

Bright, vivacious, Susie's childhood was one of privilege

(From A1)

ease left Susie with a pain-producing lump at the base of her spine, which years later often caused her to choose sleeping on the floor over bed.

Susie was bright, outgoing, vivacious, and her childhood was one of privilege. She learned early to use charm to get her way and never hesitated to employ it. If her will were thwarted, she used other tactics. Her tantrums were so severe that her mother had to douse her with cold water to control them.

The atmosphere in which Susie grew up was one of cordial and genteel formality, a throwback to Old South aristocracy, and she came to view herself and her family as special. Her childhood was structured around Old Town Elementary School, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Forsyth Country Club and big family gatherings.

She took piano lessons and learned social graces from her mother, her grandmother and her aunts. She particularly looked forward to visits with Su-Su, who gave her presents and took her to the railroad depot to see the trains.

In junior high, Susie became fascinated with the royal family of Great Britain. Pictures of the family adorned the walls of her room, and she collected and devoured books about them. She decorated her room and dressed up every year on the queen's birthday. The interest continued into high school, leading some classmates to suspect she imagined herself a princess.

She grew into a striking young woman with quick brown eyes, dark hair, a slim, well-proportioned figure and a regal bearing. She was bubbly and outgoing, always a bit hyperactive, often a little frantic, traits that would remain with her.

At North Forsyth High School, where Susie was an honor student, she developed a keen interest in history. She took part in school activities but had few close friends. When time came for other young women of prominent families to be introduced to society at debutante balls, Susie disdained the idea as beneath her standing, a gaudy practice of the nouveau riche.

Appropriately, after graduation in 1964, she went away to Queens College in Charlotte. She had become taken with the place when she visited there with other family members to see Aunt Su-Su receive an honorary degree. But she missed home and family, and after her sophomore year, she enrolled as a history major at Wake Forest University just a few miles from home.

That fall, in the library, she met Tommy Lynch.

Susie tossed her bouquet to Janie

Tom was a freshman, an athlete, 5 feet, 11 inches, 175 pounds, with sun-bleached hair and a toothy smile. He aspired to be a star guard on Wake's basketball team.

At Morgan Park Academy, a prep school in Chicago, he had averaged 30 points a game in his senior year and had been chosen one of the top 20 high school players in Chicago. Duke University and Davidson College had shown interest in recruiting him, and on a trip with his father to visit those campuses, he decided to take a look at Wake Forest. He met Bones McKinney, then in his last year as Wake's basketball coach. Hoping to get an athletic scholarship in his sophomore year, Tom decided to attend Wake.

He played on the freshman team, averaged more than 6 points a game, got his scholarship and became a substitute guard on the regular team during his sophomore year. But he never would rise above substitute, barely averaging more than a point a game in his three years on the team.

Although Tom was two years younger than Susie, they began attending campus events together and soon were dating. Susie had been chosen a fraternity sweetheart, and Tom was flattered by her attentions. By Tom's junior year, when Susie was in graduate school studying history, Tom took Susie to meet his parents.

Susie and Tom's mother Delores had an immediate dislike for each other, but Tom thought it would work itself out. During his senior year, while Susie was working in the research department at R.J. Reynolds, he ordered a diamond ring for her from a catalog, and the wedding was announced for June, after his graduation. Tom's mother didn't want him to marry Susie and questioned him repeatedly about whether he was doing the right thing. He ignored her.

The wedding was June 6, 1970, at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Winston-Salem, followed by a reception at Forsyth Country Club. It was a big affair, drawing many prominent people. The men in the wedding party



Susie Q sits between Susie Sharp and her mother Florence at right of photo

Others from left, Mary Ann, Annie and Gertrude Klenner; standing, James Sharp, Annie Sharp

wore morning coats, the women lime-green chiffon dresses. Tom's sister Janie was a bridesmaid.

Before the ceremony, Susie found fault with Janie's dress. She and Delores Lynch squabbled, and the wedding proceeded with great tension in the air, a portent Tom chose not to acknowledge. After the ceremony, Susie tossed her bouquet to Janie.

There was no time for a honeymoon. Tom had been accepted in the dental school at the University of Kentucky in Lexington. He had taken a summer job with the Kentucky Department of Health and had to leave immediately to begin work. His mother had found an apartment for the newlyweds about three miles from campus and furnished it. Tom moved in, and Susie arrived a week later. She found a job she liked at Spindle-top Research Co.

