

OCTOBER 24, 1993

TROPIC

THE MIAMI HERALD

DO THESE



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KILLERS?

A decade after the camera caught these sweet suburban kids, they were charged with the vicious execution of a boy named **Bobby Kent**. If you've been worried about the combined effect on our children of disintegrating families, pornography, crime, violence and the breakdown of values, worry harder.

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By April Witt and Scott Higham

In Broward County, seven suburban kids are charged with the vicious execution of a boy named Bobby Kent. And suddenly, all of us have even greater cause to worry about what's happening to our society. Family photos on cover show Donny Semenec as a Little Leaguer, little Lisa Connelly holding a flower and Marty Puccio (above) as a young boy.

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WHAT IS HAPPENING TO OUR CHILDREN?

By
APRIL WITT
AND SCOTT HIGHAM

Donny Semenech was a rosy-cheeked kid who talked sweet to his mom and doted on his dog, Baron. Killing a stranger was not how he wanted to spend his 18th birthday. But that's what his new girlfriend was planning for him. She and some friends had been talking for two days about how this kid named Bobby deserved to die. Now, in the middle of a Broward suburban neighborhood, they were collecting weapons. They needed Donny's knife.

Hours before he was supposed to be back home to celebrate, Donny had decided that his friends weren't just talking. He was scared. He wanted out.

But he couldn't get a ride home. So he stayed. In fact, when the time came, he was the first to plunge his

*Caution:
Growing up in
the '90s may be
hazardous to
your health.
Or even fatal.*

knife into Bobby's neck. Happy Birthday.

Black Velvet

How could this happen? How could middle-class kids, most of whom had never been in serious trouble before, carry out a vicious, sloppy execution of a boy who had made them angry?

To answer the question think David Lynch, *Blue Velvet* and *Twin Peaks* — not Ozzie and Harriet. Admire the neat privacy fences, palm trees and carefully planned subdivisions of places like Pembroke Pines, Cooper City and Weston. But know that the suburbs don't really exist any more. Not in the old sense of stable



Seven-year-old Lisa Connelly's T-shirt says, "I'm a good girl," and it was true. She was a happy kid until her parents divorced and her father moved away. Twelve years later she's pregnant and in jail, charged with murder.

CHILDREN

neighborhoods where it was safe and fun to be a kid.

Bobby Kent, the 20-year-old son of a stockbroker, died in the shadows of Windmill Ranch Estates, a Weston subdivision of 4,500-square-foot-plus homes surrounded by security fences and drainage canals that double as moats. That's where police say the kids lured Bobby on July 14 of this year, gutted him with a scuba knife, bashed his head open with a metal baseball bat, stabbed him in the heart, slit his throat, and rolled his young body into the khaki-colored waters of a rock quarry lake.

"I thought I was a good mother," says Maureen Connelly, of Pembroke Pines, whose 19-year-old daughter is accused of masterminding the murder. "I tried to be. But obviously there was a lot going wrong right under my nose."

In this tale of murder suburban-style, the parents are suckers. And the spanking-new subdivisions where they moved to keep their children safe are pastel ghettos; ominous, topsy-turvy places where parents, teachers and preachers don't have as much pull as the video arcades, and where the president-elect of a Kiwanis Club makes gay porno flicks with teens. A place where some children are mad or sad or simply bad enough to kill.

American kids are killing more frequently than ever, a phenomenon that extends far beyond crack cocaine dens and urban gang hangouts. Psychologists are realizing that more and more suburban kids feel the same forces that have proven so destructive in the inner cities — anger, despair, hopelessness and a sense that the future is this afternoon. Though nobody keeps statistics for the suburbs alone, the number of youths 17 and younger arrested for murder increased 60 percent nationwide between 1981 and 1990, far outpacing the 5.2 percent increase recorded among adults, FBI crime stats show.

In 1981, only one in 10 suspects picked up on murder charges was a juvenile. Ten years later, it was one in six.

If there is any lesson to be learned in how Bobby Kent died, and who killed him, it may be this:

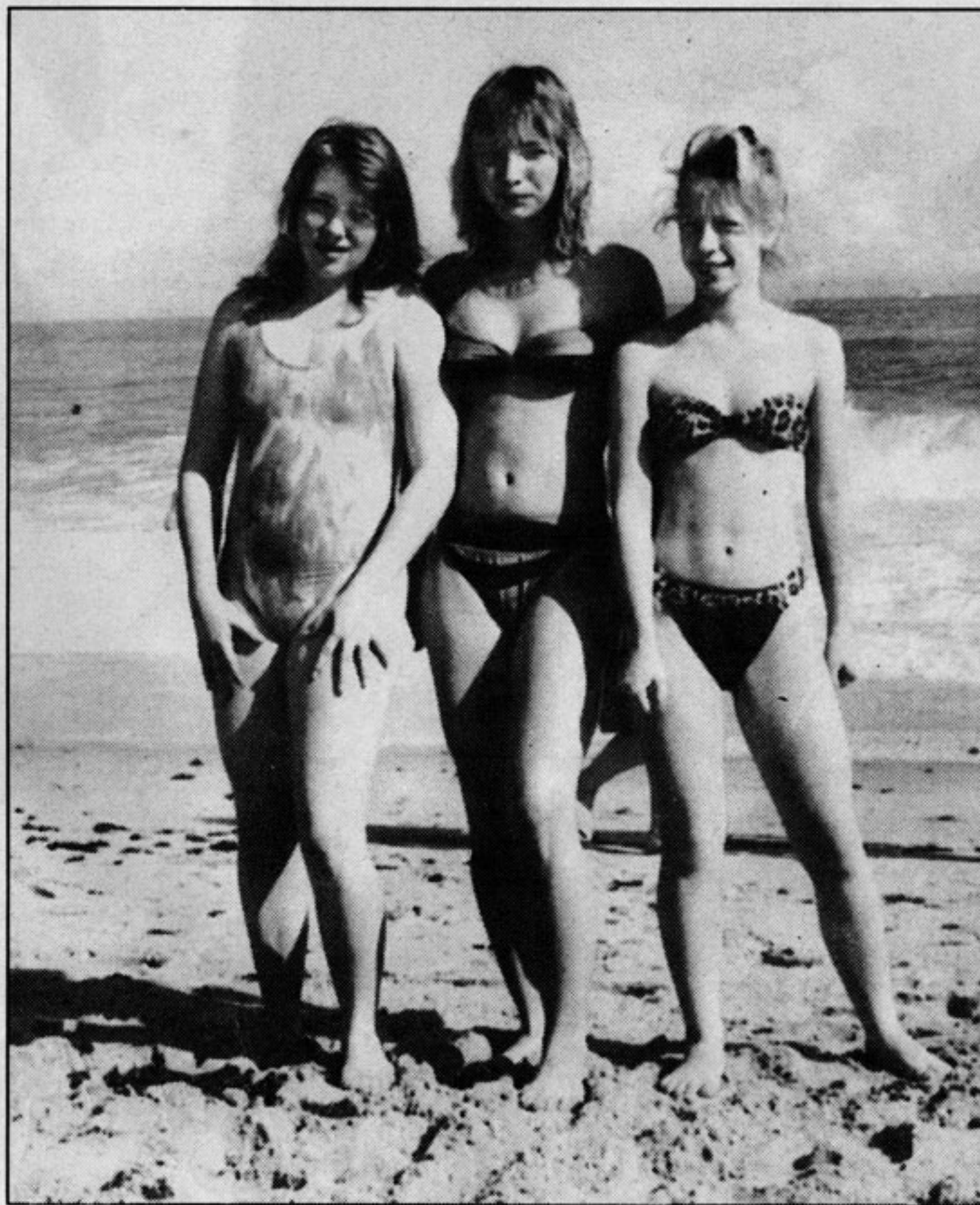
All the influences parents have been worrying about are, in fact, taking a toll on their children. The economy is squashing hope for a better future. Disintegrating families are leaving kids vulnerable to trouble, and parents are too stressed, overwhelmed or ill-prepared to help them out of it. Dropping out of school is dooming kids to failure.

Ubiquitous pornography is twisting their concept of sexuality. The emphasis on physical appearances is distorting their sense of self. Relentless brutality in television shows, movies, music and even comic books is teaching kids that life is cheap and violence without consequence.

