



Ian Perkins wept in court as he testified about his role in the triple murder

The Associated Press

Did Susie think she could save her sons by destroying them?

(From A1)

Each day, more sensational news

Police, meanwhile, were taking inventory of items seized at Susie's apartment on the night of the bomb blast.

They had taken a police scanner, thousands of rounds of ammunition, two .22-caliber carbines that Fritz had bought for the boys, an M-6 survival weapon that would fire .22 bullets and .410 shotgun shells, a 20-gauge shotgun, a .22 revolver, a .25-caliber automatic pistol, two .45-caliber pistols, a 5.56-mm assault rifle, spare barrels, a big assortment of knives and martial arts weapons, gas masks, bullet-proof vests, Mace, holsters and other military equipment.

They also took ammunition boxes that were virtual treasure chests, filled with gold and silver jewelry, pearls and precious stones. In addition to \$1,219 in cash, they found a 100-ounce silver bar, 118 one-ounce silver bars, a gold Presidential Rolex watch, three one-ounce South African Krugerrand gold coins, six half-ounce, 10 quarter-ounce and 20 tenth-ounce Krugerrands, plus numerous other gold and silver coins.

On Tuesday, June 4, police searched the house of Annie Hill Klenner, Fritz's mother, in Reidsville. They found six shotguns, a machine gun, seven pistols, five semi-automatic rifles, a case and a half of dynamite, blasting caps, 28 pounds of black powder, 15 tear-gas grenades, 20 smoke grenades, two live claymore mines, more military equipment and prescription drugs from the medical practice of the late Dr. Frederick Klenner, Fritz's father.

The story of the murders, the shootout and the blast dominated the news in North Carolina. It was carried in national and international reports. Each day brought more sensational developments.

The most sensational came Wednesday, June 5, when SBI agents held a press conference to announce that John and Jim had taken cyanide and been shot while riding in the back of Fritz's Chevy Blazer. Both were dead before the bomb blast that killed Susie and Fritz.

Medical examiners had detected the distinctive almond-Clorox odor of cyanide as soon as they began autopsies on the boys. John had 1.7 milligrams of cyanide per unit of blood, Jim a whopping 18 milligrams per unit. As little as .6 has been known to kill. An average lethal amount for an adult is 1.2.

In the medical examiners' opinions, the boys were still alive but unconscious when shot, which meant that they had taken the cyanide within a couple of minutes of being shot. They likely would have convulsed.

Jim, whose body was behind Susie's seat in the Blazer, had been shot through the left eye from a distance of no more than a foot. The 9-mm bullet went from left to right slightly upward and exited in the high center of his head.

John, whose body was behind Fritz's seat, was shot

in the left rear of his skull, behind his ear. The bullet traveled upward and exited above his left ear.

The revelation came as another terrible jolt to family and friends of Susie, the overprotective mother. They simply couldn't believe she could have had any part in destroying her children.

"She wouldn't have allowed that," said her aunt, Susie Sharp. "Maybe she was dead and sitting up in the seat before they were killed.... The possibilities are limitless. I just can't imagine even a crazy person being so deranged."

But the autopsy showed that Susie died, as did Fritz, from injuries caused by the explosion that followed the boys' deaths. No evidence showed that she was unconscious before the explosion.

'I'm just so angry'

A memorial service for John and Jim was held at 7 p.m. Wednesday at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Greensboro, the church they had attended with their mother. The service was attended by family, the boys' teachers and several of their classmates. Tom had their bodies flown to Albuquerque for burial.

The day of the service, Tom lashed out at his former wife in interviews with newspaper and TV reporters. Reports that Susie may have been unaware of Fritz's murders were ridiculous, he said.

"She may have been the mastermind-manipulator," he said. "I don't know what I think about this at this time. I'm just so angry."

Thursday morning, June 6, a private, unannounced graveside service was held for Fritz at Greenview Cemetery in Reidsville. He was buried beside his father.

Dr. Klenner's gravestone was inscribed "Beloved Physician." The stone placed on Fritz's grave read "Devoted Son."

At 2 p.m. Thursday, Susie's funeral was held at St. Andrew's. Like her mother, Susie was cremated. Her remains were interred in the columbarium at the church.

In an interview after the funeral, Rob talked about his sister's fears, revealed that she had been seeing a psychiatrist and said his family had been concerned about her unusual behavior. But he could not believe that she had any part in the murders of their parents and grandmother nor in the deaths of her children.