Tom started classes that fall. His parents were paying his school expenses, and Tom and Susie were able to live quite well on Susie's salary. They were happy but had little time together. Tom was in school all day, studied into the night. He started playing on an intramural basketball team and took up running and tag football.

Only once in four years, on a Thanksgiving, did he and Susie drive the 85 miles to Louisville to visit his parents. Susie refused to have anything to do with Delores.

In his senior year, Tom decided to join the Naval Reserve. He would be commissioned a lieutenant and serve two years active duty. It would give him time to decide what he wanted to do and let him save money to start a practice. Tom and Susie wanted to have children, at least two, and decided they might as well let the Navy pay for delivering them. Susie was soon pregnant.

Tom was commissioned in 1974 and assigned to the Marine training center at Parris Island, S.C. He and Susie got an apartment nearby in historic Beaufort. Their first child, John, was born at the base hospital on Aug. 30.

Delores and Janie Lynch drove to Beaufort to see Delores' first grandchild. Delores called the apartment when they arrived in town. Tom was still at work. Susie was very short with her. She and Tom had an extra bedroom, but Susie told Delores to get a motel room and call the next day for an appointment. Susie was cold during the brief visit, and Delores left in tears. Tom was upset, but he didn't challenge his wife.

Susie was happy in Beaufort, where old hierarchies reigned and family names and traditions mattered. She loved its Old South atmosphere. She made friends and attended some social functions, but John took up most of her time. He was a fretful baby and cried often.

Less than a year after John was born, Susie was pregnant again. Jim was born March 26, 1976.

Tom's mother wouldn't see her second grandchild for a year.

The biggest turkey of all

Tom was to be discharged from the Navy in June 1976. He'd been thinking about heading west. He loved the outdoors and open spaces, and the West always appealed to him. In dental school, he'd had friends from New Mexico who extolled their home state. Tom thought he might like to live there. One of his friends gave him the name of two dentists in Albuquerque who might help. Tom went to meet them that spring.

He loved Albuquerque. He liked the dentists, Armand and Robert Giannini. They invited him to join them as a partner. He went back to Beaufort excited and took Susie to see Albuquerque. She wasn't enthusiastic, but he thought that would change.

After his discharge, Tom took Susie and the boys to Greensboro to stay with her parents and flew to New Mexico. He got a bank loan, bought equipment, set up his office, found an apartment in the bluffs on the edge of town that looked down on the Rio Grande. He returned to Greensboro, loaded the car and brought his family to their new home.

Susie disliked Albuquerque from the beginning. It was too raw-boned, too informal. There were too many rough-looking people, too many Mexicans and Indians. She helped Tom try to establish his practice, but the babies took most of her time.

Soon after Susie and Tom settled in Albuquerque, Jerry and Joy Montgomery came to visit. Susie was happy to have them. Jerry had been Tom's best friend at college, the star guard on the basketball team, the best man at his wedding, John's godfather. Joy had known Susie at college. Jerry had gone to medical school, had just finished his residency and was looking for someplace to settle. Tom talked him into trying Albuquerque, and Jerry soon found a job at St. Joseph's Hospital.

Six months after arriving in Albuquerque, Tom and Susie bought a house at 3121 La Mancha Drive in the valley. It was a pueblo house, stucco over frame, with three bedrooms, a fireplace in the den and tall cottonwood trees in the back yard.

Henry and Irene Eichel, who lived next door, came calling the day Tom and Susie moved in. Henry was a retired Air Force colonel, then working as an executive at TRW Inc. Like Susie's father, he was an engineer. Irene was from a prominent family in Texas.

Susie took an immediate liking to Hank and Irene and soon was visiting every day. Irene began thinking

of Susie almost as a daughter. She loved John and Jimbo, as she called Jim, and frequently tended them while Susie ran errands. John started calling her Granny Goose. He called Hank Opa. Jim did, too, when he was old enough to talk.

Within six months, Susie began confiding her unhappiness to Irene. She wanted Tom to go back to North Carolina to practice. Albuquerque had no culture. The museums were pathetic. The university was second rate. There was no chamber music. She had to go all the way to Santa Fe to see an opera.

Irene suspected that Susie really was unhappy because she had no social identity in Albuquerque. Her family name didn't count. Susie talked frequently about her family back in North Carolina, about her uncle who was a world-famous doctor, but mostly about her aunt, Susie Sharp, the chief justice. She regularly dropped into conversation that Time magazine had named her aunt one of the 12 most important women in America. Irene got the idea that Susie Sharp must run North Carolina.

