marion King's pleas in the newspaper more poignant than any other mother or father's plea today? Their appeals, I imagine, are not very different from those of other unfortunate parents who have had to do the same thing.

Parts of Barry and Marion King's letters read as follows.

*The Detroit News*  
Saturday, March 19, 1977  
"Police certain boy is kidnap victim"

"We love you, Tim. God bless you. Keep tough. If you missed the Michigan-U of D game, Michigan won. If you don't make Little League tryouts tomorrow, the coach says you can try out next week. Say your prayers—and we're with you."

King's message to the kidnapper: 'Please treat Tim the way you'd treat your own kid. Kathy [sic], Chris, and Mark (the other King children) say treat him like a brother. Talk to him—he's a talkative kid. We all want him back.'

*The Sunday News*  
Sunday, March 20, 1977  
"Mother's plea for Tim's safety"

*"The following letter to the public—and to the kidnapper of her 11-year-old son—was given to a "Detroit News" reporter Saturday by Mrs. Marian [sic] King of Birmingham.*

*Her son, Timothy, has been missing since Wednesday night."*

"I am expecting at any moment for the side door to bang open and hear Tim say, 'Have we ate yet? I mean, have we had dinner yet?'

When that happens, I will run for his favorite Kentucky Fried Chicken and mix his glass of Ovaltine.

Then, when he has had the usual eight Oreos and some plain milk to dunk them, Tim and I will go on our delayed shopping trip. We had planned to buy a much-wanted light blue warm-up suit with the money he has saved from his newspaper route.

Wherever Tim is, he is distressed about worrying me. He has always left notes or called to tell me where he is. He is impatient to return to rehearsing for

his role as 'Mike TV' in the upcoming production of 'Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory' at Adams School.

He is also eager to play on his basketball team, tryout for Little League and his new career as a soccer player.

There are no words to express how much we all miss Tim. We can hardly wait to see him, hug him, and hear his latest collection of jokes.

It is my hope that Tim is not frightened or hungry and that his cold is not any worse."

## Chapter Six

### *Helen and John Meet*

Cathy once told me that her mother died the day Tim was taken. Not actually died, but that an essential part of her left with Tim. Marion King was a very private woman. Her husband, Barry, was an attorney, and he played the more gregarious role in the family. Tim's death was unusually hard for her because it immediately forced her private life into the public spotlight in Michigan, most notably in Birmingham, her home. Marion was from Nova Scotia and kept her Canadian citizenship her entire life, but Michigan was where she married and raised her family. And Birmingham was where she spent the rest of her life.

Cathy left her family home in Birmingham for Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin five months after Tim's death. She studied law, like her father, and earned her undergraduate and law degrees at Marquette. She never thought of Tim's death as a catalyst of her desire to pursue justice as a public defender or prosecutor; instead, Tim's death was something Cathy always tried to avoid. She found her niche working as a clerk and civil litigator in a circuit court of appeals. Cathy also considers herself lucky. She escaped the pain that being home extracted; her brothers, Chris and Mark, had to live in their house and in Birmingham a few more years until they could escape to college. Being in their family home in the town where they grew up is too painful, to this day, for all of the King children.

Unlike their children, Marion and Barry King had no desires to leave home. Following Tim's death, Marion retreated more into her home. If she left the house, people around town automatically recognized her, and she would either have to endure condolences from strangers,

or worse, the awkward silences and nods from acquaintances who did not know what to say. But Marion and Barry stayed in Birmingham and in their family home because all the memories of Tim were alive in that home and around the neighborhood. Marion continued to shop at the Hunter-Maple Pharmacy and park her car in the same secluded, back parking lot where Tim was abducted. Tim was all over Birmingham, and they had no desire to leave him again.

Marion King died on September 24, 2004 due to complications from smoking all of her adult life. She was cremated, as was Tim twenty-seven years earlier. Her ashes were kept at home until October 2006 when Barry King and his three eldest children held her burial. Tim's ashes were disinterred and now rest next to his mother's ashes in a family plot in a military cemetery in Michigan. Barry King served in the US Navy, and he plans to rest his ashes next to his wife and youngest son's.

For Cathy, 2006—the year of her mother's burial—became a pivotal year in another way as well. From March until now, Cathy has become part of her brother's case. Almost like the braid of a rope, three separate strands of information came together that year that gave Cathy and the OCCK case new direction: a website, a polygrapher, and a Pontiac sighting.

Through her brothers, Chris and Mark, Cathy remained casually aware of the case's Internet chatter that has swirled about since the mid-1990s. The OCCK case appears on many lurid, unsolved crime websites updated by people all over the country. The case receives its Internet notoriety as being an unsolved child serial crime and because it has remained unsolved for so long. The few potential suspects linked to the case have all had their names and criminal histories patched together into something resembling the truth. These exaggerated and sometimes

morbid sites only inflame the case as something even more brutal than it is. Cathy paid little attention to them because of this sensationalized and disturbing character.

Police received a false lead in 1999 that further upset her. Pursuing this lead, certain Oakland County police officers traveled to Wyoming to exhume the body of David Norberg, a former Michigan resident and a man police speculated was a potential suspect because of his criminal history as a child molester and violent alcoholic. Norberg died in a car crash in 1981 and among his belongings after his death was a necklace with “Kristine” engraved on it that his wife gave to police. Unidentified human hairs were found on Kristine and Tim’s body, and police speculated that they belonged to Norberg. Detective Ray Anger of the Berkeley, Michigan Police Department and other detectives working on the OCCK case traveled to Wyoming to perform a DNA test on Norberg’s exhumed body and the unknown hair. There was no match.

After that feeling of hope and then the letdown from this tip, Cathy couldn’t stay involved in police investigations. Many of us can’t bear investing time and energy in such terrible waiting games; yet Cathy had endured such experiences throughout her entire adult life. After the Norberg lead led nowhere, she chose to stay unaware. Her brothers and her father may have had the stomach for it, but Cathy could not continue to take part.

Seven years later, however, in early March 2006, Cathy received a phone call from her brother, Chris. He told her of a woman, Helen Dagner, who had a website solely devoted to the OCCK murders. This eccentric woman had started her website in March 2001. She claimed she knew who committed the murders and explained how she knew the murderer, and then she proceeded to recount her numerous conversations with the man and all of the contributing evidence. She displayed her story on her website for any one who was interested in reading, but her main intentions were too promote awareness to both the case and the inferiority of the police.



Chris phoned Cathy to warn her, in case she came across the website herself or to prevent a friend from catching her unaware with news of it. With her brother's warning in mind, Cathy decided to see what this new information was about, and she looked up Helen Dagner's website. What she found was equally upsetting and amazing: a man identified himself as the killer.

Helen Dagner relates her entire story about her involvement with the OCKK case on a cold case website <[http://www.geocities.com/toddmatthews/Oakland\\_murders.html](http://www.geocities.com/toddmatthews/Oakland_murders.html)> and on her website <<http://HelenDagner.com>>. Much of what she says—and by extension much of what I write—is hearsay as only Helen and her “murderer” were present.

Helen Dagner met a man, through a mutual acquaintance, while living in Alpena, Michigan in September 1991. His name was John Hastings, and he ultimately admitted to Helen that he committed the OCKK murders. His story, which he told her at the Alpena Big Boy restaurant over coffee every day for the next nine months, would give Helen a life goal—to find justice for these four children after the police failed, in her estimation, to give this case the attention it deserved. Out of frustration, she felt driven to post what John told her. There was so much information worth documenting to the public and that the police were ignoring. Once she started her site, she made connections with people in the case and learned even more information.

Helen worked small, freelance newspaper gigs in Alpena, a town nearly 230 miles north of Oakland County, when her meetings with John began. She has been steadfast since the first day she met John in 1991. She documented everything he told her, and she continues daily to post onto her website comments and new or recycled information about the case. Since 1991, she periodically contacts the Michigan State Police, the detectives in the OCKK task force, Michigan

media outlets, and other law enforcement departments with elements of her story. All brush her off as an eccentric woman—which she may be—and dismiss John as a neurotic who admitted to a series of crimes he did not commit. This may also be true.

Helen, however, ardently believes John Hastings played a vital role in both the abductions and murders. Not only did he confess to Helen, but she claims he recited insider information that only the parents and police involved in the case know, he once fit the speculated profile, and he lived in Oakland County during all four of the murders.

John Hastings and his four brothers and sisters were raised within a privileged family and lived in Oakland County's wealthy Bloomfield Township. In contrast to his more outgoing father, John was shy and reserved. His father, John Sr., was a local volunteer fireman and owned an antique fire truck he drove around town. He held an executive position at Zollner Corporation, a manufacturer of engine pistons. The American car was king in Detroit in the 1960 and '70s, and John Sr. provided well for his family. He was not overly frivolous with his money, however, when it came to his grown son, John. Although his parents were comfortable, they wanted to instill a sense of monetary responsibility in John, especially since he decided not to attend college. He had worked odd jobs since high school.

His parents owned two houses on the same block, and when John reached his twenties and decided not to attend college, they allowed him to live in the smaller of the two homes. His life was incongruous—he worked as a dishwasher at a local restaurant but resided alone in a house in one of Michigan's most elite neighborhoods. He lived at 200 Tuckahoe Road and his parents at 234 Tuckahoe. Only three miles from John's house, down Maple Road, was Tim King's house. Closer was Hunter-Maple Pharmacy and Poppleton Park.

John lived by himself at 200 Tuckahoe Road until March 1977. His parents were completing a messy divorce and needed to sell their other home. The divorce court issued John's eviction notice on March 16, 1977. His mother served him with the eviction notice that afternoon. That was also the day Tim King was abducted.

The house sold within days of the court's order, and John moved back home to live with his mom at 234 Tuckahoe, his childhood home.

A week later—March 22, 1977—Tim was found murdered, and police began their statewide search. Both John Hastings and his father were turned into police as potential suspects—John, through a tip by his ex-girlfriend, and John Sr. through an undisclosed tip. Police questioned John and even performed a polygraph test on him, which he passed; his father was only questioned, but not formally interviewed. The Hastings family never fully cooperated with police, and in June 1977, after the divorce, John Sr. left Bloomfield Township and Oakland County and never returned.

The police dismissed John soon after and continued with their search. John Hastings would no longer be of interest to the police until fourteen years later.

Fourteen years after Tim's murder, John moved to Alpena, Michigan to live closer to his girlfriend and their daughter. Helen met John through his girlfriend, a friend of Helen's. Helen and John were both between jobs and decided to meet for coffee.

Their first meeting formed the basis of their relationship for the next nine months. They started their three- to six-hour coffee meetings in the fall, continued through winter, and ended in the spring. They met at the Big Boy restaurant in September 1991, and John asked Helen the usual icebreaker, "What are you doing with your life?" Partially joking and partially out of

writer's ambition, Helen replied that she wanted to research and write a book about serial killers, an interest of hers. John was surprised at her answer and asked her how she could stand to write about such people. He then asked her if she knew anything about the Oakland County Child Killings. Even though Helen's late husband had been a police officer and they had lived in Michigan during the statewide search, she had no knowledge of them, and she told John so.

Before finishing their first cup of coffee during their first encounter, John not only described all four murders for Helen, but he theorized who the killer was and why he would commit such crimes. He told her that the killer cared for the children, fed them, and bathed them. He was probably from a cold but well-to-do family and wanted to save the children from a painful life that he himself experienced.

"John, it almost sounds like you know this guy," Helen said.

To her amazement, John told her that police had questioned him and other men in his age group in the surrounding area. Helen's interest was now piqued.

That first conversation carried over into the next nine months. They met daily, and John gave her more detailed, insider information into the crimes. Within three weeks of their meeting, Helen claims John started to describe the crimes in the first person.

Winter comes early to Michigan, and by mid-October, dusk appears in the late afternoon hours. Light snows dust the ground, and the temperature drops. Once the weather turned, Helen drove John home after their daily meetings. She claimed that he relived the body dumpings on the dark, snowy nights they were together. He would become quiet in the car, introspective, and seem to only snap out of his moods once she pulled up to his apartment.

John's story soon convinced Helen that he committed the murders, but she wanted to get as much information as she could before she told police. Once the police got involved, there was

the chance that John would not reveal anything else. On December 26, 1991 over coffee at the Alpena Big Boy, Helen told John that it was hard for her to visualize the location where each child's body was abandoned because she had never been to Oakland County. John immediately picked up four paper place-mats, turned them over, and drew each area. Helen remembers John's handmade maps looking nearly as accurate as store-bought ones. While John drew and described each map to Helen, sitting not too far away from their table and overhearing their bizarre conversation was the husband of one of the restaurant's former waitresses. On her website, Helen would later refer to this man as the "Alpena Witness."

