

The Horse Lady Vanishes

In the case of missing candy heiress Helen Brach, two items have been absent: a corpse and the thoughts of her onetime suitor, Richard Bailey, who has been charged with arranging her murder.

Here is one of the two

For the first time since his arrest last summer, the most infamous ladies' man in Chicago is talking—granted, warily—about Helen Vorhees Brach, the candy heiress whom he's accused of having wooed, swindled and then conspired to murder in 1977. "She was a great lady," says Richard Bailey. I struggle to make out his words over the staticky telephone connection and the maddening din of the Metropolitan Correctional Center, where the onetime proprietor of society riding stables now resides alongside accused drug dealers and other seedy characters as he awaits a May 22 sentencing hearing. Bailey has already pleaded guilty to federal racketeering charges and admitted to defrauding more than a dozen women. But he insists he had nothing to do with Brach's disappearance. "Gave me anything I wanted, that's for sure. I didn't have a problem with her, no problem."

"Was it a business relationship or more of a romantic relationship?" I ask.

"Well, it was just a friendly relationship," Bailey, 65, answers,

By Patrick J. Kiger



choosing his words with care. "I used to take her out to dinner and dancing. I hear she was planning on marrying me, but that was unbeknownst to me. People imagine all kinds of things, you know." Still, he admits, "I spent quite a bit of time with Helen. We'd go to any place that has music. Disco. We'd do all kinds of dancing. Tango. Oh, yeah, she was a good dancer." He adds, just in case I haven't realized what a hepcat he still is: "I like that lambada dancing a little bit."

"Weren't you still married at the time?" I ask.

"I wouldn't care to get into that."

What does Bailey think of the stories depicting Brach as a lonely eccentric obsessed with the occult and her pets? "Well, I'll tell you, she was a fabulous lady. We didn't have any problems. A lot of those things they could say about anybody. She loved animals, and most people do talk to their dogs or horses or pigeons or birds. She was a fabulous lady. I didn't think she was odd whatsoever." By now, Bailey is getting uncomfortable with the line of inquiry.

"What was it that got her interested in investing in horses—"

"I don't want to get in too much on the Helen deal," he complains. "You're asking me too many questions about Helen." Before we're through, he will answer many more. But what the admitted swindler of rich women really wants to present is his other side: the hard-working entrepreneur.

"I'm a good salesman, if that's what they call a con man. If I was a con man, I'd never have been involved in all these businesses. I'm a very shrewd businessman." He recites a litany of get-rich schemes: driving schools, smoking clinics, a fast-food restaurant, the stables. He's planning to go into the hair-replacement business when he regains his freedom. "Just a little spot about an inch and a half in size can run from \$4,000 to \$10,000," he says. "Big money in it. I like the medical field. You don't have to be a doctor to run that business." Bailey boasts of how he'll walk into a car dealership or a real-estate brokerage and two weeks later the boss will be begging him to take over. His résumé is as plausible as his claim that he dated Morgan Fairchild, based on a snapshot of him in a restaurant, seated at the actress's table. "You can put her name in if you want to," he says. "I was at a party and there she was, drinking Champagne by herself, walking around.... When I see a beautiful lady, I just go ahead and spend the night with her." (Fairchild, through a spokesperson, says she has never met Bailey.)

That's the odd thing. Read his florid press clips, listen to the prosecutors describe his alleged schemes, and you form the image of a suave, cool, criminal mastermind. It's a per-

fect plot for a Dick Francis novel: A grifter spends twenty years persuading rich, lonely women to invest in bum horses, taking them for more than half a million dollars. He woos an odd multimillionaire who wears a blonde wig and furs, drives a pink Cadillac and talks to dogs, and then arranges her "disappearance" just as she's about to go to the police with a complaint about him and the con he pulled on her. The cad almost gets away with it, until he's nailed years later by a brilliant prosecutor.

Then talk to the alleged villain, and you come away thinking *Door-to-door vacuum salesman*. Which, in fact, he once was. Bailey speaks in the clipped patois of the Corn Belt, with the homespun grammar of a high-school dropout, bolstered by a few two-dollar words. A shade under average height and maybe a few trysting dinners over his ideal weight, Bailey has tarnished-silver hair, now that he no longer dyes it. With a leathery tan and droopy Robert Mitchum eyelids, he's hardly lady-killer handsome.

