

Chapter 1

November 23, 1963

12:54 a.m., Bethesda Naval Hospital

Washington, DC

John Liggett needed a stiff drink. He reached into his back pocket and removed a small silver flask. He took a quick jolt of bourbon without trying to hide it from the mysterious men surrounding him and watching his every move. They were spooks, military brass, and Secret Service types, and they seemed dissatisfied with his work even though he had been at it, off and on, for more than seven hours now. He was tired, anxious and scared.

Normal jobs never made him this stressed, for Liggett was confident, almost smugly so, in his abilities as a reconstruction artist. Reconstruction artist was just a fancy name for a skilled mortician, and Liggett was as skillful as anyone in his field. His fellow morticians at Restland Funeral Home in Dallas all agreed that John was the best they had ever seen. He rebuilt eye sockets blasted away by gun shots. He rebuilt ears and noses demolished in car accidents. He once reconstructed a wife's skull which had been shattered by her baseball bat-wielding husband. He even re-attached a head which had been severed by a locomotive. The grieving families were always grateful and always raved about John's talents. He never failed to please his clientele.

But this was no normal job. Lying on the slab not two feet away was the slain body of the 35th President of the United States, John F. Kennedy. And Liggett was now on his third reconstruction attempt. The cabal of traitors assembled in this cramped, smoky room did not want to make JFK whole again for a presentable casket viewing. They wanted to distort and disguise the dead president's real wounds in order to hide the true source of the shots that had killed him. Liggett knew the conspirators were trying to frame a lone nut killer. The problem was they kept changing their minds about how the lone nut did it. Liggett was on his third version of the head wound. The genuine wounds—a gunshot entry in the right temple area, an entry wound in the throat, and a fist-sized exit wound in the right rear of the head—had been obliterated earlier in the evening at Walter Reed Army Hospital, but the government-approved wounds were still a work-in-progress. Evidence of frontal entry meant more than one shooter and that meant a conspiracy. And the conspirators were determined that there be no talk of conspiracy that would lead back to them.

Regardless of the deceptive nature of his work, Liggett had no delusions about the true nature of the crime. The CIA and the Joint Chiefs, and God knows who else, had been behind it and his job was to cover it up. The bastards had gone all the way this time, he thought. Though Liggett was apolitical and had never expressed strong feelings about Kennedy, one way or the other, even he was stunned at the brazenness of such an act. And this rattled his composure. This was history, and Liggett was busy erasing any trace of it.

At the urging of his sponsor—Air Force Chief of Staff Curtis LeMay—Liggett got back to work on JFK's head. LeMay bit hard on his cigar and barked out an instruction, "You have to fix the back of the head here so that it looks like there is no exit wound."

Liggett knew he had to make it look good for the autopsy photographers who had already taken hundreds of photos of his incomplete work. But he also knew that no forgery of this nature would be perfect. The brain had already been carved up to remove the bullet fragments which did not match the patsy's gun. The macerated mess which was left could hardly have been made by a bullet wound. The incompetent and/or corrupt autopsy doctors had even commented on it. Commander James J. Humes—who had no experience performing autopsies of gunshot victims—blurted out that someone had performed surgery on JFK's head, namely in the top of the skull. Since no such surgery had been performed by the Dallas Parkland doctors, Humes' slip of the tongue became an inadvertent admission that the president's body had been highjacked and tinkered with by parties unknown. Liggett, sitting in the bleachers of the Bethesda autopsy room at the time, stiffened when he heard Humes' words. He was afraid the whole shell game would unravel. But General LeMay immediately came to the rescue. He told Humes to get back to work and stop making editorial comments about things he knew nothing of.

And there were plenty of other obvious indications of post-mortem wound alteration. The phony puncture wound made on the president's back was too low and not a through-and-through wound; thus, when the Warren Commission later found it necessary to make this bullet track magically through the president's throat and into Governor Connally, the whole world cried foul. Humes probed the back wound at Bethesda and found that it extended only as far as the tip of his little finger. He did not realize the significance of this finding until the Warren Commission pulled off its own reconstruction ruse.

The most egregious evidence of forgery was the x-rays which showed that parts of the skull had been stapled back together. The large hole that Liggett made in the president's head had to be put back together to make it look like JFK had been shot from above and behind. And the only way to piece it back together was to hold the fragments in place with glue and spit.

