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Will to Murder gets you hooked like a good crime novel,
takes you for a ride, and leaves you wanting more."

— *Duluth News Tribune*

Will to Murder



THE TRUE STORY BEHIND THE CRIMES & TRIALS
SURROUNDING THE GLENSHEEN KILLINGS

Fourth Edition

GAIL FEICHTINGER
WITH JOHN DeSANTO & GARY WALLER

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Will to Murder: the true story behind the crimes and trials surrounding the Glensheen killings

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*For Velma Pietila,
Glensheen's forgotten victim and unsung hero.*

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For Bob, Alexandra, and Elena

— G.F.

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Foreword

THE NEWS THAT ELISABETH CONGDON AND VELMA PIETILA were found dead inside Glensheen shook the city of Duluth. The story received national press coverage, and Minnesotans daily scoured newspapers and tuned to TV news to learn of the latest developments in the investigation and prosecutions. Detective Gary Waller (the case's chief investigator) and Prosecutor John DeSanto felt the media coverage of the investigation and trials hadn't been entirely accurate, and that the complete story had never been told. One day, they told each other, we will have our chance to explain everything the way it really happened. It was a personal goal: outside of those close to the victims, the case affected no one as much as it did Waller and DeSanto. They felt compelled to tell their story, and felt the people affected by the crimes—as well as the citizens of Duluth and St. Louis County, whose tax dollars paid for the investigation and prosecutions—deserved to have the entire story told.

When that day came, Waller and DeSanto also knew they wouldn't be able to do it themselves. They had the firsthand experience and volumes of information and evidence the press had never seen, but they had never written a book. They would also need a writer who could approach the subject free of bias and go beyond what they knew in order to make the book as accurate as possible. In the mid-1980s, the two turned to former *Duluth News-Tribune* journalist Gail Feichtinger, who knew both men from her work as the paper's crime reporter. After she had left Duluth for another job and, eventually, attended law school (she now practices law with the Minnesota Attorney General's Office), Waller and DeSanto asked her to help them put all they knew and had experienced into words and also to research aspects of the story never before presented.

Together the three gathered information. Waller and DeSanto provided their own diaries and reports from the investigation and trials. They also sat down with Feichtinger many times to tell the stories that couldn't be found in newspapers—behind-the-scenes discussions and events that never reached the courtroom. Feichtinger sifted through countless stacks of books, newspaper and magazine articles, letters, police reports, court records and transcripts, and other documents. She also interviewed those associated with the case—investigators, attorneys, judges, and jurors as well as friends, acquaintances, former

Glensheen staff, and family members of the accused and the victims (including members of the Congdon family).

In addition to the three authors, many other individuals and organizations contributed to the content and shape of this book. A list of most of them appears on the acknowledgments page. But not everyone who helped has been mentioned on that list. Some asked that their names not be included for privacy concerns. Others asked to be left out of the acknowledgments because they feared reprisal from Marjorie Caldwell Hagen. The authors and publisher again thank them and anyone who may have been accidentally overlooked. Without their help and the help of those listed, the authors could not have assembled such a unique and comprehensive volume.

But the project took longer than they expected. Years longer. Because of their busy lives, none of the three could absolutely dedicate themselves to the manuscript. In fact, they even shelved the project at one time. In all, more than fifteen years of intermittent work went into the book.

The wait turned out to be a blessing. Along the way the authors discovered some exciting new information that wouldn't have been available to them until recently. David Arnold, Roger's friend and legal advisor, came forward with three boxes and a suitcase filled with documents Caldwell wrote and collected while in prison. Their contents provided valuable insight. And, for a case over twenty-five years old, the authors were fortunate enough to have access to a great deal of physical evidence. Once the case was officially closed, evidence belonging to the Congdon family was returned to the Congdon Office; the rest was scheduled to be destroyed. Instead, John DeSanto got permission to save some of the evidence, took it home, and stored it in his basement. In 2003 the authors dug through the boxes of evidence. They found a garment bag and an envelope that played key roles in the case, clothing and other bits of physical evidence recovered from the crime scene as well as fingerprints, hair samples, and known saliva samples from Roger Caldwell. Some of the evidence was subjected to DNA testing, unavailable to investigators in 1977. The results of those tests—which indeed shed new light on the case, and could well have changed the outcome of the trials had they been available at the time—can be found in the book's epilogue.

Since the book's 2003 release, Marjorie Hagen herself was released from prison. She started calling herself "Maggie Wallis" and soon returned to her old ways. In 2007—thirty years after the killings at Glensheen—she was arrested for check fraud and evidence indicates she may have gotten away with another murder. She plead guilty to attempted forgery in February 2009 was sentenced again. Gail Feichtinger has kept up with Hagen's activities, and you can read all of her exploits since her 2003 release from prison in this updated fourth edition of the book.

— TONY DIERCKINS, PUBLISHER

THE SCENE OF THE CRIME

THE WEATHER-BEATEN CITY OF DULUTH, MINNESOTA, sits roughly 150 miles north of the Twin Cities of Minneapolis-St. Paul on a rocky hillside above the westernmost point of Lake Superior, the largest expanse of fresh water in the world. The lumber and mining industries in Minnesota's Arrowhead region helped Duluth boom in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—by 1905, Duluth boasted more millionaires than any other city in the U.S. Touted early on as “The Zenith City of the Unsalted Seas,” Duluth enjoyed many prosperous years as a major U.S. port. But by the 1970s, the economy had slowed down. A shortage of trees reduced the lumber industry, and mine after mine shut down due in part to an influx of foreign steel. While Duluth hosted many visitors, drawn to the lake and such sights as the Aerial Bridge, its great tourism boom wouldn't begin until the late 1980s. In 1977, Duluth was perhaps best known as the home of millionaire entrepreneur Jeno Paulucci of Jeno's, Inc., the man credited with inventing the pizza roll. None of its 100,000 residents could have imagined their small city would soon be the scene of the most notorious double murders in Minnesota history.

On the Sunday afternoon of June 26, 1977, Elisabeth Congdon—daughter of Clara Congdon and her husband Chester, an attorney who created a fortune investing in the mining industry—returned to her family's estate after a weekend at Swiftwater Farm, her summer lodge located along the cold, racing waters of northwestern Wisconsin's Brule River. Every Friday after lunch, Elisabeth, her chauffeur Richard Kartes, and a nurse left for “the Brule,” returning each Sunday before dinner. At eighty-three years old, Elisabeth had lived in the same house for seventy-two years: “Glensheen,” a thirty-nine room Jacobean mansion her parents had built on a sprawling estate with Lake Superior as its backdrop. Filled with stands of cedar, birch, and cottonwood, the woods that bordered Glensheen played host to foraging deer, raccoons, and even bears. In winter months, storms on the big lake brought ice floes crashing against the estate's rocky beach.

Elisabeth had outlasted all her brothers and sisters, as the family portraits on the walls constantly reminded her. “Miss Elisabeth” to the household staff, she was a heavyset woman with a strong, expressive face, kind eyes, and upturned eyebrows

that rose above her metal-frame glasses. Her fine gray hair curled softly away from her face. A stroke twelve years earlier had left her comatose for ten days, destroying massive amounts of brain tissue and crippling her right side. Partial paralysis confined her to a wheelchair and made her dependent on around-the-clock nursing care and live-in servants. She was nearly deaf and also suffered from diabetes, which required daily insulin shots.

Since the stroke, Elisabeth suffered from aphasia, a loss of the ability to speak and express ideas. Although she could say yes and no, she had difficulty with full sentences and her words were distorted and halting, particularly when she was tired. Early on after her stroke, flashcards helped her communicate. Later, when she forgot a word, her family, friends, nurses, and servants would recite the alphabet until she stopped them at a certain letter. They would then list off words beginning with that letter until she nodded and said, "Yes, that is the one."

Despite her handicaps, Elisabeth refused to be pitied or coddled. There were times when Elisabeth longed for the independence and physical activity of her youth, but when she had to accept the help of her nurses and staff, she was gracious and uncommonly dignified.

She tried to lead as active a life as she could. Each morning after breakfast she did her physical therapy exercises on Glensheen's third floor. Walking was extremely difficult, but with the help of a nurse she could manage a few steps along the parallel bars on good days. Since the stroke, she had learned to write, brush her teeth, and feed herself with her left hand.

Following her exercises, her daily routine included reading, receiving visits from friends, or conferring with household staff in the library. Lunch was usually served in the breakfast room on the main floor during the winter; in warmer months, Elisabeth enjoyed her noon meal sitting on the porch overlooking the stone bridge that crossed Tischer Creek, which flowed through the estate on its way to empty into Lake Superior. She was particularly fond of the outdoors; when she was younger she had loved to play tennis, picnic, and take walks on the estate. In her later years, on afternoons when the weather was pleasant, Elisabeth was wheeled outside onto the broad, sunny brick terrace so she could enjoy Glensheen's formal gardens. She regularly provided fresh flowers to the Methodist church she attended on Sundays as often as her health permitted—like her parents before her, Elisabeth donated generously to a number of charities and nonprofit organizations. When housebound, she enjoyed a game of cards, a visit with friends, listening to classical music, or having one of her nurses read to her. She enjoyed a good murder mystery.

Elisabeth led a quiet life, as a rule, which had made it all the more surprising back in 1972 when she had allowed Universal Studios to use Glensheen as the setting for its suspense film *You'll Like My Mother*. Elisabeth and other family members attended the premiere showing at the NorShor Theatre in downtown Duluth. Elisabeth had been so taken aback by the film's dramatic and violent moments that

she kept repeating “oh my word” throughout the showing.

On that last Sunday of June 1977, Elisabeth was tired when they arrived at Glensheen around 4:30 P.M. after the almost two-hour trip from Swiftwater Farm. Nurse Mildred Klosowsky, nicknamed “Miss Kay,” brought Elisabeth’s things in from the car. She took two suitcase-like wicker baskets upstairs and put them along with Elisabeth’s purse and several dresses on the bed in the heiress’s bedroom. She then went downstairs and helped Elisabeth to the large green sofa in the living room facing the windows so Elisabeth could rest.

Klosowsky went back upstairs to unpack the wicker baskets and hang up Elisabeth’s clothes. The smaller wicker basket had been used to carry two small white pillows that were usually placed under Elisabeth’s arms while she slept. The larger basket contained medication, visitation charts, underwear, a pair of shoes, and several pillow cases. After unpacking the baskets, Klosowsky placed them one inside the other on a stool in the closet.

At about 5 P.M., Elisabeth awoke from her nap and asked Klosowsky to play gin rummy with her. Cards were a favorite pastime, and Elisabeth could beat any of the nurses at gin rummy or hearts. Unable to hold the cards, she used a special board with a groove down the center. Slowly, with great effort, she was able to shuffle the cards.

Klosowsky and Elisabeth stopped playing at about 6:30 P.M. to eat a light supper of tuna salad and egg salad sandwiches, fresh fruit, and skim milk served by the maid, Hazel Conger, in the library. More gin rummy and television followed. Elisabeth was very happy and looked forward to celebrating the Fourth of July at the Brule the next weekend. At about 9 P.M., Elisabeth’s personal secretary, Vera Dunbar, called to give nurse Klosowsky an important message: a call was expected from one of Elisabeth’s adopted daughters, Marjorie Caldwell. The previous Friday night Conger had intercepted a call from a woman who refused to identify herself. Conger had told the caller, whom she believed was Marjorie, that Miss Elisabeth would be back Sunday afternoon. Since Marjorie often wanted something from her mother—usually money—Dunbar told Klosowsky not to put the call through. Klosowsky had been told the same thing by Dunbar in the past. The servants knew Elisabeth couldn’t refuse to bail her daughter out of another financial mess.

Despite Dunbar’s warning, the phone never rang. At 10 P.M., Klosowsky wheeled Elisabeth into the elevator, which they exited on the second floor. Klosowsky pushed Elisabeth around a corner, down the hall, and turned left into a simply-decorated bedroom. Through the door, she turned left again and maneuvered the chair beside Elisabeth’s metal hospital bed, with its matching nightstands and lamps on both sides. Along the wall across from the other side of the bed was a door to the closet, a dresser, the bathroom door, and a vanity. The far corner of the room jutted out, forming a nook with windows facing the lake; a chair, small desk, and memorabilia case of family heirlooms filled the nook. In front of the nook, a sofa faced the bed,

covered with needlepoint throw pillows. A television stood just to the right of the sofa, opposite the bedroom door. A stone mosaic fireplace dominated the wall to the right of the entrance.

Klosowsky lifted her patient into bed. She opened a window to let in fresh air, as Elisabeth preferred. As part of the bedtime routine, Klosowsky removed Elisabeth's hearing aid and disconnected her phone. As usual, Elisabeth wore to bed her gold watch and her favorite ring—a platinum strawberry dome ring containing twelve diamonds and fifteen round sapphires.

Elisabeth was so tired that she didn't need the medication she sometimes took in order to sleep. She also didn't watch any television, as she did most nights. Her favorite programs included *The Waltons*, *Ironsides*, and *Streets of San Francisco*. She had enjoyed a pleasant weekend at the Brule, including an unexpected visit from her grandson Stephen LeRoy, Marjorie's oldest son. Settled in bed by 10:45 P.M., Elisabeth appeared "tired but content," after a "quiet, peaceful P.M.," nurse Klosowsky wrote in the daily medical log.

"I need a good night's rest," Elisabeth told the nurse before closing her eyes. Then she gently touched Klosowsky's cheek and said, "I'll see you tomorrow, dear." Klosowsky left one of the nightstands' small lamps on and the bedroom door open. Elisabeth went to sleep lying on her right side, facing the fireplace.

Velma Pietila, the night nurse for Sunday, arrived at the mansion shortly before 11 P.M. Nurse Klosowsky, standing at the window in the nurse's room, watched as Pietila parked her car near Glensheen's front door and walked toward the mansion. Pietila prided herself on her well-kept appearance. Her nurse's uniform revealed a slender figure and tanned, muscular legs. A petite woman, she was surprisingly strong from years of playing golf, swimming, and lifting Elisabeth in and out of her wheelchair. Her blond-tinted gray hair was swept up in a chignon, and she wore stylish, dark-framed glasses.

A registered nurse since 1933, Pietila, 66, had spent the previous seven years working at Glensheen. She had just retired the month before, eager to travel and spend more time with her husband. However, head nurse Mildred Garvue, who'd taken over Pietila's daily 7 A.M. to 3 P.M. shift, had called Friday sounding desperate. The regular night nurse was on vacation and the substitute nurse had company. Could Pietila fill in Sunday night? Pietila hated working nights and her husband strongly objected, but she had loved working for Elisabeth. Her sense of duty and affection won out. "I miss Miss Elisabeth so I'll do it this one night," she told Garvue. "But only this once."

After Klosowsky let Pietila in, the two women chatted upstairs for several minutes as Klosowsky described Elisabeth's condition and handed Pietila the key to the medicine cabinet. Then Pietila looked at her watch as Klosowsky glanced at hers. It was five past eleven.

"My goodness it's getting late," Pietila said. "I'd better let you go home."

Pietila spent the night in the nurse's room across the hall from Elisabeth's bedroom. She sipped fruit juice, saving a sandwich, apple, and piece of cake for later. After propping open a window with her thermos of juice, Pietila read the book she had brought from home, Peg Bracken's *I Didn't Come Here to Argue*. Soon she would be involved in much more than an argument—soon she would be fighting for her life.

As part of her morning routine as Glensheen's maid, Hazel Conger unlocked Glensheen's front door for head nurse Mildred Garvue so the doorbell wouldn't disturb Elisabeth. But when she went to unlock the door Monday morning, Conger was surprised to find the chain off and bolt lock undone. The nurses were supposed to follow a specific lockup routine. The nurse working the 3 P.M. to 11 P.M. shift would check the windows in the library to make sure they were locked. She would also test the front door's push button lock, put on the chain, and engage the deadbolt lock. The night nurse, on the 11 P.M. to 7 A.M. shift, would never knock on the door or ring the doorbell when she arrived. Instead, the nurse on duty would watch for the night nurse to arrive and unlock the door. The night nurse would then relock the doors after her colleague left. But Pietila must have forgotten to finish locking up this time, the maid guessed as she popped open the push button lock.