That afternoon, Annie Hill Klenner also gave an interview.

"In his right mind," she said of Fritz, "he would not harm a flea. If he has done something like that, it certainly was out of keeping with his character, and the only explanation I have is that he was sick and had had all he could take."

She said his behavior might have come about because of multiple sclerosis, which his father had diagnosed him as having in 1977.

"When his father was alive, he gave him treatment for it," Annie Hill said. "Since then, there's been no one to give him that, and he's had some difficulty. Sometimes he had to use a cane, and he's had eye problems."

That story provoked protest from multiple sclerosis patients and the National Multiple Sclerosis Society in New York. The society said no evidence linked MS to pathological social behavior. The state medical examiner also revealed that the autopsy, while not designed to detect MS, showed no signs that Fritz had the crippling disease.

Also on Thursday, SBI District Supervisor Ed Hunt disclosed that Fritz left behind a note naming an accomplice in the Newsom murders. Two days earlier, Forsyth County Sheriff Preston Oldham had spoken of an "infiltrator" who had relayed information about Fritz. The accomplice and infiltrator turned out to be the same person: Ian Perkins.

At a news conference on Monday, June 10, Sheriff Oldham said that an indictment would be sought against an unnamed person in the Newsom case. The grand jury returned indictments on June 24, charging Ian with three counts of accessory after the fact of murder.

Some officers had opposed the indictments because Ian had been duped into believing he was on a CIA mission to kill drug smugglers and had risked his life to help them. While taping his conversations with Fritz, Ian had unknowingly sat atop the bomb that later killed Susie and Fritz.

Ian was released on an unsecured bond of \$25,000.

Searching for the Kentucky connection

On July 7, Dan Davidson and Lynn Nobles, the Kentucky detectives, returned to North Carolina. They had no solid evidence connecting Fritz or Susie to the Kentucky murders, and they wanted some desperately. They interviewed Rob, Annie Hill, Ian and Mike and Steve McHargue, friends of Fritz who operate a Winston-Salem gun shop.

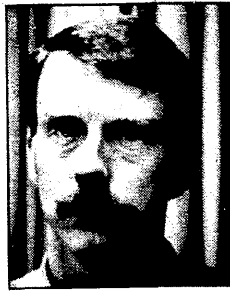
They also talked with Sgt. Furman Melton of the Greensboro Police Department. In 1984, Davidson had requested that Greensboro police do a routine interview



Rob Newsom

'It's rather like being a survivor of the Holocaust,' Rob said. 'We've lost four generations of people.'

As Tom flew to Greensboro, he blamed himself for not coming to North Carolina and snatching his kids.



Tom Lynch

of Susie for his investigation. Melton did it in December.

Susie told him that she couldn't remember where she was on the weekend of the Kentucky murders. Asked whether she thought Tom might have something to do with it, she said that she didn't think so. She made no mention of the mafia fears she recently had told her brother about.

Fritz was there when Melton arrived but went into the bedroom during the interview. Melton thought he heard a gun being cocked while he was talking with Susie but didn't think much about it until after June 3.

Before Davidson and Nobles returned to Kentucky, they got Susie's telephone records, the telephone records for Dr. Klenner's office, for which Fritz had a charge card, and Susie's bank and credit card records. They took back a map that had been found in Susie's apartment and asked federal agents from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms to trace some 30 weapons Fritz had traded back to the McHargues since the Kentucky murders.

'My only desire is to see justice'

Ian Perkins came to trial on July 31. His lawyers, Jim Medford and Jack Floyd of Greensboro, had not been able to work out a plea-bargain agreement. They advised Ian to plead guilty after Tisdale indicated to them that he would try Ian on much more serious charges of accessory before the fact of murder if he pleaded innocent.

"Are you in fact guilty?" Judge Edward Washington asked Ian.

"Yes," he said, bursting into tears.

During the hearing, Ian took the stand and tearfully told of his part in the murders.

Crying, he told why he decided to help the police.

"At that point —" He paused, trying to compose himself. "I had realized that something was terribly wrong, and I wanted to attempt to right that wrong as much as I could."

"Did you think it was legal for someone to be killed even by the CIA?" Tisdale asked.

"That was a point I had to wrestle with. It is an odious thing, but I figured if by my actions that I could prevent even an iota of suffering from those who might possibly become hooked on drugs as a result of what I believed to be a situation that Fritz told me about, then I thought and I sincerely believe that it was worth the stain upon myself."