I am struggling to imagine this Richard Bailey as the prime suspect in an eighteen-year-old murder mystery. Then again, as I venture into the milieu of intrigue that swirled around Helen Brach, I find quite a few things that don't seem to fit.

What really happened to the wealthiest woman ever to disappear without a trace? The heiress who never made it to the \$500,000 marble burial monument she'd had erected in Ohio, at which she had

looked forward to spending eternity with her husband, parents and a pair of her dogs? The mystery began on the morning of February 17, 1977, at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, when Helen Vorhees Brach heard the results of a routine physical exam. According to court documents, doctors told her she was in good health.

At 65, the five-foot-ten Brach could still squeeze into a size-eight dress and retained more than a trace of the striking looks that had prompted candy magnate Frank Brach to chat her up at a Florida country club twenty-seven years before.

At the Kahler Hotel, across the street from the clinic, Brach made some phone calls, including one to her brother, Charles, a retired railroad man, in her hometown of Hope-dale, Ohio. Charles recalled her being in good spirits, excited about furnishing her new condominium in Fort Lauderdale. In a shop beneath the hotel, she bought some towels, a soap dish and a powder box, using her American Express card. The shop clerk later told investigators that Brach said she was in a hurry because her houseman was waiting—whether Brach meant outside or back in Chicago remains unclear. This was the last time she is known to have been seen alive by anyone other than the houseman, Jack Matlick, whose



Richard Bailey before his arrest and, below, chatting up actress Morgan Fairchild.



credibility would later come under severe fire.

Matlick claimed to have picked up Brach at Chicago's O'Hare Airport that afternoon and driven her to her mansion in Glenview, Illinois, where she spent the weekend. On Monday, February 21, he supposedly drove her back to O'Hare to catch a flight to Florida, where Bailey was waiting for her. Matlick says he dropped her off at the airport, but she never got on board the flight.

Ten days later, he called Charles Vorhees in Ohio. "I think your sister has disappeared," he said. "You better get up here."

On the afternoon of July 26, 1994, Richard Bailey roared up the expressway north of Chicago in his red Mercedes coupe—the one whose vanity plate, "SHAVE IT," advertised not some lewd proposition but one of Bailey's get-rich-quick schemes, a depilatory cream. The car looked flashy until you noticed its worn seats and the six figures on its odometer. It was one of Richard Bailey's few possessions. By his own estimation, he was once a millionaire, but that was

who were tailing him. They followed him that July afternoon to his girlfriend's apartment and then nabbed him in his undershorts.

At a press conference the next day, the Cook County U.S. attorney's office unveiled a twenty-nine-count, sixty-seven-page grand-jury indictment against Bailey. The most serious charge: plotting and soliciting the murder of Helen Brach, even though her body has never been found (government officials alleged he had a coconspirator but didn't identify who it was). The document portrayed him as a kingpin among the hoodlums who preyed upon Illinois horse country. In addition, while investigating Bailey, the Feds unearthed more equestrian scandals: Twenty-two other defendants, many of them champion riders or trainers, were charged with killing show horses for insurance money. In the days that followed, the Feds announced that they'd cracked the forty-year-old sex murder case of three teenage boys whose bodies had been found in a forest preserve near some stables, and tossed a suspect, former stable hand Kenny Hansen, to state prosecutors for trial. With a poster-

"Prove the fraud and the murder will fall in place," says prosecutor Steven Miller.

before he lost the stables and just about everything else in his 1990 divorce from his first wife. His most recent venture, a party-balloon business, had gone bust in '93. He was an entrepreneur with no fixed address, a part-time car salesman who shuttled between his brother Bill's house in Chicago and the apartment of an on-again, off-again girlfriend.

His love life was complicated. He had the girlfriend, even as he was working things out with his second wife, Dr. Annette Hoffman, a wealthy cosmetic surgeon who had married him in Las Vegas on a whim that April. As soon as she'd heard a report on him from a private detective, she got an annulment. Then there were the women who sent letters in response to his lonely-hearts ads in a local paper—so many that he offered a stack of them to a buddy. And there was Helen Brach, who'd been with him in spirit all these years. That would have suited her. Helen had her quirks—she preferred stray dogs to humanity, in most instances, unless you were talking dead people. She was up until all hours of the morning, a pencil held loosely in her hand, waiting for their messages. Now that she'd apparently joined her ghostly pen pals, it was as if she kept poking and prodding her former dinner-and-dancing companion, making her presence felt. The graffiti that had appeared on the road in front of his old stables—"RICHARD BAILEY KNOWS WHERE MRS. BRACH'S BODY IS." The Brach-candy wrappers that had littered his property. The police and lawyers whose questions he'd refused to answer.

