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JAILHOUSE INTERVIEW: BOBBY BEAUSOLEIL

THE MANSON FAMILY HEARTTHROB WHO COMMITTED THE FIRST MANSON MURDER SETS THE RECORD STRAIGHT

by Ann Louise Bardach

July 25th, 1969: A merciless sun had been beating down on an abandoned ranch where Westerns had once been filmed, off in the dusty burbs east of Los Angeles where Bobby Beausoleil, a slim, handsome 21year old musician, accompanied by two young women with long unruly manes of hair, headed west, with all four windows open. When he finally made it to the Pacific Coast Highway, he was tempted to stop for a swim. But Beausoleil had important business to attend to. His destination that afternoon was the rustic hippie enclave of Topanga Canyon, just south of Malibu, and the home of Gary Hinman.

Beausoleil had spent the previous evening with his friend Charlie Manson at Manson's desert spread, the Spahn Ranch. It was at the ranch that Beausoleil claims he delivered 1000 tabs of Hinman's home-manufactured mescaline to Manson's buddy, Danny DeCarlo, who also served as club treasurer for the motorcycle gang, the Straight Satans. Several hours later, according to Beausoleil, the bikers reported back that the substance was actually strychnine and demanded their money back - pronto.

Beausoleil said he decided to confront Hinman to get the cash returned the next day. Two of Manson's girlfriends asked Beausoleil if they could come along for the ride because "they liked Gary Hinman." Their names were Mary Brunner and Susan "Sadie" Atkins.

Gary Hinman, had been a hippie renaissance figure in the '60s: a Ph.D. candidate in Sociology at U.C.L.A., a political activist, Zen Buddhist devotee, a musician, a piano teacher, and a drug dealer with a mescaline factory tucked away in his basement.

On July 31st, Gary Hinman was found dead in his home. He had been stabbed twice in the heart and badly slashed across the left side of his face. His house had been ransacked and both of his cars were missing. Scrawled on the wall in Hinman's blood was the macabre epithet, "*Political Piggy*." The police, with no leads in the case, were resigned to tagging the crime just another unsolved hippie weirdo murder in Los Angeles.

On August 5th, the California Highway Patrol found Beausoleil napping in the rear of Hinman's Fiat station wagon near San Luis Obispo. Beausoleil told the police that the car had broken down while he was driving to San Francisco. Beausoleil didn't have a driver's license—only some false ID and a sheath knife attached to his belt. It wasn't long before Robert Kenneth Beausoleil was booked for the murder of Gary Hinman.

Within three days of Beausoleil's arrest, all the occupants of the Sharon Tate and La Bianca homes were brutally slaughtered. Though blood writing on the walls was common to all three murder sites ("*Pig*" on the Tate wall and "*Death to the Pigs*" on the La Bianca refrigerator), investigators failed to make the link. According to Beausoleil, this came as something of a shock to the Manson group who had hoped that the authorities would assume the same killer responsible for all three homicidal sprees, and then release Beausoleil. Having been in jail during the Tate-La Bianca killings, he was therefore not the Hinman killer, was the lunatic logic of the Manson family.

Beausoleil's first trial in November, 1969 ended in a hung jury. Chances are he would have been acquitted had the police not picked up the erstwhile Danny DeCarlo who offered to turn state's evidence against Beausoleil in exchange for immunity on nearly a dozen charges from dope dealing to gun smuggling to car theft. Indeed, DeCarlo arrived at the Beausoleil trial after both sides had already rested. Notwithstanding protests from the defense, the court permitted the testimony of DeCarlo who fingered not only Beausoleil as the Hinman killer but also a man whose name had never surfaced during the trial - Charlie Manson.

It was an inauspicious day for Beausoleil, whose second trial came in March, 1970, followed months of media saturation of the Manson family. The prosecution asked for the death penalty and got it, with a conviction for 1st degree murder. Beausoleil was angry and bitter in his closing remarks: "You can't judge me. There is no possible way to feel any remorse," he declared before feebly quoting Bob Dylan, "Only God can judge me and God is on my side."

For more than ten years, Beausoleil has proclaimed his innocence in the murder of Gary Hinman. However, in the summer of 1980 he granted this reporter an interview at Deuel Vocational Institute, commonly known as Tracy Prison. For the first time, Beausoleil admitted his guilt in the murder and related what he claims were the actual events, motives and relationships within the Manson family.

