appalling poverty of his tenants that had interested them; they talked about being attracted by expressive family groups and by the convenience of not having to move their equipment far from the road. The defense asked if they were planning to take pictures of the Bluegrass as well as Appalachia. Were they going to make a lot of money from the film? How many millions of viewers would see the pictures of poor Eastern Kentucky people? Had they refused to move? Had they taunted Ison by saying he was shooting blanks? Did the people who signed the release forms really know what they were signing? (At least one of the signers was, like one out of four of his neighbors, unable to read.)

Except for the underlying issue of Eastern Kentucky v. Outsiders, the only issue seriously in contention was Ison's sanity. The director of a nearby mental-health clinic, testifying for the defense, said that Ison was a paranoid schizophrenic. He told of Ison showing up for one interview with long socks worn on the outside of his trouser legs and of his altercations with his neighbors and of his lack of remorse. The prosecution's psychiatrist—an impressive woman from the University of Kentucky who had been retained by Francis Thompson, Inc.—said that Ison had grown up at a time when it was common practice to run people off of property with a gun, and, because he had lived with aging parents or alone ever since childhood, he still followed that practice. Some of Ison's ideas did have "paranoid coloring," she said, but that could be traced to his being a mountaineer, since people in isolated mountain pockets normally had a suspicion of strangers and even of each other. "Socio-cultural circumstances," she concluded, "lead to the diagnosis of an individual who is normal for his culture, the shooting and the paranoid color both being present in other individuals in this culture who are considered normal." In the trial and in the insanity hearing that had earlier found Ison competent to stand trial, Smith insisted that Ison was merely peculiar, not crazy. "I said, 'Now, I happen to like mayonnaise on my beans. Does that make *me* crazy?'" Smith later recalled. "I turned to one of the jurors, a man named Mahan Fields, and I said, 'Mahan, you remember Uncle Bob Woolford, who used to work up at Evarts? Did you ever see Uncle Bob in the winter when he didn't have his socks pulled up over his pants legs to keep out the cold? Now, was Uncle Bob crazy? Why, Mahan, I bet on many a winter morning *you* wore *your* socks over your pants legs.'"

In his summation, Smith saved his harshest words not for the defendant but for the person who was responsible for bringing Hobart Ison, a mountaineer who was not quite typical of mountaineers, and Hugh O'Connor, a stranger with a camera who was not quite typical of strangers with cameras, into violent conflict. Judy Breeding—the operator of a small furniture store near Ison's shacks, and the wife of Ison's cousin—had testified that she was not only the woman who told the film crew that Ison was coming but also the woman who had told Ison that the film crew was on his property. "Hobart," she recalled saying, "there is some men over there taking pictures of your houses, with out-of-state license." Smith looked out toward the courtroom spectators and suddenly pointed his finger at Judy Breeding. He told her that he would like to be prosecuting her, that if it hadn't been for her mouth Hugh O'Connor would not be in his grave and Hobart Ison would be back home where he belonged. Later, Smith caught a glimpse of Mrs. Breeding in the hall, and he thought he saw her shake her fist at him, smiling. "You know," he said, "I believe the idea that she had anything to do with bringing that about had never occurred to her till I mentioned it."

The jury was eleven to one for conviction, but the one held out. Some people were surprised that Ison had come that close to being convicted, although it was generally agreed that the prosecution's psychiatrist had out-talked the psychiatrist who testified for the defense. Smith believed that his case had been greatly strengthened by the fact that the filmmakers had been respectful, soft-spoken witnesses—not at all smart-alecky. "If there was anything bigheaded about them," he said, "it didn't show."

*

The retrial was postponed once, and then was stopped suddenly during jury selection when Smith became ill. On March 24th, Hobart Ison came to trial again. The filmmakers, who had been dreading another trip to Kentucky, were at the county courthouse in Harlan at nine in the morning, ready to repeat their testimony. Although Smith had anticipated even more trouble finding a jury, he was prepared to go to trial. But Ison's lawyers indicated to Smith and Caudill that their client, now seventy, would be willing to plead guilty to voluntary manslaughter, and they finally met Smith's insistence on a ten-year sentence. Ison—wearing a baggy brown suit, his face pinched and red—appeared only briefly before the judge to plead guilty. A couple of hours after everyone arrived, Caudill was on his way back to Whitesburg, where he was working on the case of a Vietnam veteran accused of killing two men during an argument in the street, and the filmmakers were driving to Knoxville to catch the first plane to New York.

