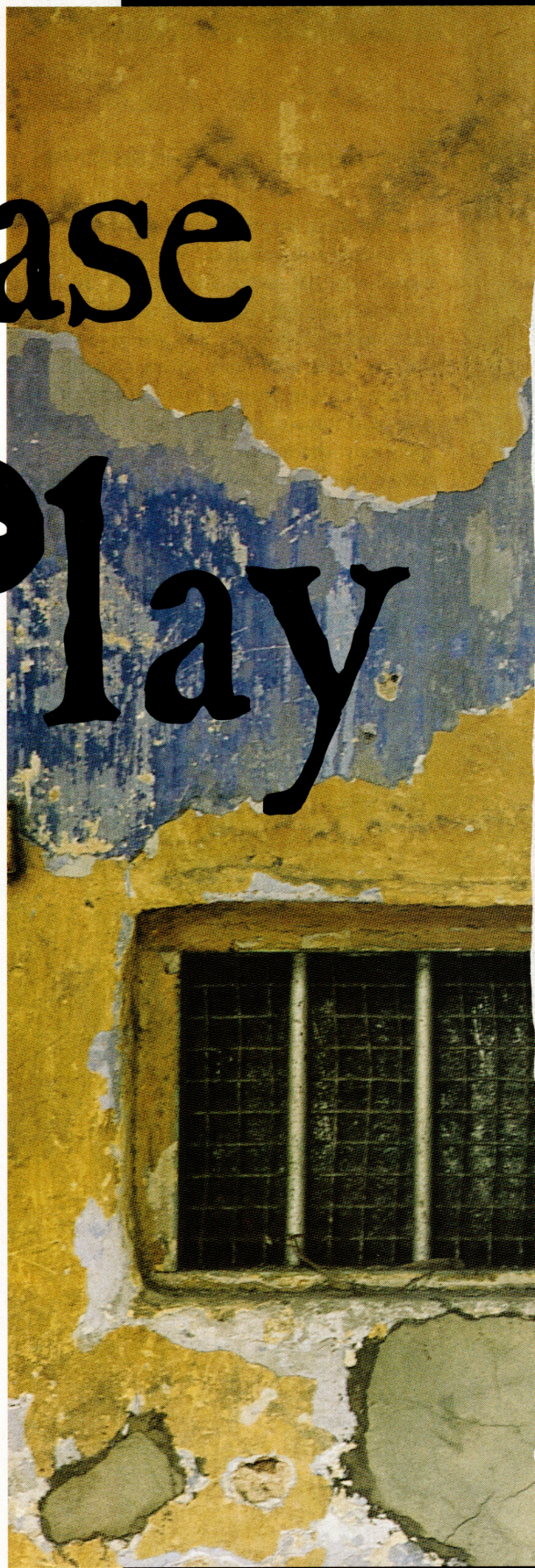


A Case of Foul Play

Private investigator Richard Post disappeared more than three years ago. Believed dead, he left a confusing trail of deceit and broken hearts. But as his wild case heads toward federal court, one of his alleged kidnappers claims he's still alive. Will the real story ever be known?

BY KEVIN COX

IT WAS A TOUGH SPOT, but if anyone could talk his way out of it, it was Richard Carl Post. Two men posing as Mexican cops kidnapped Post in front of a Tijuana pharmacy on a summer day in 1998. They took him to an





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abandoned house and duct-taped him to a chair in a shower stall.

Post was one of San Diego's most notorious private investigators—52 years old, tall and thin, with dark hair and eyes. Handsome, in a rugged, manly sort of way, Post *looked* like a private investigator. Like Magnum, P.I., without the mustache.

"He could talk a broad out of her skivvies in Main Street," another private investigator says of Post.

But on this day, one of Post's former girlfriends allegedly was also one of his kidnappers. An affidavit filed in the case by an FBI agent identifies her as Janet Fleming, and describes what happened next.

"She used pliers and squeezed Post's fingers as a form of torture," the affidavit says. "Then one of the other kidnappers took the pliers, and pinched Post's fingernails." Post screamed in pain through the duct tape and then was allowed to appeal to Fleming.

"Post asked her why she was doing this to him, and was inquiring if it was because of the other women. Fleming advised that was not the reason, but it was simply because he had stolen money from her."

