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# HIS

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## NEW ZEALAND'S MILLIONAIRE MURDERER

He's a property developer with a hidden past: gun runner, cop-killer and prime suspect in the murder of a US actress, and he's been hiding here...

## PLUS: THE TSUNAMI, & SYNCHRONICITY

April 2011, \$8.60

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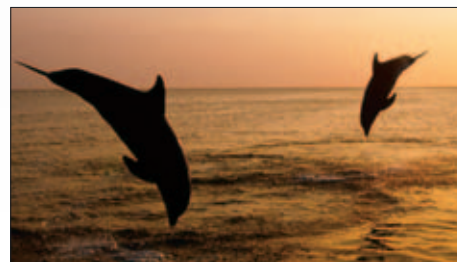
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# The Killer NEXT DOOR

NZ'S MURDERING MILLIONAIRE

AND THE ACTRESS WHO HAUNTS HIM

You wouldn't read about it, except perhaps in the book or movie that someone will inevitably pen about this story. **IAN WISHART** has the world exclusive on how a gun-runner, bank robber and double murder suspect with links to a CIA black op has ended up building a new life for himself in sleepy, provincial New Zealand, while a worldwide manhunt spanning three decades had failed to find him

In Hollywood, they say, every waitress is a movie star in the wings. Oregon-born Valerie McDonald was one of those waitresses, albeit she'd only made it as far south as a seedy, \$3-a-night North Beach apartment building overlooking San Francisco Bay. It was a neighbourhood yet to be revitalised, but it danced to a student and arts beat, a bohemian rhapsody of sorts. Valerie, studying at the San Francisco Art Institute, initially enjoyed her time at the Tower Apartments. That was, until she crossed paths with the new building managers and her rhapsody hit some discordant notes.

Phillip Thompson, Michael Hennessey and John Gordon Abbott were ex-cons. Abbott, in fact, was on work release from a five years to life sentence at San Quentin prison, and he'd met his mates on the inside. Thompson, at 35 the oldest of the men, had been born at the tail end of World War II, and cut his teeth shipping drugs and intrigue for CIA black operations during the Vietnam War era. He's listed as a driver on the Nixon presidential re-election team for 1972.

Thompson, however, had demons. Plenty of them.

On June 18, 1971, then aged in his 20s, Thompson took a 21 year old mother named Betty Cloer into a field east of Sacramento, beat her, raped her then shot her three times before "bludgeoning her face beyond recognition". Cloer's nude corpse was found by two young girls horseriding the next day. She left behind a five year old son who was so traumatised that for the next five years he lived in denial that his mum was dead, telling his grandparents that his mum was only "hiding from bad men" and that she'd come back to look after him.

It wasn't to be.

Nobody had connected Phillip Thompson to this unspeakable crime, and so he continued doing spook work for the CIA and sometimes the FBI, interspersed with prison time for armed robberies and violence. Just in passing, he was finally caught for this 1971 murder in 2003 after a DNA check on cold-cases located his DNA on Betty Cloer's underwear. He was tried and convicted of murder in 2008 in a history-making California court case, 37 years after the killing.

Detective Rick Fitzgerald told jurors in the trial that







Thompson had indeed been a CIA covert operative in the 70s and 80s:

“There is in fact some information that suggests he was an operative who was given a lot of leeway,” the police officer testified.<sup>1</sup> Newspaper reports also confirmed Thompson was associated with terrorist Luis Posada Carriles, who’d blown up a Cuban passenger jet in 1976 killing 73 people on board.

**B**ut if young mother Betty Cloer was Thompson’s first known victim, she wasn’t the last. “There are at least eight to ten others that we know of,” Det. Rick Fitzgerald said outside the court.

Which brings us back to that bohemian North Beach apartment building in San Francisco, November 1980. When Thompson, Hennessey and Abbott took over management, they began evicting some of the tenants and re-arranging rooms. Valerie McDonald feared for her safety. She told her friends she’d seen the men organise parties where “bowls of cocaine” were available, and that “Satanistic” activities had taken place.

“Val called me and told me she was frightened,” her mum Dee Dee Kouns told reporters later.<sup>2</sup> But Valerie didn’t make it out. As Valerie and a couple of girlfriends were shifting furniture on 9 November 1980, they ran into Michael Hennessey.

Hennessey, the youngest of the three criminals at only 23, came from a good family by all accounts, but his world collapsed when he rushed his ill father to hospital one day, only to be told it was nothing serious and to go home. A short time later his beloved dad dropped dead from a heart attack in front of him, and Hennessey blamed himself, going to pieces. A drift into crime followed, and incarceration at San Quentin prison. Those who’ve met his family describe Hennessey as a basically good kid who fell in with a bad crowd, and who became Thompson and Abbott’s “flunky”.

Half Japanese and half Irish, Hennessey was big and muscular, and when on his own he had relatively good social skills. Valerie liked him, but she didn’t like his mates. Still, she was prepared to give him a couple of minutes.