The following day, the clerk of the court, a strong-looking woman with a strong Kentucky accent, happened to get into a discussion about the filmmakers with another citizen who had come to know them in the year and a half since Hugh O'Connor's death—a woman with a softer accent and a less certain tone to her voice.

"You know, I asked those men yesterday morning if they were happy with the outcome," the clerk said. "And they said, 'Yes.' And I said, 'Well, you know, us hillbillies is a queer breed. We are. I'm not offering any apologies when I say that. Us hillbillies *are* a queer breed, and I'm just as proud as punch to be one.'"

"Not all of us are like that," the other woman said. "Mean like that."

"Well, I wouldn't say that man is mean," the clerk said. "I don't guess he ever harmed anybody in his life. They were very nice people. I think it was strictly a case of misunderstanding. I think that the old man thought they were laughing and making fun of him, and it was more than he could take. I know this: a person isolated in these hills, they often grow old and eccentric, which I think they have a right to do."

"But he didn't have a right to kill," the other woman said.

"Well, no," the clerk said. "But us hillbillies, we don't bother nobody. We go out of our way to help people. But we don't want nobody pushin' us around. Now, that's the code of the hills. And he felt like—that old man felt like—he was being pushed around. You know, it's like I told those men: 'I wouldn't have gone on that old man's land to pick me a mess of wild greens without I'd asked him.' They said, 'We didn't know all this.' I said, 'I bet you know it now. I bet you know it now.'"

The New Yorker, April 29, 1969

GAY TALESE

An ex-jailbird with a glib tongue, Charles Manson became guru to a coterie of drug-addled dropouts during the fabled "Summer of Love." In the spring of 1968 Manson's ragtag commune settled in a dusty, disused ranch outside Los Angeles, where they enjoyed a squalid, orgiastic existence overseen by their increasingly demented messiah. Obsessed with the Beatles' song "Helter Skelter," which he interpreted as a bizarre doomsday allegory, Manson concocted a scheme to provoke an apocalyptic race war by slaying white people in a way that would supposedly implicate black revolutionaries. On August 9, 1969, Manson sent four of his disciples to invade the home of film director Roman Polanski, who was away on a shoot. They butchered his pregnant wife, Sharon Tate, along with four other people, and scrawled cryptic graffiti in their victims' blood. The following night, Manson himself led a party of his "creepy crawlers" to the home of Leno and Rosemary LaBianca, who were slaughtered in a similar fashion.

Public fascination with Manson and his "Family" was reflected in an outpouring of writing about every facet of the case, including this 1970 *Esquire* magazine piece by Gay Talese (b. 1932). One of the pioneers of the "New Journalism," Talese started out at *The New York Times*, eventually taking over Meyer Berger's "About New York" column after Berger's death in 1959. It was his work for *Esquire*, however, that helped introduce something radically new into American journalism, a style of reporting that exploited novelistic techniques and that made Talese's deeply researched accounts read like literary fiction.

Charlie Manson's Home on the Range

The horse wrangler, tall and ruggedly handsome, placed his hands on the hips of a pretty girl wearing white bell-bottomed trousers and casually lifted her onto a hitching post near the stable; then, voluntarily, almost automatically, she spread her legs and he stood between her, moving slowly from side to side and up and down, stroking her

long blonde hair while her arms and fingers caressed his back, not quickly or eagerly but quite passively, indolently, a mood harmonious with his own.

They continued their slow erotic slumber for several moments under the mid-morning sun, swaying silently and looking without expression into one another's eyes, seeming totally unaware of their own lack of privacy and the smell of horse manure near their feet and the thousands of flies buzzing around them and the automobile that had just come down the dusty road and was now parked, motor idling, with a man inside calling through an open window to where the wrangler stood between the girl.

He slowly turned his head toward the car but did not withdraw from the girl. He was about six feet four and wore a bone-like ornament around his neck, and he had a long angular face with a sandy beard and pale sharply focused blue eyes. He did not seem perturbed by the stranger in the automobile; he assumed that he was probably a reporter or detective, both having come in great numbers recently to this ranch in Southern California to speak with the proprietor, an old man named George Spahn, about a group of violent hippies that had lived on the ranch for a year but were now believed to have all moved away.