Helen phoned the Birmingham police on December 27, the day after John drew the maps. It was nearly fifteen years after Tim's murder, but Helen thought this information could still aid police. They listened to her story and told Helen that they would need more information, something only the killer would know about the children and the crimes. Later that day, Helen met John for coffee and provoked him saying she did not believe he was the killer. In order for her to believe him, she said, she needed more specific information, something only the killer or those involved were knowledgeable of. He protested, as Helen expected he would. Bluffing, she made as if to leave the restaurant. John took the bait and started to talk. Helen claimed he gave her some three hundred pieces of insider information that only the police or the killer would know—for example, John attended the party at the American Legion Hall that Mark disappeared from (the restaurant where he worked as a dishwasher was hosting the party); John put a chicken bone in Tim's pocket; Kristine had little appliqués on her pants; Jill had a quarter in her pocket and one book in her backpack. Helen went home that night and phoned the police with her new information. The police did not tell Helen whether this information was privy only to police, but they thought it important enough to give Helen a chance.

After Helen's second call, the Birmingham Police traveled to Alpena and questioned John. He took another polygraph—nearly fourteen years after the crimes—and passed a second time. John also showed them a passport from 1977 that proved he was out of the country during one of the earlier three murders. The police questioned his mother for information about where they were in the winter of 1977 and about the trip John took abroad. According to Helen, his mother was very vague with police. The police, however, cleared John soon after. Helen was stunned.

The police told her John was not the man—he passed two polygraphs, he had a passport showing he was gone in the winter of 1977, and the police claimed that all the information John knew could have been read in newspapers and magazines: he had lived only three miles away from Tim's house, and these crimes dominated the Oakland communities and newspapers. The police believed he fabricated his entire story.

Helen continued to press the Oakland County police departments and even some of the victims' family members until the police would listen to her story again. Finally, Detective Ray Anger of the Berkeley, Michigan Police Department (who would later exhume David Norberg's body) and another officer drove up to Alpena to speak to Helen a second time. She gave them copies of the detailed maps John drew, a photo of John, a notebook of facts she had taken, and a sample of his hair. She drove them past his apartment, and they took pictures. But that spring of 1992 was the last time police ever gave Helen any more of their time. They again cleared John as a potential suspect and labeled Helen as a woman duped by a charismatic man. Interestingly enough, Helen claimed John met with her for coffee the next few months and still talked to her about the crimes, even after she turned him in to the police. He told her she simply misunderstood him. He continued to trust her, though even Helen did not know why.

Helen learned in 1999 that Detective Anger had his own suspect, David Norberg, whom he was investigating. She claimed that Detective Anger threw away the hair sample of John's and did not even check to verify John's passport from 1977. (The police have never told Helen whether they confirmed John's passport from 1977 as authentic.) Helen also learned about Detective Cory Williams's lead on Ted Lamborgine in 2005. And after all those years, her lead about John Hastings went nowhere. He left Alpena a few months after the police questioned him, and he has never returned. They no longer communicate.

Helen felt in 1992 that the police discredited her and that she needed to get her story out to other people who would believe her and what John had once told her. Since 1992, Helen and the police have had a very volatile relationship. While they believe her to be an eccentric who stirs up trouble and causes the public to distrust them, Helen strongly believes that the police are intentionally preventing the case from being solved or even moving forward. By solving the case, the police would have to admit their own mistakes these past thirty-three years; they don't have the ego to do that, she claims. Helen also feels that the police do not realize how deeply these child murders affected the residents of Oakland County, which is illustrated by their lack of motivation to move forward. She maintains that many people have contacted her to sell her story, but she refuses. Her true intentions, she states, are to promote enough awareness so the case can be solved.

Helen started her website and chat forum in 2001 in conjunction with a cold-case group and soon branched off into a website of her own. She has a tracking program on her website that allows her to view the ISP (Internet Service Provider) addresses of her viewers. The tracking program enables her to know at what hour of the day and for how long a person views her site. She knows

when members of the OCCK task force visit in the midnight hours in their houses or when they view it at their department stations. She can tell when Cathy or even John Hastings views it. A simple Internet search of the OCCK case causes Helen's website to pop up within the top ten links, and so it is viewed often at all hours of the day, virtually all over the world. But Helen keeps diligent track of her most persistent viewers.

Cathy had not known any of this while visiting Helen's website for the first time in early March 2006. She only wanted to see the latest Internet prattle on her brother's case. While she was reading the site, however, one member's posts attracted Cathy. This particular member's comments indicated she went to Cathy's high school during the time of Tim's abduction and murder. Cathy e-mailed Helen immediately, introducing herself and asking for this anonymous member to contact her.

After she sent the e-mail, Cathy had to attend to other matters. She and her family were traveling that weekend to Birmingham, Michigan from their home outside Chicago. Barry King was turning seventy-five, and his children were coming home to celebrate with him.

While his three children were home, Barry King fell victim either to end-of-the-winter restlessness or simply to a desire to tie up loose ends; he wanted to clean out his house. The boxes full of newspaper and magazine articles relating to Tim's case that Marion had diligently saved over the years were nearly thrown out with the morning trash. Cathy salvaged the boxes at the last minute, not because she wanted to relive Tim's case but to understand why her mother—who adamantly never spoke about his abduction and the case—saved all this information pertaining solely to her most painful experience.

This trip home in 2006 jumpstarted Cathy's journey into her brother's case. It was Marion's death and her squirreling away of newspapers and magazines that forced Cathy into her



new role. After Cathy read Helen's provocative website, the boxes of newspapers made any information, from any source, especially significant. Had Cathy let her father throw out those old boxes, then more than likely Cathy would not have been able to aid the police as well as she recently has.

Cathy returned home from her father's birthday celebration to a full e-mail inbox. One e-mail was from Helen Dagner, dated the day Cathy sent the initial introductory message. Helen was intrigued to find one of the victim's family members interested in her site. She also gave Cathy the e-mail address of the member who had attended school with Cathy and an attachment the member wanted Cathy to read.

Cathy opened the attachment. It was a letter for her, written by Judi Coltman. She was the member whose posts interested Cathy. Judi's mother-in-law was Polly Coltman, who had died in 1997. Judi and Cathy both went to Seaholm High School in 1977, Cathy was a senior while Judi was a sophomore; Judi was a classmate and friend of Chris King, Cathy's younger brother. In her letter, Judi detailed her story about March 16, 1977—the day Tim was abducted:

It was nearly five o'clock at night when Judi's boyfriend, Dave Coltman, picked her up at her house. She was attending the Ice Capades with Dave, his three younger brothers, and their father. Dave and Judi returned to Dave's house to wait for his younger brothers to get dressed for the night; his youngest brother, Tim Coltman, had arrived home just before they did. Judi left with the Coltman boys and their father around 5:30 that night.

The next day at school, March 17, Judi and her friends were on their lunch break at McDonald's when notice of Tim King's disappearance was broadcast over the radio. They returned to school soon after, and the entire building was vibrating with activity; some students were participating in the school's mock United Nations debates (a club both Cathy and Judi were

members of), and the news of Tim's disappearance was circulating among students and faculty. Judi knew that Tim King was a playmate of Dave's younger brother, Tim Coltman.

Within the week of Tim's abduction, Judi's boyfriend, Dave, told her that his younger brother, Tim, had been playing with Tim King the day he was abducted. Tim Coltman and the other neighborhood boys were never questioned by police, only by reporters who had then published their names in the papers; they were minors, though, and their names were pulled the next day. A few days after the article was published, however, a mysterious phone call came to the Coltman house at around six o'clock in the evening. Dave Coltman answered the phone and the caller asked if he wanted to talk about Tim. Dave misunderstood and handed the phone to his younger brother, Tim Coltman. Tim then spoke into the phone and the caller said, "Dave?" Tim replied, "No, Tim." His answer caught the caller off-guard. There were a few moments of silence before the caller spoke up again and asked Tim what he thought had happened to Tim King. Polly saw the puzzled look on her youngest son's face and pulled the phone away from his ear. "Hello," she said into the receiver. A moment later the caller hung up. She asked Tim what happened, and he told his mother that the caller wanted to talk to Dave about Tim King.

Polly called the police soon after, and they tapped the Coltman phone line. The family experienced a series of hang-ups during the next few days, but those soon stopped. The police assumed it was a reporter calling since Tim Coltman and the other neighborhood boys had their names published in the papers. The newspapers, however, never mentioned Dave Coltman.

Polly would periodically call police, asking about any new updates and if they wanted to talk to her about her incident in the Hunter-Maple Pharmacy. They were not interested.

Dave Coltman and Judi married after college, nearly five years after Tim's murder. Judi was with her mother-in-law, Polly, when she died in 1997. Judi also saw the box of newspaper

articles that Polly had saved for nearly twenty years in her basement. After Polly's death, Judi realized that Polly wanted Tim's case to be solved. It was something that still troubled her near the time of her death.

Years later, in 2004, Judi came across Helen Dagner's website while researching the OCCK case. She was amazed to learn that John Hastings admitted to nearly colliding with a woman in the Hunter-Maple Pharmacy the day Tim was abducted. She read all the postings, but it took her nearly six months to get up the courage to contact Helen. Judi gradually revealed to Helen some of her information about the case and Helen did likewise. They came to trust one another once they realized that neither one was seeking recognition or trying to write a book. Judi then asked Helen if John had ever contacted people working on the case or any of the murdered children's family members. Helen e-mailed her a list of people John claimed he contacted; included on that list were Dr. Bruce Danto and Dave Coltman. Therefore, the mysterious phone call to the Coltman house only days after Tim's murder was for Dave Coltman, and not his brother, though no one knows why. This call can easily be dismissed as a prank call; however, the fact that Helen claims John told her that he called Dave Coltman is more than coincidental. This caller (and possibly the killer) was not only familiar with both the names of the Coltman boys, but John Hastings was as well.

Judi still visits Helen's website, but her involvement in the story has mostly been told. Her husband, Dave Coltman, and her brothers-in-law, specifically Tim Coltman, cannot deal with the case. Tim Coltman had to sit next to Tim King's empty desk in school the week he was missing; he must have known, as an eleven-year-old boy, that he too could have been taken. Unlike his mother Polly who wanted to aid the case, Tim Coltman and his brothers could not relive that story anymore.

There was one piece of information on Helen's website, however, that surprised both Judi and Cathy: the man who observed Helen and John bent over their diner table as John drew maps on paper place-mats on December 26, 1991 at the Alpena Big Boy posted on Helen's website nearly fourteen years later. His name is Bill Keefe, but Helen refers to him as the "Alpena Witness."

Bill found Helen's website after a friend of his came across her website on another crime site. The friend told Bill that the Alpena Big Boy restaurant was making news in this woman's website. He knew that Bill's wife had worked at the Big Boy for years and that they had their wedding reception there years earlier. Bill followed his friend's advice and looked up Helen's website. He realized that the bizarre conversation about the maps he had heard ten years earlier was actually an earnest conversation about the OCKK case. In 2001, he emailed Helen to introduce himself and tell her that he was there during one of her meetings with John. He then contacted the police with his story. Not only does his story provide evidence against John, but it also verifies Helen's story. He contacted the OCKK task force, specifically Detective Gary Gray.

The task force subsequently discredited Bill Keefe's story and felt that he could have simply made it up after reading Helen's story online. However, Judi Coltman and Cathy King have also communicated with Keefe, and both find him to be a levelheaded, honest man. His story only verifies Helen's; it does not provide any new information. Police, therefore, cannot do much except write down his statement and thank him for coming forward. But they have not exactly done this. Just as the police ignored Polly's story in 1977, they have again discredited Helen and now Bill. After Bill Keefe talked to task force commander Gary Gray a second time about what he heard that night in the restaurant, he claimed Detective Gray disregarded his statement, asking, "Aren't you the guy who waited nearly fourteen years to come forward with

information about a killer?” Though Keefe has made numerous attempts to explain to police that what he overheard at a restaurant in 1991 made no sense to him at that time, they only cast him aside as a “Helen-sympathizer,” a most damaging label.