Joy and Jerry Montgomery had heard all this family talk, too. They concluded that Susie thought she and her family were a cut above everybody else. They had a short and simple word to describe her: snob.

In those days, "turkey" was one of Susie's favorite words, "lower class" a favorite phrase. Everything in Albuquerque was lower class. Most of the people were turkeys. People who didn't buy designer clothes and the right brand names were lower-class turkeys.

Tom was a turkey, too, Susie told Irene. She wanted to go to the opera; he wouldn't take her. She loved the classics; he had no comprehension of them. He loved to put on boots and go camping, hunting, fishing; she abhorred all that, preferred white gloves and 4:30 tea. He bought a Toyota Landcruiser to prowls the desert; she wouldn't set foot in it. He took up running again and began training for a marathon. People who run for miles are crazy, she said, and refused to take the boys to watch him race.

Tom loved sports. "Athletes," Susie announced, "are nothing but a bunch of sweaty, overrated turkeys."

The biggest turkey of all was Susie's mother-in-law, Delores. Susie loathed her and went on at length about her. She boasted to Irene that she threw away packages Delores mailed to the boys. She spoke proudly of turning Delores away in Beaufort.

Irene could see trouble ahead next door.

'He didn't fall. I slapped him.'

The trouble surfaced in Tom and Susie's third year in Albuquerque. Joy and Jerry no longer felt welcome in Susie's house, and neither did other friends of Tom's. Susie said cutting, double-edged things about Tom and his friends in front of them. Her only humor came out as sarcasm.

To Joy and Jerry, Susie seemed manipulative and domineering, not only with Tom and the children but with everybody. When she did not get her way, she stormed about in a cold fury.

Irene could hear the trouble next door. She'd hear Susie laying down the law and slamming doors, but she never heard Tom. He seemed to be shrinking inside himself. He was not the type to stand up and confront. He rarely said anything. He began staying away from home.

Irene knew, too, that Susie had begun taking her frustrations out on John and Jimbo. She was an over-protective and controlling mother. John had begun asserting his independence, and Susie didn't know how to handle it. Irene could hear the slaps and howls.

One day Irene saw marks on John's face and asked what happened.

"I fell down," he said.

"He didn't fall down," Susie said. "I slapped him."

"My god," Irene said, "you must have slapped him hard."

"I did," Susie said without remorse. "I knocked him across the room."

Irene and Hank debated whether to tell Tom but decided not to meddle.

In the spring of 1979, Tom got a call at his office telling him Jim was at Presbyterian Hospital. He arrived to find Susie making a scene and demanding to take Jim home. The doctors insisted that he stay.

Jim had facial bruises and a concussion. The doctors said the injuries were consistent with child abuse and were considering notifying authorities. Susie said Jim had been hurt when John pulled him sleeping off a bed at child care. Tom accepted the explanation.

Jim was in the hospital two days. Jerry Montgomery went to see him and found his injuries to be incompatible with a fall. They were compatible, he decided, with a punch from a fist.

But Tom didn't want to believe that, and Jerry felt awkward about pressing the matter.

Irene was furious when she heard about it. The boys hadn't been at child care the afternoon Jim was hurt. Susie had left them with her. Jim was fine when Susie came to get the boys. Two hours later, Jim was at the hospital.

When Irene later asked Susie what happened, Susie said John had knocked Jim over in his high chair. That sealed Irene's opinion of Susie forever. She wanted nothing more to do with her.

In March 1978, Susie had taken a job with Competi-



Tom, Susie in 1969, year he took her home

tive Edge, a company that produced TV commercials. She started as a receptionist but quickly rose to be production coordinator, scheduling studio time for 10 different offices from around the country. Her bosses found her to be pleasant, charming and highly capable.

Later that year, Susie revived a long-time interest in Far Eastern culture. She had become interested at Wake Forest because of an Indian professor she admired, Balkrishna Gokhale. She studied Far Eastern history in graduate school. With China opening up, she got the idea that somebody who could speak Chinese would have a bright future. She found a Taiwanese student at the University of New Mexico to tutor her and began studying Mandarin. She bought books and tapes and diligently spent evenings practicing words and drawing Chinese characters.

Irene saw the job and the language study as signs of an impending break in Susie's marriage. It came in July 1979. Susie had threatened to go back home to North Carolina after a spat in January. When she did it again in July, Tom said it might be the best thing. Susie told Irene she was going home to visit for a couple of weeks, because her grandfather, Robert Newsom, Paw-Paw, was gravely ill and she wanted the boys to see him.