Spahn was not reluctant to talk about them, the wrangler knew, even though Spahn had never seen them, the old man being blind; and so when the man in the car asked for George Spahn, a little smile formed on the wrangler's face, knowing but enigmatic, and he pointed toward a shack at the end of a row of dilapidated empty wooden buildings. Then, as the car pulled away, he again began his slow movements with the girl delicately balanced on the hitching post.

Spahn's ranch is lost in desert brush and rocky hills, but it is not so much a ranch as it is the old Western movie set it once was. The row of empty buildings extending along the dirt road toward Spahn's shack—decaying structures with faded signs marking them as a saloon, a barbershop, a café, a jail, and a carriage house—all were constructed many

years ago as Hollywood settings for cowboy brawls and Indian ambushes, and among the many actors who performed in them, or in front of them, were Tom Mix and Johnny Mack Brown, Hoot Gibson, Wallace Beery, and The Cisco Kid. In the carriage house is a coach that supposedly was used by Grace Kelly in *High Noon*, and scattered here and there, and slept in by the stray dogs and cats that run wild on this land, are old wagons and other props used in scenes in *Duel in the Sun*, *The Lone Ranger* television series and *Bonanza*. Around the street set, on the edge of the clearing near the trees, are smaller broken-down shacks lived in by wranglers or itinerants who drift to this place periodically and work briefly at some odd job and then disappear. There is an atmosphere of impermanence and neglect about the place, the unwashed windows, the rotting wood, the hauling trucks parked on inclines because their batteries are low and need the momentum of a downhill start; and yet there is much that is natural and appealing about the place, not the ranch area itself but the land in back of where the old man lives, it being thick with trees and berry bushes and dipping toward a small creek and rising again toward the rocky foothills of the Santa Susanna Mountains. There are a few caves in the mountains that have been used from time to time as shelters by shy vagrants, and in the last few years hippies have sometimes been seen along the rocky ridges strumming guitars and singing songs. Now the whole area is quiet and still and, though it is only twenty miles northwest of downtown Beverly Hills, it is possible from certain heights to look for miles in any direction without seeing any sign of modern life.

Spahn came to this region in the Nineteen-Thirties in the first great migration of the automobile age, a time when it was said to be the dream of every Midwestern Model T salesman to move to sunny Southern California and live in a bungalow with a banana plant in the front yard. Except George Spahn had no such dream, nor was he a Midwestern Model T salesman. He was a fairly successful dairy farmer from Pennsylvania with a passion for horses, preferring them to cars and to most of the people that he knew. The fact that his father had

been kicked to death by a horse, an accident that occurred in 1891 when the elder Spahn was delivering slaughtered livestock in a horse-drawn wagon near Philadelphia, did not instill in the son any fear of that animal; in fact, Spahn quit school after the third grade to work behind a horse on a milk wagon, and his close association with horses was to continue through the rest of his life, being interrupted by choice only once.

That was during his sixteenth year when, temporarily tired of rising at three a.m. for his daily milk route, he accepted a job as a carpenter's apprentice, living in the carpenter's home and becoming in time seduced by the carpenter's lusty nineteen-year-old daughter. She would entice him into the woods beyond the house on afternoons when her father was away, or into her bedroom at night after her father had gone to sleep; and even, one day, observing through her window two dogs copulating in the yard, she was suddenly overcome with desire and pulled Spahn to the floor on top of her—all this happening when he was sixteen, in 1906, a first sexual relationship that he can remember vividly and wistfully even now at the age of eighty-one.

Though never handsome, Spahn was a strong solidly built man in his youth with a plain yet personable manner. He had a hot temper at times, but he was never lazy. When he was in his middle twenties his milk business in Willow Grove, Pennsylvania, was large enough for him to operate five wagons and seven horses; and one of the men whom he employed, more out of kindness than anything else, was his stepfather, Tom Reah, whom he had once despised. Spahn could never understand what his strict German-Irish mother had ever seen in Reah, a rawboned man with a large belly who, when drunk, could be vicious. When in this condition, Reah would sometimes assault young Spahn, beating him badly; although later Spahn fought back, once swearing at Reah: "You son of a bitch, I'm gonna kill you some day!" On another occasion he threw an ice ax at Reah's head, missing by inches.

