



The cast of characters in one of the most baffling mysteries to confront the police were (from left to right): the victim, Sir Harry Oakes; his son-in-law, Count Alfred de Marigny; his daughter, Nancy; friend and business associate, Harold Christie; and Raymond Schindler, the famous American detective.

The unacted-on resolution of the Bahamian assembly is only the latest in a series of tragicomic events in one of the most grotesque murder cases of the past half century.

In the cast of characters of this officially unsolved bludgeon-blowtorch-mutilation murder are the Duke of Windsor, ex-king of England, who as governor general of the Bahamas, in 1943, at first believed that Sir Harry's murder was a suicide; the Miami police captain he summoned to Nassau, who neglected to bring along proper fingerprinting equipment; a world-famous American private detective (retained by the chief suspect's wife—the murdered man's daughter, Nancy Oakes de Marigny) who was impeded and harassed throughout his independent investigation.

Defendant de Marigny, Nancy Oakes' then-husband and the only person ever to stand trial for the murder, was a count who raised chickens. He was acquitted in short order.

Bahamian Cyril Stevenson is not the only one who claims to be able to name the murderer of Sir Harry Oakes. The name has been whispered about the islands for 16 years. Yet its bearer has never been arrested, detained, or even publicly accused of the crime. (It will be noted that Mr. Stevenson prudently did not name a man in either the House of Assembly or his newspaper.)

The trusted friend and business ally, whom rumor accuses of having brutally killed Sir Harry, to this day goes about his business on New Providence Island, carrying the burden of his alleged guilt as lightly as any native woman balancing a basket of eggs on her head.

HARRY OAKES was born a poor but honest down-East Yankee who saw no future in lobster pots and, in 1896, at the age of 21, set out to make his fortune. Gold was his object, and for 15 years he sought the yellow stuff, from the Klondike to the Philippines to West Africa to Australia; finally, by sheer fluke, in 1911, he struck a bonanza in northern Ontario, Canada. It became the second-richest gold mine in the world.

In 1923, a millionaire of 48, Oakes returned to

Australia to marry a girl 10 years his junior who had been waiting for him for 20 years, a Sydney jewelry-shop clerk named Eunice MacIntyre. By 1938, when he was 63, Oakes had acquired five children, six mansions, an income of \$3 million a year, British citizenship, and a baronetcy.

That was the year Sir Harry Oakes and a Bahamian real-estate operator named Harold Christie became friends. As a result, in 1939 the Oakes family took up official residence in Nassau, Bahamas, where the income tax was negligible. It was from Christie that Oakes purchased Westbourne, a regal 20-bedroom estate, for a reported \$500,000; it was with Christie that he engaged in numerous lucrative real-estate deals. At his death, Oakes was worth some \$200 million, and he and Christie were the two most powerful men in the islands.

Oakes was no beloved tycoon. His photos show a rough rimrock face with merciless eyes under shaggy brows, a vulturine nose, a mouth set in concrete, and a chin and jaw like the prow of a submarine. He made enemies as naturally as he made millions. He manhandled his servants. He spat in the faces of shopkeepers who incurred his royal displeasure. He had an eye, and more than an eye, not only for attractive lady tourists but for their shapely sisters in permanent Bahamian residence as well; his conquests were reputed to include many who had smoldering husbands.

A man born, some said, to be murdered.

And murdered he was during the night of July 7, 1943, in his many-roomed mansion in Nassau, all alone except for his old friend and business crony, Harold Christie.

Lady Oakes and the Oakes children had gone north some time before to escape Nassau's summer heat; they were far away that night, in the United States. Oakes himself was planning to fly to the mainland the next morning to join them; and that night he had entertained a few guests at a small, select farewell party. Among them was Christie.

All the guests but Christie departed about midnight. While the native servants cleaned up, Sir Harry and the real-estate broker discussed some business matters over a drink or two. Shortly after-

ward, the servants left the house for their cabins, and Sir Harry and his friend said good night and retired—Oakes to the master bedroom, Christie to the so-called East Room, located 18 feet away.

During the night, Christie testified at de Marigny's trial, he slept fitfully. Nevertheless, he said, he heard nothing from his host's room; a tropical storm raged half the night. A little before 7 a.m., Christie tapped on his host's door. Getting no answer, he entered to find the master bedroom filled with smoke from a smoldering mattress and rug, and Sir Harry, face up in his bed, bloody, burned, and dead.

SOMEONE HAD inflicted four deep, triangle-shaped bludgeon wounds behind the victim's left ear, applied an intense flame to the eyes and other parts of the body, and set fire to the bed. A pall of un-charred feathers from the mattress had some time later been strewn over the corpse.

The bestial nature of the murder, plus the strewn feathers, at first suggested some barbaric revenge-rite. Professed Christians though native Bahamians are, the remains of voodoo fires can still be found in remote sections of the islands' palmetto brush. But this thought was not pursued.

The savage murder at once turned into a tragic-comedy of errors and omissions. To this day, no one knows, or will tell, who notified the police. When the superintendent arrived with his constables, matters worsened. By actual count, 13 persons were allowed to enter the murder room before an RAF photographer was asked to snap pictures of the scene of the crime. By then a silk Chinese screen standing beside the victim's bed had been moved and hundreds of fingers had left prints on it—although later the dead man's son-in-law was to go on trial for his life because a single print among the hundreds was alleged to be his.

Sir Harry had made no bones about his contempt for Nancy's husband; he had considered de Marigny a no-account fortune hunter, and at the time of the murder the two men had not been on speaking terms for months. As for the count's regard for his father-in-law, one of the first things Miami policemen heard on setting foot in Nassau was the rumor that,

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