Bailey didn't know it, but Brach was about to show up more tangibly in his life again, in the form of two FBI agents

sized blowup of Brach's picture as a backdrop, U.S. Attorney James B. Burns proclaimed "a wake-up call for the equestrian industry to put its house in order."

But the star of the proceedings was Assistant U.S. Attorney Steven Miller, a former banking-fraud specialist who had devised an unorthodox method for cracking long-unsolved murder cases by reinvestigating them as financial crimes and prosecuting them under the Racketeer-Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) code. (Murder isn't a federal crime, but racketeering is, and murder can be part of a racketeering scheme. Thus Bailey has been charged with racketeering, plus mail and wire fraud and money-laundering.) Miller got on the case in 1989, when state police investigator Dave Hamm mentioned a woman's allegation that she'd been conned out of \$50,000 by Bailey. Miller didn't show much interest until Hamm added that the accused had once dated Helen Brach. Miller assembled a multiagency team that included FBI agent Pete Cullen and Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms agents Jim DeLorto and Dan Ivancich, who would spend the next five years unearthing documents and interviewing roughly 1,000 possible witnesses.

"Prove the fraud and the murder will fall in place," Miller explains to me one evening in a coffee shop near the U.S. courthouse. Tall, with close-cropped, thinning hair, conservative clothes and a precise, tight-lipped manner of speaking, Miller gives little away. "Please put in your article 'Miller would not comment on any evidentiary matters,'" he requests.

Racketeering cases are tough to beat, since a jury can buy

a pattern of crimes even if all of them aren't proved beyond reasonable doubt.

Perhaps sensing disaster, a few weeks before his scheduled trial, Bailey changed his plea to guilty on almost everything except the Brach fraud and murder charges. He's gambling that at his hearing late this month, he'll be able to convince Senior U.S. District Judge Milton Shadur that he's a swindler but not a killer and avoid the life sentence prosecutors are seeking.

Indeed, there are troubling aspects to the Brach allegations, which take up a few sketchy pages in the ninety-five-page proffer of potential witnesses that prosecutors filed in March. The government promises more damning details will emerge at the hearing. Perhaps prosecutors will identify the actual murderer—though so far they've unveiled only a mysterious witness who claims he declined

Didn't stay with any job for more than a few months. Skills? Just his personality. "I'm an extrovert, a positive thinker," Bailey says. "Anything I make my mind up to do, I do."

He saw an ad for a driving-school instructor. As he predictably relates it, "I wound up being the top honcho; [the boss] wanted to make me the manager." Instead, Bailey opened his own driving schools, first in St. Louis, then in Chicago. Then he moved to California. In 1970, back in Chicago, he ran into trouble. "A few of my instructors got carried away with students," he explains. "That was the disadvantage of being in California and not having control. Over the years, we taught thousands of students, had two or three complaints, a few complaints, and that really hurt my business." The Illinois attorney general revoked his business license for fraudulent practices. Bailey went into the smoking-clinic business.

About that time, he purchased a stable on Harms Road in

When his hearing comes up this month, Bailey hopes to convince the judge that he's merely a swindler, not a killer.

Bailey's offer of \$5,000 to kill Brach.

It may well be that prosecutors will produce the body—after all, that's what they were looking for in 1990 when they exhumed the skeleton of a Jane Doe found in a forest preserve in Thornton, Illinois, a year after Brach's disappearance, only to discover that Ms. Doe had been buried without her head. (As it turned out, the Cook County medical examiner had determined, at the time of burial, that Jane Doe, unlike Brach, had been toothless for a decade prior to her death.) Maybe the prosecution will produce incriminating physical evidence, even though police were not able to do so in 1977.

But maybe not. One federal investigator notes, "Everybody is calling this a murder case, but it's really a fraud case"—i.e., money, not blood, is the key. There's still the problem of relatives and close friends of Brach's who call into question basic points in the government's terse scenario, such as who introduced Bailey to Brach and whether or not she intended to go to the police about him. The scenario also fails to account for a longtime suspect, houseman Jack Matlick, whose odd behavior around the time of Brach's disappearance and improbable recounting of events to police suggests he may have knowledge of her fate.