The con eyed the strawberry-blonde up



**It is the only known photo of Abbott published anywhere in the world since the early 1980s, and it is perhaps apt that the photo captures John Gordon Abbott “red handed”, so to speak**

and down, and explained he was helping shoot a Dustin Hoffman movie that night. He told the girls he was supplying cocaine to the movie’s director, Dino de Laurentis, and that they wanted a blonde woman to play the part of a serial-killer’s victim in a couple of scenes.

The girls thought it sounded dodgy, but Hennessey offered Valerie \$200, and the struggling young waitress and film student – based on her earlier friendship with the man – made what turned out to be a fatal choice. She was never seen alive again.





Phillip Arthur THOMPSON  
(B: 8/5/45) 6'4", 190 lbs.  
(over)



PHILLIP A. THOMPSON  
Accused of several felonies

At some point, somehow, Valerie McDonald had made some kind of contact with a 23 year old German woman named Inez Sailer who'd also fallen into the orbit of Abbott, Thompson and Hennessey. We know this because police found a scrap of paper with Valerie's name and phone number on it, in Sailer's wallet. We don't know why it was there because when police found it on New Year's Day 1981, six weeks after Valerie had gone missing, the wallet was in Inez Sailer's cold, dead hands. Whatever had happened, she was in no condition to tell.

Two women, one vanished, one shot five times, both connected. Police now believe Sailer had been drawn into a criminal operation being run by Thompson, Abbott and Hennessey out of their apartment block.

**W**hen dawn of November 10 broke and Valerie hadn't returned home, her friends became worried but police brushed them off. By the time the San Francisco Police Department stopped chewing on doughnuts and turned to the task at hand, about ten days after her disappearance, the trail had gone cold. Valerie was missing, and so were Phillip Thompson, John Gordon Abbott and Michael Hennessey.

Which brings us to John Gordon

Abbott, currently living in New Zealand where he splits his time between Wanganui, the nearby towns of Waverley and Patea, and Japan. First, his New Zealand activities, and then we'll cover-off his real background.

*HIS* magazine has established that a John Gordon Abbott, listed as a "lecturer" in official documents, purchased a house at 45 Nile Street in Wanganui in mid 1993 for \$113,500. He paid cash, with no mortgage. Abbott swiftly followed that up with the purchase of 15 Ikitara Road in Wanganui in August 1994, for \$146,000. Again, he paid in folding stuff, no mortgage was taken against the property.

Abbott is listed as the current owner of these homes and 14 other properties that we know of, scattered between Wanganui in the south and Taranaki in the north. All of the properties appear to have been purchased for cash.

He gained a little bit of local publicity a year or two back after stumping up the cash to buy old heritage buildings like the Waverley Post Office and the Town Hall. His picture was taken by the *Wanganui Chronicle's* Stuart Munro, while Abbott sanded a window frame on one of the buildings in late 2009.

It is the only known photo of Abbott published anywhere in the world since the early 1980s, and it is perhaps apt that

the photo captures John Gordon Abbott "red handed", so to speak.

To locals in Wanganui, Waverley and Patea, John G. Abbott is the prickly landlord with a soft Canadian/mid-Atlantic accent, who rubs people up the wrong way. They know he is fluent in Asian languages and that he teaches in Japan, because he's told them that's where he goes when he's not here in New Zealand. When people argue with him, he's been known to remind them how high his IQ is, and to get into quite a temper.

Sometimes he has brought his two young daughters from Japan over to stay in the town of Waverley, where Abbott bases himself on a rural property just out of town. He's believed to be friendly with one of the locals, Laraine Sole, who is understood to look after the keys to some of his NZ properties while he's overseas.

He's also in some kind of business deals with Wanganui builder Dean Butler, and a couple of other locals named Nigel Pinn and Kerry Nixon – the names of Abbott and the three kiwis appear on city council records together. Abbott must have a good friend at the Wanganui District Council – property sales records show the council purchased a property at 52 Mosston Road in Wanganui for \$45,000 in 1998, then sold it to John Gordon Abbott in October 2005, at the height



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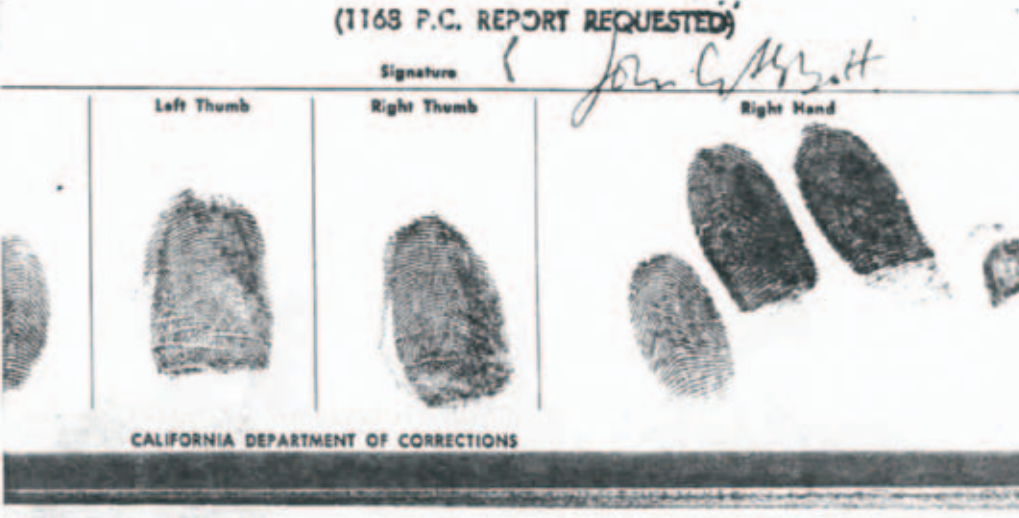
NAME ABBOTT, JOHN CLASS \_\_\_\_\_  
 ALIAS \_\_\_\_\_ REF. \_\_\_\_\_