Bobby Beausoleil has now been in jail for almost 12 years. He escaped the death penalty 26 months after being incarcerated when California voters repealed the death penalty (it was reinstated a few years later but his sentence was commuted to life).

Beausoleil was born in 1948, the eldest of a Catholic working class family from Santa Barbara. His father worked as a milkman for twenty years for Arden Farms before stepping up to a managerial position. From age 12, he was in and out of small-time trouble such as, he says, "walking my dog without a leash, stolen Christmas tree

ornaments, bomb scares, hitchhiking on the freeway"; all of which landed him a one year stay as Las Priestas reform school when he was 15. Shortly thereafter, he drifted down to Los Angeles where he played music and joined a series of hippie bands (The Weeds, Grassroots, Love) and was featured in some early porn classics, notably *Ramrod* and *The Tennis Shoe Indian Classic*.

In the mid 60s he moved in with author/filmmaker Kenneth Anger in an apartment above the Russian Consulate in San Francisco. Theirs was a tumultuous relationship, personally and professionally. Anger had chosen Beausoleil to play Lucifer in the sequel to his underground classic, *Scorpio Rising*, titled *Lucifer Rising*. (The film was released ten years later, with a film score composed by Beausoleil composed and recorded at Tracy Prison.) After a fight with Anger, Beausoleil stole both Anger's film and his car and headed for Los Angeles. Anger maintains that following a curse he put on Beausoleil, the car broke down outside the Spahn Ranch. From the film's remnants, Anger made another film, *Invocation of My Demon Brother*, about Beausoleil and his flight to LA. The film plays occasionally at art movie theaters. Since his conviction for murder, Anger has once again befriended Beausoleil.

Although nicknamed "Cupid" during his teen years, Beausoleil has adopted a Mephistophelean image while behind bars. He sports a full torso of tattoos. While flesh painting is not uncommon in jail, the designs and scope of his tattoos are a rarity. Emblazoned across his chest in large dark letters is LUCIFER. It has taken nine years to decorate his body with cartoon-like nymphets, he said, "done with ink and a broken guitar string."

Beausoleil's incarceration has done little to dampen the ardor of several young California girls. In early 1980, he married a 21 year old blond devotee. Learning of Beausoleil's predilection for "more than one," as he put it, she is presently seeking an annulment.

In jail, he is a busy man, painting his erotic drawings (some have been published in *Puritan* magazine), working in the prison video room, and writing music for his prison ensemble, *The Freedom Orchestra*.

Notwithstanding some gray hairs in his goatee, Beausoleil appears fit and well adjusted to prison rigors. Indeed, one suspects that he would thrive in virtually any environment.

ALB: When and how did you meet Charlie Manson?

BB: Listen, one thing that you should establish about me—I was not then nor am I now a member of the Manson family. There never was a Manson family. That didn't happen until everybody got busted. There were a bunch of girls, a few guys, a couple of ex-cons, a bunch of kids, some runaways with no support from home, and they were living in a garbage dump called the Spahn Ranch.

ALB: When did you first meet Manson?

BB: I met him shortly after he got out of prison. I think he had been out ten months or so. This was '66, I believe. Living in Topanga Canyon.

ALB: Were you living at Gary Hinman's at the time?

BB: No, I wasn't living with Gary. I had stayed with him previous to that. I joined a band, *The Milky Way*, that Charlie was in. That's how I met him. He was a very talented songwriter good musician, lyrically, just excellent. He was somebody with an incredibly intense, vivid, expanded imagination because of all the time he's done.

ALB: Was his imagination the "magic" that his people attributed to him?

BB: Charlie Manson grew up in a tomb. To describe his personality, you have to understand that aspect. Like I've been in a state of incubation for a decade. For Charlie, it was more than a decade. He had been locked up since he was a little kid, I mean locked up *all the time*. I think his first commitment to a prison environment was at 13 years old in West Virginia and his life before that was foster homes and orphanages. When he got out at 33, it was the first time he ever had anybody to care about him.

ALB: Did he really care about his "Family" or were they disposable units?

