CODE NAME BLUE WREN

The True Story of America's Most Dangerous Female Spy—and the Sister She Betrayed

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"*Code Name Blue Wren* might be the most mesmerizing spy story I've ever read. It shows how a brilliant manipulator secretly working for the Cubans finagled her way deep into the US military—and the anguish of the friends and family she so easily conned. Jim Popkin captures the brutal realities of modern espionage. I couldn't stop reading this."

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—James Bamford, bestselling author of *The Puzzle Palace* and *Spyfail: Foreign Spies, Moles, Saboteurs, and the Collapse of America's Counterintelligence*

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—Pete Williams, former NBC News justice correspondent

"This spy tale reads like a new season of *Homeland*—except this Ice Queen's traitorous double life was entirely real. Jim Popkin takes us deep into a long-ignored story of an intel officer who went rogue, spilling US

secrets to Cuba, endangering US operatives, and tricking presidents and her own sister at the FBI in the process.”

—Carol Leonnig, Pulitzer Prize–winning reporter at the *Washington Post* and author of *Zero Fail: The Rise and Fall of the Secret Service*

JIM POPKIN is a writer and investigative journalist whose work has appeared in the *Washington Post Magazine*, *WIRED*, *Newsweek*, *Slate*, *The Guardian*, and on National Public Radio. He was a senior investigative producer at NBC News as well as an on-air correspondent, and his stories have appeared on NBC's *Today*, NBC *Nightly News*, MSNBC, and CNBC. Popkin has won four national Emmy Awards for outstanding journalism, two Edward R. Murrow Awards, the George Polk Award, and was a finalist for the National Magazine Award. The *American Journalism Review* profiled him as one of Washington's "most enterprising journalists." He received a BA from Northwestern University and a master's of studies in law from Yale Law School, and he currently resides in Washington, DC.

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To Zach, Phoebe, and Ben

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INTRODUCTION

On a foggy Friday morning in Washington, DC, Ana Montes began her morning routine with precision. She washed, neatly made her bed, and slipped on a sensible sleeveless top in cornflower blue. The single forty-four-year-old government employee had carefully saved to buy her two-bedroom co-op apartment in DC's well-to-do Cleveland Park neighborhood, thanks in part to a last-minute cash gift from her father, and her tidy home was decorated with mementos from her extensive travels abroad. The bookshelves were crammed with hundreds of books—grad-school classics on Che Guevara and Karl Marx, paperback travel guides on the Caribbean, and nonfiction titles including *Spy Versus Spy: Stalking Soviet Spies in America* and *Your Memory: How It Works and How to Improve It.* Ana took one last look in the mirror at her no-fuss hair, short with bangs and a part, and locked the door behind her.

As she eased her red Toyota Echo into traffic, Ana had no idea it would be her last day of freedom for more than two decades. And no clue that she was being followed. On the half-hour drive to the headquarters of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), where she worked as a top analyst for the intelligence arm of the US Department of Defense, unmarked cars tracked her every turn. Drivers operating in undercover teams from an FBI surveillance unit were keeping a close eye on Ana this momentous day, but always from a respectable distance.

DIA headquarters at Bolling Air Force Base was alive with activity. Privately, Ana had always called her employer the "war machine," and the moniker never fit more aptly. In the ten days since Bin Laden's terrorists had taken down the World Trade Center and dive-bombed the Pentagon with commercial planes, the entire US military was girding for battle. The DIA was in overdrive, getting set to help launch Operation Enduring Freedom to destroy Al Qaeda training camps and hammer the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. For DIA's war planners, the task couldn't be more personal. Saudi-born terrorist Hani Hanjour had deliberately piloted American Airlines Flight 77 into the west wall of the Pentagon on

September 11, slamming into offices occupied by DIA staffers going about their morning routines. The resulting explosion killed seven DIA employees, all of whom worked for the agency's Office of the Comptroller. They were husbands and wives, mothers and fathers, all working as military accountants and budget managers. The 9/11 attacks marked the first time that DIA employees were killed in the line of duty in the United States, and was the largest single loss of life in the history of the DIA.

Amid the bustle that Friday morning, September 21, 2001, Ana eased through security and past the armed military officers in the lobby. She settled into her sixth-floor cubicle, #C6-146A. But she wouldn't be there long. A veritable squadron of FBI agents and twitchy DIA officers was hiding in nearby offices. They had even prepositioned a nurse, with an oxygen tank and CPR equipment, as a precaution. For this was the day that Ana Montes—the Pentagon's superstar analyst who had just won a prestigious fellowship at the CIA—was to be arrested and publicly exposed as a secret agent for Cuba.

