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FLORIDA'S GUN GIRL
ON A MOTORCYCLE

TRUE CASES FROM POLICE HEADQUARTERS

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INDIANA'S SAVAGE "CAT WOMAN" SLAYING

Muncie detectives were sure two witnesses held the key to the mystery, but the girls were too terrified to talk

DEATH STALKED THE WEALTHY SISTERS

The Louisiana spinsters didn't know it, but they were being cased for a "killing"

NEW JERSEY'S MOST BAFFLING MURDER CASE

State police questioned 400 people and studied thousands of handwriting samples to narrow their suspects to one man





A state trooper checks a bullet hole in murder car. This slug missed the victim. Two others lodged in back of his head

NEW JERSEY'S MOST BAFFLING MURDER CASE

Police had only a couple of clues to go on. Before they solved the puzzler they had questioned 400 people and examined thousands of samples of handwriting

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by JOHN PEARDON

Lieutenant Harry Armano, Det. Rulon Peek of New Jersey State Police, compare photos and handwriting samples of a suspect

FRANK EGNER eased his bone-weary frame into the big, tufted easy chair in the living room and settled back for a quiet evening of television.

He allowed his calloused hands and muscular, timber-sized arms to hang limply over the sides of the chair as the coiled tautness in his powerful body began slowly, under the narcotic of inaction, to unwind.

"How about a beer?" he called out to his wife, Alice, in the kitchen.

"In a minute," she replied, her own voice edged with fatigue.

They were rare, these evenings at home. Frank Egner was 41 years old, yet he lived with the restless energy of a man half his age. He worked full time as a tool and die maker, and part time as a bartender at the Antlers, a local beer hall a few miles away. Additionally, because of his skills with all things mechanical, he was frequently called on to help fix somebody's car.

But now on the Monday evening in April he found himself idle and anxious for a peaceful time at home. The day's work was behind him and it was someone else's

turn to work the long oaken bar at the Antlers. Frank Egner slouched deeply and comfortably in the big chair, reached for the beer Alice had brought him, and drew mightily on it. Then the telephone rang.

Egner winced at its sharp, jangling sound. He heard Alice's light footsteps as she walked toward the source of the intrusion but he knew instinctively it would be for him and said sharply, "Never mind, I'll get it."

Swearing softly at the interruption, he grabbed the receiver, listened briefly, then said "Yes, all right." He repeated the words three more times and hung up.

"Somebody's car broke down," he said to his wife as he walked to the closet and donned a lightweight jacket to warm him against the cool evening breezes. "I'm going to help. I'll be back."

Darkness had already dropped its soft mantle on the evening when Egner stepped from his home at 810 Main Street, in Maple Shade, a tiny farm community in the flat, sandy countryside of southern New Jersey. Out on the sidewalk, he jammed a cigarette into his mouth, cupped the match's flame against the wind and lit up. For perhaps



A phone call lured Frank Egner from his N. J. home

10 seconds he stared oddly at the burnt-out end of the match, but his thoughts seemed far removed from the thin blue wisps of smoke that rose in the night air. Then he climbed into his car parked at the curb and roared off into the darkness.

Frank Egner never did get to enjoy his evening of television. He never came home. Sometime within the hour and a half after he rode off, someone in a furious orgy of gunfire had drilled two bullet holes into his head and sprayed the inside of Egner's car with three wild shots. The identity of his killer remained a mystery until May, 1961.

At 9:45 p.m., a motorist driving along the woods-and-farm-lined Evesboro-Medford Road winding picturesquely through Maple Shade and its neighboring towns spotted a car stopped along the roadside about nine miles from Egner's home. Its headlamps sent out two thin spears of light.

"Need help, stranger?" the motorist said, crawling to a stop.

There was no answer, of course, because Frank Egner, slumped down in the front seat in a posture of sleep, lay dead, very dead, with one bullet hole just behind his left ear and another inches above the nape of his neck.

Thus began the most frustrating murder case state police in southern New Jersey ever encountered. For two full years, a team of state police detectives dogged the case relentlessly, checking and rechecking bits of evidence, investigating every trifling trickle of new information that came in, questioning hundreds upon hundreds of people, gathering a small mountain of written material, often progressing on nothing more than hope and wild hunches, frequently interrupted to work on other, more immediately pressing cases, but never giving up, never stopping in their determined hunt for the killer of Frank Egner.

But back to that warm, starless evening of April 13, 1959. . . .

Notified of the slaying by the stunned motorist, a three-man team of detectives from the Hammonton, N. J., barracks of the state police pulled up at the murder scene shortly before 10 p.m. Heading the team was Detective Lt. Harry Armano, commander of Troop A at Hammonton. With him were Detectives First Class Rulan Peek and James Brennan.

