

# The Sunday Camera Magazine

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Prof. Riha's Disap

Riha mystery unfolding

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## THE CURIOUS CASE OF THOMAS RIHA

**Poisonings, Espionage, Murder. The legends live on.**

By JULIE HUTCHINSON

RESPECTED CU TEACHER

Prof. Riha's Disap



## Cyanide or strychnine believed used Mrs. Tannenbaum commits suicide

Industry is moving in rapidly

STORY ON PAGE 5

Nixon says U.S., Soviets apply re

EXCLUSIVE UNITED PRESS INTERNAT

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Case Of Missing CU Prof Played Major Role In FBI-CIA Break

# THE CURIOUS CASE OF THOMAS RIHA

The professor disappeared from Boulder 17 years ago. Forged checks, missing files and cyanide poisonings all followed. And then J. Edgar Hoover cut off relations with the CIA. Who — if anyone — killed this popular professor of

Russian studies? Was he a spy — and, if so, who was he working for? A few cops, an attorney, three writers, his nephew, some West Boulder neighbors and a former CU president aren't the only ones who still want to know.

## Stories by JULIE HUTCHINSON

*"Oh what a tangled web we weave  
When first we practice to deceive."*

— Sir Walter Scott

ANYBODY WHO HAS EVER heard anything about the strange disappearance of Dr. Thomas Riha agrees: What a hell of a movie this story would make. The 17-year-long saga of the University of Colorado Russian history professor who disappeared one Saturday night on the Ides of March is a textbook case of truths that prove stranger than any fiction.

Like a good drugstore spy novel, the story of Thomas Riha weaves love, hate, compulsion, conviction, untried trust and magnificent obsession into a tangled web, ensnaring a cast of characters that includes the sociopathic ex-con Galya Tannenbaum, then-president of the University of Colorado Joseph Smiley and then-director of the FBI, J. Edgar Hoover.

Enticing though the story may be, it lacks one essential ingredient: There isn't any ending. The story's conclusion exists only in the imaginations of those unable to forget it.

For nobody really knows — or whoever *does* know isn't telling — what happened to Thomas Riha. Though he has reportedly been seen in Canada, Europe and Boulder since his 1969 "disappearance," no one has solid proof that Riha is alive — or dead.

Though Riha's rumored involvement with the CIA is the stuff of which legends are made, there's an issue at stake that's of much more basic concern to those who knew and loved him.

Take Zdenek Cerveny, for example, Riha's nephew who came to this country in 1968 after the Soviet invasion of his Czechoslovakian homeland — and only four months

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before Riha disappeared. Cerveny, a Boulder mechanical engineer who's looking for a job after a year in Australia with his wife, would just like to know if his uncle is alive or dead.

Cerveny, and Riha's colleagues, friends and neighbors, are saddened because a good and decent man, a responsible and well-loved teacher, a kind neighbor and a fun-loving friend, vanished into thin air.

Beyond their human concern is something entirely different, a level of intrigue inciting passionate interest and undying speculation. For those who, to this day, follow the story, that passion borders on obsession.

Riha's life was interesting enough, with his eastern European roots and specialization in Russian history, to cause a little talk. Though Riha's marriage to beautiful Hana Hursokva, a woman 15 years younger whose housekeeping and cooking talents disappointed him, was ending after only five months, it is his relationship with Denver resident Galya Tannenbaum that incites the most speculation.

Born in Chicago in 1931, Tannenbaum was abused by her mother and dropped out of high school to marry at 16. She was released from prison in Illinois in 1960 after serving two years for forgery and embezzlement.

She was married and divorced three times. Exactly how and when she met Riha is one of those funny things that nobody knows for sure. Some say they knew each other in Chicago and that both were low-level CIA informants. Others say their first meeting was at Riha's wedding reception at the Black Bear Inn in Lyons in 1968, and that Tannenbaum became infatuated with Riha.

Whatever their history, Tannenbaum didn't like Riha's wife and was at Riha's home the night neighbors rescued Hana from her bedroom window and noticed heavy ether fumes in the room.

Within a week of that bizarre incident,

Hana fled in fear, Riha disappeared and Tannenbaum took control of Riha's house, car and art collection.

Within six months, two Denver friends of Tannenbaum died mysteriously of cyanide poisoning, and Riha's wedding ring was found at the home of one of those friends, although Boulder and Denver police didn't reveal that for several months.

Despite repeated pleas for help from Riha's family and colleagues, authorities did not begin to investigate Riha's disappearance until 10 months after he disappeared.

The woman many suspect of knowing the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth about Riha, Galya Tannenbaum, committed suicide in 1971 after being sent to the Colorado State Hospital in Pueblo on an insanity ruling stemming from forgery charges.