One of twelve children, Richard Bailey grew up dirt-poor in central Illinois during the Depression and, starting at an early age, did any work he could get, including slopping hogs. He quit school after the ninth grade and got his mother to let him join the army air corps. Four years later, he was back in Illinois, new wife in tow, fixing televisions, selling vacuum cleaners, dangling from scaffolds to paint water towers.

the Chicago suburb of Morton Grove for \$300,000. He wasn't an experienced horseman, but he had a great location, next to a forest preserve, surrounded by upper-class neighborhoods. His clientele was made up of pleasure riders rather than competitors, but they were willing to pay top dollar. "I ran a first-class place," Bailey brags. "You drove in, you didn't see weeds or anything, horses groomed every day. I mean, they was flocking to get into my place." He developed a reputation as a doting, if smarmy, host. When woman customers would pull into the parking lot, he'd be there, taking their hand in his, cooing a greeting.

"He was so syrupy and insincere that you would kind of withdraw," remembers Shirley McCallum, editor of a local equestrian magazine, *On Course*. "Even if he had a million dollars, he was kind of repulsive." And if someone needed a horse, well, Bailey was always eager to hook up the customer with someone who had one to sell; broker's fees were a big part of his income.

Polite society ignored horse country's corrupt side. Some horse dealers were notorious cheats; there were whispers of altered markings and forged paperwork, of lame horses shot up with drugs to appear healthy. Horse country's godfather was Silas Jayne, a craggy character with a head of white curls and a four- or five-carat diamond on his pinkie, an accomplished horseman with an unpleasant demeanor. People who got on his bad side had a tendency to get shot at or blown up, or to have their stable burst into flames. "Silas monopolized the show world," says longtime horse-welfare activist Donna Ewing. "God help anybody that did better than him. If somebody had a horse that beat one of his, he'd go up to them and say

'I'll give you \$5,000 for that horse.' And people knew that if they didn't...well, it was an offer you can't refuse."

Jayne, who died of leukemia in 1987, even had assassins kill his half brother, George, a business rival whose horse had bested Silas's in a competition. Before going to prison in 1973 for six years for conspiring to murder his half brother, Silas, according to newspaper reports, turned over his business to nephew Frank Jayne Jr.—at whose Northwestern stables Bailey boarded his first horse.

Bailey portrays the Jaynes primarily as his rivals: "[Silas] hated me with a passion. I got to know the horse business, and a lot of times people would come by my stable on the way to his and I'd sell them a horse first." Although he sometimes did business with Silas's nephew, he says, "I never did trust him as far as I could throw him. I didn't get that close to him. He'd screw you every chance he had."

Nevertheless, during the 1970s, Bailey and Frank Jayne Jr. popped up together in lawsuits charging they'd swindled women in horse deals; those allegations would later figure in the federal racketeering case against Bailey. (Though Jayne, a convicted cocaine dealer, hasn't been indicted, details in prosecution documents identify him as

attorney, Jim Beckley, recalls one investment was a studhorse, Bull Lea's Whirl. "The problem was that he was what they call a 'shy breeder,'" Beckley explains. "In human parlance, he couldn't get it up." When his owner began to suspect a deception, the unfortunate stallion was found mysteriously dead in his stall. As her protests continued, according to the woman, things got even rougher; her barn was torched and her family received anonymous telephone threats.

Bailey, who settled the suit out of court for \$25,000, denies any part in such violence. "As far as selling women horses, I don't deny that I did," he says. "They sell automobiles like that. You're a salesman, you wine and dine people.... [Women] may have been romantically involved with me, but I wasn't romantically involved with them. I treat a lady like a lady. I wine and dine men also on business deals—but I guess for a woman, it is different."

Beckley characterizes Bailey's appeal to lonely older women differently. "At one point in the trial, I went out in the hallway with him and Frank Jayne during a break," he recalls. "Richard said to me, 'Jim, we could make a world of

money if we was partners.' I put my arm around him and said, 'Richard, I don't think I could stand all the screwing.' Richard got

Assistant U.S. Attorney Steven Miller, center, and his racket-busting team of investigators.



Jack Matlick, Mrs. Brach's houseman, is the last person known to have seen the heiress alive. He and Bailey disliked each other.



Bailey's second wife, Annette Hoffman, is standing by her man.

