



DROPS OF REMEMBRANCE

BY JUAN M. BRACETE

Vantage Press, New York, NY, 2012. 66 pages, \$10.95.

Reviewed by R. Mark Frey

A career in the United States Foreign Service—the allure of exotic locales, climates, cultures, and peoples, has caused many of us to consider it. It can be a great way to see the world and possibly play a role in world events, while also having the honor of representing our country. How does one pursue such a career? How does one go about joining this elite group of people? What skills and talents does the Department of State seek for the position? What may one expect from such a career path?

These questions and more form the basis of Juan Bracete's account of his life and career. Born and raised by his grandparents in Puerto Rico, Bracete led a solitary childhood marked by many hours reading books borrowed from his grandfather's library while dreaming of a life in another land far away from his small isolated island. These dreams were encouraged by the fact that his grandfather's prominence exposed Bracete to a stream of high-ranking island people and visitors from Europe. A trip to Europe at age 10 with his grandparents contributed even more to his desire to live abroad: "The desire to achieve, grow up and rush into the world outside the balmy Caribbean was overpowering. That mustard seed was exploding within me."

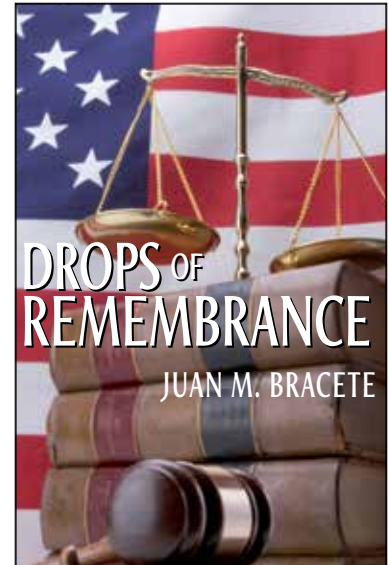
Although Bracete's grandfather discouraged him from attending school abroad, he pursued studies at Georgetown University, soaking up the culture in and around Washington, D.C. Unable to find a job after graduation, he returned to Puerto Rico to work as a junior credit officer at a local savings and loan association. He moved on some six months later to a bank, then to law school and, during the summer preceding his last semester, did an internship with the Department of Justice's Tax Division, in Washington, D.C.

Bracete hoped for post-graduation employment with the Tax Division but, as luck would have it, the Board of Immigration Appeals had an opening. The Board offered

to send him to Georgetown University for a preparatory, graduate-level immigration law course taught by Charles Gordon. Bracete grabbed the opportunity and soon commenced work with the Board of Immigration Appeals. Later, because of his grandfather's terminal illness, he quit his job and returned to Puerto Rico. Bracete initially despaired about his employment prospects in Puerto Rico, but, as he notes, "God provides for madmen, children and fools," and, not long after returning, he was hired by a local law firm, where he worked for six years. By then, his grandfather had passed away and he developed an itch to seek government service on the mainland. Contacting former supervisors at the Department of Justice, he was hired to be an immigration judge in Miami. He remained in that position for four and a half years and then followed it with three and a half years of private practice. Finally, he was appointed to the Foreign Service. He considered it a dream come true, but he also felt apprehensive about starting a new career and moving to Washington, D.C., after eight years in the Miami area.

Following training at the Foreign Service Institute, Bracete served his first assignment in Caracas, Venezuela, where he carried out such none-too-pleasant tasks as visits to the morgue and to U.S. citizens in prison, while he wended his way through a political minefield of coworkers, local citizens, and government officials in both Washington, D.C., and Venezuela.

Bracete's second assignment took him to his wife's homeland of El Salvador, but then he resigned his Foreign Service employment in order to pursue local opportunities that unfortunately failed to materialize. After a couple of other steps that I'll skip, he opened a law practice in El Salvador, and, after a year, he was appointed to the unpaid position of Minister Counselor of the Embassy of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta to the Republic of El Salvador; he took this post because of his interest in the Order's humanitarian projects in El Salvador. This was followed by an appointment to Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta to the Republic of El Salvador—a position he held for nine

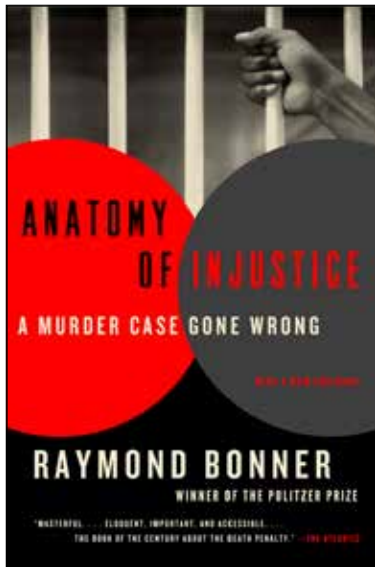


years until December 30, 2009, when he resigned and returned to the United States.

Drops of Remembrance is enjoyable, and Bracete's account of his days in Venezuela are especially insightful. But I found myself desiring more from his autobiography—more discussion of his formative years with his grandparents, more discussion of his varied education in both Puerto Rico and the United States, and more discussion of his work in immigration law, as he has a unique perspective forged during his years as an attorney with the Board of Immigration Appeals, an immigration judge, and an attorney in private practice. I wanted to hear more about his career in the Foreign Service—both its good and bad aspects. Lastly, I would have been interested in his impressions, as someone from Puerto Rico, of life in the United States, both in Washington, D.C., and Miami.

