

Finders Keepers

By Dave [McGowan](#)
June 2000

On February 7th of 1987, the *Washington Post* ran an interesting story that did not at the time seem to have any particular national significance. The article concerned a case of possible kidnapping and child abuse, and read (in part) as follows:

"Authorities investigating the alleged abuse of six children found with two men in a Tallahassee, Fla., park discovered material yesterday in the Washington area that they say points to a 1960's style commune called the Finders, described in a court document as a 'cult' that allegedly conducted 'brainwashing' and used children 'in rituals.' D. C. police, who searched a Northeast Washington warehouse linked to the group removed large plastic bags filled with color slides, photographs and photographic contact sheets. Some photos visible through a bag carried from the warehouse at 1307 Fourth St. NE were wallet-sized pictures of children, similar to school photos, and some were of naked children. D.C. police sources said some of the items seized yesterday showed pictures of children engaged in what appeared to be 'cult rituals.' Officials of the U.S. Customs Service, called in to aid in the investigation, said that the material seized yesterday includes photos showing children involved in bloodletting ceremonies of animals and one photograph of a child in chains. Customs officials said they were looking into whether a child pornography operation was being conducted ... Their links to the D.C. area have led authorities into a far-reaching investigation that includes the Finders - a group of about 40 people that court documents allege is led by a man named Marion Pettie - and their various homes, including the duplex apartment building in Glover Park, the Northeast Washington warehouse and a 90 acre farm in rural Madison County, Va. ... The children, identified in a court document only by the first names of Honeybee, John Franklin, Bee Bee, Max and Mary, were described as 'dirty unkempt, hungry, disturbed and agitated.' They had been living in the rear of the van for some time, the document said. Yesterday, police spokesman Hunt said one of the children, a 6 yr. old girl 'showed signs of sexual abuse' ... Five of the children were uncommunicative, according to police, and none seemed to recognize objects such as typewriters and staplers. However, the oldest was able to give investigators some information. She said that the two men 'were their teachers,' according to Hunt ... Before their arrests in the park, [the two adult caretakers] had told police that they were teachers from Washington 'transporting these children to Mexico and a school for brilliant children,' according to Hunt. When police asked the men where the children's mothers were they said they were being weaned from their mothers." (1)

This was just one of many such stories that emerged across the country in the late 1980's, a phenomenon that would be quickly be denounced as a 'witch hunt' and as a 'Satanic panic.' It would be nearly seven years before the press would revisit this particular manifestation of what would come to be regarded as a modern-day case of mass hysteria. It was the *U.S. News and World Report* that would ultimately provide the follow-up to the Finders story. But this was certainly not in the interest of shining any light on the earlier allegations. Most likely, the strange saga of the Finders would have disappeared forever if not for the rumors surrounding the case that just wouldn't seem to go away.

These rumors were addressed in the *News* report as follows: "One of the unresolved questions involves allegations that the Finders are somehow linked to the Central Intelligence Agency. Custom Service documents reveal that in 1987, when Customs agents sought to examine the evidence gathered by Washington, D.C. police, they were told that the Finders investigation 'had become an internal matter.' The police report on the case had been classified secret. Even now, Tallahassee police complain about the handling of the Finders investigation by D.C. police. 'They dropped this case,' one Tallahassee investigator says, 'like a hot rock.' D.C. police will not comment on the matter. As for the CIA, ranking officials describe allegations about links between the intelligence agency and the Finders as 'hogwash,' perhaps the result of a simple mix up with D.C. police. The only connection, according to the CIA: A firm that provided computer training to CIA officers also employed several members of the Finders." (2)

It should probably be noted here that the firm that supplied the training didn't just employ several members of the Finders but appears to have in fact been a wholly owned subsidiary of the Finders organization. It should also be noted that the CIA does not, as a general rule-of-thumb, assign the training of its officers to outside contractors. If a 'private' firm is utilized in such a capacity, it is in all such cases a front group of the CIA itself.