## Chapter Seven

### *A Slip-Up*

After Cathy's return home from her father's birthday in March until the end of May 2006, she read through the boxes of newspaper articles her mother saved for nearly three decades. She became a constant viewer on Helen Dagner's website and communicated regularly with Helen, Judi Coltman, and Bill Keefe, the "Alpena Witness." Although Cathy had stayed uninvolved in her brother's case since the day it happened, she now chose to make up for lost time.

Near the end of May, Cathy contacted a close friend of hers and her husband's. Michael Katz had worked in the law enforcement field all of his professional life, starting as a police officer and working his way up to a private investigator and polygrapher. Though Cathy had only briefly mentioned Tim's case to Michael in the past, she contacted him that May for his professional opinion about what avenue she should take. Since finding Helen's website and talking to Helen and Judi, Cathy felt that the Michigan State Police, who have headed the OCCK task force, generated numerous blunders—not intentionally, but through desultory efforts and a lack of clear communication. Michael could provide an objective, professional opinion.

She went over the case with him, and he too expressed amazement that the police had eight different crime scenes—four abduction points and four abandonment points for Mark, Jill, Kristine, and Tim—and no solid leads. In his experience, Michael told her, eight separate crime scenes should have provided a plethora of information.

Michael also provided Cathy with his opinion on polygraphs, as he was a seasoned polygrapher. What troubled Cathy, and what she could not let go of, was John Hastings's story.

Unlike Helen Dagner, Cathy was not blindsided by John's story. Though much of what he said was amazingly minute and detailed, there was a possibility that he became obsessed with the case (as he lived in the middle of Oakland County in his early twenties when the crimes were taking place) and researched its entirety. But Helen claims, and Cathy believes, that he knew too much. People confess to crimes they do not commit—this happens all the time—but what troubled Cathy is that John knew so much and that good liars can pass polygraphs. Despite the fact that John passed his first polygraph in 1977 and his second polygraph test in 1992, Cathy did not put stock in Hastings's test results.

Cathy told Michael all of this, recounting the case from its beginning up to the Hastings development, and asked for his advice. He told Cathy that he had a national polygraph conference to attend in Las Vegas that coming July; he would consult with his colleagues there. He knew that some Michigan State Police officers and polygraphers would be in attendance, and he would try to get another opinion on the case.

Sometimes the world we live in can be amazingly small. Cathy asked Michael if he had ever heard of another polygrapher, Patrick Coffey. The King house stood across the street and diagonal to the Coffey house in Birmingham. Cathy was a good friend of one of the Coffey daughters, and her brother Chris was friends with Patrick Coffey, a cousin who lived with his aunt, uncle, and six cousins after the death of his father a few years prior.

Patrick Coffey was a teenager when Tim was murdered, and he felt the immediate paranoia and tension that snaked its way into his community. He and Chris King were also the same age and in the same grade, and so Patrick saw how Tim's death affected the Kings. This was another death he would learn to cope with. Tim's murder influenced Patrick intimately, and he never forgot it.

Patrick moved away from Birmingham a few months after Tim's death, but he stayed in contact with Cathy and Chris King. Patrick told the Kings, years later, that he went into the law enforcement profession because of Tim. He specialized in administering polygraph tests in sexual misconduct crimes and told Cathy and Chris, when he was becoming a rising professional in the early 1990s, that he would do whatever he could for the King family in their search.

Michael Katz was amazed that Cathy knew Patrick Coffey. He told her it so happened that he and Patrick had taught a class together just a few weeks prior. He would definitely relay her greetings to Patrick in Las Vegas in a few weeks.

What occurred at the conference in July 2006 was something neither Cathy, Patrick Coffey, nor any other person associated with the case could have imagined.

On the first day of the conference, Patrick gave a speech on his use of polygraphs in immigration trials in California, where Patrick has lived for many years. This was a particular area of research yet to be explored, and his speech was a success. Afterwards, fellow polygraphers and colleagues came forward and introduced themselves to Patrick. One such man shook Patrick's hand and expressed his interest in this new field of study. He and Patrick spoke for a few minutes, and then he handed Patrick his business card. His name was Larry Wasser, and he was a private polygrapher from Southfield, Michigan. Patrick noticed the location on his card and told Wasser he grew up in Birmingham. Coffey and Wasser spoke about their neighborhoods as Southfield and Birmingham are only seven miles apart. They shared stories about their earlier years in the law profession—both working as private polygraphers—and about the impact of certain crimes on their careers. And then Patrick Coffey casually told Larry Wasser that he decided to enter into law enforcement and polygraphing because his boyhood neighbor



and friend, Tim King, was a victim of the still-unsolved Oakland County Child Killings. That case influenced him so strongly as to lead him into his life profession.

What is ironic about a polygrapher showing a visceral reaction to a piece of information is that polygraphers are trained to notice such a reaction in someone else, and so, Patrick Coffey noticed the paleness and wide-eyed amazement of Larry Wasser after that statement. They stood there for a moment, Coffey stunned at Wasser's reaction and Wasser stunned that someone brought up that case to him after thirty years. And then Wasser replied.

“I polygraphed that guy.”

Not knowing what “guy” he referred to, Coffey skillfully asked him for more. But he did not find out much, only that years earlier Wasser administered a polygraph test to this “guy” in an entirely separate case when he admitted his guilt in the OCCK case and that this “guy” and his attorney were now dead.

The next day, Michael Katz and Patrick Coffey planned to meet. It was only a few months before that they taught a class together. After they exchanged their pleasantries, Michael made his point.

“We have a friend in common, and we need to talk about a case involving her family,” Michael said.

Patrick was amazed—a second time. Only the day before he had casually mentioned the OCCK case and Larry Wasser confessed to knowing the murderer, and now someone else mentioned the case to him. This was too amazing for Patrick to believe. The only connection Patrick had to Tim's murder was that he was a teenager living across the street from the King family. But now, twenty-nine years later, he had dealt with the case twice in twenty-four hours—in a hotel on the Las Vegas strip of all places.

They talked about the case, and Patrick mentioned that he needed to contact the Kings anyway because it had been awhile since he had seen them. They left their brief get-together soon after.

The information that Larry Wasser relayed to Patrick Coffey that afternoon is now officially under seal in the Wayne County Circuit Court case files. But that wisp of information that Wasser gave Coffey became instrumental in the case's progression.

After meeting with Michael Katz earlier in the day, Patrick decided to call Chris King with this news. Patrick strongly believed that it was more than coincidence that Larry Wasser revealed knowing the murderer and that Michael Katz knew Cathy. Patrick had grown deeply religious in his adulthood and had recently recovered from a serious stroke. He felt that these encounters with Larry Wasser and Michael Katz in Las Vegas were more than a serendipitous encounter. He told Chris King about his get-together with Michael Katz and about the confessional slip-up by Larry Wasser; Patrick didn't want to waste any more time.

He then asked Chris and Cathy to hold off on contacting the police. He was going to try to get more information out of Wasser and try to read over the polygraph charts to see if he agreed with Wasser's conclusion when he administered the test. The test results would illustrate to Patrick whether Wasser and this "guy" were men worth pursuing. Unbeknownst to Patrick, there was no polygraph test result.

The tricky part, however, was that Larry Wasser breached attorney-client privilege by talking to Patrick Coffey about this "guy." Attorney-client privilege extends not only to attorneys but to any person working within a legal situation; this privilege can include polygraphers and police. Because Wasser had been retained by this "guy's" attorney to conduct the polygraph

exam, attorney-client privilege extended to Wasser's interactions with the client. Attorney-client privilege survives the death of the client. Not only did Wasser breach attorney-client privilege when he gave Coffey this information, he also breached a polygrapher's ethical rules that prohibit the unauthorized release of information obtained as part of administering an exam. Patrick Coffey also works in a field where information is guarded; he could not expect to continue to be a credible polygrapher if he ratted out a fellow colleague to the police.

Both Larry Wasser and Patrick Coffey were in difficult positions. Though Wasser broke attorney-client privilege, Coffey was not obligated to keep quiet. Attorney-client privilege, however, applies in only certain situations, and this privilege can be breached if the attorney (or polygrapher) believes that a client will inflict further harm or participate in illegal acts. Had Wasser asked Coffey his professional opinion about a certain case and a certain client, then that incident would be considered privilege. If an attorney or polygrapher asks another colleague for professional opinion or advice on a client, case, or any legal matter, then those two people are bound by attorney-client privilege; this ethical rule is upheld whether the crime was committed yesterday or twenty years ago. The law, however, does not extend in all situations. If an attorney or polygrapher casually mentions that he knew a killer or represented a killer, then that information was revealed in a non-professional situation. Any attorney or polygrapher who was privy to that information is not bound by attorney-client privilege. Wasser casually mentioned to Coffey, whom he met five minutes before, that he knew the man who committed the murders in the still unsolved Oakland County Child Killings. Wasser breached attorney-client privilege, and therefore Coffey was not obligated to uphold it.

Larry Wasser had a knee-jerk reaction and spoke too soon when he admitted his knowledge of the murderer to Patrick Coffey. Wasser knew he committed a serious error, and he

wasn't about to make it again. After a few months, Patrick Coffey called Cathy and Chris King again and told them to talk to the police and ask for a list of suspects in the task force files that supported the information Wasser spilled; they needed to find the names of men who were polygraphed with their attorneys present and that both the men and their attorneys are now dead.

Cathy and Chris were already aware of Helen Dagner's suspect, John Hastings, and Hastings was not the man Wasser indicated. John Hastings was still alive, and he never had an attorney. What was crucial about Wasser admitting knowledge about this new "guy" was that the OCCK case would now have another suspect to consider; police had already considered John Hastings in 1977 and again in 1992. Chris King went in-person to the Birmingham Police and asked for a list of suspects who conformed to Wasser's information, but the police told him it was too difficult to compile such a list, and the metaphorical door was shut on that inquiry.

Cathy was put in a difficult situation; she had her childhood friend, Patrick Coffey to protect, and she had evidence of Larry Wasser knowing a potential murder suspect. She took twelve months to decide her next move.

## Chapter Eight

### *A Popular GM Model*

Since 1977, police speak to Barry King about any developments they wish to share with him. Barry then relays any pertinent information to Cathy, Chris, and Mark; this had been their habit for years. And while his three children were home with him for their mother's burial and Tim's reburial in October 2006, Barry casually left a letter on the kitchen countertop for anyone in the family who was interested in reading it. The letter was from Lieutenant Jack Kalbfleisch who had retired from the Birmingham, Michigan Police Department but who had worked on the OCKK case since 1976. Cathy took a special interest in the letter as she had met Lieutenant Kalbfleisch years earlier; he had taken her and her brothers on a tour of the task force headquarters weeks after Tim had died. Unlike the gruff or distance demeanors of some of the other detectives, Lieutenant Kalbfleisch was one of the few detectives who Cathy remembered to have looked her in the eye and been honest with her.

To the chagrin of the OCKK task force, retired Lieutenant Kalbfleisch tries to stay as active as he can in the case. The task force members' attitude toward Lieutenant Kalbfleisch borders on annoyance. He has pestered them with material that he and another colleague found in 1977 and 1978 that the task force, both then and now, seem inclined to ignore. Compiling witness testimony and working with auto manufactures and a photo-interpreting specialist, Lieutenant Kalbfleisch found information that clearly identified the murderer's car. Lieutenant Kalbfleisch's commander, however, misread and later misquoted the report that Kalbfleisch gave him; this report is currently lost in the files of the task force.

Lieutenant Kalbfleisch has not only turned to the various Oakland County police departments with this information but also to the Michigan media, the Michigan Attorney General's office, and the FBI. All outlets have brushed him off, and he does not know why. A reasonable conclusion is the media may not want to one-up the police with breaking "news" from a retired detective about this case and because the police, the Attorney General's office, and the FBI do not want to release information to the public, via the media, that is incorrect. The media and entities of law enforcement and justice have maintained a complex, symbiotic relationship of bedfellows in this case.

Although the task force has no witnesses in the abduction of the four children, the police do have witnesses for two of the children's abandonment points. One witness described a shiny, small Pontiac or Buick near where Mark's body was abandoned in the parking lot on the morning of February 19, 1976. At around 3:30 in the morning on December 26, 1976, another witness spotted a 1971 Pontiac LeMans with primer spots and a broken left taillight on the side of the northbound shoulder of I-75 near where Jill Robinson's body was abandoned. Lastly, police found marks impressed into a snow bank from a car recently turning around where Kristine Mihelich's body lay on January 21, 1977; they photographed these impressions. These impressions became the cornerstone of Lieutenant Kalbfleisch's report.