Norwood Robinson, a lawyer who lives next door to Ian's mother and grandmother in Reidsville, appeared as a character witness. He said Ian had told him that when the enormity of the situation hit him, if he'd had the .45-caliber pistol that Fritz had given him, he would have killed himself.

"Insofar as Mr. Perkins is concerned," Judge Washington said, "I cannot believe, nor can the law of North Carolina or the United States be construed or interpreted to allow any individual to share in or participate in a plan or a course of action where a person is to be executed without trial, without an opportunity to defend himself or herself, without a determination of that person's guilt or the degree of guilt."

The judge then quoted a state Supreme Court case, State v. Clark:

"If we take our eyes from the law and give our attention only to consequences, or if we stop to consider who is morally right or wrong without regard to right or wrong as judicially ascertained, we will soon have a government not of law but without law, and the lawlessness which is sought to be avoided will follow as an inevitable result."

Ian stood and gave his final statement to the court in a halting voice.

"I can't take away the pain that the Newsoms suffered, nor can I blame them for what they feel. They have every right," he said. "Nor can I expect myself to not share some of the pain that they suffered. But my only desire is to see justice done."

"Take your time," the judge said when Ian paused.

"That's all," Ian said.

The judge considered Ian's immaturity and his helping the police at the risk of his own life. Then he sentenced him to six years, suspended on grounds that he serve a four-month active sentence, remain on probation for five years and pay a \$3,000 fine.

Monday morning quarterbacks

On Aug. 4, the Greensboro News & Record published a story that Fritz had been reported to the SBI in 1981 for practicing medicine and prescribing drugs without a license but nothing had come of it. The story said that, before trying to arrest Fritz, the SBI had been warned that he might have automatic weapons and explosives, would come out shooting and wouldn't be taken alive.

The story reported that the methods used to try to stop Fritz on June 3 were contrary to standard police procedures and that some officers believed the SBI and Forsyth County officers had unnecessarily endangered lives.

Tom Lynch questioned police actions on June 3 and couldn't understand why Fritz hadn't been arrested when he was alone and isolated. After officers made their final attempt to get a secretly taped confession from Fritz, he had at least a 20-minute drive back to Susie's apartment. Was that not time enough, Tom wondered, to get approval for his arrest from the district attorney and stop him?

SBI Director Robert Morgan, a former U.S. senator, defended his agents' actions in an interview on Aug. 5. Later that day, Attorney General Lacy Thornburg directed Morgan to conduct a complete review of the Klenner case.

Morgan disclosed his findings in a press conference in Raleigh on Aug. 15. Flanked by large charts and standing beneath a huge aerial photograph, Morgan commended officers for their actions on June 3. He called questions about their actions "Monday morning quarterbacking."

Morgan denied that "John Wayne tactics" had been used and that officers involved had left the Greensboro officer wounded in the attempt to stop Fritz. He acknowledged that he had not talked to the wounded officer, Tommy Dennis.

Morgan denied that the SBI had been warned that Fritz might have automatic weapons and explosives and wouldn't be taken alive. (In a June 6 news story, Dis-

trict Attorney Don Tisdale said, "We had an insight into him that he wouldn't be taken alive.")

About the 1981 report to the SBI on Fritz, Morgan said that agents had followed up at the time and "no evidence of any suspicious or criminal activity was found."

Morgan said the agents questioned the motives of the complainant because his wife was involved with Fritz at the time.

Morgan did acknowledge that communication among the law enforcement agencies was a problem on June 3.

With this, he said, the SBI was closing the Klenner case.

The SBI closed its case without trying to discover what role Susie played in the deaths of her children.

Medical examiners sent hand wipings from Susie to the SBI lab so tests could be run to determine if she had fired a weapon. Those tests were inconclusive, the SBI said, because of bomb residue. Yet, the SBI said it could not determine what kind of bomb had killed Fritz and Susie because the heavy rain that came after the blast had washed away the residue.

Fingerprints were not taken from weapons found at the scene of the blast. Numerous officers had handled them.

Trying to determine who killed the boys by studying the angles of the shots was deemed futile.

What did Susie know — and do?

Just what part did Susie play in the murders and in the deaths of her children?

Neither the SBI nor the Forsyth County Sheriff's Department found any evidence linking Susie to the murders of her parents and grandmother.

Did Fritz commit the murders to instill fear in Susie, thereby giving him more control of her and the boys?

Did he leave the note proclaiming his innocence to fool Susie and his mother? Or only his mother?