Garvue arrived shortly before 7 A.M. Her first task was to get Elisabeth's insulin from the refrigerator in the pantry, where cook Prudence Rennquist was organizing the breakfast tray.

"How is Miss Elisabeth this morning?" Rennquist asked.

"I don't know. I haven't been upstairs yet," Garvue answered. Insulin, coat, and purse in hand, she headed upstairs to confer with the night nurse about Elisabeth's condition.

As Garvue started up the stairs, she was startled to see bare legs dangling on the landing between the first and second floors. Pietila lay motionless, awkwardly sprawled on a red velour window seat beneath a picturesque view of Lake Superior. Her position was deceiving. At first glance, Garvue thought the night nurse was resting or had perhaps fallen down the stairs. Pietila's legs hung over the side of the window seat, but her upper body was twisted around on the seat cushion. Her arms half hid her face, and her hands were nearly clasped, as if in prayer.

Climbing farther up the stairs, Garvue spotted blood crusted on the carpet. She stopped as she began to realize something terrible had happened. Garvue slowly looked up to where the night nurse lay and saw a pool of blood beneath Pietila's head. She approached the window seat and bent down, but could not bring herself to look at Pietila's body. She did manage to lift the night nurse's stiff arm to check for signs of life. Pietila's cold arm felt like cement in Garvue's hand. There was no pulse.

Shaking with fear, Garvue gathered the courage to look closely at Pietila's body. Her face was a rust-colored mask of dried blood, her jaw appeared broken. Blood splattered her uniform and pooled on the polished hardwood floor beneath the win-

dow seat, staining the Oriental carpeting. A blood-covered brass candlestick stood on the carpet several feet from the body.

Horrified, Garvue ran upstairs in a panic, concerned for Elisabeth. She flung her purse and coat into the nurse's room as she rushed into the heiress's bedroom. Often in the mornings, Elisabeth, already waking up, would smile and say "How are you?" before Garvue had a chance to ask Elisabeth the same question. This morning the room was in disarray. Dresser drawers had been pulled out and jewelry boxes lay open and empty on the floor near the vanity. Elisabeth lay face up in her bed, her legs bare and the sheets pulled back. Her left arm was bruised. Her gold watch and diamond-and-sapphire ring were missing from her wrist and hand. A pink, blood-flecked satin pillow covered her face. Garvue nervously lifted a corner. Miss Elisabeth's face was purple. Garvue didn't need to take a pulse.

Instead she rushed downstairs to the kitchen where Conger waited to bring up the breakfast tray.

"Velma's dead—Miss Elisabeth's been murdered," Garvue said, her face and voice numb with shock. Conger, suddenly weak, clung to Garvue for support. They knew they had to call the police, but fearing they would upset Rennquist, who had a heart condition, they avoided using the kitchen phone. Arm in arm, the two women guided each other slowly toward the front hall phone. They phoned the police at 6:58 A.M. The Duluth Police Department recorded the emergency call from Glensheen:

"Severe emergency. Thirty-three hundred London Road. Homicide," Garvue urgently told the dispatcher.

The dispatcher repeated the address, "Thirty-three hundred London Road," and waited for her to continue.

"Yes, sir. The Congdon estate."

"What's the problem?"

"Homicide."

"O.K. Just a minute, we'll get an ambulance. Thirty-three hundred London Road."

"Yes, please."

"Okay. Possible ten-eighty-nine. Homicide," the dispatcher told police and paramedics.

Conger and Garvue then tried to call Dunbar and Miss Elisabeth's physician, Dr. Elizabeth Bagley. But when the head nurse picked up the phone, there was no dial tone. The two women looked at each other in horror. The phone had just worked, and now it was dead. Conger went to fetch Glensheen's maintenance man, leaving Garvue alone in the mansion. Fearing that the line had been cut and that the killer was still inside Glensheen, Garvue anxiously waited for police to arrive, praying that the killer—or killers—wouldn't get to her first.

FAMILY TIES

CHESTER ADGATE CONGDON, ELISABETH'S FATHER, was the richest man in Minnesota when he died in 1916, according to news accounts at the time. Local legend has it that the conservative Republican died of a broken heart after Democrat Woodrow Wilson won the presidency.

As attorney, land owner, and state legislator, Chester Congdon would have been remembered in Minnesota even if his daughter had died peacefully. The Congdon name is sprinkled throughout Duluth—Congdon Park, Congdon Boulevard, and Congdon Park Elementary School, to name just a few tributes. At one time, Chester even had a ship named after him, but on November 7, 1918, the Great Lakes iron ore carrier *Chester A. Congdon* ran aground on a reef. It remained there, in a rocky area called Canoe Rocks near Isle Royale, until a storm sank it. The wreck site is now called Congdon Shoal.

Chester was born in 1853 in Rochester, New York, the son of a Methodist minister. As a young boy, he moved with his family to Syracuse, where his father led a new, larger church. His childhood was uneventful until he reached age fourteen. During one tragic month in 1868, Chester's father died of pneumonia and three of Chester's siblings died of scarlet fever. Suddenly the patriarch of the Congdon family, Chester took his new responsibilities very seriously. When the time came, he decided to attend college at Syracuse University, which allowed him to be near his mother, brother Bertie, and sister Laura. He also sent money when he could to help his mother with payments for the family farm.

"It is a close shave for us all now," he wrote his mother from school. "But we're going to pull through, don't worry over the note—I can take care of that if needs be—I had hoped to send some \$10 bills as Christmas presents, all around, but I don't see how I can do it and raise the \$200 [tuition] in January. But we will all revel in luxury some day. If we don't get any harder up than we are now. We will be infinitely better off than the large majority—but that's a weak sort of consolation—I want to be better off than everybody else."

During his freshman year in 1871, Chester met Clara Hesperia Bannister of San Francisco, and they soon discovered they had something in common—Methodist minister fathers. They made a striking couple. Chester stood tall and stately with dark hair, a straight patrician nose, and deep-set blue eyes. He wore a neatly trimmed mus-

tache that hid his upper lip, a feature he hated. Clara Bannister was petite, with cascading brown hair she liked to put up in a French twist. She usually wore a black grosgrain ribbon choker.

Both excellent students, Chester and Clara graduated Phi Beta Kappa in Syracuse University's first class of 1875. Clara further distinguished herself as one of the university's first women graduates. During college, the couple had become engaged, but they postponed marriage until Chester established himself professionally.

Clara found a job as a schoolteacher at a small women's college in Belleville, Ontario, on the north shore of Lake Ontario, where she taught art and modern languages. Chester remained in Syracuse, studying law at a local firm, and was admitted to the New York bar in 1877. But wanderlust hit, and the next year Chester traveled west to Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin. Apparently, he hoped a teaching career would bring prosperity, but he lasted just one year. Tired of teaching and being poor, Chester inquired about legal opportunities in the Midwest and back East, where his family remained. His cousin C.H. Green in Fairport, New York, wrote back:

"...If you hear of a place where there are not lawyers keep away for if there had been any good picking there would have been someone on the ground. Pitch in where there is a crowd. When you see a lot of crows hovering around you may know that there is a rich feast of carrion near....

"I would be happy to show you the place and give you the reasons pro and con if you would come here...we have a flourishing village of 2000, 10 miles from Rochester. Three lawyers. One gutter drunkard, one thief. And another man who does all of the business would I think take someone into his office."

Chester decided, however, to remain in the Midwest and moved to St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1879. The next year he was admitted to the Minnesota bar and hired by a St. Paul law firm. But his early days were marked by a scarcity of money and a wealth of doubts. Chester worried about his worth as a lawyer and prospective husband. Dr. Charles Bennett, one of Chester's closest friends, tried to snap Chester out of his depression in this letter postmarked January 1880:

"How is Minneapolis? I am glad you are there rather than in Dacotah [North Dakota]. It is the place for you to plant yourself now. Mom told me of your financial condition. I think, in view of even the extreme case which you made that you are in the right plan. You may find your funds wasting away, but why leave? It is certainly as expensive to be on the move as to stay in one place. Has not this been one mistake which you have made—to be moving too soon?"

Despite his friend's good intentions, Chester continued to suffer bouts of depression. He felt he had failed himself and Clara—five years after graduation he was still struggling. Chester wrote Clara that his net worth consisted of \$9.67 in cash, \$5 receivable from his firm, \$8 in prepaid rent, a \$5.75 meal ticket, two pounds of crackers, two pounds of canned meat, and a half pound of coffee. In a letter dated January 30, 1880, a discouraged Chester confides in his fiancée:

"I am afraid I can't have any good coffee until you come & make it for me. You ask me if I have ever thought of going into the wilderness—I certainly have. When I think that perhaps the greatest wrong I could do would be to marry you, then I think of getting away. Do you remember, dear, about a year ago you had some fears that it might be a mistake for you to marry me? I was very much surprised & since that time I have watched your letters very closely to see if you still had that idea.

"No one realizes better than I that there is no reason why anyone should wish to share my life; & so when I think of how poor my own prospects are; & that there may be some doubts in your own mind, I very naturally think of the wilderness. For I should never have come here had it not been for you—& I would not stay here a week were it not for you. Not that I would go & kill myself; as that would occasion unpleasant notoriety—nor deliberately throw myself away. But I have become something of a gambler in feeling. I would risk everything on a small chance—go into the territories after money and in all human probability fail. Here is a slower & safer course.... I have seen a good many poor lawyers make money, so I may make some some day."

In another letter to his fiancée, Chester berated himself as "nothing more than a second rate lawyer." He told Clara, "certainly I should have the good sense to be a cowboy on the plains."

Chester's poor prospects suddenly improved months later when he was asked to serve as assistant to the U.S. Attorney for Minnesota, William W. Billson. His career finally launched, Chester told Clara to make wedding plans. They were married in a small ceremony in Syracuse on September 29, 1881, and honeymooned at Niagara Falls.

Theirs was a traditional marriage, based on a strong religious faith. Although the Methodist church didn't prohibit them, Clara would not allow drinking, smoking, or card playing in her home. Chester and Clara's first of seven children, Walter Bannister Congdon, was born in St. Paul in November 1882. The family lived in St. Paul for eleven years and had four more children, but little is known of their activities during this time.

In 1892, Chester, Clara, and their growing family of five children moved 150 miles north to Duluth. There Chester set up a law partnership with his old boss, William Billson. The law firm of Billson & Congdon quickly earned a statewide reputation for its expertise in civil litigation. But perhaps more significantly, on October 19, 1892, not long after the move, Clara noted in her diary that she "saw first car of ore from the Mesabi range."

The Mesabi, together with the Vermilion Iron Range, is an ore-rich region in northern Minnesota stretching over a hundred miles in a northeasterly direction from Grand Rapids to Ely. The Mesabi Iron Range became known for its soft ore, which lay close to the surface; extracting the ore didn't require the deep mining that the Vermilion Range did, nor the special processing necessary at the smaller Cuyuna Range west of Duluth, which had a high manganese content. The Mesabi generated a string of towns along its range from Grand Rapids to Babbitt, some with mining-inspired

names like Taconite (a low-grade iron ore) and Mountain Iron.

Pittsburgh mining magnate Henry Oliver came to Duluth to research the Mesabi Range for himself, and visited the firm without advance notice. Oliver wanted to talk to Billson, who was out of the office, but was persuaded to speak with the younger partner. He was so impressed he hired Chester that day as chief counsel for the Oliver Iron Mining Company, which became one of the largest copper and iron ore producers on Minnesota's Iron Range—the result of a lucky break and Chester's legal talents.

Chester became a self-taught expert on iron ore properties as an investor, consultant, and landowner. His biggest coup and moneymaker came at age forty-eight, when he purchased land containing lower grade ore initially ignored by the mining companies, who eventually leased the land from him. Soon, Chester Congdon was turning iron ore into gold.

The late nineteenth century was a time of significant iron ore exploration and discovery in northern Minnesota—the major players included the Rockefellers, the Carnegies, and J.P. Morgan. Chester became increasingly active as a business consultant for the mining companies, serving on numerous boards but always protecting Oliver Mining interests. He continued as counsel for the company during its sale to J.P. Morgan's United States Steel Corporation in 1901. The sale left its mark on the region by creating two towns along the St. Louis River just south of Duluth—Oliver, Wisconsin, and Morgan Park, a company town built for workers at the U.S. Steel plant.

After the sale, Congdon and Oliver started their own business leasing iron ore properties. Chester's investments went beyond mining properties, however. He bought large tracts of land in the South, including some in Louisiana, for their farming value, raising muskrats, or the development of a hunting resort, depending on which family members remember correctly. This property increased significantly in value after his death, when oil was discovered.

During a trip to the West Coast in the late 1800s, Chester had fallen in love with Washington state's Yakima Valley and recognized its agricultural potential. He began purchasing land, which he eventually developed into a 375-acre orchard and cattle ranch. He helped build Congdon Ditch, one of the largest irrigation systems in Yakima Valley, for his apple, cherry, pear, and peach orchards. As for his cattle, Chester's herd of Aberdeen Angus was one of the largest in the country, and nationally known. On his ranch he built a family home out of native basalt stone on the side of a hill overlooking the orchards. Named "Westhome," the mansion was known to locals as "Congdon Castle" for its castle-like design, including turrets. Westhome was also distinctive for its indoor swimming pool, the first in the region.

Besides his vast wealth and land holdings, Chester Congdon earned a reputation for his civic contributions. One example is the large sum of money Chester donated to the city of Duluth to purchase land along Lake Superior. This property later became part of panoramic Highway 61 north of the city, now called the Scenic North Shore

Drive.

Chester had little patience for political deals and favors, but became increasingly active in the Republican Party. He was a member of the Republican National Committee and served two terms in the Minnesota House of Representatives from 1909–1913. During his tenure, he denounced legislation to tax St. Louis County at the state's highest property tax rate as a backhanded way to raise taxes on the iron and steel industries. The measure was defeated. Reapportionment of political districts, an issue still prickly today, kept Chester so busy during his last House term that Clara noted it in her diary.

Despite his work as an attorney, investor, and legislator, Chester's family came first. After living in several houses in Duluth—including "The Redstone," architect Oliver Traphagen's sandstone-and-red-brick duplex masterpiece located at 1511 East Superior Street—Chester and Clara decided to build their own house. At the turn of the century, they purchased a fourteen-acre tract along Lake Superior beyond Duluth's fashionable East End. The July 23, 1903, entry in Clara's diary reads, "Chester and I went to Tischer's Creek to measure the place for house." Construction didn't begin until May 1905.

The site the Congdons chose for their new home was flanked by stands of pine and birch trees growing along Tischer Creek. Chester named the estate Glensheen, in part for his family's village of origin, Sheen, in Surrey, England, and, as the family story goes, for the way the sun shone on the waters of Tischer Creek. Glen derived from the deep ravines or glens carved out by the creek on the west end of the property.

From the selection of the building site to the mansion's architectural and interior design, Glensheen was Chester's special project. During the four years of construction, he spared no expense. He commissioned Clarence H. Johnston, Sr., a prominent architect for the State of Minnesota, to build the family home. A few years earlier, Johnston had been appointed architect to the Board of Regents of the University of Minnesota, and is credited with designing many of the university's buildings on all its campuses. Chester hired one of the Midwest's top interior designers, William A. French Company of St. Paul, to decorate Glensheen with furnishings from around the globe—Italy, Ireland, Algeria, Germany, the Orient, and the Middle East.

Glensheen's Jacobean design reflects the architect's classical training and Chester's fondness for English architecture. The thirty-nine-room mansion's external features include large, rectangular windows with divided panes, three curbed gables rising above the roof, and a series of tall brick chimneys. The décor also features Jacobean-style touches such as handcrafted pilasters in the main hall, an intricate central staircase carved to resemble leather strapwork, ornamental plaster ceiling accents, and stained glass windows in a Tudor rose pattern. Red brick terraces with marble pillar railings overlook manicured lawns, formal gardens, and a fountain.

Each of Glensheen's rooms featured international furnishings personally selected or crafted for the mansion. The main hall's rich, dark wood paneling greeted visitors

entering the house. The architect had the oak woodwork specially stained or “fumed” by exposing the wood to ammonia fumes in sealed rooms. Former workers of the Tiffany Glass Company designed the leaded light fixtures, wall sconces, and stained glass windows. The living room’s stately fireplace was made of Algerian marble, its chairs and sofa upholstered in tapestry woven in Germany. Mosque lamps bought in the Middle East flanked the library mantle, and silk damask wallpaper framed the golden-hued reception room, crowned by a ceiling accented with gold leaf. Marble imported from Sienna, Italy, faced the dining room fireplace.

