



Attic Whispers and Crime of the Month (May Edition)

## ATTACHMENT

Today, the news came that New York-based [AvroKO is reviving downtown Napa's historic Fagiani's bar](#), which has been dark for decades. It's a big deal in Napa, and not only because it's a 100-year-old building that was a [speakeasy during Prohibition](#). To really understand the bar's infamy and impact is to revisit the murder that shut down the bar in the early 70s. It wasn't until last fall that a murder trial – [and eventual conviction](#) – came to pass. Even decades later, the story remains a sensitive subject, but one that reads like a mystery novel.

The below article was published in the San Francisco Chronicle on November 17, 1989. Since that was during the pre-internet era, it's republished here, in full:



## **Napa Bar Is a Reminder of Old Murder**

By Sam Whiting, 11/17/1989

The telephone rings at Fagiani's Cocktail Lounge & Liquor Store in downtown Napa, but no one ever answers. Fagiani's is not open for business, hasn't been for more than a decade. It sits padlocked, with a bucket on the floor and blood stains in the back room - an eerie and hollow monument to unsolved murder.

For those who were around Napa when Anita Andrews was stabbed and strangled at the Main Street tavern on July 10, 1974, it serves as a chilling reminder that her killer was never caught. For those who weren't, the empty saloon stands as folklore.

"Why couldn't we solve that murder?" Jim Boitano, former Napa County district attorney, asks himself almost daily when he drives down Main.

The answer has eluded Boitano, and Napa police investigators John Bailey and Robert Jarecki for 15 years. Now, responding to fresh clues unearthed in the preparation of this article, Napa police have assigned the case high priority and put an investigator on it for the first time in 10 years.

"Every time I go by the bar and see the lock on the door I think about it," says Bailey, who is retired and counts the murder as his most frustrating case in 25 years of police work.

But most haunted of all is the victim's sister, Muriel Fagiani, 64, who shut down the family business and never explained why a prime piece of commercial real estate sits vacant. "I don't have plans," she says. "It's a landmark," says Nancy Robins of the county coroner's office. "I walk by it all the time and peek in the window."

What she sees is a murder scene as neatly preserved as an Egyptian tomb. Bottles of Jack Daniels and Smirnoff sit half-full and ready to pour into stacked cocktail glasses. Cold Bud and Oly are in the 'fridge, and 19 dusty barstools await thirsty customers. Three deer heads guard from a wall. Only the pool table, jukebox and piano have been removed.

"Muriel told me there's still change scattered on the steps," says Captain Jarecki. "If there's still change laying on the steps, then there's still blood back there."

Fagiani hints that the bar may someday serve as evidence.

Her niece, Donna Hawkins, offers a wider perspective. "It's all she has left, " says Hawkins, who was 23 when her mother was killed. "She's the last Fagiani. It was her dad's, and it's the last place where my mom was alive. That's why she keeps it as it is."

"I have always been amazed, " says Fagiani, "that something like this could happen and no one could come up with anything."

So are Boitano, Jarecki and Bailey, and anyone else familiar with the investigation.

"It's tough to see somebody that you considered a friend brutally murdered, " says Boitano, who served 20 years as Napa County D.A. "Especially when it happened within feet of my office."

The Fagiani sisters inherited the bar in 1969 from their father, Nick, who had operated it as a working-man's watering hole for 25 years. Neither sister was eager to work the plank, but they agreed to stay in business until the liquor licenses could be sold.

Main Street Napa was different then. It was lined with seedy taverns to serve the old-timers, transients and Napa State Hospital outpatients who populated the Conner Hotel across the street. Today the hotel and adjacent bars have been replaced by a scenic riverfront park and a trendy brew pub. There is a popular Mexican restaurant on one side of Fagiani's, and a nouveau frame shop on the other. "That one block is completely different, " says Jess Doud, the town historian. "The only thing that's stayed the same over the years is Fagiani's bar."

When they took over the tavern, Anita Andrews was a 46-year-old secretary at the state hospital who had two grown daughters and had been divorced. Muriel Fagiani, then 44, was a former schoolteacher who just moved home from the Sacramento area. The sisters alternated running the tavern, with Andrews usually opening each evening.

"She hated working at that damned bar, " says Barbara Gellinger, a friend and co-worker of Andrews at the hospital. "Hated it with a passion. It was not a ladies' bar."

That summer night, Andrews parked her tan, four-door, 1967 Cadillac in front, as always, opened the padlock, and illuminated the neon, to indicate Fagiani's flag was up.

As darkness fell, there were five patrons inside: a trio of local drinkers; a woman who worked with Andrews at the hospital; and another man, down at the end of the bar, variously seen flipping cards and chatting with Andrews.

The four locals drifted out. Only Andrews and the man at the end of the bar remained. What happened after that is still a mystery.

### **A SUSPICIOUS CHANGE**

The Napa police had a routine for checking Fagiani's in the evenings. The patrol officer would drive down Main Street and check for Andrews' Cadillac parked in front. He would then spotlight the front door padlock. If the car was there and the door unlocked, Fagiani's was in business and everything was presumed all right. Conversely, if the car was gone and the door was locked, it meant the sisters did not choose to open that evening. There were no set hours at Fagiani's.