The FBI had worried for years that the Cubans had placed a mole deep inside the upper echelons of the US Intelligence Community. But the special agent leading the case didn't have a name or even a government agency where the spy worked. The Bureau had, at first, clumsily hunted for an Unknown Subject, or UNSUB. Now, after years of digging on a case that the FBI had code-named "Blue Wren," the evidence was irrefutable that the Blue Wren UNSUB was, in fact, Ana Montes. In court-authorized break-ins of her apartment, the FBI had found secret communications with the Cubans on Ana's laptop, making it clear that Montes had revealed the true names of at least four covert US intelligence officers who had been operating in the shadows in Cuba. The Cubans had thanked Ana, noting ominously of one American spy she had outed, "We were waiting here for him with open arms."

Ana Montes briefed generals and a president, won national intelligence awards, and helped craft US government policy on Cuba. An acerbic personality known somewhat derisively in the halls of Washington as the "Queen of Cuba" for her mastery of Cuban military and political affairs, she led a dangerous double life. Montes leaked information that likely led to the death of an American Green Beret killed in action in El Salvador and the pro-American troops fighting alongside him. She freely shared the identities of hundreds of Americans working on Cuban intelligence matters around

the globe. She revealed the existence of a stealth satellite so costly and highly classified that US government officials still won't utter its name more than two decades later. Montes's betrayal was considered so grave that Defense Department hard-liners wanted her to pay with her life.

But it wasn't just those treasonous acts that convinced America's top counterintelligence executive to go before Congress and label Montes "one of the most damaging spies in U.S. history." It was that she performed her duties so efficiently for so long, and in the process "compromised all Cuban-focused collection programs." That's a bureaucrat's way of saying that Montes trashed practically every scheme the US devised to eavesdrop on the Castro regime from the mid-1980s until 2001. What's more, Montes may have had access to as many top-secret files as the two worst traitors in modern American history—Aldrich "Rick" Ames at the CIA and Robert Hanssen at the FBI. She not only poisoned nearly every secret plan that American intelligence officials hatched in Cuba, but she also helped author some of the US government's own policies on the region. Montes was playing multiple hands of the deck at once, divulging highly classified information to an adversary with a long history of selling state secrets to our sworn enemies, and then turning around and influencing the way the US understood and countered the Cuban threat. As one despondent victim described it years after Ana's arrest, "my life's work went up like a bonfire set from within."

Ana Belén Montes is sometimes called the most important spy you've never heard of. Her relative obscurity is mostly a fluke of timing. When the FBI finally arrested her, the nation was still shell-shocked from the 9/11 terrorist attacks. That very week, President George W. Bush threatened an imminent attack on Afghanistan, the stock market ended its worst week in sixty-eight years, and fresh details emerged on the flight training the 9/11 hijackers received while living among us. In that environment, news that a senior Pentagon analyst had been charged as a Cuban spy mostly elicited a shrug. The *New York Times* played the story the following day on Page A7. *NBC Nightly News* and *The TODAY Show* didn't assign stories at all. For most Americans, the headlines came and went.

But now that Montes has pleaded guilty, completed her sentence, and is scheduled to be freed from federal prison in January 2023, her astounding story raises fresh questions. How did a well-educated daughter of a US military officer betray her country and pull off her magician's act for so

long? What white lies did investigators tell, to protect sources, as they brought Ana to justice? What classified secrets did Montes divulge? Why has no one ever dared reveal the story of the stubborn National Security Agency analyst who risked her career to find the spy she knew was passing secrets to the enemy? The unsung federal worker, who escaped Cuba with her family when she was just a girl, later was humiliated and threatened with arrest for her actions to expose Castro's top spy.

Finally, why did Ana spy?

Yes, she suffered years of abuse at the hands of her domineering and violent father—a Freudian psychoanalyst of all things—leading the CIA in a "Secret" psychological profile to conclude that Ana's childhood "solidified her desire to retaliate against authoritarian figures." But motivations are rarely that clean, that trite. What cocktail of resentment, narcissism, and insecurity would convince someone to deliberately choose a life of endless betrayal and double-dealing?