Right Hand				
Left Hand				

Hair <u>BRN</u>	Eyes <u>BLUE</u>	Complexion <u>RUDDY</u>	Height <u>73"</u>
Weight <u>170</u>	Age <u>21</u>	Build <u>MED</u>	Occupation <u>STUDENT</u>
Rec'd at <u>NRC-CMF</u>	Date _____	County <u>YOLO</u>	Nativity <u>ENGLAND</u>
Offense <u>B on Peace Off W/ADW Burg 1st</u>		Term <u>5-Life, APO 5-Life CS</u>	Race <u>WHITE</u>
Marks and Scars <u>NONE</u>		<u>1-10 &amp; APO 5-10, CS, Cts CC</u>	

(1168 P.C. REPORT REQUESTED)

Signature *John G. Abbott*



of the property boom, for only \$30,500. Wanganui ratepayers took an almost \$15,000 hit as the property was sold for 33% less than the council paid for it at a time when values had risen substantially.

At the request of US law enforcement officials, *HIS/HERS* magazine made no attempt to contact Abbott or his New Zealand colleagues for comment on this special investigation, although we can tell you we provided US and NZ law enforcement agencies with a three week head-start to take action against Abbott.

For the sake of clarification, however, there is no suggestion that any of Abbott's New Zealand friends or contacts have done anything wrong, nor that they have a clue who he really is. You, and they, are about to find out.

### The real background of John Gordon Abbott

Born in England in the mid 1950s, his mother Ursula was an American university professor in Davis, California and his father a British diplomat working for the United Nations. The parents separated when Abbott was a teenager, and the boys, John and Michael, started to slip off the rails. His first major offence was robbery with violence at the age of 15, in Canada, while living with his grandparents.

He was sent back to live with his mother in the early 1970s, and studied Oriental Languages at UC Davis. Police files record he was a "straight-A student" with an "IQ of 180" – genius level – who by 1974 could fluently speak and write


Japanese, and in 1975 he "travelled extensively throughout Japan", the files note.

That file, a police intelligence briefing from June 1978, obtained by *HIS/HERS* from US authorities, pre-dates the 1980 disappearance of Valerie McDonald, but it eerily foreshadows how events were to pan out. It was sent to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police by police in Davis, California, just after Abbott escaped from prison.

"I feel you should be aware of Mr Abbott" wrote Det. Sergeant John Persons. "It is my belief that Mr Abbott very likely will flee to British Columbia, Canada, and possibly attempt either to stay there or make arrangements to go to Japan.

"Secondly, it is my belief that Mr





**JOHN GORDON ABBOTT** is seen leaving the Rossland Court House where he appeared morning in front of Judge David Lunn of Cranbrook. Abbott will be retained in custody when there will be a preliminary hearing for two charges of attempted murder. Abbott to and from the court house in leg chains and handcuffs.

Abbott should be considered as very dangerous, and would kill without hesitation.”

John Gordon Abbott and his brother Michael, he said, had attempted to burgle a Davis City jewellery store in May 1976, but they triggered a silent alarm in the process. “Patrol units responded,” says the police file. “The first unit approaching to the front was immediately fired upon with a .22 rifle, the bullets going through the windshield narrowly missing the officers.

“A second unit responding to the rear of the business was fired upon with a .357 magnum. During the exchange of gunfire, Michael Abbott was killed, and John Abbott escaped. During the ensuing search for John Abbott, the police depart-

ment [itself] was fired upon and a dispatcher and police officer were narrowly missed (slugs recovered were .38 calibre). A police helicopter was also fired upon.

“John Abbott was arrested approximately 18 hours later in a library at the University of California, Davis campus by non-uniformed officers. Abbott, at the time of arrest, was armed with a Charter Arms .38 calibre revolver and made the statement, ‘If I had known who you were there would have been a lot of dead cops’.

“Abbott also possessed passports for Canada and England.”

But the May 2, 1976 attempted murder of police that ended in his brother Michael’s death wasn’t the only such spree John Gordon Abbott had been on that year. Davis City Police say he was

a prime suspect in an arson at premises part owned by his mother Ursula on January 14 that year – an arson that killed a visitor to the building. That is believed to have been Abbott’s first victim.

