

**Spotlight**

**CORRUPTION,  
SCANDAL &  
ACCOUNTABILITY**

**Three shining investigative stories from  
The Boston Globe Spotlight team**

**The Boston Globe**

# Credits

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# Spotlight is launched

On September 27, 1970, The Boston Globe announced in the newspaper the creation of a “special, three-man investigative team” that would provide deeper coverage on the stories driving the discussions of the day. The team was modeled after the “Insight” team that worked at the Sunday Times of London, which had gained recognition as a leading investigative newspaper authority. The Globe’s announcement got straight to the point for its readers.

“The team’s mission will be to reconstruct major news events as rapidly and comprehensively as possible, with an emphasis on the ‘why’ rather than the ‘what’ of an event. The unit will also seek to expose public corruption and malfeasance. Articles by the team will appear under the signature of “Spotlight.”

Almost a half-century later, that mission endures, as Spotlight remains the oldest, continuously operating investigative unit at a newspaper in the United States.

With its aggressive coverage of the Catholic church, the healthcare industry, the shady world of taxicabs, and the unregulated college housing crisis, to name a few examples, the Spotlight team embodies investigative journalism at its best. Spotlight gives a voice to the voiceless, by shining a light into corners of our society that demand accountability.

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# Why investigative journalism matters

The Boston Globe's Spotlight team 2002 investigation into the cover-up of priests who committed sexual abuse is just one example of more than a century of noteworthy investigative journalism. These other stories have stood out through the years for their long-lasting impact on society, the corruption they uncovered, the secrets they unearthed and the lessons they left behind.

Writing for The Washington Post in the early 1950s, Murrey Marder examined Sen. Joe McCarthy and his accusations that 200 communists worked at the U.S. State Department. Marder found that McCarthy's claims, which led to 33 Army civilian employees being suspended, were all false and the journalist later went on to open the Post's London bureau and helped create the Nieman Watchdog Project at Harvard.

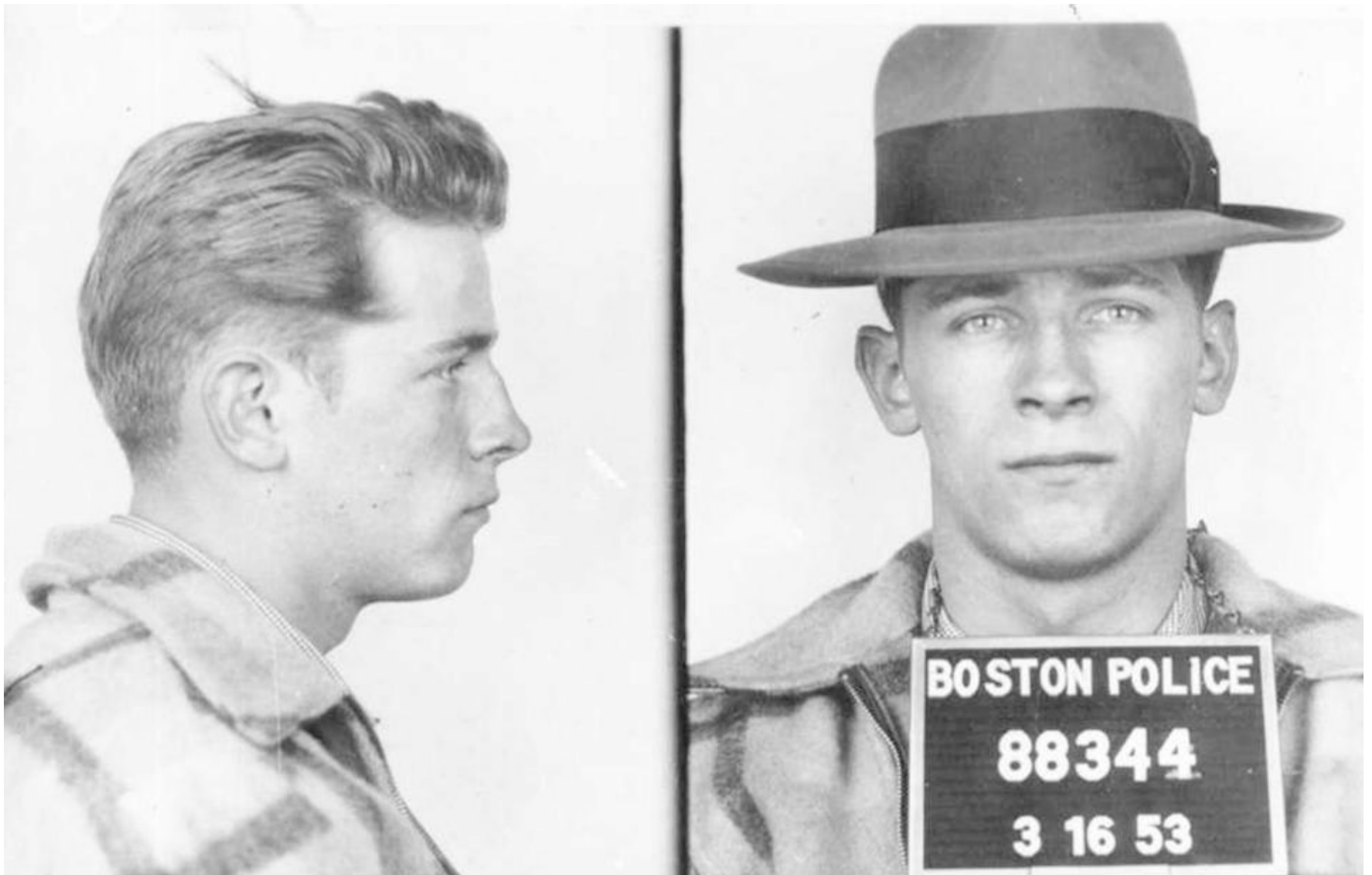
So aggressive and skeptical was David Halberstam's reporting on Vietnam in the New York Times that President John F. Kennedy in October 1963 asked the Times publisher to transfer his writer out of Vietnam. As Halberstam later wrote: "The job of the reporters in Vietnam was to report the news, whether or not the news was good for America."

When military analyst Daniel Ellsberg leaked 7,000 pages of Pentagon research detailing relations between the U.S. and Vietnam, it set off a national debate and Supreme Court case over press freedom and the public's right to know. The Washington Post and The New York Times published sections of the "Pentagon Papers," President Nixon tried to get them to stop publishing any documents, and ultimately the Supreme Court ruled in 1971 in favor of the press in *New York Times Co. v. United States*.

In the story that to this day defines the modern era of investigative journalism, a pair of Washington Post reporters began investigating a curious break-in at the Democratic National Committee offices at the Watergate Complex in Washington, D.C., only to find themselves bringing down the entire White House. The reporting of Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein led to 40 administration officials being indicted and President Nixon resigning.

Edward Snowden was a former National Security Agency analyst whose decision to leak stolen classified documents about NSA surveillance on foreign and U.S. citizens led to huge questions about just how far the government was going to protect its soil. The stories broke simultaneously in The Washington Post and The Guardian, and led Snowden to flee the U.S. and seek asylum in Russia.

# Law enforcement officials' lament about an elusive foe: Where was Whitey?



**Summary:** The Boston Globe's investigation into the activities and whereabouts of James "Whitey" Bulger stretched on for 25 years and included the stunning revelation in this early piece that Bulger had close ties to FBI agent John Connolly.

**Outcome:** Connolly was eventually tried and convicted in 2008 on charges of racketeering, obstruction of justice and murder, stemming from his relationship with Bulger, Steve Flemmi, and the Winter Hill Gang.

September 20, 1988

**By Christine Chinlund, Dick Lehr and Kevin Cullen**

Five years ago, on a cloudy April morning, federal agents barreled into a cinderblock warehouse in South Boston the minute the huge garage doors blinked open like two heavy eyelids.

Daylight revealed the booty hauled from the piers a mile away: 10 tons of marijuana. Valued at \$6 million, bale upon bale was jammed into trucks gassed up and ready to go.

Not a bad haul, along with the six men nabbed inside.

But agents savoring the bust were brought up short when they learned a potential bonus prize had apparently gotten away. By 10 minutes, informants later disclosed, the agents had missed James (Whitey) Bulger. The agents went back to look for fingerprints, but no such luck.

So where was Whitey?

The question has become the lament of law enforcement. The man designated a killer and crime boss by the 1986 President's Commission on Organized Crime has risen steadily in the past decade to the top of the underworld with nary a scratch.

Since 1980, local police, state troopers and federal drug agents have hunkered down behind windows, squeezed into entryways, and wormed around car interiors -- all in an effort to tail Bulger or conceal a tiny microphone in Bulger's car, his home or in the public telephones he frequently uses.

They have assembled the evidence to win court permission to monitor Bulger, but then have been repeatedly outmaneuvered before they could make the pinch. The bug goes in and suddenly Bulger stops talking.