It's a thrill to kill.

Look at these recent cases:

In western New Jersey, a clique of teens recite the Hail Mary before garroting a boy they didn't like. In suburban Boston,



Heather Swallers (left), one of the accused, still had her baby fat as recently as last year, when this picture was taken with her two cousins.

a 16-year-old boy uses a baseball bat to bash in the head of a 15-year-old girl because she wouldn't date him. Outside Atlanta, three middle-class teens torture a 55-year-old disabled man to death before making off with his credit cards.

Listen to Broward suburbanite Mike Colletti, age 16, a sophomore at Cooper City High School who says he was recently arrested for burglarizing a police officer's house and stealing his gun and badge. The Pembroke Pines boy says he was supposed to have been at the rock quarry lake the night Bobby Kent was killed. But his ride fell through and he missed a possible trip to the state pen.

He should be relieved. He's not.

"I wanted to see someone die," said Colletti, son of a divorced couple, a computer specialist and a registered nurse.

"I thought it was going to be an experience. I thought it would be an interesting thing to watch. It's not like watching your grandparents die of Alzheimer's."

'What Women Want'

According to sworn statements from suspects and witnesses, killing Bobby

began as a whispered proposal between two young lovers, Marty Puccio, 20 and Lisa Connelly, 19. Marty said that he wished his best friend of 13 years was dead. And Lisa liked the idea.

She thought her life would get better if Bobby was dead.

Until Lisa met Marty she lived life as a chubby, red-haired lonely heart. The boys she liked didn't like her. She longed to be tall, thin, sexy. Acceptable.

In her bedroom in Pembroke Pines, she built a monument to her longing — a shrine to unattainable beauty. She carefully clipped hundreds of photos of magazine models — male and female, all gorgeous — and pasted them, ceiling to floor, on the wall behind her black metal, tube-framed bed.

"What Women Want," she entitled the collage.

On a shopping trip to Dania Beach to buy a one-piece bathing suit in the summer of 1992, Lisa met a boy straight off her bedroom wall — a blond, brown-eyed surfer with muscles big and hard enough for a Calvin Klein ad.

His name was Marty. He and his best friend, Bobby, asked Lisa and a friend to

a party.

There was no party. The boys just wanted to fool around. But Lisa didn't mind the ruse one bit. "Mom, I got a boyfriend," she said when she got home. "You gotta meet him."

For Maureen Connelly, it was wonderful news. She wanted her daughter to be happy. She had suffered through a series of miscarriages before giving birth to her only child. She called Lisa her "Miracle Baby."

Lisa was born into a close, extended Catholic family from the Bronx that settled in South Florida in the '40s. She grew up in Cedarwoods, a collection of neat, wood-sided townhouses near the busy intersection of Sheridan Street and Hiatus Road in Pembroke Pines.

Lisa's father worked as a pipe fitter. When Lisa was born, Maureen Connelly quit her job as a Green Stamps clerk to be a full-time mother.

Lisa went to St. Bernadette Catholic School in Davie. In one of her second-grade schoolbooks, Lisa drew a crayon drawing of herself, her mom and her dad all beaming next to a cheerful house with the caption: "How good it is to belong to a family."

Soon after she drew the happy picture, her parents divorced. Her father moved away. She took it hard. Maureen Connelly went to work in her family's garbage-hauling business. When she dropped her daughter off at school one day, Lisa became terrified her mother was leaving for good. Just like her dad.

Lisa was so distraught, teachers restrained her while her mom made a dash for her car.

"She was a strong-headed girl," said Connelly, a plain-spoken woman who doesn't have the time or the inclination to fuss with makeup and fashion. "She listened to her father, but her father wasn't around."

Connelly does not blame her ex-husband for not being there. She says she understands that life gets complicated. "He did stay involved in the beginning. But then as time went on, he remarried, he set up his own life. He always calls to find out how she is."

By the time Lisa was in high school, her mother was losing control. When Lisa's father sent money to buy Lisa a used 1986 Pontiac Firebird, she used it to skip school. Lisa's mother threatened to take it away, but she relented when Lisa promised to improve her attendance. Then the point became moot: Lisa wrecked the car and didn't have the money to fix it.

Lisa quit Cooper City High in 11th grade, over her mother's protest. Lisa was smart enough to go to college — a B student without trying — but she settled for working as a clerk at Dryclean USA. And once she met Marty, she didn't want to work at all.

"Everything was him, him, him, him, him," Connelly said. "I never knew you could be so much in love."

One day, Connelly came home to find

Lisa on the phone with Marty, crying. "I heard her say, 'Don't ever hit me again,'" Connelly said. "I took the phone away and said, 'Did you hit my daughter?'"

She says Marty didn't answer. "Did you hit my daughter, yes or no? Is that a hard question for you, Marty?" Connelly asked.

"The only thing I can say to you lady is, you're a pig and so is your daughter," Marty said.

Connelly slammed down the phone. She was stunned. Nobody had ever talked to her that way before, much less one of her daughter's friends.

Within days, she began getting anonymous phone calls, young girls calling with urgent advice.

"Mrs. Connelly, please get Lisa away from Marty. Please."

She tried. "I kept saying, 'Get away from him before it's too late.' I might as well have told my wall to move."

When Lisa ignored her warnings, Connelly was at a loss. There was no punishment she knew how to enforce, no way she could think of to make her daughter obey her. She considered sending Lisa to live with her ex-husband upstate in Lake Placid, but Lisa didn't want to go.

"You got a one-parent family here," Connelly says. "I'm out trying to make a living. It's not that I'm ignoring my daughter, but I go to work and I come home, we talk for a little bit, she goes to her room, like other teenagers, they talk on the phone. You can't watch them 24 hours. I felt something bad, but nothing like this."

It's All Downhill From Here

There are no hills in Hollywood Hills. When the subdivision was started in the 1920s, promoters brought prospective buyers in by buses and downshifted into first gear to try to create the illusion of steep grades. When Marty Puccio and his family moved there in 1976, it was a middle-income neighborhood of two- and three-bedroom stucco houses, backyard pools and one of the best public high schools in Broward County.

Veronica and Martin Puccio Sr.

called their youngest son, who had precious freckles and white-blond hair, "Loverbug." Marty's father is a tall, slender salesman who has held the same job for 25 years, selling film processing services to movie companies. His mother is a pretty blond with a halo of soft curls and a penchant for pink.

She works part time as a secretary for a doctor. But her family was always her career.

"We just wanted to have babies. That was our whole goal," she said. "We wanted to have children and give them the best life possible."

Veronica Puccio had another passion — she is a charismatic Catholic, part of a movement whose members sometimes speak in tongues. She sang in a Christian ensemble. Little Marty mimicked his mom, memorizing the upbeat religious tunes she rehearsed at home.

"We always encouraged music," Veronica Puccio said. "They all had musical instruments every year for Christmas. We didn't get them real instruments. We got them little horns, clarinets, trumpets. Whatever they sell for kids that are plastic."

When Marty was 7, Bobby Kent's family moved into

the house four doors down. The boys became inseparable, known on their block as the "Siamese Twins."

Bobby's parents, Fred and Farah Kent, had immigrated from Iran. They changed their last name from Khayam to Kent. They expected to succeed, and they expected the same of their son.

They taught Bobby to say "Ma'am" and "Sir." They provided private piano lessons for Bobby and his big sister. They shuttled Bobby to karate classes and baseball practices. They drilled their children with the importance of education and commerce.

The Kents say Bobby was a happy child and a good student, once elected "king" of his elementary school class.

In high school, Bobby and Marty joined the surfer crowd. They wore the characteristic baggy pants, Ocean Pacific T-shirts, and Aero Jam sneakers favored by all the surfer boys.

Bobby was the popular class clown. "If you saw Bobby in the hall, whoever was around him was laughing," said Ashley Dunham, 19, who attended South Broward High with the boys and worked on the school yearbook. "I think

everybody knew Marty because he was always around him. Marty was like the sidekick, the tagalong."

Like other surfers, Bobby and Marty skipped school when the waves were up. But school administrators saw them as good kids who just wanted to have fun and would never wind up in any serious trouble.