In other words, any subsequent investigator who looked closely could find plenty of evidence that Liggett had perpetrated a medical forgery and that much of his work was done before the autopsy, and not afterwards as it should have been. However, Liggett also knew that it was highly unlikely that an honest investigation would ever be conducted. Men as powerful as these plotters probably already had the game rigged.

Besides, any government agency clamoring for a genuine investigation would run into the jimmied-up autopsy photos which could deceive the uninformed layman into believing that the president had been shot from behind by the patsy. Liggett's work, if well done, would forever create a false record of how the assassination happened and give the plotters the cover they needed. No one would ever dream that the president's corpse had been highjacked in order to alter the wounds and change the direction of the shots. Like many other jobs Liggett had done for the CIA, this one was meant to permanently hide the identity of the killers. Still, this was no ordinary victim; this was the President of the United States. He had been removed from office in a coup d'état, and his Brutuses were depending on Liggett to bail them out.

If he could, Liggett would have refused this assignment, but he knew there was no turning back now. He knew what kind of people his handlers were, and one did not tell these guys no.

Suddenly his work as a covert CIA/Mafia operative did not seem so adventuresome and glamorous. For he knew that there would be repercussions from this job, unlike any other he had performed.

Seven hours prior, the mood in Autopsy Room 1 of Walter Reed Army Hospital was fraught with tension, anxiety, and something akin to panic, as if everything depended on Liggett not only doing his best work, but doing his best work in a big hurry. Liggett got the distinct impression that time was of the essence. He needed to alter the wounds quickly and then accompany the body by helicopter to Bethesda where it was to be reunited with the casket from Dallas. It was a shell game cloaked in the guise of national security, and Liggett was essential to the operation. But it was hard to perform under such intense pressure.

The whole operation seemed rushed and disjointed. Liggett had been expecting the call, but when it came he was not prepared for the hectic, on-the-fly nature of it. Just 12 hours prior he had been officiating the funeral of his wife's aunt in Dallas. It was an ordinary affair, something that was routine to his position at Restland, except for the fact that his wife was in attendance. He was called away from his duties suddenly at 12:45 p.m. It was his CIA handler on the phone. He recognized the voice on the other end; it belonged to Maurice Bishop, a pseudonym for the man he later came to know as David Atlee Phillips. In his flat, deep voice Bishop uttered just one sentence, "Get to Parkland Hospital now."

Liggett left his wife at the gravesite, telling her Kennedy had been shot. He signaled his co-worker who helped him load a casket into a hearse, and within minutes they were on their way to Parkland Hospital. Inside the casket was a corpse wrapped in Parkland Hospital sheets. The corpse was the body of a homeless man who had recently died. No relatives had come to claim the body, and there was no service conducted post-mortem. Liggett and his handlers had a far more sinister fate planned for the luckless stiff, who was unceremoniously and surreptitiously disposed of at Bethesda Hospital, after doubling for the corpse of the President of the United States.

Now near exhaustion and down to his last nerve, Liggett's mind began to wander. He thought of his youthful, heady days in the Civil Air Patrol, where he was first recruited into the CIA by David Ferrie. As he took another swig from the flask, he wondered if he would have refused the offer had he to do it all over again. In retrospect, it seemed like a confluence of circumstances beyond his control that brought him face-to-face with Ferrie, that freak, that pedophile, who fancied himself a hypnotist and amateur scientist. Maybe it was no accident, Liggett thought. Nothing was accidental; it had all been arranged by the CIA. The sons-of-bitches could even murder presidents and get away with it.

Finally, around 3 a.m., Liggett's work was done; JFK's wounds had been changed to make it appear as if he had been shot from behind, and evidence of shots from the front had vanished. Though the forgery was not perfect, Liggett knew it was never going to be better than this. The autopsy photographers went to work taking their final set of photos, and all negatives and prints shot in the earlier stages of the alteration process were destroyed by the Secret Service. A false record of the body, the x-rays and the photos of the dead president had been created, shrouding the crime in mystery and confusion for future generations. Liggett was free to go, but, like all participants at Walter Reed and Bethesda—whether they were aware of the part they

were playing in the deception or not—he was threatened with dire consequences should he ever speak a word of what he had seen or done.

A few hours later, worn and haggard from the all-night clandestine assignment, Liggett was back in Dallas. But his Kennedy-related work for the agency had just begun.

Chapter 2

July 15, 1965, 10:50 p.m.