BB: That was the only family he ever had, the only people who ever really cared about him and showed it. Let me explain this: Charlie made a commitment that he would be willing to die for his family. And when you make this commitment, it's very easy to fall into the trap of: "I would be willing to *kill* for the family."

ALB: Did he have a hypnotic effect on certain people?

BB: I never thought of him that way. I suppose with some people he did.

ALB: Some say that the girls looked up to Manson, but that Manson looked up to you. And Kenneth Anger once said that you and Manson had a homosexual relationship.

BB: I would say he was attracted to me, but not.... He's not homosexual at all. Ken [Anger] was indulging in wishful thinking, daydreaming. That idea came first from Capote's interview of Andy Warhol in *Rolling Stone* magazine. And, of course that was Andy Warhol's wishful thinking. Ken just picked it up. It was good gay gossip [laughs] Truman Capote just wants to get fucked in the ass and killed. There's never been any homosexual relationship between me and Charlie Manson.

ALB: Well, it's certainly not uncommon in prison.

BB: Yeah, I'm sure he's fucked a few fat butt boys, yeah. So have I. In that respect, maybe I'm homosexual, you know? But it's a different kind of thing.

ALB: What else did you and Manson do together?

BB: Made love to women once in a while.

ALB: How long did you know Manson?

BB: About three years.

ALB: What were some of the things that you did together?

BB: Oh, mostly played music. And a million crazy things that a lot of crazy guys do together. One time Charlie and I drove two trucks through Death Valley, just for the hell of it. We didn't drag race. We just wanted to ride through that kind of terrain. We took two 4-wheel drive Army surplus power wagons. He had his group up in the desert. It took two days. We left the trucks, ate their beans and rice, stayed a couple of days. We wanted to hellraise and it was a blast.

ALB: Did Manson have many male friends?

BB: A few. Charles Manson was lonely. He used his women to attract a man because he liked having other men around to do "men things" with. What man couldn't be attracted by having the opportunity to go to bed with several women? To cater to his every fantasy, whatever. I didn't have that attraction to that group. I didn't need it. His women could not attract me. *He* could attract me because I admired his creativity.

ALB: Then, you were indifferent to Charlie's girls?

BB: Oh no. I wouldn't say that. Some of the girls were awfully cute, and I went to bed with some of them. But, it was never because I needed that. I never lacked having women around me.

ALB: Did Manson really care or like women?

BB: Oh, Charlie loved women. He showed them plenty of respect. He treated those women better than most men ever treat their women.

ALB: Were there many orgies and group sex events?

BB: Once in a while. They were beautiful. Usually ten women, at least. And three or four men.

ALB: When did you first meet Gary Hinman?

BB: I guess about six or eight months after I came down (to L.A.) from San Francisco.

ALB: That was in 1966 and he invited you to stay at his home?

BB: Yeah. He had a two level house and I stayed in the basement for two or three weeks. I never knew the man very well. He was a recluse.

ALB: But you did live with him?

BB: A very short while. He gave me the loan of his basement, and he was very rarely home. Gary Hinman was not somebody you could be close with. I was never a close friend of Gary Hinman's. He was just somebody that I knew among a crowd of people in Topanga Canyon. His ideologies were very different from mine. He was into communism and all that sort of thing. I couldn't relate to that at all. He was a political science major with a piano on the side for some kind of an income.

ALB: Did you play music with him?

BB: I did a little work with Gary. I didn't know how to read or write music. He gave me a few basic lessons on how to notate.

ALB: Why did you go to Gary Hinman's home on July 25th, 1969?

BB: I didn't go there with the intention of killing Gary. If I was going to kill him, I wouldn't have taken the girls (Mary Brunner and Susan Atkins). I was going there for one purpose only, which was to collect \$1000 that I had already turned over to him, that didn't belong to me.

ALB: When had you given him the \$1000?

BB: The night before.

ALB: You paid Hinman \$1000 for 1000 tabs of mescaline and then returned to the Spahn Ranch?

BB: Right. The whole transaction with the Straight Satans motorcycle club took place at Spahn's Ranch. There were a few Satan Slavers hanging out there as well. The Straight Satans took the mescaline back to the motorcycle club at Venice where they were intending to party. They were really mad about it.