The near-misses of Whitey Bulger have been law enforcement's most conspicuous failure in a decade of unprecedented accomplishment that saw the downfall of Howie Winter, overlord of the Winter Hill Gang, and, bigger still, of Gennaro Angiulo, the longtime Mafia underboss of Boston.

It is an elusiveness that Bulger, who served his only stretch of hard time three decades ago, has sustained throughout his life. "People all knew him, but nobody knows him," observed one longtime acquaintance. At 59, he is one of Boston's all-time mystery men and the aura of mystery fosters contradictory tales -- about his ruthlessness but also about his soft spot for the South Boston that has always been his base. The result is a paradoxical portrait of a reputed killer: the legend of Whitey as a not-so-bad bad guy.

The image has served him well. He has confounded everyone. The Mafia has a love-hate thing with him. "They're with us," Ilario M.A. Zannino, the tough Mafia lieutenant, once said about Bulger and his associates, only to bluster another time about how he would like to blow them all away with machine guns.

And the Federal Bureau of Investigation has for years had a special relationship with Bulger that has divided law enforcement bitterly and poisoned relations among many investigators, the Spotlight Team has learned.

“Isn’t he a great guy?” said an FBI agent about Bulger, according to another agent who feels the FBI should bust Bulger, not be beguiled by him.

For Whitey, the one willing to walk the high wire, the confusion provides the breathing room to prosper and survive.

“We’re all good guys here,” he proclaimed in 1984 as he waited politely for outwitted federal drug agents to finish retrieving a microphone he had discovered in his car. “You’re the good-good guys, and we’re the bad-good guys.”

Ever since his wild days of robbing banks, there have been few public glimpses of Bulger. But there have been plenty of secret ones -- from the Quincy police, state troopers and federal drug agents who have spent large portions of their professional lives chasing Bulger.

In the past decade, those sources said, Bulger has carved out a lucrative niche with his associate Stephen (The Rifleman) Flemmi: They control South Boston, Roxbury, Jamaica Plain, a piece of the South End and parts of Quincy and Lowell. With the Mafia in disarray, some now consider Bulger the most powerful mobster in Boston. “If they choose to be, Whitey and Flemmi are today as powerful as any Mafia regime,” said one investigator.

Using a low-key style, the two are believed to function, in effect, as landlords -- collecting rent from anyone doing business on their turf, whether it is running numbers or drugs. In recent years, South Boston’s piers and warehouses have been used as a staging area for drug distribution, a set-up that police say could only happen with Bulger’s blessing.

“At the very least, he’s getting protection money from drug runners,” said one agent. “Legally, that puts him in their service.” But to others, collecting tithes is the extent of his role in drug trafficking. Bulger, said another, is in the “business of money, not drugs.” And the money game includes shaking down drug dealers as well as lending funds at sky-high rates to loan sharks and gamblers who need cash quickly.

It is a business conducted mostly after hours. Like most major mobsters, Whitey is a creature of the night. His routine is to avoid a routine, having become ever more wary of being followed.

For a time in 1980, he and Flemmi operated out of a garage on Lancaster Street, near North Station. They waited outside for their appointments, each standing with his arms folded across his chest, not a hair out of place, not a shirt button out of line, as they stared down passersby.

There was the 50-year-old Whitey, still flexing the results of a lifetime of lifting weights, first in his bedroom in the Old Harbor tenements and more recently in health clubs.

On the street outside the garage, his demeanor was usually dour. He has a benign, Irish face, but somehow it is always clear he is not approachable. There is something firm and flat about the eyes, which look like marbles when he is angry.

Making visits to talk to the inseparable pair were a Who's Who of Boston's mobsters: Larry Zannino, Danny Angiulo, Nick Giso, Frank LePere, Connie Frizzi. They came carrying briefcases, and money was seen changing hands in an office inside.

Sidekick Nicky Femia usually stood watch, a beefy, gun-toting hit man who was murdered in 1983. Femia's lack of discipline and fitness was the sort of thing that set off Whitey Bulger the health fanatic, who only occasionally sips wine, does not smoke and does not permit anyone near him to smoke. Coming out of the garage office one day, Bulger spotted the 240-pound Femia using the polished hood of a black Chevy as a tabletop for a feast of McDonald's hamburgers and greasy French fries. Bulger grabbed the fast food and began throwing it into the face of the back-peddaling henchman twice his size.

It was like a scene from a mob movie, and the sudden burst of anger stunned the state troopers who were watching secretly from across the street. The troopers were left with an indelible impression similar to one a South Boston man had when he first saw Bulger's violent side 40 years ago. "I saw him get into a fight, and he just beat the piss out of the guy. Oh, he was vicious. And he wasn't that big. The other guy was bigger. But he was tough, and everyone whispered, 'That's Whitey Bulger.' "

But the garage near Boston Garden was only a pit stop for a man whose business makes perpetual motion a lifestyle. For a while, he shifted his meetings to the back room of a smokeshop near City Hall. Or he would make the rounds himself, ducking into the Cafe Pompeii in the North End to see Donato Angiulo, who ran his family's loan-sharking out of the Hanover Street coffee shop.

Mostly, however, Bulger has always commuted between pay phones. Many days, Bulger and Flemmi could be seen fishing in their pockets for dimes. They would make a call at the corner of Old Colony and Dorchester streets in South Boston, then go down to the phone at West Broadway and Dorchester Avenue. Then into a variety store on Broadway, followed by a quick swing into a bar. For a while, the favorite spot was the bank of pay phones outside the Howard Johnson's off the Southeast Expressway.

From there, they would head off to meet someone inside a row house on a narrow South Boston side street or in the parking lots of the factories at Fort Port Channel. They cruised around in leased cars that were changed frequently to guard against surveillance. For weekends, Whitey has kept a Cadillac or Jaguar -- the kind of luxury car he has always prized, going back to the projects when he not only had the wheels few others could afford but a car that sported the big fins and shiny chrome of the era.

The phones, the rotating cars and the open air meetings were all calculated moves. Said a source, "He's compulsive. The agents would do his trash . . . and there was a lot of ash, he would burn stuff



in his fireplace. He would rip things into tiny little shreds, almost like he had a shredder in his apartment.”

They were days in the early 1980s that often ended at a private club in Roxbury controlled by Flemmi. And they were days that periodically featured Bulger’s legendary temper -- a mean streak that first surfaced in his teen-age fighting days and became part of underworld folklore by the 1970s, when a wiseguy once warned a secretly wired loan-shark victim that he would rather tangle “with a cobra” than cross Whitey Bulger.

At 3:05 p.m. on Sept. 25, 1980, according to a state police report, a trooper who was following Bulger and Flemmi witnessed Whitey’s distaste for riffraff in his hometown: Bulger suddenly jumped from his car and grabbed a wino, who had been slumped on a Silver Street stoop. With Flemmi standing by, Bulger beat the man about the face, kicked him, then, in a final flourish, took the wino’s hat and threw it down the street. Bulger got back in the car laughing and drove away. When the plainclothes trooper approached the wino, the man pushed him away. “I don’t know nothin’,” the wino said. “And leave me alone.”

Few have a clue about the size of Bulger’s South Boston cadre, but no one doubts his strength. “I can’t tell you that anybody I’ve worked with has any idea what kind of muscle he has -- just that everybody’s scared to death of him,” said a former federal prosecutor.

But what Bulger may lack in numbers, compared to the beefier Mafia, he more than makes up for in guile and style. He has also always been different things to different people. To his mother, who died in 1980, the daring kid with the reddish-blond hair and easy smile was always Sonny. To his friends and siblings, he has always been Jimmy and a fierce loyalist.

Whitey has spent a lifetime helping out the mothers living in South Boston’s Old Harbor Village tenements, where the Bulger family was among the first residents in 1938. “If he was coming up the street, and I had the carriage going down just four stairs, he’d yell, ‘Wait a minute, Mrs. Dame,’” said Sally Dame, recalling five decades ago.

To the troopers who often followed Bulger into South Boston, there was always a noticeable change in his manner. Whitey Bulger, who crossed his arms and stared through those who came to pay him tribute at the downtown garage, would say hello to children and show deference to elderly women. Said a detective about Bulger today, “He would stop and open a car door for a lady, stop traffic.” He has distributed baskets and turkeys in the housing projects at Christmas, donated money to the youth sports teams and sent money to the families of men in jail.

But, for the most part, the homefront talk of Whitey is restricted to his cordial relations with adults as a boy. In interviews, many neighbors said no one ever openly discusses Sonny-Jimmy-Whitey’s professional life, which dates back to a 13-year-old’s first unruly journeys up to Mercer Street and petty crime. It is a rock no one turns over.

Said a friend: “He’s a hell of a guy; it’s just if you are on the wrong side. . .”

