



In March 1985, John and Jim attended a portrait hanging for Susie Sharp

Her boys were Fritz's boys; they did what he told them

(From A8)

and his family; Susie and her boys; Florence's sisters, Susie and Louise; and several old family friends. They had two Christmas trees, one for the children.

The meal was traditional, ham, turkey, dressing, gravy, cranberries, green bean casserole, squash casserole, wild rice, yams, biscuits, mincemeat and pumpkin pie, fruitcake and cookies, egg nog and coffee.

Bob carved, and Nana helped Florence cook. Florence worked so hard that she didn't eat until everybody had gone.

Everyone got plenty of gifts. The conversation was polite. Nobody mentioned Fritz. And everybody was pleased that Susie had come and there had been no blow-ups.

Fritz wanted to be called Papa

The new year, 1985, was Tom's year for spring and Christmas visits from the boys. He and Kathy planned a trip to Disneyland for the boys in April, and they all were looking forward to it. Florence had retired from Rutledge College and was working with Bob, but she still was teaching one class a day until a new instructor could be found. Susie continued her classes at UNC-G, making all A's. The boys, too, were doing well at Guilford Middle School. The work on Nana's house moved at a slow pace.

In March, Louise wrote to tell Tom and Kathy about a portrait-hanging ceremony at the Rockingham County Courthouse for Susie Sharp. Lots of important people attended. Most of the Sharp family was there, including Susie Lynch and the boys. Fritz came and took pictures. Photos of the boys posing with their great aunt and her portrait appeared in local newspapers. Louise sent clippings and went on about other family news.

"Annie Hill frequently has supper with me," she wrote. "When she comes, we watch 'Wheel of Fortune' after supper She backs out at the last minute when Fritz shows up at home for supper unannounced. I have no idea how or where he spends his time, but he seems to have an apartment in Durham."

Actually, a week earlier, on March 13, Fritz had moved out of his Durham apartment, leaving the walls

smoked and a big round hole burned in the center of the living room carpet. His security deposit was not returned.

He moved his things into Susie's apartment, and it became as jumbled and cluttered as his father's house always had been, with little room for sitting or walking. He hung blankets and camouflage sheeting over all the window blinds. He liked his living quarters to be as secure as a cocoon.

He was telling people now that Susie was his wife, John and Jim his sons. He encouraged the boys to call him Papa, and sometimes they did. Susie raised no objections when Fritz referred to her as his wife in public. Indeed, she told a friend in Winston-Salem, Dot McHargue, that she and Fritz had married, that they'd had to go out of state to do it because they were cousins.

Fritz's father left him the beneficiary of a \$25,000 life insurance policy. Although, like his father, Fritz distrusted banks, he deposited the money in a Reidsville bank. He made the first big withdrawal — \$1,000 — on July 19, 1984, five days before the Lynch murders. Later that summer, he used some of the money to help Susie buy a new 1984 Blazer S-10.

By the spring of 1985, almost all the money was gone, most of it spent on arms and military equipment.

Through the winter, Fritz appeared almost weekly at the Army-Navy Surplus Store on Lee Street in Greensboro. He usually arrived late in the afternoon, often just before the 6 p.m. closing time. The store always stayed open as long as Fritz wanted to shop.

Sometimes he stayed three or four hours. He rarely left without buying several hundred dollars worth of gear — knives, canteens, rations, sleeping bags, compasses, books and manuals, packs, field jackets, uniforms, camouflage materials. He often took four or five of whatever he bought and never paid attention to prices.

The store's co-owner, Phil Farlow, figured Fritz must have a commando or survival school. Fritz told him he was a doctor and had taken over his father's practice in Reidsville. He never talked about why he was buying so much gear.

He always paid cash. Like his father.

Fritz bought hundreds of books and military manuals on arms, including heavy armaments, explosives and combat techniques. He bought mercenary and survivalist books and magazines.

He collected more books and magazines on martial arts. He claimed to be a karate expert and bought karate outfits, but those who knew him well doubted that he ever had any training. Once, when he put on a karate demonstration for a group of boys, he was so comically inept that they laughed at him.

He had become fascinated with the Ninja, the secret and silent black-hooded assassins of ancient Japan. He had a collection of books about their techniques. He also bought exotic martial arts weapons and even plastic knives that can go undetected by airport metal detectors.

His biggest expenditures were for guns. He never missed an area gun show. He bought mail-order guns, gun parts and knives from all over the country. On the black market, he bought mines, hand grenades and other explosives. He made regular trips to a big gun shop in Tucker, Ga., where he spent several thousand dollars. But most of his gun buying and trading took place at McHargue Guns and Coins on Woughtown Street in Winston-Salem.

That store was owned by Curtis McHargue and operated by his wife, Dot, and two sons, Steve and Mike. They had known Fritz, whom they called Fred, five or six years and had come to like Susie and the boys. At Christmas, Susie brought them fudge. She was toying with an idea of making gift boxes of fudge to sell to traveling businessmen seeking quick gifts in airports.