On the night in question, the patrol officer, for whatever reason, did not check for the padlock-and-Cadillac formula on his rounds. If he had, he would have noticed a suspicious element - the door unlocked, the Cadillac gone.

"If the door without the lock had been seen, the body would have been found that night, " says Jarecki. "Who knows what could have happened?"

Sometime before midnight, a tan Cadillac pulled into a Sacramento truck stop off Highway 99. Paul Griener, then 36, was the attendant on duty.

"Ten dollars worth, please, " said the customer, who offered a credit card to pay. The card had a woman's name. The man said it belonged to his wife. Griener saw a purse in the back seat and noticed that the driver's lap was covered with a blue towel, which appeared to be bloodstained.

"I almost said, 'Why the towel?' but I didn't, " Griener now recalls. "I had thoughts, I'll put it that way, but he didn't seem nervous at all. He was cool, calm and collected."

The man signed the slip "A.E. Andrews, " and headed south toward Los Angeles, according to Griener. The trademark tan Cadillac, license plate UGA 370, known to everybody in Napa, then vanished.

The next morning, Muriel Fagiani received a call that her sister had missed an appointment. Fagiani drove by Andrews' apartment and the State Hospital, checking for the Cadillac. Then she tried the bar.

"When I saw the (front) doors open I thought to myself, 'My, that's funny.' " Two swinging doors at the rear were always open. On this morning they were closed to conceal her sister's body.

### **THE BLOODY SCENE**

Police officer Joe Moore responded to the call at 9:04 a.m. The storeroom, where cases of beer and mixers were kept, was a scene of bloody carnage. Anita Andrews, age 51, had been stabbed repeatedly, strangled, beaten and possibly raped. "The investigation was very intense, " Boitano says. "The cops went all out for a month to six weeks, then it went absolutely cold. It just wasn't there."

Muriel stayed in business a few years, to save the liquor licenses and conduct her own subtle investigation, constantly noting "who is going to walk in that door, and how they are going to react."

Two suspects who never returned were a former boyfriend of Andrews who was said to be a traveling carnival worker, and a welder or mechanic who was in the bar the night of the murder, according to witnesses. Police attempted to trace the carnival worker and the welder, with no luck. It never occurred to them it might be the same man.

This is because Donna Hawkins didn't tell police about the last telephone conversation she had with her mother. Andrews had been upset with the former boyfriend, who was a repairman for the carnival, Hawkins recalls.

"She was really mad because he ran up a \$400 phone bill at her apartment, " says Hawkins, 38. "She didn't want to see him anymore, but she had his tools in the back of her car and felt that she had to."

Hawkins says the killer could have gone to the bar to fetch the tools and been told by Andrews to pay up first.

"He owed her the money, and she had the tools. It could very well have been him."

The victim's former husband, Clarence (Mike) Andrews, corroborates the story.

"This guy would visit and became more or less a half-ass steady. He fit the description perfectly and had access to her car. Then he pulled a disappearing act from the carnival. This is weird. I mean weird."

Particularly for Jarecki, who had never before heard this information.

"It was never relayed to us that the carnival worker was also a welder, " says Jarecki, "or that the carnival worker had his tools in back of her car." Nor was it known Andrews had a current relationship with the man. "If this had come out in the investigation, he would have been prime suspect No. 1. We've got to find out where this guy is now."

Fagiani is cautious about supporting any conjecture.

"There are a dozen different directions this could go, " she says. "But I'm a suspicious person. I have a wild imagination."

## **TWO THEORIES**

Over the years, former District Attorney Boitano has pieced together two theories.

One is that something happened to the killer himself.

"But it couldn't have been an auto accident; we'd have the car, " he says. "The car might be in the bottom of the Sacramento River with the killer's body and the credit card." But given the droughts since '74, the car or body should have risen from the river bottom.

His second theory is that the murder was a setup.

"The car was deliberately driven to Sacramento to mislead us. Make it seem like an isolated drifter incident, " he says. "The killer is alive and out there, and there's got to be some tie to Napa through the State Hospital."

Lieutenant Bailey was the first investigator on the case, and shares Boitano's suspicions.

"It always kind of ate at me, " says Bailey, who left the Napa force a year after the murder and later served 10 years as Tiburon police chief. "The guy could have bought gas with cash. There was enough money in her purse."

Bailey speculates that after leaving a paper trail in Sacramento and heading toward Los Angeles, the murderer doubled back to the Napa area and is still there. The car was probably dismantled.

Jarecki sticks to the random crime theory, while admitting there are holes in it. "Every indication is that it was a transient situation. But how did the person who took the keys know which car was hers?"

There are other pieces that simply don't fit the puzzle.

How did the killer get to the bar? And if he was a stranger, how did he come to be playing cards with Anita and hanging around while she took the cash upstairs? Was the neon sign left on all night, and if so, why didn't anybody notice?

Meanwhile, Muriel Fagiani keeps after the cops - and when she doesn't, the bar does it for her.

And she continues to search for her sister's car. "Always, " she says. "Always."

*-Sam Whiting, 1989*

PS

My friends, this extraordinary story doesn't end here. There is another fascinating twist to all this which I will feature next month in: The Murder Mystery at Fagiani's Part II. Have I piqued your interest? I hope so!

Gabriel

Attachments area

Preview YouTube video The Story of Prohibition... in Napa