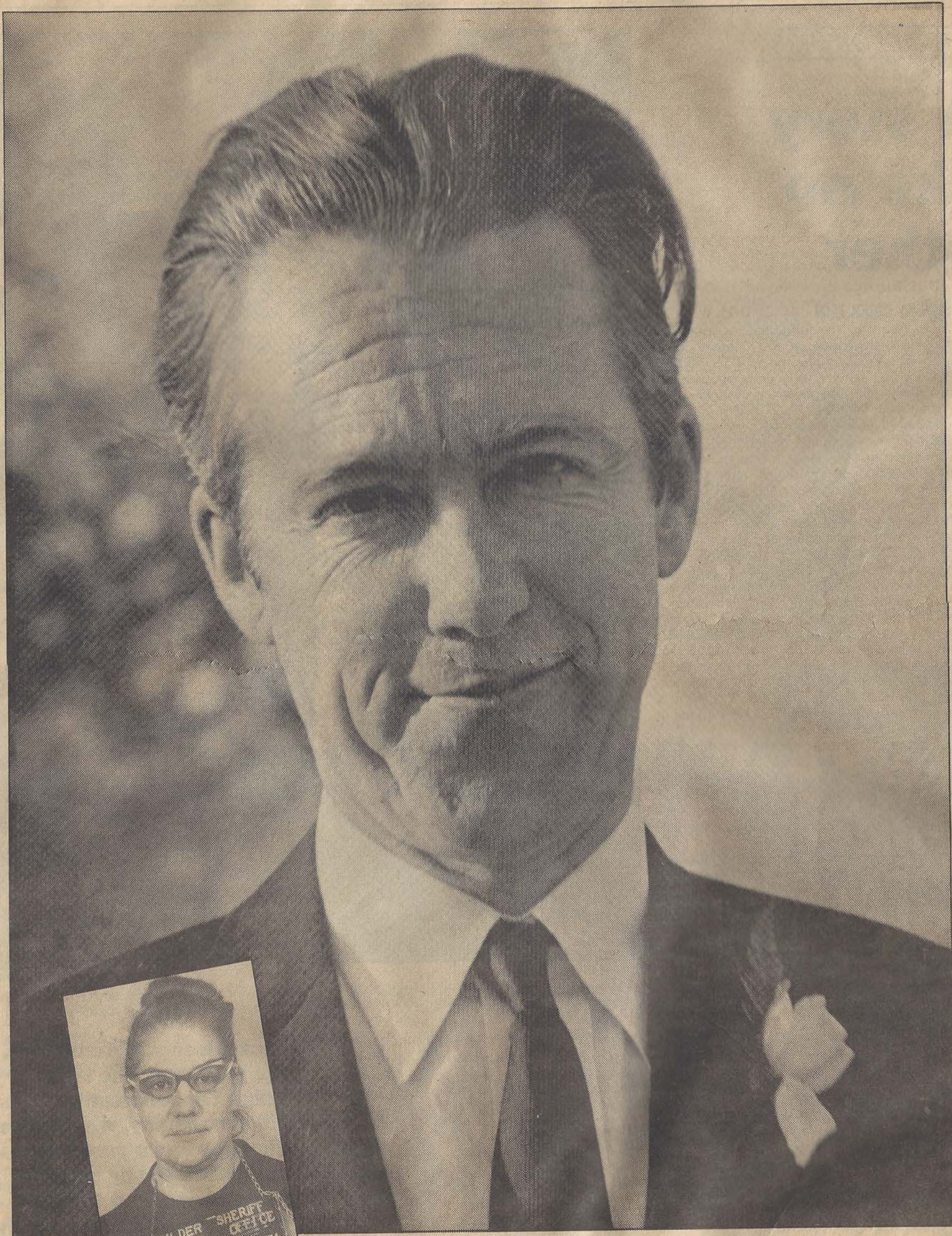
There aren't a lot of pictures of Thomas Riha available. The one most widely circulated, of a smiling man wearing a dark suit and tie with a rose in his lapel, was taken on his wedding day in October 1968. It is a picture that many people have looked at many times, though for what they're looking they're not sure.

Behind the tight, close-lipped smile and beyond the pleasant expression in his eyes, there's got to be something more. Is it a kind of depth, perhaps a secret so buried it's in his bones and his blood? Could it be a clue so obvious no one can see it? Is it that odd tilt to his head, implying some kind of slightly-off-center quality that might lead the tangled trail *somewhere*? Is it the perfunctory knot in his tie, the disconcert of his hairstyle?

Yes, it is all that, and more. Look in Thomas Riha's face long enough and you will realize that the answer to the Riha riddle is right there, in his eyes.

Known only to him.

Continued on page 8



Caught in the mysterious disappearance/suicide scenario were CU Professor Thomas Riha and "The Colonel," Galya Tannenbaum, here shown after being booked in Boulder County in 1970 on charges of forging Riha's signature on a check.

THE REPORTERS

A story like no other

THE CHERRY CIDER TEST

Jack Olsen was a senior journalism student at CU and night city editor of the Colorado Daily when Thomas Riha disappeared in 1969. Though the Boulder and Denver daily newspapers would not investigate the disappearance until Riha had been gone nine months, Olsen had a nose for news, and he smelled a big story.

With fellow journalism student Lois Fingerhut, the two reporters became passionately concerned about Riha and covered the story from the first week after the disappearance.

Olsen says the other newspapers regarded Riha's disappearance as another missing person's case. "No one thought much of it," says Olsen, now 39 and a private-practice attorney in Boulder. "Except the Colorado Daily was in tune with (Riha's) students. He was a marvelous professor, greatly loved by his students and colleagues. It became obvious he wasn't the kind of guy who would have simply disappeared without telling his students, even if it was at the request of the CIA. He just would not have allowed that to happen. It was so obvious something bad had happened. Combined with the fact that he was such a beloved professor, you knew you were working in the middle of a very bad tragedy."

Olsen and Fingerhut worked on the Riha story "day and night" for months. As the concern for Riha's well-being evolved into a determination to get to the bottom of the story, Olsen and Fingerhut headed down the Denver-Boulder Turnpike to the Logan Street home of Galya Tannenbaum near downtown Denver.