"co-schemer A," who allegedly helped plot Bailey's frauds and the murder of Brach. Jayne did not respond to repeated requests to interview him for this article.) "The Jaynes started grooming Bailey for the role they couldn't play," contends Dave Hamm, who, as a police investigator, helped jail Silas. "Somebody smooth, who could operate at levels of society that they couldn't." Allegedly, after Frank Jayne found rich women—sometimes through a corrupt policeman who ran checks on the license plates of expensive cars—Bailey would play gigolo, sweet-talking a widow at intimate dinners, dancing cheek to cheek with her, proposing marriage, until she invested in a horse deal. But instead of the top-caliber show horses for which she was paying, she'd get broken-down nags acquired for a few hundred bucks in Kentucky, sometimes drugged or with their leg nerves severed to hide lameness. She'd also get steep boarding bills, until she complained. Another conspirator might step in and offer to take the horses off her hands if she invested in another deal.

One of these widows sued Bailey in 1975, alleging that he and his partners took her for more than \$200,000, some of it while she was in a hospital bed, woozy from medication. Her

this shocked look on his face and said, 'You don't have to do that. You just put down your hair and talk purty.' His basic job was to provide companionship. He came off as old-fashioned, Victorian. He was a wonderful sociopath. He never believed any of this would affect him."

Unfortunately for the government, Helen Brach doesn't fit neatly into its theories. For one thing, contrary to what's stated in the indictment, Bailey wasn't introduced to the heiress by "co-schemer A"—i.e., Frank Jayne Jr.—who may or may not be a key witness against him. Instead, in 1973, Bailey took his Eldorado to a Morton Grove car wash and struck up a conversation with a woman who had a similar car. As the woman recalls it, Bailey complimented her on her tan, and she explained that she owned an apartment building in Fort Lauderdale. After that, Bailey started calling and asking her to lunch, but the woman, who was married, politely put him off. He was interested in buying her

building, he said. He got a lot more interested when the woman mentioned that she rented the penthouse apartment to Helen Brach. "You mean as in Brach candy?" he supposedly said. "Oh, would I love to meet her."

The woman agreed to arrange something. "Bailey was fun—he acted like a gentleman, not coarse," she explains. "He certainly wouldn't have seemed like someone I was scared of." And the heiress, she figured, might be lonely, since her husband had died three years before. On the agreed-upon evening, the woman and her husband ate dinner with Brach at the Studio, a Morton Grove steak-and-seafood restaurant; Bailey, meanwhile, waited at a nearby table for an opportune moment to get up and wander past. "I just said, 'Richard, this is Helen Brach.' He said, 'How do you do?' She had no idea I set this up." Bailey slid into a seat, ordered a drink and started talking to Brach about horses.

Bailey called Brach a couple of days later, and he kept calling until she agreed to meet him at a Fort Lauderdale restaurant six weeks later. After Bailey and Brach had been dating for a year, the woman who'd introduced them became concerned. She'd heard some gossip about Bailey's swindling another society matron on some horses. She took Brach out to lunch for a talk. "I said, 'Helen, be careful as far as your money is concerned,'" recalls the woman. "She said, 'You're not really telling me anything. I'm aware of it. But he's good company.' She must have heard some of those stories. I think she knew he was conning her all along."

The government alleges that as he had with other women, Bailey sought to defraud Brach by feigning love for her. The problem is that, according to Brach's intimate friends, she didn't love Richard Bailey. "He was more of a friend than a romantic interest," says one. Brach had been devoted to her husband, living with him in his hospital room as he lay dying. Friends say she had no desire to remarry. She never cared much for sex, and, anyway, she had two other men lavishing attention on her. One was Belton Mouras, head of the Animal Protective Institute, a California-based group to which Brach donated hundreds of thousands of dollars. The other was Jack Matlick.

Frank Brach had hired Matlick, an ex-convict, years before. After Frank's death, Helen Brach had fired him but then had taken him back; he lived on a farm she owned and did sundry tasks, such as fixing her plumbing. Some people found him strange, hostile, prone to outbursts of temper. But Matlick was devoted to Brach, some say to the point of obsession. She entrusted him with access to her safety deposit box at a local bank. Yet in other ways she kept him at arm's length. When Matlick drove her cars down to Fort Lauderdale from Chicago, for example, she wouldn't let him stay overnight in her penthouse, though it had four bedrooms.

According to Bailey, Matlick didn't much like him. "You ever see an attack dog stand back in the corner and hide behind trees?" Bailey says. "Yeah, well, that's him." When Bailey would come to pick up Brach for dates, he recalls, Matlick would refuse to shake his hand. Instead, he'd simply stand close to Bailey, in a menacing fashion. "I think he was in love with her," Bailey says.