I hope that Bracete will revisit and expand upon this book to give the reader a more comprehensive view of his life. He has lived a unique and fascinating one and has many insights to offer readers, especially young people on the cusp of making decisions about their own career paths. ©

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ANATOMY OF INJUSTICE: A MURDER CASE GONE WRONG

BY RAYMOND BONNER

Alfred A. Knopf, New York, NY, 2012. 298 pages, \$26.95 (cloth), \$16.00 (paper).

Reviewed by Thomas Holbrook

"Justice delayed is justice denied."

—Legal maxim with attributions dating back to the Magna Carta

Advanced thinkers have been carving into anatomy since the Renaissance, when, in an era before refrigeration, stench accompanied new knowledge. One of the most famous paintings in Western art is Rembrandt's "The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp," depicting a surgeon of the day revealing the penetralia of a human cadaver before a rapt audience of students. Anatomizing can thus be considered the door passed through to reach the modern from the ancient.

In English, the word "anatomy," as the study of the structure of living beings, dates to the transition between the medieval and the modern, stemming from the Greek roots for "up" and "to cut or slice"—literally, "to cut up." A recent coinage is "tomography"—electromagnetic legerdemain that images bodies in sections or slices.

A figurative literary sense also evolved, dating to Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, a 17th-century work "anatomizing" what we call "depression" (melancholy deriving from the "black choler" of the Four Humors theory of human dispositions of that time). Since Burton's exemplar,

any number of "anatomies"—examinations/delvings/investigations—have been written, including a "true crime" book, Michigan judge John Voelker's bestselling *Anatomy of a Murder* (1959), whence Raymond Bonner's title surely derives.

Bonner's subtitle, *A Murder Case Gone Wrong*, confirms this, though "gone wrong" is a howling understatement: the case involved the palpably erroneous—and manifestly racist—repeated murder convictions in South Carolina of an innocent black man, the marginally literate handyman Edward Lee Elmore. After being imprisoned for more than 30 years, most of it on death row, Elmore, in a plea-bargaining irony, had, finally, to plead guilty to the state's murder charge to gain his freedom.

Ironies abound in the book, as in the case. Greenwood, S.C.—where the murder of an elderly widow, Dorothy Edwards, took place—calls itself "Emerald City," though any wizard therein is surely malign. Edwards' next-door neighbor, "Jimmy" Holloway, who had an extended sexual relationship with her ("hooty pooty" around ... with her," a neighbor described it), had been trained as a meat cutter (the widow had been stabbed 52 times), and claimed publicly, "I am the only one who could kill her and get away with it."

Nevertheless, Edward Lee Elmore was tried and convicted for the murder three times, in the same venue and with almost the same prosecutorial and judicial participants, alas. Each time, he was returned to death row, first for 19 years, then for another 8, and finally for 5—a prisoner who is 22 when the murder occurs, and 53 when he is released. The level of impartiality toward Elmore by the legal authorities is characterized by the usual local police reference to him as "Black Elmo."

Such bias adds to moments of dark humor in the book, as when, after a concatenation of legal, judicial, and prosecutorial incompetence (and probable police chicanery), Bonner quotes the South Carolina state prosecutor pontificating about local justice: the case, he insists, "revealed a quality of justice which I think is appropriate in this state. ..." Misfeasance, malfeasance, and manifest incompetence, Bonner shows, abounded in Emerald City.

There is a second redemptive story here too, an unusual bonus in an unjust-conviction narrative. Elmore's primary defense attorney, Diana Holt, also came from a

background of deprivation and abuse. When she takes his case pro bono, "she had been a lawyer for less than 100 days," and has to "convince the judge that ... three juries at three trials—had gotten it wrong." Like Elmore, she had received few breaks in her early life, so he and his family understand and trust this neophyte white lawyer, despite her inexperience.

The chapter that introduces her to us (and to Elmore) is by far the best in a good book. Bonner's prose comes alive there, describing how Holt fought her way up from a background of sexual abuse by a stepfather, extensive drug use, truancy and poor grades, and, as a hitchhiking runaway teen, to use the intelligence she has always had to graduate *summa cum laude* from Texas State University before entering law school. But she does not yet know that for much of her life Edward Lee Elmore has been on death row. Soon she will find out, and both their lives will change.

Epilogue

As the book ends Edward Elmore is off death row but still in prison. It is a rare reviewing pleasure to note that on March 2, 2012—after the book under review had gone to press—he was set free. ☉

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A WILDERNESS OF ERROR: THE TRIALS OF JEFFREY MACDONALD

BY ERROL MORRIS

Penguin Press, New York, NY, 2012. 526 pages, \$29.95.

Reviewed by Christopher C. Faille

Errol Morris is the documentary filmmaker whose best known movie, *The Thin Blue Line* (1988), secured the freedom of a man wrongly convicted of murder. In 1991, Morris pitched the idea of an analogous documentary—one focused on the 1970 murder of Jeffrey MacDonald's wife and daughters, committed (said a jury in 1979) by Jeffrey MacDonald. Despite Morris' stellar reputation at this time, after *The Thin Blue Line* had won best documentary honors from the National Society of Film Critics, the New York Film Critics Circle, and other organizations that give such



awards, and after Morris had received a genius grant from the MacArthur Foundation, he wasn't able to interest the studios.