The two car sightings from witnesses and the photographs of the snow bank impressions in the third case were made available to police during their investigation of these three abductions; this information, however, was never synthesized. These three separate reports were temporarily overlooked in the OCK task force files when the task force was activated after Kristine Mihelich's death. It was Lieutenant Kalbfleisch who brought this information to the attention of the task force.

The Michigan State Police fully activated the task force the day they found their third victim, Kristine Mihelich. This new task force, therefore, had the monumental job of combining these three separate cases into one whole case. This multiple investigation was a huge undertaking and involved the participation of at least six separate police departments. Information was likely to be misplaced, and it was. These three separate car leads from the first three murders were largely ignored after Tim King's murder; the sighting of the blue Gremlin overshadowed the previous car leads from the previous three murders.

The witness in the Mark Stebbins case could only describe a Buick or a Pontiac. This description was not extremely specific, but this sighting helped corroborate the next two sightings. In Jill Robinson's case, the witness was driving his car on highway I-75 at 3:30 in the morning when he spotted a 1971 Pontiac LeMans idling on the highway shoulder. As the witness slowed down and merged into the left lane as he approached the LeMans, the LeMans slowly pulled onto the road. The witness was adamant to the police that it was a 1971 LeMans because he had once owned a 1971 LeMans. The witness told police that not only were primer spots marring the left side of the LeMans, but the car had a broken, left taillight. Finally, in Kristine Mihelich's case, there were impressions of a car turning around in the snow bank. The MSP at the crime scene did not measure these impressions. They only photographed them, and they did not include any other image in the photos to use as a size reference, such as a pen from a coat pocket or some loose change. The job, therefore, of measuring these marks was now compounded by this problem.

During the last murder—Tim King's murder—the task force was already functioning. Lieutenant Kalbfleisch had been working on the OCCK case since Mark Stebbins's murder in 1976; many police officers were invited to join the investigation because of the close proximity

of the Oakland County suburbs. While working on the task force, Kalbfleisch came across the car sightings from the first two murders and the photographs of the snow bank in the third murder. In Tim's case, a witness's observation of a boy, fitting Tim's description, talking to a man near a blue AMC Gremlin took precedence over the other three car leads. This sighting superseded Tim's case and subsequently, the entire OCCK case.

Working with Agent Mort Nickel, from the Detroit sector of the FBI (Oakland County's local police departments requested the assistance of the FBI due to the nature and magnitude of these crimes), Lieutenant Kalbfleisch wanted to further investigate the photographs that the MSP took at Kristine Mihelich's abandonment point. Lieutenant Kalbfleisch and Agent Nickel took the snow bank photos to Detroit's major car manufacturers and worked with engineers to try to find a match. While Ford and Chrysler could not find a match, General Motors determined that such impressions could have been made by one of its more popular models. Lieutenant Kalbfleisch and Agent Nickel then gave the photos to a photo interpreter at the University of Michigan. After one month, the photo interpreter deciphered measurements from the photo and reported that his measurements were within 1/32 of an actual inch; he also reported that the car had a damaged trailer hitch which bent to the left and damage on the car's left rear side.

Kalbfleisch and Nickel then went back to General Motors with these measurements. In Kalbfleisch and Nickel's preliminary report, General Motors verified that such measurements of the bumper impressed in the snow bank belonged to a popular GM model. Lieutenant Kalbfleisch and Agent Nickel wrote their second and later report after General Motors verified that such measurements matched their 1971 or 1972 Pontiac LeMans with a V8 engine. Lieutenant Kalbfleisch remembers General Motors giving him the exact year of the model—either a 1971 or 1972—but after thirty years he cannot remember which of the two years it was.



These first and second reports on General Motors are currently locked away, or lost, in the OCKK task force files.

Lieutenant Kalbfleisch and Agent Nickel wrote the vital, second report from General Motors in June 1978—fifteen months after Tim's death. They immediately gave the second report to their commander. But for unknown reasons, Commander Robertson sat with the report for three months; a speculated reason is that Robertson wanted to continue with the blue Gremlin lead without muddying it with a search for a Pontiac LeMans.

Commander Robertson finally chose to release the report to the media, his task force, and other law enforcement departments on September 7, 1978; it was then a year and a half since Tim's murder and over two and a half years since the first OCKK murder. The report reads:

SEPTEMBER 7, 1978

ON FEBRUARY 19, 1976, A WITNESS OBSERVED A CAR NEAR THE SCENE WHERE MARK STEBBINS' BODY WAS FOUND. THE CAR WAS DESCRIBED AS A SMALL PONTIAC OR BUICK. NO COLOR COULD BE GIVEN, BUT IT WAS A SHINY CAR.

ON DECEMBER 26, 1976, AT ABOUT 3:30 A.M., A WITNESS SAW A LIGHT BLUE 1967 PONTIAC TEMPEST WITH PRIMER SPOTS ON THE LEFT SIDE ON THE SHOULDER OF N.B. 1-75, NEAR THE SCENE WHERE JILL ROBINSON'S BODY WAS FOUND.

ON JANUARY 21, 1977, NEAR THE SCENE WHERE KRISTINE MIHELICH'S BODY WAS FOUND, OFFICERS FOUND MARKS IN THE SNOW BANK WHERE A VEHICLE HAD RECENTLY TURNED AROUND. AFTER HUNDREDS OF HOURS OF RESEARCH, IT HAS BEEN DETERMINED THAT THE MARKS IN THE SNOW WHERE [sic] MADE BY A 1964-1967 PONTIAC TEMPEST OR A BUICK SKYLARK.

ON MARCH 16, 1977, AT THE SCENE OF TIMMY KING'S ABDUCTION, A BLUE WITH A WHITE HOCKEY STRIPE GREMLIN WAS SEEN.

IT IS REASONABLE TO BELIEVE THAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR A PERSON THAT HAS INTERMEDIATE SIZE CARS AVAILABLE TO HIM AND PROBABLY A BLUE PONTIAC TEMPEST DURING THE PERIOD OF FEBRUARY, 1976 TO JANUARY, 1977; BUT IN MARCH OF 1977, HE HAD A BLUE GREMLIN AVAILABLE TO HIM.

WE NEED YOUR HELP,

APPROVED  
ROBERT ROBERTSON  
ASSISTANT DISTRICT COMMANDER

After months of research, Lieutenant Kalbfleisch and Agent Nickel's findings were positive developments for the case. What was unfortunate, however, was Commander Robertson's error in the report—it was a Pontiac LeMans he should have mentioned, not a Pontiac Tempest or Buick Skylark. Even with Lieutenant Kalbfleisch's urging, the second, vital report never accurately made it to the police or the public.

General Motors manufactured both Buicks and Pontiacs; and Buick Skylarks and Pontiac Tempests and Pontiac LeMans were all relatively similar in body shape during the early 1970s. General Motors produced many models with heavy V8 and V6 engines and long frames in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The witness in Mark Stebbins's case spotted a shiny Buick or Pontiac at the crime scene. That guess is as good as any because certain models of those cars would be hard to tell apart; LeMans and Tempests even shared the same undercarriage frame. However, the witness in Jill Robinson's case was certain he spotted a 1971 Pontiac LeMans because he had once owned one. Lastly, General Motors used the measurements that Lieutenant Kalbfleisch and Agent Nickels gave them from the third crime scene. General Motors said such measurements belonged to a 1971 or 1972 Pontiac LeMans, not a Pontiac Tempest or a Buick Skylark; the photo interpreter also reported that the car in question had a damaged trailer hitch that was bent toward the left. The LeMans from the second murder—with the primer spots and broken left taillight—therefore matched the car from the third murder with the left rear-end damage; it clearly was the same car. Why then did Commander Robertson release a report citing a 1964-1967 Pontiac Tempest or a Buick Skylark and completely negate the one car that General Motors and a witness cited as positive?

Such an error could have been mind-boggling for Lieutenant Kalbfleisch and Agent Nickel. And the same error was reprinted a day later in the *Detroit Free Press*, which detailed Commander Robertson's report for the public. Commander Robertson could have received backlogged information and released his report based on the first report from General Motors—that the marks in the snow bank could have been made by one of their popular vehicles. It was in Kalbfleisch and Nickel's second report, which they wrote from General Motors, that claimed the car was a Pontiac LeMans, but this information never accurately made it to the public or to the rest of the police. Without the more specific information detailing the murderer's car as a Pontiac LeMans, the authorities and concerned citizens continued to pursue for the Gremlin lead.

For unknown reasons, the OCCK task force—both then and now—put more stock in the witness who saw a Gremlin at Tim's abduction point than the witnesses who saw a Buick or Pontiac LeMans at Mark and Jill's drop-off points. Such vital information about a Pontiac LeMans with rear-end damage went nowhere for decades. Finally, in October of 2005, with the OCCK case being revitalized, Detective Ray Anger of the Berkley Police Department (the detective who traveled to Wyoming on the David Norberg lead years earlier) contacted retired Lieutenant Kalbfleisch, asking him for copies of correspondences regarding the Pontiac LeMans; the task force went over old evidence and cross-referenced evidence with new technology and an updated computer system. The information Lieutenant Kalbfleisch collected over the years is still pertinent today. Kalbfleisch sent the Pontiac LeMans information straightaway in 2005; however, to Lieutenant Kalbfleisch's amazement, it seemed to receive little attention. He thought this Pontiac LeMans information to be too important to neglect a second time, and so he contacted the OCCK task force commander, Detective Gary Gray, later that year in December 2005. Detective Gray told him that the Pontiac LeMans information was too old and not worth

releasing, as it would generate too many useless leads. Whereas Commander Robertson released the wrong information in 1978, Detective Gray did not want to release the correct information in 2005.

Contrary to Lieutenant Kalbfleisch's knowledge about the second report, the OCK task force currently claims that no second report about a 1971 or 1972 Pontiac LeMans was ever made available to them. Despite Lieutenant Kalbfleisch's suggestion, the OCK task force apparently has not asked the FBI's Detroit office to search Agent Mort Nickel's old files to find such a report about a Pontiac LeMans. Furthermore, the FBI's Detroit office has not responded to Lieutenant Kalbfleisch's request that they look in Agent Nickel's files.

Losing critical information, such as the second report from General Motors, is not befitting a case of this magnitude, or any case for that matter. Lieutenant Kalbfleisch and Agent Nickels delivered this report to Commander Robertson in 1978. To lose, misplace, or even misquote such a vital lead is grossly upsetting. There is a possibility, perhaps, that the second report is misfiled in one of the hundreds of OCK boxes, but the question remains whether this report is missing due to negligence or malfeasance.

It may be useless for the OCK task force, now in 2009, to ask the police and the public to remember a person who had owned a 1971 or 1972 Pontiac LeMans with primer spots marring the left side, a broken left rear taillight, and a damaged trailer hitch. Not only would this make some in the public question the abilities of the police, but some would question why this information is being released now. Why was this information not released in 1978 when Lieutenant Kalbfleisch and Agent Nickel gave these findings to Robertson? Why were the reports not searched for when Lieutenant Kalbfleisch wrote to the new task force members about double-checking their files and finding the Pontiac LeMans report? Pride can make for bad

judgment. Releasing the Pontiac LeMans information may disclose an upsetting blunder, but to not locate and release this information is an egregious error.

The King family is grateful that after thirty-two years the OCCK case has been given a fresh start. What has been frustrating, however, during these thirty-two years is that the Michigan State Police and the task force are still unwilling to ask for or to accept help from those offering it, such as Lieutenant Kalbfleisch. The task force has been inundated with offers of help from many angles—from legitimate resources to crazy people. If members of the task force took every ounce of assistance offered to them throughout the years, they quite possibly could have gotten nowhere; they would have been overtaxed sifting through all the advice. They had to draw line somewhere, and they have. People like Helen Dagner and Lieutenant Kalbfleisch—who may be brusque, eccentric, or even overly concerned—can weigh down their progress. One cannot censor them in a case of this magnitude. But one must also be amazed at the amount of pride and blind ego in this case; asking for assistance is not antithetical to weakness.

After retirement from the Birmingham Police Department, Lieutenant Jack Kalbfleisch and his wife settled in Florida where he works as an investigator for the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). He submitted Mark, Jill, Kristine, and Tim's photos to both the NCMEC database and to INTERPOL (International Criminal Police Organization) in order to search for child pornography connections. Lieutenant Kalbfleisch also contacted the task force in 2005 about using the NCMEC to provide assistance. The OCCK task force has chosen to not ask the NCMEC for assistance.