On a sweltering Midwestern night, Conrad Reese crept out of his basement door. He was careful not to make noise for fear he would wake his parents and siblings sleeping upstairs. He walked purposefully and eagerly towards the Weirshellens', the neighbors who lived at the bottom of the hill. He knew Nancy Weirshellen was home alone because her husband's car was not in the driveway. Ed Weirshellen was a salesman who traveled frequently.

Twelve-year-old Conrad, called Con by all who knew him, was an inveterate Peeping Tom, despite his strict Catholic upbringing, and on many summer nights he peeked in the Weirshellens' back window to catch a glimpse of Nancy undressing. He knew her routine when Ed was away. Johnny Carson at 10:30 p.m.; then preparation for bed at 11 p.m. Sometimes Nancy disappointed Con by changing in the bathroom; other times Con got lucky as Nancy unhooked her bra right in front of his lusting eyes. Nancy was amply endowed, and Con's pubescent fires were stoked by the sight of her bare breasts. He always felt guilty afterwards, but he could not resist peeping again and again.

This night would be different though, in horrible ways that Con could never have imagined.

Earlier in the day Nancy had ignited Con's fantasies by sunbathing in her backyard. It had been another unbearably hot day, and Nancy wore nothing but a cotton tank top and brief nylon bottoms. She often dressed provocatively, too provocatively for the standards of conservative Mattese, a small, semi-rural, semi-suburban area of St. Louis County that the Weirshellens and Reeses called home.

Mattese officially no longer exists, but in the 1950s and 1960s it was a quiet, scenic village whose back roads linked the "Mother Road," Route 66, heading south and west out of St. Louis, and Highway 21, a two-lane road into the lovely backwardness of rural Missouri. By the mid-1960s Mattese was making the painful and crass transition from farming community to subdivided bedroom sprawl. The Weirshellens, though, were no longer farmers, and the Reeses were not subdivision residents. Ed, unable to farm his back two acres, had sold them off to Conrad Reese, Sr. in 1960. Conrad Sr. and his wife Jeannie built a four-bedroom ranch they could barely afford on Ambs Road atop the hill behind the Weirshellens'. The Reeses brought their four kids to the house on the hill, and had two more before moving away in 1966 because of the notoriety and trauma that this night in July 1965 brought with it.

Nancy had become a sort of social pariah by the mid-1960s. Other women would not befriend her because they resented the attention she drew from their husbands. She developed a reputation as a loose woman. The village gossiped about her, and the rumors got back to Ed. None of the rumors were true, but Ed was suspicious nonetheless. He was given to occasional jealous rages, and sometimes their bickering could be heard even in the distance. They would always make up, however, for Ed loved his wife with a singular passion. Even if she were having an affair, Ed would have never harmed her or abandoned her, for he knew he could not live without her. This is what the police and prosecutors never understood. Ed had no motive for harming his wife. Con knew this, and it haunted him for the rest of his life because he could not save Ed. As it turned out, no one could forget those loud arguments between the Weirshellens, and that was Ed's downfall.

As Con approached the Weirshellens' on that night in July of 1965 he felt the excitement in his chest and loins. His heart pounded and his young penis stiffened. The heat made the sweat drip from his brow as he ducked beneath Nancy's window and slowly lifted his head. For a moment Con thought he was hallucinating. He saw a strange man swiftly raise a bloody hammer and bring it down hard on the head of a woman who was prone on Nancy's bed. The woman resembled Nancy from the back, but her long black hair was matted and gnarled. A dark liquid seeped onto the white sheets, and it was a moment before Con recognized it as blood. He was terrified yet transfixed by the scene. It did not register with him that he was witnessing a real murder. Not a bloodless murder like the hundreds he had seen on TV westerns. Not even like Ruby's real murder of Oswald, which was televised in black-and-white and, thus, seemed staged like all the other TV murders he had witnessed. This was the real thing.

As Nancy lay completely still, the strange man wiped the handle of the hammer and threw it on the floor. He then ransacked the room, apparently looking for something other than jewelry or money which he ignored. Con wanted to run, but he could not look away. He was paralyzed by the morbidity and horror in front of him. He watched as the stranger apparently found the object of his frantic search. It was a brown 8 x 11 envelope hidden away on a closet shelf. Nancy's murderer quickly removed the envelope's contents—some photos and a handwritten note. The look on the killer's face told Con that the photos were the reason for the crime. The murderer swiftly tucked the photos into the pockets of his leisure suit and crammed the note into his pants pocket. Con wondered how the man could wear a leisure suit on a night like this. He took a good look at the killer and realized he was not even sweating. Despite being terrified, Con could not help but scrutinize the man's physical features. He was tall, slightly over six feet, with a slim build. He had stringy brown hair which flopped over a wide forehead. His blue eyes were piercing, and set apart by a nose with a long, broad bridge at the top and flared nostrils at the bottom.