A quick check through the dead man's wallet identified him as Egner. Throughout the next couple of hours, the standard preliminary work in any murder investigation proceeded in the darkness. The car was dusted for fingerprints and moved to the state police garage at Hammonton. A search was made for the bullets, the body was taken to the morgue, the necessary photographs were taken to be introduced later, if necessary, as evidence.

Then came the most distasteful part of any cop's job—talking to the family of the victim of a murder or any other violent death. Alice Egner, 38, an attractive mother of four children, had already been told of her husband's death by telephone, but now Lt. Armano and Detectives Peek and Brennan had to visit her in person. The lieutenant had asked her to wait at home until they got there. They arrived shortly after midnight.

Her dark brown eyes dulled and still misty from the lonely hours of weeping, Alice Egner sat in the same easy chair her husband had occupied only hours earlier and answered the detectives' questions.

"I don't know. It seems impossible," she murmured. "I don't have any idea who'd want to kill Frank. I can't believe it." She wrung her hands.

"Did he have any enemies you know of?" the lieutenant asked.

"No. No. Frank had no enemies. I mean, sure, he might have known one or two people that didn't like him, but I'm sure he didn't have any real enemies."

"He had one," Detective Peek observed. "The one who killed him."

"Do you know who it was that telephoned him?"

"No, he didn't mention any name."

"You didn't recognize the voice?"

"I didn't answer it. He did."

"It may have been Ted," another voice suddenly volunteered.

"Ted? Ted who?" Lt. Armano directed his question to the Egner child who had spoken.

"Ted Wurster over in Marlton Manor."

"Ted's my husband's best friend," Mrs. Egner interjected.

Lt. Armano turned again to the child. "What makes you think it was Ted Wurster?" he asked.

"Because he always calls Dad to come out to fix his car when it breaks down."

The detectives questioned the family for the next half hour, learning as much as they could about the dead man—his place of work, his habits, his friends, whether he was in debt, anything at all that might shed some light on his murder. Then they left.

"Where to?" Detective Brennan asked as the engine of the state trooper's cruiser rumbled to life.

"Back to the barracks," the lieutenant said. "We'll see what the lab boys have found out. We'll hit Wurster's place tomorrow."

At headquarters, the investigators learned that Egner had died from two .22-caliber bullets fired at a range of perhaps two or three feet. All five spent bullets—the two that had found their deadly mark and the three lodged in the padding of the car's ceiling had been recovered. The coroner's ruling was brief. Egner's death was homicide.

The sky, emptied of the clouds that had threatened one of New Jersey's drenching Spring rains the night before, dawned diamond-clear on the morning of Tuesday, April 20th, and the first day of the incredible two-year investigation began.

Detective Walter Moore and Anthony Cowell had now joined Lt. Armano and Detectives Peek and Brennan on the case, and together the team toured the South Jersey farmlands just burgeoning into full green life with the early stirrings of spring. The fragrance of clover and dogwood scented the air as the detectives made their rounds, questioning all residents along the Evesboro-Medford road, asking if they had heard or seen anything unusual or extraordinary between 8 p.m. when Egner had left home

and 9:45 when his blood-stained body was discovered.

None had heard any voices arguing along the road, or witnessed any car they recognized, or seen anyone walking in the area. The only name introduced thus far in the investigation had been Ted Wurster's. Did they know him? Some did. Others did not. Some knew he worked as a bartender at the Antlers. He seemed, they said, very friendly with Egner.

The detectives' investigation took them to a bar at the south end of the Evesboro-Medford road. The bartender who had worked the previous night was back on duty.

"No," he said, his arm making a circular motion as he wiped down the bar. "Frank Egner wasn't in here last night. He comes in sometimes. Him and his wife and sometimes the four of them, the Egners and the Wursters. But he wasn't in here last night."

"How about Wurster?" the lieutenant asked.

"Nope. He didn't do any drinking in here last night either. He stopped in around eight or so, maybe a little earlier, but all I did was give him some change and he made a phone call. He didn't have anything to drink."

After talking to the bartender and other residents in the immediate area of the bar, the detectives drove back to the spot where Egner had met his execution. In the morning's sunlight, the investigators hoped to find the death weapon. The darkness of the night before had precluded anything but a superficial search by flashlight. The gun was not there, either in the patches of woods nearby or along the farm fields lining the road in either direction.

The bright, sunny day slid by as the investigation went forward. Early that evening, after waiting for him to return from his job in Philadelphia, Lieutenant Armano and Detectives Peek and Brennan called at the home of Theodore Wurster. He accompanied them back to the Hammon-ton barracks.

"How long did you know Egner?" Lt. Armano asked him.