Morris describes for us in his new book, *A Wilderness of Errors: The Trials of Jeffrey MacDonald*, how at one pitch meeting he spoke of opening the case back up and showing "how critical evidence was ignored or suppressed" and "how the evidence that *was* introduced does not confirm MacDonald's guilt." But the studio executives wouldn't bite. "Because he's guilty," one of them said. They had thoroughly bought into what was then *the* definitive mainstream conception of the case—the Joe McGinniss conception.

So now Morris has published this book, thereby at last having his say about the subject that no one wanted to bankroll him to film.

Births and Deaths

Kimberley, the first child of Dr. Jeffrey MacDonald and Colette (*née* Stevenson) MacDonald came into the world in April 1964. The second, another girl (Kristen), arrived in May 1967. More than two years later, their father joined the U.S. Army as a captain. In due course, the Army assigned him as a group surgeon to the 3rd Special Forces Group ("Green Berets") at Fort Bragg, NC. He and his family took up residence at 544 Castle Drive.

At 3:33 a.m., on Feb. 17, 1970, Jeffrey MacDonald called an emergency dispatcher for help. His call was to a civilian dispatcher, who instructed him to call the base's MPs. He left the phone off the hook. The operator, getting no further response from him, called

the MPs herself on another line.

Emergency personnel started showing up 17 minutes later, and they found Colette, Kimberley, and Kristen dead in their respective bedrooms. MacDonald was beside his dead wife. This is when he gave his first account of what had happened, to Ken Mica, one of the responding MPs, saying that there had been four intruders, one blonde white female, two white men, and one black man. They had set about killing his family while praising LSD.

MacDonald himself had a puncture wound and partially collapsed lung. He was taken away in an ambulance.

A Compromised Crime Scene

Everyone who writes about the MacDonald case agrees at least that somebody, during the early minutes of a homicide investigation, moved a flowerpot. At a hearing just six months after the murders of MacDonald's wife and daughters, an MP, the aforementioned Ken Mica, testified that in the living room of the MacDonald home he saw a man pick up an overturned flowerpot and set it on its base. This evidence tamperer looked as though he belonged there and was wearing an army field jacket, but, beyond that, no one knows who he was.

This is a small point, although it became a somewhat larger one soon enough—the crime photos were taken after the flower pot was restored to its base. Early investigators, looking at those photos, drew the conclusion in part from that upright pot that there couldn't have been much of a struggle in the living room, despite the fact that this was where MacDonald, on his own account, had warded off the intruders until knocked unconscious.

More generally, the replacement of the flowerpot shows that the crime scene was not under control. By some reports, there were approximately 18 MPs in the MacDonald family quarters that morning, way too many for the smallish space under investigation to begin with. Other people with no part in the investigation, including a neighbor and a chaplain, say that they walked in and out unchallenged.

Authorities questioned MacDonald in detail on April 6. He gave them an account of how he had come to be sleeping on the couch that night, of how he woke up to the sound of his family's screams, and of how a blonde stranger, holding a candle, said, "Kill the pigs.

Acid's groovy." He told of his own life-or-death struggle, of his loss of consciousness, and of waking up some time later on the hallway floor, his teeth chattering.

The CID officers, led by chief investigator Franz Grebner, indicated that they didn't believe him, and that they saw him as a suspect. "Your story just doesn't ring true," Grebner told MacDonald, and showed him a crime scene photo. "Do you see anything odd about that scene?," he asked. When MacDonald said that he didn't, Grebner continued, "Notice the flowerpot?"

The fact that the flowerpot was standing up in the photo was one of the key points indicative of what Grebner and his colleagues saw as a "staged scene," a not-so-messy mess created by MacDonald himself so he could blame imaginary intruders for the death of his family.

Even aside from the manufactured nature of that piece of evidence, its use by CID in this interrogation seems a bit dubious. If MacDonald—a physician and by all accounts an intelligent guy—had wanted to stage a scene, why *couldn't* he have turned over the flowerpot? As Errol Morris writes in the book under review: "The CID officers were suggesting that there were two MacDonalds: One MacDonald cunning enough to manufacture a crime scene; another MacDonald too stupid to do it effectively."

A Spot of Blood

Beginning in July 1970 and continuing into September, the Army held an Article 32 hearing, the military justice system's analog to a grand jury proceeding. Its purpose was to determine whether a court martial would proceed. This is the hearing at which Mica testified about that mysterious evidence tamperer in the field jacket.

Colonel Warren Rock, who presided over this hearing, issued his final report in October. Not only was there insufficient evidence to proceed to court martial, but Rock went a good deal further than he had to, saying "the matters set forth in all charges and specifications are not true." MacDonald was honorably discharged from the Army in December.

At this point, MacDonald had a good relationship with Freddy and Mildred Kassab, the stepfather and mother of his deceased wife. But he put that at risk when he started telling them that he was tracking down the real killers, whom he described in

terms reminiscent of the Manson family. On Nov. 17, MacDonald told Freddy Kassab that he had killed one of them.

