

Death Ends an Idyll

Saga of the Bishop Family

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The romance of William Bradford Bishop Jr. and Annette Kathryn Weis, for all outward appearances, personified the ideals of mid-20th century America.

Tall, handsome, intelligent California boy meets intelligent, beautiful, artistic California girl. Boy goes to Yale, girl goes to Berkeley. Boy and girl marry. Boy has important interests in the arts and athletics while caring for three young boys who are handsome, intelligent, etc.

Then, two weeks ago, came what their friends and co-workers euphemistically now call "the incident." According to police, boy kills girl, their three sons and his mother.

Sometime during the night of March 1-2 inside the Bishops' comfortable, contemporary split-level home in Bethesda, the family life which had been filled with experiences of

living in Europe and Africa, ski trips, swimming meets, tennis matches, art classes and PTA meetings, ended abruptly, brutally, mysteriously. Annette Bishop, 37, and her sons, Brad III, 14, Brent, 10, and Geoff, 5, and Bishop's mother, Lobelia, 68, had been, according to autopsy results, fatally "bludgeoned with a blunt instrument."

Brad Bishop Jr., 39, at mid-career as an aspiring diplomat, became a name and face on wanted posters distributed nationwide, a hunted man, believed to be armed and dangerous, charged with the savage murders of his own, all-American family.

The romance of Annette Weis and Bradford Bishop began in California. Annette

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was born in Toledo, Ohio, on April 14, 1938. Her parents, Gilbert and Eunice Weis, moved to California when she and her brother, Robert, were children. The family settled in the Los Angeles suburb of San Marino, and Annette attended nearby South Pasadena High School.

It was there that she met Brad Bishop, the son of Lobelia Amaryllis and William Bradford Bishop, an independent geologist, who lived in South Pasadena, the Los Angeles suburb. Brad was born Aug. 1, 1936.

Brad graduated from high school in 1954, the year before Annette did, and he went East, to study economics at Yale. But the miles did not diminish their romance — one of Brad's roommates at Calhoun College at Yale recalled that the letters flowed often between New Haven and California.

At Yale, Bishop was remembered as an above-average student academically. He played freshman football, talked about being a doctor, and was very gregarious.

One of his roommates, who went home with him for a short visit, recalled that Bishop's father was "a quiet man by comparison" to his mother, who was, like Brad, very outgoing, a personality the friend attributed to her French background.

On the same trip, the

roommate met Annette, and was impressed by her as "a lovely girl, and bright too."

Bishop would have graduated with the Class of 1958 at Yale, but he dropped out just before the start of his senior year. One friend thought it had something to do with a shortage of money at home—his father was always complaining about how the big oil companies were rough on a private geologist." Brad took a job "digging ditches." When he returned in 1959, he had given up plans to become a physician.

Shortly after he graduated from Yale, in 1959, Brad and Annette were married, in San Clemente, where her family had moved, and where her parents still live.

Brad enlisted in the Army on Aug. 7, 1959, at Ft. Dix, N. J. After basic training at Ft. Benning, he enrolled in the student battalion of the Army's intelligence school at Ft. Holabird, in Baltimore.

Bishop finished intelligence school in the summer of 1960, and immediately was sent to the Army's language school in Monterey, Calif., where he learned the Serbo-Croatian language.

While the Bishops were living in Monterey, their first son, William Bradford Bishop III, was born, on Aug. 14, 1961.

Just 10 days after his son was born, Bishop was assigned to the 163rd military intelligence battalion, in Europe, where his wife and

young son soon joined them.

For the next two years, Bishop served in Europe, primarily in Italy, where he carried out mundane spying efforts such as listening to Yugoslavian radio broadcasts and translating Serbo-Croatian publications into English. He later joked to a friend that his "big spy job" called for him to infiltrate a Yugoslavian ski team that was appearing in Verona.

When his four-year enlistment ended on Aug. 14, 1963, Staff Sgt. Bishop accepted his honorable discharge in Verona. The only medal he showed for four years and eight days of military service was for good conduct. The Bishops stayed on in Italy, and Bishop enrolled at the Florence campus of Middlebury (Vt.) College, where he studied Italian.

The family returned to the United States in the spring of 1964, and Bishop obtained a master's degree in Italian at the main Middlebury campus in Vermont.

That summer, the Bishops returned to California where, on July 30, their second son, Brenton Germain Bishop, was born, in Pasadena.