On July 16, she loaded the boys and some clothes in her blue '74 Audi Fox and headed back to the place where her name and position would mean something again.

A wonderful place for germs

A week after Susie arrived at her parents' big two-story house on Fairgreen Drive in Greensboro's Hamilton Forest section, she called Tom and said she wouldn't be returning. She told family and friends that Tom asked her to leave, that he didn't want to be married anymore.

In August, she sought advice from Aunt Su-Su, who'd just retired from the N.C. Supreme Court. Su-Su recommended she talk to a family friend, Alexander P. Sands III, a Reidsville lawyer who handled domestic cases.

Sandy Sands drew up a separation agreement that gave full custody of the children to Susie, with Tom to pay \$200 a month for support of each. He also was to pay Susie \$100 a month in permanent alimony, plus full expenses to attend graduate school for four years. Tom was to pay her half the equity in the house and 40 acres of desert land they'd bought, plus \$1,500 for home furnishings Susie left behind. She would relinquish any claim to his dental practice.

In September, Tom drove to Greensboro pulling a trailer loaded with furniture and other items of Susie's. Susie clearly was excited about him coming. Family and friends believed she still loved him and thought they might be able to work things out and get back together. Tom stayed the night at her parents' house, but there was no reconciliation.

On Sept. 13, Susie signed the separation agreement. Tom signed at the end of October without consulting a lawyer. By then, Susie had learned that Tom's dental assistant, Kathy Anderson, a leggy, long-haired young woman from Nebraska who'd gone to work for him the previous spring, was spending a lot of time with Tom at her former house. Susie was furious. And bitter. She never would let her children go back there and witness such shameful behavior, she vowed.

Meanwhile, Susie had begun making plans to prepare for a career that would let her take care of herself and her sons. She still dreamed of working for the State Department in China or for a big company doing business with the Chinese. She found a Taiwanese student at Guilford College, Bie Ju, to tutor her in Mandarin and began making plans to go to Taiwan to study the language.

That fall she was accepted for admission to the Mandarin Training Center of Taiwan Normal University in Taipei. She began writing other institutions seeking a job teaching English so she could support herself. She was buoyed when she received a positive reply from the Language Center of the College of Chinese Culture.

Her parents were opposed to her going off to a strange place with two young children. Tom didn't like the idea either. But Susie was not to be swayed. She and John and Jim left three days after Christmas with \$1,800, planning to stay a year.

They arrived in Taipei at 2 in the morning, bone-tired, but Susie's spirits rose when she walked into the airport terminal and saw a big sign — "Welcome Susie Newsom." Members of Bie's family had come to greet her.

Susie's luggage was lost and wouldn't arrive for three days. She and the boys spent the first four days with Bie's brother and his wife. Family members helped her find a child-care center and an apartment not far from the Mandarin Center in a working-class neighborhood in Yuan Ho City. The apartment was \$80 a month. Susie had two bedrooms, one of which she made into a study. But she shared the kitchen, living room and bath with her landlady's family.

The excitement and novelty of being in a new place soon wore thin. Susie didn't like living crowded in such a small place. She hated the cockroaches that infested her apartment. She had trouble finding her way around. The heavy air pollution and filth in the streets bothered her. She didn't like the table manners of the people or their hygienic practices. She bristled at being lectured for stopping up the plumbing by putting toilet paper into the commode instead of the trash can, the accepted practice.

"This place is wonderful for germs and not so wonderful for people," she wrote Aunt Su-Su.

Her life was hectic. She taught English in the morning, caught a bus to Chinese classes in the afternoon, rushed to pick up the boys at the day-care center, shopped and hurried home to cook. After dinner, she tried to spend time with the boys before studying and going to bed.

By February, Susie and the boys were sick. Susie blamed it on her landlady, who insisted on keeping all the windows open even in damp and chilly weather. Jim's condition worsened, and he finally had to be hospitalized, wiping out much of Susie's cash reserve. After Jim recovered, Susie got word that Paw Paw had died.

Susie grew despondent, fell behind in her studies and transferred to an easier class. By April, she quit her classes and gave up hopes of learning Chinese.

Her tourist visa was expiring, and she was having trouble getting it extended. She wanted to stay at least two more months to gather material about Taiwan and

(Continued on A7)

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.

Today: 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.

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