On Feb 14, the home of a gun instructor who’d been training Abbott in combat firearms use was burgled, and a .22 revolver taken. The instructor was away that weekend and his students knew that. Ten days later, an Asian American couple were confronted at their apartment door by a gunman matching John Abbott’s description. Both were pistol whipped and the male was shot in the head and the chest, while the gunman also held neighbours at bay with a .357 magnum and made his escape. He left behind a .22 revolver at the scene, later identified as



the weapon taken in the burglary of his gun instructor.

Two days later, on Feb 26<sup>th</sup>, “Officer on patrol stops to check out subject in early morning hours behind a pizza parlour. Upon exiting vehicle, officer is immediately fired upon by subject with a .357 magnum. Officer returned fire; subject escaped. Subject matched John Abbott’s physical. When John Abbott was arrested on May 3, 1976, a crude drawing was found in his jacket of the pizza parlour and the complex in which it was located.”

**T**here were other crimes in the weeks before he was caught – more arsons and burglaries – but you get the picture. “We have also located papers written in Japanese by Abbott, which, through interpretation, we determined he was conducting a stakeout,” remarks Det. Sgt. Persons in his report.

Abbott had also been using his time in early 1976 to brush up on military weapon techniques.

“We know that Abbott practiced on a firing range between January, 1976 and May, 1976 and fired in excess of 600 rounds, practicing combat shooting tactics with his .357 and .38 revolver. During the fall of 1975, Abbott took an R.O.T.C. firearms course and should be familiar with rifles.

“Upon interviewing an inmate at Nevada State Prison, who bunked together for a short period of time while in our county jail, I was told that Abbott bragged about the element of surprise and that he had trained himself to draw and fire upon immediate contact, if the situation warranted it.”

The final warning from Davis City Police to the Canadian Mounties in 1978 was this:

“Should any of your people come in contact...Abbott (in my opinion) would not hesitate to kill them. John Abbott should be considered armed and approached with extreme caution.”

It was a warning they should have paid attention to. On November 26, 1980, more than two weeks after waitress and wannabe film star Valerie McDonald had disappeared, Abbott’s parked car was approached by a couple of Canadian Mounties in the town of Trail, British Columbia, and it turned into a fatal

exchange of gunfire. As police moved towards the car Abbott was heard yelling at his companion Michael Hennessey, “Shoot them”. The nearest Mountie went down, shot in the leg, his partner returned fire, killing Michael Hennessey. When Abbott was handcuffed, officers found Hennessey had used Abbott’s gun. Abbott was charged with and later convicted of the attempted murder of a police officer.

In the boot of the car were a shotgun and rifle, and wirecutters. As they searched Abbott’s car, rented apartment and belongings, the Mounties quickly discovered he and Hennessey had been travelling with a third man, CIA spook and killer Phillip Thompson. But the trail at Trail was 24 hours cold – Thompson had flown back to America the day before. Detectives also found ID cards belonging to one Valerie McDonald, of whom there was so sign, and Abbott had the leather jacket she’d been wearing the day she disappeared from San Francisco – 1,300 kilometres south.

Maatz revealed Abbott and Phillip Thompson appeared to enjoy soft treatment from law enforcement agencies, despite the crimes they committed. After committing a number of bank robberies in 1978, for example, they were caught red-handed at Abbott’s apartment with \$25,000 in stolen property and a haul of fully automatic weapons. Abbott’s wife of a year, Susan, coughed to an SFPD police inspector that the bank jobs were raising cash to buy weapons to exchange for cocaine with a CIA-assisted rebel group in El Salvador.<sup>4</sup>

Instead of being charged with armed robbery at the time, the men were only charged with receiving stolen property and possession of weapons. SFPD’s Neil Jordan lamented to journalists the lack of a serious charge.

“That’s something that’s always puzzled me. We had a statement from Abbott acknowledging his and Thompson’s complicity in at least three of the robberies, and evidence to tie them into at least

**Should any of your people come in contact...Abbott would not hesitate to kill them. John Abbott should be considered armed and approached with extreme caution**

Hennessey, who had written love poems to Valerie McDonald at one point was, by the time of the shootout, almost catatonic. Witnesses reported him appearing as if in shock while he and Abbott moved around the city of Trail. “He never said anything, he was just like a statue,” one told *HIS/HERS* magazine. Whatever Hennessey had witnessed up there, he took it with him to the grave when the Mountie’s bullet ripped through him.

To make matters murky, news quickly began to break back in the city by the bay, the city that *never* sleeps, of a CIA link to the crimes. In a story headlined, “The mystery of the disappearing actress deepens,” the *San Francisco Chronicle*’s Larry Maatz wrote: “CIA linked to bizarre case that already includes two killings and hints of devil worship and drugs.”<sup>3</sup>

three others”. But no one, he said, would mount the prosecution.

To understand how this works requires a little history lesson. Like many government bureaucracies, spy agencies sometimes have ambitions bigger than their budgets. During the Vietnam War the CIA realised it could fund “off balance sheet” covert operations by helping ship drugs out of Asia and into the West.<sup>5</sup> The spies rationalised their activities by claiming it was for the greater good, although they seriously underestimated the social impact. In New Zealand and Australia, the Mr Asia heroin drug ring was part financed by the Nugan Hand Merchant Bank in Sydney, set up by two former CIA spooks and whose board of advisors included a former Director of the CIA, William Colby.