Before Spahn was thirty he had obtained an eighty-six-acre farm near Lansdale, Pennsylvania, on which he kept thirty-five cows, several

horses, and a lady housekeeper he had hired after placing an advertisement in a local newspaper. She had previously been married to a racing-car driver who had been killed, leaving her with one child. Spahn found her congenial and able, if not reminiscent of the carpenter's daughter; and at some later date that Spahn cannot remember, they were married. While it would not be an entirely happy or lasting marriage, they would remain together long enough to have ten children, nearly all of whom would be named after Spahn's horses. He named his first daughter, Alice, after a yellow-white pinto he had once owned; and his second daughter, Georgianna, was named in honor of a gelding called George. His third daughter, Mary, was named after a big bay mare; and when Spahn had a son, he named him George after himself *and* the aforementioned gelding. Next came Dolly, after a big sorrel mare; and Paul, after a freckled pinto; and so on down the line.

During the early Thirties, in the Depression, Spahn contemplated moving West. Animal feed was scarce in Pennsylvania, the milk was frequently spoiled by the inadequate refrigeration system on his farm, and he was becoming disenchanted with life in general. In an advertisement circulated by the Union Pacific Railroad, he had read about the virtues of Southern California, its predictable and mild climate, its lack of rain in summertime, its abundant feed for animals, and he was tempted. He first came alone by train to see Southern California for himself; then, satisfied, he returned home. He sold his farm and packed his family, his furniture, and his horse collars in a Packard sedan and a truck, and shipped his best horses separately by rail. He began the long voyage across the continent. He would not regret his decision.

Within a few years, giving up the milk business to concentrate on raising horses and operating a riding stable, he prospered. Within a decade, moving from Long Beach to South Los Angeles, and then to North Hollywood, he expanded his business to include children's pony rides, the rental of horses for parades and fairs, and the supplying of horses and wranglers for use in cowboy films. In one movie that featured a desert battle between Arabs and Ethiopians, Spahn himself became part of the cast, playing an Arab horseman and wearing a

desert robe and white bloomers. In 1948, when one of the ranches used by the moviemakers was offered for sale, a ranch once owned by William S. Hart, a cowboy star of the silent screen, Spahn bought it. Spahn and his wife parted company at about this time, but there soon appeared at Spahn's side a new leading lady of the ranch, a onetime dog trainer and circus performer named Ruby Pearl.

She was a perky redhead of about thirty with lively blue eyes, a petite figure, and lots of nerve. She had been born on a farm in Sandstone, Minnesota, and had a desire to get into show business somehow, an ambition that was as confusing as it was shocking to her mother, a Christian preacher's daughter, and her father, a conscientious routine-oriented railroad man. After graduating from high school, where she had acted in school plays and had won first prize in the girls' hundred-yard dash and broad-jump competition in a county-wide track meet, she traveled to Minneapolis on her father's railroad pass, presumably to attend secretarial school and embark on a respectable career in that city. But one day, scanning the classified ads in *The Minneapolis Tribune*, she saw a job opportunity that appealed to her. She applied and got the job, that of being a cocktail waitress at Lindy's, a local club patronized by, among other distinguished figures, Al Capone.

When Capone and his men were in town they were invariably accompanied by very attractive girls in ermine or mink, and they were always given the large table at Lindy's in the back room where the drinks were served all night. Ruby Pearl liked serving the big table, not only because of the generous tips she received but because of the sense of excitement she felt in the Capone party's presence. But she had neither the desire nor the time to become further involved, devoting all her free hours and earnings to the dancing school she attended every day, learning ballet and adagio, tap-dancing, the rumba, and the tango. After Lindy's was raided by the police and closed down, Ruby Pearl supported herself as a bus girl in a cafeteria, pouring coffee and clearing dishes. Soon she caught the eye of the assistant manager, an engineering student at the University of Minnesota. He became her

first lover and husband, and after his graduation he was hired by Lockheed in Burbank, California, and the newly married couple set up housekeeping in a motor court on the fringe of Hollywood.