The turkeys and the donations, pulled off with a politician's touch, have helped create the good-bad guy that is Whitey Bulger. Except for Flemmi, he has never stuck with anyone long enough that they could know otherwise. Even in the beginning, Whitey was there but not there; in his early teens he hung around with a few of the Shamrocks but was never himself a member of that gang. Then came his association with the Killeen brothers of South Boston and, after that, with Howie Winter. It has been a lifetime of mergers and acquisitions.

He has been a schizophrenic puzzle to the most powerful underworld enterprise, the Mafia. During three months of secret bugging of the Angiulos in 1981, the Mafia relished the idea they could call on Bulger and Flemmi, if need be, even to kill. "I'll tell you right now, if I called these guys right now they'd kill anybody we tell 'em to," underboss Gennaro Angiulo claimed one winter afternoon. Later that year, Angiulo's lieutenant Zannino discussed the fate of a wiseguy who had erred by not paying Bulger and Flemmi long overdue money. Noted a soldier to Zannino, "I know if Stevie or Whitey sees him. . ."

"They're going to hit him," Zannino said.

But this same cast of Mafiosi could suddenly turn on Bulger and Flemmi when the subject became the pair's \$245,000 debt. "When did they ever come down here and give me a quarter?" Gennaro Angiulo complained one day about the obligation that always soured his mood. "And I'll tell you something, I don't think they intend to pay it, if you want my honest opinion."

The harangues against Bulger and what was left of the Winter Hill gang increased, as his elusive, independent ways occasionally proved too much for the Mafia. Angiulo began spreading the word he was tiring of the Irish hoods over at the Lancaster Street garage. The brutal Zannino related this to his men after a night of drinking at his big-stakes card game in the North End, a night that was tape-recorded by the FBI. "They got a bad attitude," Zannino reported.

"Why don't we go in that garage, right now? With machine guns," clamored one of the soldiers.

"We'll go tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock," Zannino said, stoking a flame that never flared beyond the North End backroom.

"We'll go bust right in the joint."

Gushing Mafia machismo, Zannino concluded, "You think they're with us? We'll kill every one of these Irishmen."

For the past decade, Bulger has kept the Mafia at bay, managing what one source called a "loose association" rooted in being both ally and a potential enemy. They were the sort of ties that Howie Winter first used to keep the Italians off balance -- elaborate gamemanship that called for friendly conversations, but with everyone taking a seat with their back to the wall.

They were ties that Flemmi had on his own, as he carved out a niche in Roxbury back in the early 1960s. Together, the Bulger-Flemmi team carefully nurtured their special standing, which has

served them well. The pair dealt directly with Angiulo, who usually preferred go-betweens to insulate himself from non-Mafiosi. Said a source, “The Mafia treats them with kid gloves.”

And it is a respect that Bulger trades on, his reputation rivaling that of the Mafia’s own legendary enforcer. “Whitey is the most like Zannino on the scene today . . .,” said one investigator. “But he is 100 times smarter. He’s selectively brutal. That’s the difference.”

The Mafia is not the only force that Bulger has succeeded in keeping at arm’s length. Even more impressive is the distance he has maintained from the law. Since Bulger left prison in 1965, he has only been in court twice, both for traffic violations. Few Boston police officers have any idea what Bulger looks like and Police Commissioner Francis M. Roache has declined to discuss him.

It is not as if some other cops have not tried.

For most of 1980, the State Police pursued Bulger. Detectives wired the garage, installed bugs in pay phones and tried hiding a microphone in the car Bulger drove. Each time their efforts fizzled. They had a slew of technical difficulties but also security problems: Bulger somehow caught on to their sleuthing and either began talking gibberish or said nothing at all.

In 1984, federal drug agents took a swing. The Drug Enforcement Administration put a bug in a window of Bulger’s condominium in Quincy and, when that failed, installed a microphone in his car door. It was the car bug that led to the lengthy, good-bad guy Bulger monologue, as dejected federal agents retrieved the \$50,000 in equipment Bulger had found.

The setbacks have left law enforcement officials confused, suspicious and at one another’s throat. Bulger, said one source, loves to pit one law enforcement agency against another, “which isn’t difficult in this state.” If so, Bulger has been triumphant. Few others have ever had such a divisive effect on law enforcement -- a disharmony, The Spotlight Team has learned, rooted largely in the fallout from Bulger’s longstanding ties to John Connolly, a member of the FBI’s organized crime squad.

Mention Connolly’s name today to many who track mobsters and the reply is Whitey Bulger. Mention Bulger’s name, the reply is often Connolly, the street-smart agent who also grew up in South Boston and first made contact with the Irish gangster shortly after the FBI transferred him home from New York City in 1973.

Back then, said federal sources, it made sense to have someone in the Boston office keeping open lines with the emerging leader. For Bulger’s part, he was hardly the first underworld figure to have a tenuous liaison with the other side. Mobsters frequently shadowbox with agents in a complex game that is sometimes reducible to a single question: Who is using whom?

But as Bulger rose to the top of his game, the Bulger-Connolly tie has been questioned by others in law enforcement, including some inside the FBI. “You can never have (contact with) the top guy,” one former official said in criticizing Connolly’s continuous link with Bulger. “Because you have the top guy, he’s making policy, and then he owns you.”

The failures of the State Police and the DEA have created two antithetical schools of thought: that the investigators simply bungled it through inexperience; or that Whitey has been able to exploit his cachet with the FBI to plan his evasive tactics.

State Police officials felt so strongly that someone within the FBI had tipped the mobsters about the bug that, in an unprecedented case of fingerpointing, they asked the FBI to conduct an internal inquiry. The FBI cleared two agents, and the FBI leadership remains outraged at the suggestion that any of its own would engage in that kind of treachery.

James F. Ahearn, special agent in charge of the FBI in Boston, was unequivocal when asked last month if Bulger has had relations with the FBI that have left him free of its scrutiny.

“That is absolutely untrue,” said Ahearn. “We have not had evidence that would warrant it and if we do develop anything of an evidentiary nature, we will pursue it. We specifically deny that there has been special treatment of this individual.” He declined to make any further comment on the matter and instructed Connolly not to speak on the subject.

Fallout from the bugging fiasco at the Lancaster Street garage did not end at fingerpointing. More bitterness followed in the summer of 1981 when the State Police discovered a small item on early retirement, tagged onto the state budget package, that would have forced those who ran the department’s intelligence division to retire immediately. The item was later removed, but police officials never figured out which legislator or staff person inserted the item into the budget, or why. Many in law enforcement felt the mysterious action was a warning shot at the State Police commanders who, the year before, had authorized the Lancaster Street investigation targeting Whitey Bulger.

In the bitter aftermath, many who were planning the DEA’s 1984 probe of Bulger were convinced they should not even tell the FBI, circumventing the policy that the FBI be notified of targeted figures. Despite the nearly universal feeling that no agent had or would intentionally warn Bulger about electronic surveillance, the fear of a leak persisted.

But to avoid a feud, William F. Weld, then the US attorney in Massachusetts, and Robert M. Stutman, then the DEA special agent in charge, went to see James Greenleaf, then FBI special agent in charge of the Boston office. The FBI, according to federal sources, was offered a role in the Bulger investigation if it wanted one. Several days later, Greenleaf declined.

Interviewed recently about the meeting on Bulger, Greenleaf was evasive. “Because of the sensitivity of the thing, I can’t really comment,” he said. Later, he added, “I wish I could comment, there are things that need to be said.” But by the end of the brief interview he was backing off entirely from the subject of Bulger. “I don’t recall being in a meeting where that (Bulger investigation) was the topic of conversation.”

At the time, the FBI’s position confirmed others’ worst fears about Bulger. “It really made you think, why won’t the FBI do this guy?” said one high-ranking DEA official.

Even inside the FBI there was a growing feeling by 1984 that the Connolly- Bulger liaison had gone on too long, that it was not producing results, and that it should be abandoned given the critical perception gaining momentum among others in law enforcement. At least one FBI agent refused to work with Connolly. And, while the DEA continued drawing up its plans, there was a move within the FBI, which ultimately failed, to force Connolly to close out the contact with the underworld leader.

“You can’t have another government agency running an investigation against a guy that we know,” said a federal source familiar with the effort. “It’s stupid. It’s dumb.”

The net result is that when it comes to Whitey Bulger, the FBI has been put on the defensive. Many dubious investigators point back to the race-fixing convictions of Winter Hill mobsters, which began in 1979 and ran through 1982, as the first sign of exemption for Bulger and Flemmi. Of the co-conspirators government witness Anthony (Fat Tony) Ciulla accused of getting a cut of the profits, only Bulger and Flemmi were not indicted.

But Jeremiah T. O’Sullivan, the chief of the US Justice Department’s New England Organized Crime Strike Force, who prosecuted the case, said the two were not indicted because “we had no evidence against them outside of Ciulla’s word. Very rarely do you indict on just the word of an informant.”