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# HERS

current affairs and lifestyle for the discerning woman

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A joint investigation with  
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## The Killer NEXT DOOR

NZ'S MURDERING MILLIONAIRE  
AND THE ACTRESS WHO HAUNTS HIM

**T**he criminals got to move heroin from South East Asia and cocaine from South America in diplomatic bags or on CIA-affiliated transport networks, the Agency gained more sets of eyes and ears feeding them info, and the CIA got a cut of the drug money to finance operations that Congress could never know about. Britain's MI6 was up to the same tricks, and was publicly embarrassed at one point when an MI6 agent was one of those caught robbing a bank in Ireland.<sup>6</sup>

In that context, then, the claims by US police of some kind of spook involvement with Abbott and Thompson's criminal endeavours starts to become a little more plausible. "Really, it's the only thing that makes sense," private investigator Sandra Sutherland – whose high-profile firm (they've also acted for Russell Crowe and tobacco whistleblower Jeffrey Wigand) handled the case for Valerie McDonald's parents – told journalist Larry Maatz.

Supporting evidence of that is easy to find. How else could you explain how Phillip Thompson, for example, could be personally driven from Folsom Prison (famous for the Johnny Cash concerts) down to San Quentin, by the warden of Folsom Prison himself, only to end up back in a cell with John Abbott as a result of this special delivery? How many prisoners are driven by the warden? How many end up with the cellmate of their choice?

There are other hints. Phillip Thompson, for example, was a prime suspect in the disappearance of McDonald, and was arrested back in San Francisco on "multiple felony counts of grand theft, possession of stolen property, illegal weapons possession and narcotics violations", reported the *Chronicle*. Yet despite being wanted by police for questioning on a possible homicide, the duty judge saw fit to release Thompson on bail. Angry police were soon able to re-arrest him when he was seen carrying a gun into a warehouse, and this time they got him

held in custody, although not for long – a second judge said he could go free a few days later if the bank robber posted \$5,000 bail – which he duly did.

While Thompson walked free, the *Chronicle's* Larry Maatz published this story:

"Police have uncovered evidence of what they believe was a scheme by three ex-convicts to stage lucrative robberies, use the loot to purchase automatic weapons and ship them to Latin America, then trade the guns for cocaine to be smuggled back to this country.

"They also have evidence that these men had obtained such sensitive information about the transport of money by banks and other institutions that their robberies could have netted them millions of dollars."

Police told the newspaper they'd found Thompson, Abbott and Hennessey were on the verge of getting a federal licence

to deal in automatic weapons, via the assistance of a federal prison guard.

"At least one weapons transaction had been discussed in detail by the principals, law enforcement officials have been informed," reported the newspaper. "A \$200,000 cache of M-16 automatic rifles, leftovers from the Vietnam War and currently in storage in Hong Kong, was to be obtained and shipped to South America...The guard has been questioned by authorities but is facing no criminal charge."

Police were reportedly stunned at the level of detail the men had amassed about bank armoured car shipments. "Some of the information found in those notes is known to only four or five persons within the bank," one agent told the paper. Just one robbery the men were planning would have netted up to \$6 million in 1980 money, but the scheme fell apart when John Gordon Abbott was





pulled over for speeding near San Jose, and fled the vehicle. That was November 16, 1980 – a week after Valerie’s disappearance and ten days before the shoot-out with the Mounties in Canada.

Valerie McDonald’s mother, Dee Dee Kouns of Portland, Oregon, remembers this period of her life well. Now 82 years old, she turned her energies after Valerie’s disappearance into becoming the US equivalent of the Sensible Sentencing Trust’s Garth McVicar – lobbying for tougher sentences in America.

Speaking long-distance to *HIS/HERS* magazine, she tells of her own investigation into John Abbott and his role in her daughter’s death, and she says the newspaper reports of the speeding incident don’t fully reflect the brutality of the man.

“He was stopped by a highway patrol officer. Now, he’d gone to Japan as a boy and learned some kind of martial art where you kick and slash with your hands and make your body a lethal weapon. So he did that with one police officer, a state patrolman. He beat the hell out of that cop, jumped a fence and left the van behind. Inside were a whole bunch of stolen ID cards and papers,” says Kouns.

Kouns had become involved in her daughter’s disappearance the day she’d been informed – November 15. She and her husband – Valerie’s step-dad Bob Kouns – flew into San Francisco on the morning of November 16. It was the same day Abbott would do a runner after beating the CHiPs officer.

“We got down there before the police station was even open,” recalls Kouns, “and we got laughed at by a detective, Armond Pellisetti – he denies saying it now, but made fun of us that we were taking her disappearance so seriously. ‘You’re getting all excited about nothing’, he told us.

To the police, there was an assumption that the bohemian arts student had simply gone AWOL with a boyfriend, or had taken an impromptu trip to Vegas. The idea that 26 year old Valerie had been abducted seemed ridiculous.