In June 1906, Clara and Chester traveled back east to Burlington, Vermont, “to see granite,” according to Clara’s diary, which they purchased for Glensheen. By the following summer, the mansion’s third floor was plastered, Clara wrote, and Glensheen was more than halfway complete. On November 24, 1908, three months before Glensheen was completed, Clara noted in her diary that the Congdon family “moved in and all spent the night there.” While typical lakefront houses in 1909 cost between \$11,000 and \$16,000, Glensheen’s price tag at completion was \$864,000—given modern construction techniques and the limited availability of the raw materials, experts estimate a current price tag as high as \$30 million.

While Chester took an opulent approach to Glensheen’s magnificent design and interior decoration, he also equipped the mansion with practical features, such as buttons under the breakfast and dining room tables to summon staff. Glensheen had state-of-the-art appliances for the time, including a vacuum system that extended throughout the mansion. Hot water ran through pipes installed under the sink in the butler’s pantry to warm plates and keep food hot for second helpings. The house originally had gas light fixtures, but the Congdons had the foresight to have wiring installed for the eventuality of electricity. Chester also irrigated Glensheen’s grounds with water from a holding pond on Tischer Creek.

Over time, the estate grew to include a cottage for the gardener, a clay tennis court, a bowling green, a carriage house with an apartment, horse stables, and room for several Jersey cows, which provided the family with fresh milk and butter. Glensheen also boasted a large vegetable garden with a wealth of crops such as corn, broccoli, asparagus, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, peppers, tomatoes, and squash. In back of the main house on the lakefront, the Congdons constructed a boathouse with an attached L-shaped pier. The estate also included four greenhouses: the palm, rose, carnation, and general plant house, named for the plants grown in each. Several years after the Congdons moved into Glensheen, they ate ripe bananas and oranges from their own trees that grew in the palm house—the property’s largest greenhouse—along with orchids, palm trees, and other exotic plants. Other greenhouses supplied fresh flowers for the family to enjoy each day.

Following Glensheen’s completion, the estate became a gathering place for Congdon family members and friends from around the country, and the house was often filled with guests. Chester and Clara frequently hosted parties at the mansion or, in warmer weather, dances on the roof of the boathouse and boat rides on Lake Superior.

To the children growing up within its brick walls, Glensheen could be stuffy and formal. Elisabeth and her siblings dressed formally for dinner every night. The boys wore black tuxedos and the girls long dresses.

But the mansion also made a wonderful playground. Glensheen had secret compartments and numerous hiding places for games like “sardines in the dark,” a combination of hide-and-seek and tag. One person hid and as each seeker found the hider, they too squeezed into the hiding place.

Winters meant skating and hockey on the grounds at Tischer Creek or the Congdon Park rink just up the hill from Glensheen. The children also enjoyed sledding down the steep slope a couple blocks east of the mansion.

The Congdons celebrated Christmastime in grand fashion and elaborately decorated Glensheen. Three Norfolk Island pine trees, grown in Glensheen’s own greenhouses, were brought into the mansion and put up in the main hall, the living room, and the recreation room. The family decorated the living room tree with traditional Christmas ornaments and silver tinsel. The rose greenhouse supplied red poinsettias to decorate the mansion. The gardener fashioned evergreen boughs gathered on Glensheen’s grounds into eighty-foot-long garlands that adorned the mansion’s staircase and fireplaces, as well as the Congdons’ church, First Methodist Episcopal of Duluth.

Clara personally selected gifts for each child and grandchild. Chester distributed \$20 gold pieces to the household staff. The Congdon clan would gather at Glensheen on Christmas Day, a tradition that held through the years.

Elisabeth’s nephew, Tom Congdon, lived at Glensheen for eighteen months with his parents, sister, and brother while their house was being remodeled. He remembered the traditional Christmas breakfast of flummery, a “gritty, grainy hot cereal” of Scottish origin.

Like her cousin, Elisabeth’s daughter, Jennifer Johnson, recalled hearty Christmas breakfasts in Glensheen’s dining room with sister Marjorie, their mother, and grandmother Clara. After breakfast, the four sang Christmas carols as they walked downstairs one at a time, oldest to youngest, to the recreation room. They would find a fire blazing in the fireplace and gaily wrapped presents stacked beneath the Christmas tree. Then, before the Congdon relatives arrived for the big meal at noon, the family opened their gifts.

The Christmas noon meal consisted of a turkey and trimmings—mashed potatoes, sweet potatoes, cranberries, and mincemeat and pumpkin pie—served in the dining room. As a young child, Jennifer enjoyed visiting with her cousins as the children ate their Christmas meal in the less formal breakfast room.

Tom’s sister, Mary Congdon Van Evera, said Christmas night was celebrated with friends and neighbors. “We invited people around town that didn’t have family. Family friends who didn’t have any connection like bachelors and former boyfriends of Aunt Elisabeth’s. Dinner was held in the basement with all the food on the billiard table. We ate and then we teased everybody to play games,” Van Evera said. Charades were a popular Christmas night pastime.

In early spring, while the woods were still blanketed with snow, Chester and Clara's grown children and their children would have a cookout and make maple syrup candy. "We would boil maple syrup and make our initials in the snow," Mary Van Evera recalled.

As the weather became warmer, family activities often revolved around the lake and lakefront. The Congdons held parties on the beach and, on the Fourth of July, they picnicked and set off Roman candles. Chester bought a pleasure boat and named it the *Hesperia*, after Clara's middle name. The boat was docked at the pier behind Glensheen. During the summer, Chester and Clara entertained friends on the boat, taking it out on the lake while a live orchestra played on the boathouse roof. Unfortunately, a mishap with the boat's fuel destroyed the *Hesperia* in a July 1916 fire that also damaged the boathouse.

Chester and Clara were seasoned travelers who visited many European countries, the Orient, and the Middle East. They displayed special mementos they brought home in the "little museum," a room at the west end of the mansion's basement. The mementos included miniature tea sets, souvenir teaspoons, wooden carvings, and ceramic tiles. Additionally, Clara collected seashells and coral from their travels to tropical destinations such as the Caribbean, South Seas, and Roratonga.

Some items, like a Persian rug, became part of the mansion's décor. As their children grew, Clara became more of a homebody, preferring to remain behind at Glensheen while Chester traveled on business. Family vacations, however, remained important to Clara and Chester. The Congdon family visited Clara's relatives in California and New York, toured historic sites, and attended World's Fairs and Expositions, including those in Seattle, Chicago, San Francisco, and Portland.

As a father, Chester was caring and supportive. Although he expected his children to excel academically, and was a stricter disciplinarian than Clara, Chester also enjoyed a close relationship with each of his six children. While he and Clara had a large family, they tried hard to spend time with each child individually. Chester had a special way of getting to know his children better—each year, Chester took one child on a trip. One year, Elisabeth and her father sailed Lake Superior on an iron ore carrier. Another time, Chester took Elisabeth's brother Walter on a trip down the Nile.

Clara was a loving mother, but, as was the practice in those days, not an overly demonstrative parent. Her children were encouraged to be self-reliant. As Clara explained to one of her grandchildren years later, "In the old days, we didn't believe it was proper to fill our children with love and affection. We had to be stoic and teach them to be good sports and overcome all obstacles." But Clara took an active interest in her children's activities. She screened her children's books to make sure they were suitable. Gifted at sewing, needlepoint, appliqué, and other handicrafts (including making lace, which she collected from around the world), Clara taught her daughters those skills.

Clara's children also received lessons in thriftiness. When the seamstress came to Glensheen to sew clothes for the children, Clara had her make over any reusable

clothes belonging to her older children as hand-me-downs. Torn bed sheets that couldn't be mended became pillowcases. Frayed towels found a new home in the maid's bathroom.

Chester and Clara instilled in their children a sense of noblesse oblige. For the Congdon children this meant that because they had more money than most, they had a duty to give to others. Community service would become a priority in their daughter Elisabeth's life.

Clara, a devoutly religious woman, made sure her children regularly attended services at First Methodist, where she was an active volunteer. She insisted that grace be said before each meal. She forbade card playing on Sundays, when the minister often joined the family for dinner at noon. Instead, she encouraged reading books, including the Bible. Jennifer recalled that she and Marjorie had to go into their grandmother Clara's bedroom each Sunday, where she would assign the girls a Bible verse to memorize that week. The following Sunday, Clara would ask the girls to recite the verse.

As she had done in their previous homes, Clara did not allow alcohol to be served at Glensheen. But when Chester hosted his business associates for dinner, he liked to serve brandy after the meal. He had a secret liquor cabinet in the basement in a closet off the playroom, which was not accessed until after Clara and the other wives retired to the living room. Jennifer Johnson remembered a family story about the night Chester had to repeatedly ask the butler to bring up brandy for his guests. "I'm sorry, Mr. Congdon, there isn't any brandy," the butler said each time. Chester asked him to look more thoroughly. Finally, the fourth time the butler was unsuccessful, Chester could see and smell the real reason why: there was indeed brandy, but unfortunately it was inside the butler. Clara discovered the liquor after Chester's death and promptly donated it to St. Luke's Hospital to use for medicinal purposes.

When Clara was in her late twenties, she lost most of her hearing to an unspecified illness, and sometimes wore an ear trumpet as a hearing aid. She found the device cumbersome and unhelpful, and instead began carrying a pad and pencil around to better communicate with family and friends. Although she never learned sign language, Clara became skilled at reading letters traced with a finger on her children's and Chester's hands, and at reading lips. Even from across the room, Clara could make out an unkind word or harsh retort, as her children and grandchildren learned the hard way.

Chester and Clara wanted their children to receive a good education, so they sent them off to prestigious East Coast preparatory schools and colleges. Elisabeth's older brothers attended prep schools in Massachusetts and Pennsylvania before attending Yale. Elisabeth and her sisters Helen and Marjorie attended Dana Hall, a private boarding school for girls in Wellesley, Massachusetts. Elisabeth was a good student who excelled at history and English, and her parents encouraged her to continue her education. After graduating from Dana Hall in 1915, she enrolled at Vassar College in

Poughkeepsie, New York, where her sister Helen had also gone.

Chester Congdon died of pleurisy on November 21, 1916, in his apartment at the Saint Paul Hotel, where he stayed during the legislative session. He was sixty-three years old. He had become ill shortly after returning from Duluth, where he had gone to vote in the presidential election. The *Duluth Herald* published a special editorial:

Mr. Congdon was a close student of government and state policies, a foe of waste and inefficiency, a friend of political progress as he saw it, a champion of clean public life and sound government.... Not because he was a rich man but because he was a good man with sound instincts and large capacities for service and with an ever increasing will to give his energy and means to wholesome public enterprises the loss of Chester A. Congdon is a great blow to the community, to the state and to the nation.

Her father's death brought Elisabeth home to Duluth after her freshman year of college. She did not go back to Vassar, feeling it was her duty to remain at Glensheen and look after her mother. In 1913 Chester had established two trusts "to provide and maintain for my wife and children a home so long as any of them shall live.... [m]aking it easy for any of my children, who so may wish, to occupy Glensheen." Elisabeth became her mother's closest companion, a special relationship the two women shared for thirty-four years, until Clara's death at age ninety-six in 1950. Elisabeth stayed until her own death, the last of Chester and Clara's children and the only one to live in Glensheen her entire adult life.

Soon after her return to Duluth, Elisabeth devoted herself to volunteer work. Although Elisabeth avoided publicity, her generous donations of money and time to charitable and civic organizations put her in the public eye. She filled her calendar with fundraisers and meetings for causes that included the symphony orchestra, the public library, the Lighthouse for the Blind, the St. Louis County Heritage and Arts Center, and the Duluth Rehabilitation Center. Like her mother, Elisabeth became an active volunteer at her family's church, which would eventually relocate to Skyline Parkway in 1966 and become First United Methodist, known to Duluthians as the "Coppertop Church" for its distinctive roof. In later years, Elisabeth attended church as often as her health allowed and continued to regularly donate fresh flowers from Glensheen's gardens, as her mother had done.

Educational institutions, long important to both sides of Elisabeth's family, became one of her priorities. She served as a member of the Chancellor's Group at Syracuse University, her parents' alma mater. She was a trustee of Dana Hall, the preparatory school she'd attended, and nearby Pine Manor Junior College. Years later, Elisabeth received an honorary doctorate from the University of the Pacific in Stockton, California, where her maternal grandfather had been the first president and founder.

Elisabeth shared her father's interest in civic affairs. She served as president of the King's Daughters Society of Duluth and, when it became the local Junior League in

1920, members selected Elisabeth as its first president. She held a seat on the board of the St. Luke's Hospital Guild and, as a board member, took charge of a major decorating project. She helped redecorate an entire wing, selecting wallpaper and traveling to Mexico to buy decorative art pieces.

During World War II, Elisabeth organized and headed the American Red Cross Nurse's Aid Committee in Duluth. The women volunteers rolled bandages, prepared care packages, knit mittens and scarves, and helped however they could to support the war effort and the local hospitals. Although Elisabeth didn't knit, she rolled hundreds of bandages and coordinated volunteers.

Those who knew Elisabeth well said she didn't give the impression of belonging to one of the richest families in town. She shunned fancy clothes, preferring instead to wear simply styled, fine cotton dresses and sensible pumps. She wore her hair neatly coifed, but in a simple, unfussy style. Elisabeth adorned herself with little jewelry, typically a simple strand of cultured pearls and matching earrings.

According to a friend, Elisabeth "liked to do things for people, but she was very natural with people—they never thought of her as hoity-toity."

Elisabeth did sometimes indulge a more flamboyant side. Her pride and joy for many years was a Stutz Bearcat sports car, followed by a Cadillac, in the family's favorite color—a pine green they called "Congdon green."

Although Elisabeth remained single, it wasn't for lack of attention. In her late twenties she seriously considered marrying Fred Wolvin, a handsome Duluth beau and longtime acquaintance, considered "a good catch" by Elisabeth's friends and family. [Wolvin's father, Captain August B. Wolvin, was a business acquaintance of Chester's and in 1902 built the Wolvin Building in Duluth at 227 West First Street; the building has since been renamed the Missabe Building.] Elisabeth accepted a diamond engagement ring from Wolvin, although their engagement was never officially announced. Elisabeth later told Wolvin she didn't love him enough to spend the rest of her life with him. The story goes that after she returned the large diamond engagement ring, her distraught suitor threw it into Lake Superior. Wolvin never married and, when he died, he left Elisabeth money in his will to buy a ring to commemorate their friendship. She purchased a diamond-and-sapphire dome ring she wore faithfully on her little finger until she died. For reasons she kept to herself, Elisabeth never married.

Nevertheless, Elisabeth loved children and didn't let convention stand in her way when, in her late thirties, she decided she wanted children of her own. Although adoption by single women was virtually unheard of in the 1930s, Elisabeth had family and financial resources that many adoptive couples did not, which likely assisted the adoption process. In 1932, at the age of thirty-eight, she contacted an adoption agency in Greensboro, North Carolina, and brought home a three-month-old baby girl named Jacqueline Barnes. "I want to help her. I can give her a good home and schooling," Elisabeth told family members and friends. She renamed her new daughter Marjorie, after her sister, and Mannering, after her mother's father. Marjorie Mannering Cong-

don slept in a bassinet in her mother's bedroom.

"There was a kind of feeling that Marjorie was to be the answer to Aunt Elisabeth's lonesomeness and her feeling of being unfulfilled as a single person," Mary Van Evera recalled. "But that also made Marjorie sort of a toy. I remember reading in [Clara's] diary 'Elisabeth was away again today,' and I think that Elisabeth left the baby-sitting job to her mother a whole lot."

Three years later, Elisabeth Congdon adopted her second daughter, this time through a Chicago adoption agency. As part of the adoption proceedings, she obtained a letter of recommendation from attorney Harold Stassen, Minnesota's future governor. Elisabeth adopted a baby girl whose parents, unmarried college students, could not afford to raise a child. She called her new daughter Jennifer Susan because she "liked the name."