“To the people who are whining and complaining, I’d suggest, make a case on them. It ain’t nuclear physics. It can be done,” said O’Sullivan in a challenge to the law enforcement agencies which have gone after Bulger. “What you’ve had is some people taking one shot, then walking away crying that there’s been a leak. You’ve got to keep trying.”

The explanation does not quiet the critics, who contend the race-fixing case was the best shot anyone has had against Bulger, a shot worth taking with the word of a government witness who proved his credibility in court. They also note that back in 1968 just the word of a government witness put away Raymond L.S. Patriarca, head of the New England Mafia, for five years.

Moreover, O’Sullivan’s exhortations to try harder do not explain the existence of at least 14 volumes of FBI files on Bulger -- material that one federal source noted is further proof of the FBI’s long-standing relationship with Bulger. “Who else would have that many volumes?” the source asked rhetorically. “Maybe Jerry Angiulo? Patriarca? But they were put away.” The extensiveness of the files indicate the FBI has been following Bulger closely for years, but it has never charged him with anything.

Knowledge of the copious FBI files resulted from a Freedom of Information Act request made by the Globe last April. The Globe has yet to receive any of the requested material from the FBI, a delay that one official in Washington explained was in part due to the time it will take to sift through the voluminous material to determine what portions are disclosable.

For the critics, including those within the FBI who have heard Connolly mention Whitey's good-guy deeds in the home district, it is a dangerous situation not unlike the US government hanging on too long with helpful if unscrupulous dictators.

"It's always a tough call about when you go past that turning point where you were using the guy and then he starts using you," said a veteran investigator.

From the dispute, Bulger profits -- his opposition divided, his reputation enhanced. "Other police just throw up their hands and it becomes a free ride," another said. Added a prosecutor about Bulger's apparent omniscience, "Whitey's got hooks everywhere." If Bulger lacks outright control, it is clear he is on the mind of those running the control tower.

One clue to Bulger's strategic success comes from the nine years he spent in federal prison. He studied extensively, from politics to World War II. But his approach to war was unique. "He would read one guy's book, say Marshall's book, and then he'd go get the book from some German, and he would study the same battle from everybody's perspective," said a friend.

Bulger, it seems, has a knack for the quick countermove. Faced with the prospect of renewed surveillance, he has become more cautious, said sources who monitor his activities.

Less frequent are his visits to the home of his brother, Senate President William M. Bulger, and he has long stopped going to gatherings there on St. Patrick's Day. In the summers, Bulger used to enjoy the afternoon sun in front of the South Boston Liquor Mart, the building which until recently was owned in his name. He has not been sunning himself there this year.

Bulger now goes on the road a lot, sources said, travel being his favorite form of recreation, often with his longtime companion, Theresa Stanley. Indeed, Bulger's last public encounter was an unexpected one a year ago at Logan Airport.

As always, it had a Whitey twist.

Minutes before Bulger and Stanley were going to board a flight to Montreal last September, airport security examining luggage realized Bulger's carry-on bag contained a brick-sized wad of cash. The guard thumbed through the \$100 bills, totaling an estimated \$100,000. Bulger angrily ignored questions about the money and, when the guard said she was notifying State Police, he took off.

Followed by a guard, Bulger headed quickly for the door. Just as a quarterback hands off a football, he gave the package to another man, who hurried out the door and climbed into a black Chevy Blazer. The guard tried to follow, but Bulger put his foot in the revolving door so it would not budge.

The guard was stuck. The Chevy drove away.

No one knew they were dealing with Whitey Bulger, not State Trooper William Johnson, who responded and found a man dressed in an expensive black jogging suit exchanging harsh words with

a security guard. The trooper looked at Bulger's identification -- James J. Bulger -- but still did not make the connection.

Because there was no reason to detain him, Bulger was eventually let go. But not before the trooper spent a couple of minutes trying to figure out what happened. Getting double talk from Bulger, the trooper finally yelled at him to shut up. Bulger, who does not consider himself an ordinary wise-guy, was genuinely affronted. In his best good-bad guy mold, he asked:

“Is that how you treat citizens?”

# Geoghan preferred preying on poorer children

**Summary:** The Boston Globe's investigation into how the archdiocese shuttled priest John Geoghan from parish to parish despite knowing his history of abusing children over three decades included letters of warnings that were ignored and records revealing a trail of secrecy and deception.

**Outcome:** In the years following the Globe's first story in January 2002, other investigations around the world found hundreds of similar cases of abuse claims that were covered up by local churches. Accused priests either resigned or were defrocked, many were convicted of crimes, and hundreds of millions of dollars in settlement payments were made to victims. Pope Francis recently said that "God weeps" at the sexual abuse of children and that he commits "to the careful oversight to ensure that youth are protected."



January 7, 2002



**This article was prepared by the Globe Spotlight Team; reporters Matt Carroll, Sacha Pfeiffer, and Michael Rezendes; and editor Walter V. Robinson. It was written by Pfeiffer.**

The telephone call was urgent.

“There is a crisis,” the Rev. Brian M. Flatley, an archdiocesan official, told Dr. Edward Messner, a psychiatrist at Massachusetts General Hospital, on Dec. 30, 1994.

Messner’s notes from that day convey the gravity of the situation: “A priest had admitted abusing minors in the past and has been acting out again recently . . . police and the district attorney are involved . . .

The allegations mirror what has come up before.”

Six hours later, the Rev. John J. Geoghan and Messner began regular therapy sessions in which Geoghan admitted to being “drawn by affection and intimacy with boys” and, as an MGH psychologist wrote, “pointed out that his misconduct occurred, ‘during a time of sexual exploration for this country.’ ”

In 1995 and 1996, according to court records examined by the Globe Spotlight Team, Geoghan explained why he preyed on children from poorer families: “The children were just so affectionate, I got caught up in their acts of affection. Children from middle-class families never acted like that toward me, so I never got so confused.”

Moreover, court documents that include Geoghan’s psychiatric records contain starkly contradictory assessments of his danger to children from different therapists. He received at least four clean bills of health between 1980 and 1990, a period when the Archdiocese of Boston assigned him three times to parishes despite his record of abuse; but prompted declarations that he was an incurable pedophile after he became a public embarrassment to the archdiocese in the mid-1990s.

For example, Messner’s notes show that Geoghan told him that Flatley, whose job was to deal with priests who had molested children, had branded him “a pedophile, a liar, and a manipulator.”

Collectively, the publicly filed church documents add detailed clinical evidence to what the Globe reported yesterday: Although the 1995 and 1996 psychiatric reports diagnose Geoghan with a deep-rooted sexual perversion, there were ample signs years earlier that he was unfit for parish work.

Yesterday, the Globe reported that Cardinal Bernard F. Law, during his first year in Boston in 1984, assigned Geoghan to St. Julia’s in Weston even though Geoghan had been removed from his two prior parishes for molesting children. In one of those cases, in 1980, Geoghan asserted that his repeated abuse of seven boys in one family, which was discovered that year, was not a “serious” problem. That is according to a church timeline of Geoghan’s career - six parish assignments in 34 years with accusations that he molested more than 130 children.

Law, after celebrating Mass yesterday at the Cathedral of the Holy Cross, reiterated the archdiocese's statement of Friday that he would not comment on Geoghan.

The documents also contain evidence that Geoghan's false denials of past sexual abuse through the 1960s and much of the 1970s helped justify a critical church decision that freed Geoghan to abuse even more children. In 1989, Geoghan was forced to take a six-month sick leave from St. Julia's after more accusations of abuse surfaced. But Law soon signed off on a decision to return him to the parish, according to church documents.

The Spotlight reports of today and yesterday are based on public documents filed in connection with 84 civil lawsuits pending against Geoghan and two criminal cases, the first of which is scheduled to go to trial in Middlesex Superior Court next Monday. The archdiocese, Law, and five other bishops are defendants in many of the pending lawsuits, charged with negligence for not properly supervising Geoghan. Already, the archdiocese has settled 50 other lawsuits, paying more than \$10 million to Geoghan's victims.

The multiple accusations against Geoghan represent the largest scandal involving an American Catholic priest since the 1992 disclosure that former priest James Porter had abused more than 100 children in the Fall River Diocese in the 1960s.

The massive number of documents compiled by lawyers handling the 84 remaining civil suits have been under a confidentiality seal sought by the archdiocese. But based on a motion by the Globe, Superior Court Judge Constance M. Sweeney ordered that all the documents be made public. They are scheduled to be released on Jan. 26.

The documents already on public file detail the extent of Geoghan's lengthy treatment history and make clear the church's longtime knowledge of his misconduct.

The psychiatric documents offer added insights into Geoghan's troubled mind and the motivations behind his aberrant actions - often as explained by Geoghan himself.

Geoghan was, by his own assessment, a heterosexual. But he told Messner during his treatment sessions that his victims were usually young prepubescent boys. He said he "avoided girls," explaining, "I picked the boys because in some way they were the safest, the girls and the mothers would have been more dangerous."