Bailey saw a lot of Brach—her landlady recalls that he

seemed to come to Florida every other week when Brach was there. But still she kept him at a polite distance. When he became more persistent in his attentions, one friend says, Brach stopped seeing him for six months.

It wasn't Bailey's animal magnetism that got her back but, rather, her love of animals. Sometime in late 1974 or early 1975, Brach and Bailey got together at Gulfstream Park racetrack, near Fort Lauderdale. Brach never had much interest in the mounts Bailey peddled, but she loved racehorses. She and Frank had owned a few thoroughbreds; she'd gone with him to the big horse auctions in Kentucky, and she'd had her picture snapped in the winner's circle at Chicago's Arlington International track. "She was a good handicapper," Bailey remembers discovering. "She knew that *Racing Form* like the back of her hand, you know?"

One can imagine that as Bailey went to the window to place her \$6 bets that day, bells went off in his head. Before long, Everett Moore, Brach's accountant, got a phone call from her in Florida. Bailey had put together a deal for her to buy three racehorses. Instead of from his usual sources, they came from his brother Paul "PJ" Bailey, a former jockey and a horse owner in Florida, who became Brach's trainer. Government witnesses claim Bailey sold Brach several hundred thousand dollars' worth of horses, including fifteen worthless broodmares—a transaction that was strangely absent from Brach's financial records eighteen years ago when a legion of lawyers pored over them after her disappearance. Bailey says the amount was more like \$150,000. As an animal lover, Brach gave instructions that the horses were not to be whipped in the backstretch. Still, Bailey says, she had ambitions of winning some big races. "She liked to be in the limelight," he says.

But she didn't get there with Bailey's horses. Take Potenciado, a three-year-old from Argentina, which Brach acquired on June 30, 1975, for \$48,261, according to court documents. In his native land, the stallion had finished in the money in two of three starts the previous year. After Brach got him, he never even ran a race. "He wasn't very good," one federal investigator notes. On the other hand, as Bailey points out, most racehorse owners don't make any money. "Everybody knows it is a risk, and anybody that goes into it knows it's going to be for pleasure. Most people that invest in horses have a lot of money. So they go to the races, hoping that one of their horses will win. That's just the business, has been since Day One. Not that I'm an expert on racehorses," he says. In any case, at the beginning of 1976, Brach switched trainers and began acquiring horses from other sellers in Florida. Her new horses started to catch on modestly. The weekend of her disappearance, in fact, one, Brach's *Hilarious*, won the seventh at Gulfstream by a length and a half.

Bailey doesn't recall Brach's becoming disenchanted with him, but others do. "She was excited about it when she bought the horses, but then it cooled off," her Florida landlady recalls. "The horses weren't winners. She was getting suspicious of the whole situation." Her brother, Charles, remembers her being upset: "She told (continued on page 193)



THE HORSE LADY

(continued from page 192) me she'd bought a horse and it wouldn't run. Wouldn't you be? She thought she'd been taken." But he also recollects her saying that things had been smoothed over, that the horse—apparently, Potenciado—was going to be made into a jumper. By the end of 1976, Bailey was still on good enough terms with Brach to fly into Manhattan and join her at the Waldorf-Astoria, where they had dinner and celebrated the New Year, dancing to Guy Lombardo. That night, they stayed in separate rooms, as usual; the next day, Bailey returned to Chicago.

At this point, things start to get murky. If Brach was murdered, one trigger for it might have been the preparation of her 1976 tax return, which showed that she had lost \$120,000 on her racehorses. One witness, a horse appraiser, says he examined Brach's horses and advised her not to spend any more money training them. Bailey says he doesn't remember a quarrel about this, but Brach's cousin Edelen Henderson, a sometime companion, recalls the heiress's complaints: "Those horses were very expensive, and she was angry about it. I think it was more being swindled than the money she lost. She said, 'I told [Bailey] I'm going to turn him in to the authorities.' I said, 'You shouldn't do that. Just go.'"

But how serious Brach was about that threat is hard to say. During a January 1977 visit to her brother, Charles, in Ohio, she seemed anything but angry. Charles, who says he was never interviewed by federal agents, doesn't recall his sister's saying anything at that time about Bailey or about going to the police. In fact, he questions whether she would ever have done that. Brach, apparently, was irked that local authorities had done nothing after shutters had been stolen from her farm. "She didn't care much for the police," he explains.