The two girls couldn't have been more different.

THE INVESTIGATION BEGINS

DESPITE THE WARMTH AND SUNSHINE that greeted Duluthians Monday morning, June 27, 1977, Duluth Police Sergeant Gary Waller knew it was going to rain. The air was heavy and humid, a perfume of steaming wet leaves and grass, unusual for a city used to Lake Superior's brisk breezes. Dressed in athletic shorts and a sweatshirt with the sleeves pushed high, the thirty-two-year-old detective was sweating after only a couple blocks of his daily three-mile run through Lakeside, the neighborhood just east of Glensheen. One more drop of moisture in the air, Waller thought, and rain would spill out.

Waller took the time to stay in shape, dress stylishly, and carefully groom his dark blond hair. This, together with his blue eyes and wide smile, caused him to suffer a good deal of ribbing from his fellow police officers, some of whom tagged him the department's "golden boy." He shrugged off the good-natured teasing—the "golden boy" had become a heavy smoker and let himself go a bit around the middle, about fifteen pounds' worth by his estimation. Jogging, one of the things he hated most in life, was a necessary evil. Besides, it gave him time to review the burglary case he and his partner in the Detective Bureau, Dave Cismoski, had recently solved. More than one hundred residential burglaries had taken place in the city in just half a year. They now had two suspects in custody—a couple of local teenagers—and planned to take one of them out of jail for the day to identify homes he and his associates had burglarized. Within days, however, Waller would realize that the challenges of that case paled when compared with the Congdon case, and not just because the latter involved two murders.

Some police officers thought of law enforcement as just a job, but to Waller it was his career and his life. Law enforcement ran in his family. His father was a twenty-five-year Duluth police veteran. His brother, an uncle, and a cousin were police officers. After working his way up from a street cop, Waller found himself where he wanted to be, the detective bureau. But police work hadn't always been part of his plans.

Waller had grown up in Piedmont Heights, largely a blue collar, middle class neighborhood. As a teenager, he'd worked at the business his father ran in addition to his patrol job, a dental lab that made dentures. When Waller first attended the Uni-

versity of Minnesota Duluth, he intended to become a dentist. But he soon found the prerequisite math classes, especially calculus, too much. Waller changed his major from dentistry to sociology with a criminology focus. He liked to joke about his decision, saying he'd gone from working with one end of the anatomy to the other.

Like many young men in the 1960s, Waller had his education interrupted by the military. He signed up with the Minnesota National Guard in 1964 and completed basic training the following winter at Fort Knox, Kentucky. He then returned to college, waiting to be called up to Vietnam. But his unit never saw active duty. In the years since, Waller felt fortunate compared to many of his friends who were injured or killed in the war. He also felt guilt pangs for not having fought.

The Duluth Police Department hired Waller in 1966. After only three years on patrol, he took an assignment with the identification bureau, along the way gaining expertise in fingerprint analysis. By the time of the murders at Glensheen, he had risen to detective sergeant specializing in criminal investigation.

By 7:30 A.M., Waller had finished his run and was about to shower when the phone rang. Sergeant Richard Yagoda, one of the department's most experienced detectives, was calling from headquarters with a message from their boss, Duluth Police Inspector Ernie Grams.

A large man, Yagoda stood over six feet tall and weighed in at about 230 pounds. He had dark, wavy hair and a prominent nose even he kidded about. Waller considered Yagoda one of his mentors. He particularly admired the veteran detective's interview skills. Yagoda had a certain folksy charm that, when combined with persistent questioning, persuaded subjects to open up. Grams usually asked him to take charge of the department's tough cases.

"Gary. What are you doing?"

"I just got back from jogging. What do you think? I'm getting ready for work."

"There's been a double homicide at the Congdon estate."

"Go screw yourself, Dick."

Waller wasn't in the mood for another of Yagoda's practical jokes. Duluth didn't have a high crime rate. In the late seventies the city recorded an average of two or three homicides per year, far fewer than other communities its size.

"No, I'm serious, Gary. Elisabeth Congdon and her nurse were murdered last night. Ernie wants you at the estate right away."

"Who else is down there?"

"Chris Kucera. Jack Greene. ID's been called. Ernie's asking you to handle the crime scene."

"I can't come dressed like this. I'll be down there as fast as I can."

Waller showered, dressed hurriedly, and drove his 1974 Oldsmobile toward the Congdon estate. He snubbed out a half-smoked cigarette and lit another. He was up to a couple packs of Winston filters a day, a chain smoker when stressed. He had been thinking about quitting. Bad timing.

This case would mean a lot of pressure from the media and the victims' families, particularly the Congdons. He'd grown up with the Congdon name. To Waller and others outside the family it meant one thing—wealth. The Congdons were among Duluth's richest, oldest, and best-known families. Conscious of their position in the community, the Congdons prided themselves on their civic contributions made with little or no fanfare. But no citizen could miss the Congdon name. It appeared on everything in the city. Schools. Streets. Parks. Recreational halls. Boardrooms. The name also signified Glensheen, the mansion Waller drove by daily on the way to work. He'd never been inside, but he had investigated a killing involving the Congdon family before.

Seven years earlier Waller had been a crime scene technician in the Identification Bureau of the Duluth Police Department and had investigated the death of a teenage boy at the Robert and Dorothy Congdon mansion located at 3700 London Road, a few blocks east of Glensheen. The late Robert Congdon was Elisabeth's brother. His widow, Dorothy, had retired for the night to her second floor bedroom when she heard the sound of breaking glass outside and below her bedroom. An intruder was kicking out the glass panes in a terrace door on the first level, using the door as a ladder to climb to a second floor balcony on the Lake Superior side of the mansion.

The feisty seventy-year-old later told Waller that she was an experienced hunter and marksman. As the young man had attempted to climb onto the balcony she pointed a shotgun at him and ordered him to leave; he didn't take advantage of the opportunity. She had then aimed at his leg, hoping to only injure him, and fired. Unfortunately, one bb from the shotgun blast severed the femoral artery of his leg and he bled to death before medical assistance arrived. The intent of the young man, who had been under the influence of drugs, would never be known. Later that day Waller and his partner were pictured on the front page of the evening paper. It had been Waller's first press coverage, and he knew there would be much more this time.

Duluth police officer Chris Kucera was the first to reach Glensheen, at 7:03 A.M. He had driven in through the estate's east gate and circled the gardener's residence when he saw a man working outside the garage. Kucera pulled the marked blue squad alongside and got out of the car.

"Did you call for help?" Kucera asked gardener Robert Wyness.

"No, it must be from the main house," the gardener replied matter-of-factly, obviously unaware of the reported homicides.

Kucera got back in the car and sped around the driveway to the mansion's front entrance. Two women, one dressed in a white nurse's uniform and the other in a conservative suit, paced outside the door.

As the nurse came toward him, he noticed the dazed expression on her face. Conger and Garvue had been afraid the killer was still in Glensheen and had cut the phone line. But the line wasn't dead—there was no dial tone because the police operator had kept the line open between dispatch and the house until the first unit arrived, a

common safety measure before the 911 emergency system could automatically identify a caller's location.

"What happened?" he asked.

"Both of them are dead," Conger said, pointing inside the house.

"Where?"

"Up there," she said, motioning toward the stairs.

Officer Kucera rushed past the women to the central staircase and climbed to the landing. He stopped in front of the first body and instinctively touched one leg to check for vital signs. The body was cool; no pulse. Kucera ran upstairs to Elisabeth Congdon's bedroom and saw the second body on the bed. He touched her lifeless right leg. Nothing to do but call for backup.

As Kucera headed downstairs, he saw his partner, Steve Rolland, and paramedics coming up. "No need for an ambulance," Kucera told them.

Rolland pulled out his radio. "We have a homicide. Send more help," he instructed headquarters.

At police headquarters, Sergeant Jack Greene had planned to continue working on a missing person case with local FBI agents. But as he parked his car on the ramp, a uniformed officer shouted at him.

"Hey, Jack. You've got a homicide on London Road."

From the police garage another male voice broke in: "Now you've got a double homicide."

Greene immediately called Ernie Grams at home, interrupting the inspector's breakfast. Grams assigned Greene and Yagoda to interview Glensheen servants and household staff.

At Glensheen, Lieutenant Nick Radulovich arrived next on the scene and ordered the mansion searched. He and Officer Kucera checked the second and third floors while Rolland took the first. They found no one hiding.

Within minutes, Grams and Greene arrived. As ranking officer at the crime scene, Grams confirmed the homicides and radioed the dispatcher to send tracking dogs and additional investigators. He also verified that identification experts were on the way.

A thirty-year police veteran, Grams, fifty-three, was a short, stocky balding man with deep-set eyes and a heavy, furrowed brow. He had started his career in Duluth on the other side of First Street, as the police reporter for the *Duluth News-Tribune*. He joined the Duluth Police Department in 1948, moving across the street from the newspaper's offices to the granite building that served in part as the city's police station. Fellow officers liked to describe Grams as TV detective Kojak with a little hair left. Grams had a dry sense of humor, often self-effacing. He wisecracked to reporters that he was just a hick cop from Duluth. He enjoyed a good cigar even in the office, and kept a stockpile in his desk drawer. Beneath the friendly banter and easygoing manner was an old pro with a track record for wrapping up difficult cases.

Detective Waller looked for Inspector Grams as he pulled up to the estate shortly after 8 A.M. He parked illegally on the grass outside Glensheen's wrought iron fence—one perk of being a cop. He spotted the uniformed officers posted around the grounds. The officer stationed at the main gate motioned for the crowd, which had gathered within minutes of news bulletins, to let Waller pass. The media, using police scanners, had found out about the murders just moments after the dispatcher had, so television and radio news bulletins had gone out within fifteen minutes of Garvue's call. Forecasts of a storm hadn't dissuaded reporters or spectators. Forcing his way through the crush of people on the sidewalk, Waller refused to answer questions.

As Waller entered the mansion, he saw before him a polished wooden stairway with Persian runners. To the left of the staircase, sun streamed in through a heavy cut-glass door leading to the patio. The house was dim except for the prism-like door and the patterns it cast on the dark, paneled walls.

Waller felt like he was walking into a museum, as though time had suddenly stopped. The air smelled musty, like someone had just opened an old manuscript or a sealed room after many years. The others present—police officers, paramedics, and household staff—spoke in hushed, grave voices. "Even though people lived in the house, there was absolutely no feeling of warmth," Waller recalled later. "It was ornate and dark and somber."

For a moment, Waller was overwhelmed by the enormous task that he and the other officers faced—ensuring that the three-story, thirty-nine-room mansion and seven-and-a-half-acre estate were not disturbed. But any security police now provided for the crime scene would be more than had previously existed at Glensheen. Waller was surprised to learn that despite the estate's vast size, there was no electronic security system at the mansion and other security measures were few. They included triple locks on Glensheen's massive front doors, a live-in staff, and a local security company under contract for emergency calls. Violent crime in Duluth was so rare in the mid-'70s that the Congdon family trustees felt confident they needed no further safety measures. Obviously, that confidence had been shattered.

The scene reminded Waller of "a Chinese fire drill: lots of people running around, much activity, but little control. We had a shift commander, inspector of detectives, three detective sergeants, and two patrol sergeants all wanting to take charge." FBI Special Agent Robert Harvey was also there, having tagged along with Greene, but the FBI wasn't officially on the case yet. "Harvey wasn't a Hoover-type agent," Waller recalled. "He was a team player."

Inspector Grams met Waller in the hallway. The two men stood talking at the foot of the main staircase.

"What have we got?" Waller asked.

"We found the nurse's body on the landing. She's been badly beaten. Miss Congdon appears to have been smothered with a pillow."

"What can I do?"

"I want you to handle the crime scene," said Grams, assigning Waller to supervise the processing and collection of evidence. But first, Grams wanted Waller to view the bodies with him, to try and reconstruct what had happened.

Inspector Grams and Waller climbed the stairs. Sunlight filled the window above the body on the window seat. The familiar sweet, coppery smell of blood concentrated on the landing made Waller wince. Even before he got close, he could sense the lifelessness. "There is a definite absence of life, you can feel the vacuum when you enter a room with a dead body," Waller said later. "It's instinctual, and it has nothing to do with being a policeman or an investigator."

Waller had investigated dozens of violent deaths, but the brutality of this attack sickened him. Velma Pietila was beaten beyond recognition. Her chiseled Nordic features—she was Finnish—were crushed, her blond-gray hair matted with blood. Her white nurse's uniform was spattered with blood, bunched to her waist, and unzipped halfway, exposing her slip. This suggested a sexual assault, though lab tests later ruled that out.

Pietila's body had apparently been arranged on the seat, her torso awkwardly angled in a different direction than her arms and legs. Her arms were badly bruised, and a dark nylon stocking was wound tightly around her left wrist. Perhaps the killer had first tried to just tie her up, Waller thought. Whoever had killed her and rested her body there might have felt a certain degree of remorse.

The two men moved upstairs, careful to step around other pieces of evidence scattered on the landing and up the stairs. They then entered Elisabeth Congdon's bedroom. The lamp next to her bed remained lit. The heiress's pillow, bedspread, and nightgown were bloodstained. Judging from the light-colored flecks of blood, many of them smeared, Waller guessed Pietila had been killed first. The murderer had then transferred traces of the nurse's blood to Congdon's bedroom. If the police were lucky, the killer had also been injured during the struggle on the stairs and left traces of his or her own blood behind.

Waller removed the pink satin pillow from Congdon's face. One crumpled corner had obviously been clenched in the killer's fist. Waller noticed a raw patch of skin on her nose. He could also see dark bruises on her left arm where the killer had held her down.

Waller looked around, surprised by the muted colors and rather plain furnishings in the bedroom. Except for a few knickknacks and decorative pieces acquired during her globe-trotting days, it showed few outward signs of Congdon's vast wealth. A dull pinkish gray dominated the room: as in all the other bedrooms, the wallpaper, draperies, carpeting, and woodwork matched. Aside from a hospital bed with its overhead ring and railings, only a pale green couch and a large wooden dresser stood out.

The tall dresser caught the investigators' eyes. All eight drawers were pulled out exactly the same distance, about six inches. Hardly wide enough for a burglar to search

inside. Yet empty jewelry boxes and plastic trays were scattered on the floor by the vanity. The burglar had taken time to neatly arrange the dresser, Waller noted, perhaps to stage the appearance of a break-in.

Directly across the hall, in the nurse's room, Pietila's purse lay open on the bed, obviously rifled through by the killer, who, it would later be determined, had taken her car keys. In the adjoining bathroom, faint bloodstains showed on the door jamb, and several nearly invisible spots dotted on the white sink and white-tiled floor. The stains suggested the murderer had stopped to hurriedly wash before escaping.

In the meantime, canine units went through Glensheen from top to bottom before the crime scene was sealed. One of the German shepherds picked up a scent in Congdon's bedroom that led to the basement and a possible entry point, a broken window at the rear of the mansion, inside an enclosed porch. The other dog followed a track to the porch that continued outside beyond the well-manicured lawn and gardens toward the lake. Officers found a single set of fresh tracks and a lollipop stick on the pier at the lake's edge. Did the lollipop stick belong to the killer, or just some trespassing kid? There was no way to know.

Once the dogs moved outside, Waller and three officers from the Duluth Police Department's identification bureau began the tedious task of processing the crime scene, documenting and collecting each item of evidence. They started by photographing the bodies and all visible physical evidence. The officers worked their way up the central staircase to Pietila's body, then into Elisabeth Congdon's bedroom, before finishing with the nurse's bedroom and bathroom.

Dr. Volker Goldschmidt, the St. Louis County medical examiner, arrived about 8:45 A.M. He knelt on the landing and closely examined Pietila's body. The dark nylon stocking was wound around her left wrist so tightly it would have to be cut free at the autopsy. Goldschmidt was puzzled by a pattern of tattoo-like puncture wounds on her face, forearm, and finger, unsure of what had caused them. He noted the strange markings in his pre-autopsy observations. Based on the condition of the blood on the landing, Dr. Goldschmidt believed that Pietila died sometime after midnight. Next, he and Mildred Garvue went up to the nurse's bedroom to look at the medical log maintained by the nurses during each shift. Pietila's uneaten dinner and thermos were on the sill of the window overlooking the driveway.

