

Satanism: When is an exposé just 'damage control'?

by Judy Hotchkiss

Ritual Abuse: Canada's Most Infamous Trial on Child Abuse

by Kevin Marron

McClelland-Bantam, Inc., Toronto, Canada, 1989
252 pages, paperbound, \$4.95 Canadian

"What graveyard? A real one?" Catherine asked.

"Yes, near the woods. A real graveyard where you bury people. It was terrible. I'm scared."

"Did you see the hand, Jan, did you see the cut-off hand?" Linda prompted.

"That's where Elizabeth is, our friend Elizabeth," said Linda. "She got dead by a killer."

Janis said, "Gary said he'd kill me if I told. They'll kill me if I tell. They said that."

"When you tell, the killer gets you," Linda confirmed. "Janis, did you see the hand at the graveyard? Did you see the woods in your dream? That's the killing place."

"Yeah, they tie them up and punch leaves in them, in the belly. They stick knives in them. They cut them. They stick big sticks in them. We have to do things too. I take them in the woods. The man from 11 is there, and so is the lady. Sometimes Mom goes back in Gary's car. Gary has a big shovel. Sometimes they cut the neck, ugh. They stick fingers in us too. They take pictures in the woods and the graveyard," said Janis.

She pointed towards her genital area and said, "They stick knives there too. They cut something off."

"What?" asked Catherine. Janis and Linda did not answer. Janis told Catherine, "Well, they tear the face some-

times, and Mom likes to break their hands all up. Gary too."

"Elizabeth's mother knew. She went phew. She breathed in when she found out that Elizabeth was killed," said Linda.

"The man from 11 helps Gary dig the graves. They use a flashlight," Janis said.

The two sisters, ages 7 and 8, involved in this exchange were the subject of a year-and-a-half-long custody trial in Hamilton, Ontario, ending just last year. These descriptions of dreams of satanic rituals were repeated, first to a number of foster parents, then to police officers, psychologists, and finally, via videotape, to the judge in the custody battle brought by the Hamilton Children's Aid Society against the children's parents.

The children would recount numerous stories of human sacrifices, sexual perversions, and cannibalism, involving a variety of sites and a multitude of people, including their parents. The custody case resulted in a victory for the social welfare agency, but no criminal charges were ever levied.

Kevin Marron, a reporter for Canada's *Globe and Mail* national newspaper, compiles the testimony given in the courtroom and presents excerpts from the videotape viewed by the court showing Janis and Linda telling their stories to a psychologist. Marron describes the lack of interest by the local police investigating these allegations, and gives an overview of cases in the United States where the same kind of apparent negligence or complicity is implied.

He compassionately describes the ridicule and abuse the witnesses for the children suffered. Marron himself appears to be convinced that the children's stories are truthful. But somehow, there is a peculiar tone to his analysis of the problem.

If the reader steps back and reflects on the structure of the

book's contents, a subliminal message begins to be laid bare. The book starts with a lengthy and dry discussion of Canada's child sex abuse laws. The next section presents details of the girls' mother's own experiences as a childhood victim of sex abuse by her father. The narrative here is in the form of a lurid, pornographic novel.

It is only in the next chapters that we hear the story of Linda and Janis, where the narrative may be explicit concerning the details of the allegations, but the focus is on the struggle of good people trying to find a way to intervene on the situation, legally and otherwise. The book ends with, again, a very dry discussion of the status of child sex abuse laws. Marron states:

"The bizarre allegations and the sensational nature of the parents' evidence resulted in the hearing attracting a level of public attention quite unprecedented for a child welfare case. Not only has the case helped to alert the public to the need for more research and investigation into the perplexing issue of ritual abuse, but it has also served to promote awareness about child sexual abuse in general, a problem of epidemic proportions, of which ritual abuse is an alarming new mutation."

New mutation! These horror stories represent no "sociological phenomenon." Marron had just spent 100 pages documenting the most alarming evidence imaginable proving that the entire "scene" which involved this family was organized on a massive scale. For example, the "man from 11" was described by the girls as someone who filmed similar scenes involving them inside the studios of Channel 11 TV, late at night.

Marron also cites similar court cases in the area indicating the involvement of a network of biker gangs throughout southern Ontario. Some of the children's stories point to a sophisticated operation worked out to avoid suspicion in the area, explaining why Canada has few incidences of missing children: Kidnapings are organized across the border in the United States, and the children transported into Canada for the rituals and the filming.

But all of this gruesome material is presented in a manner very strangely detached from Marron's analysis of the legal or political options for dealing with the situation. In fact, there are many references in the book to the idea that a successful criminal prosecution in this kind of case would be one that sticks only to the sex abuse charges, and didn't discredit the witnesses involved by testimony about "unbelievable" satanic ritual murders or cannibalism.

This book makes one wonder anew: how many court trials, and how many exposes in the media, dealing with these kind of cases serve the purpose of "damage control"?

Exposés on the horrors of drug abuse in the 1960s and 1970s were often accompanied with the advice that one should resign oneself to the problem, leaving the reader helpless.

Are we to see some future exposé that proposes the legalization of pederasty in order to keep it out of the hands of criminals?

The making of popular myth

by Bruce Khouri

Guts and Glory: The Rise and Fall of Oliver North

by Ben Bradlee, Jr.

Donald I. Fine Inc., New York, 1988

577 pages with index, \$21.95 hardbound

Guts and Glory is a dull plate of disinformation. The author ingratiate himself to conservatives by portraying Oliver North as a man of hero-like qualities, and seeks to establish his credibility as an "honest and objective" liberal journalist. He is, however, neither honest nor objective.

The life of Oliver North pre-1981 was nothing extraordinary. His childhood and later years at the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis show a young man not overly endowed intellectually. Oliver North was an ordinary guy with the aspiration to commit his life to a moral purpose, not unlike many who enter the United States' military academies. His service as a Marine platoon commander in Vietnam was likewise similar to the service of many other platoon leaders in many other wars. Oliver North was a "can do" man, with all the implied limitations of that term. It was that profile which was manipulated at the National Security Council. For North, his sense of "Duty, Honor, Country" became a romantic notion of subservience to authority because of his overriding ambition to be a "player" in the game of establishing a "New Yalta" deal with the Russians. Thus, Bradlee's attempt to liken Oliver North to a MacArthur or a Patton is, indeed, laughable.

Bradlee's sophistry is to define North as a renegade "Mac" (MacArthur archetype) as opposed to the "Ikes" who submit to "civilian" rule. On the contrary, North was "Ike" archetypical in the sense that Eisenhower was a notorious "brown-nose." Eisenhower was placed in command of the European theater precisely because Winston Churchill knew of Eisenhower's profile. Churchill demanded an American Supreme Commander who would not upset a postwar, liberal establishment "Yalta" deal with the Russians. Neither MacArthur nor Patton, both "senior" to Ike, fit this profile. Bradlee's problem is that he confuses the words "civilian rule" with "establishment rule." In the art of "brown-nosing," North