

'Helter Skelter' author is back

Attorney pens 2nd book

By F'IRLEED IDEN

An old Chinese proverb says "the palest ink is better than the finest memory."

Vincent Bugliosi, the California attorney who put Charles Manson behind bars, contends his habit of writing everything "on that yellow legal pad" has helped him both as an attorney and as an author.

Bugliosi, who was an assistant district attorney in Los Angeles County when the Manson family came to trial for murder, successfully prosecuted the bizarre group and then co-authored the best-selling "Helter-Skelter."

His latest book, "Till Death Do Us Part," written with Ken Turwitz, tells the story of his most disturbing murder case and how he managed to get a conviction in a case with no hard evidence, no confession, no murder weapon.

It is based on a case that began in Los Angeles in 1956 when a man named Henry Stockton was found dead from multiple bullet wounds in his burning home.

A second murder, 16 months later, involved another shooting. This time 22-year-old Judy Pallito was gunned and bludgeoned to death in the parking lot of her apartment complex.

"Till Death Do Us Part" tells the story of how Bugliosi and the Los Angeles police pursued their investigation, connected the murder victims with their murderers and persuaded a Los Angeles jury to vote for the death penalty, albeit on circumstantial evidence.

Bugliosi is especially proud of the comment of famed criminal lawyer F. Lee Bailey, who said the authors have "written a crime book that should be read by every lawyer and every judge in America."

A graduate of UCLA Law School in 1964, Bugliosi spent eight years as a prosecutor for the Los Angeles District Attorney's office. During that time he

tried close to 1,000 felony and misdemeanor cases, always writing prodigiously on that yellow legal pad.

Of 106 felony cases, he lost one.

Today he lives in Los Angeles with his wife, Gail, who he says has "more common sense than I have," and two children, Vincent, 13, and Wendy, 15.

No one attorney, Bugliosi, a Minnesota native, said. "No one plays tennis in northern Minnesota, but I did."

"I won championships that were never before won that far north. Tennis was my life, but I had enough sense to know I didn't want to be a tennis bum."

The young Bugliosi listed the things he liked and didn't like and what he could and couldn't do.

"I didn't like math and I didn't want medicine or salesmanship," he said. "I like words and drawing inferences and so I decided I was only qualified to be an attorney."

THE UNIVERSITY of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) Law School agreed he might be right and he was accepted, though he questions whether he would be today.

Bugliosi said law schools are tougher to get into and out of today and the profession is getting overcrowded.

"I've taught in law schools and I lecture in them from time to time," he said. "I see from 30-35 percent of the students are women and they seem to do better because they are conscientious."

"But what's difficult to understand is how most of these students work so hard in law school and then come to court unprepared."

As to whether the proximity to the Hollywood fantasies have rubbed off on his own courtroom conduct, Bugliosi admitted he emotes and acts in front of a jury.

"But I don't think I have show business qualities, you have to show emotion, but I depend on hard work," he said.

"A Los Angeles reporter approached me to write a book about the Manson case and, since there was no serious work being attempted, I did."

— Vincent Bugliosi, attorney

And further, he contends, television cameras in the courtroom are a mistake.

"PEOPLE'S LIVES are at stake in the courtroom and I'm opposed to allowing cameras in. Participants in the courtroom drama should be concentrating on what they're doing. In one case, where cameras were allowed, they said one lawyer was wearing make-up."

Now working in a private criminal dramatic cases have been treated in his first documentary books.

"I'm just a trial lawyer who had two interested cases," he said. "A Los Angeles reporter approached me to write a book about the Manson case and, since there was no serious work being attempted, I did."

He said the first publisher he approached wanted a quick, sensational book, so he changed publishers. The success of "Helter-Skelter" was a surprise to both its authors and the publisher.

"They wanted a second book and there was only one other murder case out of 21 I handled that would lend itself to a book," he said.

Bugliosi said his own legal temperament is mercurial and his personality undergoes marked changes when he enters the courtroom.

"MY WIFE is constantly amazed. I



VINCENT BUGLIOSI

practice, Bugliosi said it's that criminal lawyer, not the best-selling author or hard-hitting prosecutor, who's the real Vincent Bugliosi.

He did say he might someday write a novel, particularly since his two most walk around the house noticing nothing but when I get into a trial, my senses are heightened and I have intense awareness.

Bugliosi contends that he would not, as a criminal lawyer, defend a client such as Charles Manson.

"Not unless I was the only lawyer in town," he said. "The Sixth Amendment of the Constitution gives him the right to counsel, but if I felt there was guilt and no mitigating circumstances, I would draw the line and not get involved."

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