The log was usually kept on the larger of two desks in the nurse's room. The lone entry for the evening of June 26 was Velma's sign-in at the beginning of her shift: "V. Pietila, R.N., eleven to seven." Between 11 P.M. and 2:30 A.M., Elisabeth was often repositioned in bed and typically received sedatives or pain medication and sometimes a glass of warm milk to aid her sleep. There was no notation in the log of any medication in the early morning hours of June 27. An inventory of Elisabeth's medications the day of the murders also indicated that none had been dispensed during Pietila's shift. The lack of any additional entries by Pietila therefore suggested a time frame for the killings between 11 P.M. and 2:30 A.M.

Goldschmidt next examined Elisabeth's body. Rigor mortis had set in.

He also observed the abrasion on the tip of her nose, small hemorrhages in the pupils of her eyes, and a severe bruise on her left forearm. She appeared to have suffocated while fighting off her killer: as she had twisted from side to side, the satin pillow had rubbed the tip of her nose raw.

While Waller and others processed physical evidence, Greene had begun his first interview with sixty-two-year-old Vera Dunbar. Scottish, strong-willed, and square-jawed, Dunbar was a prim, petite woman. She wore a conservative suit, her gray hair styled in a pageboy. She had managed Elisabeth Congdon's daily schedule for nine years and ran the household, giving orders to the servants and nurses. Three years earlier, she'd been appointed one of Miss Congdon's personal conservators. Her new duties included screening her employer's calls and visitors to ensure no one tried to take advantage of the heiress and that Miss Elisabeth didn't overexert herself.

Dunbar escorted Sergeant Greene to a small room used as the servants' dining area. Seated at the formica table, Greene started the conversation: "Tell me something. Tell me about this family, this house. Get me going."

Dunbar said Elisabeth owned two of the four Congdon homes; a winter home in Tucson, Arizona, and Swiftwater Farm. Glensheen and Westhome in Yakima, Washington, belonged to the Congdon estate. Elisabeth divided her time between Duluth, the Brule, and Tucson. The last time Dunbar saw her employer was after lunch on Friday, June 24, when Miss Elisabeth left for a weekend at Swiftwater Farm.

Greene was particularly interested to learn that whenever Elisabeth visited the winter home, the family hired a security guard because Tucson was over 300 miles closer to Golden, Colorado—where her adopted daughter Marjorie lived—than Duluth was. Duluth. Dunbar retrieved a family photo album and showed Greene a smiling photograph of Marjorie and her first husband, Richard LeRoy. Dunbar told Greene that Marjorie's second husband, Roger Caldwell, had visited Glensheen in May—without Marjorie—to meet Elisabeth and ask the Congdon trustees for a large sum of money. Dunbar said the meeting took place in the library and lasted a half hour. Dunbar then drove Caldwell back to his Duluth hotel.

When Greene asked about any family problems, Dunbar mentioned a rift between Marjorie and other family members over her mishandling of money. Marjorie was constantly in debt. Greene would hear this repeatedly from most of the family and staff he interviewed. Dunbar had more to confide. Marjorie manipulated her mother, she told Greene, and as conservator Dunbar had tried to protect Miss Elisabeth from her daughter's advances, particularly after an incident three years earlier, on November 3, 1974.

Marjorie had visited her mother at Glensheen and brought along a loaf of home-made bread and jar of sugar-free marmalade, Dunbar recalled. There had been trouble before with Marjorie concerning Elisabeth's diet. (Marjorie's daughter Suzanne would

later state that during holiday meals at Glensheen her mother would place sweets on Elisabeth's plate and tell her she should have some, even though Elisabeth, a diabetic, was not medically permitted to do so.) Dunbar continued to explain that within hours after Elisabeth had eaten the sandwich her daughter had prepared, she became very ill. Her blood pressure dropped drastically, she couldn't be roused the next morning, and she was sleepy for two days. Blood tests performed by her doctor revealed traces of meprobamate, a powerful sedative not on Elisabeth's prescription list. But tests could not pinpoint how and when Elisabeth was drugged or by whom.

Determined to avoid adverse publicity, the Congdon family did not notify Duluth police. The family also decided against confronting Marjorie. They had no proof, just circumstantial evidence and suspicions, particularly because Marjorie abruptly left the morning her mother's condition was discovered. After the scare, however, household staff and nurses were told never to leave Elisabeth alone with Marjorie. Trustees of the Congdon Office Corporation, established in Duluth to manage and oversee the Congdon family's finances, also ordered the household and nursing staff to monitor all phone calls between the two women.

Next, Greene interviewed sixty-four-year-old Prudence Rennquist, who'd joined the household as cook two months earlier. Rennquist told Greene she went to her bedroom around 8:30 P.M., took a bath, watched television, and let Muffin, her black miniature poodle, outside before going to bed shortly before eleven. She awoke around 3 A.M. to find Muffin scratching at her arm and barking excitedly.

Rennquist later said, "I'm very time conscious, especially if I get woke up in the middle of the night. And I looked at my watch and it was ten minutes to three, and I said, 'What's your story, Muffin?' And she just ran to the door and wanted me to come with her. I took her in my arms and held her mouth shut and went to the bathroom. But when I was coming out of the bathroom, she got away from me and ran to the door that leads from the servants' quarters to Miss Congdon's room." A thick wooden door separated the servants' quarters from the rest of Glensheen's second floor. "And she scratched on the door and I remember the thought went through my mind, well, tomorrow morning I'll just have to see if there's any scratches on that door."

Even after being spanked with a newspaper, Muffin continued to bark and whine and refused to stay in bed. Rennquist said, "I had my Bible laying by the bed and I had some favorite letters that my four daughters sent and I read through all the letters first, and hushed Muffin in between reading. And in one of my girl's letters she said 'read the psalms,' so I was reading the psalms." The dog remained agitated and kept Rennquist awake until about 4:50 A.M. Muffin had behaved the same way only once before, when Rennquist's previous employer's garage was burglarized.

Glensheen maid Hazel Conger had worked at the mansion for nine years. She occupied the front bedroom in the servants' quarters. A heavy sleeper, Conger told officers she hadn't heard any strange noises after going to bed around 11:15 P.M. Sunday. She'd slept so soundly she didn't wake up until her alarm went off at 6:30 A.M.

Once dressed, Conger's morning routine was to turn off the front hall and outside lights and unlock the front door for the day nurse. She then set up Miss Elisabeth's breakfast tray in the pantry; Miss Elisabeth always ate breakfast in bed. This morning, as Conger finished setting out the food, she heard someone at the pantry door calling her.

Conger thought it was Velma Pietila. But when she turned, she saw Mildred Garvue instead. Garvue's wide eyes and pained expression said something wasn't right. "What's wrong?" Conger had nervously asked. It was then she learned Miss Elisabeth was dead.

Glensheen gardener Robert Wyness had lived all but six of his sixty-two years on the estate, where his father had served as gardener before him. Wyness told police he'd had relatives visiting from Springfield, Illinois. They'd had a fish fry on the beach behind Wyness's small house on the grounds from 7 to 9 P.M. Sunday. Wyness then drove the relatives to their motel about 10 P.M., when it was getting dark. After he returned, he and his wife went to bed. They heard nothing unusual at the estate that night.

The death of Elisabeth, whom he thought of as a sister, traumatized Wyness so much that he refused to enter the main house for nearly two years.

Velma Pietila's husband, Loren, arrived at Glensheen at 8:50 A.M. Inspector Grams had the unpleasant responsibility of informing him that his wife

had been murdered, but Grams was too late. Pietila, a retired forester, already knew he was a widower. He'd heard a radio news report shortly after 7:15 A.M. in his home, just two miles east of Glensheen on London Road. It was about the time his wife should have been getting home.

Shaken by the news, Loren Pietila eventually called a close friend to drive him to the mansion. As he walked up the driveway, he noticed his car, a Ford Granada, was missing. He told Inspector Grams that Velma had driven the car to work. Duluth police immediately issued a statewide alert.

He told Grams that when his wife was asked to work Sunday night, he "pleaded with her not to go." Velma had never worked a night shift before during the seven years she'd cared for Elisabeth Congdon. He said goodbye to his wife about 10:45 P.M. Sunday. That was the last time they spoke.

The Pietilas had been married nearly forty-five years. Childhood sweethearts from northern Minnesota's Iron Range, the Pietilas were still deeply in love. They spent as much time together as possible. The parents of three grown children, the couple eagerly looked forward to Velma's retirement when they could travel more and play golf. As Loren Pietila explained simply, "We had things planned."

Grams asked Pietila if he knew anyone who'd want to harm his wife or Elisabeth Congdon. Velma had confided to her husband that she'd had problems with Marjorie, Pietila said. During one of Marjorie's visits, she and Velma argued over Miss Congdon. Marjorie grabbed Velma's wrists hard and wouldn't let go. Velma told her husband she "shook off Marjorie's hands."

This incident was recounted in a letter from Vera Dunbar to one of the Congdon trustees on August 7, 1975. Dunbar, who had been out shopping, returned to Glensheen to find a car belonging to Fran Bouche, one of Marjorie's friends from the Twin Cities, parked in front. As Dunbar walked toward the front door, Hazel Conger came hurriedly toward her and told her to go right upstairs because Marjorie was with her mother and she had heard shouting. Dunbar immediately went up to the second floor and found Marjorie and Bouche seated in Elisabeth's bedroom. "[Elisabeth] was in her wheelchair," Dunbar wrote, "and the nurse, Velma Pietila, met me at the door at the room saying 'you don't know what I've been through.' She told me that Marjorie grabbed her wrists while she was attempting to back out of the room with [Elisabeth], explaining that [Elisabeth] had a one o'clock at the hairdresser. Marjorie said that her mother was going to stay right where she was." Eventually, Congdon cousins Tom Congdon—a trustee—and Dr. Terry d'Autremont were summoned to the mansion, and Marjorie informed them that she expected her mother to take her and Bouche to lunch at the Kitchi Gammi Club, the exclusive private club founded in 1883 by Chester Congdon's good friend Guilford Hartley and other prominent Duluth businessmen.

Loren Pietila believed Miss Congdon had been "set up" by Marjorie. "Bad blood" existed between the mother and daughter, he told Grams. Loren Pietila had heard Marjorie owed her mother more than \$1 million.

While Loren Pietila talked with detectives, news of the murders reached Elisabeth Congdon's family. Jennifer and her husband, Chuck, were in the middle of having the upstairs of their Racine, Wisconsin, home painted. When the phone rang, Chuck had taken their dog for a walk on the beach and Jennifer was getting dressed. "Bill Van Evera called, and I picked up the phone," Jennifer remembered. Van Evera was her cousin Mary's husband and a Congdon trustee. "He said, which I thought was pretty blunt, 'Your mother's been murdered.' The first thing I said was 'Marjorie did it. I've got to find Chuck.' Never thinking about the painters, I went out the door in my nightgown, down the stairs. I was screaming at Chuck down at the beach to get up here. That afternoon we left to go to Duluth."

North of St. Paul, Marjorie Caldwell's oldest daughter, Suzanne LeRoy, received word of her grandmother's death from her sister, who had called the stable where Suzanne worked. LeRoy's first thought was that her mother was probably involved. She told stable owner Hans Ecklund she suspected her mother because of her desperate need for money. Her mother might even have hired a Mafia hit man, LeRoy said, referring to the number of suspected organized crime figures who owned horses near Marjorie's home and prospective horse ranch in Colorado. Ecklund quickly pointed out that if Marjorie's finances were so bad, the Caldwells couldn't cover the advance hit men usually require. (Subsequent police investigation failed to turn up any organized crime connection to Marjorie Caldwell or the murders.) Suzanne's father, Dick LeRoy—Marjorie's first husband—also found out soon, contacted at work by his second wife, Sherry. Dick told his colleagues that he thought Marjorie was involved.

In Denver, Elisabeth's nephew Tom Congdon took matters into his own hands after learning of the murders. He considered his cousin Marjorie and her husband, Roger Caldwell, who lived less than an hour away in Golden, Colorado, suspects. Assuming Roger had committed the murders and would be fleeing back to Colorado, he telephoned airport police only to discover the likely flight from Minneapolis to Denver had already landed. He then contacted the Denver Police and asked for the name of a private investigator. He was given the name of private detective William Furman of Denver. Congdon called Furman and arranged for immediate protection of his family. He also hired Furman to tail Marjorie and Roger. To help collect information on the Caldwells and the murders, Furman told Congdon he would use "a kind of device that enables you to hear conversations from a distance." Furman also said he would "put some money on the streets" to see what he could dig up on the Caldwells. The choice would eventually prove regrettable—Furman had a questionable reputation with certain police officers.

As one of three trustees for the funds established by Chester Congdon, Tom Congdon was aware of every family member's financial status. The Caldwells had serious money problems. He'd recently paid \$400 so they wouldn't be thrown out of the Holland House Hotel in Golden, where they and Marjorie's youngest son, Rick, had lived since March.

Bob Harmon, an agent with the Colorado Bureau of Investigation, also had suspicions regarding the Caldwells. He'd spent months investigating an alleged burglary at the couple's former home. Harmon suspected the crime had been staged. The Caldwells faced possible charges of insurance fraud.

Waller authorized the removal and dispatch of the bodies, Pietila's at 9:50 A.M. and Elisabeth's at 10:50 A.M., to St. Luke's Hospital for the autopsy. Once the paramedics removed the bodies, Waller and officers Bob Cox and Bob Gracek of the department's identification bureau began their painstaking examination of the landing and stairs where Pietila had struggled. The apparent murder weapon sat upright on the landing next to her body—a heavy, ten-inch brass candlestick bent above its base. Across from the window seat, on the hardwood floor, they found a bloody footprint. Unfortunately the print, made by what looked like a shoe heel, was blurred, and of little help to police. Over the next several hours, the trio carefully examined the bizarre array of items strewn on the landing and stairway—a dented flashlight, batteries, a bloody shoe with its heel broken off, hairpins, earrings, broken eyeglasses, pills, and teeth fragments. They recovered thirty-seven pieces of evidence from the staircase alone, proof of the horrible struggle between Pietila and her killer.

While the officers continued to process the central staircase, Vera Dunbar took a preliminary inventory of her employer's bedroom. Police soon learned many pieces of Elisabeth's jewelry were missing. A diamond-and-sapphire ring, a gold watch, a double string of pearls, a cameo pin, a choker necklace, several bracelets, a gold Tiffany pin, and

eighteen pairs of earrings could not be located. The stolen jewelry, most of it custom-made, included Elisabeth's favorite charm bracelet with thirteen gold charm silhouette heads, each representing one of her grandchildren.

Detectives received a call from Loren Pietila around 10 A.M., shortly after he'd returned home. The keys to Pietila's stolen car had been found at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport at about 8:30 that morning. Mark Fuelling, an airport maintenance worker, told Pietila he'd discovered the keys after removing a plastic trash bag from a can outside the terminal's main entrance. Fuelling noticed an identification tag on the key ring listing Pietila's name, address, and phone number.

Since the killer—or killers—had apparently abandoned the car at the airport, Duluth police phoned airport security with a description of the car and license plate number. About 11 A.M., two airport police officers found the Ford Granada in the short-term parking lot. The Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, headquartered in St. Paul, was called in to process the car. The organization specializes in the collection and laboratory examination of physical evidence, which in this case meant hair, fiber, blood, and fingerprints. Meanwhile, airport police asked Fuelling to point out the trash can where he found the car keys. Inside the trash container, they discovered a short-term parking lot ticket for the airport lot stamped 6:35 A.M. June 27.

Back at headquarters, Duluth police began checking commercial airline schedules for early morning flights out of the Twin Cities. Because Congdon family members suspected Marjorie and her husband (privately, Duluth police did too), investigators focused on direct and connecting flights to Colorado.

Eventually, a fingerprint on the driver's window would be identified as belonging to Loren Pietila. A blood stain on the floor near the gas pedal came from someone with blood type O. Velma Pietila and Elisabeth Congdon both had type-O blood. So did Roger Caldwell.