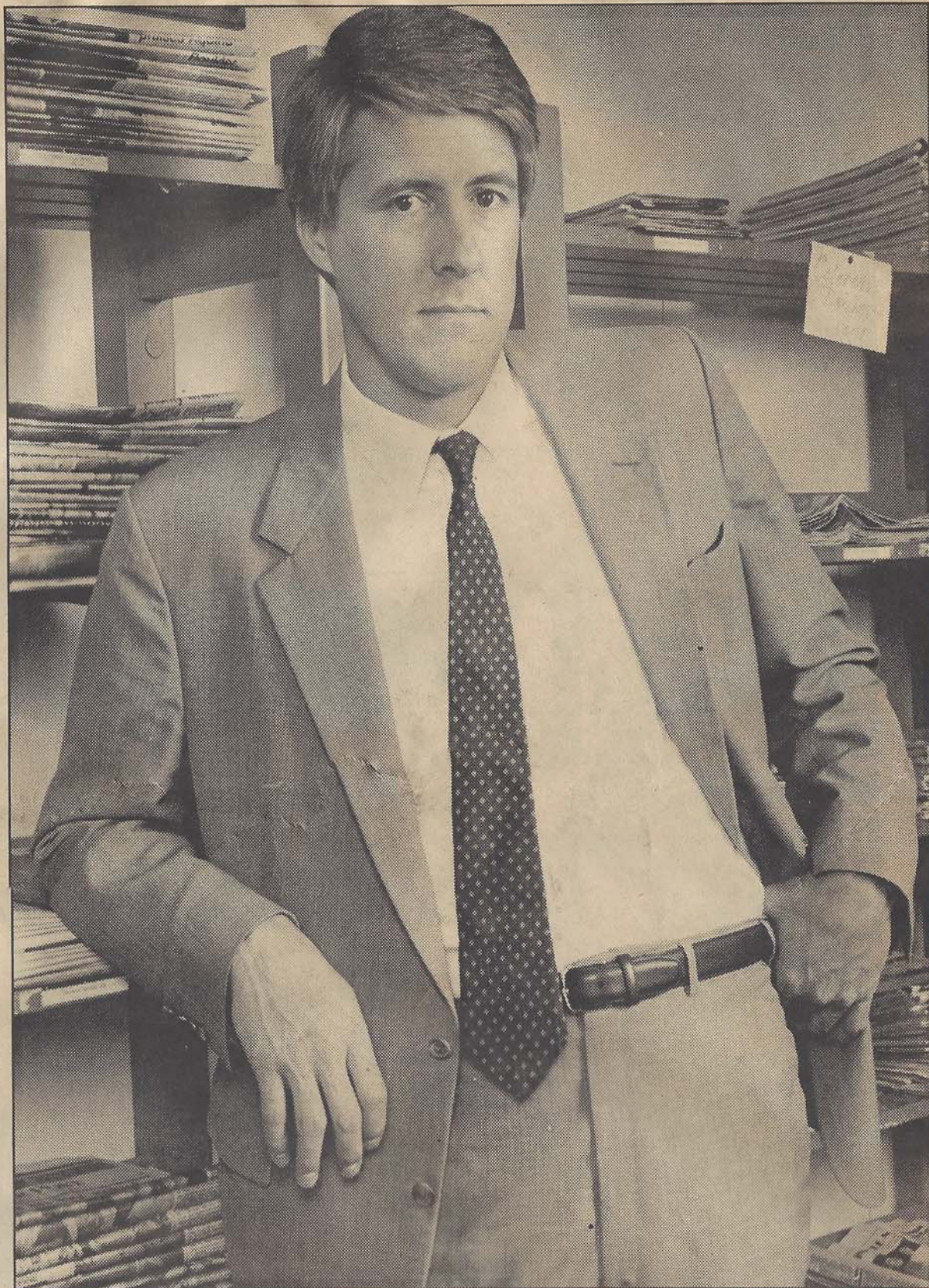
"We targeted her as someone we thought was involved," says Olsen. "Lois and I decided to go right to the horse's mouth."

Tannenbaum, whom Olsen describes as a "very non-American looking woman, strong and stern and austere-looking," invited the couple in and "immediately began to serve us cherry cider," says Olsen, who wandered from the kitchen to the room of Tannenbaum's 10-year-old son, Jimmy, whom Olsen describes as a precocious kid fascinated by science.

"...He blurted out that his mother was an agent for the Russian government ... I kind of gulped. I thought that's an awfully serious coincidence that Thomas Riha had previous connections with U.S. government and Russian affairs and now this boy, spontaneously, is saying this to a total stranger. I knew there was something insane going on here or something very sane."

Olsen says Tannenbaum's son talked about the armored car his mother drove, "That her car looked normal and had reinforced windows and frame, and that she also carried two guns with her. And I asked Mrs. Tannenbaum about that. She said yes, she did carry guns but that her son was making up the part about the armored car."

The couple spent several hours with Tannenbaum, who told them she had Riha's wallet



VERN WALKER / Daily Camera

Jack Olsen was a senior journalism student at CU when he covered the disappearance of Thomas Riha for the Colorado Daily. "I think we must have talked to 1,000 people, checking out that case," says Olsen.

because he had given it to her. She also talked about property she owned near St. Mary's Glacier. Later, the Colorado Daily would theorize that Riha had been murdered and his body dumped in a mine shaft near St. Mary's Glacier.

The two reporters drove to St. Mary's Glacier and "interviewed everybody in sight," says Olsen. "People at the lodge, snowmobilers. I think we must have talked to 1,000 people, checking out that case."

But what Olsen will never forget is sipping cider served by Tannenbaum, aware from the first swallow that his hostess was associated with two people dead from cyanide poisoning.

"I believe now that was a litmus test, for her, of whether someone really suspected her or

*Continued on page 15*

**Jack Olsen wandered from the kitchen to the room of Galya Tannenbaum's 10-year-old son, Jimmy, whom Olsen describes as a precocious kid fascinated by science. "...He blurted out that his mother was an agent for the Russian government...."**

# The times of Thomas Riha

Born in 1929 in Prague, Czechoslovakia, Thomas Riha's life repeatedly crossed between the worlds of East and West. We can find clues as to his final whereabouts below, but we can't be sure about his final crossing.

**1951:** Riha receives undergraduate degree in political science from the University of California at Berkeley.

**1953:** Riha is drafted into U.S. Army while studying at Russian Institute at Columbia University.

**1955:** Riha is discharged from the Army.

**1957:** Riha receives master's degree in Slavic studies from Berkeley and enrolls at Harvard on Ford Foundation Fellowship.

**1958:** Riha is an exchange student at Moscow State University in the Soviet Union.

**1960:** Riha completes studies at Harvard and is hired as an instructor of Russian history at the University of Chicago.

**1962:** Riha receives doctorate from Harvard and continues teaching at the University of Chicago.

**1967:** Riha moves to Boulder after accepting job as associate professor of history at CU.

**Oct. 13, 1968:** In Boulder, Riha marries Hana Hruskova, a 24-year-old Czech from Prague.

**November 1968:** Riha's nephew, Zdenek Cerveny, is among the first wave of Czech refugees to come to America after the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia.

**March 9, 1969:** Riha's neighbors rescue his screaming wife, Hana, from her bedroom window and report a strong odor of ether in the air. Galya Tannenbaum represents herself to responding Boulder police as an immigration authority.

