Copyright

by

Elena Anita Watts

2012

The Report Committee for Elena Anita Watts
Certifies that this is the approved version of the following report:

Death in Texas
Two privileged sons and a killing that still haunts a small town

APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:

Supervisor: ______________________________
Glenn Frankel

____
Cecilia Balli

Death in Texas
Two privileged sons and a killing that still haunts a small town

by

Elena Anita Watts, BA

Report

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

December 2012

Abstract

Death in Texas
Two privileged sons and a killing that still haunts a small town

Elena Anita Watts, MA

The University of Texas at Austin, 2012

Supervisor: Glenn Frankel

Intrigue and tragedy are inherent in murder. Justice is not. What role does wealth play? At the very least, money buys access to limitless expert witnesses and the best and brightest attorneys. Today, all killings are felonies except those deemed justifiable. But that was not the case in Victoria, Texas, in 1976 when young, handsome and wealthy rancher Hampton C. Robinson III shot young, handsome and wealthy rancher Thomas Traylor Bauer in the back of the head. Criminally negligent homicide was a misdemeanor. And unlike the law today, the judge was allowed to reduce the full range of charges and provide jurors only two: murder or criminally negligent homicide. Convicted of a misdemeanor, Hampton Robinson served less than a year in jail. His crime began a downward spiral that took other lives and led to his self-destruction.

Table of Contents

MURDER IN SMALL-TOWN TEXAS	**1**
VICTORIA, TEXAS	**2**
OLD TEXAS FAMILY	**4**
HAMPTON C. ROBINSON III	**6**
THOMAS TRAYLOR BAUER	**19**
THE INFAMOUS EVENING	**26**
THE INVESTIGATION & TRIAL	**30**
JAIL	**37**
ANOTHER MURDER	**42**
END OF MARRIAGE & LIFE	**46**
BIBLIOGRAPHY	**49**

MURDER IN SMALL-TOWN TEXAS

Mother Nature cast clouds over a clear night sky on Oct. 9, 1976.

Some say Tommy Bauer showed up at the Captain's Table in Victoria, Texas, that evening because he caught wind that his on-again, off-again girlfriend, Linda Hauschild Loyd, was there with Hamp Robinson. In any event, it wasn't unusual for Tommy to stop for a Saturday night drink and swirl around the dance floor at the most popular watering hole in town.

Most residents of the small South Texas town assumed that Thomas Traylor Bauer and Hampton Carroll Robinson III — both good-looking, young ranchers and distant cousins from old wealthy families — fought over a woman that night. That's not exactly true, said Jim Meyer, a good friend of Tommy's. They fought over two women.

Linda was the immediate cause. But in the background was a legal secretary named Jo Ann Stafford who was a friend of Tommy's before she became Hamp's girlfriend.

Between 11 and midnight, when Tommy pulled away from the lounge with Linda tucked in the passenger seat of his new Porsche, the temperature in Victoria dropped nearly 10 degrees and the moist air turned swampy. When Hamp followed in his black-over-yellow Ford LTD, a confrontation crept in with the clouds that extinguished more than ordinary night stars.

Tommy Bauer lay face-up, spread-eagle and gasping for air with blood seeping from a hollow-point bullet wound in the back of his head. One man died while the other hurried down a path toward self-destruction.

VICTORIA, TEXAS

Victoria was rebellious even before it was a town. In 1840, hundreds of Comanches on a revenge raid invaded the settlement, slaughtered a dozen farmers and slaves, and torched the buildings before heading to the Gulf of Mexico. Later there were cattle ranches and later still there was oil. But Victoria always maintained a wild streak, though it has been tempered in recent years by an arts and education scene unusually vibrant for a town its size.

More than 16,000 residents lived in Victoria in the 1950s, a decade that boomed with military, petrochemicals and banking. That number grew to 40,000 by 1970 and leveled off at 60,000 where it remains today.

During the Golden Era, the Jet Drive-In, Barry's Drive-In, and the El Rancho and Uptown Theaters served as innocent hangouts for Victoria's youth while the Corral and Totah's Motel served spirits to teens with wilder hairs. It was a time when the police called kids who were drinking underage or driving drunk by name and told them to be careful going home.

Victoria ranchers began enjoying the spoils that spewed from beneath the thousands of acres where their cattle grazed. In the 1950s, a high school graduation celebration featured a city-size outdoor carnival. Inside Club Westerner, the legendary Fats Domino roared "Ain't That a Shame," and Hank Williams topped the bill at another fete. National sensation Santo and Johnny, with 1959 number one billboard hit "Sleepwalk," performed at a local wedding reception. Windfall wealth mixed with the residents' unique DNA set the small town ablaze with gambling, drinking, dancing and philandering.

Rumor had it that two rapacious Victoria men shot more than one bald eagle, the U.S. national bird, from a helicopter. A desperate woman was said to have relieved herself tableside at the Cactus Club, the town's casino, rather than break her winning streak. The club closed when the Texas Rangers came to town and opened back up when they left. Clyde Bauer, Tommy's father, and John Welder, Hamp's distant cousin, were rumored to have shut the club down for an entire weekend when they wanted it to themselves.

They were privileged ranchers and farmers who had privileged children. And the havoc those children wreaked one foggy night in October 1976 haunted both families and the town they helped to build.

OLD TEXAS FAMILY

Hamp's mother, Patricia Welder Robinson, and Tommy's mother, Maddeline Traylor Bauer, belonged to two of Victoria's oldest ranching empires. They shared an ancestor who owned miles of ranchland southeast of town before it was subdivided by inheritance. The Traylor and Welder families settled in the Victoria area 30 and 40 years, respectively, before my family arrived.

In 1885, George Tyng, my great-great grandfather on my mother's side, planted his wife, Elena Anita Carrillo Thompson Tyng, in Victoria before he continued north from Mexico where he had organized and managed the Tehuantepec Inter-Ocean Railroad. For two decades, George managed the White Deer Lands Trust in North Texas before Utah silver mines lured him away. He was called the "Father of the Texas Panhandle." When their son George, my great-grandfather, returned from college to practice dentistry where his mother lived, the family became firmly rooted in the sleepy South Texas town. His son Frederick, my grandfather, true to his grandfather's example, moved his family to Victoria while he worked elsewhere. He put his knowledge of numbers to use for a commercial construction company in Houston.

In 1980, my recently divorced 40-year-old mother returned to Victoria from Clear Lake with my older teenage brother and me, 10 years old, in tow. Strangers in a town where our family went way back. We came to know many of the people who shared our roots, some intersecting and even growing together. Two of my mother's brothers married into the Welder and Traylor clans.

A couple of years ago, I began investigating the unspeakable loss that left the two families in lingering pain, like dark clouds unable to rain. I discovered how Hamp

received an inexplicably light murder sentence, and how memories of the two wildly rich, charming and handsome young men still clung to the lives they once touched. Without eyewitnesses, a trial transcript (if one ever existed), and the players who have long since passed, I pieced the story together with newspaper clippings, case files, police reports and interviews with remaining attorneys, friends and family. I learned that Hampton Robinson spent the rest of his life in a downward spiral of crime and drug addiction. That he effectively ended his own life when he ended Tommy's Bauer's with the pull of a trigger on that cool, damp evening.

HAMPTON C. ROBINSON III

Hampton Robinson III inherited his mother's fine-featured good looks. At 6'2 and 180 pounds, his shoulders were broad and his hair brown and wavy.

Jo Ann Stafford, a petite, wide-eyed beauty with long, thick brown hair, married Hamp when she became pregnant with their daughter Jennifer. She agreed to visit with me at the apartment where she lives behind her daughter's suburban home outside Corpus Christi. Smart and vivacious, Jo Ann sat in a chair turned from a wobbly computer table in the corner of her small living room shared by an L-shaped kitchenette. After 12 years with the same law firm, she had given up her job as a legal secretary a couple of years prior to help care for her two granddaughters. Jennifer, who had been a paramedic for seven years responding to emergency calls like the one made for Tommy in 1976, was studying full-time to become a nurse or radiologist.