Realising they weren’t getting anywhere with San Fran’s finest, Dee Dee and her husband hired top PI Sandra Sutherland to follow up leads, beginning



## **Unbeknownst to the distraught parents, their daughter was still alive, being held captive in a San Francisco warehouse leased by Abbott, Thompson and Michael Hennessey**

with Valerie’s friends. Dee Dee already knew that her daughter had been frightened of John Gordon Abbott.

“My daughter had told me that she had moved out of the Tower Apartments because they had started filling it with San Quentin releasees. Phillip Thompson [the CIA informant and murderer] was actually allowed to be a sponsor of Abbott on his prison work release!

“Abbott one night was pounding on Val’s door so hard he broke a piece out. This was a very old building. Val actually left the next morning. She had screamed, and was screaming ‘rape, rape, rape’ because that’s she thought he was going to do, and she called the police and two officers came, but they never came up to see her. She called a friend to say she could see police downstairs when she looked out the window. We don’t know for certain what the men said to police but it’s believed they told the police she hadn’t paid her rent and they were just trying to get her out. So the police went away.

“There were a group of SFPD officers who almost seemed to be taking orders from Thompson, in the way they ran the case, what they were feeding to the media,” laments Kouns.

Dee Dee and her husband had arrived in town November 16 – exactly a week since Valerie had last been seen alive. Unbeknownst to the distraught parents, their daughter was still alive, being held captive in a San Francisco warehouse leased by Abbott, Thompson and Michael Hennessey. Dee Dee tells *HIS/HERS* she remains “haunted” to this day by the realisation she was alive when they flew in.

When investigator Sandra Sutherland began making inquiries about Valerie at the apartment block, Thompson, Abbott and Hennessey did a runner. Dee Dee says she only found out a month or so later where Valerie had been imprisoned. John Abbott had been recruiting two more criminals due for parole to come and work for him and Thompson.

“We later talked with these people,”





explains Dee Dee. “We did it separately, and they both told us the same thing. They told us where Valerie had been held. They told us she had been a captive there for 10 days. They took us up there to see if we could find anything that had been Valerie’s.”

What they found in the old warehouse brings tears to a mother’s eyes and chokes her voice, even 30 years after the event.

“They had her chained and strapped, and on a mattress in the warehouse. I suspect during that ten days they probably did some very terrible things to her. I can’t tell you about that without really [the 82 year old takes a moment to compose herself]...She was probably raped many times.

“Beside the mattress, just a little ways, there were two bags that had two kinds of poison. One was tincture of mercury and the other was potassium cyanide.

We hoped she was not tortured any more to death, but maybe had a quick death with one of those poisons. That’s what the two criminals told us had happened.”

These are hard things for a mother to witness, but even harder was the sight that awaited them in the warehouse: recently opened bags of quick-set cement and what appeared to be dry seaweed.

“They had put her feet into a bucket of cement,” Kouns explains. “There was an area, a hidden area, outside the warehouse where they’d been holding her. They’d obviously mixed up the cement there. We’re pretty certain that when Thompson drove her up to Canada she was already dead, in the trunk.”

Sure enough, when John Abbott was arrested in British Columbia after the shootout, the Mounties found he was still carrying the receipt for a hardware store purchase: a hoe, two bags of quick-set cement, and a bucket.

But that wasn’t all the Mounties found.

If they needed proof of an elaborate criminal enterprise, they found it in spades in Abbott’s rented apartment in Rossland, British Columbia. Searching it after the shootout, the Mounties located nearly two dozen filing boxes full of the names of bank staff, delivery routes, armoured car drivers, the works, across a number of major banks and armoured car companies. It “included the names of dispatchers, drivers, home addresses, the names of their children, social security numbers, driver’s licence numbers and their daily schedules.”

“Ominously,” reported the *Chronicle*, “it also included the ages of the children and where they went to school.”

Someone, somewhere, had gone to a lot of trouble to provide Abbott and his men with a blistering array of information capable of being used to threaten key bank personnel.



The Mounties described the unit to the *Chronicle* as “the headquarters of an international crime conglomerate headed by erratic genius John Gordon Abbott.” They also found blond strands of Valerie McDonald’s hair in Abbott’s car.

Had McDonald been murdered because she stumbled across the gang’s plans? No one knew; no body had been found.

**P**hillip Thompson, from behind bars in San Francisco, told a journalist he had nothing to do with the disappearance of Valerie McDonald. “She was just the face of the girl in room 24...If I had the slightest idea where she was I would persuade her to turn herself in or call someone. If you’re looking for Valerie McDonald, I haven’t the foggiest,” lied Thompson<sup>8</sup>, adding that someone else in the building had seen Valerie “packing up her stuff” the day after she supposedly went missing.

We now know this wasn’t true.

In 1991, hunters in a remote part of Washington state, just south of the Canadian border, stumbled across a human skull wedged under a log in the Kettle River floodplain. Investigators soon found a woman’s upper torso as well, but no legs. The badly decomposed remains gave up few clues, and detectives could only enter the dental records into the system and hope for a match.