In the fall of 1965, Brad came to Washington and, armed with a master's degree and fluency in two foreign languages, he entered the State Department's foreign service program.

At age 29, Bishop was the oldest member of the group of 30 candidates who attended an eight-week orien-

tation course and then a 20-week program of study at the Foreign Service Institute's old headquarters in the Arlington Towers.

"Because of his age and languages, Brad entered at the highest level" for new foreign service officers, one classmate recalled. By November, Bishop had been promoted to Foreign Service Officer grade 7.

"Brad was intellectually superior, clearly one of the brightest guys in the class," said another FSI classmate.

Shortly before Christmas, 1965, Bishop got his first overseas assignment, as a junior officer in the U.S. embassy at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The Bishops quickly became an integral part of the small American community there. Edward Korry, who was the U.S. ambassador at the time, rated Bishop as a "first-class foreign service officer whom I pushed along as fast as I could."

Annette Bishop was, Ambassador Korry recalled, "among the loveliest of the American mission wives."

A woman who then was a teen-ager in the American compound in Addis Ababa remembers looking up to the Bishops as "really the ideal family. He was smart and handsome and she was her own person — a mother and wife, and also into art."

Bishop was named a consular officer in Addis Ababa in January, 1967 and promoted to FSO 6 that June.

In January, 1968, he was transferred to Milan, where

his fluency in Italian helped him advance in his career. His next promotion, to FSO-5, came in Italy, in May, 1969.

The Bishops were rotated back to the U.S. in 1970, as is customary in the foreign service, and Bishop was sent back to school — this time to the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA).

He attended UCLA for three quarters, got five A's four B's and graduated in mid-1971 with a second master's degree, in African studies.

The Bishops lived in their hometown of South Pasadena that year, so Annette and the boys were able to spend considerable time with her parents and on Feb. 12, 1971, their third, and last, son Geoffrey Corder Bishop, was born, in Pasadena.

Bishop returned to Washington, and the State Department, in June, 1971, and was assigned to the East African Office of the Bureau of African Affairs.

When Bishops moved back to Washington that summer, they were accompanied by his mother, who, following the death of her husband, had sold the house in Pasadena.

When Brad was posted for his next foreign assignment, to Gaborone, Botswana, in January, 1972, it was a family of six—husband, wife, mother and three sons—who made the trip.

In Botswana, Bishop was deputy chief of the mission, a position that made him second only to the ambassador there.

He had been promoted to the rank of FSO-4 after earning his second master's degree, and one of his FSI classmates—who keeps close tab on such matters—noted that "Brad was the first one in the class to make it to Grade 4."

Persons who either knew the Bishops in both Ethiopia and Botswana, or who had friends who did, noticed a slight change in the family on the second trip to Africa.

"Annette wasn't so anxious to play the loyal State Department wife bit," said one. "She didn't always

jump in and volunteer to bake cookies or help with the constant rounds of dinner parties."

The change might have been attributed to the presence of Bishop's mother, an active, youngish-looking woman who was anxious to take her share of responsibilities in the family.

Mrs. Bishop Sr., as Lobelia was known, took over part of the household chores, and especially liked to play with the baby, Geoff. The relief permitted Annette to "do her own thing," according to one friend, and increasingly, she turned to her long-held interest in art.

The Bishops returned to Washingtonian 1974 and settled into the modern frame house at 8103 Lilly Stone Drive, in the Carderock Springs section of Bethesda.

It is a neighborhood of upwardly mobile families, including several other State Department foreign service officers, and the Bishops fit in beautifully.

They joined the Carderock Springs Tennis and Swim Club, where the older boys swam competitively and Brad and Annette were popular tennis partners.

And again, because, according to some neighbors, the senior Mrs. Bishop "acted like the mother of the family," Annette was free to pursue her interest in art.

Two years ago, Annette, who had attended the University of California at Berkeley while Brad was at Yale, enrolled as a full-time student at the main campus of the University of Maryland in College Park.

Claudia DeMonte, an instructor in design, said Annette was "extremely intelligent, a very bright student. She brought a lot to the class."

Joseph Ferraiolo, her faculty adviser and sculpture instructor, said Annette was "very enthusiastic. She worked in a determined kind of way," often coming to the campus on days when she had no classes.

She recently had turned her attention to stone sculpture, and had bought a chisel and other new tools.