"We were friends for about 12 years," Wurster replied. "We went out together a lot with our wives. Fran—that's my wife—and Alice Egner were good friends, too."

Wurster told the interrogators that he worked as a salesman in Philadelphia, that he had previously worked as a plumber, and added some additional information about his friendship with Egner. Then Lieutenant Armano asked:

"What was the matter with your car last night?"

"My car? Nothing."

"Then why did you call Egner to come fix it?"

"I didn't call Egner. That was someone else, not me."

"Who did you call around 8 p.m.?"

"No one."

It was out. A statement that apparently tripped up Wurster. The interrogators huddled for a brief few moments while Wurster, now suddenly nervous, watched in bewilderment.

"Okay," the lieutenant said, stepping back to confront Wurster. "We're holding you as a material witness."

"Why?" the stunned Wurster asked.

"Because you lied about the phone call. We know you went into a bar around eight last night. We know you asked for change and we know you made a telephone call."

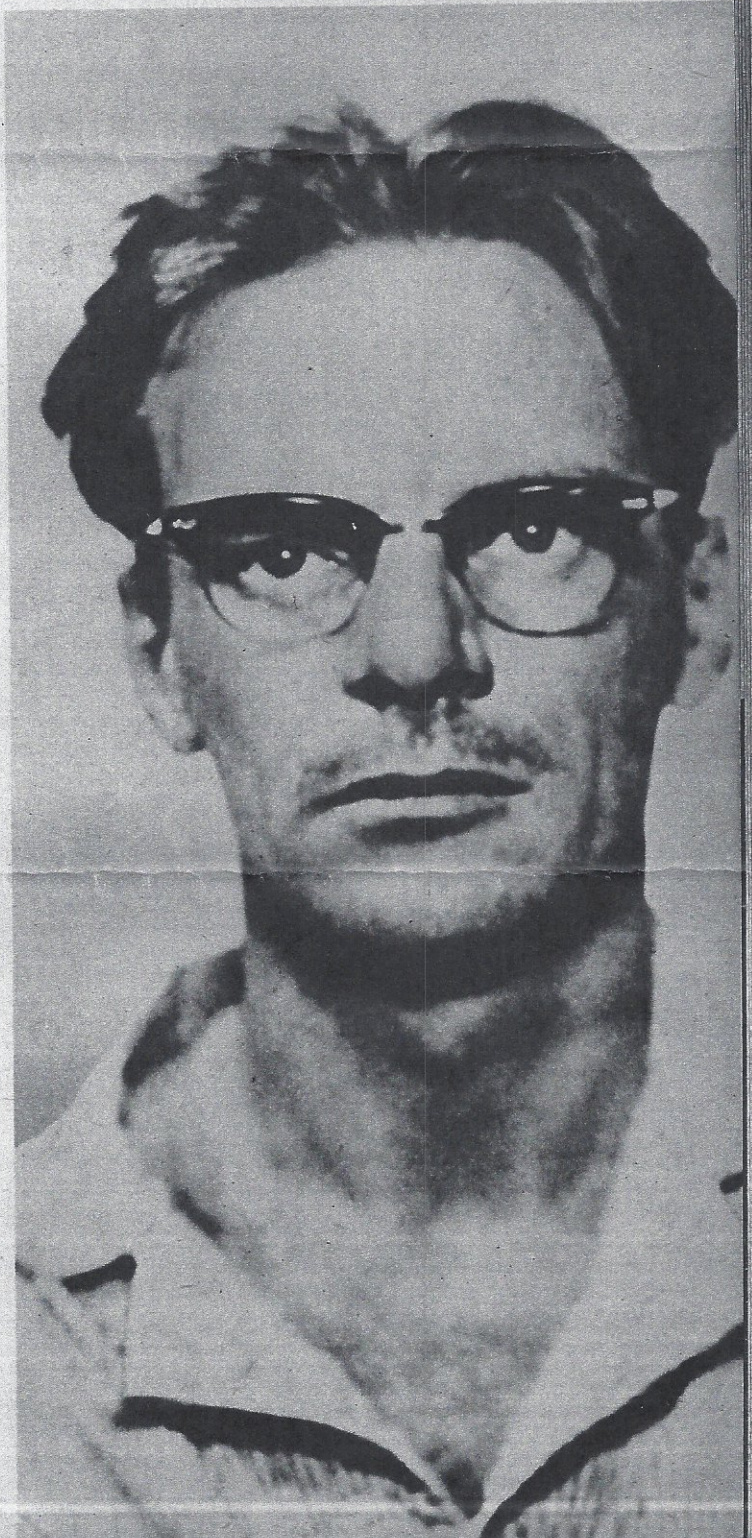
From then on, Wurster refused to answer any questions. He was questioned until two o'clock the next morning. Once or twice, the detectives thought, he seemed on the verge of breaking his silence, but he always stopped short. He was held in jail that night. The next day police granted his request to see a lawyer and a short while later he was released. There was no evidence to justify holding him.