"If someone had told us this would happen, we would never have believed it," South Broward principal Beverly James said after Bobby's murder. "It was not something we could have predicted at all."

But there were warning signs. About the time Bobby entered adolescence, family members say, he became extraordinarily fastidious. He washed his hands "about 100 times a day," according to his sister, Laila. The Kents didn't see this as an obsession, as some psychologists might. They saw it as a sign of good hygiene.

At the same time, the Puccios began to see signs of trouble with Marty. His grades began falling, partly because he skipped school so much. When he was 16, Marty begged his parents to move. He begged them repeatedly. He didn't say why, and they didn't push for an explanation.

"I just figured he had a lot of pressure from something," Veronica Puccio said. "I didn't know exactly what it was. He didn't go into in detail. I thought, 'Gosh. He really wants to move away from here.' Something must really be bothering him."

They don't know to this day what that something was.

Signs of Trouble

The Puccios never considered moving. "You can't walk away from your job and move away because your son is having problems," Veronica Puccio said.

But Marty persisted, so his parents decided to send him to live briefly with his aunt in upstate New York. They thought that might straighten him out.

It didn't. When Marty returned a few months later, school counselors began calling the Puccios. He was so disruptive, teachers

◆
"You got a one-parent family here," Maureen Connelly says. "You can't watch them 24 hours."

THE ACCUSED



Lisa Connelly



Marty Puccio



Donny Semenech



Derek Dzvirkov



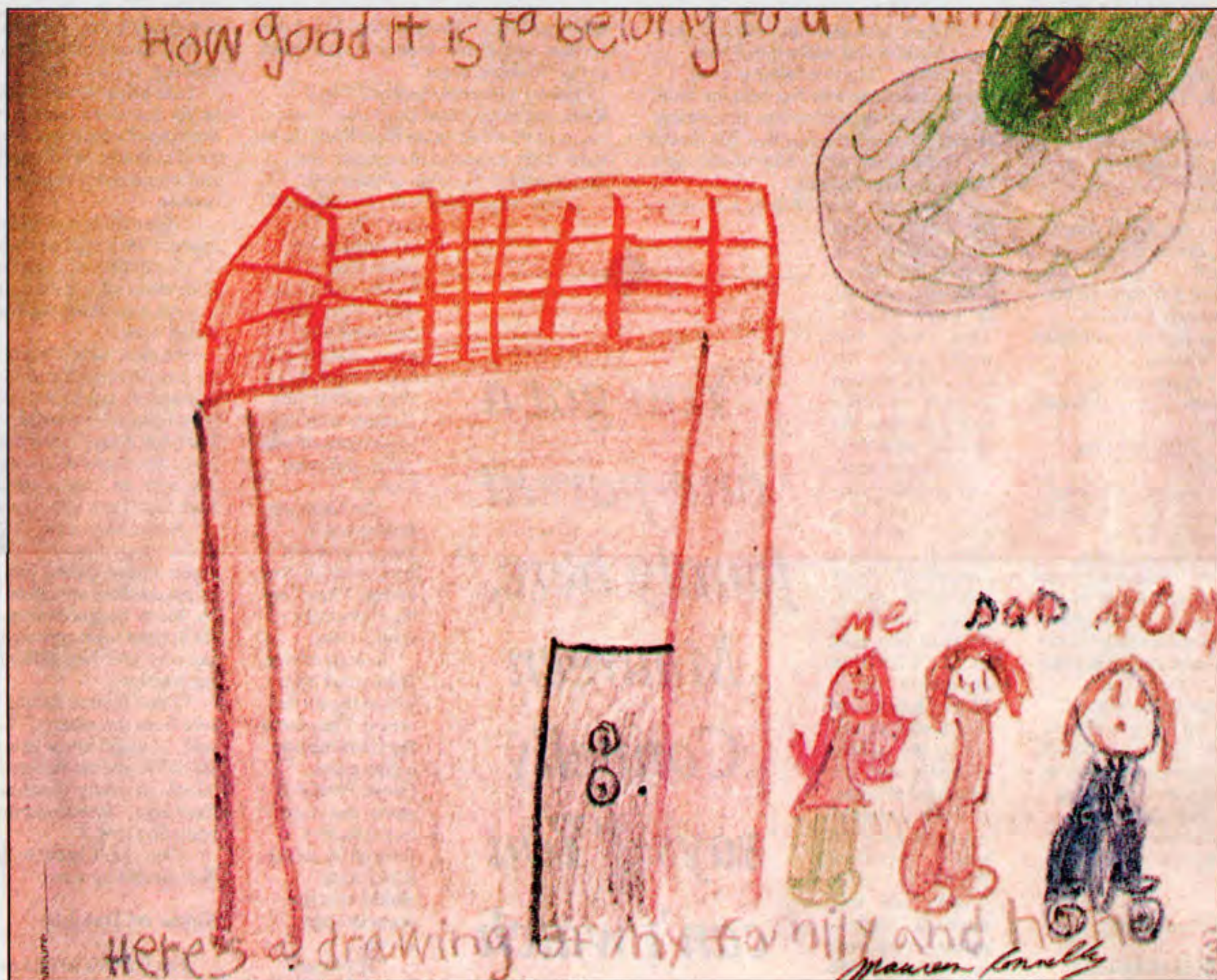
Derek Kaufman



Heather Swallers



Ali Willis



Lisa Connelly went to St. Bernadette Catholic School in Davie. In one of her second-grade schoolbooks, she drew a crayon picture of herself, her mom and dad, all beaming next to their home with the caption: "How good it is to belong to a family."

no longer wanted him in class. Veronica Puccio went to meetings of Tough Love — a support group for parents with troubled children — but she didn't stay long. She always spoke first, then left to avoid other parents' cigarette smoke. She took church parenting classes with titles like "How to Raise a Responsible Child."

She sums up what she learned: "Be tough. If you say something, follow through, and mostly, let them suffer the consequences of their actions."

Marty began to suffer quite a few consequences. Police arrested him for trespassing, shoplifting and possessing pot. Marty and Bobby both were arrested for prowling at the North Park Senior Citizen's Retirement Community in Hollywood.

Veronica Puccio couldn't understand her son.

"I never skipped school one day growing up," she said. "I was probably the teacher's favorite."

In his third year at South Broward, Marty dropped out.

"We knew he was having a hard time. We pretty much accepted it," Veronica Puccio said.

Fred and Farah Kent were worried their son might follow Marty's example. Kent threatened to sell his home and move away. He was so serious, he nearly signed a contract. But Bobby pleaded, promising to stay in school and stop spending so much time with Marty.

Kent relented. Bobby reneged. He spent even more time with his best — and only — close friend, even when it seemed life was trying to drag them apart:

Bobby graduated from South Broward High. Marty never did. Bobby had a job. Marty couldn't hold one down. Bobby had a future. Marty wanted to surf the waves and watch TV. Marty was jealous.

But Bobby made sure he held the friendship together. After Bobby graduated, he spent eight hours a day with Marty. He nagged him to lift weights two hours a day, as he himself did. He

found Marty a job, working with him in the deli department of the Sheridan Street Publix in Hollywood.

Fred Kent's ambitions for his son went far beyond the grocery deli counter. In that context, Bobby Kent's bond to Marty Puccio, who seemed to be heading nowhere, was worrisome. Fred wanted Bobby to go to college. Or become a businessman. But Bobby was more interested in tinkering with his \$2,000 car cassette player. So his father said he would bankroll a car stereo and window-tinting business.

"Every time I said, 'Son, if you want to go into business, you want me to open a place up?' he said: 'Can Marty come and work for us, too, because I'd like him to be with me,'" Fred Kent said.

Kent worried about his son's future. He thought he knew the dangers: that his son would accomplish little, fall out of the middle class. In truth, he didn't have a clue. The real perils Bobby faced were so dark they were all but unimaginable.

Dark Shadows

Working out in the weight room of the Hollywood YMCA two years ago, Marty and Bobby, both 18 at the time, befriended Larry Shafer, who was 40 years old, lonely and beginning to explore his own homosexuality. The boys told Shafer they were gay lovers.