After talking with the Glensheen staff, detectives Greene and Yagoda began interviewing the Congdon family. The detectives were interested in the absence of a formal security system at the mansion. The family had hired off-duty Duluth police officers to direct traffic and provide security for a family reunion two years before. It was at the reunion that Pietila had had her argument with Marjorie Caldwell; Bill Van Evera told detectives that Marjorie had ejected the nurse from her mother's room. Afterward, the family decided to pay the Midwest Patrol security firm \$25 a month to be on call for emergencies. But more recently, the family had relied on around-the-clock nurses, live-in servants, and the two families living on the grounds: the male chauffeur and groundskeeper, who lived in separate homes, and the telephone hookups from their quarters to the mansion, comprised Glensheen's internal security system. The interviews with Congdon relatives would last into the evening. Detectives Greene and

Yagoda continued to hear the same story over and over. Family members suspected that Elisabeth's daughter Marjorie and her husband, Roger, were involved in the murders. The motive? The couple's heavy and mounting debt. Marjorie stood to inherit millions upon Elisabeth's death.

Waller and police identification technicians Cox and Gracek continued their evidence gathering on the central staircase throughout the morning. Gracek sketched the crime scene and items of evidence while Waller measured each object and its location on the stairs. Cox photographed, recorded, labeled, and collected the evidence in new paper bags. Police prefer paper bags because they are sterile, untouched by human hands until opened. And unlike plastic, paper breathes. In this case, officers could collect the victims' bloody clothing and bedding without worrying that the material would decompose before trial. Each bag was sealed and initialed by Waller. The evidence was then sent either to the state crime lab or FBI for analysis or to the police evidence room for storage.

The investigators left the apparent murder weapon, the dented, bloodied brass candlestick, upright on the landing. Police would dust it for fingerprints later. The blood-soaked carpeting on the landing would be pulled up several days later and sent to the state crime lab along with the stained cushion from the window seat.

While the officers worked their way up the staircase, a massive thunderstorm moved in over Lake Superior. Through the window they saw ominous black clouds rolling across the vast horizon and lightning dancing upon the lake, its flashes lighting up the staircase. The officers fell silent, momentarily overcome by the scene in front of them. The storm forced police to slightly alter the crime scene; someone removed Pietila's thermos from the nurse's room window so the window could be shut. Continuing his way up the stairs, Waller noticed a deep, crescent-shaped dent in the wall paneling near the head of the stairs. The killer had either missed a swing at Velma Pietila with the heavy candlestick or dropped the weapon against the wall.

Blood splatters marked the walls going up the stairs and above the window seat. Investigators found spattered blood as far as six feet from the window—including blood casting on the molded ceiling at the top of the stairs—made by the killer while swinging the bloody candlestick. They recorded numerous bloodstains in the nurse's room and bathroom. The state crime lab technicians, experts in blood splatter analysis, would be on the scene two days later. Waller counted on the blood splatter analysis to confirm the sequence of the murders and provide details on Pietila's struggle with her killer. Next, the officers examined a low, wooden bureau in the hallway at the top of the stairs. To its right sat a chair, to the left stood a small statue of the Roman poet Virgil perched on a stone obelisk (nearby, the statue's counterpart, a matching statue of Italian poet Danté, flanked the left side of a guest room door). On top of the bureau, on the left side, a single brass candlestick remained. The candle and drip ring from the bloody candlestick on the landing lay on the right side, where they had fallen when the

murderer grabbed his or her weapon. From there, Waller, Cox, and Gracek moved into Elisabeth's bedroom.

Once the written narrative, photographs, measurements, and sketches had been completed, officers collected latent prints at the crime scene. Investigators lifted a partial print from the brass candlestick, and Waller hoped for good news from the crime lab. No usable prints were found in Elisabeth's bedroom. The nurse's room and bathroom would not be processed for prints until after the state crime experts examined the faint bloodstains.

Since neither the live-in staff nor the families living on the grounds had seen or heard anything suspicious, Waller hoped to find physical evidence as the first day of the investigation progressed. Detectives couldn't afford to overlook anything at this stage of the investigation. Every conceivable relevant item was painstakingly photographed, measured, and documented in a written log.

"We were documenting the original condition of the crime scene, recording exactly what we saw," Waller recalled. "When we walked up the stairs and saw that amount of blood on the floor and the blood splattering on the walls and the battered body of Velma Pietila...it's hard not to let your emotions get in the way. But the first thing we had to do was control our emotions before we could begin."

It would take police three days to search and collect evidence at the mansion and 7.6-acre estate, even with outside help from the state crime lab experts. This was the most challenging crime scene of Waller's experience—and the most frustrating.

"First and foremost, the crime scene has to be protected from contamination until all the evidence is gathered," Waller said. "The worst offenders are usually the law enforcement officers assigned to investigate the case."

"We did secure the house and the grounds, but we failed to protect them. We had cigarette butts in the toilet of the nurse's bathroom. Who threw their cigarettes in the toilet? The police officer protecting the scene. I didn't see it at the time. I looked at pictures of the crime scene a million times and missed seeing the cigarettes. It gave the appearance of being careless and sloppy and worst of all, of a contaminated crime scene. How can you defend that in court?"

"Good crime scene investigations involve complete control of everyone entering the area. Now anyone who comes to a crime scene has to be there for a legitimate reason," Waller said. This murder resulted in a policy change for the police department, requiring officers to sign in and state their purpose for being at the crime scene.

Waller was mad as hell about the initial lack of security to protect the evidence—and he had good reason to be. Every time people enter a crime scene they risk taking away a bit of evidence. They might also deposit fibers, fingerprints, hairs, and other matter not there before. Contamination of the crime scene is the fastest way to destroy a solid, physical evidence case. A small army of police officers and representatives of the county attorney's office had tramped through the crime scene, especially around Velma Pietila's body. The large number of visitors raised a nagging question for Waller.

Could hair strands found near the nurse's body, assumed to be the murderer's, have been tracked there from somewhere else in the mansion? The possibility was mathematically remote, but not impossible.

Pietila's clothing and Congdon's nightgown and bedding were among the dozens of items Duluth police forwarded to the FBI. The FBI lab had the technology to lift prints off porous surfaces like cloth by using special chemicals. All other evidence, hundreds of items, was sent to the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension.

The volume of physical evidence was impressive. Waller had already earned a reputation for submitting large quantities of evidence to the state crime lab. His fellow officers teased that only his uncle, Floyd Bowman, a twenty-one-year veteran with the Duluth Police Department and at that time a BCA agent, could top him. They said that if it were possible, Waller would have put Glensheen on wheels and rolled it down Interstate 35 to the BCA in St. Paul.

Monday afternoon, Grams held a press conference in his ground-floor office at city hall. The grisly news had spread throughout Duluth, down to the Twin Cities, and hit the wire services. The news media demanded to know what had gone on inside Glensheen. Reporters nationwide wondered if the police had any suspects or a motive for the killings. The story made banner headlines:

"ELISABETH CONGDON, NIGHT NURSE MURDERED" — *The Duluth Herald*

"DULUTH SOCIALITE, NURSE MURDERED" — *The Minneapolis Star*

"2 WOMEN SLAIN IN DULUTH" — *The St. Paul Dispatch*

"HEIRESS, NURSE FOUND SLAIN" — *The Milwaukee Journal*

"DULUTH HEIRESS AND NURSE SLAIN" — *Chicago Sun-Times*

"TUCSON BENEFACTRESS AND NURSE SLAIN IN MANSION NEAR DULUTH"
— *Arizona Daily Star*

Grams told reporters burglary was the presumed motive for the murders. The killer had apparently entered Glensheen through a window at the rear of the house. The murders had occurred sometime between midnight and 7 A.M.

Grams dispelled rumors that Elisabeth Congdon had slept with a gun under her pillow. He also informed reporters that Glensheen's main gates were open during the night. They were only locked during the smelting season to discourage trespassing in the creek on their property. (Smelting was a popular spring ritual along Lake Superior's North Shore. Mouths of creeks and rivers filled with smelt, a small, silvery fish, swimming upstream to spawn. Thousands gathered to catch the smelt with bare hands, buckets, and nets. Since the late 1980s, the smelt population—and, therefore, smelting—has dramatically declined.)

Pietila apparently had been killed after encountering the intruder just before or after Elisabeth Congdon's murder. Judging by the force of the blows to Pietila, "We know the murderer was a man," said Grams. "I can't imagine a woman being that vicious." But they had no official suspects. "The suspect could be four-foot-nine or six-foot-ten. We just don't know. Anybody could be a suspect."

What the reporters in Grams' office didn't know until much later was that police almost immediately discarded the burglary theory. The disarray in Elisabeth Congdon's room was too well organized. They were looking at premeditated murder. There was one killer for sure, possibly two.

Back at Glensheen, Duluth police processed the suspected entry point. The broken window led into the basement from an enclosed porch which ran much of the length of the lake side of the mansion. It was called the "subway" by the Congdon family, a space where the children had once played and ridden their bicycles. A door at the far end of the subway had been left unlocked, and a number of the exterior windows had been removed by the gardener for repair, resulting in easy access to the basement windows.

Police collected fibers and glass shards from the subway and the recreation room inside the basement. A partial heel print was visible on a couch beneath the open entry window. Investigators were puzzled by the absence of any object that could have been used to break the glass, and wondered if the entry had been staged. Could someone break the window, reach an arm through, unlatch the lock, and then reach further in to release the window stop? The hole in the glass was narrow and jagged, and the window stop was not easily reached. The stop made it possible to leave the window unlocked and partially open while ensuring the window could not be opened far enough to permit entry; the stop was not reachable through the partial opening.

Officer Barry Brooks, assigned to process the suspected entry point, decided to conduct his own experiment to see if it were possible to reach the window stop through the hole in the glass without being severely cut. He enlisted four officers, but of the group, only Brooks could get his right arm far enough through to disengage the sash lock, allowing him to open the window all the way.

Later, this unauthorized experiment would prove to be another costly mistake for Duluth police. When the case reached the courts, arm length comparisons, biceps measurements, and even a life-sized cardboard cutout of the window would be used to distract from the physical evidence.

Another problem with the window evidence would surface at trial. Police had not prevented contamination of the crime scene. When the canine unit had made its sweep before processing, one of the dogs had jumped through the

open window and the canine handler had followed right behind the dog. Worse yet, Waller learned that Lieutenant Radulovich, the third officer at Glensheen, had gone through the open window before the dogs arrived. The scent the dogs tracked

from Elisabeth's bedroom, through the window, and onto the grounds—as well as the heel print on the couch—could have been his.

Police investigated for any possible connection to the earlier killing involving Dorothy Congdon, but found no leads in that regard. Equally fruitless was the seizure of clothing discarded at a Duluth gas station and the forty bags of garbage removed from all the trash containers at roadside rest areas between Duluth and Minneapolis. As officers sorted through the garbage, they retrieved a pair of surgical gloves and a piece of costume jewelry. But, like the clothes from the gas station, they amounted to nothing.

Duluth police also received help from other law enforcement agencies. The FBI had officially joined the case when reports of the stolen jewelry's estimated worth topped \$50,000. The Minnesota State Patrol conducted a twenty-mile helicopter search of the shoreline behind Glensheen, north to the town of Two Harbors.

Calls continued to pour into police headquarters from people reporting suspicious people and vehicles. One man reported seeing a motorcycle turn into the estate grounds at 4 A.M. June 27. Another caller told police he heard gunshots in the neighborhood Sunday night. The calls even included several from off-duty police officers. Nothing came of any of these, ultimately, but Duluth police tried to follow up on every lead.

Because of the money at stake, many family members were possible suspects. Twenty-three people were mentioned in Elisabeth's will. In addition to the Elisabeth Congdon Living Trust, valued at \$4,078,101, Elisabeth had been an heir to various trusts set up by her father that totaled \$45,106,453. Some people who had been getting up to \$40,000 a year might now receive \$1 million. But only one family member had a history of desperate financial problems and a sometimes volatile relationship with Elisabeth.

Police even received a postcard with just such a tip. "Sad indeed to read about Miss Congdon's murder. One daughter, Marjorie Caldwell of Golden, Colorado, has always been a Big Spender. Would she know anything? Attempt anything? She would seem worth questioning." Signed, "Merchant she dealt with when living in Minneapolis."

They dropped the ball, however, on one lead in particular. Later, there would be controversy over their lack of follow-up on the sighting of a white male in his twenties with shoulder-length hair and a slender build wearing a sleeveless jean jacket. A caller had spotted the man in front of the Congdon estate about 2:30 A.M. Monday, June 27. Police made no effort to track down persons matching this description. The information was sketchy, and it wasn't uncommon for young people to be out late in the summer walking along the lakeshore on London Road, a major thoroughfare through the east end of town. A defense attorney would later exploit the failure to follow through on the lead.

This wasn't the only oversight Duluth law enforcement made during the initial investigation. Hundreds of pictures were taken of the crime scene and physical evidence the day of the murder. But police failed to keep a photo inventory with a description

of where and when each picture was taken and in what order. This omission eventually caused serious problems for the prosecution. Police would have a difficult time refuting defense allegations that evidence could have been moved or removed by officers at the crime scene.

As the officer in charge, Waller hated these screw ups. Later he would insist the police department had done its best. The department only had 130 officers; fewer than a dozen were trained to investigate homicides. With a case of this magnitude, the department's resources were stretched thin, and the investigation was just beginning.

CHAPTER 4

THE BLACK SHEEP

NO ONE COULD HAVE MISTAKEN ELISABETH CONGDON'S adopted daughters Marjorie and Jennifer for biological sisters. Petite with short, pixie-like brownish-black hair and olive-hued skin, Marjorie wore thick glasses—tied on when she was a small child—that hid her nearsighted, dark brown eyes. Jennifer stood tall and fair, with long, wavy blond hair, blue eyes, and a pale complexion.

The differences between Marjorie and Jennifer went far beyond physical appearance. Jennifer had an outgoing, bubbly personality that allowed her to make friends easily. She got along well with people, including her Congdon relatives, and didn't share Marjorie's sensitivity or insecurity about being adopted. Like her mother, Jennifer loved the outdoors, and played outside whenever she could. Family members and Glensheen staff remember Jennifer as a well-mannered, thoughtful girl who liked to help her mother. She seldom disobeyed Elisabeth.

Marjorie was a more complex child to raise. An introvert, Marjorie would play with toys by herself or spend hours lost in a book, reading. As she later said, "I was alone but not lonesome." She was also a spirited child who said she enjoyed sliding down Glensheen's main staircase banister, or down the laundry chute to the baskets below. When Marjorie didn't want to eat her vegetables, she claimed she hid them in the Oriental vases in the dining room—until the stench exposed her secret. On rainy days, she played house in Glensheen's attic. She loved to look for secret compartments behind the wall panels throughout the mansion. When Elisabeth hosted dinner parties, Marjorie would spy on her mother's guests until the creaky boards of the main staircase gave her away.

But the spirited child could turn willful, even volatile, if she didn't get what she wanted. "Marjorie liked attention and she was bossy," said her cousin Mary Van Evera. When playing with her friends and cousins, she insisted on being in charge of the games or toys. Marjorie also needed to have more toys or doll clothes than the children she played with, a childhood friend recalled.

From an early age, Marjorie learned to get her way with her mother by throwing temper tantrums. She would fling herself on the floor, kicking her feet and screaming. When Marjorie got older, if her mother denied her something she wanted, she might flail at Elisabeth with her fists, sometimes striking her, according to Jennifer. Elisabeth gave in to her elder daughter's demands in order to keep the peace. "I don't remember

Aunt Elisabeth having any disciplinary issues with her when there was a crowd,” said Van Evera. “But I know there were plenty, and not all Marjorie’s fault. Aunt Elisabeth did have a difficult time being a single mother.”

Yet as suddenly as Marjorie could turn prickly, she could ooze charm. She could be unexpectedly demonstrative, showering friends and family with affection and presents. Even as a girl, Marjorie had the gift of gab; she could talk her way into or out of just about anything.

While Jennifer was open about her adoption, Marjorie was shy and defensive. She disliked having to explain to others why her mother was a Miss. Jennifer recalled that, as a child, Marjorie would tell strangers she was related to royalty. Not just any royalty; she said she was a direct descendant of King Charlemagne of France.

As she grew older, Marjorie complained that her cousins in Duluth teased her about being illegitimate. She also claimed that because she was not a blood relative, her mother’s family did not accept her and did not allow her to sit at the dining room table for family dinners. As Marjorie said later, “I never felt a part of the family. The animosity goes back to Day One.” She began calling herself the black sheep of the Congdon family.