In the last paragraph of the *U.S. News* report, yet more intriguing connections to Langley are revealed. Speaking of group leader Marion Pettie, it is noted that "the CIA's interest in the Finders may stem from the fact that his late wife once worked for the agency and that his son worked for a CIA proprietary firm, Air America." Aside from

acknowledging these by then widely known (in Washington, at least) CIA connections, the *U.S. News* reporters did their very best to bury this story once and for all, denigrating the sordid allegations leveled against the group seven years earlier. The article reads as follows:

"The case is almost seven years old now, but matters surrounding a mysterious group known as the Finders keep growing curiouser and curiouser. In early February 1987, an anonymous tipster in Tallahassee, Fla, made a phone call to police. Two 'well dressed men' seemed to be 'supervising' six disheveled and hungry children in a local park, the caller said. The cops went after the case like bloodhounds, at least at first. The two men were identified as members of the Finders. They were charged with child abuse in Florida. In Washington, D.C. police and U.S. Customs Service agents raided a duplex apartment building and a warehouse connected to the group. Among the evidence seized - detailed instructions on obtaining children for unknown purposes and several photographs of nude children. According to a Customs Service memorandum obtained by *U.S. News*, one photo appeared 'to accent the child's genitals.' The more the police learned about the Finders, the more bizarre they seemed: There were suggestions of child abuse, Satanism, dealing in pornography and ritualistic animal slaughter. None of the allegations was ever proved, however. The child abuse charges against the two men in Tallahassee were dropped; all six of the children were eventually returned to their mothers, though in the case of two, conditions were attached by a court. In Washington, D.C. police began backing away from the Finders investigation. The groups practices, the police said, were eccentric - not illegal." (2)

The article closed by noting that "some of the rumors can last an awfully long time." Indeed they can, though the rumors would have to circulate outside of the media, which has never again mentioned the case. This does not mean though that there is no additional information available on the subject. As the *News* noted in their report, there is a certain Customs Service memorandum that was written at the time of the original investigation.

As this document was in the hands of the *News* reporters at the time the story was written, as is readily acknowledged, it should logically follow that any pertinent information contained therein would have been faithfully reported. And as we know, the *News* concluded that "none of the allegations was ever proved." Still, it might be interesting to review the document to see what kind of "eccentric - not illegal" practices it was that the group was involved in. As luck would have it, I also happen to have a copy of the memo, which is actually a series of memos written by Ramon J. Martinez, Special Agent, United States Customs Service. In Martinez's own words, this is what he observed during his participation in the investigation:

"On Thursday, February 5, 1987, this office was contacted via telephone by Sergeant JoAnn VanMETER of the Tallahassee Police Department, Juvenile Division. Sgt. VanMETER requested assistance in identifying two adult males and six minor children ages 7 years to 2 years.

"The adult males were tentatively identified by TPD as Michael HOULIHAN and Douglas AMMERMAN, both of Washington, D.C. who were arrested the previous day on charges of child abuse.

"The police had received an anonymous telephone call relative two well-dressed white men wearing suits and ties in Myers Park, (Tallahassee), apparently watching six dirty and unkempt children in the playground area. HOULIHAN and AMMERMAN were near a 1980 Blue Dodge van bearing Virginia license number XHW-557, the inside of which was later described as foul-smelling filled with maps, books, letters, with a mattress situated to the rear of the van which appeared as if it were used as a bed, and the overall appearance of the van gave the impression that all eight persons were living in it.

"The children were covered with insect bites, were very dirty, most of the children were not wearing underwear and all of the children had not been bathed in many days.

"The men were arrested and charged with multiple counts of child abuse and lodged in the Leon County Jail. Once in custody the men were somewhat evasive in their answers to the police regarding the children and stated only that they both were the children's teachers and that all were enroute to Mexico to establish a school for brilliant children ...

"U.S. Customs was contacted because the police officers involved suspected the adults of being involved in child pornography and knew the Customs Service to have a network of child pornography investigators, and of the existence of the Child Pornography and Protection Unit. SS/A Krietlow stated the two adults were well dressed white males. They had custody of six white children (boys and girls), ages three to six years. The children were observed to be poorly dressed, bruised, dirty, and behaving like wild animals in a public park in Tallahassee ...

"SS/A Kreitlow was further advised the children were unaware of the function and purpose of telephones,

televisions and toilets, and that the children had stated they were not allowed to live indoors and were only given food as a reward ...

"Upon contacting Detective Bradley, I learned that he had initiated an investigation on the two addresses provided by the Tallahassee Police Dept. during December of 1986. An informant had given him information regarding a cult, known as the "Finders" operating various businesses out of a warehouse located at 1307 4th St., N.E., and were supposed to be housing children at 3918/3920 W St., N.W. The information was specific in describing 'blood rituals' and sexual orgies involving children, and an as yet unsolved murder in which the Finders may be involved. With the information provided by the informant, Detective Bradley was able to match some of the children in Tallahassee with names of children known alleged to be in the custody of the Finders. Furthermore, Bradley was able to match the tentative ID of the adults with known members of the Finders. I stood by while Bradley consulted with AUSA Harry Benner and obtained search warrants for the two premises. I advised acting RAC SS/A Tim Halloran of my intention to accompany MPD on the execution of the warrants, received his permission, and was joined by SS/A Harrold. SS/A Harrold accompanied the team which went to 1307 4th St., and I went to 3918/20 W St.

