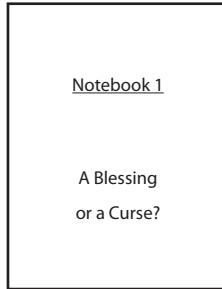


they were probably only surrogates for the real issues facing her.

She took another sip from her glass. The whiskey suddenly had acquired a new smoothness and she turned her attention to the notebook collection. The left-most volume was labeled with a big "1." Although bleary-eyed with fatigue and feeling a bit spacey from a countless series of painted yellow lines lately feeding across the highway toward her and her several fingers of whiskey, she was drawn irresistibly toward opening the cover



and reading whatever her father had left for someone. She was not sure who that someone could have been, but she had the strange sensation that perhaps he might even have done it for her. Of course it was just words put down on paper.

She opened the first.

She read for a while, and realized that this book had to do with his coming to Orebed Lake after many years absence. It recorded his impressions and told her something about the man, but she soon put it down to look at the other notebooks. The titles of the others were: *Mining*, *Family*, *Was there a Murder?* *Tales from the North Woods*, and *Passages*. She took down *Family*, hoping that it might tell her something about her own early life, but was disappointed by its first words.

"I met Mary Ann under brilliant blue skies on the shore of Tupper Lake."

She had not known her name, but could only surmise that Mary Ann was his second wife. And those words told her that

## **Orebed Lake**

the family of this volume was not her own. Having decided to defer all the other volumes to a later time, only one irresistibly drew her attention.

She began to read.

## ▲ Murder in Orebed Lake

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Notebook 4

Was there a Murder  
in Orebed Lake?

Anyone reading this needs to understand one important fact. In my role as a Detective Sergeant of the Bureau of Criminal Investigation and a part of the New York State Police organization, it was never my duty to accuse anyone of a crime. My specific responsibilities involved investigating criminal activities, but also circumstances in which a crime might have been committed. As a practical matter, I was responsible for investigating all fatal accidents in my district, with the goal of shedding light on whether a crime might have been responsible for the death or deaths. As should be apparent, with drunken drivers, hunting accidents, drownings, and suicides, a great many of the incidents I investigated had to do with dead people, but did not have to do with willful wrongdoing on the part of any living persons. Even when it appeared that criminal intent might have been involved, my role was only to accumulate the evidence. It

## **Orebed Lake**

was up to the District Attorney, Grand Juries, and others to make the determination as to whether anyone was to be charged with a crime. Nevertheless, I always felt I had a solemn duty to discover the truth so that others could act justly.

I begin with this preface because although I no longer am a "BCI man," I regarded it then and continue to regard it as an ethical obligation to keep to myself my personal judgments, beliefs, and conclusions regarding the possible criminal actions of any living persons. To some extent it might be argued that by these writings I am making such a revelation, and thus betraying that trust from beyond the grave. Therefore, I also charge any readers of this account with a similar responsibility—they too are bound by what I see as an ethical and moral responsibility to resist any disclosures or actions based on what I have written here. As it would have been unethical for me as the living Sergeant Fred McGonegal to reveal his suspicions to anyone, so would it be a breach of ethics for any readers likewise to make public the beliefs expressed in this memoir.

Despite the danger and risk of transgressing ethical bounds by the words expressed here, I feel compelled for history, justice, and my own peace of mind to record my recollections of what many believed to have been a murder in Orebed Lake.

It was June 8, 1956. The call had come in at 9:40 AM the previous day informing me there had been a drowning and that the victim was a member of a prominent family. Unfortunately, I was due in a courtroom that day, and in fact spent most of it waiting to

## Orebed Lake

testify in a high-profile trial. Consequently, I was unable to begin my investigation until the day after the event. This was unfortunate and frustrating, as I knew the case in Orebed Lake was to be a sensitive and possibly explosive one. I was aware of certain things about the Goodrich family, although much of what I knew was common knowledge. And, people being as they are, much of what was represented as knowledge was possibly just rumor and speculation.

The Goodriches had money, kept to themselves, and everybody knew that their fortune had begun with the old man. He was an immigrant from somewhere in eastern Europe who people said had made a killing by bringing liquor across from Canada during Prohibition. As if that wasn't enough, after the repeal of Prohibition, the family enterprise appeared to have morphed into a cigarette vending machine business—widely believed to have specialized in the importation of bootleg cigarettes. I never saw any evidence, but the cigarette story made some sense by the closeness of the area to the isolated of unguarded territory along the Canadian border. It was also possible that anyone with criminal intent might have taken advantage of the opportunities for getting tax-free cigarettes provided by the Indian reservation that spanned both sides of the border. Anyhow, evasion of cigarette taxes may have been integral to the family business, although it was said that the vending machine business was so profitable it resembled a racket even when conducted entirely within the law.