For three hours, we talked one Saturday afternoon about her memories of Hamp and their life together. As one of Hamp's few intimate connections still living, she was instrumental in my understanding of a man whom I knew only as the sum of a series of bad decisions.

Jo Ann's recollection of those years long past began with their first date. When Hamp moved from Houston to his mother's hometown, Jo Ann's bosses arranged for her to meet him for a drink.

"I was glad I was the first one to meet him because he didn't have any trouble meeting people, especially girls," she said. "I can honestly say he was the best looking guy I'd ever seen, especially in Victoria. Maaannn."

Jo Ann helped Hamp work cattle and mend fences on the Welder ranch. They even built a barn together. Down the road, Seadrift had a good dinner spot. And when Jo Ann got off work, they liked to meet for drinks at the Brown Boar in downtown Victoria.

"There wasn't much to do in Victoria," Jo Ann said. "You really had to work at keeping yourself entertained."

Jo Ann dated Hamp more than a year before he took her to Houston, where he began to let his guard down. He showed her the houses where he grew up and talked about his life, but he wasn't bragging. He wasn't proud of his fortune.

"He just saw that money didn't make his family happy," Jo Ann said. "They all had their problems."

Hamp's mother was a beautiful fair-skinned South Texas oil heiress with dark hair and eyes. Patricia Welder, nicknamed Pree by her pals, grew up on Three Mile Ranch outside Victoria in a Spanish-style mansion designed by her father. He was a brilliant, reclusive man who preferred the solitude of his ranch to the party scene. Patricia's mother, a schoolteacher from Lufkin, was more outgoing. Patricia's only brother Patrick married the children's drop-dead gorgeous nanny.

Patricia's lifelong friend, Gloria Shouse, said the curiosity inspired in outsiders by the father bolstered the misconception that Patricia's shyness was strangeness. Patricia liked to socialize and speak her mind with a small group of familiar friends whom she trusted. She was only shy with people she didn't know, and she didn't like to put on a show.

"Pree was her own person. She had a dry sense of humor — you never knew if she was kidding," Gloria said. "She was smart as a whip and funny as she could be."

After a semester at Georgian Court College in Lakewood, New Jersey, Patricia returned home and married Hampton Robinson Jr. from another old ranching family. He was a prominent Houston surgeon who told his nurses, "I'm going to marry this woman," after he removed her appendix, according to Mary Ann Vivion, whose family managed the Welder ranches for more than 70 years.

Dr. Robinson, known as Doc, sported a pencil-thin mustache that made him look like '40s film star Errol Flynn, said Milo Abercrombie, Hamp's childhood friend who belonged to another old, wealthy Houston-area family. Gloria, whose husband was Doc's attorney and best friend, described Doc as quiet, scholarly and sweet.

By all accounts, he was a reserved, well-groomed, distinguished-looking gentleman.

Doc served as president of the State Board of Health and was a member of the Baylor School of Medicine faculty while he had his own practice, but he also dabbled in community development, farming and ranching. He hired William F. Cody, a Palm Springs architect known for Desert Modernism, to build a ranch house 20 miles outside Houston for him and his wife. He bought up the surrounding property with the dream of creating a luxury community like Rancho Mirage in Palm Springs, but eventually sold 750 acres to developers who established Quail Valley, a mid-level golfing neighborhood.

Hamp was the oldest of the four Robinson children. His sister Patricia followed and two brothers, Patrick and Justin, came along after her. Hamp had good relationships with all of his siblings, but was closest to his youngest brother Justin, whom he called Boo. He was eight years younger and slighter than his oldest brother. Patrick weighed in as the middle brother, four years younger than Hamp and four years older than Justin. Patricia — the only sibling still living — was two years Hamp's junior.

In his teens, Charlie Dickerson, a fifth generation resident of Rosenberg, met Hamp for the first time and described him as very shy. Charlie's father bought 100 head of Brahman cattle for little or nothing from Doc — money didn't seem to mean much to him. Hamp was just a boy, and Charlie and his friend Grant Roane left him at the house while they explored the ranch.

Charlie heard that Hamp's grandmother Dannie DeWalt Robinson was one of few people who ever showed the children attention and affection, aside from a governess. They had few friends and didn't play as children should. A black stretch limousine delivered them to their tutor's house, and the driver waited in his black uniform complete with hat in the sweltering Texas sun.

"Talk about poor little rich kids," Charlie said.

Hamp spent as much time as possible with his Robinson grandparents on their ranch outside Houston.

"They were very loving to him," Milo said. "I think they tried to take over for what the parents didn't do."

Hamp loved his mother, but she had a serious drinking problem.

Milo Abercrombie remembered a phone call Hamp received, presumably from his father, while he was visiting Milo's ranch. Hamp's mother would soon drive past Milo's on her way to Victoria and he should stop her because she was drunk.

Doc repeatedly sent his wife to hospitals where she could dry out and belittled her when she returned home, Hamp told Jo Ann. Doc told his wife that she wasn't allowed in public because she was an embarrassment to the family, which caused her to drink even more.

Hamp didn't like what he saw.

His mother cried all the time, Hamp told Jo Ann.

Doc was very controlling and demanded that his family do things when he said to do them. And when they didn't do those things, it drove him crazy.

"Hamp really didn't think much of his father," Milo said. "His father didn't seem to have much time for any of the kids."

And it turned out poorly for everyone.

"I don't want anyone to think badly of anyone," Jo Ann said. "There are reasons Hamp was going through stuff, he was seeing things that would affect anyone."

Hamp was 16 when he found his mother's body after she decided to end her wealthy but tormented life with the pull of a trigger. Her death certificate called the shooting accidental. It happened just seven years after she was named one of the best-dressed women in the world alongside the likes of Princess Grace of Monaco.

Milo felt sorry for his friend. He learned that Hamp broke the door down to get to his mother after he heard gunfire.

"She didn't kill herself for no reason," Jo Ann said. "There were a lot of things going on. Doc was cruel to her and to the kids, too."

Even though Hamp didn't talk about his mother much, Jo Ann understood that he never recovered from the trauma of her death. Jo Ann laughed that she was Hamp's mother, his sister, his girlfriend, and everything in between.

"Sometimes he'd just be like a little boy — he wanted someone to love him, really love him, and not for some reason," Jo Ann said. "I truly loved him, and he knew that."

Milo met Hamp through his friend John Wall, who shared a room with Hamp at San Marcos Academy, a military boarding school. Milo rescued his friends on the weekends, even when they weren't supposed to leave.

"They just wanted to get the hell out of there," Milo said. "So we'd go do something."

They hunted when it was hunting season and trolled for girls when it wasn't. Hamp always behaved around women to Milo's knowledge.

"Hell, he'd look at one of them and they'd drop their drawers, so there was no reason not to be nice," Milo said.

Milo visited the Robinson's River Oaks mansion many times growing up, and even stayed overnight. Hamp was a little on the wild side, but they were all young and dumb at that time.

"He seemed a little dumber than the rest of us," Milo said. "I mean, he was bright, but he just didn't give a damn."

Milo and Hamp also spent a lot of time with Hamp's Uncle Joe Robinson, and looking back, Milo said he was a drunk too. Joe was an outgoing rancher who never met a stranger, Gloria said. The exact opposite of his brother Doc.

The family went downhill after the suicide, said Joe Fenn, the Robinsons' ranch foreman for nearly a decade. Hamp went to stay with Joe shortly after the incident. The Fenn and Robinson families went way back. They had made whiskey together during Prohibition.

"I picked him up every morning and took him around the ranches, and we worked cattle, cleaned water troughs, fixed fences, whatever needed to be done," Joe recalled. "I always liked Hamp — he was good-natured, and he didn't mind working."

Life had changed irreversibly. The nanny, the ranch foreman and the yardman were like family, but the children needed more after their mother's tragic death. They needed their father.

When Hamp began to run with a few bad eggs after his mother's death, he became an entirely different person, Joe Fenn said. Those rotten acquaintances multiplied and drugs became a mainstay.