Now began one of the most staggeringly minute and detailed investigations ever launched anywhere—an investigation that was to last exactly two years and 21 days

and come to an end on the morning of May 10, 1961.

Lieutenant Armano, because he had a troop to administer, was able to take only limited participation in the case during the long months ahead and the case was assigned to Detectives Peek and Brennan. From time to time, of course, Lt. Armano, along with Detectives Moore and Cowell, conferred with the two men in charge of the investigation. Both Detective Peek and Detective Brennan themselves were pulled off the case a dozen times across that seemingly endless two-year stretch to assist in other investigations, but they always returned to it. When they were needed, state troopers from Philadelphia, Baltimore and other areas of Maryland also helped out.

In the weeks and months that followed Egner's death, Wurster was tailed often—to his (Continued on page 68)



Handwriting samples led state police to Theodore Wurster ➔

New Jersey's Most Baffling Murder Case

(Continued from page 49)

place of work, to his home, to the Antlers where he still worked part-time, to other bars he frequented. If he was the guilty one, then he might, the detectives hoped, inadvertently drop some incriminating remark. More important, he might, since he did not know that he was being followed, lead them to the crucial bit of evidence, the murder gun.

It was all in vain. Wurster was either innocent or playing it very cagily. In the meantime, the detectives had other avenues to pursue.

They talked with scores of Wurster's co-workers and scores of people who knew the dead man. They questioned anyone who might shed some light on the murder. Even the owner of the candy store Wurster patronized was interrogated. So was the milkman servicing Marlton Manor. The detectives fanned out through Burlington County, always questioning, always digging.

Meanwhile the investigators had run a check on Wurster. They found, among other things, that he had been arrested in Philadelphia in 1950 for possession of

lewd and pornographic pictures. He had been fined \$250 as a first offender. After that, his record was clean.

Throughout the long, tedious investigation, detectives had sought to discover some possible motive Wurster might have had for killing Egner. They questioned officials of dozens of banks to ascertain if Wurster had secretly taken out any bank loans to pay off a debt. They were going on the theory Egner might somehow have been black mailing Wurster. The banks checked their records. Wurster owed money to none of them. Once again the detectives went back to Wurster's employes and co-workers, this time to ask if he had seemed troubled recently with debts. All said no.

Since many murders hinge on jealousy or a distorted love life, the detectives began checking around to discover, if possible, whether Egner and Wurster might have become bitter enemies over a woman. On the surface both were happily married. Frank and Alice Egner had four children; Ted and Fran Wurster, seven. Yet, clandestinely, the two men might have fallen in love with the same third woman and if so, the detectives wanted to know.

Endless checking seemed to rule out this possibility. As so often happens in small communities, Frank Egner and Ted Wurster were known well and widely; any secret, furtive arrangements with a mistress could not have gone unnoticed. No one questioned knew of any third woman in either man's life.

As for the possibility that either man

might have been interested in the other's wife, the same kind of checking appeared to rule that out. The four—Fran and Ted Wurster and Alice and Frank Egner—were seen together frequently at the Antlers and other public eating and drinking places. The couples also exchanged dinner dates at home quite often.

Month after month the investigation continued without producing even the first faint fissure that might later widen into a major breakthrough.

The death weapon appeared literally to have vanished from the face of the earth. Teams of experts with mine detectors were pressed into service to sweep large vistas of the flat but compellingly beautiful South Jersey countryside for the gun. Acres of farmland were covered and so were the ribbons of earth paralleling the Evesboro-Medford road in both directions, as well as all other roads in the vicinity. Dozens of old discarded firearms were found and several were .22-caliber pistols, but ballistic tests eliminated all of them as the death gun.

And still time flew by. The Spring of Frank Egner's death blossomed into a rich green summer. Then the browns and burnt reds and the flaming golds of Autumn blazoned across the landscape, only to submit in melancholy surrender to the bitter, biting winter of the area.

Then it was Spring again. A whole year had gone by and through it all, the murder remained frustratingly unsolved. Wurster was still the prime suspect, and, in fact, the only suspect. But he was beyond reach.

Lieutenant Armano sighed. It was at another of his meetings with Detectives Peek, Brennan, Moore and Cowell. With less and less to report, the meetings had become increasingly rare.

"This is a tough one, boys," the lieutenant mused. Armano, a strong, leathery 47, with 22 years behind him as a state trooper, sighed again.

"What we need," he said, "is a good break. I've never seen a case so slippery, so tough to get a solid grip on."

"Something will come up," said Detective Peek. "It usually does."