The records suggest there were early warning signs.

Geoghan, who is 66, attended St. John's Seminary after graduating from Holy Cross College and was ordained in 1962. Deposition transcripts refer to correspondence from Geoghan's seminary days in which his superiors conclude he has "pronounced immaturity."

In an April 1995 session with Messner, Geoghan said that even as a newly ordained priest he would "experience arousal when there was physical closeness" with children.

In a June 1996 psychological assessment, Dr. Mark Blais, a Massachusetts General Hospital psychologist, concluded that Geoghan has a “powerful sense of emotional deprivation and emotional loneliness.”

Medical evaluations of Geoghan, which repeatedly cleared him to return to parish work after incidents of sexual misconduct in the 1970s and ‘80s, changed dramatically in the mid-1990s. By then, complaints against Geoghan were being made with unsettling frequency, and it was clear he risked becoming an embarrassment - and financial liability - to the Church.

In December 1984, for example, a month after being reassigned to St. Julia’s in Weston following his removal from St. Brendan’s in Dorchester, Geoghan underwent evaluations by two separate Boston-area psychotherapists. Dr. Robert Mullins declared Geoghan “fully recovered,” and Dr. John H. Brennan advised “no . . . restrictions to his work as a parish priest.”

Not everyone was comfortable with the assignment. Bishop John M. D’Arcy, a popular cleric whose forthright manner rankled Law, according to a friend of D’Arcy, wrote to Law in December 1984 to question Law’s decision assigning Geoghan to St. Julia’s because of his history of sex abuse. He warned that placing Geoghan there might result in further scandal.

Two months later, D’Arcy was gone, transferred to a diocese in Fort Wayne, Ind., which he has headed ever since.

New allegations against Geoghan surfaced within two years, and again in 1989. But Geoghan told Bishop Robert J. Banks in March 1989 that he had “no more sexual attraction to children” and had been “chaste for five years.”

But the church’s own timeline of Geoghan’s misconduct suggests Banks did not believe him. Within weeks, Geoghan was sent to the St. Luke Institute in Suitland, Md., where he was diagnosed with “homosexual pedophilia.” The result: “Told by Bishop Banks he had to leave ministry,” according to a church record.

Instead, Geoghan was put on sick leave the following month, and in August was hospitalized for three months at the Institute of Living, a Hartford treatment center, where he was discharged in November 1989, as “moderately improved.” Banks agreed to send him back to St. Julia’s, subject to approval by another bishop and “BFL” - Cardinal Law.

But during 1995 treatment, psychologists at St. Luke concluded that during the 1989 treatment in Hartford, Geoghan did not tell the truth about the extent of his sexual abuse of children. He denied any incidents before the late 1970s, to include long-running instances of abuse dating to 1962. And the Institute of Living’s report to the archdiocese reflected Geoghan’s lie.

Moreover, the records state that Bishop Banks was “unhappy” with the Institute of Living’s discharge summary because it was “different from what he had understood and based his decision to allow Fr. Geoghan back to work.”

A reply letter from the institute reports: “The probability that he would act out again is quite low. However, we cannot guarantee that it could not reoccur.”

Yet the archdiocese was hit with more complaints in 1991, 1992, and 1994, although the 1992 accusation was dismissed by church officials as “hearsay and vague.”

Law finally removed Geoghan from parish duty in January 1993.

Midway through his treatment with Messner, Geoghan was returned to St. Luke in January 1995. His diagnosis after that 10-day stay was far less optimistic than earlier judgments. “It is our clinical judgment that Father Geoghan has a longstanding and continuing problem with sexual attraction to prepubescent males,” his evaluation reads. “His recognition of the problem and his insight into it is limited.”

Therapists at St. Luke advised that Geoghan have no unsupervised contact with minor males and return for residential treatment, although Geoghan resisted the latter recommendation. Instead, he was sent in July 1995, to Southdown, an Ontario treatment facility, where he stayed for four to six months.

In 1996, Blais, too, submitted a pessimistic evaluation. “Treatment of such a chronic and deeply ingrained condition would need to be lengthy,” he wrote.

Geoghan was removed from the priesthood in 1998.

# A house jammed with students, a life of promise lost



**Summary:** In a region crammed with college students, the Globe investigated the conditions of off-campus housing and found a crisis of greed, mismanagement and neglect with sometimes tragic results.

**Outcome:** Boston Mayor Martin J. Walsh persuaded officials from Boston College, Boston University, Northeastern, and other schools to provide the addresses of students living off campus, so inspectors could enforce zoning rules intended to limit to four the number of undergrads living in a single apartment. But that rule was deemed unenforceable, even though the city identified about 600 properties likely in violation of it, and no citations were issued. The city is exploring other options to tighten the regulations on colleges.

May 4, 2014

**This story was reported by Globe Spotlight Team reporters Jenn Abelson, Jonathan Saltzman, Casey Ross, and Todd Wallack, and editor Thomas Farragher. It was written by Abelson.**

April 28, 2013: 1:30 a.m.

It had been a long night.

As Binland Lee trudged up the rear staircase of 87 Linden St. early Sunday morning, the Boston University senior found a small gathering of housemates and friends sprawled across the living room sipping gin and tonics and mojitos and listening to music on a laptop.

The 22-year-old was exhausted after walking from a party near MIT where a friend had just confessed romantic feelings for her.

A little tipsy, Binland broke into a wide grin when she spotted Devi Gopal, an old classmate from Brooklyn Technical High School, sitting in her Allston apartment. They hung out for five minutes before Binland called it a night. Her freshly cut, glossy black hair swung across her back as she walked up stairs still adorned in twinkling Christmas lights.

Binland headed to her attic sanctuary, her perfect undergraduate space. The marine science major had hung a beach ball-colored hammock inspired by a school trip to Belize next to a giant poster of Hawaiian palm trees and ocean waves. Above the dormer window, Binland plastered a large blue and white flag of Finland — an amusing emblem of her trademark introduction.

"Hi, I'm Binland. Like Finland with a B," she explained to new acquaintances.

She opened the tan curtain draped over her bed like a canopy and sank into the queen size mattress. Several hours later, Binland woke; fire was spreading through the house, climbing rapidly toward the attic.

"Get down!" her housemate Thiéry Désiré yelled from inside his bedroom across the hall.

The apartment had only one exit on the floor below — her perfect space was therefore also perfectly illegal — and dark smoke was now choking the hallway outside her bedroom door. It was a 26-foot plunge from her dormer window to the front lawn.

Binland screamed.

The light gray Colonial where Binland lived with 13 others was never supposed to house so many people.

A prior owner had converted it to a two-family after a fire in the 1990s, splitting up the building in an unusual way by blocking off the central staircase that once connected the first and second floors.

Binland and her housemates nicknamed these stairs to nowhere "the Pit" and considered turning it into a colorful ball pit like at Chuck E. Cheese's. Instead, they used the area as storage for luggage, scuba gear, and books.

The walled-off staircase meant no one could enter the upstairs apartment through the front door. A rear interior staircase provided the only access to that unit, and a new sliding glass door in the family room on the second floor was intended to provide the required second egress, according to plans filed with the city in 1992.

But heedless landlords, scant oversight, and intense demand for student housing would turn 87 Linden into a case study of the city's broken student rental housing system.

Boston, defined in large measure by the students who flock to it, allows these eager newcomers to be put at risk in overcrowded houses that serve as shoddy substitutes for modern dorms. Such illegal overcrowding is rampant in student neighborhoods, a Globe Spotlight Team investigation found, a health and safety hazard virtually ignored by city inspectors and exacerbated by local universities that have in recent years, admitted many more students than they can house.

The exact cause of the blaze that consumed the house remains in dispute. The fire department found that the cause was "unintentional, careless disposal of smoking materials" but residents deny that anyone smoked in the house the night before the blaze. The Globe's detailed reconstruction of that terrifying morning, drawing on hundreds of documents and more than 60 interviews, revealed persistent problems at 87 Linden and the failure of key players to do much about them.

By the time Binland and her friends moved into the house in the fall of 2012, landlord Anna Belokurova, who had just emerged from bankruptcy protection, was renting out nearly every space as a bedroom, including the family room with the sliding glass door. That left the building without a mandatory second exit for the upstairs unit.

It was nothing out of the ordinary for this student-packed neighborhood where homes with rafts of code violations persist despite crackdowns promised by the city. The house, which listed six bedrooms in building plans, was actually filled with 14 residents sharing 12 bedrooms, including three people who lived in basement spaces that city inspectors had cited as illegal in 2001.

The wood-frame home had an array of other issues — a kitchen light constantly flickered, bulbs burned out quickly, and stifling heat alternated with frigid temperatures. The total monthly rent for the two units: \$7,850.

It was a great deal for Belokurova. And compared to dorm costs, the rent was a bargain.