"Hamp was destined for death from the time he left high school," Charlie Dickerson said.

Charlie didn't meet Hamp again until he was Missouri City district attorney. He and Justice Russ Roane, Hamp's great-uncle, staged a mock trial to kick Hamp out of Fort Bend County, which included some of Houston and its bordering towns. There had been so many disturbance calls and claims of alleged assaults and dope dealing that it had become embarrassing for the family. The chief deputy brought Hamp to Charlie's office where they listed all of his alleged offenses and convinced him that they would prosecute him for every single one if he didn't leave town. That's when Hamp moved to the Victoria area.

Hamp was nearing his 30s when he arrived at the Welder ranch. He hunted deer and hogs, gambled and messed around with buddies he made in town. Old Houston friends showed up from time to time too.

He moved an old un-air-conditioned railroad depot onto the Welder property. A fireplace spanned one of its long walls, and Jo Ann stayed there with Hamp more often than she stayed at her apartment in town.

Hamp and his family didn't visit the Welder mansion after Patricia passed. They locked the doors and it sat empty, except for the furnishings that remained as they had been when she was alive.

One afternoon, Jo Ann and Hamp, along with Justin and his friend, jumped the fence and played around the mansion. They sat under the huge oak trees, ate watermelon spiked with Vodka and ran a garden hose all day in the drained swimming pool where Patricia and her friend Gloria had enjoyed dips in the clear blue water growing up. When the deep end was half-full, they swam around and floated on an old inner tube in the nasty water.

It was one of Jo Ann's best memories with Hamp.

Hamp didn't care for the old house because his mother had shared sad memories of growing up there, but he wanted Jo Ann to see it.

"It was so beautiful — the way it was built — the tile and the furniture came from France," Jo Ann said. "Even the bunk beds in the children's bedrooms had real gold detail."

Hamp's brother Justin, whose drug addiction surpassed even Hamp's, wiped the mansion clean with his drug-thug friends from Houston. They took the furniture and pictures, and even ripped things out of the walls. They destroyed the interior, but Justin made sure each of his brothers got a load.

"And all that beautiful, beautiful stuff that those people would have no clue what to do with, it was gone," Jo Ann said. "I don't know what in the world they would have done with all of that stuff because that furniture wouldn't have looked right in any other kind of house — you couldn't just put it anywhere."

Hamp wasn't a typical rich boy. He didn't take money from his family the first few years Jo Ann knew him, and she did his books. He was his own person.

Mike Crane was in high school when he worked for Hamp on the 20,000 acres below Bloomington. They attended auctions, bought steers, fattened them up and sold them.

And Hamp was happy with that.

"You grow up in Victoria hearing about the O'Connors and the Welders, the richest people ever," Jo Ann said. "But I was making his bank deposits, and I never saw it. It just wasn't like that."

Mike thought Hamp hung the moon at the time. He was a good-looking, friendly cowboy who didn't get pushed around. And he let the teenager tag along. On the town, people gravitated to Hamp, which led to an occasional bar brawl.

"I never saw a bad side of him, other than being rowdy in a bar, which was everybody," Mike said. "As full of shit as a Christmas turkey, but that's what it takes to get along."

Hamp was shy until people knew him, Jo Ann said. He had a cute smile and big, broad shoulders. The girls just loved him, and they really loved him when they learned he had money. Hamp wore a Resistol beaver cowboy hat, super-starched custom Hamilton Shirt Company button-downs, Wrangler blue jeans and Justin boots.

He was a bulldogger when he traveled with the rodeo circuit, which means he jumped from his horse onto a moving steer, grabbed him by the horns and threw him down. Johnny Ackel, a rodeo buddy, said Hamp bulldogged "pretty good."

Another rodeo connection, Joe Lee Evans, who shoed horses for a living, said they all looked up to Johnny. He was about 20 years older than the boys and sometimes hazed, or kept the steer running straight, for his friend Hamp.

There was a code that one rodeo cowboy couldn't refuse another a place to stay. Hamp's friends, some of them world champions, stopped by the ranch on their way from one rodeo to another. Johnny said the rodeo scene in those days was "wilder than a March hare."

Hamp and Johnny made a habit of fighting together. In a motel bar near the Houston Astrodome, a friend of theirs began an argument and hit some guy over the head with a full bottle of Cold Duck.

"I had to get in it because I didn't want him to beat my friend all up," Johnny said. The bouncer pinned Johnny down between the bar and the brass foot rail and tried to poke his eyes out. Johnny panicked and bit the guy's little finger off when it came too close to his mouth.

"I wasn't going to let him put my damn eyes out," Johnny said. "I shook my head like a mad dog and just bit the son of a bitch off."

He spit it out.

Hamp was playing — throwing and turning over chairs like he was in a movie scene — while Johnny was fighting. Police officers barreled down the spiral staircase behind German Shepherds, and everyone hauled ass. No one got caught.

When Johnny stayed with Hamp one night at the ranch near Houston, hoodlums shot the place up with machine guns.

"I had to jump in the bathtub," Johnny said. "He'd just done a lot of shit to people he wasn't supposed to do."

Norman Jones, Victoria assistant district attorney, was invited to hunt hogs on the Welder ranch by a friend of Hamp's. When the hunters happened upon a giant rattlesnake crossing the road, Hamp didn't take aim from the safety of his truck window. Instead, he

and his friend jumped out and stomped the snake to death in their tall snake-proof boots, which were no guarantee against a high strike during the dangerous dance.

“And in hindsight it gives me insight into Hamp,” Norman said. “He got a thrill out of it.”

Hamp was two different people. Cliff Howard, longtime Welder ranch foreman thought the world of Hamp, but couldn’t believe the crazy stuff he pulled. Hamp was the nicest guy anyone could hope to meet, but he might knock off a convenience store on his way back to Houston, Joe Lee Evans said.

Hamp invited Kenneth Kemp, a helicopter pilot, to bring his hunting dogs to the ranch. They became good friends after that. When Hamp walked into a dance hall, every girl wanted to dance with him and every guy wanted to know him, Kenneth said.

“One of these days, I’m going to be somebody,” Hamp told Kenneth. “I’m going to be like [Joe] Rufus Lyne.”

Joe Rufus Lyne, a rancher from George West and father of rodeo champion Phil Lyne, Hamp’s contemporary, supposedly took care of guys when they crossed him. That impressed Hamp.

“Hampton, you’re already somebody,” Kenneth told him. “You got anything you want. You’ve got a gold spoon.”

One afternoon, Hamp and Kenneth decided to grab a cold beer. One beer turned into several, and before long they were having belt-pulling contests with a couple of Hamp’s rodeo friends at the Captain’s Table. One whipped his leather belt from his pant loops and sat on the ground facing another, feet-to-feet with straight legs. They pulled the belt back and forth like a two-man saw until one threw the other over his head. When they were kicked out, the rowdy foursome headed to Totah’s Motel.

Hamp and Gary Beard began tossing a quarter for $100 a flip. When Hamp won too many times in a row, Gary wanted to fight. Kenneth hopped behind the wheel of his pickup truck and Hamp slid across the bench seat, followed by Gary. The other friend pulled his truck up to Kenneth's passenger side window and handed Gary a brown paper sack with an unopened fifth of bourbon.

Hamp told Kenneth to head for the river as he grabbed a scabbard from the dashboard and removed a large hog-hunting knife.

"I'll just cut his head off and throw it in the river," Hamp said.

"And that alarmed me pretty good, because he was pretty adamant about what he was fixing to do," Kenneth said.

Kenneth grabbed Hamp's hand, put the knife back in its scabbard and shoved it behind the left-hand side of his seat.

"Nope," Kenneth said. "Ain't going to be cutting anybody's head off tonight."

Hamp told Kenneth to pull over near the Guadalupe River. As the truck rolled to a stop, Gary smashed the bottle of bourbon against Hamp's face. Glass and bourbon doused the truck's interior. Hamp, with his arm around Gary's neck, leaned over and ripped off a good portion of his ear.

"The guy is screaming and blood is going everywhere," Kenneth recalled.