Why did Susie act so strangely, almost indifferent, about the deaths of her parents and grandmother?

Wouldn't she have been suspicious of Fritz after the police came and Ian kept calling?

Was Fritz keeping her informed of developments?

At about 5:30 Sunday, June 2, Susie drove past her brother's house and was hailed by Chris Hunt, who lived next door. Earlier that day, Fritz had met with Ian. Ian had told him about being taken to the murder scene in Old Town and seeing the car Fritz had driven the night of the triple murder.

Fritz asked him how many cars were there. A couple, Ian said. Should have been three, Fritz said, unless Rob, Susie's brother, had picked up one.

When Susie drove by that night, was she checking to see if Rob had indeed picked up a car, so Fritz would know whether Ian was lying about being taken to the murder scene?

Why did Susie lie about Fritz not being in the apartment when SBI agent Tom Sturgill called on June 3?

If Susie knew nothing about the murders, why didn't she do something to try to stop Fritz after he shot an officer in uniform? The Blazer was full of weapons, and she knew how to use them.

Had Susie's thinking become so warped that she thought she could save her sons only by destroying them?

Didn't the notes Fritz left behind, the prayer cloths they all were wearing, the rosary beads they carried, indicate a planned suicide?

Were the boys part of a suicide pact? Did they know they were going to die when they took the cyanide capsules? Or were they so accustomed to taking pills that they would take anything they were given?

Who gave them the capsules?

The McHargues in Winston-Salem said Susie once told them that she couldn't live without Fritz. She carried cyanide. If anything ever happened to Fritz, she and the boys would take it.

The evidence against her

Dan Davidson of the Kentucky State Police believes that Susie came to Kentucky with Fritz to kill Delores and Janie Lynch. He thinks she had to have pointed out the house to him. He figures she let Fritz out near the house and drove somewhere in the Blazer while he did the killing. Before dawn on July 22, 1984, a witness saw a black vehicle he thought was an International Harvester four-wheel-drive turning around in a driveway near the Lynch house.

Davidson has found reason for suspicion in Susie's telephone records. Long-distance calls usually were made from Susie's phone every day, often to gun and knife dealers. But on the weekend of the Lynch murders, no calls were made, indicating that nobody was at home.

At 12:03 p.m. on Friday, July 20, 1984, a call was made from her phone to a company in California that made combat pistols. The next call was not made until 11:47 p.m. Monday night, July 23. That call was to Tom Lynch in Albuquerque, where Susie's sons were on their summer visit.

Was Susie calling because she and Fritz had heard nothing about bodies being found in Kentucky? Tom said she seemed surprised that he was home to answer the phone.

Susie talked to the boys for 10 minutes. Three minutes after hanging up, at midnight, she called the Klenner house in Reidsville and talked for 19 minutes. Was she talking to Fritz, who often stayed at his mother's house? Were they pondering why no news had come about the murders?

The bodies of Delores and Janie Lynch were found on Tuesday afternoon, July 24. At 7:20 p.m. in Albuquerque, 9:20 p.m. in Greensboro, Tom called Susie to tell her about the murders and ask her to let the boys stay longer. They talked for eight minutes. Four minutes later, Susie again called the Klenner house. Was she reporting the finding of the bodies to Fritz? Davidson believed so.

On the afternoon of July 23, Susie and Fritz appeared at McHargue's gun shop in Winston-Salem. Fritz traded in a nickel-plated .223 rifle he had bought there earlier. ATF agents traced that weapon and found it.

(Continued on A15)

BITTER BLOOD

A Genealogy of Murder

Sunday: The Dying Begins — Both murder scenes suggested robbery. Police suspected professionals. Family members suspected one of their own.

Monday: His Father's Son — Fritz Klenner's proud Prussian papa taught him to love guns, hate commies, charm women and expect Armageddon.

Tuesday: Susie Q — Susie Lynch lived a fairy-tale youth: May Queen at 5, high school princess, fraternity sweetheart.

Wednesday: The Gathering Storm — Fritz was ready for the world to fall apart, but not for his father to die.

Thursday: Victims and Survivors — As the family arranged funerals, the detectives analyzed alibis.

Friday: A Spy Gets Spooked — Ian Perkins dreamed of joining the CIA. He thought he had passed the first test until the police came calling.

Saturday: The Bloody End — A shootout, a chase, an explosion — now nine people were dead.

Today: The Unraveling — The family was devastated, the community captivated. One by one, the bizarre details surfaced.