On certain evenings, together with other young engineers from Lockheed and their wives, Ruby and her husband would go to The Brown Derby and Ciro's and various night spots where there was live entertainment and dancing. Ruby invariably became restless and tense on these occasions, seated around the table with the others, sipping her drink, and wishing that she was not with the dull wives of engineers but rather that she was in the spotlight on the stage, kicking up her heels.

Her marriage did not produce children, nor did she want any. She wanted to resume with her dancing, and she did, attending classes conducted by a sleek French-Indian adagio dancer who later gave Ruby a part in his touring trio that featured himself and his jealous girl friend. Ruby also danced in a chorus of a Hollywood club for a while, as her marriage deteriorated and finally ended in divorce.

At about this time, approaching an age when she could no longer maintain a dancer's pace, she was introduced, by a man she had met, to a new career of training dogs to dance, sit, jump through hoops, and ride atop ponies. She had a natural facility for animal training, and within a few years she had perfected an act with three dogs and a pony that was booked at several community fairs in Southern California, in addition to a number of schools, circuses, and local television shows. At one community fair, in Thousand Oaks, Ruby met a man, a wrestler, who would become her next husband. He was a burly, strong, and tender man who had done quite well financially, and he also owned a restaurant on the side, a subject of interest to Ruby because of her days as a waitress. Not long afterward, Ruby met another man with whom she had much in common, a proprietor of a pony-riding ring for children and a movie ranch—George Spahn.

She had seen Spahn at a few of the parades for which he had provided horses, and on a few occasions she had helped with the handling of the horses, displaying her skill as a wrangler. After Spahn had obtained the movie ranch, Ruby applied for a job there and was hired. Spahn was happy to have her. His eyesight was not yet so poor that he was unaware of her fine figure and appeal, and he also welcomed the return of a woman's touch around the place, for it had been absent since the recent departure of his wife. There was not only the film business but also the riding stable that required extra help, particularly on weekends when there would sometimes be a long line of cars with people wanting to rent a horse and go riding through the woods for an hour or two. Ruby knew the horses well, knew the frisky ones from the slower ones, and she could tell pretty much by the way people walked up to the riding stable whether or not they possessed the coordination to safely mount and ride Spahn's better horses. Ruby Pearl was also important to Spahn because she could keep an eye on the young wranglers' manners with regard to the schoolgirls and other young women who often rented horses, although he had to admit that some of the women seemed deliberately dressed for a seduction scene when they came to the ranch—skintight chinos and no bras, their long hair loose and legs wide and bumping up and down as they capered through the woods—it was a risky business.

But Ruby Pearl kept order, and the more responsibility she took the more Spahn relied upon her. His children were now grown and married. Occasionally, Ruby would spend the night on the ranch, and as Spahn's sight worsened in the next few years she accompanied him on shopping trips off the ranch, held him close as they climbed steps, guided his hand as he signed checks, dialed telephone numbers for him, helped to prepare his meals. There were rumors in the nearby town, and among the ranch hands, that associated the pair romantically, and once her husband, the wrestler, complained about the time she was devoting to the ranch. But she quickly dismissed the subject, saying sharply, "I'm *needed* there."

In the last few years, however, Spahn gradually began to notice changes in Ruby Pearl. Slowly, as his sight failed completely and his imagination sharpened, he began to think that she was drifting away from the ranch and himself. He began to notice a difference in the way

she held his arm as they walked—she seemed to be holding on more to the cloth of his sleeve than to his arm, and eventually it seemed that she was leading him around while holding *only* to the cloth. He began to miss, or to imagine he was missing, many of the things he once had, among them the presence of female voices on the ranch at night. Perhaps that is why, when the hippie girls arrived, even though they were often noisy and sang songs all night, he felt more alive than he had felt in a very long time.

He does not remember exactly when they first moved onto the ranch. He believes one group of hippie girls and boys arrived sometime in 1967, possibly having come down from San Francisco, and settled briefly in a roadside church several miles north of his ranch; and eventually, in their wanderings down the hill searching for food, they discovered the many empty shacks along the riding path in the woods. They lived in the shacks briefly, and Spahn did not object; but one morning there was a police raid in search of marijuana, and many of the young people were taken into custody. The police asked if Spahn wished to press charges, but he said he did not. The police nonetheless warned the hippies against trespassing, and for a long time it was again very quiet on the ranch at night.