Gary jumped from the truck and onto Kenneth's hood.

"What did you do?" Kenneth yelled. "What did you cut him with?"

"I didn't — I just bit his ear off," Hamp said. "The fight's over with."

Kenneth stopped running around with Hamp after that.

"That was just a little out of my league," he said.

Hamp had been building his bad-guy persona, and his lack of control was in full swing by the time he met Tommy Bauer.

THOMAS TRAYLOR BAUER

Tommy Bauer preferred farming to ranching, though neither was necessary after drills struck oil on his family's land. His father Clyde Bauer worked hard and played hard, and he expected as much from his son. Clyde came from a farming family, and served as cowboy to local ranchers before marrying Maddeline Traylor. When her father passed away, Clyde assumed management of the family's vast farm and ranch operation. Maddeline was left an only child when her brother, who Tommy closely resembled, died of pneumonia in his late teens.

Tommy was a health nut who lived dangerously. He quit smoking, limited his drinking, kept physically active and drove fast. His hair was thick and brown, his complexion olive. His face was beautiful, yet masculine, with pretty, hazel eyes behind wire-rimmed glasses. An athletic, muscular 5'11 build.

Unlike Hamp, Tommy felt loved and nurtured on every front. Rearing him tug-of-war style, Clyde disciplined and Maddeline spoiled. Clyde installed a track in Port O'Connor where Tommy raced souped-up go-carts as a boy. Clyde brought him a brick, 522 shotgun shells, every day, and Tommy shot them all. He whittled away a big oak tree outside his bedroom window with his bullets.

In Tommy's teens, before he could drive, Clyde's black ranch foreman Pete Brown took him to the "Chicken Ranch" in LaGrange — better known as the "Best Little Whore House in Texas."

Pete and his wife Odessa reared their son Sammy who was two years older than Tommy in a house behind the "big" house. Like brothers, Sammy and Tommy got in the

way of the workers while they played on the ranch. Everywhere Tommy went, Sammy went.

"If Mrs. Bauer took Tommy to town, I went to town with them," Sammy said. "I was never left out. If Tommy got something, I got something. That's the way it was." When the Bauers went out for a night on the town, Odessa stayed with the boys in the big house. Her bed was in the room-like hallway outside the three upstairs bedrooms where she watched television while the boys were in Tommy's room with the door shut. Odessa always baked something sweet, which she delivered with the message that it was all they could have. But Tommy and Sammy always wanted more. They snuck through the bathroom that joined the children's bedrooms and crawled on their bellies down the stairs to the kitchen that was "bigger than most people's houses." One morning, Odessa went to wake the boys and found Tommy in his bed covered with chocolate fudge. He ate so much it made him sick. They all had a good laugh about that.

Clyde, a passionate horseman, owned the 1953 NCHA World Champion Cutting Horse, Snipper W. When Clyde retired the gelding, Dan Braman, another wealthy Victoria rancher, bought him for his son Danny. Danny and his world-champion pet swam together in the swimming pool. After a kidnapping threat, he didn't hang around Sammy and Tommy as much as other boys because his activities were limited.

Tommy liked to ride, too. His horse, Buck, was the fastest on the ranch. Bud Harvey, one of the ranch hands who became a Baptist minister in Bloomington, liked to tell the same story every Sunday that Sammy showed up for church. He'd been thrown from his horse while working cattle on the Traylor-Bauer ranch and somehow got the rope around his neck. The horse dragged him a good ways before Sammy could stop him. The cars were parked at the pens about two-and-a-half miles away, so Tommy hit it fast

atop the already-winded Buck. They could hear Tommy's four-barrel 1964 high performance El Camino bumping back along the bottom. Two ranch hands held Bud in the bed for the quick ride to the nearest hospital in Port Lavaca.

"He never forgot that," Sammy said. "That I stopped the horse and got the rope off, and how fast Tommy got him to that hospital."

When "Hatari!" came out in the early 1960s, the boys hunted deer and wild hogs John Wayne-style late at night with spotlights, banging on the jeep like a drum. With two or three friends, they ran game across the flats, and Tommy shot from the big hunting seat in the jeep bed. Many late nights and early mornings, the boys drove their kills into Bloomington where they left them with needy families who were happy to clean the animals for the meat.

Bloomington had four stop signs back then. When Tommy spotted the patrol car on his way back to the ranch late at night, he slowed down, rolled through the sign, shifted gears, and fishtailed out of there. He stopped and waited for the patrolmen at the entrance to his ranch. They never ticketed him — it was a game.

"There was no way they were going to catch him," Sammy laughed.

Tommy stopped by beer joints under the hill, the black side of town, where Sammy hung out, and Sammy never worried about Tommy because he could handle himself. He arm wrestled guys who were bigger than they were strong and won.

"No one did or said anything to him," Sammy said. "They figured if he had the nerve to come down there, he belonged there."

Likewise, Sammy went to the other side of town to see Tommy.

In the '60s, Sammy was probably the only black man who sat inside the Jet. Tommy and his friends saw to it that Sammy did what they did.

"They weren't going to let anybody mess with me," Sammy said.

Tommy visited Fairye McGinnes at Sam Houston State University almost every weekend while they were courting. They married in 1964 and had two daughters, Liz and Becky, before their marriage ended 11 years later.

"He had two beautiful kids, just cute-as-a-bug little girls, Becky and Lizzie," Jim Meyer said.

Fred Tyng, who was Tommy's brother-in-law before a divorce, said they threw a party at the ranch for his brother Tom Tyng when he married Madeline Murphy. Fairye marched up and punched some girl in the face with her fist because she was flirting with Tommy.

"That goes to show you how feisty Fairye was," he said. "That caused a commotion."

Fred liked her. She was pretty and tough enough not to put up with anything.

"She'd tell Clyde off, and I'd just laugh," he said. "Clyde liked her, too — he liked somebody like that."

Clyde died just eight months before Tommy. Pete Brown had become a sheriff's deputy by then, but returned to the ranch on weekends to help Tommy.

Tommy also served the sheriff's department — as a volunteer reserve deputy. He was racquetball champion at the YMCA, where he coached boys' football as well.

"He was into everything growing up — hot-rodding, fast boats, shooting," Frances Weidemier, Tommy's sister, said. "He was always number one — you couldn't compete with him because he worked at being the best no matter what he did. He was wonderful to watch."

Tommy and his sister Barbara shared impressive skeet shooting skills. Tommy was member of a five-man team that placed first in the world, and he ranked ninth in the world individually.

"Tommy was such a fabulous shot, just like Daddy," Barbara, a one-time world pigeon-shooting champion, said. "He could hit anything with a rifle or a shotgun. There was a lot of competition between us — we had a good time."

Tommy's friend Jim Meyer recalled a time when Tommy threw a rock in the air, shot the rock into two pieces, and shot the two pieces before they hit the ground.
"Tommy was wiry and quick," Jim said. "I mean just lightning quick. His reflexes were almost superhuman."

Debbie Tyng Thibadeaux said her Uncle Tommy showed up when her parents went through their divorce. He let her drive his Corvette to the Corral, where waitresses served them sodas curbside while they visited. They went to movies. Sometimes they just drove around.

"We all worshipped him," Debbie said.

Tommy needed a fast engine to match his vitality and the family had money to burn, so he always bought hot-rods. Nobody but Tommy ever pulled into the garage attached to the house on Bluebonnet Street where Debbie's family lived.

"We'd be sleeping, and he'd do it on purpose," Debbie said. "The whole house would be shaking, our beds would be shaking. He was a little devil."

Debbie and her younger twin siblings, Maddeline and Clyde, knew what to expect. Tommy bounded up the steps, barged into their rooms and jumped on their beds, yelling and tugging at their bedcovers.

The children rolled on the ground with laughter when Tommy imitated '70s black comedian Flip Wilson's female persona, Geraldine Jones, doing the "devil made me do it" routine.

Tommy's temper wasn't as ferocious as his wit, though it was just as a consistent. Still, unlike Hamp, he wasn't comfortable being out of control. Jim Meyer said he never saw Tommy drunk in public and only once or twice in private.