The murderer walked purposefully towards the front door, and Con knew he had to move quickly to avoid detection. As he turned and started running up the hill towards home, he heard the Weirshellens' front door close. Then he heard the clang of a tin waste-can lid open and close. The murderer had dumped something into the Reeses' garbage before he ran east on Amb's Road towards the parish schoolyard. Con caught a glimpse of the man's silhouette in the moonlight. Nifty move, thought Con, even in his terrorized state. The murderer parked his car in Our Lady of Assumption's crowded lot. It would go unnoticed because a late ballgame was still

being played on the lighted diamond on the other side of the parish grounds, and the attendees were not paying attention to the comings and goings of the cars in the lot.

Con made a mental note to return to the garbage pail at the end of his driveway before the trash man came the next morning, just to see what the murderer had left in it. Meanwhile he tried sprinting, but he could not keep his footing. His legs were almost numb. He trembled with fright. In his short life he had never witnessed anything so gruesome. He stumbled and fell several times, but finally managed to climb the hill to his basement door. He looked back down at the Weirshellens' house and Ambs Road, hoping it was all somehow not real. He heard only the summer crickets, and saw nothing unusual in the moonlit panorama; still, he knew what he had seen was not his imagination gone wild. Nancy Weirshellen's killer had already vanished, and he left behind a lifetime of harrowing nightmares and hellish visions for Con.

Con climbed into bed that night and tried to sleep, but not a wink came. His thoughts careened wildly as he tossed from side to side. Maybe the cops would catch the killer, and there would be no need for Con to come forward. This turned out to be a vain wish, for by morning Ed Weirshellen was under arrest for the murder of his wife.

Ed, as he often did, drove straight from some distant sales call in order to get home as quickly as possible to Nancy. Not that Ed did not trust her being alone in the house all night, rather he preferred arriving home in the early morning hours to spending another night on the road without her. What he found when he entered his house at 2 a.m. sent him into shock. Through his tears he managed to call for help. As he waited for the police and ambulance to arrive, he found the murder weapon. He instinctively picked up the hammer and examined it. Stuck to the head of it were strands of his wife's hair mingled with dried blood.

Mattese was too small to have its own police force, so the case fell under the jurisdiction of the St. Louis County police. In those days the St. Louis County police were primarily known for two things: incompetence and corruption. Patrol officers demanded sexual favors from female drivers in exchange for overlooking traffic violations or other misdemeanors. Many officers were accused of accepting bribes. Blacks and other minorities were routinely harassed or beaten for daring to pass through the all-white areas of the county. But the county cops were not only crooked and racist, they were also stupid. Felony investigations were frequently botched. And from the moment they entered Ed Weirshellen's residence in the early hours of July 16, 1965, they made critical errors.

The detectives let the crime scene get trampled by cops and emergency personnel. The ground in low-lying areas was still damp, and the killer had left a muddy footprint in the main hallway. However, the shoeprints made by hordes of people going in and out of the house obliterated the killer's print.

The one thing that was preserved—the murder weapon—pointed to the wrong man. The cops, of course, found Ed's fingerprints, and no one else's, on the hammer. And once the bumbling detectives set their crosshairs on Ed, they ignored all other leads and suspects. Ed was their man. He had motive, means and opportunity. He flew into a jealous rage and bludgeoned his wife to death, the cops surmised. Perhaps Ed came home unexpectedly and found Nancy in bed with another man. Perhaps they were having one of their loud, intense arguments, and things just got out of hand. Whatever the reason, Ed killed his wife, and, according to the St. Louis County police, the fingerprints on the murder weapon cinched the case. Other trace

evidence which would have pointed away from Ed was found at the scene, but it was overlooked because these were the days before the certainty and precision of DNA and fiber analysis.

Agitated and terrified, Con lay awake in his bed all night. At dawn he peered out the basement window and saw a phalanx of cop cars in the Weirshellens' driveway. Uniformed officers and plain-clothed detectives swarmed over the residence, some looking for evidence inside the house, some scouring the dewy ground outside. Ed was nowhere to be found. The cops had already cuffed him and driven him to county police headquarters for questioning.