But some family members say Marjorie manufactured her bitter memories. Her claims were nonsense, according to Van Evera. “Marjorie used to say she was rejected because she had to sit at the other table. Well, there were so many of us that the younger kids had a table in the window,” Van Evera said.

While Elisabeth’s daughters may have lacked a father, two of her brothers, Robert and Edward “Ned” Congdon, provided them with a male presence. Elisabeth relied particularly on her older brother, Ned, for help. She had always been close to Ned, the family practical joker. One Christmas morning when the children were young, he gave Elisabeth and Robert chewing tobacco. Elisabeth and Robert each chewed a wad and their Christmas was ruined—they were sick to their stomachs the entire day.

Ned lived nearby and frequently looked in on his mother, sister, and nieces. He was godfather to Marjorie and Jennifer and a loving uncle to both girls. Jennifer recalled that Uncle Ned could tell wonderful stories, and she and Marjorie would take turns sitting on his lap and listening to his tales.

Elisabeth’s youngest brother, Robert, was also one of her closest confidantes, especially after Ned’s sudden death from a heart attack in 1940. Jennifer enjoyed a good relationship with her Uncle Bob and, when she married, Uncle Bob gave her away. Marjorie, however, did not get along with her uncle from a young age, most likely because he had advised his sister to practice tough love when Marjorie first began acting out. When Marjorie threw tantrums, he insisted that his sister not give in to the child’s demands. After Marjorie repeatedly ran up her mother’s charge cards and spent money she didn’t have, he told his sister to stop bailing Marjorie out. Marjorie became furious when she learned of her uncle’s recommendations, but it didn’t matter. Elisabeth continued to rescue her daughter financially and give her what she wanted because, as she

told her brother, she wanted to uphold the Congdon name. Of her mother's relatives, Marjorie preferred the company of her Uncle Harry Dudley and his wife Marjorie, her namesake and godmother. Perhaps, her sister Jennifer speculated, this was because the Dudleys felt sorry for Marjorie and, when it came to family matters, they listened to her side of the story.

While Glensheen was home to Clara, Elisabeth, Marjorie, and Jennifer, the family divided their time between Duluth, Tucson, Yakima, and the Brule. Throughout their grammar school years, the girls spent the fall semester until Christmas at Glensheen. Marjorie and Jennifer attended the Duluth Normal School, where both girls were good students. Jennifer was a serious student who loved school but had to work hard at it. Good grades came easily for Marjorie, who, although she was a gifted, straight-A student, didn't care for school. However, while Marjorie excelled at most subjects such as English and history, she had no aptitude for math.

After the Christmas holidays, Elisabeth, her mother Clara, and her daughters traveled by train from Duluth to Chicago. After an overnight in Chicago, the four then took the Golden State Limited from Chicago to the family's winter home in Tucson, where they stayed through Easter. In those glory days of train travel, tuxedoed waiters served four-course meals on bone china, with silver utensils, crystal glasses, and white linen tablecloths. Elisabeth and the girls occupied one room in a sleeper car with a private bath while Clara had a room to herself.

Elisabeth had built her Tucson adobe ranch-style home in the late 1920s, at a time when desert surrounded the property. Tucson's main street, Broadway, was a packed dirt road during the time Jennifer and Marjorie grew up. Elisabeth's only neighbors for years were the El Conquistador Hotel and Julia and Caroline Marshall, close friends from Duluth, who built a house on a small parcel of land Elisabeth sold them. Marjorie and Jennifer boarded horses at the hotel's stables and took frequent rides up into the foothills. They attended the private Arizona Sunshine School for the winter semester, and Elisabeth took watercolor painting lessons.

Winters in Tucson included Sunday afternoon picnics. Clara, Elisabeth, and the girls loaded the car's trunk with lunch prepared by cooks—fried chicken, mashed potatoes, vegetables, salad, and dessert—and then drove up into the foothills. "My grandmother would go off into the desert with her cane and poke around for wildflowers," Jennifer recalled. "Marjorie and I would hike and explore. Sometimes we'd go up to Sabino Canyon where there was a stream coming through and we'd go wading."

Tucson gave Elisabeth, her aging mother, and the girls a respite from Duluth's harsh winters. But having to repeatedly change schools was not always easy for Jennifer and Marjorie. Jennifer said, "The last year I transferred from Duluth to Tucson was when I was a freshman in high school, and that was very difficult. I was taking both Spanish and Latin and math, and the Tucson schools were so far ahead of the Duluth schools. Of course, when I transferred back it was great."

In April, after Easter, Clara, Elisabeth, Marjorie, and Jennifer took the train from Tucson to Westhome, Chester's other dream home, in Yakima. Westhome was a welcome destination for Jennifer. She loved the house's castle-like appearance with its lava stone walls and turret. Elisabeth and other family members also cherished Westhome for its scenic view overlooking the Congdon fruit orchards. Jennifer remembered the orchards as one of her favorite things. "We'd go out in the orchards and get up on the hood of this old Chrysler that was kept in the barn, and we'd pick cherries," she recalled. One time, however, the day before Jennifer, Marjorie, Elisabeth, and Clara were leaving for Duluth, Jennifer ate as many cherries as she could. "I ate so many cherries that I was terribly ill on the train ride back," Jennifer said. After visiting Westhome, they all returned to Duluth for the girls' spring semester.

Once the final school semester was completed, Elisabeth and her daughters spent summers in Duluth and at Swiftwater Farm, named for the rushing river and rapids near the house. Elisabeth had bought the old six-bedroom farmhouse in 1947, remodeled it, and built a guest house and caretaker cottage. The girls went swimming, canoeing, tubing, and exploring and ran around in swimsuits, shorts, and bare feet. Goats provided further entertainment, and Elisabeth's brother Edward had a summer home nearby, so the girls had more Congdon relatives to visit and play with.

Elisabeth relaxed at her summer house; she particularly enjoyed painting watercolors, canoeing, picnicking, and playing tennis on the courts at her brother Ned's house. For the girls, the casual lifestyle at the Brule was a welcome contrast to Glensheen's formality. "At Glensheen, we always had to dress for dinner. You had to have a dress and shoes on. You couldn't come barefoot to the table. The only place we didn't have to dress up was at the Brule," Jennifer said. She recalled that Fourth of July celebrations at the Brule included strawberry shortcake for dessert and sparklers and firecrackers before bedtime.

In addition to traveling between the family homes, Elisabeth took her children to Europe and Mexico. As her parents had for her, Elisabeth wanted her children to see the world and experience other cultures. Marjorie first visited Europe as a toddler with Clara and Elisabeth. Jennifer recalled a trip with her mother during high school when they visited twelve countries in three months. Elisabeth wanted Jennifer to get an overview of Europe so that Jennifer could decide which countries she wanted to explore further.

Life at Glensheen served to remind Marjorie and Jennifer that they weren't ordinary little girls. Like many children, the two girls took piano lessons. But unlike most, Jennifer and Marjorie practiced on a Steinway grand piano in Glensheen's living room. When Marjorie or Jennifer needed new clothes, they didn't shop with their mother in the department stores. Instead, the stores ferried boxes and boxes of clothes to Glensheen for the girls to try on. The girls wore classic, expensive clothing with timeless styling. As a child, Marjorie had a brown woolen winter coat trimmed with beaver pelts

that was later worn by other family members' children. In the wintertime, when it was too cold to play outside, Elisabeth allowed the girls to roller-skate and ride their bikes on the subway's marble floors.

Mansion life even affected how they got around town. Whenever the girls visited friends the chauffeur drove them. Jennifer particularly hated the fuss. She would lie on the back seat of the Cadillac so no one could see her. A half block away from a friend's house she made the driver let her out so she could walk to the door unescorted. The first time Marjorie was allowed to walk home from school, the chauffeur followed her in the family car.

At school, Jennifer had many friends and loved to take part in activities such as glee club. Marjorie spent a lot of time by herself, often reading. According to one childhood friend who attended Duluth Normal School (and, later, Dana Hall) at the same time as Marjorie, the older Congdon sister didn't have many friends. "Marjorie was quiet and serious..., a little, dark-eyed kid with glasses," while her sister Jennifer "was bouncy, cheerful, and outgoing," the friend recalled. "Marjorie was not a happy camper." When it came to boys, Jennifer dated regularly throughout school, while Marjorie didn't have her first real boyfriend until she was eighteen.

It didn't matter that only three years separated Marjorie and Jennifer, or that they shared a bedroom in Tucson each winter and spring, or that they had both been adopted. The sisters were not close, and they spent little spare time together as children, usually choosing to play apart and make separate friends.

Marjorie talked about being a veterinarian when she grew up, seeming to prefer the company of animals to that of most humans. She particularly loved horses; she thought they were beautiful creatures, and she loved the feeling of power she had when riding. Marjorie took riding lessons for a number of years during the winter in Tucson and in the summers at Duluth's Skyline Stables.

Marjorie demonstrated her rebellious streak at an early age. When she was about seven years old, she would take her mother's special diamond-and-sapphire ring and wear it outside to play in the sandbox. Another childhood friend recalled that Marjorie had a "thing" about that piece of jewelry. The maid would have to come and retrieve the ring and return it to Elisabeth's jewelry box. Marjorie's fixation on the ring would continue into adulthood. Her daughter Suzanne later recalled that when she was a young girl Elisabeth told Suzanne she would receive the ring someday. Marjorie immediately corrected her mother, saying that she would get the ring, not Suzanne.

Marjorie would sometimes sneak away from the estate without her mother's permission. Jennifer recalled a number of occasions when Marjorie dragged her along on a "misadventure." One afternoon the two girls left home without telling anyone and hopped the bus downtown to the movie theater. Chauffeur James Roper, however, saw the sisters get off the bus returning home. Although the movie was Marjorie's idea, Jennifer remembers they were punished equally. Elisabeth did not tolerate dishonesty.

Jennifer recalled that her sister began having money troubles as a young child. "She always had a spending problem. Even when she was little, she'd steal money from my mother's purse in her bedroom. I've seen her steal from mother's purse. We got a quarter a week, and fifteen cents of that had to go to Sunday School. She always had to have money," Jennifer recalled. For many years, Elisabeth was unaware that her daughter was stealing money from her. If Elisabeth's wallet had less cash than she remembered, it was money she must have forgotten she'd spent at the grocery or drugstore.

Elisabeth Oakerland, a childhood friend, recalled that Marjorie learned early on she could get away with overspending, even when caught.

As a teen, Oakerland clerked at Wahl's Department Store in Duluth, where Marjorie was a frequent customer. "Marjorie would come in and charge three or four cashmere sweaters and then Elisabeth Congdon would make a telephone call to the store telling them not to let Marjorie charge things," Oakerland remembers. Eventually, Marjorie's continued charging without consent led to a special arrangement with the store. Elisabeth would give Marjorie a signed note when she had permission to use Elisabeth's charge account. But Oakerland said the arrangement did nothing to reign in Marjorie's spending. Marjorie simply forged her mother's signature as needed.

One winter in Tucson, when Marjorie was a teenager, she entreated Elisabeth to buy her a thoroughbred stallion. Jennifer recalled that Marjorie, without their mother's knowledge or permission, signed papers and put money down on the stallion. Marjorie could not come up with the remaining money and, when the owners threatened to sue Elisabeth, she bailed her daughter out and bought the stallion.

Maybe because her scheme had worked so well, Marjorie tried it again with a palomino mare, "Fara." Elisabeth bought the second horse, but told Marjorie the palomino would be Jennifer's to ride as Marjorie already had the stallion. But Marjorie wasn't finished. She insisted she should have the stallion to ride in Duluth. Elisabeth was allergic to horses, but Marjorie's power of persuasion was strong. Marjorie arranged to have it transported by trailer to Duluth and Elisabeth got stuck with the bill. The Congdons kept the stallion in Glensheen's stables while Fara remained in Tucson for Jennifer, who rode the palomino for many years.

Marjorie's theatrical flair reminded one family friend of actress Tallulah Bankhead. "She can make herself do anything she wants," the friend said. One longtime Glensheen employee described Marjorie as "smart and scheming...Marjorie could talk her mother into almost anything."

In the fall of 1947, Elisabeth decided to send Marjorie to Dana Hall, the exclusive girls' boarding school she had attended outside Boston. Elisabeth hoped her daughter would outgrow her emotional problems at a school known for academic excellence and strict supervision.

In her first letter home on September 28, 1947, Marjorie wrote "Well I suppose you are pretty disgusted that I haven't written to you before but I've been so doggone

busy and all since classes have started that I don't know where the time goes." She was most excited about her first riding experience at the school's stables, because she was put into the second-class advanced riders. The instructor "said I didn't have much form (he is a stickler on form) but I...would someday be an excellent horse woman." After mentioning how well she was doing in her classes, Marjorie continued, "By the way sprained my ankle slightly. It's very slight and no there is nothing to worry about but I thought you might like to know." She signed off "Love, Me."

Marjorie was a loner, a school friend remembered, who spent as much time as possible around horses and rode every day at Dana Hall. Marjorie had one friend who was very tall, and together they made a real Mutt and Jeff combination. "They were two lonely girls and their horses," the friend said.

Marjorie earned good grades at Dana Hall and reportedly possessed one of the highest IQs in the school's history. But even in her first year she had money trouble and run-ins with the headmistress, as her letters home revealed:

January 27, 1948

Dear Mom,

I have enclosed the reports you asked for plus a note from Peg. She wrote it herself with no priming from me because things were in a mess here and she figured this would calm you down. Boy, you really fixed things with Mrs. Johnson. She was so mad at me she was about to have little kittens but I told her I had talked everything over with you and that it was all O.K. Finally I got her calmed down and she said she would disregard your letter and you won't have to write her anymore. For heaven's sake don't do that again. Everything was horribly messed for awhile and I got so wrought up about it all I just about flunked a Spanish test. I got a C- on it. After this discuss things with me first and leave the school out of it. It is none of Mrs. Johnson's business anyhow. Now she has poked her nose in everything....

I AM COMING BACK ON ONE CONDITION ONLY. We can talk about it later I've got to go to bed now, but I'll write just as soon as I get back from Peg's.

Love, Marj

The enclosed note from Marjorie's friend and classmate Peg read: "I don't think that Marjorie wastes money or that she gets too much." Marjorie also included a list of her recent expenditures in an attempt to persuade her mother she was conscientious and charitable:

September 2	\$20.00	Subscription to the <i>Western Horseman</i> , the <i>Quarter Horse</i> and having two pictures framed and buying one for me
October 9	\$3.16	to buy the book <i>Equestrianare</i> and rental due on rental books
October 15	\$21.50	to Congregational Church for aid to France and Belgium
November 8	\$21.50	to Congregational Church for aid to Germany
November 8	\$3.50	to the Horsemans book club for <i>Great Horse Stories</i> for me
December 24	\$80.00	for white french poodle, nightgown and Grandma presents

December 27	\$10.00	to me for cash for miscellaneous [sic] things
January 14	\$41.00	to Thurmans for photographs and frames
January 16	\$1.85	to The Craftloom for yarn to finish my green sweater
January 17	\$24.00	to Sue Page for pictures (antique) and frames. One was given away for a present (birthday) and three were kept

Marjorie returned to Dana Hall for her junior year. Her letter to her mother dated Valentine's Day, 1949, described her continued problems at school and her overspending. It also reflected Marjorie's sensitivity about her adoption:

Dear Mom,

It was swell to talk to you on the phone yesterday. You don't know how much I miss you and want to get home. As you know I have from the 23rd until the 6th, that is 15 days of freedom. I really will stay home more this time and only go riding once a day for half a day at a time instead of all day.

My bill for rides at Colonel Beasley's was my biggest expense this vacation. Jean is going to let me ride for considerably less. I was paying about \$20 a week at the Colonel's, but I certainly got my money's worth with the amount of riding I did. Ye gads, I hate to think what it would have been by the hour. Anyway that and paying for a few of the girls' rides when they went as my guests mounted the amount. They just cashed my check apparently and I got a letter from Mr. Berg [of the Congdon Office in Duluth] saying I had overdrawn my account. He put in my March allowance to cover it though and I assure you it won't happen again. I am now going to try and see how big a bank balance I can pile up.