On the evening of Monday, February 21, 1977, Edelen Henderson received a strange call at her home in Dania, Florida, from Jack Matlick. "He wanted to know if I'd seen [Helen] and if she was with me," says Henderson. "He acted as if he thought I would know." Later, she would wonder if Matlick's seeming worry had been an attempt at building an alibi. Indeed, over the next week, according to Matlick's deposition, he phoned a lot of people, trying to find out where Brach was. But he waited ten days before calling Charles Vorhees and asking him to come to Chicago to file a missing person report, which police would accept only from a relative.

When Charles arrived in Chicago, according to his sworn testimony, the houseman did not take him immediately to the police. Upstairs in the mansion, Matlick opened a drawer to reveal two of Brach's diaries and tablets full of her scrawled attempts to communicate with spirits. On top was a note that said "Burn these." Matlick thought that was a good idea—even though, he said, he believed Brach was still alive, he was concerned that the diaries would be taken by the police and fall into the hands of the press. Charles agreed: The note looked to be in Brach's handwriting. The houseman tore off the diaries' locks with pliers and took everything down to the furnace. When police finally came to the house, they were reduced to analyzing the ashes.

"I wish the hell they hadn't burned those diaries," Bailey gripes today. "Because she would have had me down in them as the greatest thing that ever happened."

In the next few months, police, private investigators and attorneys untangling Brach's affairs came up with more troubling details. The horse deals, certainly, raised questions about Bailey, who says that at the time of Brach's disappearance, he was waiting for her in Palm Beach, at the Breakers hotel. When subpoenaed in a civil lawsuit over Brach's estate, Bailey took the Fifth—in retrospect, he says, "the biggest mistake I ever made." But Matlick got more attention from the police, and not just for disposing of the diaries. Matlick reported that he had taken Brach to O'Hare just before 7 A.M. on February 21, 1977; investigators discovered that the first flight to Fort Lauderdale didn't leave until nine. Moreover, Brach, not an early riser, thanks to her late-night supernatural scribbling, seldom traveled in the morning.

And then there were the checks. The weekend before Brach's supposed departure from O'Hare, eight drafts totaling \$15,000 were written, \$12,400 worth of which were made out to Matlick. According to court testimony, handwriting experts from Brach's bank and from the Northern Illinois Crime Lab agreed the signatures had been forged, although they could not identify by whom. In the same lawsuit for which Bailey declined to testify, Matlick also took the Fifth, when asked about the checks, though he would claim Brach had offered to help him with financial problems. In subsequent court testimony, Matlick's former wife would say that the houseman's safe suddenly began to fill with rare coins. Eventually, in a 1993 lawsuit, Charles Vorhees would accuse Matlick of stealing \$90,000 in

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cash, checks and valuables from Brach. Matlick settled the claim by relinquishing rights to a \$50,000 retirement annuity left to him by his employer. (Most of her \$20 million fortune endowed a foundation funding various animal causes. Charles received a \$500,000 trust.)

The tiny Glenview Police Department moved slowly on the case; by the time crime-lab investigators got into the house, almost a month after Brach's disappearance, according to a former local detective, Matlick's meticulous house-keeping had wiped out potential clues. The detective came away troubled by Matlick. "You just can't imagine this guy," he says. "He reminds you of—what's the guy's name in *Psycho*? A really strange duck; kind of gave you the creeps to talk to."

Matlick wore Brach's reading glasses. He knew the contents of every drawer in her house, where she kept every garment, even where she kept a swatch of hair for matching her wigs. "He knew too many intimate details about this woman—more than what I know about my wife," the detective marvels. "It was like an obsession...with her and the whole relationship they had. His life seemed to be integrated into this estate of hers." The detective wonders if Matlick's obsession might have spun out of control as he saw his future in jeopardy. After all, according to Charles Vorhees, Brach planned to sell the Glenview mansion and split her time between the new Florida condo and her lake house in Ohio. "She probably told [Matlick] what she was going to do," Charles guesses.

The only person, perhaps, who knows the answers is Matlick, who now lives in a

small town outside Pittsburgh. "I have no comment," he tells me. "Thank you for calling."