**March 15, 1969:** Riha's Boulder friends see him for the last time as he leaves a small dinner party shortly after midnight. Within a week, Tannenbaum has taken control of Riha's possessions, including his car, his house and his art collection.

**April 1969:** Colorado Daily publishes first news story about Riha's disappearance, including speculation about CIA connection. FBI tells CIA that Riha has left Boulder because of family squabble and is safe in Brooklyn.

**April 5, 1969:** Hana Riha returns to New York.

**April 11, 1969:** Joyce Lebra, CU history teacher, attempts to file missing person report on Riha and is told by Boulder police that Riha is in New York by his choice.

**April 1969:** CU President Joseph Smiley says reliable Washington sources have told him Riha is safe.

**June 18, 1969:** Gustav Ingwersen, 78, a Denver inventor and plastics engineer, is found dead shortly after visiting Tannenbaum. Cause of death: cyanide poisoning.

**June 19, 1969:** Small boy delivers Ingwersen's will to Denver Probate Court in which Tannenbaum and her children are named as beneficiaries.

**July 28, 1969:** Tannenbaum charters plane from Longmont's Judson Flying Service and pays with check signed by Riha.

**Summer 1969:** Rumors circulate that Riha has defected to an Eastern European capital.

**Sept. 13, 1969:** Barbara Egbert, 51, a friend of Tannenbaum's, is found dead in her Denver apartment. Cause of death: cyanide poisoning. Her car is found in front of the Chicago home of Tannenbaum's oldest daughter, Margaret.

**Sept. 30, 1969:** Riha's wife is granted a divorce.

**Oct. 28, 1969:** Riha's nephew, Zdenek Cerveny, files missing per-

to building pressure from news reports and Riha's friends and colleagues, charges Tannenbaum with forging Ingwersen's will. She pleads innocent by reason of insanity, is freed on bond and ordered to submit to psychiatric tests.

**Jan. 23, 1970:** Tannenbaum is arrested by Boulder police on charges of forging Riha's signature on check to Judson Flying Service for charter flight. Boulder police conduct a six-hour search of her Denver home and find Riha's wallet and cyanide.

**March 7, 1971:** Tannenbaum reportedly commits suicide at the Colorado State Hospital in Pueblo by swallowing cyanide. A hospital aide reports that, moments before her death, she whispered: "I didn't kill him. That son of a bitch. He's in

sighting is reported.

CIA deletes this information because it "...would reveal intelligence sources and methods, the location of CIA field installations overseas, countries in which the CIA conducts its operations, the existence of intelligence liaison arrangements with foreign governments and CIA codes and pseudonyms."

**Oct. 11, 1975:** Then-Denver District Attorney Dale Tooley says a "thorough investigation" by his staff failed to turn up "voluminous" files on the Riha case and says the files were missing when he assumed the job in January 1973. He adds that he doesn't believe the missing files are an indication of anything "sinister."

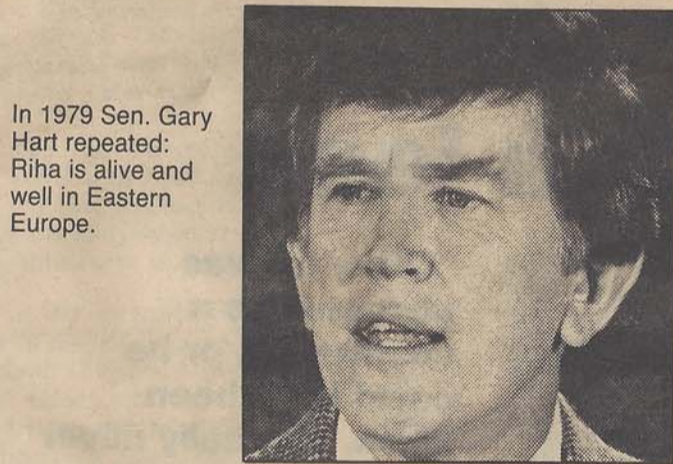
**February 1976:** Following extensive inquiries made at his request by



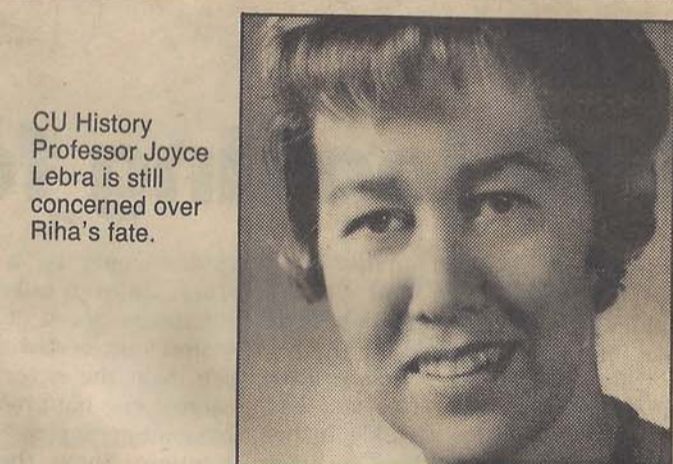
Dale Tooley, who died last year of cancer, discovered the voluminous Riha case files missing from his Denver district attorney's office in 1975.



The late J. Edgar Hoover was furious when no one would tell him the source of the CIA's Riha rumors.



In 1979 Sen. Gary Hart repeated: Riha is alive and well in Eastern Europe.



CU History Professor Joyce Lebra is still concerned over Riha's fate.

son report on Riha with Boulder Police.

**Oct. 29, 1969:** Boulder police tell Denver police that the FBI informs them Riha is alive and well.

**Late 1969:** Riha's wedding ring is found in the home of Gus Ingwersen. Denver and Boulder authorities do not reveal this for two months after the ring is found.

**January 1970:** J. Edgar Hoover, then-director of the FBI, writes letter to Colorado Congressman Donald Brozman saying that the Denver FBI office had "no knowledge concerning Riha's whereabouts" and conducted no investigation into his disappearance.

**Jan. 22, 1970:** Denver District Attorney Mike McKeivitt, responding

Russia. He just made it."