Retired Lieutenant Kalbfleisch regularly communicates with the King family. The OCCK task force severely limit their contact with the King family and Lieutenant Kalbfleisch.

## Chapter Nine

### *Wasser Remembers*

Amidst a set of long-winding coincidences, Cathy found herself on the OCCK trail in 2006. Had it not been for Helen's inflammatory website and John Hastings's story, Cathy would never have heard Polly Coltman's story, which would prompt Cathy to contact her law enforcement and polygrapher friend who happened to run into Patrick Coffey at a polygrapher convention. The information Patrick Coffey gleaned from Larry Wasser only compelled Cathy to try to find out more. The turning point with all this information occurred when Cathy went home to Birmingham in October 2006, and her father showed her the letters from Lieutenant Kalbfleisch.

Cathy gathered, from this set of occurrences from March 2006 until October 2006, that the MSP and the OCCK task force had not handled the case to the best of their abilities. Had she approached them with the information Larry Wasser revealed to Patrick Coffey, Cathy strongly felt they would not move forward with it. She also realized that Larry Wasser was not going to give more information to Patrick Coffey or to anyone else.

After Cathy experienced this series of coincidences in 2006, further opportunity arose in the OCCK case. Because Cathy has lived away from Michigan since her college days and because her brother Mark lives on the West Coast, neither attended a meeting her father, Barry, and other brother, Chris, had with a task force member.

Detective Cory Williams has worked as a detective for the Livonia, Michigan Police Department for nearly thirty years, and he was placed on the OCCK task force working with

MSP detectives because of the speculation that Theodore Lamborgine was involved in these child murders. As determined by Detective Williams's investigation, Lamborgine was not involved in the OCCK case, although he was involved in a series of other crimes and convicted and imprisoned for them. But investigating Lamborgine motivated Detective Williams to move forward in the OCCK case.

Since 2005, the OCCK task force has on duty two full-time detectives and one half-time detective—Detective Gary Gray and Detective Cory Williams, while Detective David Robertson (the son of Commander Robert Robertson of the original task force in 1977) works on a part-time, as-needed, basis. The Lamborgine case indirectly positioned Detective Williams on the task force, and he stayed busy on the case after the Lamborgine conviction, looking through all of the old OCCK tips. It is only natural that Detective Williams would meet the victims' family members when he conducted his initial meeting with Barry and Chris King and Detectives Gray, Robertson, and Anger. Detective Williams and Barry and Chris King developed an immediate liking for one another.

On her brother Chris's recommendation, Cathy turned to Detective Williams of the Livonia Police Department, and not Detective Gary Gray of the MSP Department, with Patrick Coffey's new information concerning Larry Wasser. After Wasser's broke attorney-client privilege and made an unauthorized release of information in front of Coffey, Coffey felt morally obligated to do something with this information that could help solve the case. He gave the information to Cathy, and she finally turned to Detective Williams twelve months later.

Cathy called Detective Williams on July 31, 2007 and told him about the information she had—Larry Wasser knew the guy responsible for the OCCK murders because this guy admitted his guilt to Larry Wasser during a polygraph test for an unrelated crime. Wasser also admitted to

Coffey that this guy and his attorney were dead. That was all he admitted to Coffey that previous July and that was all he told Coffey after further questioning.

Detective Williams found Cathy's story about Wasser to be worth pursuing. He contacted Wayne County Assistant Prosecutor Rob Moran and informed him of this new development. A.P. Moran gave Williams his approval and an investigative subpoena to serve to Wasser. Wayne County has jurisdiction only over Tim King's murder (not those of the other three children) because his body was dumped in Livonia—a part of Wayne County—and not in Oakland County. A.P. Moran drafted the subpoena which required Wasser to only reveal the name of the guy. Moran and Williams did not want the polygraphing file or any information on this unnamed man; they had a suspicion that Wasser would never provide them with that.

Perhaps to catch him off-guard, Detective Williams wanted to meet Larry Wasser face-to-face and to serve him with his investigative subpoena. He drove to Wasser's house. It was during a week day, and Wasser's wife answered the door. Williams introduced himself and asked to see her husband. He wasn't home right now, she replied. Detective Williams handed her his business card and said he would try back another time. Not an hour later, while Williams was working at the Livonia police station, his phone rang. It was Larry Wasser calling from his cell phone.

Wasser was sitting in a box seat watching a Detroit Tigers game, yet Detective Williams sensed urgency in his voice. His wife had obviously called him to let him know a Livonia detective came to their front door looking for him, and Detective Williams believed that Wasser knew exactly what any Livonia detective wanted. It was just a year earlier that Wasser confided in Patrick Coffey, and Wasser knew that what he had revealed would not stay secret forever. He must have known that revealing the identity of the OCCK killer would incite suspicion.



Wasser said he would be right over to meet with Detective Williams. Despite the detective's urging that he stay and finish watching the game—they could meet another day—Wasser left the stadium in Detroit and drove to Livonia, a thirty-minute drive. Wasser's insistence that he meet with him that day did not go unnoticed by Williams.

Larry Wasser soon arrived at the station and even on such short notice brought along his attorney, James Feinberg. Once Wasser and Feinberg entered the detective's office, Williams served him with the subpoena. All three men spoke that August afternoon in Detective Williams's office, and Detective Williams told Wasser and Feinberg the story: he was investigating the murder of Tim King, and he heard that Wasser might have information about the murderer. Detective Williams never mentioned Patrick Coffey's name, nor did Wasser. After Detective Williams served Wasser his subpoena, Wasser's attorney, Feinberg, said he would file objections immediately.

What happened next was a five-month ordeal—costing much time and money—so Larry Wasser could remember a name.

Larry Wasser knew that he had breached attorney-client privilege the previous July when he talked to Patrick Coffey, but Wasser was not going to reveal anything more. Detective Williams's next step, therefore, was to attend the hearing A.P. Moran scheduled for a few days later. Moran wanted Wasser to testify and have on record what he revealed to Patrick Coffey the previous July in Las Vegas.

Detective Williams, James Feinberg, and Larry Wasser's first encounter in the police station that August afternoon 2007 had been unproductive. From that meeting Larry Wasser learned only that Detective Williams was officially investigating the murder of Tim King, and

Detective Williams learned that Wasser's memory was poor. Other than that, they became suspicious of one another.

On the morning of the hearing, Wasser's attorney James Feinberg had to reschedule. He had a death in the family and was too bereft to attend the hearing; however, later that afternoon, Feinberg appeared at A.P. Moran's office to discuss with him the issue: his client Larry Wasser did not remember this guy's name. Moran then told Feinberg that this was contradictory to what Wasser revealed last July in Las Vegas. Moran rescheduled the hearing for August 24.

On August 24, A.P. Rob Moran, Larry Wasser, and defense attorney James Feinberg met in the judge's chambers. Feinberg asked for an extension to file his reply to Moran's brief. The judge granted Feinberg's extension, and then Feinberg asked the judge to forfeit the case. Feinberg claimed that twenty years ago, he and the judge were involved in a drug forfeiture case in which the judge had accused Feinberg of wrongdoing. The judge could not recall the incident but agreed to hand the case over to another judge. They set the next hearing for September 17. This was the second delay.

Finally on September 17, all parties appeared before their new judge. The judge indicated that this was going to be an intensely scrutinized ruling, and given that the case was already so old, the judge gave the defense time to submit additional authorities. The court gave Feinberg nine days for filing and a new hearing was set two weeks later—October 1. This was the third delay. Days before the newly scheduled hearing on October 1, a fourth delay occurred. The new hearing date was set for October 9.

On October 9, the court finally ordered Wasser to give police the name of this guy he polygraphed in 1978 (only the name, as requested by A.P. Moran). Feinberg then told the court that he was filing a stay with the Michigan Court of Appeals (this means that the defense does

not have to comply with the court's order until the appeals court can review the propriety of the lower court's order). Filing a stay is not the same as an appeal; a stay is reviewed by a judge at the court of appeals and there is no oral argument, such as in an appeal. Feinberg's stay took more than four weeks to file and longer for the Michigan Court of Appeals to review.

Finally in mid-November 2007, the court of appeals rejected Feinberg's stay and upheld the lower circuit court's ruling: Wasser needed to give the court and the police the name. The court of appeals scheduled a new hearing for November 19 in the lower circuit court. The night before the court date, A.P. Moran received a phone call from Feinberg. He asked Moran if they could meet a few minutes early and discuss something before their arranged hearing. Moran agreed.

On their court date, Wasser and Feinberg found Moran, Detective Williams, and Patrick Coffey waiting. Wasser balked; the last time he had seen Patrick Coffey was at the Las Vegas hotel a year-and-a-half earlier. Unbeknownst to Wasser and Feinberg, Patrick Coffey was prepared to testify to the court and have his statement placed on record about the information Wasser had given him in Las Vegas.

Despite Wasser's initial shock and resentment, Feinberg told Moran the purpose of this impromptu meeting. They wanted, with the court's approval, to avoid the hubbub of a hearing and to have Wasser review some old OCCK files. Searching through those files might stimulate Wasser's memory. In lieu of Wasser testifying under oath, Feinberg and Moran made an oral agreement that Wasser would cooperate with the police when they needed him. Both Moran and Detective Williams agreed with this arrangement. But Moran required that Patrick Coffey take the stand and have his statements placed on record about what Larry Wasser told him that July in 2007. Wasser and Feinberg hesitantly agreed.

Larry Wasser was scheduled to meet with Detectives Williams, Gray, and Robertson of the OCCK task force at the task force's headquarters in Oak Park in the first week of December.

This time Larry Wasser called Detective Williams the night before their scheduled meeting. Wasser said he had been mulling things over, and he had started to remember. He still couldn't recall a name, but he did remember that the young guy he polygraphed had, at the time, recently returned from a trip overseas in Europe. England, maybe, or Switzerland.

To Detective Williams's surprise, Wasser also told him more that night on the phone. He admitted that he was about to polygraph this man on a totally separate child molestation case in 1978, but before the test began the young man started talking about other polygraph tests he had taken. He talked about the OCCK case and how an anonymous tip turned him and his friend in. They took their polygraph tests as suspects in the first three OCCK killings in Flint, Michigan—some fifty miles from Birmingham—in January 1977 by a second-string polygrapher of the MSP (the regular polygrapher was not in the office that day). Most OCCK suspects had been questioned in Birmingham or the surrounding suburbs, however. Both the guy and his friend passed their tests, even without the presence of his family attorney who, for the past few years, had been representing him on his numerous criminal sexual conduct and child pornography charges. Then, this guy—Wasser told Detective Williams—started a ranting dialogue detailing the OCCK crimes in great length. He described other crimes he had committed against children, but Wasser hastily stopped him. Wasser walked out of the room and approached the man's attorney waiting outside. Wasser told the attorney he wasn't going to administer a polygraph test on the client; he seemed mentally unfit and would surely pass. It would be a biased test to perform on someone who just admitted to a series of other crimes, and both he and Wasser no longer had an objective relationship with one another. The attorney pulled his client from the

room and Wasser never administered the test. This incident with Wasser and the guy happened in 1978, a year after Tim King's murder.

That was what Larry Wasser told Detective Williams a night before their meeting—he never actually administered a polygraph test to this guy; he was getting ready to administer a polygraph test for another crime in 1978 when the guy detailed the OCKK crimes. This man went on to tell Wasser he was polygraphed in Flint without his attorney present in January 1977 for the three OCKK crimes; Tim was not murdered until March. This guy, therefore, was free to kill Tim two months after he was polygraphed for the previous three OCKK murders and cleared of them. The police had him, and unknowingly let him go.

The morning of their meeting, Detective Williams spread a small stack of files on a table. From the detailed information Larry Wasser gave Detective Williams the night before, Detective Williams was able to narrow down the list of suspects to some twelve files. He placed each file on the table. All suspects were polygraphed in Flint and cleared by their polygraph test, and all suspects were now dead.

The three task force detectives—Williams, Gray, and Robertson—stood around the table as Larry Wasser perused the files. In less than five minutes, Wasser remembered the guy. He handed the file to Detective Williams. It belonged to a young man named Christopher Busch.

Wasser was right. Christopher Busch was polygraphed in Flint by a second-string polygrapher and cleared. His attorney was not present at the time of the test. He had a laundry list of child-related criminal charges in which his family attorney provided representation. And both Christopher Busch and his attorney were now dead. Larry Wasser fulfilled his requirement. He remembered the “guy” and provided the next major lead in the OCKK case.