We'll skip past the Kassabs' growing conviction of their son-in-law's guilt, and mention that, in August 1974, largely as a consequence of their insistence, a federal grand jury met in the Eastern District of North Carolina to look into the three murders from scratch. That grand jury indicted MacDonald early the next year.

The government's attorneys presented evidence to the grand jury that must have seemed scientific and persuasive. For example, they told the panel that there was a small speck of type O blood on the right lens of Jeffrey MacDonald's eyeglasses. Kristen's blood was type O, and the government suggested that it had gotten onto MacDonald's glasses while he was killing the younger of his daughters.

But what the grand jury didn't hear was that MacDonald had worked as an ER doctor at Hamlet Hospital on Feb. 15, two days before the murders. As Morris writes: "He had treated five patients with O-type blood that day, including a man with a cut foot. The speck of O-type blood could have come from any of these patients."

Lining Up Puncture Holes

Shortly before the start of his trial, MacDonald contracted with Joe McGinniss, a writer best known for his book about a Nixon presidential campaign, *The Selling of the President 1968*. McGinniss would live with the defense team, sit with them through the trial, and write a book on the case.

During the trial, which got underway in July 1975, the government presented evidence about a pajama top. At the crime scene, the prosecutor said, investigators had found a torn blue pajama top with a lot of holes in it lying over Colette's body. This was Jeffrey MacDonald's.

According to the prosecution's theory of the case, MacDonald put the garment over Colette's body and proceeded to stab her through it, repeatedly, with an ice pick. There were 21 ice pick wounds on her body and 48 punctures in the pajama top. (She was already dead before this began. On the prosecution theory, the actual murder weapon was a board of lumber.)

The prosecution suggested to the jury that the wounds to Colette's body lined up with the holes in this blue pajama top,

and that this supported its account of the murders. A physical science technician at the FBI laboratory determined that it was *possible* to fold the pajama top in such a way as to align the puncture holes with the wounds, using pushpins to simulate the presumed impact of the ice pick.

What is actual, of course, has to be possible. But what is possible need not be actual. And Morris has a low opinion of the significance of this supposed reconstruction. It was an exercise in creative folding, which is origami, he says, not forensics.

Morris' book also credits MacDonald's attorney, Bernard Segal, with an effective cross-examination on this point. Segal pointed out that there was another layer of cloth involved—the *pink* pajama top that Colette wore to bed that night. Presumably, assuming the government's theory, the ice pick passed through that pajama top, too, every time that it inflicted a wound on her body. Shouldn't the origami experiment have included that?

Bernard Segal: Did you ever attempt to do this little experiment: first putting on the pink pajama top across the dummy, then putting on the blue pajama top, and then trying to put through—these skewers through it all?

Shirley Green: No.

This was another instance, like the flowerpot and the blood on the glasses, in which "evidence" was employed only as a prop, not as part of a genuine effort to determine the truth.

The prosecution prevailed. On Aug. 29, the jury found Jeffrey MacDonald guilty of one count of first-degree murder and two counts of second-degree murder. (The different degrees of murder are explained by a prosecution theory that the defendant killed his wife and one child in a frenzied state and that he then killed the remaining child cold-bloodedly, in order to eliminate a witness.)

McGinniss and an Editor

In 1982, McGinniss' editor at Putnam wrote him about his ongoing work on the book on MacDonald. The editor was concerned that his draft as of that time wasn't adequately unambiguous in its conclusion. "Please make sure that it is clear that Jeff is convicted because he is truly

guilty and not just because he has a bad lawyer," she wrote. "You might even insert a sentence or two pointing out to the reader the irrefutable nature of certain pieces of evidence against Jeff."

By this point, McGinniss was near the bottom of what Morris calls a "slippery slope of tergiversation, opportunism, and self-interest" that would lead him in the book in its final form, as *Fatal Vision*, to present to the world a quite unambiguous picture of MacDonald as a psychotic adrenaline-pumped killer.

Putnam published *Fatal Vision* in September 1983. That December, in an apparently unrelated development in the world of publishing, *The New Yorker* published two articles by Janet Malcolm about a dissident psychoanalyst, Jeffrey Masson, and his theories about Sigmund Freud. The articles later became a book, *In the Freud Archives*, that brought Malcolm both fame and litigation, as Masson claimed that she "quoted" things he had never said. In 1991, the U.S. Supreme Court decided *Masson v. New Yorker Magazine, Inc.*

NBC ran a miniseries of *Fatal Vision* in November 1984. In that broadcast, the Kassabs are the heroes, struggling to see that their daughter's killer is brought to justice. Indeed, Freddy Kassab was portrayed by Karl Malden, and Mildred Kassab by Eva Marie Saint, who could hardly have been other than the good guys.

In the course of this miniseries, there is a bit of business involving the flowerpot. As Morris puts it, the viewers "see an MP pick up a tipped-over flowerpot and put it upright." This Morris calls "lip service to reality," to the sloppy nature of the evidence gathering that morning, but the general tone of the miniseries is unaffected.

The miniseries made a big point of the pajama top. But it wasn't the supposedly perfect lineup of holes that was critical in the screenplay. It was the *shape* of the punctures. Freddy Kassab decided that his son-in-law was a murderer (according to the series) because, if MacDonald had been using the pajama top to ward off the blows of an assailant, the blows would presumably have been jagged. The government investigators informed him, though, that the punctures were circular, as would on their hypothesis have been the case had the clothing been at rest.