Spying, it turns out, is a lot more Bourne than Bond. It's a lonely, tortured mess of a life. Yes, Ana donned wigs and used fake passports to travel to exotic locations, had affairs, learned to defeat polygraphs, and talked to Havana through ciphers and cutouts and high-frequency radio blasts. She even kept distress codes on water-soluble disappearing paper. It all sounds exciting, even romantic, until you learn that her handlers would go completely dark when they sensed danger. Ana often had no one to talk to, and the Cubans were not too keen on letting her ditch the spy game to start a family. No wonder Montes experienced crying spells and panic attacks, began showering compulsively, and eating only boiled potatoes. A lifetime of deceit took its toll.

Montes didn't just deceive her colleagues and country. Her betrayal was intensely personal. Her mercurial father was a former US Army colonel. The boyfriend she hoped to marry was, of all people, an American who ran a Cuban intelligence program for the Pentagon's US Southern Command. Two of Ana's siblings were active FBI employees; their spouses were true-blue FBI, too.

In fact, Ana's only sister, Lucy, worked her entire career for the Bureau. The highlight of her distinguished thirty-one-year career: helping the FBI flush Cuban spies out of the United States. As Ana was blithely disclosing the true names of CIA officers operating undercover in Havana, her sister, Lucy, joined a top-secret task force run by the FBI and NSA to rid Miami of

Cuban spies. The arrest of Florida's "Wasp Network" of Cuban operatives would have a direct impact on Ana in Washington, limiting her lifeline to her handlers and triggering bouts of depression and anxiety.

Little did Lucy Montes know that the most notorious Cuban spy of all was sitting right next to her at baptisms, weddings, and funerals. This book is Lucy's story, too, and reflects her attempt to reclaim the name of an American family that once was known solely for its achievements in medicine, law enforcement, and academia. "We all grew up in the same household, we all had the same parents," Lucy said. "It never even entered my mind that my sister would be capable of such a thing, because we weren't raised that way." Ana Belén Montes, the ultimate target of operation Blue Wren, kept them all guessing for nearly seventeen years.

Chapter 1.

THE WORLD'S WORST SORORITY

"The place is a combat zone tucked inside of a madhouse."

—Ana Montes letter from prison, 2013

Seventy-four-year-old Lynette Fromme lives in a dark-green Quonset hut in upstate New York. Her once-famous auburn hair has long since turned white. When the weather kicks up, the rain seeps through the domed roof of her converted shed and the wind batters its steel walls. Living in a drafty World War II outbuilding is far from perfect, but, candidly, neither is Lynette.[1]

More commonly known as "Squeaky" Fromme, Lynette is a living flashback of America's dark past. She will be forever remembered as the most loyal groupie of Charles Manson, the ex-con turned cult leader whose followers murdered actress Sharon Tate and at least eight others in Los Angeles in 1969. In a gesture of solidarity with "Charlie," Squeaky gouged a bloody X in her forehead and camped outside the LA courthouse where her leader and his flock were on trial for their lives. The Manson Family den mother kept vigil at Temple and Broadway for months.

Six years later, still under Charlie's spell, Squeaky attempted to assassinate President Gerald Ford. Dressed in a bloodred robe, she hid among the crowd as Ford walked through Capitol Park in Sacramento. She pulled a loaded Colt .45 on the president as he shook hands with supporters just two feet away. A Secret Service agent grabbed the semiautomatic and

arrested Fromme, then twenty-six, before she could finish the job. “Can you believe it? It didn’t go off,” she shouted.[2]

Fromme received a life sentence and, over the next thirty-four years, shuffled between federal prisons from California to Florida to Kentucky. She was hardly the model inmate. In 1979 in Pleasanton, California, she bashed a fellow prisoner in the head with the claw end of a hammer. In 1987, she escaped from the lockup in Alderson, West Virginia. She spent a day and a half on the run in the frigid mountains of southern West Virginia before being captured on Christmas Day. At trial, she admitted she had broken out to see Manson, “my husband, my brother, my father, my son.”[3]

By the summer of 1998, the Bureau of Prisons had had enough. They transferred Fromme to an intimate new prison-within-a-prison reserved for the nation’s most dangerous women. Its antiseptic name doesn’t reveal much, but the “Admin Unit” just outside Fort Worth, Texas, has become the Supermax for female offenders in the United States. A self-contained fortress on the grounds of the Carswell Federal Medical Center, the Admin Unit houses Al Qaeda terrorists, serial murderers, drug lords, and everyday psychotics. The ladies live together, typically just about twenty at a time, in the world’s worst sorority house.

Lynette “Squeaky” Fromme still reveres Charles Manson and may not be a reliable witness for most things. But more than three decades behind bars has made her an expert on prison life. She was released from Carswell in 2009 and offered up her hard-earned observations reluctantly, and with precision.