\*

Detective Williams called Cathy a few days later with the new information. He told her the most immediate details about Busch's connection to the OCCK case. Busch was twenty-six-years-old at the time of the crimes, and he and a friend, Gregory Green, had been turned in together as a result of an anonymous tip. Busch had been cleared on a multitude of other child molestation charges throughout Michigan. His family had money, and they kept on-hand two attorneys, a husband-and-wife team. The wife, Jane Burgess, primarily represented Busch against his charges across the state. The Burgess' would occasionally employ Larry Wasser as their own private polygrapher—which could explain why Wasser would not want to expose the guilt of one of their “cash cow” clients in 1978, or even now. Wasser would have lost a lucrative partnership with the attorneys, and the attorneys would lose the Busch family as their clients. Even though Christopher Busch, his parents, and both the Burgess attorneys are dead, Wasser still maintains an unknown involvement in this case. His lack of cooperation and the amount of time and money he wasted in not revealing Christopher Busch's name has possibly turned into an issue of pride for him.

Detective Williams went on to mention a few more details to Cathy: Christopher Busch lived in one of Michigan's most affluent towns, Bloomfield Township. His father worked as an executive at General Motors, and he and his wife were frequently out of the country for extended periods of time. Busch lived alone—for months at a time—in the sprawling family home in Bloomfield Township. His older brother, Charles Busch, would sporadically check in on Busch from his home in Birmingham. Christopher Busch had a blue Chevy Vega with a white hockey stripe down the side. Similar to a Gremlin.

## Chapter Ten

### *Answers*

Detective Williams opened Christopher Busch's OCCK file. In January of 1977, an anonymous tip turned Christopher Busch and his friend, Gregory Green, in to police as a pair of suspects in the three OCCK murders. They were tips #278 and #279.

Just to make sure Larry Wasser did not lead him off the trail with a false tip, Williams called Wasser a few days later. He asked Wasser if Busch was truly the man he remembered. Was he certain or did the name just sound familiar? But after months of court delays and a lot of inactive dialogue, Wasser finally sounded confident. No, he told Detective Williams, Busch was definitely the right man to pursue.

Christopher Busch and Gregory Green were staying together in Flint, Michigan that January of 1977. Green's ailing father had a house in Flint that his son and Busch occasionally occupied. When the anonymous caller turned them in to the police, the Flint Police Department didn't arrest them but took them into the station for questioning. They also administered polygraph tests on Busch and Green. The usual polygrapher was not in the station that day, so the task of administering the tests fell to a second-string polygrapher. He performed the test, and both men passed. Busch and Green left the station and never attracted the interest of the task force again.

Detective Williams read all this in their OCCK files. He then looked into the Michigan State Police files and found both men had lengthy criminal histories. Gregory Green also had a list of criminal sexual conduct charges he committed in California in the early 1970s; his last

crime involved molesting and then strangling a boy whose unconscious body he left at an emergency room entrance. The boy identified Green to police, and Green served his time in a mental health hospital in California without ever serving jail time. Green then came back home to Flint, but he fell into his old perverse lifestyle and continued to commit acts of criminal sexual conduct once back home in Michigan.

Soon after the first OCCK murder—Mark Stebbins’s case—police pulled Green in on a child molestation charge, and Green revealed to police that Christopher Busch killed Mark Stebbins; Detective Williams read this in Green’s file. Green’s declaration, however, went nowhere as police, for unknown reasons, did not question Busch. Though Green was in Michigan and capable of committing the first three OCCK murders, he was, however, in jail awaiting trial for another criminal sexual conduct charge when Tim was abducted and murdered in March 1977. Though Green may have committed the first three murders, he was not involved in Tim’s.

After reading this, Detective Williams talked to a former cellmate of Green’s, though inmates may not be the most reliable of sources. Green’s former cellmate told him that Green once threatened him by saying that since he had killed kids, he had no problem killing him.

Detective Williams later talked to Green’s brother in Flint who informed the detective that Green and Busch would periodically stay at their father’s house in Flint, the Buschs’ family house in Bloomfield Township, or the Buschs’ lake cottage in Northern Michigan. Though Green and Busch spent a lot of time together, Green’s brother could not state whether the two men were involved in a sexual relationship together.

A surprising and disturbing aspect that the brother related to Williams was that Green had built a secret room that was completely indiscernible to the eye at their father’s house in Flint;



their father did not even know about the room. Green would periodically move back home to take care of his ailing father, and when he and Busch stayed there at his father's home, Green had a fourteen-year-old boy stay in the secret room. Green's father also never knew about the boy. Green told his brother that the boy was a runaway, which he may have been, and that he needed the room to sleep in since he had nowhere else to go. Green's brother, again, could not state whether there was a sexual relationship between the boy and Green or Busch. He did go on to tell Detective Williams that the secret room was so well hidden within the house that even the current owners would not know it exists.

Gregory Green died in prison in the mid-1990s. He was serving a life sentence for a criminal sexual conduct charge. He expressed no connection to the OCCK murders, and police never questioned him about it again.

Detective Williams then looked into Christopher Busch, which proved slightly more difficult than it had for Green. The problem came down to money; Green had none and Busch had plenty. While Green had files all over Michigan, files on Busch were harder to find. Busch never served jail time for any of his crimes because he had two attorneys to defend him and sometimes clear his record of such crimes, and subsequently, his files in some towns were either destroyed or lost. When he was held for a period of time, Busch always made bail; Green did not. A criminal with money can be far more dangerous than a criminal without it.

Detective Williams was able to piece together enough information from the various files police departments had on Busch throughout Michigan. Like Richard Lawson, Ted Lamborgine, and now Gregory Green, Christopher Busch had a series of child molestation charges, child pornography, and criminal sexual conduct charges. A few weeks prior to Tim's abduction, Flint police arrested Busch for a criminal sexual conduct charge with minors. When the police pulled

him into the station, they found rolls of child pornography film on him. The photos were related to a boy's camp on Fox Island in Grand Traverse Bay, Michigan. This charge was still pending in Busch's file, which means that Busch was not cleared from the charge, nor was the case going to trial. Likely Busch's parents paid off the victims so they would not testify, as Detective Williams soon determined; they had done this numerous times before. This child pornography charge, however, was in Busch's Flint file when the Flint police pulled him in on the OCCK charge. How the Flint police negated this child pornography charge when they questioned and polygraphed Busch for the OCCK crimes is egregious.

Christopher Busch was the youngest son of Harold Lee (H. Lee) and Elsie Busch. He had three older brothers, Charles, David, and John. His eldest brother, Charles, is still alive and is the inheritor of the Busch family wealth. Out of the immediate family of six, only Charles is alive; both parents are dead, as are Christopher and the two middle brothers, David and John.

After Detective Williams gathered this information from Christopher Busch's files scattered throughout Michigan and the brief OCCK task force file—compiled when police gave Busch a polygraph test in Flint, Michigan—he decided to track down two nephews of one of Busch's late brothers. Both men agreed to talk to Williams, and they told him that when they were boys, Christopher had molested them. They said their grandfather, H. Lee, took care of all the family problems. The nephews told Williams that their grandmother, Elsie, would have her driver take her to the houses where Christopher's molestation victims lived; she would write them checks so they wouldn't go to the police. Christopher was the known black sheep of the family and apparently the only way his parents dealt with his crimes was through expensive lawyers and pay-offs. His parents bought him out of trouble every time, but it is unclear whether

they did so to help their son or protect their own family name and reputation. Neither of the nephews had fond memories of their late uncle or their grandparents.

Of the four Busch boys, only Christopher attended boarding school in Switzerland during his middle and high school years. He had no interest in college and instead worked at a small restaurant in Alma, Michigan when he returned from Switzerland. The restaurant went under, however, and Busch moved back home to Bloomfield Township. His father found Busch a job working as a food service manager at an assisted-living apartment facility. He held that job during the years of the OCCK murders.

H. Lee Busch was an executive at General Motors and spent nearly six months out of the year at a General Motors corporate office in Scotland. The Buschs owned a small, white Scottish Highland Terrier that they brought home to Michigan from Scotland. While H. Lee and Elsie lived abroad, Christopher stayed at the family home in Bloomfield Township with the dog. His middle two brothers had left home by now and were living on their own. But Charles Busch—the eldest brother—and his wife and young son lived in Birmingham, and Charles would periodically check in on Christopher and the dog from his home a mile away.

On November 20, 1978 Christopher Busch shot and killed himself at his family home in Bloomfield Township. He was twenty-seven-years-old. Charles found him and called the police.

Cathy learned all this from Detective Williams. He told her that he showed Busch and Green's polygraph charts from 1977 to a few polygraphers at the station; they examined the results, and all said that both men should have failed. In another development, A.P. Moran would not release the investigative subpoena on Larry Wasser, despite his attorney's urging. This information was everything Williams told her, which was enough after thirty-two years of having nothing. But after a day or two, Cathy needed to find out more.

## Chapter Eleven

### *So Very Close to Home*

Death certificates are considered public records, and are, therefore, rather accessible. Cathy was able to find Christopher Busch's death certificate, but after months of searching, she could not find the death certificates for H. Lee, Elsie, David, or John.

Cathy had a good childhood friend from Birmingham, a lawyer, find Busch's death record. She also had her friend file a Freedom of Information Act request for Christopher Busch's suicide file with Bloomfield Township; the police responded that the file was destroyed. Cathy received his death certificate, which her friend mailed to her, later that December of 2007. She now had his birth and death date: Christopher Brian Busch was born on July 31, 1951 and died on November 20, 1978. She also had the address of the family home in Bloomfield Township—3310 Morningview Terrace. Since Charles Busch found his brother's body, Charles's address was also listed on the death certificate.

Cathy looked up both addresses on Google Maps. The Busch family home was three miles from the Cathy's family home in Birmingham. Maple Road connected the two houses, and Tim was abducted off of that same street. She then looked up Charles Busch's house in Birmingham. He, his wife, and son had lived on the corner of Mohegan and Oxford Street, right across the street from Poppleton Park. While Polly Coltman lived on the south end of the park, Charles lived on the northeast end. As Tim King, Tim Coltman, and the neighborhood boys played in Poppleton Park that Wednesday afternoon, Christopher Busch could easily have visited his brother that day and seen the boys.

It is a commonly held belief that all crimes can be solved; one just needs to look in the right places to find the hidden evidence. The cruel nature of this belief, however, is that this particular crime was committed so very close to home. Cathy believes that from his brother's house Christopher Busch watched Tim play in Poppleton that afternoon on March 16, 1977. He then stalked Tim the rest of the evening. Busch could easily have known that the neighborhood boys frequently rode skateboards in the Hunter-Maple Pharmacy parking lot, as evidenced by Polly Coltman knocking into the same man in the pharmacy who would later survey the park while the boys played in it. Busch waited for Tim, somehow. Tim made it to the pharmacy safely; he even bought a candy bar. But something happened afterwards that only Tim or Busch or another accomplice knows. Tim was abducted in the parking lot and possibly taken three miles away to Busch's empty family home.

This is what Cathy believes.

Cathy went back to the map. She scrutinized the area. She looked up the Bloomfield Township website. She had no picture of Busch and little family information. She needed to get closer to this man who—the mounting evidence showed—killed her brother.

She stared at 3310 Morningview Terrace on her computer screen. She magnified the map, and then something caught her attention. Tuckahoe Road. It sounded familiar, but she didn't know why. She looked through her notes. John Hastings lived at 200 Tuckahoe Road. Hastings, and Busch lived three-and-a-half blocks away. They were both in their mid-twenties and both lived alone in big houses in the middle of an affluent, tight-knit community. They were neighbors.

Cathy typed Busch's address and Hastings's address into Google Maps, which created a direct route from one house to another. They were less than half a mile away from each other.

She attached the routed map and e-mailed the attachment to Detective Williams. She wrote a short e-mail asking him to take a look at the map, but that he didn't have to respond.

Though Gregory Green was in jail when Tim was abducted and killed, John Hastings was living only three-and-a-half blocks away from Busch. Busch might have needed another accomplice, and Hastings may have proved to be a willing participant. If Hastings was involved in Tim's abduction and murder, it would explain his intimate knowledge of the crimes, which he would recount to Helen Dagner fifteen years later.