Binland embraced her first off-campus apartment, and so did her housemates, among them Thierry Désiré, a high school classmate; Erica Ross, a marine science friend; and Patrick Farley, a pal of Erica's ex-boyfriend. They led fairly independent lives but came together for parties and occasional late nights after the bars closed.



Nine residents and four guests were sleeping at 87 Linden on the night of the fire. About an hour after Binland retreated to her attic bedroom, the gathering had dwindled to a few people in the living room on the second floor.

They brought out a vaporizer, a smokeless device, to inhale marijuana. The vaporizer plugged into an outlet to heat up the plant material and did not use a lighter or match.

At around 3 a.m., the vaporizer now unplugged and put away, Patrick turned to Thiéry: "Dude, please unplug the Christmas lights."

Thiéry did that, and as he headed up to the attic, quiet fell over the house.

April 28, 2013: 6:30 a.m.

A shrill beeping pierced the Sunday morning as Alex Mark opened her bedroom door and walked toward the second-floor bathroom.

The Boston University senior felt a jolt of fear when she spotted black smoke ahead of her and orange flames to her left in the Pit.

The 22-year-old ran to Erica Ross's bedroom in the rear of the building across the hall from Alex. After finding Erica's bed empty, Alex fled in her pajamas and black Birkenstock sandals to the only way out — a white door on a small landing next to the Pit. Heat from the fire singed the top of her dirty blond hair as she bolted down a separate staircase to a back exit on the ground floor.

While Alex frantically dialed 911 outside the house, Julia Cseko, roused by the alarm, stood half-clothed by the door of her boyfriend Patrick's bedroom in the rear of the house on the second floor. She fumbled with a fire extinguisher and tried to put out the flames that had advanced from the Pit to the couch in the living room overlooking Linden Street.

"Get out of the house! There is a fire!" Julia yelled, as black smoke enveloped her.

Julia and Patrick darted out the sliding glass door on the back wall of his bedroom and inhaled the crisp spring air. He reached inside for two pairs of pants and they quickly dressed on the wood deck facing the driveway behind the building.

Julia's screams startled Nick Moore who lived one floor above in the attic. He crawled on the light brown carpet toward the stairs to the second floor — his only escape route — and then turned back. It was too hard to breathe.

Nick lunged for his bedroom window and gulped air. A rock climber, the recent Emmanuel College graduate snatched a blue sweatshirt and hoisted himself onto the slanted roof, shimmied across the narrow edge, and then jumped about 12 feet down onto a pitched landing.

Nick hopped over a railing to join Patrick and Julia as several windows exploded with such force that it sounded like bombs to the neighbors next door.



Alex, the first to exit the burning building, looked up from the back driveway and saw Nick, Julia, and Patrick barreling down the exterior stairs from Patrick's deck. Waves of relief washed over her; Alex assumed her other housemates, Thierry and Binland, were not far behind.

Pieces of melting gray siding fell from above. Alex looked into Cat Principe's bedroom on the ground floor. "There's a fire upstairs. You have to get out," Alex barked through the window.

Cat, still inside, scooped up her black cat and shrieked: "There is a fire! Get out! Wake up!"

Sylvan O'Sullivan heard the screams and scrambled out the front door. Cat tore through her two-level apartment to the basement to warn the housemates who lived there. The BU sophomore had trouble seeing in the basement, so she crawled back up the stairs with BU sophomore Shiran Sukumar a few steps behind and raced out the front door. Jed Margolis, another basement resident, fled through the cellar storm door onto the rear driveway.

Upstairs in the third-floor attic, a gray haze was settling over Thierry's room where his high school friend Devi, her cousin Ashley Gopal, and Ashley's roommate Tiffany Ramgolam were visiting from New York. When Thierry opened the door, a wall of smoke surged over him. It singed his eyebrows and seared his throat.

Thierry yelled to get on the floor and slammed the door shut.

"Do you think you'll make it if we run all the way downstairs?" Thierry asked Ashley, a senior at Stony Brook University in Long Island.

"No, we can't. We have to jump," Ashley pleaded. "We have to jump."

Ashley, Devi, and Tiffany took turns sticking their heads out of the dormer window overlooking Linden Street while Thierry dialed 911. It was 6:35 a.m.

The window, broken before he moved in, would not stay open so Thierry ripped the glass panel from the frame and threw it on the floor.

Tiffany stuck one leg over the sill but her other leg got caught in the plastic white blinds. She froze when she looked outside to the left and saw the 2½-story drop to the front lawn.

Peering through the opening, Ashley spotted a roof near the middle of the house over a porch on the ground floor. She scooted around Tiffany, who still had one leg hanging outside, and clutched the window frame. Ashley turned her body so it was pressed against the house and let go. Tiffany quickly followed, landing hard next to Ashley and spraining her right ankle.

Thierry grabbed his wallet and glasses as Devi prepared to make the 12-foot leap.

Then they heard Binland, their Brooklyn Tech classmate, scream from across the hall in her bedroom.

"Binland! Binland!" Thierry yelled from behind his closed door. "Come to the window!"

He thought he heard Binland open her room's window. Smoke filled his lungs. The room blackened. Thierry panicked, worried he would die if he waited any longer.

He jumped and found Devi writhing in pain on the porch roof with a fractured back and injured wrist. When he looked up at the front of the house, glowing flames shot from Binland's window and glass began raining down.

April 28, 2013: 6:40 a.m.

Boston Fire Department's Ladder 14 roared the wrong way down Linden Street from Brighton Avenue. Fire Captain Pat Ellis immediately called for a second alarm when he saw roiling smoke, heavy fire, and college students jumping from upper floors, including Tiffany, who was dangling by her fingers from the porch roof.

Firefighter Brian Hardiman threw up a 35-foot ladder for Tiffany. Then he scurried to help Devi and Thierry, who was shivering in a canary yellow T-shirt and boxer shorts.

"Make sure my roommates are out," Thierry begged as he gestured toward the house.

Captain Ellis sprinted around the side and rear to see if anyone needed rescuing.

Down on the sidewalk, Boston Police Sergeant Maryann O'Neill urgently interviewed residents to assess who might be inside. Alerted to one missing tenant — 22-year-old Binland — she asked: "Does anyone know where Binland is? Does anyone know if she came home?"

Alex, who lived in the bedroom below Binland, told O'Neill she knew that her friend was still in the apartment.

"Then let's call her and see where she is," O'Neill directed. "Can you call her and see where she is?"

Alex, distraught, dialed Binland's cellphone repeatedly. It rang the first time and then went straight to voicemail.

Chaos broke out across Linden Street as neighbors stumbled outside to a sunny April morning weeks away from BU's graduation. Ambulances, sirens blaring, hurtled toward the scene. Firetrucks jammed the narrow street of mismatched two- and three-family houses packed with college students.

It was a horrifying déjà vu for many residents who had awakened on a Sunday morning a year earlier to discover 84 Linden St. ablaze with BU students leaping out of second- and third-story windows.

Captain Ellis and firefighter Mike Lynch tore through the front door of 87 Linden to search the upper floors, only to hit a dead end at the walled-off staircase on the first floor — the other side of the Pit.

"How do you get to the second floor?" Ellis shouted to the tenants as he ran back outside.

Around the rear, they pointed. Back there, flames roared from every window except one in Erica's bedroom on the second floor.

Firefighter Travis Dery positioned a ladder at that window and climbed inside while Ellis maneuvered through a shattered opening on the second floor. They met near the door to Erica's bedroom and then Ellis fell through the floor where the interior staircase and banister had burned away. Ellis ripped a ligament in his knee but continued fighting the blaze, seeking treatment later in the day.

The fire was moving quickly through the wood-frame home. The open stairwell was like a chimney, pushing the inferno upward. Boxes, vinyl records, and a snowboard stored in the Pit fed flames that devoured oxygen and emitted noxious fumes.

Electrical power lines above the house initially blocked firefighters from using an aerial ladder to aim hoses at the top floor. Inside, another firefighter, James Shone, tumbled hard into the same hole by the charred stairs that had tripped up Ellis.

Deputy Chief Steve Dunbar ordered everyone out of the building except Rescue 1, the team conducting searches. He requested a third alarm at 6:56 a.m.

At 7:03 a.m., Dunbar called out: "We are getting reports we are missing a person on the second floor rear. Before you pull them out, can you do a secondary search of the second floor?"

At 7:07 a.m.: "We are now receiving updated information from the police that that person could be located in the attic."

Julia, who had been staying on the second floor with her boyfriend Patrick, felt an urge to vomit when she watched the smoke consume Binland's attic bedroom.

"[She] could be dying in there," Julia thought, as she sat on the sidewalk.

Police officers arriving on the scene ushered Julia, Patrick, his housemate Nick, and an injured firefighter, into an ambulance bound for Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center. Another emergency vehicle transported Alex, Thiéry, and his three guests to Brigham & Women's Hospital.

Thiérry, stoic by nature, sobbed uncontrollably. Tears streamed down his soot-caked cheeks as he dialed his mother in New York.