Another fact made the case of unusual interest to me. My single prior professional experience with the Goodrich family was

## **Orebed Lake**

occasioned by an apparent hit-and-run episode. The victim, who was severely maimed, first blamed Hugo Goodrich's oldest son with running him down with his car while driving drunk. Part way through the investigation, however, the victim changed his story, stating that he was run down not by a red Chevrolet convertible like the one driven by young Goodrich, but rather by a maroon Pontiac station wagon with Canadian license plates. There was no way to discover the truth, but it certainly seemed possible that the victim had been offered and accepted a large bribe in order to change his story.

There were rumors also, about a wife who had disappeared. Said to have returned to her birthplace in Europe, no one outside the family had seen her leave and many believed that her disappearance had a more sinister cause.

When I arrived in Orebed Lake one day after the drowning, I first got a report from Trooper Baldwin, based on his findings the previous day. The story he related went something like this—you have to realize that my official reports would have been much more detailed, but they were not my property and I would not have been permitted to keep a copy under any circumstances. And of course it would have unthinkable to use the contents of that report to provide details for a memoir like this one—even if the opportunity were to present itself.

A teenage boy discovered the floating body, and ran to tell a neighbor, who called the Rescue Squad. They arrived soon, recovered the body and brought it to shore, where they immediately recognized the victim as Christine

## Orebed Lake

Goodrich. Everyone in town knew who the Goodriches were, at least by sight. She was clearly dead, and no one made any attempt to resuscitate her.

There was a problem in that the funeral director was at an all-day service out of town, and the hearse was not available to transport the remains. One of the men on the Rescue Squad went back to the firehouse to get a litter and sheet. By then Trooper Baldwin had been called, and he arrived also. Baldwin, new to the job and not yet used to the presence of death, was still quite shaken a day later. And although he adequately described to me the basics of what had happened, he also included some useless details. For example, he related that the wire mesh litter brought to the scene by someone from the Rescue Squad had a narrow sheet of thin plywood wired to the bottom, making it a sort of toboggan—this because it was used by the local ski patrol to carry injured skiers down the hill.

He repeated that the subject was obviously dead, and the local doctor had agreed to meet them in the hospital morgue and to prepare a death certificate. With no hearse, they were forced to use the Rescue Squad's Ford Rancho pickup truck to bring the body the half-mile to the hospital. Assistant squad leader Hank Pelletier was in charge of the scene. Peter Henri, the regular Squad Leader was working the 7:00-3:00 shift at the mine. Pelletier thought it disrespectful to carry the body in an open truck bed, and he decided to ride with it in the back of the truck. Hat in hand, he said he believed his presence with the body in the truck bed made the trip seem more dignified. Baldwin was much impressed by

## Orebed Lake

this and remarked that although he had known Pelletier for two months, he had been unaware to that point what a fine man he was. I might add that in this line of work you experience many such events—where you get glimpses of the best and worst qualities of mankind, often appearing in the same scene.

Trooper Baldwin and Dr. French both followed procedure, the first calling me, so I could plan my investigation, and the other calling the county medical examiner. As no other transport for the body was available, Dr. French asked the medical examiner to send an ambulance or hearse from the county seat in Prague to carry the body to the morgue.

Trooper Baldwin went to inform the Goodrich family of what had happened; at their home he was met with a strange, originally hostile, reaction. They demanded to know when the body would be released to them, stated that they were opposed to any "intrusive procedures," suggesting autopsies, and further stated that the family's lawyers would be heard from soon regarding their expectations.

The ambulance from Prague did not arrive until after 4 PM, and almost everyone had gone home before the body reached the county morgue; the examination would have to wait until the next day. So a full day and perhaps longer elapsed before the examination, and any chance to precisely determine the time of death was thereby squandered.

Of course by the time I arrived the next day the body had already been removed to the medical examiner's office in Prague. I interviewed the boy who found the body and members of the rescue squad. I had a brief,



## Orebed Lake

tense interview with Hugo Goodrich's eldest son, who informed me that his father was under heavy sedation and wholly uncommunicative. I would be able to speak with him later in the week, he told me, after the sedative had worn off and his attorney had arrived.