Detective Williams did not respond to the e-mail. But two months later, in February 2008, he called Cathy. He did not, however, mention her findings regarding Hastings and Busch's addresses. He was still investigating the Christopher Busch lead, he told her, and he had called Charles Busch earlier that month; Charles was either at his New York City condo or his Connecticut house—Cathy forgot which. Charles was very courteous on the phone, though he did not admit much to Williams. The most telling detail Williams gleaned from their conversation was that Charles and his wife had never left their young son alone around Christopher. Detective Williams ended the phone call, telling Cathy the Georgia State Police obtained a DNA sample from John Hastings in Atlanta, where he was currently living. There was no match between Hastings's DNA and hair samples of any of the four children.

Although what Detective Williams told Cathy was supposed to be in complete confidence—his superior could nail him for telling her—she couldn't stay silent with that information. Almost six months after Cathy learned of Busch, she decided to e-mail Helen Dagner and asked her if the name Christopher Brian Busch sounded familiar. She only gave Helen his name. Helen e-mailed her back and wrote that John had a good friend whom he always referred to by his initials, B.B., and who had killed himself on November, 20, 1978.

That was all Helen knew. That date was significant for Helen because November 20 was the date when her husband committed suicide (though he took his life in the early 1980s). That date was significant, however, for Cathy because that was the day Busch killed himself.

Helen e-mailed Cathy again, now a few weeks after Detective Williams's phone call with Charles Busch. Helen included an attachment of a file from her tracking program of an ISP address and the times and dates this particular address viewed her site. The address belonged to a Charles Busch. He had been spending considerable amounts of time on her website—hours at a time, at all hours of the day. Helen also told Cathy that John Hastings was viewing her website again. Helen occasionally emails one of John Hastings's sisters-in-law, who lives in Florida. Helen had recently noticed that the ISP address belonging to a person in a mental-health facility in Lake Mary, Florida was viewing her website. It was for relatively short periods of time, but the person was viewing it frequently. She assumed it was Hastings's sister-in-law, who worked as a nurse. She learned, however, from his sister-in-law that it was John viewing the website. He was now a resident at the hospital in Florida.

Cathy then called Lieutenant Kalbfleisch and asked him if he remembered the Busch name. He did, actually. When he was on the task force in the 1970s, Commander Robertson wanted the death certificates of all males between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-five from Oakland County; this was one of the extra steps the police had attempted to catch the killer. Since Christopher committed suicide, the Bloomfield Township police looked into his death, but they soon contacted the Michigan State Police and the task force after they found suspicious evidence. Lieutenant Kalbfleisch never entered the Busch home at 3310 Morningview Terrace when the police were called to the crime scene, but he had seen a drawing that police had found in the house (likely Busch's bedroom, as that was where his body lay). It was a pencil sketch of a

young boy screaming; the boy in the drawing looked similar to Mark Stebbins. This drawing was noted in Christopher's suicide file with the Bloomfield Township (the township that had replied to Cathy's Freedom of Information Act stating that Busch's file was destroyed). This pencil drawing is now included in Busch's OCK task force file. While Lieutenant Kalbfleisch mentioned to Cathy that the drawing was especially sophisticated and detailed when he saw it in 1978, Detective Williams told her it was rather amateurish.

Though Lieutenant Kalbfleisch knew about the drawing, he did not know any more details about Busch's suicide. Police found a set of ligatures spread out on display on the floor of Busch's bedroom closet. More than likely, Charles did not see the ligatures because they were in the closet. There was blood on them—or something that looked very close to blood. The police took photos of them, which are included in Busch's OCK file.

Amazingly, though, the police lost the ligatures. The ligatures more than likely had DNA on them. Detective Williams relayed that he had only seen the photos. He also mentioned that Charles told police he found no suicide note from his brother. The coroner's information on Busch's suicide, the pencil sketch, the photos of the ligatures, and his cleared polygraph test results from Flint are now included in his OCK file.

Lieutenant Kalbfleisch did not know about the ligatures because he was probably not privy to the most immediate details (even though he was a member of the task force). Cathy and Detective Williams do not know why the Bloomfield Township Police and the OCK task force ignored the set of ligatures when they saw Busch's body. How such an uncommon and disturbing item could be ignored (and later lost as evidence) is incredible.

No other information surrounding Busch's death is included in his file. Busch killed himself in November 1978, and the OCK task force disbanded the following month due to lack



of funding. Though Christopher's suicide might have raised some suspicion, it occurred almost too late for the task force to investigate. The task force could have also cleared him because he had passed a polygraph concerning the first three OCCK deaths back in January of 1977.

Soon after Cathy told Helen about the Busch name, Helen contacted her other confidential sources—one is a retired police officer and the other works at a local Detroit metro hospital. Neither of them could find anything on the Busch family.

At the time of the murders, police did not find much organic material on the children's bodies. All were bathed and their fingernails and toenails cleaned and trimmed. There was no blood or semen on their bodies; the most police had were hairs and fibers. There were dog hairs on Mark and Tim's bodies. Kristine had a human hair on her body, and Tim had a human hair in his mouth and a facial hair (a man's beard hair) around his genital area. All four children had rug or carpet fibers on their bodies. Police have all those hairs in evidence, except for the facial hair found on Tim, which they lost.

DNA testing was not an option when the murders occurred in the late 1970s (DNA would not be used in criminal cases until a decade later). With the revitalization of the case in 2005, the police sent the evidence to the FBI lab in Quantico, Virginia. They were able to successfully re-scan the hairs and carpet fibers and the children's clothing for DNA evidence. There were a few stains on the children's clothes, which were detected in 2005, that police missed in 1977. Detective Williams did not specify to Cathy what these stains were and what they revealed.

Since the Buschs had Christopher's body cremated in 1978, the police do not have his DNA to examine against the four children. They need Busch DNA to match up to the DNA evidence found on any of the four children. The police have the fingerprints of each child, and a

blood DNA sample from each mother. Since Charles is the only living relation to Christopher, the New York sector of the FBI took a cheek swab sample from him at his New York home in April of 2008. He was also extensively interviewed. To date, none of the hair found on Kristine and Tim's bodies match up with the DNA of either John Hastings or Charles Busch. The carpet fibers found on each child were rescanned in 2005; however, the fibers are somewhere in the FBI lab in Quantico, and no one has successfully brought the fibers back to task force headquarters these past four years. The dog hairs found on the boys have yet to be tested because there is no dog hair to compare it with; obviously, Charles Busch does not have a sample of hair from the family's Scottish terrier that they owned in the 1970s, nor does Gregory Green's family have a sample of hair from his dog.

## Chapter Twelve

### *Evidence*

In June of 2008, Cathy drove home to Birmingham to meet Detective Williams. When she sat down at the table, the first thing he told her was how much she looked like Tim. Though he had only seen pictures of Tim as an eleven-year-old boy and he was meeting Cathy—a forty-eight-year-old woman—face-to-face for the first time, Williams could still see the resemblance.

At this meeting, Cathy learned the more immediate details surrounding Busch's suicide and the four children's deaths. This was when she learned about the lost evidence. They talked about the murders, about the police's dislike of Helen Dagner, about Lieutenant Kalbfleisch's annoying tenacity in the case, about the shame of Larry Wasser wasting so much time and energy when he remembered all along. They talked for three hours. Williams showed Cathy one of Christopher Busch's many mug shots. Her immediate thought was that he looked like Grizzly Adams, even though the photo was in black and white. Busch had shaggy, dark hair and a full beard. He seemed ageless, neither young or old.

Detective Williams told her that he was compiling evidence to write a search warrant and affidavit for the Busch home on 3310 Morningview Terrace. After Christopher killed himself in 1978, the Buschs sold the house in 1979. After it was bought in 1979, the house stayed in the possession of the same family until 2005. From 2005 until the present, another family has lived there. This was actually positive information Detective Williams told Cathy; the house only changed hands twice in twenty-nine years. Williams told Cathy not to get her hopes up. The search warrant and affidavit could take months to assemble, the search warrant could stay in the

court system for months longer, and if approved, the crime lab could take even longer processing any evidence. There were still many obstacles to overcome.

During that weekend-long trip home, Cathy did some investigating on her own. The Busch house was only three miles from her childhood home. She drove to Bloomfield Township and took photos of both of the Hastings's family homes as well as the Busch home. She tried to stay incognito, but the owner at 3310 Morningview Terrace saw her. He walked out his front door and asked, "Can I help you with something?" Cathy lied and told him she was a real estate agent. She got back in her car and left. He seemed like a nice man, she felt. There was a basketball hoop in the driveway and a kid's plastic play-set in the front yard.

Cathy drove back to her home in Illinois at the end of the weekend. A few months later, in early October, she received an e-mail from Detective Williams; he submitted the application for a search warrant and accompanying affidavit to Oakland County Prosecutor David Gorcyca. Now, all they could do was wait.

Then, in the middle of an afternoon in early November, when Cathy had accidentally fallen asleep on the couch, a rare occurrence, the phone rang and woke her. She felt guilty for sleeping during the day and didn't want to answer right away. She glanced down at the phone, and the ID read *Livonia Police*. She debated picking it up, just for a split second, and then answered. It was Detective Williams.

The search warrant and the accompanying, lengthy affidavit were approved by an Oakland County judge. Only the homeowners and their attorney saw the search warrant; they did not see the affidavit, which spelled out what crime they were investigating and all the speculated evidence that was once in the house or could still be in the house—such as dirty ligatures, pencil drawings, and dog hair. The affidavit was used to convince the judge to approve the warrant.

The MSP crime lab searched 3310 Morningview Terrace on October 30, 2008. The current owners learned of the search warrant two days before its execution. Oakland County Prosecutor David Gorcyca talked to the homeowner's attorney and told him the news. The homeowner's attorney was outraged on behalf of his clients, but there was nothing he could do. Gorcyca was not allowed to detail anything about what they were looking for or even that they were investigating the OCCK case; he stated only that the police were investigating an older case. The morning before the search, on October 29, Gorcyca called the homeowners to inform them about some of the procedures the lab would perform in their house the following day. Perhaps the Jimmy Hoffa hunt from 2006 was still fresh in the homeowner's mind because he asked the prosecutor, "When will the backhoe get here?" Gorcyca assured him that there would be no backhoe, or camera-crew for that matter; the police and crime lab's goal was not to call attention to themselves.

The property had a sloping driveway that curved around the back of the house. The MSP crime lab team was able to park their trailer in the driveway, hidden so the neighbors could not see. No police entered the house, only crime lab workers decked out in their white NASA-like suits. A few unmarked police cars were parked on the block. Detective Williams was in one of them.

The homeowners voluntarily left the house once the lab arrived, but their attorney stayed for the entire search. The MSP crime lab worked in the house for over nine hours. They had a very successful search. Neither the homeowners, in the past thirty years, had gotten the house's air vents blown clean. The crime lab found dog hairs in the vents. They pulled up all the baseboards and found more hairs under them. They knocked on all the walls and found a hollow wall on the ground level of the house. The lab cut the entire slab of drywall away and carried it

to the trailer for examination. Removing the drywall exposed a small room that resembled a root cellar. Shelves lined the walls, and wisps of hair and fibers dusted them. Smudged fingerprints were still discernible on the shelves and walls. The lab technicians took the shelving away and carried them to the trailer. They knocked on more walls and found a closed-off dumb-waiter. They cut away at the drywall again. The tray and pulley were still there, and the tray was filthy with decayed traces of food, mold, and dirt. There was more evidence, but that was as much as Detective Williams told Cathy. He also told her that the current owners had no knowledge of the walled-up root cellar.

Detective Williams later sent Cathy a copy of the search warrant and affidavit. As he told her, the affidavit included a description of the ligatures and the pencil drawing and the need to find dog hair and other incriminating evidence. Detective Williams also told Cathy that he was applying for grant money so the dog hairs found on Mark and Tim and the dog hairs found in 3310 Morningview Terrace could be cross-examined. Crime lab technicians are not trained in identifying and DNA-testing animal hairs; that is a rare specialty. There is a woman in California, Williams told Cathy, who is an expert in examining animal hair. She can identify the breed of dog based on a single hair. She charges \$10,000 for the examination of a single hair, but if the animal hairs found on the children's bodies matched the dog hairs found in the house, then a positive identification could be made. The lab was currently examining the dog hairs to find the best possible sample to send to California. The lab was also busy examining the carpet fibers, hairs, fingerprints, and other evidence that they found at 3310 Morningview Terrace. They can process this evidence more quickly than the dog hair analysis. Also, the carpet fibers, human hair, and the other evidence can lead to a conclusion more inexpensively than the dog hair analysis.