"Tommy's one flaw was his womanizing," Jim recalled. "I think he and Linda would have ended up with a permanent relationship."

Though they never hung out, Hamp and Tommy ran in the same circles and vied for the attention of the same women. Tommy passed Jo Ann Stafford on his early-morning drives to the freshly planted crops on his ranch. Jo Ann was on her way to work in Victoria from Hamp's ranch.

At first, they flashed their headlights, honked and waved as they headed in opposite directions. Before long, they stopped roadside to chat. One thing led to another, Tommy told his friend Jim, and eventually Hamp found out. Hamp also saw Tommy chatting with Jo Ann at her office one day, but she told him they were just friends.

Jo Ann said Hamp's fear that she and Tommy had a fling was unfounded. Tommy wasn't interested in Jo Ann. He pumped her for information about her roommate, June McQuiggan.

But Hamp couldn't shake the idea: If he had flings, why wouldn't she?

Tommy mentioned to his girlfriend Linda Loyd that Hamp made accusations that he was seeing Jo Ann. The day before his death, Tommy called Jim Meyer for advice. Hamp had threatened to kill him, and he was worried. Jim suggested Tommy tell the police and stay out of the beer joints where he might find Hamp. Tommy either didn't

want to contact the police or hadn't yet, and apparently couldn't avoid the hot nightspots in slow-town Texas.

Hamp, in Jim's mind, pursued Linda because he knew Tommy was smitten. He knew Tommy would react.

THE INFAMOUS EVENING

On that damp October evening, the Captain's Table was Linda Loyd's last stop after a long day that started early. With a group of friends, including Hamp Robinson, Gary Tatum and Kay Teague, she had watched the Texas v. Oklahoma football game at Totah's Motel before she went to the Cuero Turkey Trot. At the motel, Hamp had his friend Freddie Dodd move his car so Jo Ann wouldn't see it. He was supposed to take her to the Turkey Trot, but made plans with Linda instead.

When Tommy Bauer walked into the lounge, Linda sensed right away that she should call a taxi to take her home. He didn't like her hanging around lounges. They were off-again, but she figured they'd patch things up. Linda reached down to grab her purse when she felt a tap on her shoulder. Tommy swept her around the dance floor for a song before he drove her home.

Hamp returned to the table to find Linda missing. Recollections of the conversation that ensued didn't jibe. Hamp said Kay was anxious and wanted to check on Linda because Tommy had bruised her up a time or two. Kay said Hamp was the antsy one who wanted her to drive with him to Linda's apartment because he didn't know where she lived. The couple climbed into Hamp's Ford LTD and headed after Tommy and Linda.

The foursome met in the breezeway of Linda's apartment complex where words were exchanged.

"What's going on?" Tommy asked.

"That's what I want to know," Hamp said.

“There is no reason to argue, I don’t even know this guy,” Linda told Tommy as she positioned herself between the two men.

Unable to stop the hostility, Linda ran inside crying and Kay followed. Seconds later, they heard a gunshot. Kenneth Kemp and his wife, who lived in the neighborhood behind the apartments, heard the gunshot clearly from their bedroom. Sounds of feet slapping the pavement, a car door creaking open and slamming shut, and tires squealing drifted to an upstairs apartment. Headlights scanned a fence heading the wrong direction, then the right direction, before they sped away from the complex.

An agriculture chemical salesman, Wayne “Curly” Gilbreath, was reading a book in his nearby apartment when he heard the “bang or loud slap” and went outside to investigate. Christine Thurmond was babysitting Linda’s daughter in another apartment and walked outside with her mother Jan. They stopped when they heard Linda crying and screaming, “No! Help me. It can’t be!” Curly discovered Tommy lying face-up, gasping for air, with blood seeping from the back of his head.

The C-shift of Emergency Medical Services sat watching television in Fire Station #2 located in front of the apartment complex when Curly ran into the room around 11:50 p.m.

“Hey, EMTs, there is a man shot at the apartments,” Curly said.

While one attendant called the incident into the dispatcher and another drove the ambulance to the apartments, Rex Jordan grabbed his trauma kit and ran to the breezeway with Curly. He immediately recognized Tommy, who he’d known for more than a decade. Tommy was unconscious, and Rex started artificial ventilation. Tommy spontaneously gasped for air about 10 seconds later. Another medic continued the

ventilation while Rex wrapped Tommy's head in an attempt to stop the bleeding. They began IVs in both of Tommy's arms.

As they lifted him onto the gurney, a paramedic felt an object under Tommy's trousers. They pulled his pant leg over the top of his boot and removed a 9MM Walther pistol.

Tommy died two hours later on his sister Frances's birthday. He was 32 years old. Linda and Kay answered the door when an officer went knocking, but Linda began sobbing before he could question her.

"Why is this happening?" Linda cried. "This is all so senseless."

An hour-and-a-half later, an engineer in Victoria's public works department, who was also a reserve deputy, learned about the shooting from the sheriff's department. A Ford matching the description of the car leaving the scene was parked at his apartment complex, where Jo Ann Stafford also lived. The sheriff's department asked him to keep an eye on the car.

Equipped with a police band radio, he followed when it left the parking lot at 4 a.m. A dark-colored El Camino with twin CB antennas left at the same time. Deputies stopped the Ford to find a man smelling of alcohol who wasn't Hamp behind the wheel. When asked his identity and whose car he was driving, the man responded, "I do not care to say."

It was Hamp's Three Mile Ranch employee and close friend Freddie Dodd.

Contradictory stories from Hamp's entourage about his and their whereabouts after the incident didn't add up. All that was certain was that Hamp made it out of Victoria and ended up at his attorney Jim Tatum's house in Houston.

Jim phoned the Victoria sheriff's department in the wee hours of the morning on Oct. 10 to arrange for Hamp's surrender. The sheriff and chief deputy sheriff met the Robinson's private plane at Victoria Regional Airport later that day. Hamp's father accompanied his son on the flight from Houston, along with Jim.

THE INVESTIGATION & TRIAL

Five months passed before legal teams, police investigators, witnesses, friends and family made the three-hour drive to Huntsville, where the trial was moved as a result of a change of venue motion. Many of them settled into sterile motel rooms for the duration of the two weeks. It was the first murder case tried in the new $7.5 million Criminal Justice Center on the Sam Houston State University campus.

Hamp had been freed on $100,000 bond. In the elevator on the first day of the trial, Tommy's sister Barbara noticed a good-looking man. He was tall, with thick, broad shoulders and wavy brown hair. She didn't know on the ride up that he had killed her brother.

Barbara avoided the vending machines in the basement of the courthouse because that's where Hamp's menacing compadres converged. A steady stream of them, including women he'd dated and women who wanted to date him, hung around for the duration of the trial.

"Hamp had a number of groupies, so to speak," Hamp's attorney Don Rogers said. "He was good-looking and wealthy, so a lot of women found him attractive."

Knute Dietze, who was district attorney, Norman Jones, the assistant district attorney, Chuck Dennis, the investigator, Paul Obert, the pathologist, and Wayne Hartman, the attorney hired by the Bauers to assist, composed the state's core team.
Knute was like a bantam rooster, so he made an excellent prosecutor, Norman said. He was 100-percent German. Feisty. Short in physique and large in attitude.

The defense team included Houston attorneys Jim Tatum and Don Rogers, and Victoria attorney Steve McManus. Jim, who was the lead lawyer, was prominent in

Houston until his wife shot and killed him in 2007. He had survived his first wife's bullet in 1981, and the courts declined to press charges in both cases, calling the acts justifiable.

"Jim's the only man I know who was shot by two wives, but not only that, he taught them both to shoot," Don said.

He wasn't top shelf — a "Racehorse" Haynes or a Percy Foreman — but he was a good solid lawyer. Jim woke up in a different world every day, Don said. A lawyer one day, a cowboy the next, an oilman, a big-game hunter, a scuba diver.

Judge Joseph Kelly, who presided over the case, was large in attitude and physique. One hundred-percent Irish. Norman considered him an excellent judge.