It was evident to me immediately that there was the need for a thorough investigation. Despite being an Olympic-class swimmer and some curious findings - a torn seam on her Speedo brand swimsuit which she had specially gotten from Australia, and no swim cap, which she normally wore—there was no real physical evidence to go on. The medical examiner found no bruises or signs such as might have been produced by collision with a boat or a blow delivered by an assailant, and there was water in the lungs. The coroner—perhaps in a hurry because the Goodrich lawyers were calling—ruled the death an accidental drowning and released the body.

As a result of the coroner's decision and no real evidence of wrong-doing, my investigation came to a sudden halt. There was no longer any justification to continue with what might have been a criminal investigation. My inquiry was essentially finished, and I was never able to interview Hugo Goodrich.

However, I was not satisfied. As I said, I was also well aware of the family's reputed underworld connections and rumored background. I also found the accidental drowning scenario to be less than plausible. Olympic class swimmers don't drown during routine morning workouts for no apparent reason, and there were the other anomalies, although trivial ones. It could be possible, I thought, that

## **Orebed Lake**

something to do with the family's illicit business was involved.

Rumors about the Goodrich family, perhaps mostly unfounded, nevertheless had circulated widely in Orebed Lake. Christine Goodrich seemed to fit in poorly with the rough-cut Goodriches, and persistent gossip told of discord. Even I could not completely ignore the suggestion that urbane and sophisticated Christine might have become aware of and disgusted by the family's business practices. Perhaps, if this were true, having Christine alive was inconvenient for the family. For example, she might have pressured them to give up their criminal activities and even gone so far as threatening to expose them. Regardless of the specifics, I was perhaps troubled most of all by the belief that another member of the Goodrich family was once again to be immune from the law and had no obligation to account for his actions.

These thoughts continued to work on my mind, and two months after the Medical Examiner's ruling, I recommended to the District Attorney that the case be reopened and the body exhumed. I noted that the woman had been quite dead when her body was discovered, no determination of the time of death was ever made, and the assumption was that she had drowned sometime during her regular morning swim. I had reason to suspect, I noted, that she had been drowned earlier—probably in a bathtub—and her body later placed in the lake. The torn seam in the swimsuit could have resulted from the difficult task of dressing a dead and limp body in the tight-fitting suit. And putting on the bathing cap she normally wore could have been impossible once she was dead.

## Orebed Lake

I had been assured by the crime lab in Albany that traces of soap in the fluid in her lungs would still be detectable after so long an interval, and I would request that the tests be performed. I will add nothing to the accompanying photocopy of a letter from the downstate law firm representing the Goodrich family noting that any attempt at exhumation would increase the burden of anguish on the family and would be strongly opposed by all available legal means.

The issue ended at that point. However, the Goodrich home on the lake burned shortly after the drowning, and the family moved to a hunting camp, which they began enlarging as a year-round residence. After these events, anyone who believed the crime of murder had been committed and was in fact committed in that house, was faced with the new facts that both the victim's body and the scene of that crime had disappeared and were no longer available for investigation.

In this retelling at the distance of many years after the actual events, my actions seem even to me to have been abrupt. I had no choice, however. Had I been able to travel to Orebed Lake to aggressively manage the initial phases of the investigation, and had the Goodrich family not acted so effectively in stifling my investigation, the outcome might have been far different. Circumstances, whether of human or natural origin, made it impossible for me to do my duty. And while my recommendations to the District Attorney may in retrospect seem rash, they reflected accurately the depths of my frustration.

## Orebed Lake

Anyone reading this and knowing my personal history and circumstances may wonder whether my deciding to come to Orebed Lake had anything to do with my continuing regrets about this long ago investigation and the fact that Hugo Goodrich still lives here as a free man. I think it did not. I grew up here. I have known people living in the area for many years, and my family has roots here going back a long time. Somehow it just seemed to be the right place and, as I related in Notebook 1, I was able to find a camp that met my needs.

Having written the above, I must admit that I have asked myself the same question. Did something going on out of the reach of my consciousness tell me that living here would let me keep an eye on old Hugo, and pounce if I ever saw a chance of solving that long ago crime. The vision of Hugo as a man able to get away with murder—in part because I was unable to do my duty—has hounded me over the years. And I realized that I must be an inhabitant of his subconscious also, and in fact his worst nightmare. Close by one another or far apart, we probably both continue to haunt one another in more or less equal measures.