**October 1971:** First public announcement is made that then-FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover broke off all contact between the FBI and the CIA as a direct result of the Riha case. The split occurred when the CIA would not tell Hoover which of his FBI agents had leaked information about the disappearance of Riha.

**Late 1973:** Riha is reportedly seen in Czechoslovakia. Denver Attorney Martin Buckley, representing Riha's estate, invokes Freedom of Information Act in order to obtain memos from the CIA about this sighting.

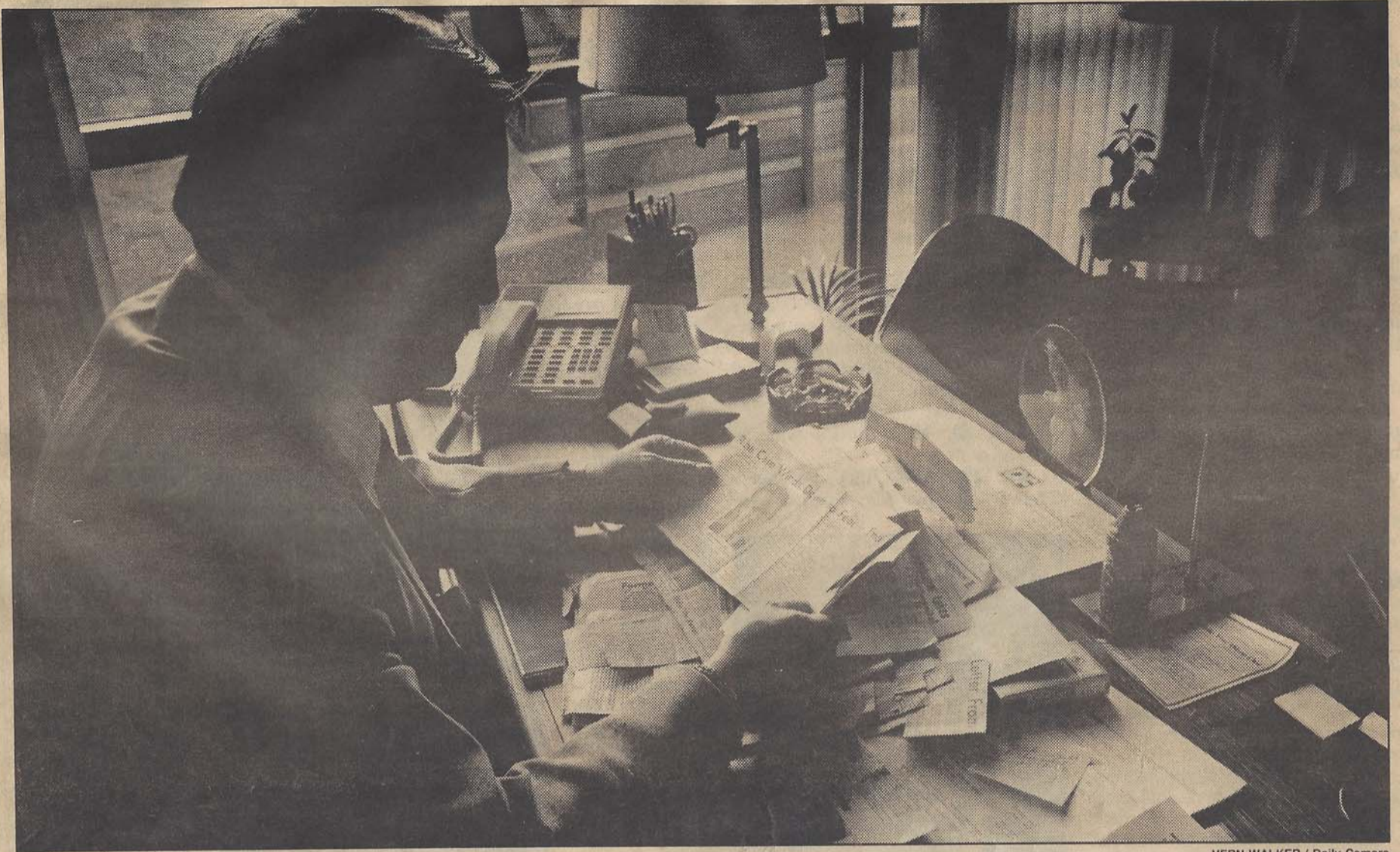
Deleted from the memos are the names of the source of the sighting and the three persons to whom the

the U.S. Senate Intelligence Committee, Colorado Senator Gary Hart says he believes Riha is alive and living somewhere in Eastern Europe, possibly Czechoslovakia.

**Nov. 10, 1976:** Documents filed by Riha estate attorney Martin Buckley, and obtained from the CIA through the Freedom of Information Act, prove that the CIA assured CU President Smiley that Riha was "alive and well" in April 1969.

**September 1978:** Riha declared legally dead by Denver Probate Court.

**March 1979:** Sen. Hart reaffirms his belief that Riha is alive and living somewhere in Eastern Europe.



VERN WALKER / Daily Camera

Boulder Police Lt. Bob Diezi still carries Galya Tannenbaum's picture in one of his briefcases. "Every time I hear about a body found, my ears perk up."

**THE COP**

**Still looking for a lead**

Sitting in his office in the Randolph Building on Walnut Street, Boulder Police Lieutenant Bob Diezi looks like he just walked off the set of "Hill Street Blues." He's a little pudgy, puffs on cigarettes and has the kind of intuitive twinkle in his eye for which good TV cops get paid big bucks.

Back in 1969, Diezi and his then-partner Ralph Ruzicka, assigned to the Riha case, used every last drop of intuition they had in trying to solve the mystery of the missing professor.

And he still thinks about it.

"I think about it quite often," he says. "It was a rather intriguing case with two endings: Either he was abducted as a counterspy, or he could have been killed. We really never had an answer either way."

Diezi occasionally takes off his badge and works as a consultant and location manager for movie companies, and he worked in Boulder on the "Mork and Mindy" TV show. He's been bitten a little by the show-biz bug and he thinks the Riha

riddle would be a riveting screen story. He even talked to a couple of producers about it, but says they weren't interested. He'd still like to see it on the silver screen but says there's one big problem. "It doesn't have an ending, see." But he's got a solution: Show the movie with a variety of plausible endings and let the audience pick.