"Marty was a tease," said Shafer, who was named president-elect of the Hollywood Beach Kiwanis Club in the spring of 1992. (He recently stepped down after his relationship with the boys became public.)

Bobby asked Shafer if he wanted to buy steroids, boasting that he and Marty used them to pump up fast. Shafer says he declined, but he bought something else from Marty. Marty told Shafer that he moonlighted as a prostitute and offered to phone him and talk dirty for money. Marty began calling Shafer from his parents' home, and talking to him in hushed tones until Shafer climaxed.

Marty's price: \$25 a week. He told

Shafer he needed the money because his parents expected him to buy his own groceries — a motivational tool Veronica learned in her Tough Love meetings.

Marty soon persuaded Shafer to star in homemade porn flicks. He and Bobby said they planned to sell them to a local porn studio. They'd make easy money. In one of the flicks, Shafer stripped for the camcorder and played with a dildo. Marty urged him on.

"Oh yeah," Marty said, his voice recorded by the video camera. "Put that thing up there."

The movie didn't sell. But it was a hit with the boys. They loved to show it to teenage girls they entertained when Marty's parents were away.

Marty spent one of his first dates with Lisa watching the tape. Lisa didn't mind. But her friends did.

"We kept yelling for them to turn it off," Catherine Dellavedova of Pembroke Pines, then 17, later told police in a sworn statement.

Claudia Arbelaez was 17, too, when Bobby and Marty asked her if she had a strong stomach. They cued the tape and pushed the play button. On the screen, Marty goaded Larry into putting the dirty dildo in his mouth.

"I started, ughhh, walking off, and I went my own way," Claudia told police.

During one screening, Marty's mom came home. Marty leaped to his feet and stood in front of the TV set, blocking her view.

"She was very nice. She said 'Hi' to us, went in her room," Claudia said.

Bobby and Marty didn't just gross out Lisa's friends; they threatened them and hit them. Susan Obear, 15, remembers angering the boys when she threw up in Bobby's car as they partied along Sheridan Street. Marty was sitting next to her and was enraged because he thought some of her vomit sprayed into his mouth. Bobby and Marty threatened to beat her up and dump her in Liberty City, Obear says.

When Bobby brushed up against Catherine Dellavedova and groped her one day, Catherine says, she pushed him away. Bobby stumbled and fell.

"He got up and smacked me and, like, had his arms raised like he was gonna fight me," Catherine later told detectives investigating Bobby's murder. "I told him, either leave or I'd call the police."

But Lisa Connelly didn't walk away from any of it. Not when Marty called her "Fat Ass" or "Shamu" the killer whale in front of Bobby and her friends. Not, her friends say, when Marty slapped her or struck her with his thick leather weightlifting belt.

Not even when Lisa told Marty she was newly pregnant with his baby — and he told her she better start raising money for an abortion. Lisa tried to obey. She started bumming money from her friends but couldn't raise enough.

Lisa didn't seem to care how Marty treated her.

But she hated the way Bobby treated Marty. According to statements from witnesses, when Marty had trouble getting the lid back on a jar, Bobby grew impatient and slapped him. When Marty hit a curb while driving Bobby's car, Bobby punched him in the face. When Marty came over to Lisa's house with a black eye, he said he had been in a fight. Like Lisa, Marty took the punishment passively.

Lisa complained to friends that she could never spend any time alone with Marty, her picture-perfect surfer boy. She figured life might be easier for everyone if she could just find Bobby a girlfriend.

The Rich Girl

Lisa had known Alice Slay Willis for 13 years, ever since they were schoolgirls at St. Bernadette. Alice, Ali to her friends, was the wild one, the spoiled rich kid who bought expensive clothes for her friends, rented hotel rooms for parties, and hired white stretch limousines to squire her pals around. She wore her shorts cut high, revealing the curves of her buttocks. She started sleeping with boys and

running away at age 12, and at 14 was downing wine coolers and partying with friends till after midnight.

On Oct. 26, 1989, when Ali was 14 years old, she and a girlfriend ran away from home and called their former boyfriends for a ride to Miami. Instead, the two teens, members of the Zulu street gang, drove the girls to a desolate Interstate 75 overpass in Miami Lakes and raped them at knife-point. The two youths played a violent game of Truth-or-Consequences, forcing the girls to remove items of clothing every time they answered questions incorrectly.

When the girls were naked, the teens beat them, stole their jewelry and took turns sexually assaulting them in a 1984 Plymouth Duster and on a blanket spread on the shoulder of the highway overpass, police records show.

During a stop at a gas station near Hialeah, a police officer noticed Ali and her friend cowering in the back seat of the car. The officer called for help and police arrested Nigel Rambaran, then 18, and Diego Molina, then 19. They later pleaded guilty to sexual battery with a deadly weapon, armed kidnapping, assault and robbery. Rambaran was sentenced to 18 years in prison. Molina got 12 years.

Ali, in a way, got life.

Ali was so terrified after the rape, she nailed blankets over her bedroom window.

"I said, 'Why are you doing that?'" said her mother, Virginia Slay.

"I don't want anyone to know what bedroom I sleep in," Ali said.

After she was raped, Ali wanted to switch high schools because so many kids had heard what happened. She left South Broward and enrolled in ninth grade at Cooper City High. But when her mother drove her to the new school, Ali was too distraught to get out of the car. She went the next day, but soon dropped out.

At home, Ali screamed hysterically and threw furniture. Her parents took her to see a therapist, but never told the counselor that Ali had been raped. They left that for her to do. In fact, the Slay

family didn't discuss the rape at all.

"She never talked to me about it," Ali's mother said. "I tried to, and she said, 'I don't want to talk about it. I just want to forget about it.'"

Three years ago, Virginia and Albert Slay, now 59 and 75 respectively, sold their successful electrical contracting company in Broward and moved to Palm Bay, a planned community near Melbourne in Brevard County. They wanted to give their daughter a fresh start. But they were fleeing trouble they could not outrun.

Ali gave birth to a daughter out of wedlock, consigned the baby to the care of her parents, married the father, Michael Willis, last March, and split up with him — all without leaving the comfort of her family's spacious white country-style Palm Bay home.

Ali's parents denied her little. By the time Ali was 17, her parents were giving her their credit cards which she used creatively. They bought a racy red 1988 Mustang 5.0 for Ali to drive. It was nicer than the Plymouth and Buick they drove.

The Mustang made it easy for Ali to make the three-hour drive south to see her close friend Lisa.

On one trip, Ali had no place to stay. A girlfriend suggested she stay at the Fort Lauderdale trailer home of Thomas Hildebrand, 60, a convicted head of a kiddie prostitution ring.

According to statements Ali later made to Oakland Park police, she was soon turning tricks with middle-aged men, making up to \$150 per session. Hildebrand coached Ali to tell one trick she was only 14. When she reached his house, the delighted customer bowed before her.

"He just kept saying how beautiful I was, and I was such a pretty little girl, and he likes girls really young," Ali later told police.

Designated Girlfriend

The way Lisa saw it, Ali was the perfect girl to keep Bobby occupied. Ali was willing. Bobby told her that his father was going to set him up in the car

"I don't know why I went along," Lisa later told police, trying to explain how idle talk turned into murder. "I love Marty. And I just thought his life would be better, and my life and my best friend's life would be better."

CHILDREN

stereo and window tinting business. If Bobby meant to impress her, it worked.

"I don't know Ma, he may be marriage material," Ali told her mother.

When Bobby and Ali began dating, he didn't know she was a prostitute. But once they started having sex, Bobby didn't treat her like a prom queen.

Ali told people close to her that before sex, Bobby would bring out gay porn flicks. She claimed he would hold her face with both hands, keeping her eyes fixed on the TV screen. If she looked away, he'd hit her, she said. During sex, Bobby coached Ali: Tell me I'm the best you ever had. If she refused, he'd hit her again.

Lisa's plan wasn't working.

On Sunday, May 23, Ali filed an abuse report with the Hollywood Police Department. She said Bobby slapped her in the face and threw her up against the wall of a friend's house.

Ali phoned home.

"This guy's not marriage material," she told her mom. "I'm coming home."