In 1988, Miramax Films distributed *The Thin Blue Line*, which is Morris' movie on

the conviction of Randall Dale Adams in the death of Dallas Police Officer Robert W. Wood in November 1976. Largely as a consequence of evidence Morris compiled, the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals overturned Adams' conviction and sent the case back to Dallas County for a retrial. Adams was released after the district attorney declined to re-prosecute.

Facts: Who Gets to Speak

In 1989, *The New Yorker* ran another pair of articles by Janet Malcolm. These articles centered on the MacDonald case and in particular on the relationship between MacDonald and McGinniss. This, too, would become a book: *The Journalist and the Murderer*. Much of the reaction to these articles and the book turned on the perceived parallels between Malcolm's situation and McGinniss', in the light of Masson's complaints about *In the Freud Archives*. Malcolm's opening sentence in her new book seemed to some a self-indictment: "Every journalist who is not too stupid or too full of himself to notice what is going on knows that what he does is morally indefensible."

But Morris, for his part, focuses on another passage from *The Journalist and the Murderer*, in which Malcolm says that she spoke to MacDonald while preparing the original articles and that he responded by sending her documents, a "mountain of documents." She felt oppressed by the quantity of it—"trial transcripts, motions, declarations, affidavits, reports"—which, when she glanced at it, contained phrases such as "blue threads," "left chest puncture," "unidentified fingerprints," and so forth.

She decided not to read through this pile. "I know I cannot learn anything about MacDonald's guilt or innocence from this material. It is like looking for proof or disproof of the existence of God in a flower—it all depends on how you read the evidence. ... The material does not 'speak for itself.'"

Morris, who very much believes that if you want to know what happened you do have to struggle with the facts, and that in this situation that means with the documents, is offended by the postmodernism of Malcolm's sentiment. No, facts don't speak for themselves. Nonetheless, they are the reality against which we, the speakers of the universe, need to check our speaking.

McGinniss and Boyd Norton

He does *not* take the view, in the end, that MacDonald is innocent. He may be guilty. The rest of us may never know just what happened at 544 Castle Drive that night. Surely if we look at the situation as dramatists, MacDonald does not fit the role of "innocent man wronged" very well. He has lied, as in his tales to Freddy Kassab about his tracking of the real killers. He has also shown what psychologists might consider inappropriate affect. This was notoriously so in an appearance on the Dick Cavett Show after the Article 32 hearing when he discussed the case in a rather jovial tone.

But Morris is sure that MacDonald has never received due process of law. His conviction and his continued imprisonment are tainted for Morris by the botching of the initial military investigation, the vendetta atmosphere of the civilian investigation, and the decisions of a string of people thereafter: the trial judge who "eliminated exculpatory evidence from the trial; appellate judges who passed the buck rather than re-examining the issues" and "a craven and sloppy journalist who confabulated, lied, and betrayed," as well as another journalist who "lost herself in a misguided discussion of journalism" in order to avoid the difficulties of a pursuit of the truth.

To Morris, this all suggests "an endlessly perverse universe where guilt is assumed and issues of truth are left dangling."

Let's go back to that bit about McGinniss as a "craven and sloppy journalist." In Morris' view it was McGinniss' cravenness that led him to change the gist of his book to something that would be appealing to his publisher and the marketplace. We quoted above the concerns of McGinniss' editor.

There is evidence that he rewrote his book in response to such non-cognitive factors. In December 1979, four months after the jury's verdict, McGinniss wrote to MacDonald telling him about a conversation he'd had with a scientist friend of his, Boyd Norton. He assured MacDonald that scientists like Norton can see through the pseudoscience the prosecution had employed. He referred specifically to the pajama top: "Boyd himself says he would fly to San Francisco and go over all that is available—not the actual pajama top, etc., but all reports of procedures, and conclusions—and he would do it simply for expenses, no fee involved, because he thinks you got screwed by lousy, lazy

pseudo-science and, as a true scientist, he is angered and offended by that."

Not Like a Fingerprint

But what does *Fatal Vision* tell us about that pajama top? It praises the very same supposed evidence that McGinniss in 1979 had found so contemptible. McGinniss speaks through the lips now of a supposed (but unnamed) criminological consultant to the defense team.

"This is very convincing evidence," the paid expert said. ... "Now I see why they got the indictment." Segal attempted to be dismissive, discouraging at some length about how even the government's own theory of the crime offered no plausible explanation for why MacDonald would have placed his pajama top on his wife's chest before stabbing her with the ice pick. The criminologist simply shook his head. "You can raise all that, Bernie, but this is like a fingerprint. Holy Christmas! That's very convincing stuff."

Do real live criminologists use exclamations like "Holy Christmas"? At any rate, the passage paraphrases Segal making a perfectly reasonable point, then pooh-poohs that point by simply having the unnamed expert shake his head.

The evidence that McGinniss saw as lousy and lazy in December 1979 had become decisive, just "like a fingerprint," by the fall of 1983, when *Fatal Vision* hit the market. That is the kind of switch that has encouraged Morris to call McGinniss "craven."