"During the execution of the warrant at 3918/20 W St., I was able to observe and access the entire building ... There were several subjects on the premises. Only one was deemed to be connected with the Finders. [He] was located in a room equipped with several computers, printers, and numerous documents. cursory examination of the documents revealed detailed instructions for obtaining children for unspecified purposes. The instructions included the impregnation of female members of the community known as the Finders, purchasing children, trading, and kidnapping. There were telex messages using MCI account numbers between a computer terminal believed to be located in the same room, and others located across the country and in foreign locations. One such telex specifically ordered the purchase of two children in Hong Kong to be arranged through a contact in the Chinese Embassy there. Another telex expressed interest in 'bank secrecy' situations. Other documents identified interests in high-tech transfers to the United Kingdom, numerous properties under the control of the Finders, a keen interest in terrorism, explosives, and the evasion of law enforcement. Also found in the 'computer room' was a detailed summary of the events surrounding the arrest and taking into custody of the two adults and six children in Tallahassee the previous night. There were also a set of instructions which appeared to be broadcast via a computer network which advised the participants to move 'the children' and keep them moving through different jurisdictions, and instructions on how to avoid police attention ...

"On Friday, 2/6/87, I met Detective Bradley at the warehouse on 4th Street, N.E. I duly advised my acting group supervisor, SS/A Don Blutworth. I was again granted unlimited access to the premises. I was able to observe numerous documents which described explicit sexual conduct between the members of the community known as Finders. I also saw a large collection of photographs of unidentified persons. Some of the photographs were nudes, believed to be of members of the Finders. There were numerous photos of children, some nude, at least one of which was a photo of a child 'on display' and appearing to accent the child's genitals. I was only able to examine a very small amount of the photos at this time. However, one of the officers presented me with a photo album for my review. The album contained a series of photos of adults and children dressed in white sheets participating in a 'blood ritual.' The ritual centered around the execution of at least two goats. The photos portrayed the execution, disembowelment, skinning and dismemberment of the goats at the hands of the children. This included the removal of the testes of a male goat, the discovery of a female goat's "womb" and the "baby goats" inside the womb, and the presentation of a goat's head to one of the children.

"Further inspection of the premises disclosed numerous files relating to activities of the organization in different parts of the world. Locations I observed are as follows: London, Germany, the Bahamas, Japan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Africa, Costa Rica, and 'Europe.' There was also a file identified as 'Palestinian.' Other files were identified by member name or 'project' name. The projects appearing to be operated for commercial purposes under front names for the Finders. There was one file entitled 'Pentagon Break-In,' and others referring to members operating in foreign countries. Not observed by me but related by an MPD officer were intelligence files on private families not related to the Finders. The process undertaken appears to be have been a systematic response to local newspaper advertisements for babysitters, tutors, etc. A member of the Finders would respond and gather as much information as possible about the habits, identity, occupation, etc., of the family. The use to which this information was to be put is still unknown. There was also a large amount of data collected on various child care organizations.

"The warehouse contained a large library, two kitchens, a sauna, hot-tub, and a 'video room.' The video room seemed to be set up as an indoctrination center. It also appeared that that the organization had the capability to produce its own videos. There were what appeared to be training areas for children and what appeared to be an altar set up in a residential area of the warehouse. Many jars of urine and feces were located in this area." (3)

I'm going to go out on a limb here and guess that most people, upon reading this, will conclude that the practices of

the Finders were not in fact merely "eccentric." The last time I checked into it, running an international terrorist organization specializing in the trafficking of children was definitely illegal. Unless, that is, the organization doing the trafficking is run by the Central Intelligence Agency.

Group leader Marion Pettie shed additional light on his non-connections to the agency in an interview with *Steamshovel Press* in 1998. Recounting the history of his group, Pettie notes that: "Going back to World War II, I kept open house mainly to intelligence people in Washington. OSS people passing through, things like that." (4)

He wasn't, mind you, an intelligence asset himself. In fact, according to Pettie, he has spent his entire life trying - as a private citizen - to *spy on the spies*. As for his wife, he claims he sent her "in as a spy, to spy on the CIA for me. She was very happy about it, happy to tell me everything she found out. She was in a key place, you know with the records, and she could find out things for me." (4)

Pettie also acknowledges that his "son worked for Air America, which was a proprietary of the CIA. There are some connections, but not to me personally." (4) Of course not. In fact, Pettie is something of a CIA watch-dog, proclaiming that he has "been studying them since before they were born."