Meanwhile, Lisa was having her own problems. The day after Ali bailed out, Lisa went to Marty's house. A girlfriend of Lisa's called police to say Lisa was being held against her will. But when two police officers knocked on the Puccios' front door, Lisa answered and she said there was nothing wrong.

She called her mom for a ride home. Her mother noticed Lisa's wrists were black and blue. Lisa told her Marty was fooling around and she fell. Maureen Connelly threatened to send her brother to Marty's house to find out what was going on. But Connelly didn't follow through and she didn't ask Lisa any more questions about the bruises.



Marty Puccio was so slight in high school, girls called him a "little mosquito." By the time he met Lisa Connelly, he was beefed up from his daily workouts at the Hollywood YMCA. Lisa thought she had finally landed her hunk.

"I really didn't want to know," Connelly said.

Instead, Connelly asked her sister's son, Derek Dzvirko, to talk some sense into Lisa. Derek had been friends with his cousin from childhood, a straight arrow, Connelly thought. He didn't think much of Bobby and Marty. In short, he was the perfect ally. Get her away from those two, Connelly told him. It was a request she would later regret.

"It backfired," she said. "He got caught up in her whirlpool. He didn't save her. She took him down with her."

Video Wizard

Derek Dzvirko lived with his mother and stepfather, Linda and Richard Bohnert, in a Pembroke Pines subdivision called Westview. Tacked up on the refrigerator of the immaculately kept home is a tiny bag of sand with a card. "Richard's Florida Beachfront Property," it reads.

It was a wry joke, less funny since Pan Am folded and Richard lost his job as a flight training manager at Miami International Airport after 26 years. Richard is a handsome man, his arms well-muscled from years of bowling and his new job — mowing lawns.

Linda Bohnert says Derek's real father fled to Mexico years ago to avoid child support payments. Derek and his sister haven't heard from their father since.

"Neither of my kids really remember him," said Linda Bohnert, a short, fiery 44, with long dark hair and heavy eye makeup, a cigarette always in her hand. "My son might recognize him."

By age 19, Derek Dzvirko had

become an innocuous video nerd. A big bear of a boy, at six-foot-one and 210 pounds, he nagged his mother not to smoke and he almost always came home when he said he would.

Derek wanted his parents to be proud. He wasn't a good student, but he kept at it, taking night-school classes until he had all the credits he needed to graduate from Cooper City High last June. "Mom, I know you want to see me walk down that aisle," he told her.

But unlike those of previous generations, Derek found it tough to parlay a high-school diploma into a decent job. He wanted to join a police department, but was told he needed some college credits. He tried to join the military, but recruiters wouldn't take him. He had pins in his arm from a childhood bike crash.

Derek earned pocket money hawking pizzas at Joe Robbie Stadium and helping his stepfather with the fledgling lawn-cutting business. Linda and Richard Bohnert never worried Derek would get into any trouble.

They knew just where he was. He was at the kitchen table, steering friends through elaborate role-playing games, like *Dungeons and Dragons*. Or he'd be in his room, reading his favorite comics — *Spawn* and *Deathmate*. They're filled with messages of anarchy and nihilism.

"Look into the future, maybe the answers are there," says one creature in the September issue of *Deathmate*.

"There is no future," another creature responds. "No future at all."

But there was something Derek liked more than comic books. He would stand in the back of the DNA comic store at the Embassy Lakes strip mall, playing *Mortal Kombat*, the hottest video game in the country. He was so good, he played for hours on a quarter.

Controlling fighters with a joy stick and five buttons, he punched his opponents' heads off and reached into their chests to tear out their hearts. The payoff for each fatality: 100,000 bonus points.

When Derek's aunt, Maureen Connelly, asked him to help Lisa get away from Marty, he was happy to help. Derek loved Lisa like a sister. As far as Derek could tell, Marty had a pretty strange way of treating his cousin.

Marty never picked Lisa up for dates. He never brought her home afterward. She had to call Derek's beeper number for a ride. As soon as he got her message, he'd stop whatever he was doing to pick her up.

One time, Derek knocked on the Puccios' front door and Marty invited him in. Lisa was in the bathroom. Bobby and Marty were watching a tape on TV. Two men were having sex on the screen. "Isn't this neat?" Marty said.

Derek didn't think so.

"Tell my cousin I'll be out in the truck," Derek said, walking out the front door. "If she's not out in five minutes, I'm out of here."

But the next time Lisa beeped him for a ride, he delivered her right back to Marty's door.



The Kents (from left to right): Bobby who bought roses for his mom and Lisa, who says she was the one who murdered, they say, is killing them.

The Plot Thickens

In early July, Lisa asked Marty if he thought there was something wrong with Bobby. He reminded her of the husband in the movie *Sleeping With the Enemy*, a fastidious psycho who abused Julia Roberts over small failings, like leaving bathroom towels askew.

Marty said Bobby frightened him, too. He said Bobby had been knocking him around over stupid things for years. He had been running his life ever since they were little kids. He said Bobby threatened to kill him if he ever stopped being his best friend.

In her sworn statement to police, Lisa quoted Marty: "The only way he could be stopped was to be killed."

"I don't know why I went along," Lisa later told police, trying to explain how idle talk turned into murder. "I love



y, mother Farah, father Fred and sister Laila) say they were a close family and Bobby was a dutiful son, a boy looked up to his older sister, who graduated this year at the top of her class at Florida State University. Bobby's

trouble with the law. His mom had strict rules and set times to be home. Mostly, Donny obeyed her.

Donny moved to Palm Bay last year after his mother lost her nursing job with the state of Massachusetts. The last time he'd seen his biological father, Donny was 12. He had no idea where his father lived now.

His mother, Donna Ferreira, 34, figured Palm Bay would be a safer place to raise her two sons than the suburbs of Boston. At first, the plan seemed to be working. Donny, who dropped out of high school in Massachusetts, re-enrolled. He dated a sweet, clean-cut girl, and his mother really liked her.

When the girl left town for vacation, the trouble began.

Donny took up with Ali. She had everything he didn't — a hot sports car, lots of money, credit cards and unlimited freedom. Donny didn't need to work for chump change any more.

He ran with Ali full time.

"He was mesmerized by her money," said Donny's mom. "He was blinded, I swear to God."

Mother's Little Helper

Around 4 on the afternoon of July 13, Lisa took her mother's gun out of a bedside nightstand and showed it to her neighbor, Eileen Traynor, 16. It was a .25-caliber, auto-loading Beretta with a five-clip cartridge in a brown leather holster. Maureen Connelly had bought it for her own protection — as a single mother living alone with her daughter, she figured she might need it someday. But Lisa had found a use for it first.

"Marty wants me to do it," Lisa told Eileen. "I told him I would."

Eileen was a Cooper City High student who lived with her parents in Pembroke Pines, and skipped school to work as a prostitute. Two months earlier, she had been arrested after being videotaped in room 502 of the Oakland Park Holiday Inn performing oral sex on a police officer. She told police that she had made \$3,000 turning tricks the previous week, \$1,000 of which she gave to Thomas Hildebrand, who used Eileen to recruit other high-school girls. Hildebrand, a former security guard, is the same man who put Ali to work as a prostitute.

When Lisa flashed her mother's gun and talked murder, Eileen didn't flinch. She'd met the intended victim three times and thought he was "nice." Even so, the fact that someone wanted to kill him didn't prompt her to alert police.

"I'd never been in this kind of situation before," she said later. "I didn't know what to do."

But that didn't stop her from jumping right in and joining the plot, providing advice that may have been fatal to

Continued on page 17

him. And I just thought his life would be better, and my life and my best friend's life would be better."

On the morning of July 13, Lisa phoned her best friend, Ali, in Palm Bay. Lisa told Ali she was sick of Bobby. Sick of the way he was always around. Sick of the way he always rode Marty. Sick of his quick temper and the way he mistreated her girlfriends. Sick of the way he slapped Marty and Ali.

"We're going to shoot him, Lisa told Ali. You want to come down this afternoon and help?"

Ali says she laughed. At first, she thought it was one of Lisa's crazy ploys to get her to come visit again. But the more they talked, the more Ali liked the idea. The way she saw it, Bobby had it coming.

Later Lisa said: "I wanted her to say, 'No. What are you, nuts? Are you

crazy?' And then it would have just went *whoosh*, out of my mind."