"That's so," the lieutenant agreed. "We'll just have to keep working. We'll find that breakthrough yet."

It came a few days later.

The April rains had softened the earth, and the soil, coming alive under the warming rays of the Spring sun, was ready again in the never-changing cycle of seasons for the first bite of the farmer's plow. New Jersey in the time of reaping can be beautiful to look upon with the rich brown earth burgeoning with its promise of a plentiful harvest, and maybe Charles Haskins was lost in the beauty of his land when the harsh crunch of the silvery plow blade snapped his attention to the ground beneath him. It was May 7, 1960 and sweltering with an unseasonal heat as though a mid-August day had strayed impatiently and dawned unnaturally two months ahead of its time. Haskins, squinting against the sun, peered at the upturned loam and spotted the object his plow blade had scraped.

It was covered with a year's rust, but its outline was unmistakable. He had uncovered the frame of a pistol. The farmer climbed down from his tractor seat and looked at the gun closely. Was it a toy? He couldn't be sure. One thing was evident. It had been badly broken, not by his plow but by whoever threw it there. The frame was intact but the butt handle was gone; so was the trigger mechanism and perhaps one



CALVIN

"Are you the baby sitter?"

other part. Kicking the dirt underfoot carefully, Haskins found the butt a few minutes later but further searching failed to turn up the other parts.

Should he throw the two pieces away? He thought he might as well. Without the other parts they were obviously unusable. But suddenly the memory of the mine detectors sweeping across his farm—a huge acreage bordering on the Evesboro-Medford road—flashed into his mind and in the same instant, he knew what he was holding in his hand.

The Egner death weapon! Haskins drove hurriedly to the state police barracks at Red Lion, New Jersey, and the trooper there brought it in turn to Lieutenant Armano at Hammonton. Haskins accompanied them.

The excited farmer described the exact spot he had found the two rust-coated gun fragments. It was just slightly more than three-quarters of a mile from the place where Egner had been slain. A further search of the field was made but the other parts were not found. Similar searches were made in the adjoining fields, but the results were the same. Meanwhile the frame and the butt handle were sent to the state police crime laboratory in Trenton, the state capital, where, with painstaking care, the thick, brittle cover of rust and a hard undercoating of mud were removed.

Rid of the rust and grime, the now smoothly oiled fragments showed with unmistakable clarity both the serial number and the make of the gun.

It had been manufactured in Spain, but by tracing the serial number, detectives learned that it had been imported into the United States by the Astra Company of New York. An official of the firm checked the files and discovered that the gun had been shipped

to the Western Auto Company, a retail outlet in Elkton, Maryland.

It was now June, 1960, 13 months since Frank Egner had met his death, but the detectives, re-energized by the good fortune of the gun's discovery, moved swiftly, sensing they might at long last be coming into the final stretch. Lieutenant Armano, taking personal charge of the case again, went with Detectives Peek, Brennan, Moore and Cowell and a contingent of Maryland state troopers and police to Elkton where they talked to the counter clerk at Western Auto.

The State of Maryland does not require a person purchasing a gun to have a license, but it does require him to fill out a detailed application form printed on white 8-by-11 paper. The application demands such information as name, occupation, place of employment, home address, height, weight and date of birth.

Armano immediately wanted to know if anyone named Theodore F. Wurster had purchased a .22 automatic bearing the serial number on the gun found in Haskins' farm. The clerk, who lived in Elkton, hauled out the store's thick record files and carefully went through them. There had been no sale of a weapon to any Theodore Wurster, he said.

"I'd like to take a look at all the purchase applications for a .22 caliber automatic for the past year," Lieutenant Armano said.

The clerk rifled through the files and came up with a sheet of the white forms. One by one, Armano and his aides studied them.

Suddenly Detective Peek exclaimed: "Look at this!"

On February 7, 1959, two months before Egner's murder, a man listing his

name as John Wade of 3016 Huron St., Baltimore, had purchased a .22 automatic. The name meant nothing. But in the rest of the spaces the purchaser had described himself as white, male, five feet 11½ inches, 125 pounds, blue eyes, blond hair and a plumber by occupation. He listed his date of birth as Oct. 17, 1926.

The detectives looked at each other. Except for the "John Wade," the man filling out the application form matched in every way the identification of Theodore F. Wurster. Even the birthday was the same. And the detectives recalled, of course, that before taking his present job as a salesman, Wurster had worked as a plumber.

Was it a coincidence? An incredible coincidence? Or had Wurster, thinking it sufficient protection, written down the false name and then automatically entered correct answers in the rest of the blank spaces?