Oh: and why were the holes in that pajama top smooth rather than jagged? McGinniss himself offered an answer in that December 1979 letter. "Boyd points out that if one's wrists are entangled in a garment and one is being attacked, the only natural defensive motion would be vertical, not horizontal, and you would be pushing toward the ice pick, thus causing contact to be perpendicular, and permitting the holes to be cylindrical, as they were, rather than elongated tears." ☉

Christopher Faille graduated from Western New England College School of Law in 1982 and became a member of the Connecticut bar soon thereafter. He is at work on a book that will make the quants of Wall Street intelligible to sociology majors.

JACK KENNEDY: ELUSIVE HERO

BY CHRIS MATTHEWS

Simon & Schuster, New York, NY, 2011. 460 pages, \$27.50.

Reviewed by John C. Holmes

Jack Kennedy: Elusive Hero, by the popular political commentator, Chris Matthews, is a superb portrayal of the 35th President of the United States. Focusing not only on Kennedy's career, but on his background, character, personal relationships, charm, and charisma, Matthews augments his thorough research with his considerable political wisdom, intelligence, Irish humor, and cynicism. The result is an exceptionally perceptive, balanced, and well-written book.

Though it is commonly known that John F. Kennedy had health problems, the extent of his illnesses is still not appreciated, particularly his Addison's disease, which is a serious disorder of the adrenal glands for which no cure has been developed and that usually requires lifetime treatment. So serious was his condition that on three occasions Kennedy was given last rites. Matthews reveals that Kennedy's usual tanned face was an artificial necessity to hide his pale, yellowish skin caused by this condition. His quick, sunny smile also hid severe back pain that resulted from injuries he suffered in combat during World War II. While recovering from back surgery during 1954 and 1955, Kennedy worked on his best-selling book, *Profiles in Courage*, which described courageous actions of eight U.S. senators on behalf of

unpopular causes. "Though Kennedy dug up the stories and sketched out his intentions," Matthews writes, "Ted Sorensen did most of the actual writing."

Well known is the assistance that Kennedy's father, Joseph P. Kennedy, gave to his son's career. Matthews convincingly shows that, although the younger Kennedy benefited from his father's financial help as well as connections, his political decisions were his own, often taken in defiance or disregard of his father's views. Kennedy had strongly opposed the isolationist views that his father took while ambassador to England prior to U.S. entry into World War II. Jack Kennedy looked up to his older brother, Joseph Jr., and grieved deeply after Joseph was killed when his plane crashed during World War II combat. He was also saddened at the death four years later of his sister Kathleen, with whom he'd had a close relationship. Jack pretty much ignored his younger brother Bobby until Jack pressed him into service in his political campaigns. Jack acquired a longstanding appreciation of Bobby, which Bobby reciprocated. Bobby would become the "bad cop" whenever Jack needed him to attack political opponents.

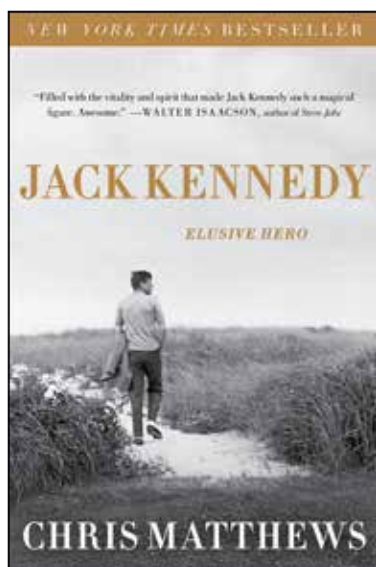
When Kennedy was first elected to the House of Representatives, Rep. George Smathers of Florida became his closest social friend. Matthews writes that Smathers "was a hack, knew it, and enjoyed it." Surprisingly, Kennedy became closely affiliated politically with Richard Nixon, whom he judged to be the "smartest" guy on the Hill, according to Matthews. In Nixon, Kennedy saw a bright, ambitious politician like himself, with whom he could share his views and from whom he could learn. But Kennedy, in Matthews' view, although convivial, was coldly calculating in both his personal and political associations. He put aside his friendly relationship with Nixon when he ran against him for the presidency. Prior to their first debate, Kennedy agreed that he would not wear makeup if Nixon wouldn't. Without telling Nixon, he subsequently did use make-up; Nixon's four o'clock shadow and perspiration would probably have been less visible had he done the same. During the debates, Kennedy studiously ignored Nixon and appealed instead to the audience. This flustered Nixon and the debate contributed to his failure to win the presidency.

In 1953, at age 36, Kennedy married the glamorous Jacqueline Bouvier, age 24, but he did not stop his womanizing; in August

1956, he was partying in London when a daughter was stillborn. Jackie soon realized that her role was more as a backdrop for Kennedy than an equal, but she suffered in silence. On Nov. 29, 1963, a week after Kennedy's assassination, Jackie summoned the popular political writer, Theodore H. White, to the Kennedy compound at Cape Cod, where she delivered a monologue for nearly four hours on Kennedy as she knew him. White used it as the basis for an article for *Life* magazine, taking Jackie's suggestion to make "Camelot," which was then running on Broadway, the theme of Kennedy's presidency. Matthews, however, uncovered White's notes and found that White, who was a friend of Jackie's, had omitted from his article the bitterness that Jackie had expressed.