"Both Knute and Judge Kelly were hardheaded and opinionated," Norman said. "So they'd have an argument, it'd get contentious, and then they would back off. The next day, everything was fine."

The state argued that the men exchanged words and punches. Tommy knocked Hamp to the ground and turned to go when Hamp pulled his pistol and shot him in the back of the head.

The defense theory was that both men had guns when they got into a scuffle, Hamp hit Tommy over the head with his pistol and the pistol discharged. Self-defense. They introduced a gritty Smith & Wesson revolver at the trial that they claimed Tommy had the night of the fight. The only gun found at the scene was the pistol still in Tommy's boot.

"A piece of crap gun that Tommy wouldn't use for a boat anchor let alone carry, known as a throw-down gun," Jim Meyer said. "It was a cheap piece of junk that you would buy at any pawnshop, or somebody had in their closet."

Linda Loyd, with "divorcee" following her name like a job title at every first mention in the Victoria Advocate's coverage, was among the first to take the stand. She and others at the club that night described the events that led up to the murder, but key testimony came from expert witnesses.

The Dallas County Medical Examiner, hired by the state and bolstered by Victoria's pathologist Paul Obert, and the Harris County Medical Examiner, hired by the defense, presented conflicting testimony. The case hinged on primer residue, a chemical compound found in contact wounds. Without a contact wound, the defense did not have a self-defense case.

The state's experts said the absence of the residue in the tissue samples meant it was not a contact wound, but the defense's expert said the residue might have washed out when medical professionals cleaned the wound. Furthermore, the wound was not a small, single bullet hole. It was messy. So the trace compound could have exited in the tissue that was blown away, and they did not test all the tissue (since some was found on the overhead gutter after the police investigation).

The evidence supported both theories, and provided the seed of doubt the defense needed.

Dr. Obert, who looked like a grandfather and had that kind of aura, testified that Hamp fired the hollow-point bullet at least three feet from Tommy's head.

The jury loved him, Norman said.

When the defense cross-examined him about his conclusions on trajectory, bullets and blood, they couldn't trip him up. Not even when they brought out a giant 600- or 800-page forensic pathology book.

"'Well, over here, doctor, it says this – it says ABC on this page,' Hamp's attorney said contradicting a finding on Dr. Obert's report," Norman said.

Dr. Obert responded without looking at the book. He knew it paragraph-by-paragraph, page-by-page:

"Well, that's right. Now, if you go to page 842 it says the other thing."

But Obert's opinion wasn't enough to undo the doubt planted by the defense's expert witness.

Texas law has changed since 1977, and a couple of differences affected the outcome of Hamp's trial.

First and most crucial, the state back then allowed judges to use their discretion in regard to the range of punishment given the jury. The judge could issue all the charges — murder, manslaughter, criminally negligent homicide and innocence — or fewer than all the charges. Today, the full range of punishment is always available to jurors.

In this case, Judge Kelly excluded manslaughter and gave jurors three choices: murder, criminally negligent homicide or innocence. The distinction between manslaughter and negligent homicide is slight. It's a matter of whether someone disregards a known risk (recklessness) or takes an unknown risk that should have been known (negligence). Hamp hitting Tommy over the head with a loaded gun with one finger on the trigger was deemed negligent.

Another important factor was that criminally negligent homicide was a misdemeanor with a maximum penalty of one year in jail and a $2,000 fine. Today, it's a third degree felony when a deadly weapon is involved, and the punishment is two to 10 years in jail and up to a $10,000 fine.

Hamp admitted that his bullet killed Tommy, which made innocence an unlikely verdict. So the judge's decision to submit only three options to the jury boiled down to either death by lethal injection, 20 years to life with parole or one year in jail. The defense's burden was to convince one juror that the murder might have been accidental to secure a one-year sentence. The prosecution had to prove to all 12 jurors beyond a reasonable doubt that Hamp had murdered Tommy intentionally.

To the best of Don Roger's recollection, a couple of witnesses testified to Hamp's bad reputation, but it's not clear that jurors heard anything else. Only prior convictions and character testimony were admissible in the 1970s — in little detail during the punishment phase of the trial. Today, extraneous offenses are admissible for limited purposes during the guilt or innocence phase of the trial, and for almost any reason in detail during the punishment phase.

A 1974 offense report from the Richmond sheriff's department detailed an assault outside the Round-up Club in Simonton. Hamp badly beat a young man with brass knuckles before he pulled a pistol on him and said, "And now you're going to die mother fucker." The young man, along with Hamp's buddies, wrestled for the gun and it fired into the air.

Jim Meyer, who sat through the entire trial, recalled testimony from witnesses that he knows jurors never heard:

One of Hamp's ex-girlfriends wanted to testify that he beat her with a dead rabbit, and that he invited two buddies to use her any way they wanted when he was through with her. Inadmissible. Another witness wanted to testify that Hamp crawled under a table and stabbed him. The knife wasn't considered a deadly weapon. Inadmissible.

Testimony that could have hurt Hamp's defense didn't make it in front of the jury, while witnesses assassinated Tommy's character.

One witness testified that he saw Tommy mow down domestic dogs with a machine gun at the ranch for the fun of it, which Jim said was untrue. Another romantic rival testified that Tommy was crazy-jealous, and that Linda Loyd warned him that Tommy might kill him. And Tommy's love of guns, a family trait, helped Hamp's case. Tommy always had a pistol in his boot and another in his car.

"That was distressing for me, because I could see him being painted in a light that was painful," Debbie, Tommy's niece, said. "My family likes guns. That's how we were raised. Just because you own guns doesn't mean you kill people."

Rumors flew about witnesses' debts being paid off by Hamp's family. In fact, such tales stalked the proceedings and the town long after it all ended.

"There was no area where I think anyone perjured themselves, as far as witnesses go, outside of possibly Hamp, if he did," Don Rogers said. "He was the only witness who was there, and he did testify that he hit Tommy on the back of the head in the middle of a fight, and the gun discharged. Whether it's true or false, I don't know."

An area that remains murky is the jurors' apparent lack of knowledge about the punishment that accompanied their verdict, despite the fact that the jury foreman taught criminal justice at Sam Houston State University.

"The professor told me after the trial that he knew about it, but he didn't tell the rest of the jurors because he didn't feel it was his place," Don said.

By accounts from attorneys on both sides, as well as courtroom observers, the jurors were livid when Hamp's sentence was read aloud. Nine men, three of them SHSU

professors, and three women composed the jury. They asked the judge for a meeting after sentencing, but he refused.

Defense attorney Steve McManus talked to jurors after the trial.

“They thought he should have gotten more like 10 years,” Steve said. “Submitting only two charges to the jury was the crucial difference that kept Hamp out of jail for a longer period of time.”

Debbie, Tommy’s niece who was in college at the time, attended only one day of the trial with her boyfriend and sister. She asked her mother if it was normal for the judge to fall asleep on the stand during the trial.

JAIL

One year in jail and a $2,000 fine.

Hamp Robinson served eight months in Walker County jail where it was rumored that he spent most weekdays rambling around a bar across the street and weekends hunting on his ranch with the system's higher-ups.

"He ran around with the sheriff the whole time he was in jail for killing Tommy," Johnny Ackel said. "They were in the cow business together."

Most Sundays, Jo Ann and Hamp's stepmother, Louise, picked up roast beef at a deli on their way to visit Hamp. The jail was small, un-air-conditioned and nasty, and Jo Ann said Hamp had a difficult time.

"I don't want you to think he had 'The Life of Reilly' in jail, he didn't," Jo Ann said. "They would take him to the courthouse to mow and clean out flowerbeds — things that embarrassed the crap out of him — but he knew he had to do it."

Girls from the district clerk's office, the county clerk's office and the judge's office visited him while he worked. Some of them even baked him cookies.

"That's pretty bad, just doing your time and women chasing you around the courthouse," Jo Ann said.

Tommy's death changed everything about Hamp's life. Where he lived. How he lived. His friends. His future. He could no longer be the same person. Jail was the beginning of his end.