When they arrived at the Brigham, Thiéry and Alex were treated for smoke inhalation. BU chaplain Brother Larry Whitney attempted to comfort the students but Thiéry began grilling him. "Have you heard what's going on?" the 21-year-old demanded. "Have they found Binland?"

Meanwhile, back on Linden Street, the landlord, Anna Belokurova, pulled up to the fire scene with her insurance adjuster and approached Christopher Sloane of Boston's Fire Investigation Unit.

She began listing problems with the property: There was a ceiling light flickering that her maintenance man fixed a month ago; a closet pole fell down a couple of days ago.

"Can I move away from the cameras?" the landlord asked Sloane as television crews filmed the devastation.

At the BU police station less than a mile away, three tenants from the lower-level apartment, two of them shoeless and in pajamas, peppered the officers with questions. "Where is Binland? Have you found her? Where is everyone from upstairs?"

There were no good answers.

Sept. 1, 2012: eight months earlier

On move-in day, the tenants found 87 Linden in well-worn shape — a familiar, shabby greeting for Boston students living off campus.

Cat Principe remembers looking apprehensively at the old mattress left on the sidewalk plastered with a bright orange sticker from Boston's Inspectional Services Department: "Caution --This May Contain Bed Bugs -- Do Not Remove!"

It was hardly an auspicious beginning for the 20-year-old's first off-campus living experience. But this old house had to be better than Warren Towers, her BU freshman dorm, which she considered chaotic and too expensive.

Down the block, Cat spotted city officials who had set up a tent in the Hess gas station parking lot at the corner of Brighton Avenue. Move-in day is when city inspectors make a large and very public show of force in student neighborhoods. They encouraged tenants moving into Allston to get their apartments inspected. When Cat called the city for information, the BU student was told someone could come by within the week.

Cat rang the landlord, Belokurova, to get her advice: "They are going around inspecting apartments for free," Cat remembers saying. "Should I sign up for it and ask them to come look?"

Belokurova immediately rejected the idea, Cat recalled.

The landlord had just wrapped up her bankruptcy case in August after years of financial distress. Like many seeking to profit from the real estate boom, she had bought up properties in Allston and other neighborhoods. But Belokurova's huge loans swiftly fell into default.

An appraisal of the house filed in March 2011 as part of the bankruptcy proceedings noted that 87 Linden had "accrued a more than average amount of physical depreciation. Several windows, flooring, moldings, appliances, fences, stairs, stairways, and some siding needs replacing, and also needs electrical updating."

"No, it's fine," Belokurova told her unsuspecting tenant. "It isn't necessary."

Cat let it go. And she never saw inspectors come by.

In the apartment upstairs, Binland focused that day on perfecting her room. Binland's immigrant parents made the trip from Brooklyn to help move in their only child as they had every fall semester. A seasoned worrier, her mother, Xu Mei Kwong, had resisted the idea of off-campus housing. The Chinese seamstress relented after Binland convinced her that she could save money for graduate school and become more independent. But now Mei noticed cracks on the walls, exposed wires, and a broken bathroom door.

"I'll get them fixed," Binland promised.

Mei, who spoke with her daughter several times a day, mailed Binland a tan curtain to cover the cracks. The BU senior tacked the cloth to the ceiling and draped it over her bed. It reminded Binland of the comforting fort she had built with pillows and blankets in her junior year dorm room. It was a happy memory and she planned to make more.

### Trouble on Linden Street

87 Linden St. is a house with a history, and not an entirely happy one. The paper trail stretches back years.

Certainly it was an address city officials came to know well.

Officer Edwin DeJesus pulled up his cruiser to 87 Linden at 1:12 a.m. on April 15, 2000, and discovered a raucous gathering of 40 to 50 minors drinking alcohol and playing loud music. While the police were distracted, partygoers who paid a \$15 entry fee locked themselves in bedrooms and hid there with kegs of beer.

Three days later, District 14's Dan Daley faxed the police report from 87 Linden with a message for Inspectional Services Commissioner Kevin Joyce: "This location is a BU frat. Joe Walsh from office of Gov't & Comm affairs at B.U. asked if location could be inspected to see if they have appropriate licenses."

On April 20, Inspectional Services dispatched its special operations division. The inspectors found nine tenants paying \$6,500 a month for a house with no working smoke detectors, blocked egress, holes in the ceiling and walls, broken lights, mold in the bathroom, missing handrails, debris in the basement, and a garbage-strewn yard.

The city filed a lawsuit against then-owner Joseph Briganti ordering him to make the repairs. Another inspection in January 2001 uncovered illegal bedrooms in the basement.

But the landlord apparently had another way of addressing the problems: Let somebody else deal with them. Briganti sold 87 Linden for \$567,000 in March 2001 to Wing Chan, a local property investor.

When BU student Erika Reimerdes let inspectors onto the property less than a month later, plywood boards covered broken windows near the front porch and two of her housemates were living

in the illegal basement bedrooms. The agency reported "violations still exist" and rewrote the old complaints with the new owner's name.

On April 30, 2001, a city inspector made handwritten notes on the smoke detector citation: "Closed. Violations corrected. Case closed."

The paper trail abruptly ends for the other dozen violations, including the illegal basement bedrooms. As far as can be determined, nothing was done about them.

The transitory nature of these rentals rarely allows students to learn about the horrible experiences of those who lived before them in these rooms, people like Jennifer Ducharme.

Two days before classes started in 2007, Ducharme, a Boston University senior, searched for an available place in Allston. She checked out one of the few listings posted — a basement bedroom at 87 Linden St. — and signed a lease with Belokurova, who had purchased the property in 2002 for \$690,000.

Problems surfaced immediately. The dishwasher overflowed. The refrigerator's shelves broke in two places. The water stopped running. On Oct. 9, Boston inspectors cited Belokurova after the city turned off water service, apparently because of unpaid bills.

Belokurova had made a habit of not paying bills and defaulted on her mortgage with Bank of America, which moved to foreclose on the property in the fall of 2007. While other landlords were cashing in on can't-miss investments, Anna's financial skills matched her housekeeping; she was going broke.

Jennifer called the city on Nov. 1, when the electrical company shut off power for two days and the stench of rotting food permeated the apartment. The heat stopped working days later. Jennifer's conversations with Belokurova left the student in tears.

On Nov. 12 at 9:25 p.m., Belokurova, a Ukrainian immigrant who also bought a home on Cape Cod, wrote Ducharme's housemate from her e-mail account with the name invest2trust: "I just wanted to let you know that my plumber turned of [sic] the gas tonight. He found a crack in the heater. The part will be replaced by 2morrow. He felt that the apartment was worm [sic] enough so he felt it was safer that way. Nothing to be concern about, I just wanted 2 let u know."

City inspectors showed up three days later to examine the heater in the basement. But they missed something that should have been glaringly obvious — the unpermitted bedrooms on the basement level.

Things were breaking so frequently that Jennifer befriended the man hired to repair problems in the house. After he confided that the landlord didn't plan to fix a toilet, Jennifer called Belokurova to complain. The next day, the repairman let himself into the apartment with his set of keys and confronted the young student in her bedroom. He grabbed her breast and buttocks, Jennifer recalled, forcibly kissed her on the mouth, and pushed her onto the bed. When Jennifer screamed, he got up and left.

"Don't tell anyone about this," he texted.

The BU senior was mortified. In December, after she hurt her back falling down the cracked stairs on an icy morning, Jennifer broke her lease and fled the apartment.

Her mother, Elizabeth, sent a certified letter to Belokurova on Dec. 20: "We feel that Jennifer and her studies have been harmed by your negligence in maintaining the apartment house as agreed upon according to the terms of the lease. . . . Please return deposit and interest by December 27th so that we will not be required to take further legal action against you concerning the growing list of safety issues."

The refund check never came.

Jennifer found somewhere else to live a few blocks away.

There was no shortage of new tenants ready to take her place at 87 Linden.

Oct. 31, 2012

Heating and electrical issues still plagued the house five years later. The thermostat, kept under a locked plastic box, rarely worked properly, pumping oppressive heat on the first floor and chilly air into the upstairs apartment. It would switch between hot and cold for no apparent reason.

The light in the first-floor kitchen, which was next to the wall that blocked off the Pit, buzzed loudly and flickered violently like a strobe light at a dance party.

A repairman replaced the fixture once, but it did not stop the fierce flickering that gave Cat headaches. Other sockets in the bedrooms and basement burned out bulbs in a week.

In the apartment upstairs, the laundry machine broke. Lights flickered in Patrick's bedroom and the living room on the second floor. Cracks spread across the walls. A kitchen plug near a dish rack shorted.

The landlord, who had accumulated more than \$3,000 in city fines for illegal dumping and improper trash storage at 87 Linden St., fixed some problems. Others remained. But that was standard fare for college living so the students thought little about it.