Con remembered the killer dropping something in the garbage can at the bottom of the Reeses' long driveway, and he wondered if the cops had thought to search his family's trash. He walked slowly towards the tin can, still full and sitting at the edge of Ambs Road. The cops had roped off the crime area and were busy tending to their duties, so they took no notice of the 12-year-old kid. A small crowd of Mattese residents were already gathering to see what the commotion was. The onlookers took no notice of Con as he lifted the lid of the trash can, and there sitting on top of the bagged refuse was an opened envelope. It was 8 x 11 in size and plain brown in color. It looked just like the envelope the killer had opened the night before. This had to be what the killer left, Con thought; nothing else seemed out of place. He quickly grabbed it and replaced the lid. He walked back up the hill to his house and entered his basement bedroom. He turned on the light and peered in the envelope. It was empty. He read the address labels on the outside. The addressee was "Nancy Weirshellen, 4748 Ambs Road, Mattese, 28, Missouri." The return address was "Colonel Owen Krugher, Walter Reed Army Hospital, 6900 Georgia Ave. NW, Washington, DC." The envelope had an official letterhead which read, "McLane and Bryant, Attorneys at Law." It was postmarked "8 July 1965," so Con deduced that it had probably arrived just a day or so prior to Nancy's murder. If that were the case the murderer must have known when the package would be arriving, thought Con, and the murderer must have known the sender, Colonel Owen Krugher. Con, of course, had no idea who Colonel Owen Krugher was and why he (or his lawyer) had sent something to Nancy Weirshellen. Whatever he had sent her—the photographs and the piece of paper Con had seen removed—was apparently coveted by the killer and may have been the motive for the killing.

Con put the envelope under his mattress where only he could find it. He correctly presumed that he might need it someday. Meanwhile he lay in bed for hours trying to get some sleep. He could hear the rest of the house beginning to stir. Con Sr. was up and eating the breakfast prepared by Jeannie. Soon Con Sr. would leave for work and discover the tragedy that had occurred in his neighbor's house. Con Jr. knew his parents would have to explain what happened to all their kids. They had been through something similar two years prior when Kennedy had been assassinated. Back then, though confusing and sorrowful, the event had been easily explained away as the work of a solitary kook. The Reese kids were not personally affected by the President's murder, and soon life went on as before. The Weirshellen murder was different; it happened virtually in the Reeses' backyard, and the kids were going to have to deal with the questions and curiosities of the rest of the village. Con Sr. and Jeannie owed it to their kids to make the brutality and fiendishness as tolerable and undisturbing as they could. Con Jr. knew that this talk was coming, and he was not looking forward to it, for he knew that if he were going to tell the truth he should do it then.

Con faced a terrible dilemma: reveal what he knew to his parents and risk their severe admonishment for peeping into a neighbor's bedroom, or keep his mouth shut and possibly let a murderer get away with his crime. Shame got the best of Con, and he decided to say nothing in the days immediately following the murder. However, when he read in the July 20th Globe-Democrat that Ed had been officially charged with his wife's murder, guilt overcame Con. Knowing that Ed was unjustly sitting in jail awaiting trial for a murder he did not commit, Con suffered pangs of conscience so deep that he was forced to reveal his terrible secret. That evening he told his parents what he had witnessed.

At first Con Sr. and Jeannie did not believe their son. They knew he was occasionally given to wild imaginings. Creative and smart, Con excelled in English class where the nuns gave him high marks for his storytelling. And when he was not playing baseball or swimming, Con wrote short stories on indolent summer days. Con Sr. and Jeannie encouraged this and were proud of his writing skills, but this latest fantasy crossed the line.

As the blood drained from his face, Con Sr. posed a half-statement, half-question to his son, "You didn't really see Mrs. Weirshellen get murdered, didja?"

"I did," replied Con. When the tears formed at the corners of their son's eyes, Con Sr. and Jeannie knew their son meant what he said.

"What were you doing looking in her window?" asked Con Sr.

Con could not form the answer; he merely looked down in disgrace. His parents looked knowingly at one another, and wondered where they had gone wrong.

With something akin to resignation and anger, Con Sr. asked, "Why are you telling us this now?"

"Because I know Mr. Weirshellen is innocent. I saw the real killer; he wasn't Mr. Weirshellen. He didn't look anything like him."