ALB: How did you know that it was strychnine instead of mescaline in such a short time? If you didn't try or test the drug yourself, how could you be certain that it

was bogus or poison?

BB: I don't think that those guys would have lied to me. They wouldn't have been *that* mad.

ALB: How long had you and Hinman been doing these transactions?

BB: Very rarely. I just happened to know that he had something. I was trying to be a nice guy, trying to be in with the fellows, trying to impress somebody.

AB: Impress the bikers?

BB: They represented to me an element of freedom in America. On the road, and in their lifestyle, the freedom that they express with each other. I felt so desperate in this situation, being put in a cross with the motorcycle club. Naturally, they are going to be mad at me—not at him. They didn't even know him. I'm the one who took their money and brought back this mescaline, *supposed* mescaline. I'm in a helluva bind. If I don't give them something, who knows about their plans.

ALB: Why did you bring Susan Atkins and Mary Brunner to the Hinman house?

BB: Because they were friends of Gary Hinman. Mary Brunner was close to him because she stayed with him for a while. She was as close as anybody could be with him. The girls didn't even know what was going on. They just wanted to go party and see him. No one was going there with any intention of killing Gary Hinman.

ALB: In neither of your two trials, nor in Ed Sanders' or Bugliosi's books, is there any mention of the Hinman murder stemming from a drug burn.

BB: I never testified about it. I never told anybody. I didn't know how to deal with it. What happened to me that day was the culmination of a whole lot of pressures that had been on me for several years.

ALB: Alright. You arrived at Hinman's and asked for your money back?

BB: I demanded it. I wasn't going to take no for an answer. I had a motorcycle band on my back.

ALB: And Hinman refused to return the money?

BB: Right. I was carrying a knife in a sheath at that time, more for utility than anything else. I had been wearing a knife for three to four years prior to that because I was always on the road.

ALB: Who had the gun?

BB: I gave the gun to Susan Atkins. We were sitting at the kitchen table. I was looking for something worth \$1000 that I could take back to these people. "If he moves," I said, "shoot him." She wasn't going to shoot him. I was right about that. But he decided to be a hero and dove at the gun. And she's yelling and screaming, "He's got the gun, he's got the gun." Oh God. We had a hell of a night. I wasn't going to let him get the gun.

ALB: How long were you in Hinman's house?

BB: A little less than 24 hours. It got dark again.

ALB: When you killed Hinman, were you high on anything?

BB: No. Nothing. I think I had a glass of wine at Gary's that night.

ALB: It was stated at your trial that Charlie Manson made an entrance at the Hinman home, sometime during the period when you were there. Didn't Manson show up at one point?

BB: No, no, no. You see the Sheriff's Homicide Department wanted to get Manson involved in my case, which was very difficult because Manson was not *involved*.

ALB: Both prosecutor/author Vincent Bugliosi and Ed Sanders (in his book *The Family*) maintained that Charlie Manson came to Hinman's during the night and slashed off Hinman's ear with his knife. Now you say that you *alone* cut his face and killed him.

BB: Yeah, yeah. That was the prosecution's theory because they wanted to get Manson into the act (laughs). They tried every trick in the book and I'll tell you why. The Tate-La Bianca murders fell under the jurisdiction of the Los Angeles Police Department. However, the Shorty Shea and Gary Hinman murders both came into the jurisdiction of the Sheriff's Department (LASO). And the Sheriff's Dept. was in competition. Actually Hinman's ear was never gone, never cut off. It was more his cheek sliced, actually, a cut on his cheek that intersected the edge of his ear. That slash across his face occurred the night before he died in the fight over the gun.

ALB: If you had no intention of killing Hinman, why did you bring a 9 mm Radon pistol?

BB: I borrowed it from Bruce Davis. I didn't actually ask him. It was around (the Spahn Ranch). I just borrowed it. I didn't even know how to use the damn thing.

ALB: But you did fire a shot that missed Hinman.

BB: Struggling with Gary Hinman for the gun, it went off in the kitchen. [The bullet]

went through the sink. That was the only time it was fired. I knew so little about operating this gun that after it went off and not knowing that it was a semi-automatic, I cocked the gun which jammed it. I didn't know that it wouldn't fire again without removing the clip and the shell.