I have a suggestion to make. What do you think about lowering my allowance considerably during the summer months? I really won't need as much money there as during the winter....

Mrs. J says that she's going to answer your letter. She says that she feels it her duty to help you bring me up as I don't have two parents. I just about slapped her face I was so furious. As if you couldn't bring me up as well or better than most girls.... If there is anything you want to discuss with me do it spring vacation, but leave that woman out of it. She says since I am an adopted child I should feel much more grateful to you and realize what a privilege I have been given. She won't even say "your mother." She says "your guardian" or "your aunt" when she says anything to me about you. Then she says I have an adoption complex. I have never hated anyone so damn much in all my life and if you will have any more correspondence with her about me I'll clear out of here and never come back to this place again. I mean it. She says I get too much money, when I know four girls that get \$125 a month. Anyway, it's none of her damn business....

So long and write me any questions you want answered before her.

Love, Marj

Jennifer recalled that her mother was extremely frustrated by Marjorie's irresponsibility with money—either Marjorie hadn't registered all the checks she'd written or she'd lost track of her bank balance. But the spending didn't stop with an overdraft notice. That summer Marjorie attended camp in Maine. In her postcards, Marjorie asked her mother to send more clothes and money.

Following Marjorie's junior year at Dana Hall, Elisabeth took her for evaluation at the Menninger Clinic, a well-known psychiatric treatment center in Topeka, Kansas. Marjorie's compulsive lying, her stealing, irresponsibility with money, and her acting out at home added up to a bigger problem than adolescence, Congdon family members remembered. Menninger doctors diagnosed Marjorie as a sociopath: a person who ignores social and moral norms.

After a short stay at the clinic, Marjorie went to a group home in St. Louis and completed her senior year at a special school, Jennifer said. Elisabeth hoped this change would help Marjorie, who did successfully graduate and made plans to attend St. Louis University. Soon after she met her first real boyfriend, Richard "Dick" LeRoy, a handsome man with dark hair and a long, thin face distinguished by deep-set, serious eyes. Nearly a foot taller than Marjorie and five years her senior, he would become her first husband.

Dick LeRoy was born in February 1927, the last of Harris and Beth LeRoy's eight children. Raised in Winchester, Massachusetts, as a child he learned the virtues of hard work and fiscal responsibility from his father, who was director of the Boston area chapter of the Boys Club of America. "His biggest job was fundraising," Dick recalled. "When he came in 1910, they had \$3,000 and a couple of rooms. When my father retired, the club had five buildings and an annual income of \$350,000."

His fiscal lessons continued after his father's stroke and death in 1938. When he was eleven, financial problems forced his family to move from their seventeen-room house to one less than half its size. But his mother always made sure there was food on the table and scraped together money for her children's needs. Years later, Dick still remembered the day she sold rickrack to the neighbors for bus fare, so his brother and sister could look for work.

After high school, Dick enlisted in the Navy, where he specialized in radio communications and combat gunnery. After two years of service, during which World War II ended, Dick returned home to enroll at the University of Massachusetts. He majored in political science, originally hoping to go on to law school after graduation. But money was tight, so he accepted his brother Robert's invitation to come live and job hunt in St. Louis.

Dick started working as an underwriter for General Insurance Company of America and spent his first six weeks in St. Louis living with Robert. From there he moved into a rooming house that didn't provide meals. Most evenings, he walked down the street to take his supper at Mom and Pop Lippert's boarding house, where Marjorie Congdon happened to live.

On an October night in 1950, Dick was introduced to a talkative young woman seated across the table. Her thick glasses did little to hide her dark, inquisitive eyes. Marjorie told him she was taking a nursing course at Washington University. For months he would learn little of her family background—or her family's wealth.

Soon after they met, Dick asked Marjorie out. That winter they dated steadily, often meeting at the rooming house or at a favorite local restaurant, Parentes, for pizza and Coke. Dick and Marjorie regularly attended Centenary Methodist Church, where they participated in the young adults' club. The couple played volleyball with other club members, attended church potluck suppers, and went to concerts and plays. When the weather was warm, they enjoyed the municipal opera, which performed outdoors, and took excursions on the river boat *Admiral*.

"She was exuberant, so full of fun," said Dick, recalling what had first attracted him. "She was very intelligent, from an upper-middle class family whose values were similar to my own."

Marjorie confided to Dick that she had been in some trouble during her early teens and been taken to the Menninger Clinic. She explained that her overprotective, eccentric mother had insisted on the visit—he shouldn't take it seriously.

She didn't need to make excuses for her visit to the clinic: Dick had fallen in love with the spunky woman who seemed to him a whirlwind of activity. One night in January or February 1951, while the couple was alone helping paint the church, Dick asked Marjorie to marry him. She said yes, but would have to wait a year for her diamond engagement ring, which Dick couldn't yet afford.

Elisabeth learned of the wedding plans in a phone call from Marjorie just as she and Jennifer were returning to the U.S. after a trip to Europe. She and Jennifer traveled straight to St. Louis to see the newly engaged couple, concerned that Marjorie, at age nineteen, was too young. Elisabeth talked to her about the importance of getting an education, of perhaps seeing more of the world before committing to marriage—Elisabeth hoped she and Marjorie could go to Europe together—but it did no good. Marjorie had made up her mind to get married. If opposites attract, spendthrift Marjorie couldn't have chosen a more suitable partner than Dick. Beyond his austere upbringing, his last name—from the French *le roi*, "the king"—made him a fitting companion for a young woman who liked to believe she descended from royalty.

Marjorie Mannering Congdon and Richard Webster LeRoy were married on June 30, 1951, in a large, formal Methodist ceremony held in Glensheen's living room before approximately 150 guests. Dick's mother, Beth, had flown in for the wedding, and to meet her new daughter-in-law.

The wedding announcement in Dick's hometown newspaper described the wedding as taking place "[b]efore a fireplace banked with caladium, ivy and maidenhair fern." Marjorie wore a long-sleeved, traditional white Italian silk satin dress trimmed in heirloom rosepoint lace with a Juliet cap. Marjorie's floor-length veil of silk illusion had belonged to her namesake, her aunt Marjorie Congdon Dudley, and she was given away by her uncle Harry Dudley, both of whom were among the few relatives with whom she enjoyed a close relationship. Jennifer was her maid of honor, and her bridesmaids were childhood friends: Betsy Congdon, Ann Paine, Helen Moore, and Caroline Lewis. Dick's best man was unable to make it to Duluth from St. Louis, so Marjorie's

cousin Chester d'Autremont took his place; other Congdon cousins and friends served as his groomsmen. The simple, elegant reception consisted of a beautiful wedding cake and buffet served in Glensheen's dining room. Marjorie tossed her bouquet from the main staircase landing.

The newlyweds honeymooned for two weeks at Swiftwater Farm before returning to St. Louis. Dick recalled years later how happy they were to simply be together for that brief time, enjoying the outdoors as they went swimming, took canoe rides, and picnicked. They never once discussed money.

CHAPTER 5



Dick LeRoy and Marjorie Congdon's wedding party at Glensheen, including (right to left) the groom's mother, Beth LeRoy, the bride's mother, Elisabeth Congdon, the groom, his bride, best man and Congdon cousin Chester d'Autremont, maid of honor and bride's sister, Jennifer Congdon, and Congdon family members and friends: John Garver, Helen Moore, Jim McLeran, Anne Paine, Russell Moore, Caroline Lewis, Jim Voss, and Betsy Congdon.



The LeRoy family enjoys an afternoon outing, including roasting marshmallows, at Wabun Park in Minneapolis in the early 1960s. From left to right, Dick, Peter, Heather (in front of Peter), Marjorie, Rebecca, Ricky, Stephen (behind Ricky), Suzanne, and Andrew.



Velma Pietila, the valiant nurse who struggled in vain to stop the intruder who killed her and Elisabeth Congdon and made off with Congdon's jewelry.



Elisabeth Congdon a few years before her death, wearing a brooch that was stolen the night of her murder and was later found in her daughter Marjorie's hotel room.



Miss Elisabeth (front row center) surrounded by her nursing staff, clockwise from left: Mildred Garvue, Velma Pietila, Marie Johnson, Mildred "Miss K" Kłowsowsky, Sylvia Maki, and Joyce Loberg. Loberg was supposed to have worked at Glensheen on June 27, 1977—the night of the murders—but Velma Pietila agreed to take her place so Loberg and her family could visit relatives in Iowa. Oddly, Loberg died exactly twenty-seven years after the murders, on June 27, 2004.

Right: During a LeRoy family visit to Glensheen in 1958, Marjorie secretly removed this small oil painting by Henri Harpignies (1819-1916) from the library and sold it to the Beard Art Gallery of Minneapolis. The Congdon Office and Dick LeRoy then traced the painting to Newhouse Galleries in New York City. The Congdon Office paid the gallery, and the painting returned to Glensheen; it once again hangs in the mansion's library.



May 23, 1977

To Whom This May Concerns:

RE: Richard Leroy

In reference to my letter dated June 26, 1976, all of the conditions outlined are still true and in many ways have been intensified. In addition, the following changes have developed since that time. The cystic fibrosis, which was latent a year ago, is now an active and real problem. His physical limitations are more pronounced and his vocational field has now narrowed to agriculture or some other form of out-door endeavor. He shows an interest in veterinary medicine, which I have encouraged, but have also had to remind him to confine his thinking to large animals, so as to minimize his time in the office. His college studies would require longer than average time due to his inability to carry a complete schedule of classes plus his frequent hospitalization. Summer school and private tutoring could be required or possibly extending his normal schooling by two or more years.

His parents desire to operate a boarding stable is an excellent idea which could provide Richard with precisely the type of atmosphere which I deem medically necessary for his continued health and well being.

Richard is presently on an experimental drug which is provided to us by the F.D.A. Due to the uniqueness of his condition and his reactions to various treatments and medications there is substantial motivation for using his case for publication in medical journals, with his parent's permission, of course.

The experience that I have had in letters and phone conversations with his trust officers or any members of his family, aside from his parents, have proven in the most part to be fruitless. It is my understanding that his step-father has provided him with his horses, motorcycle and automobile. Richard knows that his grandmother could, and would, provide financial assistance to him if she were legally able. Unfortunately Richard feels both unloved and unwanted by anyone other than his parents.

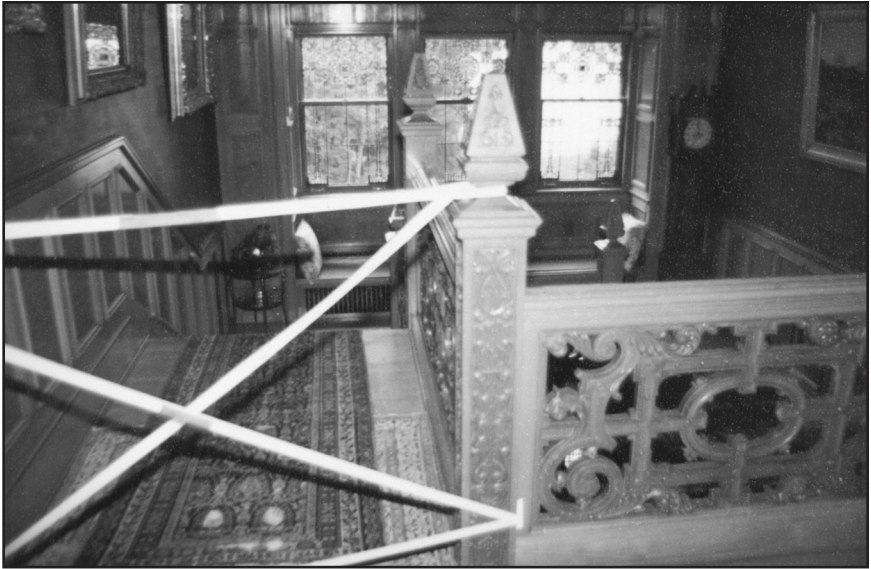
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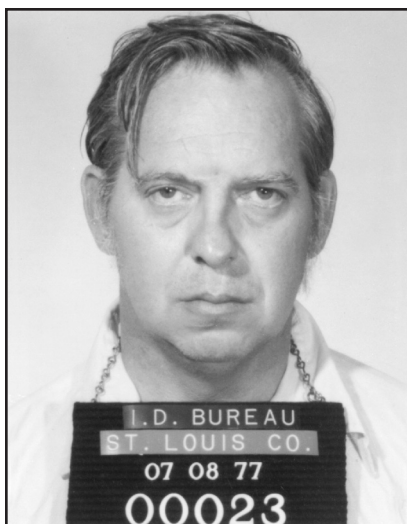
Left: The letter, supposedly from Rick LeRoy's doctor at the National Asthma Center, that Roger presented to the Congdon Trustees as evidence that he and Marjorie needed \$750,000 in order to build a ranch custommade for Rick's condition. The trustees turned Roger down. They learned the Caldwells had forged the letter on stationery stolen from the National Asthma Center. The Center had diagnosed Rick's asthma as moderate, not life threatening. Roger had typed while Marjorie dictated every word.



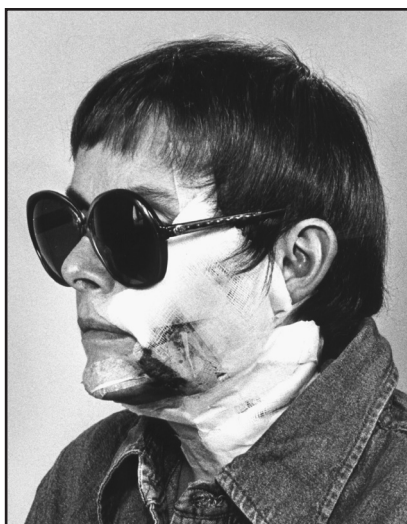
Crime scene: the top of Glensheen's main stairway, where Velma Pietila began her struggle with the intruder. This photo was taken from a spot directly in front of the table that held the brass candlestick the intruder used to kill Pietila. Her body was found arranged on the window seat, evidently moved there after she was killed.



Duluth Police Officer Barry Brooks attempting to place his arm through the window Roger Caldwell claimed he broke to gain access to Glensheen. Lead Detective Gary Waller and Prosecutor John DeSanto both now believe the window was broken to mislead investigators.



Roger Sipe Caldwell's mug shot, taken shortly after his arrest for the murders of Glensheen nurse Velma Pietila and his mother-in-law, heiress Elisabeth Congdon. When officers explained to Caldwell that he was being placed under arrest for the murder—while he was being hospitalized—he replied simply, "Oh."



Marjorie Caldwell, bandaged after an alleged attack. She claimed a man dressed as a police officer (and resembling detective Gary Waller) slashed her with a razor. Her examining physician said the wounds appeared self-inflicted. She insisted that a *Duluth News-Tribune* photographer take this photo.



Marjorie Caldwell at the Dakota County Courthouse in Hastings, Minnesota—accompanied by her youngest son, Ricky (left)—being escorted to her trial for conspiring to murder her mother.



Marjorie (Caldwell) Hagen at the time of her arrest in Ajo, Arizona. She was arrested outside her neighbor's house where she had left a kerosene-soaked rag burning in a pried-open window. She was convicted of insurance fraud and attempted arson and was thought to be responsible for a rash of fires that occurred in Ajo during the time she and her third husband, Wally Hagen, lived there. Before authorities came to take Marjorie to prison the day after her sentencing, they received a call from Wally's son Tom. Marjorie had called Tom in Minnesota to tell him Wally was dead. A joint suicide note, primarily written by Marjorie, claimed they had a suicide pact. Marjorie apparently couldn't go through with her end. Murder charges were dropped due to lack of evidence.

An apparently pleased Roger Caldwell leaving the St. Louis County Jail (followed by reporter Mike Simonson) after the Minnesota Supreme Court's decision on August 6, 1982, to grant Roger a new trial based on evidence raised at his wife's trial.

On July 5, 1983, he avoided trial and further prison time by providing the authorities a confession. Officials had hoped his confession would implicate Marjorie Caldwell. Unfortunately, the confession shed no new light on the case.

Caldwell returned to Latrobe, Pennsylvania, his hometown. He had trouble finding steady work and began drinking again. After making several failed attempts to sell his "real" story to Elisabeth Congdon's other surviving daughter, Jennifer Johnson, he committed suicide on May 18, 1988.