The detectives determined to find out. They sped to the Baltimore address on the application but found no John Wade living there. They had more or less expected that John Wade might be a phantom name, perhaps plucked haphazardly from the telephone book. But they didn't expect to find what they did. In questioning the building's owner, they learned that at the time of the gun purchase, in February 1959, the person living at 3016 Huron St., was—Frederick R. Wurster!

Again the odd, unexplainable twist. Could Frederick R. Wurster be some relative who had acted as a confederate for Ted Wurster? The question was soon answered. The detectives traced Frederick Wurster to his new address—he had moved to the Midwest—and discovered he was not related to the

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Name Age.....

Address

City Zone..... State.....

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Wurster in Marlton Manor, did not know him, and had not the remotest connection with the investigation!

"Weird," pondered Lt. Armano aloud. "Why someone with the name of Wurster? Could he have gone through the Baltimore phone book for someone named Wurster and planned to buy the gun under that name?"

"Maybe so," said Detective Brennan. "But if so, he sure changed his mind at the last minute."

"Yeah, but then he must have had to come up with a name very quickly—probably just as he was filling out the application," said the lieutenant. "And if that's true, it's a good bet he actually knows, or knew, someone named John Wade. Let's try to find him."

All those steps in the new phase of the investigation had taken time—the days needed to clean the gun fragments at Trenton and ship them back to Hammonton; the weeks to trace the gun to the importer and thence to the retail store in Elkton. More time to find and clear the completely innocent Frederick R. Wurster and now more long and perhaps fruitless legwork lay ahead of the officers as they tried to learn the identity of the mysterious John Wade.

Using the gun application as a point of departure, Lieutenant Armano and Detectives Peek and Brennan went to the Baltimore plumbing supply firm that "John Wade" listed as his place of employment. It was the same story there as the Huron St. address. No one had heard of him.

Now the investigators decided to check Wurster's handwriting against the handwriting on the gun purchase application. They went to Wurster's former place of employment in Philadelphia and, after identifying themselves and explaining their mission, they were al-

lowed to go through the company's files. In one of them, they hit pay dirt. In it, they found one of the required letters of recommendation all new employees must submit when applying for work.

It was signed by John Wade.

Everything seemed to be falling in place. Ted Wurster had known, and apparently on the best of terms, a man named John Wade—the same name that appeared on the application. Again, could it be possible the two circumstances were nothing more than an incredible coincidence?

The detectives, after working so long and so frustratingly, were taking no chances. If Wurster was their man, they wanted more evidence. Mountains of it. They'd had Wurster up as a prime suspect once before, a suspect who seemed on the verge of telling everything he knew about Frank Egner's murder. But then he had clammed up. If they picked him up again there must not be any chance he'd slip away again.

In going through Wurster's old desk at the Philadelphia firm, Armano found an old check stub showing that \$13.50 had been sent out to pay for a gun. It could not have been for the .22 purchased in Elkton since that had been paid for in cash, so the check stub had to represent another attempt at buying a weapon.

Since the stub did not indicate where the check had been sent, Lieutenant Armano purchased a magazine popular among gun fanciers and personally sent out a dozen letters to the major gun manufacturers and distributors in the United States asking if any had been sold, or had been asked to sell, a gun to one Theodore F. Wurster.

Weeks later, the lieutenant received his answer. The Seaport-Import Co. of Los Angeles wrote back that it had indeed received a check for \$13.50 from

Theodore F. Wurster. Not only that, the company wrote, but would the lieutenant please forward Wurster's new address so that they could send the check back to him? It seems that Wurster never answered and never even asked for his money back when the Los Angeles firm informed him by letter that he would have to furnish a written authorization from his local police chief.

The search for more handwriting samples went on. Wurster's own personal correspondence, of course, was unavailable to the detectives and the number of specimens they could get elsewhere were rare and hard to find. Months fled by, but little by little they continued to accumulate and in time Armano felt he had enough.

He sent all of Wurster's handwriting samples to Albert D. Osborn of 233 Broadway in New York City, a nationally renowned expert in the handwriting analysis field. Once more, time slipped by, but Osborn's reply finally came back. His answer: In his opinion, the specimens and the signature were written by the same hand.

On May 4, 1961, Lt. Armano conferred in his office with Detectives Peek, Brennan, Moore and Cowell.

"Well, you see it all here, boys," the lieutenant said. "After all this time, this is about all the evidence we can probably expect to get short of a confession. I think it's time we picked up Mr. Wurster. Agree?"

To a man, they agreed. Two years had gone by in the investigation so far, plus an incalculable amount of determination and energy. More than 400 persons had been questioned and altogether some 3,000 pages of statements and documents had been compiled.

Agree? They itched to get moving. "Okay," the lieutenant said. "It's Thursday now. Let's keep him under surveillance one more week and make the arrest—say next Wednesday."