ALB: Did Gary Hinman bleed to death?

BB: No, no, no. Nobody was killing him until the last minute.

ALB: I think that's at odds with the coroner's report. The prosecution at your trial charged there was torture involved.

BB: There had been some suggestion that I tortured him, a theory used by the district attorney to justify a 1st degree conviction, a felony murder. District Attorney, Burton Katz, with a red Cadillac, pitted against a paunchy Jewish public defender [Leon Salter].

ALB: You're saying that you attacked Hinman with the knife after a struggle over the gun.

BB: Right. And I sewed up his ear too, by the way, with dental floss.

ALB: That was mighty white of you.

BB: Oh, stop being sarcastic. We had a helluva fight. I wasn't going to let him get the gun.

ALB: When did you decide to kill Hinman? And why?

BB: Gary Hinman would not have died if he had not told me that he was going to blow the whistle as soon as I was gone.

ALB: Blow the whistle to whom?

BB: He told me that he was going to the police [and tell them] that I had come and assaulted him to get money from him. I had my back against the wall. He said, "I'm going to tell the police what you did to me." Up until that point I had assumed that everything was square between us. This guy is a drug dealer. He's playing the game. And if you're going to dance, you've got to pay the fiddler. You burn somebody, that's the way it is. You expect somebody to knock on your door to collect. I figured we were straight. He had signed over the pink slips of his two cars to me. They were pieces of junk but they were worth between them, perhaps one thousand dollars. I figured that I'd give these cars to the motorcycle club, hoping they would accept them in return for their \$1000, and get myself out of my bind with them. The only reason that I stayed over was so that I wouldn't be seen driving his beat-up VW van during the daylight.

ALB: Did you ever call the Spahn Ranch during this period?

BB: Yes, I did and talked to a guy named Bruce [Davis]. I said, "Come over and pick up a car."

He did. He came over and picked up the car.

ALB: Was this after you had killed Hinman?

BB: No. At the time that Bruce Davis was coming over to pick up the car, everything between Gary and I was straight. Bruce came to the house and stayed just long enough to pick up the car. He didn't even come inside. He picked up the car keys and somebody who was with him—it was more than likely Elda who was tight with Bruce—drove the car back that he came in. That was Bruce Davis' *only involvement*. He had no idea what was going on.

AB: Where is he now?

BB: He's in Folsom Prison.

ALB: For the murder of Hinman...

BB: Yeah and they tied him up with the Shorty Shea thing. [Stuntman Shorty Shea who lived at the Spahn Ranch prior to his murder].

ALB: How did Gary Hinman die?

BB: Stabbed in the heart twice. He died immediately. He had signed over both pink slips to me and I figured that we were square. One car had already been picked up, and I was going to drive the other. So I stayed over and the next evening he tells me, "I'm sending you to prison for assault," or whatever. I thought, well, here goes my life. My freedom is my life. The slash on his face is pretty bad. I didn't really know what to do. Hinman would have a scar on his face now for the rest of his life. He was a lot more upstanding than me. He's a homeowner and so forth, a college student. I'm at a loss trying to resolve this situation, where we can go from there and not get in each other's way. And it was a stupid decision. I should have taken my chances with whatever he was going to do.

ALB: Did Susan Atkins and Mary Brunner simply stand around and watch you kill Hinman?

BB: Well, no one wanted to kill him. They had just come along for the ride.

ALB: What did the girls do?

BB: They didn't know what to do. He was closer to them than he was to me. Susan Atkins seemed to think, "Oh, what fun, how interesting." Mary Brunner was just scared to death. Mary Brunner just faded into the woodwork. She was a librarian. Susan Atkins

is now a Jesus freak in jail. She gave five different testimonies and in one of them, she claimed that *she* killed Hinman. (laughs).

ALB: Who actually wrote *Political Piggy* on the wall in Hinman's blood?

BB: I didn't, but I had it written. Well, it was my idea to do it. Susan Atkins was on that wall. The whole thing was to take the heat off the trail. Gary Hinman was into his revolutionary communism. His whole living room was a library of Communist literature. I figured I'd make it look like one of his cohorts, you know.

AB: Make it look like a Black Panther killing?

BB: I wasn't thinking about blacks necessarily.

ALB: That was Manson's trip?