No one has seen Post since then. His body has never been found. Many doubt it ever will be. One source believes Post was killed "Mexican style" and parted out like a stolen car. "He was chopped up, and they weren't worried about anybody ever finding him."

With no body, police at first considered Post just another missing person. His family filed the usual report to open a case with San Diego Police. But they also had some evidence: love letters from Fleming to Post.

"I'm just so deeply in love with you ... you're all I can think of," a source quotes from the letters. "She was really ... obsessed with him," the source says. "But she found out that he really wasn't romancing her. He was going after her wallet."

Post's attorney, Joseph Dicks, did not respond to interview requests.

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Post's story offers a different view of San Diego, one that doesn't show up in the picture postcards. It's a story of sex, scams and shady characters. It's a story with famous and infamous names: Dr. Deepak Chopra, the world-renowned author and lecturer from La Jolla, and Svetlana Orgorodnikova, a convicted Russian spy.

While most private investigators work their cases quietly—they're *private* investigators, after all—Post was always drawing attention to himself. That's how he met Chopra. Or more accu-

ately, Chopra's lawyers. In court documents, they accuse Post of trying to shake down Chopra. They say Post was behind a sexual harassment lawsuit against Chopra, filed by a woman named Joyce Weaver.

In 1995, Post and Weaver "plotted together to fabricate a lawsuit," court documents say. That same year, Chopra's lawyers accused Post of arranging the theft of confidential legal documents from their law firm. The lawyers alleged Post was working for one of San Diego's largest and most prestigious law firms—Gray, Cary, Ware & Freidenrich—the same firm representing Weaver. So Chopra went after Gray Cary—along with Post—in February 1997.

The case dragged on for three years, until Chopra dropped it. By then, he had prevailed against Weaver, the woman who had alleged sexual harassment. "After deliberating for less than 10 minutes," according to court documents filed in that case, "a jury returned a verdict in favor of Dr. Chopra and all his companies on all of Weaver's claims."

THE WEAVER CASE was just one lawsuit involving Post. Court files show more than a dozen civil cases filed against him—including two divorces and a paternity suit. There were several judgments against him, including one for more than \$22,000. According to documents filed in that case, Post passed off a reproduction as an original Diego Rivera painting.

The court files also tell his life story. In the 1970s, he was a construction worker and a deck hand on a sport-fishing boat. One file notes Post was "claiming that he was in Army intelligence when he was in the Army ... for a two-year period of time."

By 1982, Post was sounding like a real spy. "He has frequently eluded [sic] ... that he works for the Central Intelligence Agency," according to his first wife.

Years later, Post told another private investigator an incredible story about working with the CIA—to kidnap the leaders of a Mexican drug cartel. "The CIA and I are putting together a, ah, thing," another private investigator quotes Post as saying, "to pay off the Arellano brothers' jet pilot. And we're gonna get the Arellano brothers and put 'em on the airplane and gas 'em and bring [them] up here to the United States."

Some people don't believe any of it. But they're cautious about saying so. They'll talk about Post, but they don't want their names used. "He was a wanna-be, a guy who watched too many Bond movies," a lawyer says. "He wanted everybody to think he was the big shot, the mystery guy with the heavy connections. I don't buy that s--- for a minute."

For a secret agent, Post's life was proceeding in a very public way. In a December 1991 issue of *The San Diego Weekly Reader*,

Post is quoted extensively in an article about Satanic cults. He even goes hunting for Satanists in East County—with a 12-gauge shotgun and a Bowie knife—but doesn't find any.

That doesn't stop him from hinting darkly about vast conspiracies of devil worshipping. "There are some 'local elected officials' involved, but he won't name them," the *Reader* article says.

“I have a feeling that no one is doing anything about it,” the article quotes Post as saying. “I couldn’t turn my back on it.”

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October 2001 to plotting to kidnap Post. He cut a deal with the U.S. Attorney's office in San Diego and agreed to testify against Fleming.

An affidavit describes the following sequence of events, recorded in a conversation between Krueger and an informant. Krueger told Fleming that Post was stealing from her company and that he was having affairs with other women. Post was in big trouble, and not just with Fleming. She had given Post \$10,000 to give to a man named Humberto Iribe, who is believed to have ties to organized crime in Mexico. But Iribe never got the money.