But that didn't happen. When Lisa hung up the phone, she was confident Ali was on her way to help kill Bobby.

Lisa walked to the Subway shop at the Embassy Lakes strip mall for lunch. As she strolled over, she ran into Susan Obear, the girl who threw up in Bobby's car. Lisa bragged that Bobby was about to pay.

"He's gonna get shot, you know,"

Lisa said. "He's really going to get it."

Susan found it laughable that little Lisa was "s - - - talking" like "some bad-ass."

Ali headed for Pembroke Pines in her red Mustang. She brought with her two passengers, her brand-new boyfriend, Donny Semenec — the birthday boy — and one of her best friends from Palm Bay, Heather Swallers, 18.

Donny had dropped out of high school a year before. His one goal in life was to be a deejay. He dreamed of appearing on MTV, making a living by playing tunes for a national TV audience. The closest he ever got was spinning records and tapes for his friends at weekend parties in Palm Bay.

His mom and stepdad worked hard and steady. Donny sporadically worked odd jobs mowing lawns and fixing up houses. Mostly he hung around with his pals, driving around Palm Bay drinking beer.

"We hardly ever worked," said one of his best friends, Robin "Ray" Henry, a convicted burglar, behind bars for violating his probation. "We were just kids, wanting to have fun, and Mommy and Daddy were taking care of us all."

Unlike his friend, Donny avoided

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Bobby Kent.

Lisa wasn't sure how to fire the gun. But she was more worried about something else: She had seen enough TV cop shows to know that ballistics experts could match bullets to guns. She didn't want the cops tracing this pistol back to her mother.

Maybe, Eileen suggested, Lisa should telephone a guy named Derek Kaufman. He belongs to a Broward gang called the Crazy Mother F---ers. He knows all about guns and killing people.

"Like, I need to talk to you," Lisa told Derek Kaufman in a phone call.

Why? He wanted to know.

"I can't tell you over the phone."

When Ali, Donny and Heather arrived from Palm Bay, Lisa and Eileen met them in the driveway. We gotta go see someone, they said. All five kids took off for Derek Kaufman's house.

'A Big Baby'

Derek Kaufman, 20, lived in his stepfather's sprawling house near Weston. It was built with profits from the stepfather's garbage business in New Jersey and his South Florida construction company, Southland Engineering and Development. It's part ranch, part Italianate villa, with a fountain rising from the edge of the over-size swimming pool.

Derek is a big kid, six-foot-three, 235 pounds. He had no job, no prospects, and a criminal record for dealing stolen property, grand theft and carrying a concealed weapon. He liked to talk tough and had his gang's call letters, "CMF," tattooed next to a dragon on his right arm. He convinced neighborhood kids he was a Mafia hit man.

In truth, Derek was deeply insecure. He hung out with much younger kids. His best friend is 17, his girlfriend 14. He left North Miami Beach High after flunking nearly all his courses. Among the few he passed — Television Production and Ecology.

The first thing his stepfather, Ronald Esposito, said of Derek when contacted by a reporter after the arrest for Kent's murder was: "I really have nothing to do with him. He's not my son."

Esposito said that Derek's tough reputation was a sham. "He's just a big baby. He's never gotten into a fight in his life."

But Derek was tough enough for Lisa. When she arrived at his house, her four friends in tow, Lisa asked Derek to help her kill somebody that night — a guy who liked to beat up little girls.

"It's got to be done," Lisa demanded.

Derek didn't know Bobby Kent. He didn't know Lisa or her friends. He had met Eileen, but didn't know her last name. Still, he agreed to talk murder with them. He had a reputation to uphold.

Besides, with all these pretty teenage girls involved, he figured he'd get lucky.

Derek decided to play along. If they wanted his help, he told them, they'd have to do things his way. Killing Bobby that night was out of the question. Derek

had guns, he assured them, but they were all out on loan. A successful hit would take time and planning.

There were a lot of ways they could go, he said. They could set up a drive-by shooting at Bobby's house, making it look like a gang killing. Or perhaps somebody could take Bobby out along I-75 near the Everglades and simply beat him to death.

"Weston would be a good place to dump the body," Kaufman said, talking tough, but being careful not to include himself in any specific plans for murder.

Lisa was getting impatient.



Best friends Lisa (in shades) and Ali mug happily for a snapshot. In some ways, they were typical teenagers.

"I want him dead tonight," she insisted.

Ali was eager, too. She wanted Bobby dead by the weekend. After all, she had to be back in Palm Bay. Derek said he'd look for a clean gun, and left it at that. The conspirators drove back toward Lisa's house in Pembroke Pines.

On the way, according to Eileen Traynor's statement to police, Lisa began having doubts. "Lisa's, like, 'Maybe Derek's right. Maybe we should wait. Maybe we shouldn't do it.' Ali was, like, 'I want him dead.' Lisa's, like, 'OK.'"

Twin Peaks

Lisa and Ali didn't wait for Derek Kaufman to come up with a gun. They dropped off Heather, Donny and Eileen at a friend's house, saying they were going to kill Bobby by themselves. They picked him up around 10 p.m., luring him with a promise: He could "dog out" Ali's Mustang on the straight, deserted back roads of Weston. And maybe he

could get back together with Ali.

But first, they told him, they had to stop some place.

As Bobby waited in the car, Ali and Lisa knocked on Derek Kaufman's front door. They had a gun, they told him, but they needed a trigger man. Ali took Lisa's mother's pistol from her pocket. She handed it to Derek.

"I gave it back," Derek said. "I wasn't gonna go."

The girls were on their own.

Ali drove Lisa and Bobby out west. She parked her Mustang on the white, sandy shoulder of an abandoned lime-

Lisa ran after them, yanking Ali aside to take the gun.

"I was freaking out," Lisa said.

Bobby and Ali disappeared for 15 minutes in the guest cottage behind his parents' home, four doors down from Marty's house. Bobby sat her down on the bed.

"I know you still love me," he said. "I know you want to get back together with me."

"No," Ali said.

She would later tell her friends Bobby pushed her down on the bed, got on top of her, pulled her clothes off and raped her.

"I began to scream," Ali said. "He put his hand over my mouth."

When the two emerged, Ali told Lisa that Bobby had raped her: another reason he had to die. If Bobby did rape Ali, she didn't report it to police. Even so, she and Lisa would use the alleged rape to great effect, whipping up enthusiasm for their plan to kill Bobby.

Lisa and Ali left Marty and Bobby. They picked up Heather and Donny some time after midnight.

Did you kill Bobby yet? Heather and Donny teased.

No, Ali and Lisa said. But they almost did.

Donny and Heather laughed it off. False bravado, they figured, nothing more. But Heather started taking the proposal more seriously when she overheard a phone conversation between Lisa and Marty.

"He's got to be killed," Lisa said.

"He can't live no more. He's making too many people miserable. It's about time he got paid back."

Lisa told Marty she'd talk to Derek Kaufman the next day to see if he'd found a clean gun. If not, they'd have to scrounge around for other weapons.

The Sins of the Father

With all the talk of weapons, Heather Swallers was getting nervous. At 2 a.m., Heather called her boyfriend in Palm Bay, begging him to come down and take her home. They'd had a fight before she left. He was still mad and he refused to come get her.

Heather knew about murder. Her grandfather, an alcoholic, beat her grandmother to death with a claw hammer on Jan. 24, 1970. Then, he had sex with her corpse.

It was a sensational murder, playing on the pages of The Kankakee (Illinois) Daily Journal for months. It has been playing out for years in the lives of Heather and her mother, Rachel Jacqueline Callahan.

Heather's mother was 15 at the time of the murder. Like her father, she became a raging alcoholic. She called herself Jackie, after her father. She says she bounced between jobs and men, until she found one who beat her almost as savagely as her father had beaten her mother.