Fritz trusted the McHargues and told them things that he told few others. He told them that he was a contract operative with the CIA. He spoke secretively of covert operations he had been on. He told them, too, that he was on the Delta Team, the quick-response commando group stationed at Fort Bragg. The McHargues believed him, and would continue to do so.

Five hours before news broke about the Russian downing of a Korean airliner in September 1983, Fritz told them about it. Dot McHargue said. A day in advance, he told them about the U.S. invasion of Grenada in October 1983.

He also told them stories that never made the news, one about four Russian submarines being sunk off Cape Hatteras.

Susie told of going on missions with Fritz a couple of times when he made "courier runs" to drop off satchels full of money.

Fritz's mother also believed he was working for some secret government agency, although she wouldn't be able to recall its name when she told officers about it



later. She knew he was involved in something dangerous because once she'd found a package addressed to him at the front door. She called Susie to tell him about it.

"Don't touch it," Susie told her. "We'll be right there."

When Fritz arrived, he used an electronic device to check it, announced that it was a bomb, carried it carefully away and later reported that he had disarmed it.

666 — the mark of the beast

Fritz spent a lot of time at the News 'n Novels bookstore in Kroger Shopping Center on West Market Street. There he bought gun, mercenary and survivalist magazines and poetry by Rudyard Kipling.

He liked poetry. One of his favorite works was the "Rubaiyat" by Omar Khayyam, 11th-century Arabic poetry. He gave copies of it to women he liked.

He often talked with Lynne McNeil, a clerk at the store. One day she was wearing a pin she had made from an odd little hand-painted trinket from her grandmother's jewelry box. Fritz noticed it and told her it was a decoration from horse-and-buggy days used to fasten harnesses on special occasions. His dad knew all about them, he said, and when he saw him he'd find out more.

He never brought it up again, and later she would be surprised to learn that Dr. Klenner had been dead six months when Fritz told her that.

At the Kroger, Fritz came in frequently, always after midnight. He usually wore military clothes or a white doctor's coat with a stethoscope in the pocket. He became friendly with several employees and freely offered medical advice. Like almost everyone else who encountered him, the store employees thought him nice, if a bit peculiar. Often he spent 15 or 20 minutes talking on the pay phone.

He bought lots of vitamins, and sometimes he would buy dozens of bottles of rubbing alcohol, rolls of gauze and adhesive tape. One night he bought \$300 worth. Another night he bought every box of Hershey's cocoa in the store.

"Somebody must be about to have a chocolate fit," a clerk quipped.

Fritz smiled and said that cocoa was an appetite suppressant; in desperate situations, a person with cocoa could get along without food.

Another night, Fritz became agitated when the bill for the customer ahead of him in line came to \$6.66. Those numbers represented the mark of the beast in the Book of Revelations, and Fritz began to talk about it.

"Before I'll take the mark of the beast," he said, "I'll take my wife and my two boys and we'll go so far back into the mountains that not even the devil can find us."

Neither Susie's family nor her former husband knew that Fritz and Susie were passing as married. They also didn't know how much Susie's personality had been subverted to Fritz's. His lifestyle had become hers. His fears, fantasies, extreme politics and hatreds — all were now hers.

Her boys were his. They did what he told them. They wore military clothes and were learning about guns. Fritz had bought them Ruger .22 rifles and was teaching them to shoot.

Susie and the boys even had accepted Fritz's strange religion. In their apartment, which now resembled a military arsenal and supply dump, crucifixes hung in every room. Over windows and doors were small palm-leaf crosses. Over the front door, next to a tear-gas canister booby trap, was a small card hand lettered by Fritz:

I
NIR
I
Sanctus Spiritus
I
NIR
I
All this be guarded here in time and there in eternity.
Amen

Both Susie and Fritz were feeding on the other's fantasies and paranoia, generating a spiraling madness that was whipping into whirlwind. But they managed to keep it undetected.

That spring Susie's brother Rob called and asked her and Fritz to have lunch with him at Stamey's Barbecue on High Point Road. He wanted to get a feel for their situation. Both came. The three had a nice chat, mostly about the boys and Rob's work. To Rob, his sister and Fritz seemed perfectly normal.

'Two down and two to go'

On March 22, 1985, Tom Lynch wrote a letter to his lawyer in Reidsville, Bill Horsley. He enclosed copies of letters he'd received from Susie's family. He said he would be sending along material that he and Kathy had been gathering about divorce and child custody. They had consulted child psychologists who told them that the boys were at an age when they particularly needed a father's guidance — and that Tom's visitation schedule was far less than the national norm.

Tom wanted 70 days in the summer, plus every spring break. He wanted the parent travel stipulation dropped. To show that it was unnecessary, he'd gathered material about how airlines handle small children.