Detective Williams told Cathy all this on the phone in November. He also mentioned that he and Detective Gray were possibly flying to Florida in December to question John Hastings again. He was still living at the mental health facility.

That phone call is the last Cathy has had from Detective Williams. He told her that the crime lab should have everything processed by the New Year. They did not.

As of March 2009, the MSP crime lab is still working on the search warrant results. They have yet to send the lab results to the FBI lab in Quantico, Virginia. Cathy and her father and her brothers are still waiting.

## Afterword

On February 6, 2009, Larry Wasser gave a keynote address at a meeting of the Michigan Association of Polygraph Examiners (MAPE) in Lansing, Michigan. Part of his speech included a patched-together story about his recent involvement in the OCCK case. Though he leaves out the part where he breached attorney-client privilege, he did mention to his colleagues how Patrick Coffey's confession to the police forced Wasser to hire an attorney to protect himself against county prosecutors. On behalf of MAPE, Wasser then presented his defense attorney, James Feinberg, with an award for the stellar legal representation Feinberg provided him when he was under pressure from the state and forced to legitimately breach attorney-client privilege. Wasser then asked his fellow polygraphers for assistance in paying his hefty legal fees.

Though Wasser didn't know it at the time, his speech was ironic. When the circuit court made Wasser reveal Christopher Busch's name, the judge ruled that a seal be placed on the case and its accompanying transcripts to protect Wasser's name from being leaked to the press, other prosecutors, or police. By speaking of the case as he did in his address, Wasser broke the seal. Any protection afforded to him from that seal is now gone. Just as he breached attorney-client privilege in July 2006 in Las Vegas, Wasser again spoke when he should have known better.

In early February 2009, Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy and her good friend, newly-elected, Oakland County Prosecutor Jessica Cooper attended a prosecutor's conference in Traverse City, Michigan. While at the conference, Worthy asked Cooper about any updates in the OCCK case or what the lab had found at 3310 Morningview Terrace. Cooper replied that she didn't know about the search warrant or that the OCCK case was even being investigated. She



had only been in office for a few months as Oakland County Prosecutor. She filled the place of Oakland County Prosecutor David Gorcyca (who decided not to run).

Though David Gorcyca approved the search warrant for 3310 Morningview Terrace, he left office without telling the new county prosecutor, Jessica Cooper, about the search warrant and this huge development for the OCCK case. The fact that he didn't mention this to his successor might have more to do with politics than with benign negligence; Cooper was a Democrat and beat out the Republican pick that Gorcyca had endorsed to be his successor. The search warrant was conducted on October 30, 2008, and Jessica Cooper was elected to office a week later. Since Cooper entered office without knowledge of the search warrant, her office, therefore, did not renew the seal on the search warrant. Had any reporters decided to look into new search warrants the police had conducted over the past few months, they easily could have found out about this latest OCCK development.

Two weeks later, on February 20, 2009, Jessica Cooper called a meeting in Oakland County. Present at the meeting was Oakland County Prosecutor Jessica Cooper, Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy and Assistant Prosecutor Rob Moran, as well as Detectives Gary Gray and Cory Williams of the OCCK task force. The meeting lasted over three hours. Both county prosecutors wanted to know about the case's progress. Worthy and Cooper both strongly felt that a lack of communication and cooperation between the task force and prosecutors had held back the case during the past thirty-three years. They wanted everyone to be involved and on-task.

They asked Detective Gray—the task force commander—to give everyone at the meeting an update. He did, as best he could, but Detective Williams was soon asked to take over. He took all three prosecutors back to the Ted Lamborgine lead in 2005 and how the Busch lead was finally connected. They talked about Wasser, about Christopher Busch and all of his

surmounting circumstantial evidence, and about the Buschs' attorney, Jane Burgess. Jane Burgess had fought and lost a long battle with cancer, and Prosecutor Cooper was amazed to learn that Burgess represented a man with such a grotesque criminal history. Williams then informed everyone that the Busches allowed the Burgesses and their children to use their lake cabin in the summer.

Williams went over the search warrant. He told them about the dog hairs and about the carpet fibers that were found on the children's bodies, which the FBI rescanned in 2005. Cooper then asked Detective Gray what the fibers revealed, and Gray sheepishly mentioned that the fibers have been at the FBI laboratory these past three years and have yet to be returned to the collection of evidence at the task force's headquarters. The MSP had already lost other OCKK evidence, and these carpet fibers and dog hairs found on the children were essential in indentifying a match to any fibers or hair that the lab found this past October.

The meeting ended with the request that all new evidence collected—after its evaluation by the lab—be directly forwarded for further evaluation to the FBI lab in Quantico, Virginia. In addition, Cooper and Worthy stressed that both Oakland and Wayne County need to work cooperatively on this case—something that has not been done for thirty-three years.

## Endnotes

### Chapter One: What Polly Coltman Saw

- Page  
7 *Oakland County ranks:* <[www.co.oakland.mi.us](http://www.co.oakland.mi.us)>; <[www.co.wayne.mi.us](http://www.co.wayne.mi.us)>  
7-10 Interviews with Cathy King;

### Chapter Two: Revitalized

- Page  
12 *Michigan State Police revitalized the case due to:* “Detectives Revive Infamous Case; Citizens Encouraged to Come Forward with Tips About ‘70’s Killings”  
12 *The twenty-nine-year anniversary:* “Police still on child killer case”  
13 *Detective Sergeant Cory Williams of the Livonia:* King Interview; “Livonia Murder Case to Get a National TV Airing” by Hunt  
14-16 *Lamborgine soon evolved into a main suspect:* “Ohio man is suspect in Oakland Child Killings” by Zaniewski; “Two Men Arrested for Child Porn”  
15 *To date, Lamborgine has been convicted:* “Theodore Lamborgine;” “Richard Lawson”  
15-16 *A vital note:* King Interview  
11-16 Interviews with Cathy King

### Chapter Three: The Victims of Oakland County

- Page  
17-18 *Oakland County lies:* <<http://www.milmi.org>>; <<http://www.bls.gov>>; <[www.co.oakland.mi.us](http://www.co.oakland.mi.us)>; <[www.co.wayne.mi.us](http://www.co.wayne.mi.us)>  
18-23 *Though the name sounds sensationalized:* Chapter 5 of *The Riverman* by Keppel  
19-21 *There was a lingering aspect:* King interviews  
22-23 *Something was tragically amiss:* Chapter 5 of *The Riverman* by Keppel  
23-25 *Jimmy Hoffa:* “No Sign Yet of Hoffa’s Body, But the F.B.I. Cites ‘Credible’ Tip” by Bunkley and Maynard; “Hoffa Search Finds Town’s Sense of Humor” by Bunkley and Maynard  
17-25 Interviews with Cathy King

### Chapter Four: Cathy

- Page  
34 *Cathy showed me:* “Finder of Tim’s body is haunted by sight” by Kirby;  
35-36 *One criminal psychiatrist:* “Bruce Danto: Psycho-Sleuth” by Stark; “Kidnapping Linked to Snowfalls?” by Briggs-Bunting  
26-39 Interviews with Cathy King

### Chapter Five: The Hunt

- Page  
40 *On Sunday, March 20, 1977:* “Witness Becomes Suspect In Kidnap of Suburban Boy” by Briggs-Bunting;  
40 *Friday morning’s headline:* “Missing Birmingham Boy Hunted” by Briggs-Bunting and Fireman

- 41 *Not until Saturday*: “Police certain boy is kidnap victim; Birmingham offers \$25,000 reward” by Smith  
41-43 *Police had a tip*: “Child killer eludes massive dragnet”  
43-44 *Unfortunate Gremlin owners*: “Oakland parents tense after killing” by Wowk  
44-45 “ ‘We love you, Tim:’ ” “Police certain boy is kidnap victim; Birmingham offers \$25,000 reward” by Smith  
45-46 *The following letter*: “Mother’s plea for Tim’s safety”  
40-46 Interviews with Cathy King

#### Chapter Six: Helen and John Meet

Page

- 49 *Police receive a false lead*: “Police still on Child Killer case” by Martindale  
49-61 *This eccentric woman*: <[www.helendagner.com](http://www.helendagner.com)>  
47-61 Interviews with Cathy King

#### Chapter Seven: A Slip-Up

Page

- 62-69 Interviews with Cathy King

#### Chapter Eight: A Popular GM Model

Page

- 74-75 *The report reads*: Private report of OCCK task force from Lieutenant Jack Kalbfleisch  
76 *And the same error*: “3 Oakland slayings linked to a Pontiac” by Morris  
70-78 Interviews with Cathy King

#### Chapter Nine: Wasser Remembers

Page

- 79-87 Interviews with Cathy King

#### Chapter Ten: Answers

Page

- 88-92 Interviews with Cathy King

#### Chapter Eleven: So Very Close to Home

Page

- 93-99 Interviews with Cathy King

#### Chapter Twelve: Evidence

Page

- 100-104 Interviews with Cathy King

## Bibliography

- Briggs-Bunting, Jane. "Kidnapping Linked to Snowfalls." Detroit Free Press. March 21, 1977. 1A.
- . "Witness Becomes Suspect In Kidnap of Suburban Boy." Detroit Free Press. March 20, 1977.
- Briggs-Bunting, Jane and Ken Fireman. "Missing Birmingham Boy Hunted." Detroit Free Press. March 18, 1977.
- Bunkley, Nick and Micheline Maynard. "Hoffa Search Finds Town's Sense of Humor." The New York Times. May 24, 2006: 21.
- . "No Sign Yet of Hoffa's Body, But the F.B.I. Cites 'Credible' Tip." The New York Times. May 19, 2006. 16.
- Dagner, Helen. <<http://helendagner.com>>. January 2007-March 2009.
- "Detectives Revive Infamous Case; Citizens Encouraged to Come Forward with Tips About '70's Killings." 18 February 2005. State of Michigan. August 1, 2008. <<http://michigan.gov/>>.
- Hunt, Amber. "Livonia Murder Case to Get a National TV Airing." The Detroit Free Press. December 29, 2006. REDOrbit News. August 6, 2008. <<http://redorbit.com>>.
- Kalbfleisch, Lieutenant Jack. Private correspondences. January 2007-March 2009.
- Keppel, Robert. The Riverman. New York: Pocket Books, 1995.
- King, Cathy. Interviews and private correspondences. January 2007-April 2009.
- Kirby, Mary Ellen. "Finder of Tim's body is haunted by sight." The Detroit News. March 24, 1977: 4B.
- Lamborgine, Theodore. "Offender Profile." Offender Tracking Information System (OTIS). Michigan.gov. <<http://state.mi.us>>. August 8, 2008.
- Lawson, Richard. "Offender Profile." Offender Tracking Information System (OTIS). Michigan.gov. <<http://state.mi.us>>. August 8, 2008.
- Lochbiler, Peter R. "Child killer eludes massive dragnet." The Detroit News. March 25, 1977. 1A-6A.

Martindale, Mike. "Police still on child killer case." The Detroit News. February 18, 2005.

"Metropolitan Area Employment and Unemployment Summary." Bureau of Labor Statistics. <<http://bls.gov>>. August 1, 2007

Morris, Julie. "3 Oakland slayings linked to a Pontiac." Detroit Free Press. September 8, 1978.

"Mother's plea for Tim's safety." The Sunday News. March 20, 1977.

"Oakland County, Michigan Website." <<http://www.co.oakland.mi.us>>. January 2007-March 2009.

Smith, Joel J. "Police certain boy is kidnap victim; Birmingham offers \$25,000 reward." The Detroit News. March 19, 1977.

Stark, Al. "Bruce Danto: Psycho-Sleuth." The Sunday News Magazine. July 3, 1977: 8.

"Two Men Arrested for Child Porn." WXYZ-TV. February 21, 2007. WXYZ Detroit News. <<http://wxyz.com/>>. August 1, 2008.

"Wayne County, Michigan Website." <<http://www.co.wayne.mi.us>>. January 2007-March 2009.

Wowk, Michael. "Oakland parents tense after killing." The Detroit News. March 24, 1977.

Zaniewski, Ann. "Ohio man is suspect in Oakland child killings." The Oakland Press. December 12, 2006. August 2, 2008. <<http://theoaklandpress.com>>.

## Vita

Julia Cianci was born in Boston, Massachusetts and raised outside Chicago, Illinois. She earned her degree in English Literature from North Central College in December 2004 and her Master of Fine Arts degree in Creative Writing from the University of New Orleans in May 2009. She currently lives and works in the San Francisco Bay Area.