"I was studying them back in the 30's. It was ONI back then [Office of Naval Intelligence], and then the Coordinator of Information comes on, and after that it turns into the OSS and OSS turns into the CIAU and the CIAU turns into the CIA. So I've been studying that all of my life. But I wasn't personally working for them." (4)

Of course he wasn't. I have no idea where anyone would get a crazy notion like that. Interestingly enough, though, this group which claimed no direct connection to the intelligence community quite obviously had very powerful people within that community protecting it. As the final Customs Service memo notes:

"On Thursday, February 5, 1987, Senior Special Agent Harrold and I assisted the Washington D.C. Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) with two search warrants involving the possible sexual exploitation of children. During the course of the search warrants, numerous documents were discovered which appeared to be concerned with international trafficking in children, high tech transfer to the United Kingdom, and international transfer of currency.

"On March 31, 1987, I contacted Detective Jim Bradley of the Washington, DC Metropolitan Police Department (MPD). I was to meet with Detective Bradley to review the documents seized pursuant to two search warrants executed in January, 1987. The meeting was to take place on April 2 or 3, 1987.

"On April 2, 1987, I arrived at MPD at approximately 9:00 a.m. Detective Bradley was not available. I spoke to a third party who was willing to discuss the case with me on a strictly 'off the record' basis.

"I was advised that all the passport data had been turned over to the State Department for their investigation. The State Department in turn, advised the MPD that all travel and use of the passports by the holders of the passports was within the law and no action would be taken. This included travel to Moscow, North Korea, and North Vietnam from the late 1950s to mid 1970s.

"The individual further advised me of circumstances which indicated that the investigation into the activity of the Finders had become a CIA internal matter. The MPD report has been classified SECRET and was not available for review. I was advised that the FBI had withdrawn from the investigation several weeks prior and that the FBI Foreign Counter Intelligence Division had directed MPD not to advise the FBI Washington Field Office of anything that had transpired.

"No further information will be available. No further action will be taken."

And with these rather cryptic words, the case of the Finders was permanently closed. So there you have it. The only question now remaining, I suppose, is simply this: how long can we - the American people - allow a government to stand that is so depraved, so fundamentally corrupt and criminal, so completely lacking in any semblance of morals or basic human decency that it would traffic in the minds and bodies of *our children*? HOW FUCKING LONG?

Click [here](#) to read a related story.

1. Joseph E. Bouchard, Ed Bruske, Mary Thorton, John Harris and Linda Wheeler "Officials Describe 'Cult Rituals' in Child Abuse Case," *Washington Post*, February 7, 1987

2. Gordon Witkin, Peter Cary and Ancel Martinez "Through a Glass, Very Darkly," *U.S. News and World Report*, December 27, 1993 - January 3, 1994
3. United States Customs Service Documents, *Report of Investigation*, February 7, 1987; February 12, 1987; April 13, 1987
4. Kenn Thomas and Len Bracken "The Finders' Keeper," *Steamshovel Press*, Issue #16, 1998

More reports surfaced that children were being stolen in South and Central America, flown across the border in light aircraft, and sold to child sex rings, or sold so their organs could be used in transplants.

There was no shortage of rumors about who was involved. One named was Air Force Colonel Phil Willer, a World War II veteran turned contraband-runner. His twin-engined Beechcraft had finally been shot down by a Mexican antiaircraft unit, crashing in flames. Willer died strapped into the cockpit. Ironically, there was no one else on board. But the story persisted that other fliers had inherited his role and substantial income. One was known as the Desert Jackal, a sixty-year-old American who learned his flying against the Japanese in the Pacific in World War II. Another had flown a helicopter gunship in Vietnam.

A pilot could make two thousand dollars on a ninety-minute round trip from some Mexican mountaintop or jungle clearing, skimming over the border to land at a remote landing strip in New Mexico or Texas.

Some made two or three flights a day. The more experienced used Beech 18s because of the aircraft's capacity and maneuverability. The majority of the fliers were mercenaries who had flown for the CIA.

Gordon Thomas *Enslaved*, Pharos Books, 1991

<http://web.archive.org/web/20010111012000/www.davesweb.cnchost.com/finders.htm>