Show biz aside, Diezi's cop instincts still react when he thinks about the Riha story. "Every time I hear about a body found up in the mountains unidentified, my ears perk up," he says.

"It was our case, and now it's mine, I guess," he says, referring to the fact that his former partner Ruzicka now works for the Colorado Bureau of Investigation.

"It's still open. Every time anyone hears anything I check it out," he says, but he hasn't gotten a decent lead since about 1973.

While the partners worked the case in 1969 and 1970, they shared a passionate interest in getting to the bottom of the story. There was so

**"Either he was abducted as a counterspy, or he could have been killed. We really never had an answer either way."**

much rumor and speculation about the case that Diezi says, "It was kind of half a joke" that the partners followed up leads that Riha was alive on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. "Tuesday and Thursday we followed leads he wasn't alive."

They frequently visited Denver on the case, and Diezi says, "Going into Denver, we'd talk about theories that he was alive. Coming back we'd talk about why it wouldn't work. We played against each other a lot to try to come up with anything that would make it fit."

Diezi says Tannenbaum's suicide stole any remaining chance from

them to solve the case because "We had always thought if she was going to give a dying declaration, she would tell us what happened." In Tannenbaum's dying declaration, she maintained her innocence and claimed that Riha had "just made it" to Russia. However, there are those who dispute whether or not Tannenbaum was able to make such a proclamation only seconds before she died from ingesting cyanide — taking into consideration that she was experiencing convulsions and foaming at the mouth.

Diezi's personal theory is that Riha disappeared because of Tannenbaum, not because he was "whisked away someplace and held in a camp somewhere or held in Siberia. He was a spy, I believe that. For us or them, I'm not sure."

But hope flares eternal in this cop's heart. "It's been so long now, but who knows. Someday, somebody might be tearing down a building.... What we need is a lead, somebody to come forward and say something. That's one I'd like to solve." ■

# Legal dead ends

## FOLLOWING AN "INTERESTING" CASE

Castle Rock private-practice attorney John Kokish met Galya Tannenbaum in 1969. At the time, she was looking for a lawyer to defend her on the charge of forging the will of Gus Ingwersen, her 78-year-old Denver friend and inventor who had died of cyanide poisoning.

"I did it because the case was referred to me," says Kokish. "It sounded interesting." Kokish says Tannenbaum, known for her fascination with famous people, first tried to hire former Colorado Governor Steve McNichols (and brother of former Denver Mayor Bill McNichols) to represent her. Kokish says the only money he was ever paid was the initial \$500 retainer.

"What I didn't know was where she got the \$500 for the retainer," says Kokish, chuckling at the memory. Kokish learned after the fact that Tannenbaum got the \$500 by borrowing against Riha's art collection that she donated to the Denver Art Museum.

"She was one of the greatest con artists ever. She was a very aggressive, assertive, strong person but she disturbed me because she had a quality about her that I kind of thought she might have been missing a couple of dots from her dominoes. There's no question she was mentally ill."

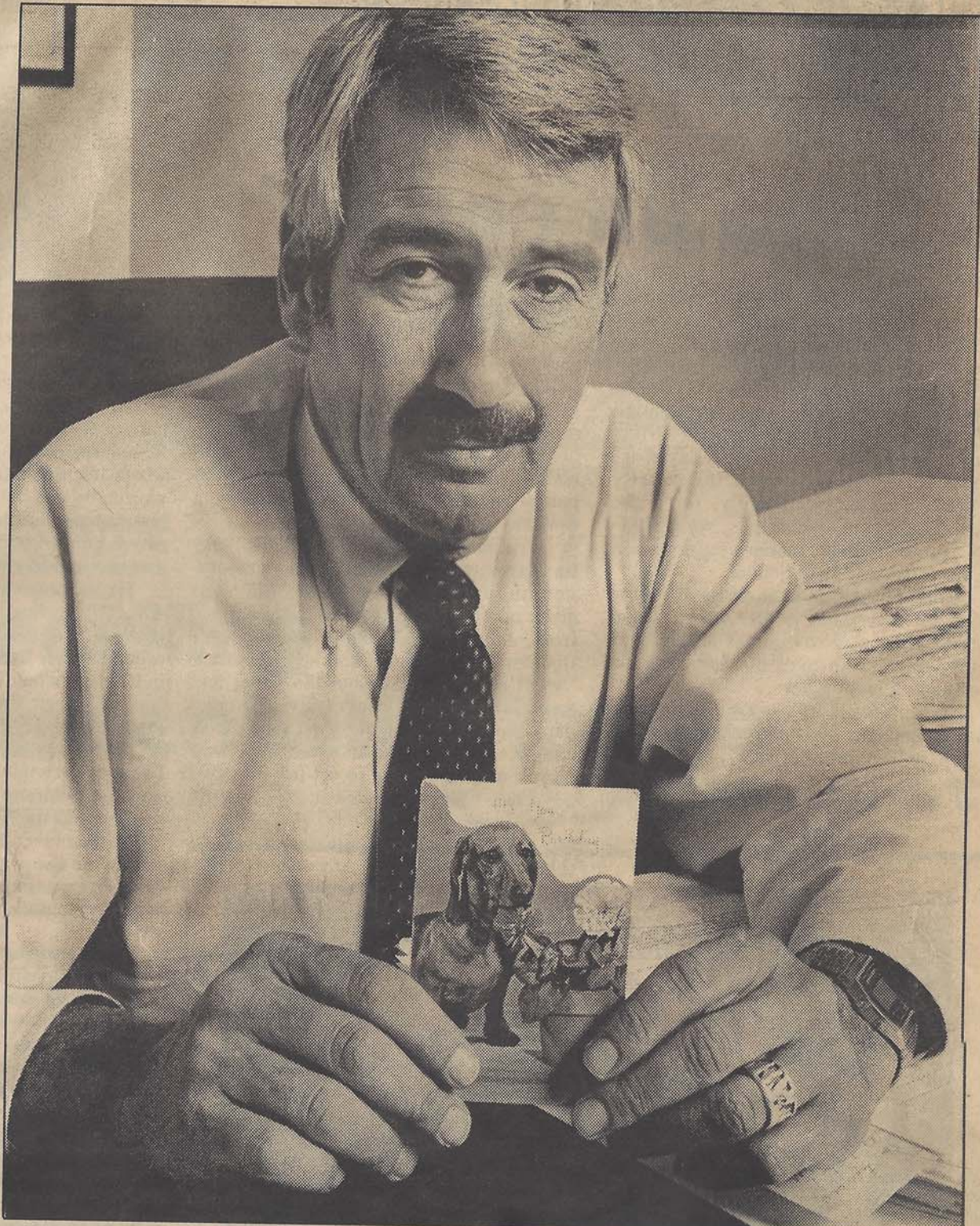
But Kokish echoes the sentiments of many who met her and were attracted to her intelligence and her intensity. "I thought she was a sick lady," says Kokish, "but I kind of liked her. She was an interesting person. I think deep down she was a very lonely and sad type individual who perhaps did a lot of the things she was accused of doing, but not out of things that usually motivated people. Assuming she did it, I don't think she believed she did them. She never ever admitted to me she did them. I think if she did anybody in ... it would have been for an emotional reason rather than greed."