Binland, who loved to cook and dreamed about starting a food blog with Thiéry, organized taco nights and tried out recipes on her housemates and guests.

She had a quirky constellation of friends — the freshman year gang, science geeks, Brooklyn pals, first-generation Chinese students, and MIT frat boys. The marine science major had an endless curiosity and enjoyed sharing her passions, particularly for cuttlefish, known as the chameleons of the sea because of their ability to change their skin color and pattern. They were kind of like Binland, who was always seeking new adventures and could fit in anywhere — traits that drew others to her.

She invited her friends to several theme parties that fall, including a luau and a Halloween gathering. Binland and her housemates Erica Ross, Noelle Olsen, and Noelle's girlfriend Cait McAndrews pooled their funds for the Halloween fete, buying decorations and pouring beer and a cider vodka punch into carved-out pumpkins.

Binland dressed up as a ballerina and the reserved Thierry even donned a costume, posing as Lance Armstrong with a biking helmet and a syringe sewn into the back of his cycling tights.

As leaves fell from the giant tree outside Binland's window and the bitter Boston winter took hold, some tenants fumed over unaddressed safety concerns.

Early one January morning a stranger with a graying beard screamed at Cat Principe through her first-floor window. The crazed individual brandished a knife and demanded to know who had taken his bike. He insisted that she knew.

"I am going to rape you with this knife," the man threatened, perched on the basement storm doors that led out to the rear driveway. "I'm going to [expletive] kill you if you don't tell me who this person is."

Cat swore repeatedly that she had no idea what he was talking about until the stranger finally left. Then she called her landlord.

"Anna, can I please put bars on the window?" Cat pleaded.

Belokurova resisted. It would mess up the outside of the house and require approvals.

No, was her final answer.

April 15, 2013

Three months later, Binland struggled with anxiety after the Marathon day bombings that killed three people, including Lingzi Lu, a BU student from China. Binland photographed the race that day for her journalism class and was supposed to be at the finish line when the blasts went off. But the runner she was following fell behind, and she was two blocks away as the bombs blew up on Boylston Street.

When Binland's boyfriend, Elbert Kim, insisted on heading toward the explosions, she balked. They feuded and things were shaky between the couple after that.

On April 19, as Boston remained under a lockdown order following the shootout in Watertown with the suspected bombers, Binland knocked on her housemate Alex's door downstairs and sat on her bed.

"I don't feel safe anywhere," Binland said, sharing the fear she'd felt since the Twin Towers crumbled just miles away from her Brooklyn home.



But rather than retreat into her fears, Binland decided to use the Boston bombings as a wake-up call to live life more fully. She invited friends she hadn't seen in awhile over for a movie night to watch "Pitch Perfect" and cooked a pasta dinner. On the Saturday before the fire, Binland, who typically kept her feelings private, chatted on the phone with her freshman year roommate, Amanda Calderon, for more than an hour about her relationship issues.

Binland ended the call in what was, for her, a most unusual way.

"I love you," she said.

April 28, 2013: 8:30 a.m.

Investigators walked into Ashley Gopal's hospital room with a notepad and a lot of questions.

"Was anybody smoking cigarettes?" they asked. "It's OK, you can tell me. Were there joints?"

"No," she said.

"Was there smoking of cigarettes? Were you smoking a joint? You won't get in trouble," they promised.

"No one was smoking," Ashley insisted.

Residents and visitors who were at the house that night told authorities the same thing: No one smoked inside. Boston Fire Lieutenant Thomas Murray, one of the investigators, ruled out the vaporizer as a source of the fire. And he confirmed that no one admitted smoking cigarettes in the house — two said they'd had cigarettes on the porches outside. Nonetheless, "unintentional careless disposal of smoking materials" was the Fire Department's conclusion about the cause of the blaze.

Fire Lieutenant William McCarthy, a licensed electrician, found several issues on the ground floor that could have contributed to the flickering lights, but the department believed electricity did not play a role because there were no outlets in the Pit, where the fire appears to have started.

April 28, 2013: 10 a.m.

Binland's boyfriend, Elbert, was moving furniture in the Back Bay when he got a call from Delacia Davis.

"Binland isn't picking up the phone. There is a fire at 87 Linden," Binland's friend told him, panic in her voice.

Elbert hopped in a cab and tried to get past the yellow police tape on Linden Street.

"I'm Binland's boyfriend," he said.

A homicide detective walked him to the Hess gas station down the street at the corner of Brighton Avenue.

"Everyone is accounted for except for Binland Lee and we found a body," the detective said.

Elbert, who had turned down an offer to stay over Binland's house the night before, sat down in the middle of the parking lot and started sobbing. Over the next several hours he raced to hospitals across Boston.

Then, he called Binland's mom, Mei.

"I couldn't find her," Elbert said. "You need to come because we couldn't find her."

Mei arrived at South Station after 9 p.m. on a Lucky Star bus from New York. BU's dean of students, Kenneth Elmore, met her at the terminal with Elbert and Amanda, Binland's freshman year roommate, and they walked together toward the back of the station.

Elbert laid down on the floor. Amanda held Binland's mom. Dean Elmore took her hands and broke the news. Mei began howling uncontrollably and lost feeling in her legs. Elmore found a wheelchair to bring her to a BU police cruiser and they drove to Hotel Commonwealth in Kenmore Square.

When they arrived in the hotel lobby, Mei was hyperventilating. Paramedics arrived at 10:15 p.m. and transported her to Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center.

April 29, 2013

Mei and her brother, Da Ren Kwong, who had driven up from New York, met with the homicide team. Later that day, Boston's inspectional services commissioner, Bryan Glascock, arrived at 87 Linden looking for answers. He wanted to understand how the building was laid out and why it was a challenge to escape.

"I was horrified at this terrible, terrible loss," the commissioner said. "I wanted to see for my own self how something like this could happen."

In the evening, BU held a small vigil on Marsh Plaza — similar to a gathering held weeks earlier for Lingzi Lu.

"Not for nothing," someone scrawled in chalk next to a makeshift memorial where Binland's boyfriend left her senior year photo. "We are living our lives for two now," Elbert told the mourners.

After the vigil, Jefferson Sanchez, the MIT student who had shared his romantic feelings for Binland the night before the fire, drove straight to 87 Linden. He held a hand-carved wooden paperweight from Nicaragua. It was a gift he'd bought for his crush but never got around to giving her. Jefferson dug a hole in the lawn and buried it.

On Tuesday, Boston's inspectional services cited Belokurova, the landlord, for running an illegal rooming house and not having permits to create bedrooms in the basement. The agency had issued similar violations to a previous owner in 2000 after BU's Joe Walsh flagged the property. Nonetheless, Glascock told the media that inspectors had not been inside the house since 1992.

Later, he conceded: "That's the problem with paper records. Once they are in the file no one ever sees them again."

After the fire, Belokurova immediately hired an attorney who issued a statement saying the property had passed many inspections and that the safety of her tenants was always the landlord's top priority.

Nonetheless, she rented out an apartment with only one egress — a violation so significant that it could have led the property to be condemned by the city. Belokurova, who lives in Newton, would not answer why. And Glascock said he could not comment because of an expected lawsuit.

Three days after the fire, Noelle, who lived in the apartment during the fall semester, and her girlfriend Cait, returned to 87 Linden. The temperature instantly dropped 10 degrees as they walked through the door. They climbed up the burned-out staircase to the attic and dug through piles of wet black ash in Binland's room, searching for items to give to her family.

They found an old wallet with a middle school ID and a library card. The scorched hammock stuck together in clumps. They recovered scuba booties Binland wore in Belize. Her family would later place them in her coffin.

Rescue 1 had found Binland's body by a dormer window in her bedroom. The medical examiner concluded she died of smoke inhalation.

Mei tried to convince her brother to drive by 87 Linden on their way back to Brooklyn. He refused because it was too painful.

Mei thought about returning to Boston a few weeks later to see the house and watch Binland's friends receive their diplomas. But it was an impossible trip for a grieving mother to make.

"For closure I want to look at the house," Binland's mother said. "I don't believe that she died."

Six days ago, on the one-year anniversary of the fire, Mei made the journey to 87 Linden. She searched for Binland's bedroom window but the attic had been razed and a blue tarp covering the second floor rustled in the wind.

Mei gathered on the front lawn with her sister, Xiao Mei Kuang, along with Noelle, Cait, Cat, and Binland's high school friend Cory Chan. They set up an elaborate memorial with candles, hazelnut chocolates, and dozens of flowers surrounding three framed photos of Binland.

Mei kneeled on the ground, set down two teddy bears holding hearts, and then sobbed on the sidewalk. She walked back on the lawn to place red roses in the dirt next to the photo of Binland in her graduation cap.

Mei and the others left briefly to buy more flowers but by the time they returned to Linden Street, someone had removed the memorial and raked the front lawn clean. When Noelle called the landlord, she said Belokurova hung up.



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