Visitors kept him in the flush with percodan, and he became hooked. He didn't even realize it until he became sick without the pills after his release from jail, Jo Ann

said. He found a dealer, and seediness crept into his life as the drugs worsened and the abuse escalated.

Jo Ann believes Hamp started taking pills in prison because he didn't want to think about what he'd done to Tommy's daughters. That struck a chord. He knew what it was like to grow up without his mother, and they would grow up without their father.

"We talked about all that. I think it was hard on him — he had a lot of guilt," Jo Ann said. "And when you take a lot of pills and go to sleep you don't have to think about it as much."

Jim Meyer received a telephone call around Thanksgiving just after Hamp's release:

"Is this the Jim Meyer whose wife works at the bank and trust?"

"Yes it is."

"Well, if Hamp Robinson so much as catches a cold, you're dead."

Hamp didn't visit Victoria much after that. On one occasion, he called Mike Crane, who had worked for him. Mike found him at the Three Mile surrounded by several black friends whom Hamp called protection. Mike rode along with Hamp as far as Edna on his way back to Houston. Mike's buddy followed in one car, and Hamp's friends followed in another.

Halfway to Edna, Hamp asked Mike to reach into his briefcase on the backseat and give him a bag. Hamp tore it open with his knife and snorted. The case was full of cocaine. He wanted Mike to try it and even offered him a bag, but Mike knew trouble when he saw it.

"I don't know how much it was worth, but it must have been worth a lot," Mike said. "I don't know what the shit he was doing with a whole briefcase of it, but he had it."

Hamp and Jo Ann moved into a townhouse in Houston, but spent most of their time on a ranch in Dodge, outside Huntsville, that Hamp purchased.

Curry's used car lot in Houston became one of Hamp's hangouts, and Milo Abercrombie met him there a few times. He didn't stay long. Hamp was running with some scary characters — even killers.

"I tried to talk to him about the drugs, but he'd just go, 'Yeah, yeah,' and act like he was going to straighten out, but just never did," Milo said. "I'd just try to talk to him and see him, but it was a waste of time, basically."

Hamp and Jo Ann frequented Las Vegas, where they encountered notorious hit man Charles "Charlie" Harrelson for the first time. In his early 40s, Charlie was a stocky, good-looking gangster who fathered actor Woody Harrelson and prided himself on his ability to woo women. Jo Ann learned later that he had done his research and intentionally bumped into them. He knew Hamp had money, and he planned to get some.

"He was very intelligent, I mean very intelligent," Jo Ann said. "I guess he did a lot of reading in prison."

Charlie visited their townhouse several times before he arrived unannounced with Eric Brogan at their ranch. Charlie's partners in crime had sprung Eric from a California jail, and they needed a place to vanish. Eric was a chemist, and Charlie planned to manufacture cocaine.

That's when the FBI started following Hamp and Jo Ann. They were building a case against Charlie for the assassination of Judge John H. Wood of San Antonio, the first federal judge murdered in the 20th Century, but didn't have enough evidence to convict him.

Hamp disappeared to Houston for 10 days because he was upset. Charlie tried to take over, and Hamp didn't know how to tell him no. He didn't want cocaine manufactured on his property in Walker County out of respect for Sheriff Darrell White who'd been kind to him in jail.

He left Jo Ann at the ranch with Charlie and Eric. They helped her care for the livestock, made fires to stave off the cold and played Password. Charlie even entertained his companions with card tricks.

"We really had a lot of fun, they treated me with nothing but respect," Jo Ann said. "In hindsight, it was pretty risky."

Charlie and Hamp were friendly until paranoia got the best of them. Charlie threatened to kill Hamp and Jo Ann if they talked to the FBI, and Hamp feared Charlie had already knocked off Eric. Charlie returned to the ranch without his chemist friend and said they'd been in a car accident that killed Eric. But Charlie was unscathed.

Hamp went to the only law enforcement officer he trusted, and Sheriff White arranged a meeting with the FBI.

Hamp and Jo Ann met with agents in a dramatic scene. Down winding dirt roads, they drove to a cornfield in the middle of nowhere to meet a car under some tree. Agents frisked them, and they talked about Charlie. Hamp had chosen sides and there was no going back. He sent Jo Ann to Victoria because he feared Charlie might hurt her if he found out.

Hamp always wanted to be an outlaw. A standup guy, not a snitch. But it became too much, and he didn't like it, Jo Ann said. He was scared.

"That's when I knew he was basically good," Jo Ann said. "I knew him inside and out, and he was a very good guy who had the most horrible things happen to him."

Hamp had played a part, though small, in the 1979 murder of "Maximum John." He cleaned up and disposed of the car used in the murder. Ultimately, he testified against Charlie in return for leniency. That trial put Charlie Harrelson behind bars until his death in 2007.

In 1979, Jo Ann became pregnant and married Hamp. Charlie and his wife were witnesses to the union.

"Hamp got so excited when he found out, and he just right away wanted to get married," Jo Ann said. "We didn't have a ceremony — we went to the J.P."

Hamp hadn't yet gone off the deep end, Jo Ann said. That didn't happen until Charlie showed him how to shoot high-grade cocaine into his veins.

Jennifer Ann Robinson was born on June 13, 1980. The day they brought her home from the hospital was the last time Jo Ann saw Charlie. He skipped bail and headed for El Paso on what Jo Ann described as a "grand Texas adventure."

After a stay in the border town, Charlie hopped in his Corvette with eight ounces of cocaine and a box of needles. Hamp had put a contract out on the two attorneys who prosecuted him for Tommy's murder, and Charlie picked it up. FBI agents warned the attorneys, and they moved into temporary safe houses with their families.

Charlie mainlined all the way to Victoria, and blew right through. He was strung out and paranoid that the DEA was on his tail. Authorities picked him up in Van Horn when he shot the gas tank out of his hotrod.

ANOTHER MURDER

On May 12, 1981, Hamp allegedly killed again. This time it wasn't a cousin, but an old friend and dope connection, William Scott Greene. The boys had run around for years, and even lived together for a while. Hamp was best man in Scott's wedding.

Johnny Ackel described Scott as a good old cowboy, and Milo Abercrombie said he was nuttier than a fruitcake. The drugs might have done some damage. Scott ran to Hamp every time he got into trouble.

Scott's body was found awkwardly stretched between an abandoned couch and the ground at an old motor-cross track in Missouri City, his green eyes wide open. His black cowboy hat lay on the ground, and his pant leg was pulled above his left boot. One bullet entered behind his left ear at close range and exited his lower right jaw. The other bullet entered his right ear and lodged in his bone. Blood drenched his head, arms and hands, and splattered his tan T-shirt and matching tan jeans. Police found his bloody, brown leather wallet nearby. The six dollars clipped inside were bloodier than the wallet's exterior.

Two days later, Ronald "Ron" Edwin Wilkinson admitted he was there when Scott was murdered, but he was afraid to talk because "some really heavy people" were involved. Reluctantly, he related the details of the murder in a written statement. He even pointed police to the brine pit where he threw the alleged murder weapon, a .357 Colt Python.

Ron brought his friend Grady "Stewart" Williams to Missouri City police headquarters almost a week later. He also admitted his presence at the murder scene, and provided written testimony:

Scott had stole Hamp's prized brown-and-white bulldog, Shotsie, and denied it.

When Hamp, Ron and Stewart found Scott and Shotsie, they took him for a ride in Hamp's brown Cadillac. Hamp directed Stewart to a remote area off Harralson Road where he backed down a dirt road. Another friend who cruised around Missouri City with Hamp earlier that day said Hamp had joked that Charlie would be amused if he killed someone on Harralson Road.

Hamp, pistol in hand, walked Scott to the back of the car while Stewart and Ron remained inside. They snorted more cocaine, and listened to the radio. Fifteen minutes passed before Hamp yelled for Ron. As he stepped from the car, Ron saw blood on the left side of Scott's head, so he grabbed the other pistol.