Con's parents were stunned. They immediately realized the dire ramifications of what their son had just said. If Ed were the killer of his wife, then the police had the right man in jail, and there would be no need for Con to come forward with his eyewitness account. But Con's identification of another murderer meant he would have to make public what he knew in order to save Ed. It would be a humiliating and unnerving ordeal for a kid to endure.

"How can you be sure that was not Mr. Weirshellen?"

"I know what Mr. Weirshellen looks like. He's got a crew cut, and he's short and stubby. His face is round. The killer was taller, had longer hair, a square head and a pointy face. And he had blue eyes that creeped me out."

Con's parents looked at one another; then suddenly turned their backs to Con as they huddled together. Con could make out just bits and pieces of their urgent whispering.

"I'm not putting him through that..."

"...but what if he..."

"...the police have the..."

"...the county cops?"

Con Sr. turned and saw his son's curious gaze. "Go down to your room; we'll be down to see you later. Meanwhile don't tell anybody about this."

For days afterwards Con's parents wrangled with one another over their son's assertion. Con Sr. was of the opinion that Con was simply mistaken about the identity of Nancy Weirshellen's

killer. But even if he were not, Con Sr. was not going to subject his son to the kind of media scrutiny, police browbeating, and lawyers' double-talk that were sure to haunt him if he exposed what he saw, or thought he saw. Jeannie, on the other hand, was certain her son was telling the truth. After all, why would he lie? She knew it had taken considerable courage for Con to finally admit the truth, and he had done so at the risk of very personal negative consequences for himself. Con Jr. wanted to save an innocent man, and his mother felt he was morally compelled to do so.

Jeannie Reese liked the Weirshellens. She had found Nancy sincere and pleasant, even if a bit provocative in dress and speech, and she knew that Ed was a simple, decent man, completely devoid of guile, and seemingly incapable of harming a wife he adored. Nancy's murder had been tragic enough for Ed; it would be unconscionable to compound Ed's misery by letting him rot in prison.

Gradually, though, Con Sr. wore down his wife's righteousness and assuaged her guilt. He never really convinced her that their son had made up the story about a phantom killer, but, slowly, she came to realize that her son's emotional and physical well-being would be jeopardized if he were allowed to tell his story. Besides, Con's parents knew what reaction the St. Louis County police and prosecutors would have when told, by a 12-year-old kid no less, that they had the wrong man in jail. They would do everything in their power to refute the kid's story, even if it meant threatening or publicly excoriating him.

Con often felt intimidated by his father, but never more so than after he admitted seeing Nancy Weirshellens's murder. Con Sr. made it absolutely clear to his son that he was never to reveal to anyone else his secret knowledge. Too much danger was involved; people might try to hurt him. Con wanted to object, but knew it was fruitless. When his father set his mind to something, no one could change it. Con knew, at least for the time being, that he had to keep quiet and find a way to live with his terrible secret.

Con found no peace as the months passed. He had recurring nightmares in which Nancy's murder was re-enacted in bizarre and harrowing ways. He would awake in a cold sweat and lay in bed until sleep returned. When he awoke in the mornings he found momentary relief. The whole thing seemed unreal, like a bad, bloody phantasm that came to him in the night. The new morning washed it away. But when he turned on the TV or read the newspaper, the unreal became real again. Nancy's murder was big news, and the story was impossible to avoid.

The finality of Nancy's death hit Con when he read her obituary. He felt a deep sense of remorse all over again. Nancy was survived only by her husband, Ed. Her parents had preceded her in death and so had her only sibling, a brother—Owen Krugher. Con recognized the name from somewhere, but it took him a moment to place it. He hurried to his room and reached under his mattress for the envelope the killer had discarded. The return address read, "Owen Krugher, M.D., Walter Reed Army Hospital." Whatever her brother Owen had mailed Nancy had gotten her killed, he thought. But what, he asked himself. What was so important about those photos Con saw the killer remove from the envelope? As quickly as the thought occurred, it vanished, for Con did not want to dwell on these matters. They only caused more grief.

Con escalated his activities to try to escape his mental anguish. Each day that summer he occupied himself outdoors. He refused to stay in his room for fear that he would start dwelling on the Weirshellens murder again. To his parents it appeared that Con had returned to being a

normal 12-year-old that summer, even if he seemed to be playing more pick-up baseball than ever before. On the inside, though, Con could never shake the feeling of guilt and shame.

He had no way of knowing the lifetime of horrors that lay ahead. For he would not learn until years later that Nancy's killer was John Liggett.