When Kennedy became a senator in 1953, he hired the 24-year-old Ted Sorensen as his chief legislative aide, and, in Sorensen, he found a kindred spirit who, although of Scandinavian and Jewish middle-class parents and a graduate of the University of Nebraska College of Law, shared many of Kennedy's ideas and political outlook. Together they would forge, in addition to *Profiles in Courage*, the speeches that made Kennedy one of the most quoted of all world leaders, with phrases such as, "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country," and "Man holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of human poverty and all forms of human life." Standing before a huge crowd in front of the Berlin Wall in West Berlin, Kennedy emotionally declared, "Ich bin ein Berliner."

Some critics view the incident of a Japanese destroyer smashing through Kennedy's PT-109 boat in the Pacific as revealing a lack of his navigational skill. None, however, could deny his heroism in saving his 12 crewmen from the shark-infested waters, hiding them from Japanese soldiers, and arranging for their rescue. In campaigning for President, Kennedy would cite his military experience to counter arguments concerning his Catholicism, stating: "They didn't ask my religion when I was sent into combat." Kennedy gave marvelous speeches, strongly denying allegiance to the Pope rather than to the Constitution. At the same time, Kennedy stirred up the Catholic population—more than 25 percent of the voters—urging them to support their fellow Catholic.



Kennedy was hardly ensconced in the White House when he was forced to decide whether to approve the proposed secret C.I.A. military action against Cuba that became known as the Bay of Pigs operation. Unprepared, he allowed the operation to proceed, but required restrictions that made it bound to fail. Emboldened by Kennedy's failed mission, Khrushchev smuggled nuclear warheads into Cuba that were pointed at the U.S. While the world stood in fear that a deadly confrontation would occur, Kennedy, with cunning and courage, managed to defuse the situation and have the missiles removed. As a quid pro quo, he secretly agreed to remove U.S. warheads from Turkey, but not until several months later, when it would probably go unnoticed.

Khrushchev pressured Kennedy over West Berlin, threatening all-out war if he did not remove U.S. troops from the city. Kennedy refused, not knowing whether Khrushchev was bluffing or insane enough to launch a nuclear attack. When Khrushchev contemplated building a wall in Berlin to keep East Germans from fleeing to the West, Kennedy tacitly indicated that he would not actively oppose it, and the crisis was defused. Kennedy was also conflicted over what approach to take with respect to the increasing tension between North and South Vietnam, but he would not live to see war erupt. Although we will never know whether the Vietnam War would have been averted had Kennedy lived, Matthews praises him for his steadfast refusal to yield to Soviet aggression while avoiding war.

Matthews praises Kennedy for advancing the United States ahead of the Soviet Union in the space race, and for establishing the goal of landing a man on the moon by the end of the decade, which was accomplished in July 1969. Matthews also quotes Ted Sorensen's moral verdict on Kennedy:

An American President, commander in chief of the world's greatest military power, who during his presidency did not send one combat troop division abroad or drop one bomb, who used his presidency to break down the barriers of religious and racial equality and harmony in this country and to reach out to the victims of poverty and repression, who encouraged Americans to serve their communities and to love their neighbors regardless of the color of

their skin, who waged war not on smaller nations but on poverty and illiteracy and mental illness in his own country, and who restored the appeal of politics for the young and sent Peace Corps volunteers overseas to work with the poor and untrained in other countries—was in my book a moral president, regardless of his personal misconduct. ☺

John C. Holmes was an administrative law judge with the U.S. Department of Labor for more than 25 years, and he retired as Chief ALJ at the Department of Interior in 2004. He currently works part-time as an arbitrator and consultant; enjoys golf, travel, and bridge; and can be reached at jhomesalj@aol.com.

DOUBLE CROSS: THE TRUE STORY OF THE D-DAY SPIES

BY BEN MACINTYRE

Crown Publishers, New York, NY, 2012. 400 pages, \$26.00.

Reviewed by Henry S. Cohn

Double Cross is Ben Macintyre's third book on Great Britain's efforts to deceive the Germans during World War II. The first, *Agent Zigzag*, entertainingly traced the career of con man Eddie Chapman, who was awarded the Nazis' highest symbol of bravery, the Iron Cross, but who was actually a double agent for Britain. The second book, *Operation Mincemeat*, was a brilliant and suspenseful retelling of memoirs about the war deception known as "the man who never was." Critics praised Macintyre's telling of a true incident in which a body of a tramp, dressed as an officer, was dropped by British intelligence off the coast of Spain with a briefcase full of false documents attached to him. The deception worked and German planners were misled into believing that the 1943 Allied landing in Italy was intended to be in Sardinia, not in Sicily, where it actually occurred.