Heather and her little brother, Shane, saw it all. They watched as one man pinned their mother to the floor and

THE NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD PUZZLE

B MAJORS

BY JEANETTE K. BRILL / ANSWERS ARE ON PAGE 16

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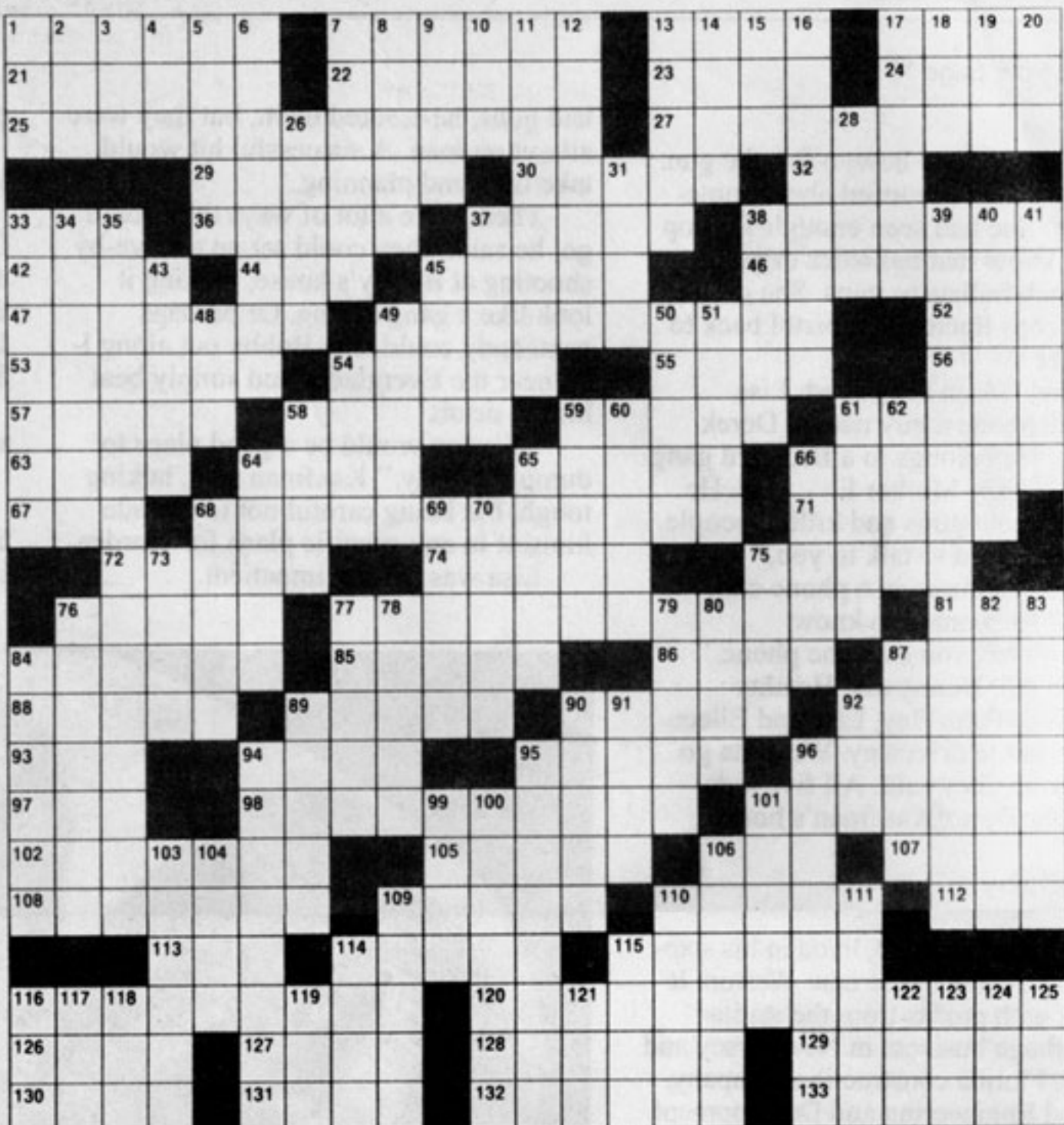
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CHILDREN

poured booze and pills down her throat. They watched as she repeatedly tried to kill herself, only to be locked up in psych hospitals. They watched as she passed out drunk on the floor, night after night, leaving Heather to remove her shoes and cover her up with a blanket.

But Jackie Callahan did something far worse — and she realizes it now.

She used to sit with a bottle of vodka in one hand and her father's trial transcript in the other and read the most horrific passages aloud to Heather and her little brother. They weren't even in kindergarten yet.

"I basically did to her what my father did to me," said Callahan, 39, sitting in the cramped hotel room in Cocoa Beach where she landed after her latest stint in rehab, her belongings stuffed into a black, cedar-lined steamer trunk. "I destroyed her."

Heather was 4 when her parents divorced. She never had enough confi-

dence to do well in school. She dropped out of high school. She never had much of anything — until she met Ali while staying with her mother's sister in Palm Bay. Heather became Ali's protégé, dyeing her hair blond, just like Ali.

"Ali would take Heather to the mall and buy her \$500 worth of clothes on her mother's credit card," said her aunt, Cindy Hanlon.

Heather's mother and aunt sent her back to Illinois to live with her second set of grandparents. They wanted to keep her away from Ali. But Ali bought Heather a bus ticket back to Palm Bay. Her mom and aunt let her stay.

Weeks before the murder, Heather told her mother she had a problem — crack cocaine. "I need help," Heather said. Her mother helped Heather check into the Twin Rivers drug rehab center in Melbourne. Three days later, Heather was out. Her aunt blames Ali.

"Heather got buggy," Hanlon said. "She didn't have a job. She was not over the drugs. Ali just picked up the phone, and that was the end of it."

Plan B

By Wednesday morning, July 14, Lisa and Ali had decided to go to plan B. Since they couldn't find a clean gun, they would arm themselves with knives and baseball bats. Donny had his brother's military-style knife, which he had stashed under the seat in Ali's car a few weeks before. Marty said he had a scuba knife.

Lisa told Marty that when he saw Bobby in the weight room at the Hollywood YMCA that afternoon, he should say that Ali was willing to give Bobby another chance. That way they could lure him back to the quarry, making him think he could drive Ali's Mustang again.

Ali beeped Lisa's cousin Derek Dzvirko and told him they needed him to help with something. When he arrived at Lisa's house, they told Derek about Ali's alleged rape, and said they were going to teach Bobby a lesson. Derek's job was to round up some baseball bats.

He phoned several friends, saying he needed the bats to help beat up some bad

guy and bash in his car. He struck out with the video nerds he knew. But Lisa wouldn't give up.

"All day Lisa is hounding about killing Bob," Heather said. "Bob has got to be dead. Bob has got to be dead and all this. We heard that all day."

Through it all, Heather stayed quiet. She called her boyfriend in Palm Bay again. She pleaded with him to get her. Forget it, he said. He wasn't driving three hours down to Pembroke Pines.

That was when Donny got nervous, too.

His birthday was hours away. His friends were supposed to help him celebrate back in Palm Bay. Donny called one of them. Speaking in hushed tones, Donny told Ronald McConnell, 19, that his girlfriend and some other kids were planning to kill a guy.

Donny wanted to go home, but Ali wouldn't take him.

Put Lisa on the phone, Ronald said. "Bring him home," Ronald ordered. "He's going to be 18 tomorrow, and he don't need this sh - -."

Lisa said she'd talk to Ali about it. And then she hung up.

The Crime

Derek Kaufman was on the phone with friends late Wednesday night when he heard someone tapping on his bedroom window. It was Lisa and Ali. They said they were ready.

Derek still wasn't sure they were serious.

"Get in the car," Ali said. "Let's go. Let's get it over with."

"I don't think this is a good idea," Derek said. "But, you know, I'll go."

They drove back to Hollywood and waited at Marty's while he called Bobby. He asked his best friend if he was ready to go out.

Before Bobby left home to walk down the block to Marty's, his mother asked if he was "on or off" the next day. Are you "on or off" was a frequently asked question in the Kent household, where everyone worked irregular schedules.

"Yeah, I'm off tomorrow, Mom," Bobby said. "We'll all do something."

"Don't say it if you don't really mean it," Farah Kent kidded him.

The eight kids sped off in two cars — Ali's Mustang and Marty's mother's red, 1987 four-door Mercury Topaz. Donny and Heather, sitting in the back of the Mustang, were introduced to Bobby as boyfriend and girlfriend. They didn't want Bobby to suspect that Donny really was with Ali. Bobby was never introduced to Derek Kaufman, who was riding in the other car with Marty, Lisa, and Derek Dzvirko.