Lynette recalls when Ana Montes first arrived at the Admin Unit in late 2002.[4] She waited for the new girl to reveal herself. “She didn’t kowtow to anybody,” Lynette said in a series of on-the-record phone interviews. “And I’ve seen plenty of women come in and the scariest people in there, they picked to try to make friends with. And it’s disastrous because these people know what they’re doing and eventually a lot of these girls ended up getting beat up because it was artificial.”

In her two-decade confinement at the Admin Unit, including seven years bunking near Squeaky, Montes tried to disassociate herself with her grim surroundings. “Nothing ever happens to me personally because I have neither friends nor enemies. I act like I’m neutral like Sweden or a rock in the corner,” she once wrote to a friend. Lynette concurs. “She is the least talkative person that I probably ever met. She is the most taciturn person...

She wasn't trying to ingratiate herself nor was she trying to be tough." Trying to blend in at Carswell was a sound plan. At various points, Ana's neighbors included a homemaker who strangled a pregnant woman and then used a kitchen knife to remove her unborn baby, a nurse who murdered four hospital patients by injecting them with massive amounts of adrenaline, and, more recently, the cocaine-smuggling wife of Mexican drug kingpin Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzmán.

With her grad-school books, yoga routine, and refined manners, Ana wouldn't seem to be much of a threat inside the Lizzie Borden ward of federal penitentiaries. And yet her jailers kept her on a tight leash. "Ana had a lot of rules on her," Squeaky Fromme said. "She had more restrictions than I did."

Let that sink in. Ana Montes, doctor's daughter and demure US government insider, lived under tighter prison restrictions than the gun-toting former lover of Charles Manson. Ana had morphed, seemingly overnight, from dutiful oldest child to dangerous American traitor.

Chapter 2.

TOPEKA

"Ana Belén Montes's childhood experiences, family relationships, and arrested psychological development contributed to her ideological and moral development and increased her vulnerability to recruitment by a foreign intelligence service."

—From a classified profile of Montes written by the CIA's Counterintelligence Center Analysis Group

For newlyweds Alberto and Emilia Montes, February 28, 1957, was a day of joy and promise. Their first child, Ana Belén Montes, had just been born at the US Army Hospital in Nuremberg, West Germany, and was named for her two grandmothers. Ana had big brown eyes and gold curly hair and her parents couldn't stop posing with her. And smiling.

Understandably, Alberto was flying high. The son of a grocer who had only gotten as far as the sixth-grade[5] , Alberto had beaten the odds by graduating Magna Cum Laude from a four-year college in Puerto Rico and then earning a government scholarship to attend Albany Medical College, one of the oldest medical schools in the nation. True, he had to borrow cash from a distant relative just to afford the plane ticket to upstate New York—the first airplane flight of his life. And in the summers, when his classmates were off relaxing, he had to hustle factory jobs at a Philadelphia dye mill to keep up with med-school bills. But now here he was, a fresh-faced captain working in the dispensary for the United States Army at the sprawling

Grafenwöhr Army Base in West Germany, with a baby, Ana, and a feisty, whip-smart twenty-one-year-old wife, Emilia, at his side.

Sixteen months later, at the same Army hospital, the good Lord smiled again. This time, Al and Emilia welcomed baby Luz to the world, nicknamed Lucy. Just as a US Army private named Elvis Presley showed up in Germany as part of his tank battalion training, Captain Montes and his growing family headed in the opposite direction. Alberto completed his three-year military hitch and flew with his wife and baby girls to the States, landing in New York on August 26, 1958. Bright days, and a new job with better pay in the American heartland, lay ahead.

None of this good fortune was preordained. Ana's parents, Emilia and Alberto, were from families of modest means, and it was only through smarts and sacrifice that they had so quickly left the farms and barrios of Puerto Rico behind. Alberto's father was one of eleven children in his family and had started his working life as a boy. Alberto's mother, who was orphaned at age nine after her policeman father was killed by machete-wielding locals in the Dominican Republic, left school after third grade. Alberto's parents were literate but never learned English. Young Alberto grew up in the Depression in a house without electricity or indoor toilets. But Alberto's parents had a fierce work ethic that they passed down to their four children. Alberto's dad, Ana and Lucy's grandfather, worked 6½ days a week in his grocery store in Manatí, on Puerto Rico's northern coast, selling on credit to farmers who often could not afford to pay him back. "Though he was very enthusiastic about having a business, [my father] made very little money because he was soft-hearted," Alberto wrote in an autobiography he presented to his children one Christmas in 1995. "He could not bear the thought that their families would go hungry, unless he sold on credit." The next Montes generation fared better. Alberto became a doctor, his sister a teacher, his younger brother a Jesuit priest, and his baby brother a college sociology professor.