They didn’t get one. For nine years Valerie McDonald’s bones languished in a storage box labelled “Jane Doe”, while killer John Abbott was beginning his new life in New Zealand.

The body find fell within the jurisdiction of Ferry County sheriff Pete Warner, an ex-pat Australian who’s been head of law enforcement in these parts since the early 1990s. His West Coast twang is rudely offset by an Ocker “Maaate” as he takes the phone call from New Zealand. “I’m a transplanted Aussie here mate,”

he insists. The mystery in his patch had always grated with him, and he was as surprised as anyone else when his department received a call in 2000 to say CAPMI – California’s state autopsy records system – had finally delivered a real name for Jane Doe: Valerie McDonald.

“We found the remains, but it took years to get an ID,” recalls Sheriff Warner. The reason for the delay? A computer operator at the state database had mis-keyed dental record information. But why didn’t searchers ever find Valerie’s lower body? Mother Dee Dee Kouns believes she knows the answer.

“Now at this river up in Ferry County where Valerie’s body was dumped, when the snow melts every year they have raging floods. It’s just a little calm creek normally, but when it’s flooding down from the mountains it is raging. Everybody – the Mounties and everybody who talked to us – believed they’d placed Valerie in

**{ In 1991, hunters in a remote part of Washington state, just south of the Canadian border, stumbled across a human skull wedged under a log in the Kettle River floodplain**







**LEFT:** Abbott's fellow con, Phillip Arthur Thompson, after being convicted of murder at his 2008 trial. **ABOVE:** The historic buildings in Waverley, north of Wanganui, now owned by John Gordon Abbott

the river with her feet in the cement tub, and then she was there from November until the floods in early spring. Her body eventually tore loose from her legs and was swept out onto that flood plain.

"Then it was all in pieces. Her skull was intact. She had not been shot or had her skull smashed, but there were pieces of her hands, her arms, her upper arms, her ribs, her pelvic bones, but everything of her hips down were gone. Not any part of them there. And I believe they're still up there in that river," she says quietly.

One thing she does know is that John Gordon Abbott, property developer of Wanganui, Waverley and Patea, is the man who disposed of Valerie's body. Dee Dee knows this because the Mounties gave her 24 hours' access to the documents they'd seized from Abbott's apartment in British Columbia.

"Abbott had kept a diary that matched

up with many of the crimes in this information. It also mentioned him laying my daughter in the river. He wrote about throwing her in, calling her 'The Ice Maiden...she was dead cold'."

Dee Dee Kouns has a copy of that diary. In fact, she says, she and her husband came away from their visit to the Mounties with "three suitcases full of copies of documents" belonging to Abbott.

"The Canadian Mounties did not get one single moment of help or attention to anything they were trying to tell the US. The Mounties tried to let California know they had all these documents, but no one wanted it."

It appears the involvement of Thompson and Abbott in some kind of master plot to steal millions from major banks and then use the money in a weapons for drugs deal with Contra rebels in Central America

threatened to become an international incident. Far better to dump it in Canada's lap and run as far away as possible.

**P**roof that this was probably the case came when Dee Dee and her husband tracked a lead back to an FBI agent. "He looked really flustered when we confronted him," she says, "ushering us into his office and then he sat in the guest chair while Bob sat in his chair. He told us probably more than he should have, that they had used Phillip Thompson on inquiries in the past.

"The next thing we know Frank McCoy [the head of the San Francisco Police Department investigation into Valerie's disappearance] is publicly screaming at us in the streets of San Francisco, he was so angry at us for having visited the FBI because apparently he got blamed for leaking details



of their involvement with Thompson, but he hadn't – we'd got it from another source."

For the FBI to have been furious that their involvement with a murderer had been exposed, and to blame the SFPD, clearly shows the SFPD knew about Thompson's black ops for the CIA and FBI and may explain why the police dragged their heels on investigating Valerie's murder.

**T**here was more evidence of this when Detective Armond Pelisetti – the cop who'd originally been reluctant to investigate Valerie's disappearance – told Dee Dee on another occasion she was compromising a bigger investigation:

"You're screwing up something that a guy's been working on for three years! Just get out, and go home!"

When *HIS/HERS* suggests to Dee Dee Kouns that her daughter's murder investigation appears to have fallen through the cracks, she snorts derisively.

"Fallen between the cracks? That's putting it mildly. May I remind you that Abbott was cellmates on two different occasions, a long time partner, of Phillip Arthur Thompson – who the FBI and CIA were using as an informant. His codename within the FBI was 'JASON SMITH' and there was actually an effort to hinder Val's murder investigation rather than help it. The Canadian police were stonewalled when they tried to get information on these men. It wasn't just the usual 'slip between the cracks'."

So when we break the news that *Investigate HIS/HERS* magazine has located Abbott in New Zealand, where he's been since at least 1993, Dee Dee's reaction is "Wow. 1993? Wow."

"Last we heard he was living in Japan," adds Sheriff Pete Warner in Washington state, his ears pricking up when we offer to email through a recent photo of Abbott.