Then one day a school bus carrying hippies arrived at the ranch and parked in the woods, and young girls approached Spahn's doorway, tapping lightly on the screen, and asked if they could stay for a few days. He was reluctant, but when they assured him that it would be only for a few days, adding that they had had automobile trouble, he acquiesced. The next morning Spahn became aware of the sound of weeds being clipped not far from his house, and he was told by one of the wranglers that the work was being done by a few long-haired girls and boys. Later, one of the girls offered to make the old man's lunch, to clean out the shack, to wash the windows. She had a sweet, gentle voice, and she was obviously an educated and very considerate young lady. Spahn was pleased.

In the days that followed, extending into weeks and months, Spahn

became familiar with the sounds of the other girls' voices, equally gentle and eager to do whatever had to be done; he did not have to ask them for anything, they saw what had to be done, and they did it. Spahn also came to know the young man who seemed to be in charge of the group, another gentle voice who explained that he was a musician, a singer and poet, and that his name was Charlie Manson. Spahn liked Manson, too. Manson would visit his shack on quiet afternoons and talk for hours about deep philosophical questions, subjects that bewildered the old man but interested him, relieving the loneliness. Sometimes after Spahn had heard Manson walk out the door, and after he had sat in silence for a while, the old man might mutter something to himself—and Manson would reply. Manson seemed to breathe soundlessly, to walk with unbelievable silence over creaky floors. Spahn had heard the wranglers tell of how they would see Charlie Manson sitting quietly by himself in one part of the ranch, and then suddenly they would discover him somewhere else. He seemed to be here, there, everywhere, sitting under a tree softly strumming his guitar. The wranglers had described Manson as a rather small, dark-haired man in his middle thirties, and they could not understand the strong attraction that the six or eight women had for him. Obviously, they adored him. They made his clothes, sat at his feet while he ate, made love to him whenever he wished, did whatever he asked. He had asked that the girls look after the old man's needs, and a few of them would sometimes spend the night in his shack, rising early to make his breakfast. During the day they would paint portraits of Spahn, using oil paint on small canvases that they had brought. Manson brought Spahn many presents, one of them being a large tapestry of a horse.

He also gave presents to Ruby Pearl—a camera, a silver serving set, tapestries—and once, when he said he was short of money, he sold her a $200 television set for $50. It was rare, however, that Manson admitted to needing money, although nobody on the ranch knew where he got the money that he had, having to speculate that he had been given it by his girls out of their checks from home, or had earned it from his music. Manson claimed to have written music for rock-and-roll

recording artists, and sometimes he was visited at the ranch by members of The Beach Boys and also by Doris Day's son, Terry Melcher. All sorts of new people had been visiting the ranch since Manson's arrival, and one wrangler even claimed to have seen the pregnant movie actress, Sharon Tate, riding through the ranch one evening on a horse. But Spahn could not be sure.

Spahn could not be certain of anything after Manson had been there for a few months. Many new people, new sounds and elements, had intruded so quickly upon what had been familiar to the old blind man on the ranch that he could not distinguish the voices, the footsteps, the mannerisms as he once had; and without Ruby Pearl on the ranch each night, Spahn's view of reality was largely through the eyes of the hippies or the wranglers, and he did not know which of the two groups was the more bizarre, harebrained, hallucinatory. He knew that the wranglers were now associating with the hippies; he could hear them talking together during the day near the horse corral, and at night he thought he recognized wranglers' voices in the crowd that had gathered to hear Manson's music in the café of the old Western movie set. The hippies were wearing Western clothes and boots and were riding the horses, he had heard; and perhaps the motorcycle sounds he heard in the morning were being made by wranglers, he did not know. The atmosphere was now a blend of horse manure and marijuana, and most of the people seemed to speak in soft voices, wranglers as well as hippies, and this greatly irritated the old man. He yelled toward them: "Speak up, *speak up*, I want to hear too!" They would speak up, but in tones still soft and placid; and Spahn often overheard them describing him as a "beautiful person."

None of Spahn's experience in life had prepared him for this; he was thoroughly confused by Manson and his followers, yet was pleasantly distracted by their presence and particularly fascinated by Manson's girls. They would do anything that Manson asked, anything, and their submissiveness was in sharp contrast to all the women that Spahn had ever known, beginning with his stern mother in Pennsylvania and extending through the carpenter's aggressive daughter, and the untimid housekeeper who became his wife, and the independent woman who was Ruby Pearl. Manson's girls, intellectually superior to all the women that George Spahn had known, were also more domestic: they liked to cook, to clean, to sew, to make love to Manson or to whomever he designated.

