

McMartin Preschool Revisited

by **Alex Constantine**

1996

Welcome to Manhattan Beach

Paul Bynum graduated from college in 1972 and joined the Hermosa Beach police department a year later. At 31 he was promoted to the rank of chief detective. Bynum was not a traditional investigator. One fellow detective often thought he was "too bright to be a cop." Off duty, he drove an MG and mixed with the '60s survivors at the Sweetwater Cafe.

In 1976 Bynum was assigned the investigation of the Karen Klaas murder. Klaas was the divorced wife of Bill Medley, a vocalist for the Righteous Brothers. She was raped and murdered one morning about an hour after dropping her five-year-old son off at the McMartin preschool in Manhattan Beach.

Neighbors told police they'd been alarmed at the sight of a menacing stranger before the murder wandering through the neighborhood. Police later entertained speculation that Klaas had been stalked. Throughout the week her body was found, this same stranger had popped up several times on her corner. A neighbor phoned Karen to warn her. She didn't answer. When friends entered the back door of the house, concerned for her safety, they found a Caucasian male with a beard, about 5'7", 28 years old, dressed in a long olive green coat with a tunic collar and boots. He was leaving through the front door. Klaas was found naked and unconscious. She died five days later. Nothing was stolen. Police had no indication that Klaas knew the man who assaulted her.

In 1984, shortly after indictments were handed to defendants in the McMartin child molestation case, Gerald Klaas, her husband, drove off a cliff in Oregon and was killed. Children alleged in a grand jury hearing that teachers at the preschool had threatened to kill family members if they talked about abuse. It was rumored around town that the Klaas deaths and the McMartin case may have been related.

But police said no. "We have no leads, no suspects and we're not coordinating with Manhattan Beach," Hermosa Beach Lt. Mike Lavin told reporters.¹

In 1979, Paul Bynum was forced out of the police department without an explanation despite an unblemished record. After Bynum had wrapped up an investigation of a series of murders of teenage girls in nearby Redondo Beach, culminating in the arrest and conviction of serial killers Roy Norris and Lawrence Bittaker, police chief Frank Beeson pressured Bynum to take a stress leave. Bynum was haunted by the serial murder investigation, but remained confident in his emotional stability. He refused the leave. The chief obtained an order from the city manager, and Bynum was forced out on an indefinite disability leave.

He chalked it up to internal politics, "paranoia."

"When the papers reported that Beeson had shown up apparently drunk at his first Hermosa council meeting and dropped his revolver on the floor," Bynum told reporter Kevin Cody, "he thought we had tipped reporters." Beeson was unaware that reporters routinely attended meetings of the city council.²

Bynum set out on a new career as a private investigator. In March 1984, he was retained by the Buckeys' defense attorney, Danny Davis, and in the course of his investigation came to the

conclusion that children had been abused at the preschool. He found the video-taped interviews of the children by child therapists "credible." One afternoon, Cody informed Bynum that hundreds of children had alleged molestation took place at the preschool. Bynum was shocked. He stammered he had no idea so many children were involved.

In 1986 he was called to testify at the trial of Ray Buckey by prosecutor Lael Rubin. The morning he was to appear a juror's home was burglarized and Bynum's testimony was rescheduled for the next morning.

"Neither side is going to like what I have to say," he told Cody. For one thing, there was the matter of Bynum's lost citation books, records he'd kept while a detective in Hermosa Beach. When the police arrested Ray Buckey on molestation charges, the "lost" books were discovered on the preschool attendant's desk. What were official police records doing in Buckey's home?

And Prosecutor Rubin had intended to ask Bynum about a map turned up by DA investigators in March 1986, pin-pointing the location of turtle shells Bynum had unearthed at the lot next to the McMartin preschool. (The children claimed teachers had killed turtles to demonstrate what would happen to them and their families if they talked about the molestations. Bynum, while retained by the defense, had managed to corroborate a key point in the testimony of the children.)

Bynum's court appearance was preempted by "suicide," although the timing left some parents in the case convinced he'd been murdered.³ His body was discovered by his wife at 5:45 in the morning. He died of a head shot from a .38 caliber pistol.