Kokish says Tannenbaum was very defensive. "I started becoming suspicious of her. That wasn't my role to be her prosecutor, it was to defend her, but in your own mind you have to establish whether to defend because they're innocent or because you're gonna use every defense legally possible.

"She tried to manipulate me all the time" by protestations of innocence and attempts to impress him with stories of "wealthy and famous people she knew and had gone to bed with, including (Mafia chieftain) Joe Bananas," says Kokish.

Kokish still wonders if he could have saved Tannenbaum's life if the mail service at the Colorado State Hospital in Pueblo had been more efficient. Shortly after Tannenbaum committed suicide, Kokish received a suicidal letter from Tannenbaum written three or four days before she died. "She told me that by the time I got it (the letter), she probably wouldn't be around anymore." Kokish represented Tannenbaum's two children, Jimmy and Becky, in a suit filed against the state hospital and made a "reasonable settlement" on behalf of the children.

Kokish says Tannenbaum's children contacted him about three years ago to look through his files concerning their mother. Jimmy, now 27, is a computer salesman, recently married, living in



VERN WALKER / Daily Camera

Castle Rock attorney John Kokish has never been able to throw away the birthday card Galya Tannenbaum sent him shortly before she committed suicide 15 years ago.

Utah. Becky, now 20, lives in the Denver area and has also recently married. They were raised as Mormons by foster parents.

Shortly before Tannenbaum died, she sent Kokish a birthday card from the state hospital. It remains in his desk drawer today. Why, he says, "I don't know. I really don't know. I've thought about dumping it many times...."

## THE CURIOSITY CONTINUES

Denver attorney Martin Buckley represented the estate of Thomas Riha and sued the CIA to release information concerning the professor's disappearance. The CIA released documents heavily censored because of national security. The documents failed to provide any real clues but confirmed the CIA's involvement.

"Sure, I think about it from time to time," says Buckley. "It's a subject that comes up in conversation at parties and when you meet someone who has heard of your involvement. It's been a long time though since Professor Riha left us. In terms of wondering whether he's still alive, I guess that thought doesn't cross my mind very often."

**"She (Galya Tannenbaum) was one of the greatest con artists ever. She disturbed me because she had a quality about her that I kind of thought she might have been missing a couple of dots from her dominoes."**

— JOHN KOKISH

"When he was declared legally dead, I realized there wasn't anything that could be done. It wasn't worth a lot of further thought, although I'm always curious as to what happened and would love to have some answers."

Buckley has been involved in cases including the police brutality at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, school desegregation in the South and "very big" labor litigation. The Riha case, he says, is at least equal in terms of interest.

THE BOOK WRITER

# 'I have an ending'

Galya Tannenbaum carried to her pauper's grave in a Pueblo cemetery her terrible, sad secrets, and Denver author Kathleen Hayes says she knows more about those secrets than anyone. Though Denver writer Bill Pearson and Boulder lawyer Dennis Blewitt are also writing books about the Riha story, Hayes has followed the story all over the country, compulsively and constantly, for a decade. The 43-year-old Hayes, who moved to Aurora in 1949, teaches journalism at Aurora Hinkley High School.

The only person in the cast of characters in the Riha riddle whom Hayes hasn't been able to contact is Riha's ex-wife, Hana, who lives in New York and works as a bank teller.

Hayes says that, as a good writer, she has to become what she's writing about. "I've gotten into Galya's psyche," she says. Her book, "The Colonel and the Cat: The Tannenbaum-Riha Affair," will

tell the true story of what happened to Thomas Riha, she maintains.

"The Colonel" is a nickname Tannenbaum used for herself to imply her high-ranking intelligence agency position. On Riha's desk calendar after he disappeared, the notation "Dinner, The Colonel" was found. "The Cat" was Tannenbaum's nickname for Riha, whose sexual habits reputedly resembled those of a tomcat.

Writing this book hasn't been easy for Hayes, who keeps all her documentation in a safe-deposit vault. She was given a \$500 advance about 10 years ago from Johnson Publishing Company of Boulder for the book, and she says they "went so far as to design the cover and screen the photos." Hayes says the company decided after her first draft was completed "they didn't want it any more" and asked her to return the \$500 advance. "They just said it was not the

quality that they wanted. I find it hard to believe, inasmuch as they kept getting chapters for seven or eight months and liking them."

Johnson Publishing Company Publisher Barbara Johnson Musill says the company was "very much interested in doing it. The samples she sent we knew needed work, but they were rough drafts. When we finally got the final drafts, they were just not publishable. We were still interested, but we said it had to be rewritten, and she had to get help."

Hayes believes Riha was a low-level spy. "My feeling is that Riha had connections on both sides of the fence." She theorizes that Riha and Tannenbaum met in Chicago when Riha was helping people leave Eastern Europe with phony passports and visas for a fee.