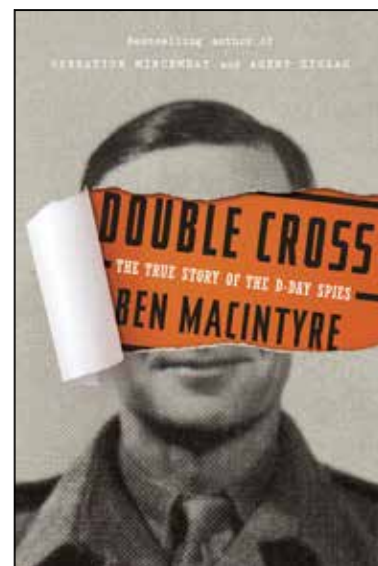
Double Cross, however, is not as successful as Macintyre's prior books on British deception during World War II. Macintyre writes well and what he relates is of interest, but he only briefly addresses how the Nazis were tricked "into believing that [on D-Day, June 6, 1944] the Allies would attack at Calais and Norway rather than Normandy"—

the summary of the book given on its jacket and in pre-publication publicity. Instead, Macintyre writes about the formation of the British double agent system, the recruitment of double agents, and the activities of five double agents during and after the war. But he does not justify calling these agents "D-Day spies."

Macintyre writes about a specific type of spy—a double agent—not merely someone who served the British Special Operations Executive. Therefore, he does not mention Britain's World War II spy queen, Vera Atkins. Britain's double agents were supervised by T. Argyll Robertson, known by his initials as "Tar," with assistance from John Masterman, an Oxford don and mystery writer on loan to Tar's group.

Tar formed his department by taking on certain German agents captured in Britain who agreed to cooperate rather than receive death sentences or long terms of imprisonment. He also agreed to accept persons who had led the Germans to believe that they were loyal. The five double agents upon whom Macintyre focuses were of the second type of double agent—Germans who were not as loyal as the Nazis thought.

Among the five agents, Macintyre writes mostly about Dusan "Dusko" Popov, a wealthy Serbian playboy who originally agreed with German intelligence to be smuggled into England and obtain information on military installations. In December 1940, Popov met with Tar in Bristol and became a double agent. Popov longed for the good life in England, and Tar rewarded his successes with "wine, women, and song. Especially women." Popov provided the Germans with what was termed "chicken



feed,” tidbits of true information that was not helpful and false information on major matters that was misleading.

In 1941, Popov was sent to the United States, ostensibly by the Germans, but with British approval. J. Edgar Hoover, who was aware of Popov's true role, did not trust Popov and hated his lifestyle, with its almost unlimited expenses and behavior that Hoover considered less than moral. Later in the war, Popov risked his life in Spain, overcoming German suspicions that he was not acting in their interests. Then, in early 1944, he gave a report to German agents in Lisbon about a fictional invasion force being formed in England.

The second agent was Roman Czerniawski, a Polish patriot who had served in the Polish army in its tragic efforts to repel the German invasion in September 1939. He had managed to resettle in Paris and conduct a successful intelligence-gathering operation for the British. A disgruntled confederate turned him in to the Nazis, who offered him the chance to spy in England. He accepted the offer, but once in England, he contacted Tar and became a double agent.

The third agent was Elvira de la Fuente Chaudoir, a wealthy gambler in Europe. Down on her luck and starved for cash, she was recruited by the Germans, but found her way to England and Tar. The fourth agent was Lily Sergeyev, from the moneyed class in Paris. She convinced the Germans that she would spy for them in England, but, before she took on any assignment, she made contact with the British in Madrid. She agreed to be a liaison to a German major, Emile Kliemann, stationed in Madrid, who had information that the British sought. She annoyed Tar and her handlers over matters such as bringing her male terrier-poodle named Babs into England, where the law prohibited it.

Macintyre's final double agent was Juan Pujol García, who also played a role in *Operation Mincemeat*. Pujol successfully convinced Karl-Erich Kuhlenthal, a Nazi intelligence officer stationed in Spain, that he controlled 27 subagents across Britain. This was a falsehood, invented with the assistance of Tar's unit. These supposed subagents supplied Kuhlenthal with useless information and “chicken feed.”

After spending more than 200 pages relating the history of the five double agents, Macintyre finally turns to the D-Day

deceptions. He briefly describes Operation Fortitude North, in which Tar's agents participated, to set up the Germans for a fake Allied invasion of Norway; and Operation Fortitude South, which spread false information about the actual Allied invasion of France taking place at Pas de Calais. Macintyre quotes from a telegram sent by German intelligence (and shows a photograph of it as well) that incorporates a warning by Pujol that a “decisive” invasion at Calais was to follow the June 6 landings within three days. Of course, Pujol's warning was false and was meant to deceive.

Double Cross concludes with a summary of the postwar careers of the five double agents. Popov wrote a partially true book about his experiences, engaged in international trade, and married two glamorous young women (not at the same time). Czerniawski lived in London with his pet cats—32 of them at one point. He divorced twice and remarried twice, and was “secretly appointed an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire for his wartime role.” Sergeyev moved to Michigan and wrote a book that caused consternation for her British handlers. Chaudoir was always in debt, but survived by opening a gift shop in France. Pujol was appointed a “Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire” and settled in Venezuela. (Macintyre does not compare his rank as a “Member” with Czerniawski's as an “Officer.”) Pujol wrote, “My main pride and satisfaction has been the knowledge that I contributed to the reduction of casualties among the tens of thousands of servicemen fighting to hold the Normandy beachheads. Many, many more would have perished had our plan failed.”

Double Cross is a charming book, but it lacks depth and suspense, and it does not succeed in showing a relationship between the so-called D-Day spies and the successful Allied invasion on D-Day itself. ☹

Henry S. Cohn is a judge of the Connecticut Superior Court.

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