"None of the half dozen people questioned who were close to Bynum could think of any reason why his involvement in the case might have driven him to suicide," reported the Easy Reader in Manhattan Beach. "Paul was kind of a worrier," said Stephen Kay, a deputy district attorney and friend of the Bynum family, "but there was no hint of suicide. He was very upbeat about his wife and new daughter, both of whom he adored."⁴

The belief that Bynum had been murdered was fueled by the memory of another odd death, the alcohol toxicity that claimed the life of Judy Johnson. She was the first mother to speak publicly about child molestation at McMartin. and sympathizers of the Buckeys in the press have gone to great lengths to portray Johnson as "crazy." Her life was inverted the day her son came home from the McMartin school, bleeding. Strangers entered her life, intimidated her. She believed she'd been poisoned. (In 1992, therapists at the L.A. Commission for Women's Ritual Abuse Task Force were also poisoned, and corroborated their allegations with medical reports - the Los Angeles Times was given the reports, but ignored them and alleged the therapists were paranoid fantasists.⁵) She lived in fear, felt it necessary to keep a gun in the house. Her estranged husband appeared to have joined in the harassment campaign. She took to alcohol. She was allergic to alcohol. It poisoned her.

The death of Judy Johnson was met with howls of laughter in greater Los Angeles. She will be remembered as the delusional paranoiac who set in motion a wave of "hysteria" carried through Southern California by a sensational press and out across the plains, contaminating lives and decimating families everywhere. A groundless witch-hunt. This was the explanation doled out by "experts" from leading universities.

Nevertheless, children who attended the preschool still insist they were abused. And the detailed memories of their parents are sharply at odds with the simple caricature of the case repeated endlessly in the press. They recall not suggestive questioning, but the long hours of testimony by dozens of children, the telephoned death threats, how some of the children suffered deep emotional problems requiring hospitalization. Knowing child pornography to be a highly lucrative business, they frown at the snickering over the childrens' disclosures that they were forced to play "naked movie-star" games. They haven't put aside as anomalous accident the first exhibit in the case, a physician's report that one of the children suffered "blunt force trauma" of sexual areas.⁶ The parents were left to ponder why some of the toddlers in the care of the McMartins had

chlamydia, a sexually-transmitted infection.⁷

Where was the humor in all of this?

Open Season

The parents wondered, like everyone else, at the incredibility of the charges - some said the children were lying - yet they had to question Peggy McMartin's testimony that she only worked at the school for a short time, when payroll records showed that she had been employed there for years. To the families, the final verdict of Ray Buckey meant it was now "open season on children."

The world was told redundantly that ABC's Wayne Satz, the reporter who broke the case (killed by a heart attack in December, 1992 at age 47), and Kee MacFarlane, a therapist testifying for the prosecution, had an affair, as if this had any bearing on the allegations of the children. Even Oliver Stone, perhaps in ignorance, took to the bandwagon with a film made for HBO, written by Abby Mann, theorizing that hysteria in Manhattan Beach was kindled when one child returned home from school one afternoon with "a red bottom" - this would be the son of Judy Johnson, and he hadn't been spanked - he was bleeding from the anus.

This hardly constitutes media "spin." It is conscious participation in a felony. The account of the case pounded into collective memory by media repetition goes that far to distort the facts. The widespread media coverage was, according to Los Angeles Times editor Noel Greenwood, "a mean-spirited campaign" organized to discredit the children and their therapists.⁸

But why should certain members of the corporate press, and segments of the legal and psychiatric professions, go to such lengths to suppress evidence of organized child abuse at McMartin?

The traumatic crimes reported by the toddlers bear an uncanny resemblance to mind control programming, a specialty of certain classified federal agencies and cult cut-outs on the black budget payroll.⁹

The children are often ridiculed because some of their charges are impossible. Tunnels under the preschool? Too ludicrous to consider. But as it happens, there were tunnels, confirmed in 1993 by a team of five scientists from leading universities.

The unearthing of the tunnels, like much of the critical evidence, never made it to the courtroom. They have been discreetly excluded from newspaper accounts.