BB: It's never really been his trip. I mean, he's from the South. West Virginia. Since he's been in, he gets along with blacks better than anybody.

ALB: When you returned to the Spahn Ranch and returned the jammed gun to Bruce Davis, did you tell him that you had killed Gary Hinman?

BB: I didn't talk to anybody about it. But Susan Atkins has a motor mouth. She was the one, *not me*, that Danny DeCarlo had the conversation with. The district attorney and Danny DeCarlo were drinking buddies and that is how he [DeCarlo] got the two felony charges and a federal gun charge dropped in return for his testimony.

ALB: If Hinman died immediately as you say, why did Susan Atkins run back inside the house and suffocate him?

BB: It was death gasps. He was dead but there are spasms that people go through. What do they call it? The death rattle. I mean it's a normal thing that happens. She [Atkins] ran back into the house and laid a pillow over his face to muffle the sound. There was no suffocating. He was dead.

ALB: Was this the first time that you had ever killed somebody?

BB: The first and only time. I'm not ordinarily violence prone. I've been in some situations here (in prison) where I've had to stand up for myself, but I've never had any preoccupation with violence.

ALB: Were you frightened after you killed Hinman?

BB: It's hard to say. You go through a lot of things. Guilt. Anxiety over getting busted.

ALB: Were you surprised that it took a week before you were caught?

BB: No. I thought the body would be discovered later than it was because the cars were gone and, by all appearances, Hinman was gone too. The heat of the summer and de-composure attracted flies and some attention. The body was found five days later.

ALB: And when you were caught driving his car, you had some of his blood on you. True?

BB: No. Well, in a matter of speaking. I wasn't wearing the clothes I was wearing then. There were a couple of spots and they [forensic] couldn't even tell if it was animal blood. It was probably not Gary Hinman's blood.

ALB: Whose blood could it have been?

BB: More than likely it was my own. I have a tendency to cut myself. I work with my hands a lot.

ALB: In light of the murder you had committed only a week before, it doesn't appear that you were taking precautions against getting caught. Driving a dead man's car, for instance.

BB: I'm not sure that I was trying so desperately to prevent my apprehension. I was kind of devastated by what I had done. I drove the car off on the pretense of ditching it somewhere. I picked up some hitchhikers and took them to where they were going and just continued north. In retrospect, it was definitely a stupid move.

ALB: What are your thoughts about Gary Hinman now? Are you still bitter?

BB: No. I don't begrudge anything that happened. Gary Hinman was as stupid as me. If he was going to do something like that, he should never have told me. It was done and finished. He had a thin cut on his cheek. It would have healed and he would have had a thin line to show for it. Well, he burned somebody. He sold some drugs that would have killed people.

ALB: What was your biggest mistake that night? and at your trials?

BB: My biggest mistake was simply in killing Gary Hinman. I told the judge that I didn't feel any remorse because I wouldn't give him that satisfaction. That's the only reason I told him that. As far as I'm concerned that man [Judge John Shea] is a helluva lot more diabolical than Charlie Manson ever was.

But the thing is I've felt a great deal of remorse within me. I think I wanted to pay for Gary Hinman's death. I think I owed Gary that. I've worshipped life my whole life. What's heartbreaking to me more than anything else is that killing Gary Hinman has

negated all of my creative efforts. The world doesn't concentrate on anything other than that one mistake I made in my life. And it was a big mistake. You can't give a life back.

ALB: Did it ever occur to you to turn state's evidence or offer your hunch on who committed the Tate-La Bianca murders in exchange for having the Hinman charge dropped?

BB: Yes, But there's no future...

ALB: For a snitch?

BB: Not to me. I wouldn't be able to.

AB: Do you still get letters from [Manson] family members?

BB: I've gotten a few from Squeaky [Fromme]. Squeaky and Sandra Goode are trying to hold together the illusion of this Manson family thing. They're into this fanatical religion hype.

ALB: What do they ask you to do?

BB: They just preach. I don't know why. I can't relate to that.

ALB: Do you have any letters from Manson?

BB: Oh, heavens yes.

ALB: When was the last time you heard from him?

BB: Probably about eight years ago.

ALB: Have you heard from your old girlfriend Kitty Leutsinger who testified against you when she was pregnant?