Just before Post disappeared, Krueger arranged a meeting at Horton Plaza between Fleming and Iribe. Then Krueger says he received a voicemail from Fleming, telling him Post had been kidnapped.

The next day, Krueger went to Mexico, where he saw Fleming and Iribe sitting at a table in a restaurant, laughing. Krueger says he confronted them, and Iribe told Krueger that Post would not be hurt.

The FBI used another informant to trick Fleming. That woman is Svetlana Orgorodnikova, a Russian spy convicted in the explosive espionage case involving former FBI agent Richard Miller. The FBI wired Orgorodnikova with a body record-

But Fleming told the undercover agent Krueger's death couldn't look suspicious, because the feds would quickly blame her. "If there's a natural way for John to have an accident ... this is the way to do it," she said, according to the court file.

Then Fleming and the undercover agent talked money. "Ten thousand [was] just a down payment, and he expected to receive \$10,000 per body. [She] agreed," according to the court file.

THE FBI ARRESTED Janet Fleming and John Krueger in April 2000 for the murder of Rick Post. Humberto Iribe was arrested in Mexico. If Krueger is good enough on the witness stand, the deal says the feds will ask the judge to give him no more than 12 years in prison.

Fleming's murder trial is scheduled to start June 18 in federal court. Her attorney, Philip Demassa, says Fleming is the victim in this case.

"She thinks this was all set up by Krueger and Post," Demassa says. "She doesn't think anything happened to [Post]."

Demassa says Fleming was selling machines to cure cancer—he calls them "bio-frequency devices." And he showed *San Diego Magazine* a videotape with testi-

A letter from the prosecutor in the case, assistant U.S. Attorney Barbara Major, may help prove Demassa's point. Citing uncorroborated FBI evidence, Major writes that "in 1997, Mexican authorities suspected Richard Post was extorting Chinese citizens who were seeking illegal immigration into the U.S., and that he may have co-opted a Mexican intelligence officer in furtherance of his extortion scheme.

"The FBI also learned that Mexican authorities wanted to talk to Mr. Post about these activities, and there was a suggestion that violence might be used during questioning."

The U.S. Attorney's office declined to comment on the letter or any other aspect of the case. Krueger's attorney was unavailable for comment.

Whatever happened to him, Post was playing a dangerous game. In an April 1999 confidential report on Post's disappearance, the FBI acknowledges that he was an informant for the feds, using the code name Jim Green. Citing a San Diego Police investigation, the FBI report says Post "may have fled with between half a million and \$1 million."

The FBI cut off the relationship with Post, who became just another former source. "Given the circumstances ... it is

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er. Fleming was recorded saying Iribe told her they had to kill Post because he had seen their faces. When Iribe asked Fleming what she wanted done with Post, Fleming said, "Do what you have to do."

And Fleming allegedly wanted to make more people go away. On December 22, 1999, Fleming met with an undercover FBI agent at a San Diego hotel. She believed Krueger and others were trying to kill her. Fleming wanted to kill Krueger and two other men, and gave the undercover agent \$10,000 cash.

"All I know is there are three people out to get me, and it's a survival contest," the federal court file quotes Fleming as saying. "I will do whatever has to be done to survive. I deserve to live. They don't."

monial after testimonial from people who say the devices cured them of cancer and other illnesses.

He acknowledges Fleming made millions of dollars by selling the machines. "Fleming gave \$30,000 to \$40,000 a month to Post," Demassa says. "Post and Krueger started stealing from her." Fleming told Demassa that Post stole 1,000 of the devices from her—worth \$1.4 million.

"It's not like he's destitute and disappeared," Demassa says.

And if Post is dead, there are lots of potential suspects, according to Demassa. "He's an amoral guy. I hate to say anything about someone if he's not around, but there's a serious issue about what's going on."

recommended this source be discontinued, and the file be placed in closed status," the report concludes.

Demassa says the government has so many problems with its case—like using an informant who's a convicted Russian spy—that the U.S. Attorney's office is ready to deal. "I've heard 20 years," Demassa says. "I think they're more comfortable saying she tricked him down there [to Mexico] than she was involved in the murder."

But Fleming won't take the deal, her attorney says. She claims to have evidence that Post is still alive.

Most believe that's highly unlikely. Then again, if anyone can come back to life, it's Richard Carl Post. ■