Ana and Lucy's mother, Emilia, was from a higher social standing. Her father, Carlos Badillo y Vadi, worked as a bookkeeper at the San Vicente sugar mill near Vega Baja, the town right next to Manatí. It was a steady job at one of the region's top employers. The sugar company built and owned the Badillo family's four-bedroom home and picked up the rent and utilities, and Emilia and her little brother never went hungry. "I had a lovely childhood. We had what we need[ed] and more," Emilia said.[6] "I spent my

first 18 years in an apparently happy and healthy family, without even thinking about the future."[7] Carlos and his wife, whose first name was Belén, encouraged their daughter's studies. They bought Emilia a set of encyclopedias and the determined schoolgirl devoured them cover to cover. She was expected to follow in the footsteps of her aunts, who had gone to college and become teachers, pharmacists, professionals. "Her father told her that her future was going to be in the United States, and she needed to learn to speak English," remembered daughter Lucy Montes. Emilia did just that and went to Mount Saint Agnes, a Catholic women's college in Baltimore.

By fall 1958, Ana Montes's young family was on its way. Adventures awaited in the American plains. From the age of five, Alberto had dreamed of working as a physician. He had watched his little brother, Carlos, nearly die as a baby when he developed diphtheria in Puerto Rico and could no longer breastfeed. When a local doctor diagnosed Carlos and gave him "diphtheria antitoxin shots," Carlos recovered in two days. Young Alberto stood in awe of Dr. Lopez's heroics and "I decided that one day I would become a physician." And now it was a reality.

Alberto had secured a job as a general physician at the Winter VA Hospital in Topeka, Kansas. Now called the Colmery-O'Neil Veterans' Administration Medical Center, it was named in honor of the World War I pilot who is considered the main architect of the G.I. Bill. Ana's father began seeing patients at the hospital, treating veterans of the Korean War and World War II.

Topeka in the 1950s could not have been more different from the tropical homeland Emilia and Alberto had left behind. The capital city of Kansas had less than one hundred thousand residents at the time, and about 92 percent of them were White. Census takers back then didn't even record the Latino population, which in Topeka would have been negligible.[8] In the early 1950s, famously, the Board of Education of Topeka operated under the doctrine of "separate but equal" at its public schools, relegating area Black children to poorly performing schools. The policy led the Supreme Court to rule in the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* case that segregation in the elementary schools of Topeka, and all other public schools in the nation, was unconstitutional. "Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal," the Court declared in 1954, in a case championed by the Topeka chapter of the NAACP.

Racial strife was still apparent when the Montes family flew to Topeka in 1958. Just days after their arrival, an openly racist op-ed ran in the *Wichita Eagle*, a leading newspaper. “The United States has had trouble for years with Puerto Ricans who have flocked into New York City and area to find a better way of life than in their homeland... The crime wave attributed to the Puerto Ricans in and around New York City is terrific,” the *Eagle* stated. “Undoubtedly the West needs a better policy. It can’t be done, however, based on unlimited immigration of colored people.”[9] Not surprisingly, Mexican Americans who lived in Topeka at the same time were “publicly ridiculed and called cruel derogatory names,” Thomas Rodriguez writes in his Topeka memoir, *Americano: My Journey to the Dream.* Rodriguez recalls that “Mexicans were not allowed to eat in many of Topeka’s restaurants” and banned from certain swimming pools in the city. Around the time when the Montes family arrived in Topeka in the late ’50s, he writes, White parents began complaining to officials at Topeka High School to “do something to stop interracial dating between Mexican-American boys and White girls.”[10]

Alberto and Emilia were light-skinned and classified as “White” in US government records. As a doctor’s family, they were treated with kindness in the Kansas suburbs. They settled in at a comfortable house in southwest Topeka, an easy drive from the veterans hospital and walking distance to McEachron Elementary School. Their new home was on a dirt road with a pretty backyard and a party line, or shared telephone line, for a phone. Alberto began refining his skills as a doctor at the hospital, while dressing in his Army fatigues for Army Reserve training during the weekend. As was traditional then, Emilia cooked and took care of the girls. She recalls that Ana would often become jealous when Emilia nursed baby Lucy. Ana would warn her mother that “a big dog outside was going to take Lucy” away.[11]

In June of 1959, Ana and Lucy were joined by a new playmate. Baby Alberto was born and thereafter called “Tito,” to distinguish him from his father, Alberto, and grandfather Alberto before him. Dr. and Mrs. Emilia Montes now had three babies, all less than two and half years old, under the roof of their suddenly chaotic three-bedroom, one-and-a-half-bath home on Topeka’s W. 29th Street.

