INTRODUCTION

When they say everything's bigger in Texas, they mean nice things: hair, smiles, steaks, sky. Crime is too depressing to make the cut, but like it or not, our crime is not just big but bigger than anyone else's, so we may as well brag about it. Our iconic criminals are larger than life, their names so well ingrained in our culture that they trip off the tongue without so much as a raised eyebrow: Bonnie and Clyde. Charles Whitman. Lee Harvey Oswald. Andrea Yates. Even if their acts were ghastly, they are or have been fixtures in our lives, the stuff of everyday headlines, for as long as we can remember. There's no point in ignoring them or wishing they'd go away.

From a journalistic standpoint, we couldn't, and we haven't. Since its inception, *Texas Monthly* has made hay of true crime, in the great tradition of our literary forebears. A previous anthology of terrific crime stories culled from our pages covered the celebrated likes of the folks mentioned above. In your hand is, to my mind, a more interesting collection. The crimes chronicled are not as widely known, nor are the perpetrators. (With the possible exception of that nice lady from Houston who ran over her adulterous husband with her Mercedes and then did it again and again, just to make sure she got him. Maybe you saw the TV movie? This stuff is entertainment gold.) But start reading about them—and then try to stop.

Evan Smith

These twelve gems have in common what you'd want from any good read: memorable characters, a compelling plot, and rich scenes. And, of course, great writing. The authors are some of the finest, not just in Texas but anywhere.

Perhaps the finest among them—at least when a dead body is at the center of the action—is Skip Hollandsworth, one of the magazine's longtime executive editors. It's no surprise that Skip wrote half the stories in this collection. A master spinner of yarns, he mixes deep-dive reporting with stylish storytelling in a way that gets his stories consistently talked about at dinner tables and around watercoolers. He's such a favorite of our readers, and of mine, for one simple reason: He treats true crime not as pulp or pap but as serious journalism—every bit as worthy as any other genre, which it is. And also every bit as big.

Evan Smith, Editor

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