"I don't think that my desires in this matter should be negotiable," he wrote. "Regardless of the boys' situation in N.C., they need to spend more time with their father. And because of their situation, I believe it would



Tom and Kathy took the boys to the Grand Canyon in 1984 and to Disneyland in April 1985. After that trip, they promised they would see the boys soon. They wouldn't get to keep that promise.

be good for them to spend some time away from that environment. You'll need to notify Susie of my desires while I have the boys in Disneyland (April 3-9). I do not expect her to cooperate.

"Bill, I can not express to you in any stronger manner how committed I am in this. The information you glean from these letters is not half of the story, but I won't put down on paper my feelings about how Susie is raising the boys. I do think that at this time even her family questions her methods."

On April 3, John and Jim left Greensboro on a direct flight to Los Angeles to meet Tom and Kathy. That day Florence mailed Tom photos that had been taken at Christmas and told him how excited the boys were about going to Disneyland.

"Bob and I were there in 1970, and I enjoyed it as much as any child," she wrote. "I told Jim to tell Mickey Mouse hello for me."

She went on with other family news and ended by telling of plans to go to her mother's church for Easter services, as she and her sisters did every year. Her mother had died on Good Friday and had been buried on Easter.

"Easter is a very sad time, but also a glorious time. The trees and flowers here are beautiful. The tulips, daffodils, fruit trees and dogwoods are just lovely. The azaleas are not quite open but will be by this weekend. I think."

The boys had a grand time at Disneyland.

They stayed in a fancy hotel and tried escargot. They went to see Granny Goose and Opa, their Albuquerque neighbors who now lived in California. Kathy thought the boys got to be really close to her on the trip. She and Tom shared the sadness when they put the boys on the plane, kissed them goodbye and assured them they would see them again soon. They wouldn't have a chance to keep that promise.

On May 2, Bill Horsley filed a motion asking for the extended visits Tom wanted. A hearing was set for May 23. Tom called Susie's father to tell him about it and asked Bob if he would testify in his behalf. Bob said that he would. He thought his grandsons should spend more time with their father.

On Saturday, May 11, Mother's Day weekend, Bob and Florence left for Silver Spring, Md., to visit close friends, Marvin and Taki Mundel.

Bob usually took Florence away on minor holidays to help ease the pain of Susie's ignoring her. They planned to be gone a week but returned on Thursday to learn that a sheriff's deputy had been by with a subpoena for Bob to appear at the hearing a week hence. The next morning, Bob called Susie to tell her of his intention to testify.

At 3:30 that afternoon, Susie went to Reidsville to see her lawyer, Sandy Sands. She carried a plastic bag containing two stuffed toy animals, a green dragon and an orange and black tiger. The throats on both animals had been slit.

Susie was frantic, crying, trembling, her voice quivering. Sands had never seen a human being as scared. "She was terrified," he said.

She told him that in March Tom had called to ask for a longer visit in the spring. She'd said no. They'd argued. She'd hung up. Shortly afterward, she came home from class to find the two animals, the boys' travel toys, with their throats slit.

Had she called the police? Sands asked.

No, nothing else was disturbed, and there was no sign of a forced entry. She went to the complex office and got the pass key to her apartment from a panel on the wall, but it wouldn't open her door. Apparently somebody had taken the one that would and replaced it.

Soon after she found the animals, Susie said, she got an anonymous call.

"Two down and two to go," the caller said, and hung up.

Susie said she took it to mean that the Lynch murders were the two down. The two to go might be her children.

Sands managed to calm her, and afterward they talked about the upcoming hearing. Sands told her that her father would be testifying for Tom, and she said she knew. They talked about what evidence likely would be presented and what they might present. Sands wanted to put the boys on the stand to say that they didn't want more time with their father. He might call the psychiatrist Susie and the boys had been seeing, Dr. Andrew Courts of Greensboro. Susie said she and the boys had an appointment with him Monday.

The meeting lasted two hours. Before Susie left, Sands assured her that it was not unusual that her father would testify for the other side. Grandparents often thought that the other parent should have more time, he said. He thought that Susie left satisfied about that.

She hadn't.

The next morning, Saturday, May 18, a day that would end in murder, Annette Hunt got a surprise call from Susie.

Annette, who lived across from the Newsoms, had rarely heard from Susie in the past year and a half. Annette thought it was because Susie didn't want her to know how close she'd gotten with Fritz.

"What are you doing?" Susie asked.

"Nothing much."

"Can I come over?"

"Sure."

Susie stayed several hours. She and Annette spent some time catching up, but mostly Susie wanted to talk about the upcoming custody hearing. She couldn't understand how her father could testify against her. She went on and on about it.

Annette told Susie that if she had to go back to court, she should try to get Tom to pay to send the boys to camp each summer. It would be good for all of them. She gave Susie some material about a camp her sons had gone to.

Susie saw that the camp had a rifle program. The boys, she said, would like that.