* * *

Manatí and the San Vicente sugar mill might as well have been a million miles away. There was no family to lean on in Topeka, and few friends yet to be found. Emilia was loving and patient with her babies and Alberto was attentive. “Dad was a very good father when we were very young. He would change our diapers and help feed us and do all kinds of things,” Lucy said. Alberto ruled the roost as many men did in that era, doling out a weekly allowance to Emilia and making most decisions for the household. He was clearly “el jefe,” as his father had been before him, and expected quasi military-level deference at home.

Alberto’s days were packed. He had decided to specialize in psychiatry, and had won admittance in 1958 to the prestigious Menninger School of Psychiatry. Colocated at Winter Veterans Administration Hospital, the school was one of the best in the nation at educating post-WWII professionals in the booming new field. General Omar Bradley, who had commanded US Army troops during the Invasion of Normandy, had helped start Winter Hospital’s training program for young psychiatrists after the end of World War II.[12]

Improbably, tiny Topeka had become the epicenter of Freudian theory and the understanding of the human mind. In the 1920s, Harvard-trained Dr. Karl Menninger, with his father and brother, established a clinic in Topeka in an old farmhouse. It had beds for thirteen patients. An early ad for their private sanitarium promised “treatment of the nervously and mentally sick” with showers, Sitz baths, and hydrotherapy that is “preferable to drug sedation.”[13] As the Menninger clinic expanded, the mind-body treatment offered in Topeka was revolutionary for its time. “Previously, psychiatric treatment had been conducted one-on-one over a long period—perhaps five to seven years. The Menninger idea was to provide a ‘total environment’ for its clinic patients in which there would be a family atmosphere, physical exercise and medical doctors from various disciplines who could give patients comprehensive care,” the *New York Times*[14] recounted in a 2,000-word obituary when Dr. Menninger died in 1990 at age ninety-six.

Karl Menninger became the toast of Topeka. He helped to popularize psychiatry with publication of his first book, *The Human Mind*, in 1930, and with a regularly appearing advice column in the *Ladies’ Home Journal.* Although Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, had been publishing for decades when Menninger came on the scene, most Americans remained in the dark about the advances in understanding of

human emotion and mental illness. “To the general public, the mentally ill or emotionally disturbed were often ‘lunatics’ to be confined in insane asylums,” the *Times* reported. “Dr. Menninger had a hand in changing those conceptions through his papers, articles and books, some of which became bestsellers.” The Menninger family would go on to create an empire in Topeka for treating mental disorders. At its height, it mushroomed into two sprawling campuses in Topeka, a workforce of more than a thousand people, and a multimillion-dollar budget.

At its core, the success of the Menninger Foundation was based on Karl Menninger’s deep understanding of the human psyche and the enduring influence of parents on their children. “In childhood parents represent omnipotent gods,”[15] Menninger wrote in his bestseller, *The Human Mind.* As a disciple of Freud, Menninger knew that the loving role of parents was one of the basic precepts of emotional well-being. “It is much easier, more logical and more efficacious to help a child grow up with love and courage than it is to instill hope in a despondent soul,” he said. “What mother and father mean to them is more than psychiatrists can ever mean.”[16]

And yet, over his long career as one of the nation’s top psychiatrists, Dr. Menninger had witnessed “almost unbelievable cruelties systematically practiced by parents upon children.”[17] In an essay for *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1939 called “Women, Men, and Hate,” Menninger expounded. “The secret cruelties that parents visit upon their children are past belief...in my capacity as a psychiatrist I shudder at the tales of brutality I am obliged to hear.”

If psychiatrist-in-training Alberto Montes ever read Dr. Menninger’s well-known and now-obvious observations on love and parenting, he had a funny way of showing it. As the Montes children would later bear witness, they grew terrified of their father’s hair-trigger temper and unpredictable mood swings. In a twisted irony for the ages, Dr. Alberto Montes became a successful and noted Freudian analyst. A Freudian psychotherapist armed with a leather belt.