Despite the detective's speculations about a possible crime of passion, police never were able to come up with evidence—a body, a murder weapon, a witness—strong enough to charge Matlick with murder. Still, logically speaking, Matlick's hulking presence casts a shadow on the case against Bailey. If Matlick doesn't figure in Brach's disappearance, how does one explain the checks or the account of events that the judge who declared Brach legally dead in 1984 found unbelievable? And if Matlick was involved, doesn't that tend to vindicate Bailey, since the two men didn't get along? "Some of our sources say they hated each other," an investigator admits. He quickly adds, "We don't need Matlick to make the case against Bailey."

He may be right. Bailey, the grifter who's lived so much of his life in the gray area, now finds himself in the clutches of the amorphous racketeering statute, which compelled him to plead guilty to get a separate hearing from a judge on the Brach charges. Worse for Bailey, the Feds don't have to meet the reasonable-doubt standard, which a state court would demand if he were on trial on the same murder-conspiracy charges. And if prosecutors can't conclusively solve the Brach mystery, they need only convince the judge that Bailey probably was involved in the disappearance.

Since the admitted swindler is such an oily character, it's easy for people to believe the worst.

One exception is his second wife, Annette Hoffman, who's been described

by prosecutors as the most recent of Bailey's targets. They met in a restaurant in April 1994. After only a couple of dates, he persuaded her to marry him, in Vegas. He had a limousine filled with flowers waiting to take them directly to the marriage-license bureau. They checked into a hotel, and she discovered he had no credit card, which made her suspicious—though not nearly as much as when she discovered he'd shaved thirteen years off his age and neglected to tell her about his involvement with Helen Brach. After the annulment and then his arrest, amazingly, she gave him another chance. The couple remarried in a jailhouse ceremony. In November, she sought, unsuccessfully, to gain his release by putting up her \$1 million house as security. To some, Bailey's courtly rap might seem smarmy, but to Hoffman, he's a gentleman with old-fashioned, European manners. Though he's suspected of a lurid crime, he does stand when she walks into a room. "Whether he really did these bad things, I don't know," she says tremulously. "These women, even Helen Brach...but that is not what I make him out to be, in my experience."

Even as the government bears down on Bailey for a murder he may or may not have committed, the irrepressible hustler is calling me back to revise his plans. He's decided against hair transplants, he says; he'd rather open a clinic that offers a miraculous blood-cleansing regimen. "Nothing like it," he proclaims. "Too bad I'm not in a place where I could get the details for you." As he says, he's a positive thinker. ♦

Patrick J. Kiger is a freelance writer based in Takoma Park, Maryland.

TALK STUPID

(continued from page 159) grimaces. (And then the ratings come in, and he cries like a baby.)

Why Maury Povich hasn't sunk two careers—his own and Connie Chung's—is one of the great mysteries of modern civilization. Instead, he rises, going from a TV-tabloid magazine show to his own TV-tabloid talk show—along the way, bagging the networks' prime-time news queen, Connie Chung, and gaining a modicum of respectability that gives him entrée to roundtable discussions about journalism on *Charlie Rose*. If Maury and Connie ever have children—at the moment, there is no state or federal law to stop them—expect a baby that talks before it walks.

In the drama that is daytime TV, Geral-

do is Brando. Geraldo's a method asshole: He's so concerned. He's so sincere. He's so Geraldo. Geraldo actually thinks he brings some journalistic integrity to his daily telepopocalypse. Ha! On one show—and he does this every other day—he details how a mother's drug use has damaged her children. He interviews the parents onstage, then interviews their small children backstage, then talks again with the parents. When the parents start to get out of hand, Geraldo—dripping with disingenuous concern—implores his producer on-camera "Do me a favor, Michael, let's get the kids to a faraway place." (Oh, sure, Jerry. You fly these kids to New York City. You put them up in a hotel. You chauffeur them in a limo to a TV show. You bring them to the stu-

dio, and you sit them offstage. You interview them on national TV about their mother's drug problem. And then you say "Let's protect them"? Sorry, pal, no sale.)

And you know what? When Geraldo takes a dump, it lands on Richard Bey. That's how far down the food chain that bum is. Bey is a bottom-feeder who can't find bottom.

One bit of good news: If most of daytime talk is a food fight, *LIVE With Regis & Kathie Lee* is a gourmet meal. The opening twenty minutes—mostly ad-libbed, all chemistry—are the best twenty minutes on daytime TV. The hosts exchange news and notes, insults and barbs; it's conversation worth seeing. Joey Bishop should have been Regis's sidekick; the man can bring it.