Hamp told Scott he'd been nothing but trouble and questioned him about his bulldog. Scott sat on the couch in the weed-infested field and pleaded with Hamp, who towered over him, not to hit him again. He repeatedly jumped halfway up and fell back down as Hamp waved the gun in his face. Ron thought Hamp was just trying to scare Scott. He played along.

Hamp backed up, squatted down and called Ron over. In a loud voice, Hamp suggested they give Scott a break. The conditions were that Scott find his own way back to his car and leave town within 24 hours. Scott argued that some band was playing a gig, and he needed to be there.

"Useless," Hamp said. He sent Ron back to the car.

Another 15 minutes passed before Ron heard the first shot.

"Oh shit," Stewart said and looked in the rearview mirror.

Ron didn't turned around. He held his pistol and hoped Hamp had shot the ground. Another shot followed a few seconds later. Hamp held his pistol loosely, looked back at Scott and returned to the car.

"Some people get off on steer wrestling or playing golf or tennis, I get off on killing people," Hamp told them. "The last thing Scott saw was a hard on."

Hamp told Stewart to drive away slowly. They stopped at a couple of used car lots where they unloaded the dog and scored more cocaine. Before they parted, Hamp threatened Ron.

"Only three of us know about this," Hamp said. "One thing good about being separated is that if you can't get to someone, you can always get to someone they care about. You have that little girl."

William Scott Greene was pronounced dead at 8:30 p.m. He was 35 years old.
Norman Jones recalled reading in the Houston Chronicle that a hearing was scheduled to post bond for the witnesses, Ron and Stewart, so he called Harris County's assistant district attorney.

"Don't do that," Norman told him. "If you let them out of jail, they're going to disappear."

"Why do you say that?" the Harris County attorney asked.

"Because I know Hamp Robinson," Norman said.

Norman received a telephone call six months later.

"You were right," the Harris County attorney said. "They disappeared."

Hamp was indicted for Scott's murder, but the state's case went missing.

Investigators eventually found the two men, but they took the fifth, despite their earlier written testimony. Randy McDonald, Harris County assistant district attorney, said

they found one in California and the other on a shrimp boat. They were sentenced to six months in jail for contempt of court.

END OF MARRIAGE & LIFE

In 1982, Jo Ann decided to divorce Hamp and move back to Victoria. Life had become too fast and dangerous for her and Jennifer. Doc, not Hamp, fought her every step of the way. The Robinson family didn't divorce. He'd give her money, and she could disappear.

Two years and an appeal later, the judge decided in Jo Ann's favor. She got a lump sum payment of $100,000 and monthly payments of $4,000 for just over a year, lowered to $3,000 thereafter until Jennifer turned 18.

During their five-year marriage, Hamp was the beneficiary of four trusts that amounted to separate property ranging from $107,000 to $500,000 per year. Despite this, the community estate consisted of a little furniture, a horse and saddle, their personal effects and a few thousand dollars.

Hamp told Jo Ann the divorce was just a piece of paper, and that she was still his wife. He continued to visit until she and Jennifer moved to Corpus Christi. He couldn't travel that far from his drug dealer.

"He'd have to bring enough drugs to last him, and he was scared he'd run out," Jo Ann said. "That's awful. A horrible way to live. He hated doing it towards the end, but he didn't know how to get out of it."

Hamp's rap sheet continued to grow. Many speculated that his most dangerous connections were made while he served time in jail.

He pled guilty to unlawfully carrying a weapon in 1978 and 1979. He paid $500 fines and spent three days in jail for each offense. Four charges were dismissed between 1979 and 1983 including dangerous drugs delivery, unlawfully carrying a weapon,

murder and check forgery. He was indicted in 1983 for illegal drug possession. Four days later, he was charged again with possession.

In 1984, he pled guilty to both possession charges, was assessed 10-year probated sentences, paid $1,000 fines for each offense, and was ordered to serve two consecutive 30-day jail sentences. Hamp failed to surrender for the jail sentences. The judge didn't revoke his probation because Hamp showed up later with hat in hand to serve his time.

After serving two 30-day sentences, he failed to report to his probation officer, failed to pay the supervisory fee as ordered and left Harris County without permission. A hearing was held and his probation was revoked. Hamp was assessed 10 years in the Texas Department of Corrections for each offense, and his bond was set at $75,000.

In 1985, he appealed and the court upheld the convictions for each offense. Eight days later, he was arrested again for illegal possession of a pistol and drugs. He was granted shock probation and reported to Jim Tatum's Red River Ranch in Stonewall, Colorado. He was to mail a report to his probation officer and have his urine analyzed once a month. Between the two trials, Hamp pled guilty to evading arrest and was sentenced to 45 days in jail.

In 1986, Hamp's probation was revoked when Houston police received a call from police in Pueblo, Colorado. They inquired about a good-looking stranger from Texas who had befriended a cop who turned up dead. Hamp had violated two conditions of his probation: he moved to another town without informing his probation officer, and he failed to avoid a disreputable character, Alexander Ruben Valdez, currently serving time in the Colorado Territorial Correctional Facility. They didn't pin that murder on Hamp either.

Hamp married Pamela Gay in 1986 and they had a daughter, Lindsay Robinson.

Doc sent Hamp to rehabilitative hospitals, belittled him and told him he was an embarrassment to the family.

"He was in such bad shape at that time," Jo Ann said. "His dad tried to rescue him, but he had a strange way of doing it."

Not until the very end did the family give up entirely. Hamp was hanging around with drug thugs in Houston's Third Ward, and they were afraid of his company.

Hamp spent the final two weeks of his life in 1988 in a drug-induced coma. Jo Ann saw him for the last time lying unconscious and phonebook-yellow in a Houston hospital bed. Hepatitis finally got him. He was 39 years old.

Johnny Ackel got a call from Jim Tatum that the family couldn't find pallbearers. They carried opposite sides of Hamp's casket, and Johnny was nervous. A rumor was circulating that there was a bomb in the coffin.

"I was shaking in my blue jeans because anything that could happen to Hampton Robinson would be true," Johnny said. "He had plenty of people who'd have been happy to put a bomb in his coffin. Oh, hell yeah, he made people mad."

There was also buzz that a man in the congregation planned to make trouble because Hamp had murdered his daughter. Johnny watched him closely.

"When we were walking down the aisle with the casket, he went inside his coat like he was going to get a gun," Johnny said. "I almost turned my part of that casket loose and jumped on him, but he didn't come out with no gun."

At the graveside service, that man approached Doc with a note that supposedly read, "This is something that money does to everybody."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Simons, James. “Rancher Shooting Suspect in Custody.” *Victoria Advocate* 11 Oct. 1976: sec. A: 1.

Simons, James. “Robinson Indicted in Slaying of Bauer.” *Victoria Advocate* 23 Oct 1976: sec. A: 1

Simons, James. “Trial Testimony Under Way.” *Victoria Advocate* 3 March 1977: sec. A: 1

Simons, James. “Testimony Continues in Robinson Trial” *Victoria Advocate* 4 March 1977: sec. A: 1

Simons, James. “Pathologist Testifies.” *Victoria Advocate* 5 March 1977: sec. A: 1

Simons, James. “State Rests in Robinson Murder.” *Victoria Advocate* 8 March 1977: sec. A: 1

Simons, James. “Testimony Contradicted.” *Victoria Advocate* 9 March 1977: sec. A: 1

Simons, James. “Robinson To Give Testimony in Trial.” *Victoria Advocate* 10 March 1977: sec. A: 1

Simons, James. “Robinson Relates Version of Shooting.” *Victoria Advocate* 11 March 1977: sec. A: 1

Simons, James. “Testimony Ends.” *Victoria Advocate* 12 March 1977: sec. A: 1

Simons, James. “Robinson Guilty.” *Victoria Advocate* 13 March 1977: sec. A: 1

Simons, James. “Robinson Receives Jail Sentence.” *Victoria Advocate* 15 March 1977: sec. A: 1

Simons, James. “Robinson Checks In at Huntsville Jail.” *Victoria Advocate* 19 March 1977: sec. A: 1