BB: Not for many, many years. The last time I heard she was living with a junkie in Santa Cruz.

ALB: How old is your child?

BB: A girl. She's eleven now and lives with her grandparents. Kitty's.

ALB: Who was killed first? When did the murder sprees begin?

BB: Gary Hinman was killed before anybody was killed. Before that, nobody had any real plans of killing anybody, but when it happened...

ALB: It became contagious?

BB: Yeah, sort of.

ALB: You're saying then that the Hinman murder was almost a catalyst for mass killing.

BB: I think it did have some kind of triggering effect. Yes.

ALB: As a consequence, the people in the Tate and La Bianca homes were killed. Did you have any notice that they were going to be killed?

BB: No, nothing at all. When it happened, I knew who had done it. I was fairly certain.

ALB: What made you so certain? Because you knew that the Tate house used to be Terry Melcher's? Did they think they would find Terry Melcher?

BB: Yeah, I would assume. Yeah. That's what I've heard.

ALB: And the style of the murders was a grotesque exaggeration of the way you killed Gary Hinman. More blood writing on the wall, the way you did it. It's been said that the Tate-La Bianca murders were done to try to spring you from jail. An attempt to prove that they were all connected by a consistent signature of writing on the walls with the victim's blood. Hence, if you were in jail during the Tate-La Biancas and they were done by the same person who killed Hinman, their crazy logic was that the police would have to release you?

BB: I do believe there was something to that, yes, because of the way the murders were made to look. They [Tate-La Biancas] were a few days after I was arrested. That was the 9th [August 9, 1969]. I don't think that whoever's idea it was to commit these murders would have been able to get the participation of those involved unless there had been this noble concept.

ALB: Meaning freeing Bobby from jail?

BB: Gary Hinman had his own personal relationship with the so-called Manson Family and perhaps they interpreted the thing that I had defended them from him, as well as myself.

ALB: Did that enter your mind when you killed him, that he could squeal on the Family?

BB: It's not that I did that, but whether *they* thought I had intended that. You've got to understand that these people were not totally without some kind of

scruples. *They* had to have some kind of reason to justify it in their own minds, even if the justification was twisted and bizarre.

ALB: Why would your incarceration be such a threat or loss to them?

BB: I believe that it led to a situation in which Charlie and the others, who had made similar commitments to each other, were forced into a situation of acting upon their commitment. I don't think it was because of Charlie Manson's fondness for me, necessarily. I think that this was a justification—something that would give the whole episode a more noble cause than just going out to kill some people. This was 1969. "Kill your Parents," Jerry Rubin and all of that. There was a lot of doomsday talk around at that time when everybody was pretty well frustrated and not knowing what to do and still having some romantic vision of revolution.

What the exact motives were I can't really say. It wasn't a plot by The Beatles' records and it was not the "I was hypnotized" concept of Susan Atkins. I think it falls back to a basic commitment that Charlie made with people. The striking out was very senseless. I've seen it a lot in here, where people are so desperate that they really don't know who to strike out at. It was more that sort of thing than something that was sat down and plotted out.

ALB: How accurate are the descriptions of Manson and the family in Bugliosi's *Helter Skelter* and Ed Sanders' *The Family*?

BB: They are both so pathetic because neither one took the proper approach to begin to understand what happened. Everything gets lost in blood and guts, devil worship, all that stuff that never went on. This satanic crap and brainwave master never went on. These things were taken out of light-hearted conversations. There is truth in all these books. There are facts. Period.

ALB: Where did the writers go wrong?

BB: They were never in a situation where they experienced that kind of desperation.

ALB: Describe that kind of desperation.

BB: The desperation which leads somebody to go out and almost...

ALB: Kill?

BB: Yeah. Kill crazily. Just throw away their lives and murder people.

ALB: What created this so-called desperation?

BB: They were a bunch of people with their backs against the wall. This wasn't mere discontent. This was lunacy. At least in their minds, they were at the end corner of the

world. They couldn't travel any more together without a caravan of law enforcement people behind them. The only place left to go was the desert. They were at the end of the edge of the world and they were scared to death of being pushed off the edge. The desert is death. They wound up in Death Valley trying to live off the bugs.