A half-hour later, they spotted the faint outlines of the twin peaks of sand in the darkness. They parked on a wide, white stretch of gravel that runs alongside a series of rock quarry lakes. It was close to midnight. There was a quarter-moon in a cloudy sky. With no street lamps and few lights burning over at Windmill Ranch Estates, it was hard to see.

Ali took Bobby by the arm, walking him down the road. To a passerby, it would have looked romantic.

The other boys scrambled to remove their weapons from the car. Donny took out his military knife. Marty picked up his scuba blade. Derek Kaufman brought out the bat — a blue and silver 25-ounce 32-inch metal Easton model the other Derek had finally come up with — hiding it from Bobby's sight.

Everybody was scared and nobody knew what to do next. They told Donny he should stick Bobby first. After all, it

was his girlfriend, Ali, who Bobby supposedly raped the night before.

Donny didn't want to go first.

"If you don't do it, I'm gonna do it," Lisa said.

Like an actress on cue, Lisa called for Ali to join the others by the water.

"Come on over here, Ali," Lisa said. "Come on, hang out with us."

"They're never gonna leave us alone," Bobby said. "We may as well go so she'll shut up."

Bobby and Ali strolled down to the water's edge. Heather and Donny walked up behind them. Nobody said a word. It was so quiet, it was nerve-racking.

Heather broke the silence. "Are there any alligators in this water?" she asked.

Donny lifted his arm high, the blade in his hand.

Later, he would tell police he had been afraid not to participate: "If [Marty] is crazy enough to kill his best friend, why wouldn't he kill me."

Donny brought the blade down hard, striking Bobby once in the back of the neck.

"Oh f---," Bobby cried out.

He turned, grabbing the back of his neck. When he brought his hand back down, he saw that it was covered in blood.

"Oh my God," Bobby said. "Marty, help me."

Heather and Ali had seen enough. They ran to the Mustang, screaming.

Marty stepped up and plunged his scuba knife into Bobby's belly, slicing him until his intestines began to slip out.

Bobby ran.

"Somebody better get him," Derek Kaufman said.

Donny, Marty and Kaufman gave chase. Lisa later told a friend that Bobby died apologizing.

"I'm sorry," Bobby pleaded, stumbling in the sand and gravel. "I'm sorry for whatever I did. I'm sorry, you know. Whatever you guys are mad at me about, I'm sorry."

Ali tried to start the Mustang. She was so shaken, she turned on the headlights instead. Heather sat in the car. She closed her eyes and covered her ears. She could still hear Bobby's screams.

"Turn off the car lights," Kaufman yelled.

One of the kids caught Bobby, tackling him to the ground.

Marty stabbed Bobby again, this time in the heart. Bobby began to gurgle on the ground.

"He's not dead yet," Kaufman said. "He's still alive. We have to finish him off."



Please help us at Thanksgiving

Dear Friend,

During the next few weeks, literally hundreds of destitute, homeless and hungry people will come to us seeking help.

They're afraid... anxious... alone... hurting... sick.

Many will try to drown their loneliness in alcohol and drugs — running from the memories of the past, which are especially painful as Thanksgiving approaches.

When these people come to us, cold, hungry and in despair, they are often shocked when they're not turned away, or treated like worthless junk.

When we reach out to them in love and compassion, binding up their wounds, providing clean, serviceable clothing, warm beds and nutritious meals, they often can't understand.

Especially at Thanksgiving.

And, during this Thanksgiving season, we expect to provide more than 47,000 hot, nutritious meals for the hungry and shelter for the homeless.

For our Thanksgiving meal, we'll serve traditional home-cooked turkey dinners with all the trimmings... mouth-watering dressing, mashed potatoes and gravy, green beans and cranberry sauce, topped off with a giant slice of pie.

Because so much of our food is donated, we can serve these nutritious meals for just \$1.47 each. That means...

(\$14.70 can help provide 10 meals*
\$29.40 can help provide 20 meals
\$58.80 can help provide 40 meals
\$147 can help provide 100 meals
\$1,000 can help feed and shelter 500 people)

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Please help us feed thousands of hungry men, women and children this Thanksgiving season. Most have no place to go. Many have no family. No real friends. Many do not even have a decent place to lay their head.

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Please fill in the coupon, clip and mail with your gift today.

Thank you for caring for the hungry at Thanksgiving.

Dr. Frank Jacobs
Executive Director
Miami Rescue Mission

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Two months after Ann joined, she met Randy. Six months later they were engaged.

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CHILDREN

Kaufman raised the 25-ounce Easton in the air and whacked Bobby once in the head. He would tell police he just wanted to put him out of his misery.

Still Bobby moaned. Marty held his scuba knife against his old friend's throat and frantically sawed back and forth.

Bobby fell silent.

"Let's just go," Lisa said.

"You just can't leave the body," Kaufman said.

He called for someone to help carry Bobby to the water. No one answered. He called out again, more insistently this time. Derek Dzvirko grabbed Bobby by the ankles. Kaufman took his wrists.

Dzvirko was shaking so badly, he dropped Bobby. Marty came over and helped Kaufman roll Bobby into the water. He landed face down, arms and torso floating in the water, his legs stretching out on the shore.

He would stay that way for four days. His murderers came back the next day, to make sure he was really dead. He was.

Police treated Bobby Kent's disappearance as a missing persons case until some kids started talking. Ali placed an anonymous call to Crimestoppers, blaming Marty and Lisa for the murder. On Sunday, July 18, Derek Dzvirko led detectives to the body. Within days, five of the seven kids confessed to their roles in the killing. Marty and Derek Dzvirko have not admitted their guilt in sworn statements.

News accounts of the murder terrified suburban parents — not just because kids killed a friend, but because these kids didn't seem that different from millions of other middle-class teens. The public sensed what experts already knew.

"It's an oversimplification to say that these are really bad kids," said Charles Patrick Ewing, a law professor and psychologist at the State University of New York at Buffalo and an author of two books on kids who kill. "An awful lot of kids who commit these crimes are not that much different from other kids. They fell into a particular set of circumstances and this crime evolved.

"The social benefit of these cases and the publicity they generate may be to make the rest of us think about what we're doing with our own kids."

On the night they killed Bobby Kent, the seven kids sped back to Hollywood Beach. They threw their knives into the sea, washed blood off the bat and sat on the wooden steps bridging the sand dunes near the Hollywood Beach Resort, built in 1926 for the Great Gatsby rich of the Northeast.

Derek Kaufman laughed, trying to make a joke out of killing Bobby.

Lisa told police she sat on the beach debating with herself the theology of murder. "I tried . . . but I couldn't talk myself into thinking that it's just a regular sin. I'm going to hell."

Ali told a slightly different story: She started to sob and Lisa told her, "You shouldn't cry. Bob got what he deserved."

About the time Bobby was murdered, Farah Kent had a bad dream. She saw Bobby, standing before her, repeating a haunting question.

"Am I on, or am I off?" he asked in the voice of a frightened child.

"Mommy, I don't know if I'm on or off tomorrow. Am I on, or am I off? Am I on, or am I off?"

After a while, Bobby stopped asking.

"It doesn't even matter anymore," Bobby said. "I'm tired. I'm just going to rest."

She awoke with the question ringing in her mind and jumped out of bed. Terrified, she rushed to the living room and looked out the front window. She saw Bobby's white Pontiac LeMans, a graduation gift from his father, parked in the circular driveway. She was relieved.

She mistakenly thought he must be asleep in his room. Safe in suburbia. ■

APRIL WITT and SCOTT HIGHMAN are Herald staff writers. Herald researcher Gay Nemeti contributed to this report.

Lisa Connelly, Derek Dzvirko, Derek Kaufman, Marty Puccio, Donny Semenec, Heather Swallers and Ali Willis are being treated as adults and charged with first-degree murder and conspiracy. They are being held without bond; the boys at the Broward County Jail; the girls at the Pompano Beach Detention Center. Their next court appearance is Nov. 9. The trials are not expected to begin until some time next year. Lisa is close to five months pregnant and plans to have Marty's baby.