On occasions when Manson was in Spahn's shack, the old man tried to learn the secret of Manson's handling of women, but the latter would mostly laugh—"All you gotta do, George, is grab 'em by the hair, and kick 'em you know where"—and then Manson would be gone, his secret unexplained, and the girls would arrive, docile, delightful.

Abruptly, it ended.

Manson and his followers left the ranch in their bus one day, going as mysteriously as they had come, and for a while the old man's life reverted to what it had been. But then the police and detectives began to visit the ranch, inspecting the movie shacks where the hippies had lived, taking fingerprints and even digging large holes in the woodlands beyond the clearing in search of bodies. Then the reporters and television cameramen arrived, flashing light into Spahn's face that was so bright he could see it, and asking him questions about Charlie Manson and his "family" who were now charged with murdering Sharon Tate and several others. Spahn was stunned, disbelieving, but he told them what he knew. He sat in his shack for several hours with the press, slumped in a chair, holding a cane in one hand and a small dog in the other, wearing a soiled tan Stetson and dark sunglasses to protect his head and eyes from the flies and the light and the dirt and the flicking tails of his horses, and he answered the reporters' questions and posed for photographs. Hanging from the wall behind him, or resting on the mantel, were psychedelic portraits of him done by the girls, and on a nearby table was a guitar, and on another wall was the tapestry of a horse that Manson had given him.

For the next several days, with the television cameras on trucks focusing on the ranch, lighting up the rickety Hollywood sets, it was like

old times for Spahn. Ruby Pearl was there to lead him around, although still holding him by the cloth of his sleeve, and his picture appeared on television and his words were quoted in the national press. He said that it was hard for him to believe that the girls had participated in the murders; if they had, he continued, they were undoubtedly under the influence of drugs.

As for Manson, Spahn said, there was no explanation—he had a hypnotic spell over the girls, they were his slaves. But Spahn was reluctant to say too much against Manson; and when the reporters asked why this was so, Spahn confessed that he was somewhat fearful of Manson, even though the latter was in jail. Manson might get out, Spahn suggested, or there might still be people on the ranch who were loyal to him.

The reporters did not press Spahn further. After they had finished with their questions, they wandered around the ranch taking photographs of the movie set and the soft-spoken wranglers and the girl who stood near the hitching post.

Esquire, March 1970

TRUMAN CAPOTE

A preternaturally charming man who moved easily among the rich and famous, Truman Capote (1924–1984) made a sensational debut at the age of 24 with the publication of his first novel, *Other Voices, Other Rooms*, a coming-of-age story that caused a stir as much for its notorious author's photo—an epicene Capote languidly sprawled on a divan—as for its evocative story and poetic style. Over the next decade, when he wasn't hobnobbing with socialites and movie stars, Capote worked in a variety of genres, from screenplays and Broadway shows to journalism and fiction, achieving major success with his 1958 novella *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. The book that put him in the forefront of American writers, however, was his "nonfiction novel" *In Cold Blood* (1966), which traced the intersecting lives of a midwestern farm family and the two dead-end drifters who murdered them. The book became a cultural and commercial phenomenon, but its six-year composition—and the intimate bond Capote established with one of its subjects, the condemned killer Perry Smith—took a heavy psychological toll. Capote spiraled into drug use and alcoholism and produced nothing to match the achievements of his earlier work. Occasionally, however, he was still capable of effective writing, as in this jailhouse interview with Manson associate Robert Beausoleil, from the 1980 collection *Music for Chameleons*.

Then It All Came Down

Scene: A cell in a maximum-security cell block at San Quentin prison in California. The cell is furnished with a single cot, and its permanent occupant, Robert Beausoleil, and his visitor are required to sit on it in rather cramped positions. The cell is neat, uncluttered; a well-waxed guitar stands in one corner. But it is late on a winter afternoon, and in the air lingers a chill, even a hint of mist, as though fog from San Francisco Bay had infiltrated the prison itself.

Despite the chill, Beausoleil is shirtless, wearing only a pair of