Detectives Peek and Brennan had been keeping a sharper eye on Wurster as the evidence had mounted during the previous month. They knew he traveled to work in a car pool.

On the morning of the following Wednesday, May 10th, as Wurster and a handful of others tooled along the South Jersey road leading to Philadelphia, Detective Peek allowed the siren on his cruiser to wail softly as he and Detective Brennan pulled abreast of the car and motioned it to the side.

They ordered Wurster out. They were prepared for an argument, a fight, even a blazing gun battle, but they were not prepared for Wurster's mild reaction.

"I expected you guys sooner," he said almost laconically as he stepped from the car. "I actually looked for you on April 13th. You know, the anniversary."

Wurster fell silent on the ride back to the barracks where they were all waiting, all the other detectives who had worked so tirelessly on the case. Also on tap were John Wade, whose name Wurster allegedly stole, the Elkton clerk who was thought to have sold him the .22 automatic.

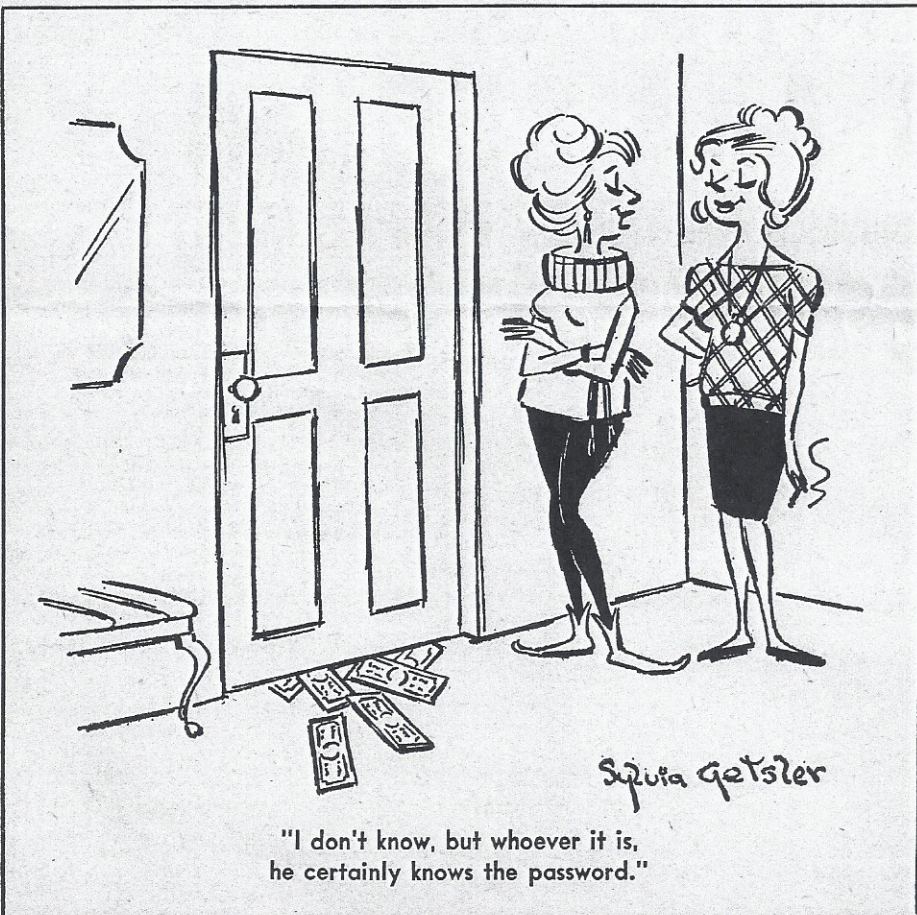
When Wurster entered, Lieutenant Armano placed him, John Wade and several others in a police lineup. Then the gun store man who had been waiting in another room, was summoned.

"Do you see the man you sold the gun to?" the lieutenant asked.

"I do. It was him." The clerk's accusing finger, police said, pointed directly at Wurster.

"Are you positive?"

"I'll never forget his face," the gun store clerk intoned heavily.



"I don't know, but whoever it is, he certainly knows the password."

"How about the man next to him, John Wade? It was his name on the application. Did you ever sell him a gun in your store?"

"Never."

The eyes of everyone in the room turned on Theodore F. Wurster. Would he confess? Would he deny the charge? Two years of work seemed to hang on his next utterance. Then it came.

"I guess I might as well get it off my mind," police quoted him. "I'll tell you about it now."

Wurster's subsequent statement, in response to questions fed him by Lieutenant Armano, ran to seven full pages of single-spaced type. Much of it dealt with material of a statistical nature. But here, as related by Armano are excerpts from the verbatim confession:

Wurster: "Egner had been antagonizing me to the extent—to the extent that he had made remarks about . . . my wife . . ."