ALB: How do you think Manson has held up over the last decade of virtual solitary confinement? [In 1980, Vacaville Prison released Manson from solitary]

BB: I don't know if he's burnt out. From what I've heard, the pressures have taken their toll. All this time he's been in protective custody. Some of these guys kill people for real weird reasons, just to see what it's like. Some kind of peer pressure or peer prestige. There's a lot of sickness in prisons. It's an environment that grows this ugly fear mentality, like a culture dish of bacteria.

ALB: Have you changed much being in jail for 11 years? Do you think you've learned anything?

BB: Oh, I've learned a lot. Where do I begin? I've got my act together pretty well. I was a lame kid when I came in and when I come out I'm not going to be any lame kid. They don't have to worry about me being a troublemaker because I've got enough talent. Believe me, it's been hell, but experiences like this temper you. I've used it. ■

Sidebar: BEAUSOLEIL ON CAPOTE

BB: There was a Truman Capote interview that took place in 1973, a television interview by CBS. It was going to be a series, but I think that a one hour special was the extent of it. What Truman Capote did was to take a few fragments of that original television interview and rewrite it. I have the actual original transcript somewhere and it doesn't match at all with his interview in *Interview* magazine. Most of it was a complete fabrication.

ALB: Why do you think he did that?

BB: Well, I can assume by his *Rolling Stone* interview with Andy Warhol that he's trying to relive *In Cold Blood* or something, I really don't know. But he seems to be obsessed with this idea, and no matter what I say to him, he's not going to get that idea out of his mind.

ALB: Did you personally dislike him when you met him?

BB: Oh, the moment I met him, I didn't dislike him. I was open to doing something with him. The only thing I knew about him was that he had tried to do some prison reform work, or something like that. Everyone in San Quentin at the time he came there was interested in cooperating with Truman Capote in the hopes that he could do something for them. Truman Capote, to put it mildly, did not meet their expectations.

ALB: Did at San Quentin feel that way?

BB: Everybody at San Quentin assumed that he came in there for the purpose of discussing prison problems and trying to educate the public as to what was really going on in prison. And things were bad in a lot of respects. Everyone was interested in having that opportunity. It turned out that Truman Capote was only interested in coming there to have some conversations with the so-called "notorious" murderers. I would never have cooperated with him had I known this. The day before he interviewed me, he had a short personal interview with me, to explain his intentions. And what he explained to me was that he wanted to expose prison problems, discuss prison problems, and let the public know what's going on. The next day we're in front of the TV camera and he comes on with "This thing with you and the Manson family" and he never got off of it. I fenced with him the whole time in front of the cameras. I hadn't found one corner in the media where I could get a fair hearing.

ALB: Who else did he interview at San Quentin?

BB: He interviewed several people...I don't recall.

ALB: Sirhan Sirhan?

BB: Sirhan Sirhan wasn't there. He wasn't in San Quentin at that time. He interviewed mostly murderers on death row. He specifically chose murderers.

ALB: But in *Interview* he did say he saw Sirhan Sirhan at San Quentin. You're saying he wasn't there?

BB: He wasn't there, no. In his Andy Warhol interview with *Rolling Stone* and in this interview in *Interview* magazine, Truman Capote seems preoccupied with himself and reliving what...I don't know, it's hard to say. I'm not a psychologist.

ALB: I find that interesting, because Capote said he had a talk with Sirhan Sirhan. He said that you said, "So does Sirhan beef about being kept in special security?"

BB: He asked me that? Fabrication.

ALB: Sirhan Sirhan wasn't in the jail, then?

BB: No. You can tell how long ago this was. He tries to sell himself on this preoccupation with murder. I don't know; maybe he's got a death wish—I don't know.

ALB: In his interview, you are very pro-Manson family...it was all justifiable homicide etc. Have you changed your views?

BB: My stand on that, if you want to call it that, hasn't changed. What I've been explaining to you is basically what I was trying to explain to him. I tried to take it [the murders] in some way out of that interpretation of the senseless robot murder machine type of image and make them perhaps just a little bit more understandable...Oh, this is sick. Anyone who would do something like this is, as far as I'm concerned, sicker than anything he's trying to call sick. That is totally irresponsible journalism. And this guy [Capote] is supposed to be somebody....