Filling the void, Debbie Nathan, a widely published skeptic of ritual abuse, heaped ridicule on the tunnel allegations in the Village Voice in June 1990. She maintained the McMartin site had already been "painstakingly probed for tunnels. None were found"⁹ Nathan's account is a fabrication. In fact, recalls Dr. Roland Summit, who contributed to the final report on the tunnel excavation, parents started digging and prosecutors, reluctantly forced to a showdown, "commissioned a superficial search of open terrain." District Attorney Ira Reiner then declared the tunnel stories unfounded "without going under the concrete floor of the preschool." Once the tunnels were officially discounted, attempts to explore for an underground reality were instant targets for ridicule.¹⁰ Archeologist Gary Stickel was retained to lead the excavation on the recommendation of Dr. Rainier Berger, chairman of UCLA's Interdisciplinary Archeology Program, by parents of McMartin children.¹¹ Initially Stickel sided with the Buckeys, believing the abuse allegations to be so much moonlight for hysterics. However, he'd heard of late homicide detective Paul Bynum, the first to dig at the site:

Bynum apparently conducted his informal digging in February, 1984 (Daily Breeze, 1987). It is significant to note he did unearth some buried animal remains, "numerous pieces of tortoise shells and bones" (Daily Breeze, 1987). "There was keen interest at the time since it was reported that the children testified that tortoises, rabbits, and other small animals were mutilated to terrorize the children into keeping silent" (Daily Breeze, 1987).¹²

But "experts" courted by the press snaffled at the suggestion that animals were killed to frighten children at McMartin and other preschools around the country. It was not until 1993 that a study by the National Center for Child Abuse and Neglect confirmed that children are not only threatened in day care settings, "most threats are very specific in terms of what the consequence of disclosure will be and how the threat will be carried out.... The use of such severe threats is obviously quite frightening to young children and is effective in preventing disclosure. In fact, it appears that threats used in day care center cases may go beyond what is usually needed to silence victims, and may in some instances be made for purposes of psychological terror in and of itself."¹³

Into the Grotto

Most reporters in Southern California pooh-poohed evidence of coercion, but there was a great, gaping silence when the tunnels were found.

"I asked my daughter," recalls Jackie MacGauley, a mother of two children who attended the preschool, "How could they have taken you to these places without being seen?" And she answered me as though I was silly to ask such a question. She said, 'Through the tunnels, of course.'"

The Los Angeles Times ran a spate of features poking fun of the excavation team until actual evidence of tunnels was discovered. Then the Times ran a brief news item, one paragraph long, dryly noting that "evidence" of tunnels had been found, and never mentioned the subject again. The local Beach Reporter covered the story without a blush: "parents began to dig with shovels, allegedly in an area pointed out by a nine-year-old former student of the McMartin preschool, who told them to dig behind a cement planter in the northeast corner. When parents unearthed several broken turtle shells and a few bones, they stopped digging and notified the district attorney's office."

Once the entrance was exposed, Stickel used remote sensing equipment to read the terrain conductivity of the empty lot next to the preschool. The survey was conducted by a respected geophysicist, Robert Beer, working with an electromagnetic scanner. The tunnel opening was found precisely where children said it would be.

Stickel: "Some of the children had stated there had been animal cages placed along that wall and that they had entered a tunnel under the cages." A foreign soil deposit was found near the foundation. Clearing the anomaly with a backhoe, they found the roots of an avocado tree cut to clear a path for the tunnel. The roots had been cut with a hand saw and torn away, and shreds dangled on either wall of the tunnel.

That's the moment editors at the Times chose to pull reporters off the story. All other news outlets rapidly followed suit.

But the excavators cleared the foreign soil and followed the tunnel anyway. It "meandered under Classroom No. 4 and then most of Classroom No. 3.... There is no other scenario that fits all of the facts except that the feature was indeed a tunnel," they concluded. "The date of the construction and use of the tunnel was not absolutely established, but an assessment of seven factors of data all indicate that it was probably constructed, used and completely filled back in

sometime after 1966 (the construction date of the preschool)." ¹⁴

Dr. E. Michael, a specialist in forensic geology in Malibu, was called to examine a cavity in the underground passage. Together with Dr. Herbert Adams of the geology department at Cal State University, a ground resistivity reading of the tunnel was followed from the preschool to a triplex next door, a traversing section parallel to the north wall of the school, 5 feet away, extending 20 feet eastward, 10 to 15 feet beneath the surface. ¹⁵

Gerald Hobbs, a local tree surgeon for 25 years, did much of the actual digging. Hobbs:

The children had told two different stories about this tunnel prior to the dig. One, that they had gone through the tunnel and came up in the house next door, and two, they had come up in the garage, which blocked the house from the street. At any rate, the tunnel went in that direction.... That evening I went to the house next door and followed the walk between the school and the house, only about 41/2 feet apart. I went about 30 feet down between the buildings and found a crawl space under the house. I bellied my way toward the southwest corner of the house. After going about 20 feet, I found an area inside the west wall of the house where the floor was cut out. If I remember correctly, the area of floor that was missing was 36" X 38" X 41". ¹⁶

A total of 77 animal bones were found buried at the McMartin site, an assortment of the osteo-remains of domestic cattle, chickens, dogs and a single rabbit. ¹⁷

However, Debbie Nathan, the hide-bound "skeptic" of ritual abuse, a scion of the False Memory Syndrome Foundation, told another story. The McMartin site, she insisted, had already been "painstakingly probed for tunnels" by the D.A.'s office. (Not so, as we've seen). "None were found. [The McMartin] parents have invested years believing in demonic conspiracies and underground nursery tunnels. (Until recently the parents were still digging. They came up with Indian artifacts)." No mention of Bynum's independent findings. No mention of the dig as it happened in the real world. She reserves much of her scorn for former FBI agent Ted Gunderson and Jackie MacGauley. Nathan seems not to realize that Gunderson and MacGauley brought in Stickel and his geological team to defuse accusations they were directly engaged in the dig. They weren't. The search for the tunnels was independent, and scores of volunteers pitched in.

Nathan's refrain of "no evidence" is hollow. She has been known to contort around the facts of ritual abuse in a grotesque parody of journalism and is frequently blind to critical evidence. Nathan continues to find "no evidence" of abuse at McMartin despite the nightmares, the acting-out, medical molestation reports and sexual infections. The tunnel excavation, she assures with psychic certainty (and a sniff of condescension), is a "hoax."

To come to the point: Nathan's propaganda, repeated in the New York Times and a host of other corporate publications, happened to conceal a classified mind control operation the CIA and Pentagon had undertaken thirty years before....

End of Part One

- Notes -

1. Kevin Cody, "Former HB Officer's Suicide Adds Questions to McMartin Mystery," Easy Reader (Manhattan Beach tabloid news weekly), November 17, 1987.

2. Ibid.

3. The Easy Reader obituary declares, "none of the half dozen people questioned who were close to Bynum could think of any reason why his involvement in the case might have driven him to commit suicide. But the timing of Bynum's death and the controversy already surrounding the McMartin case ... inevitably spawned speculation that a link existed between his suicide and his pending testimony."

4. Cody.

5. The medical reports were reprinted in Alex Constantine, *Psychic dictatorship in the U.S.A.* Portland: Feral House, 1995, pp. 97-111.

6. McMartin trial record, evidentiary exhibit one.

7. Interviews with parents.

8. Alex Constantine, "Ray Buckey's Press Corps and the Tunnels of Mc-Martin," pp. 77-96.

9. Debbie Nathan, "What McMartin Started: The Ritual Abuse Hoax," *Village Voice*, June 12, 1990.

10. Roland Summit, M.D., "Introduction," *Archeological Investigations of the McMartin Preschool Site, Manhattan Beach, California*, unpublished report by archeologist Gary Stickel of the McMartin Tunnel Project, 1993, p. ii.

11. Gary Stickel, foreword to *Archeological Investigations*.

12. Ibid.

13. Kelly, Brant and Waterman, "Sexual Abuse of Children in Day Care Centers," *Journal of Child Abuse & Neglect* (17), 1993, p. 74

14. Stickel, *Archeological Investigations*, p. 95. The assessment of the tunnel's age was corroborated by Dr. Jon Michael, a geologist on the McMartin project.

15. Dr. E. Michael, in a letter to Dr. Gary Stickel, July 2, 1992, pp. 2-3.

16. Gerald Hobbs, "Notes on Investigation of the Neighboring Tri-plex," in *Archeological Investigations*, p. 176.

17. Charles Schwartz, Ph.D., "The McMartin Preschool Osteological Remains" (2nd report), *Archeological Investigations*, June 15, 1990, p. 1.

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