Lt. Armano: "How often had he been making the remarks?"

Wurster: "Oh, about a year."

Lt. Armano: "You talked to him many times about this?"

Wurster: "Yes, I told him on several occasions my wife wouldn't look at him and didn't have time for him . . . the night before he died he told me specifically again—he was working behind the bar at the Antlers in Maple Shade and he passed the remark he was going to make a big try this week. I asked him what he meant. He said he was going to stop at the house some day this week."

Lt. Armano: "And did you know what he meant by this?"

Wurster: "It only left one thing in my mind. What would you think?"

Lt. Armano: "You called him the next night?"

Wurster: "I called him the next night and told him I wanted to talk to him. It had only been my intention to threaten him. And when he came out (to the Evesboro-Medford Road rendezvous) I told him I wanted him to leave my wife alone. It wasn't so much me, but I wanted him to stop his remarks about Fran, and not bother Fran again."

Lt. Armano: "You called him by phone?"

Wurster: "Yes."

Lt. Armano: "How long was it after you called him that you met him?"

Wurster: "Oh, about 10 or 15 minutes."

Lt. Armano: "Do you know the name of the road you were on?"

Wurster: "To the best of my knowledge it was the Evesboro-Medford Road."

Lt. Armano: "What did you say to him when you met him?"

Wurster: "I approached the car from the driver's side and he asked me what was up. I told him I wanted to talk to him. I told him what about. I again told him to stay away and I didn't want him bothering my wife, Fran. He laughed, and asked if I was afraid. I told him I wasn't afraid that he could bust us up, but was afraid he could start something that could get out of hand—that Fran had never bothered with anyone before and I didn't want anyone bothering her after tonight."

Lt. Armano: "Then what happened?"

Wurster: "Then he said 'There's only one time I'll ever leave her alone.' Then he laughed. I wouldn't give you his reply because it wouldn't be proper. Well, he said 'There's only one time I'll leave her alone . . .' That's when I got mad and drew the gun out of my pocket with the intention of threatening him. I intended to threaten him. I had no deliberate—how would you say—pre-

meditation? I only wanted to threaten him."

Lt. Armano: "Then what happened?"

Wurster: "I can't recall exactly what happened next. I can recall pulling the trigger. I don't know how many times or what happened thereafter."

Lt. Armano: "Did you stay at the scene or leave?"

Wurster: "I left after a very short time."

Lt. Armano: "What did you do with the gun?"

Wurster: "I stripped it down to the best of my knowledge and threw them (the pieces) out of the window . . ."

Wurster signed the confession and was booked on a charge of homicide. Later on the morning of May 10th, Wurster was arraigned before Burlington County Municipal Judge Oliver Bowen where he entered a plea of innocent—mandatory in all homicide cases in New Jersey. Wurster waived his right to be represented by an attorney at the hearing.

Wurster's wife, Fran, wept throughout the proceedings and fainted as the hearing ended. The defendant walked to where she sat and consoled her for a few moments before he was led to the county jail to await a grand jury's decision.

The grand jury had still not been impaneled as MASTER DETECTIVE went to press. ◆◆◆

EDITOR'S NOTE:

The name Charles Haskins, as used in the foregoing story, is not the real name of the person concerned. He has been given a fictitious name to protect his identity.



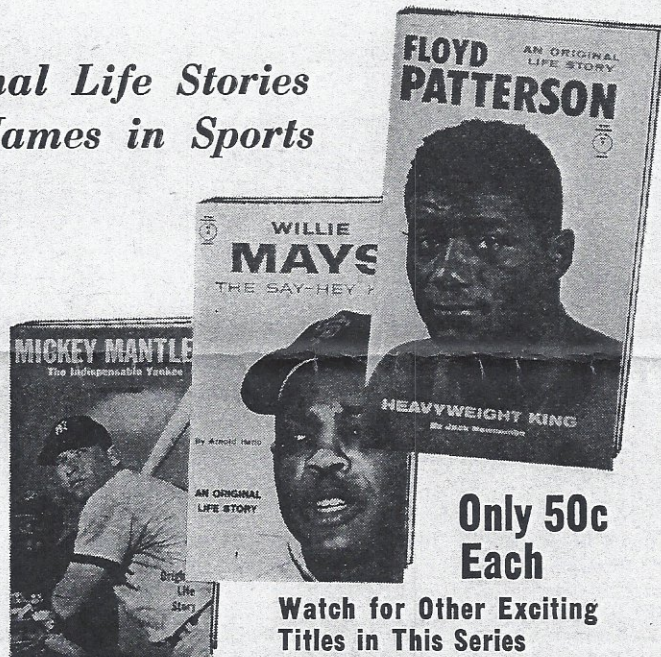
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