"I'm just bringing up the picture you sent now. Yeah, that looks like him alright. There's a few years of age on him now. The photo I'm looking at from 1979, he has a beard and long hair from those days. That's him though, there's no doubt in my mind. What amazes me though is how the hell he was allowed to live in



NZ. The New Zealand government, don't they do background checks?"

It's a fair question, but the answer appears to be simple. Abbott held dual passports. He was a convicted felon in the US. Served jail time in Canada for shooting a cop, but was deported to England where he had no criminal record. Apart from the New Zealand Immigration card that all passengers fill out, there was no other way in the early 1990s of knowing about his background. He clearly lied on his card, and any background check with British authorities would have turned up nothing. Back then, Google, and indeed the internet as we now know it, did not exist.

One South Taranaki woman who's dealt with Abbott in New Zealand says she isn't surprised to hear he's a killer.

"My staff, on more than one occasion, have told me they find him 'creepy', and that they felt his girls [daughters] were,

how should I put it...they felt he had a very unusual relationship with his girls. They were very cowed down, even for girls coming from Japan. They seemed terrified to be too close to him but terrified to get too far away from him because of his reaction. My staff were deeply uncomfortable for those girls."

In a cruel twist of fate, just after we conducted this interview, the area of Japan where Abbott's family are based – Ibaraki prefecture – was devastated by the tsunami and earthquake. It is not known whether Abbott's Japanese wife and daughters survived the tragedy. Abbott himself was in Australia at the time of the quake.

"He's a professor at a university north of Tokyo," confirms one of Portland, Oregon's Deputy District Attorneys, Norm Frink, "or he was. I can't remember off the top of my head but its name began with a 'T.'" In fact, Abbott still is a lec-



Masaaki Kureha	Human Geography, Regional C
Yoshito Takasaki	Development Economics, Envi
Kazuto Suzuki	International Relations, Interna
Mari Minowa	International Development, Edu
Masami Ishida*	Economics of Southeast Asia
Marianne Kimura*	Comparative Literature
<b>John G. Abbott*</b>	<b>American History, Japanese H</b>
Cecilia Ikeguchi*	Applied Linguistics, Communio
Olivier, Ammour-Mayeur	Comparative Literature, Cinem
Kohichi Obata*	International relations
Aki Tokumaru	Folklore
Hisao Sekine	Cultural Anthropology
Louis, Augustine-Jean	Economics of East Asia
Timur Dadabaev	International Relations
Hussain, MD Akbar*	Social Anthropolgy, Developm

against the killer in their midst would be something.

Her biggest wish is that the FBI, after 30 years, might be prepared to step in and seek Abbott's extradition from New Zealand:

"I would like John Abbott charged with my daughter's murder. He's culpable. He was involved in everything from the kidnap to disposing of her body. Under United States law that would make him responsible for murder, not just abuse of a corpse."

By the time you read this, fugitive millionaire John Gordon Abbott should either have been already picked up by police in New Zealand, or detained at the border as he tried to re-enter the country from Japan or Australia. *HIS/HERS* can confirm he did not declare his convictions when he first entered New Zealand. If he is out of the country, he will never get back in as a free man, and knowing what they now know about his previous criminal record he may be a wanted man in Australia and elsewhere for making false immigration declarations as well.

With rumours of his past beginning to filter via gossip through his local community in NZ even before *HIS/HERS* became involved, Abbott posed a risk to any of his neighbours if he had become aware of those rumours. Now, that's no longer a problem.

Abbott is fast running out of places to hide.

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## In fact, Abbott still is a lecturer there – documents online show him teaching American History and Japanese History at Tsukuba University in Ibaraki prefecture as recently as 2009

ture there – documents online show him teaching American History and Japanese History at Tsukuba University in Ibaraki prefecture as recently as 2009, about an hour's drive north of Tokyo. But how did he manage to settle in Japan?

"We had some contact with the authorities in Japan, through the FBI, and my recollection was – because we were wondering the same thing about his immigration status there – and my recollection was that the authorities advised us he was in compliance with the law there. He was married to a Japanese national and had children there with her," says Frink.

"So although we became aware that he was in Japan and that he had property in New Zealand, that was the end of it because there was not the ability to criminally prosecute him," says Frink. That's because the District Attorney's office in Oregon state could not prove that any part of the murder or disposal of the body had definitely taken

place in Oregon. In short, they lacked jurisdiction.

With San Francisco Police Department unwilling to go after Abbott despite the murder probably taking place in their city, and Ferry County law enforcement in Washington state not having the budget for an international murder inquiry despite the body being found there, it's difficult to see Abbott ever serving time for Valerie McDonald's murder.

There is still an opportunity for justice however. Abbott could be arrested under New Zealand law and charged with making a false immigration declaration. The maximum penalty, if a judge chooses to apply it to a would-be cop killer, convicted armed robber and suspected double-murderer who slunk into this country under false pretences, is seven years' jail and a \$100,000 fine. It's nowhere near the possible death penalty John Abbott would have faced if he'd been brought to trial in California, but for Dee Dee Kouns seeing NZ take action