Hayes has access to journals Tannenbaum kept while in Denver County Jail and the Colorado State Hospital in Pueblo. Those diaries were given to Hayes by Tannenbaum's attorney, John Kokish.

Here's the scenario Hayes has worked out, after extensive interviews and research using all the powers of her intuition:

Riha fled to Canada the night he disappeared, after asking Tannenbaum to take care of his possessions. "I have a U.S. Army Intelligence document that says Riha was sighted in a Montreal bookstore in April 1969. This bookstore he went to was frequented by agents of Communist nations," says Hayes.

She believes Riha returned to Boulder some time in May and discovered that Tannenbaum had sold his car, his house and his art collection. Fearful of being sighted in Boulder, Hayes surmises that the two drove to Tannenbaum's property at St. Mary's Glacier, where Tannenbaum shot Riha and blew up his body with dynamite.

The house Tannenbaum rented at 248 Logan St. in Denver, just a half-block from the Colorado Army Guard armory building, was torn down about a year ago, along with every house north to Third Avenue. A "for sale" sign stands on the empty lot today. The only reminder of the house where Tannenbaum lived is the pink flagstone sidewalk in front and a lone tree where the back yard was.

Hayes has become fascinated with what made Galya Tannenbaum tick and has interviewed scores of people who had any association with Tannenbaum. "She entertained guests very lavishly. She was a very good cook, loved to have people over and cook these wonderful meals. And she was a compulsive spender, a sociopath with a diminished conscience." Tannenbaum was a rock hound and spent hours in the mountains in old mines. For that hobby, she kept dynamite and cyanide (used in gold mining).

Hayes believes Tannenbaum spent



Aurora teacher Kathleen Hayes believes he about Galya Tannenbaum's obsession.



CHRIS McCLEAN / Pueblo Chieftain

Galya Tannenbaum took the truth to her pauper's grave in Pueblo.

## Tannenbaum's diary: fact or fiction?

Galya Tannenbaum kept a diary while she was incarcerated in the state mental hospital in Pueblo. Denver book writer Kathleen Hayes says she has obtained that diary and provided this excerpt:

"Out there, like two dumb nuts on that stupid ice, we argued, almost unconscious of even being out so far. Then in the fast verbal battle, the crashing part came like thunder....

Tom was not simply going elsewhere in the U.S., but he was going to the Soviet Union ... to work along the lines offered him that last summer. There I was, an ex-colonel of military intelligence, and Tom was a traitor to the U.S.A. and to me ... and he was telling me ... and I was supposed to help him....

"I couldn't let him go and it seemed the only thing to do was stop him right now. I was blind with anger ... I wanted to kick the ice and dump him in the lake. Somehow I vaguely remember him laying on the ice, out there, and my trying to lift him and not being able as he was too heavy....

"The sound of something exploding also rings into memory." ■

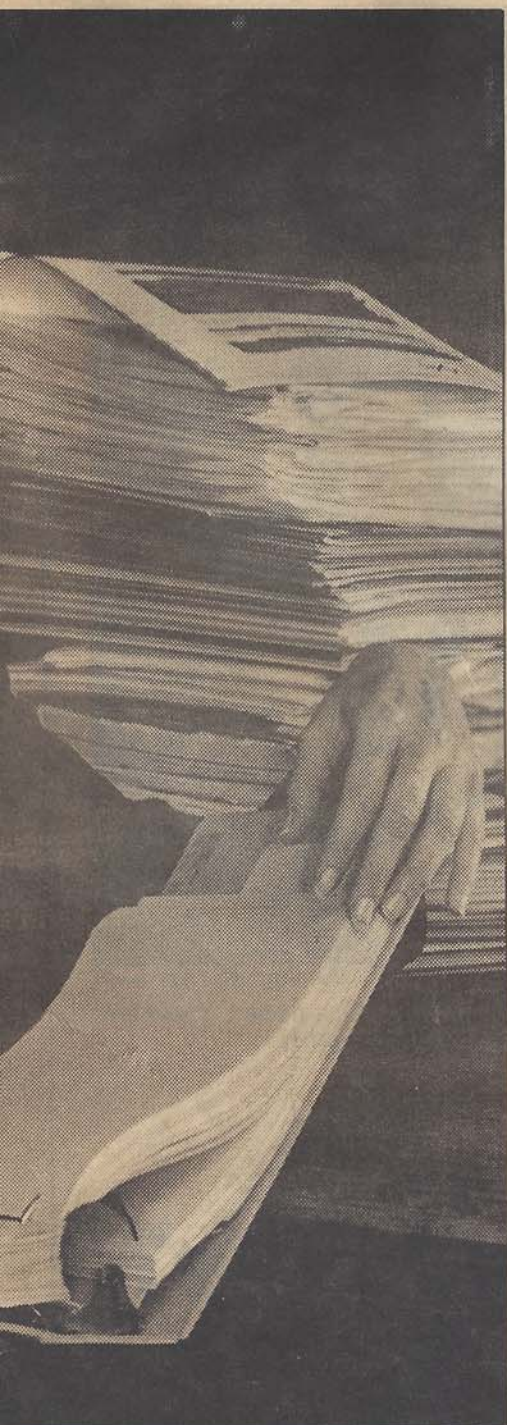
the money she got from Riha's possessions and that when he found out, "he became very angry. I think he told her then he was going to the Soviet Union.... I also believe she blackmailed him, that American intelligence was on to him, he had to get out of the country.

"She couldn't handle the rejection of him going to the Soviet Union. In her mind, I believe she believed she was this colonel."

Tannenbaum, says, Hayes, was very strong. "Almost like the build of a Swedish masseuse, very large." She stood 5-foot-7-inches tall, says Hayes, and weighed "170 pounds she admitted to, probably closer to 180." Riha was of slight build, standing 5-foot-6-inches tall at 130 pounds with a mass of dark, wavy hair.

"She had such powers of repression that ... she could repress things to the point where she could not admit it because she couldn't believe it. She didn't know the difference between fantasy and reality. The thin line was al-





JULIE SOTOMURA / Daily Camera

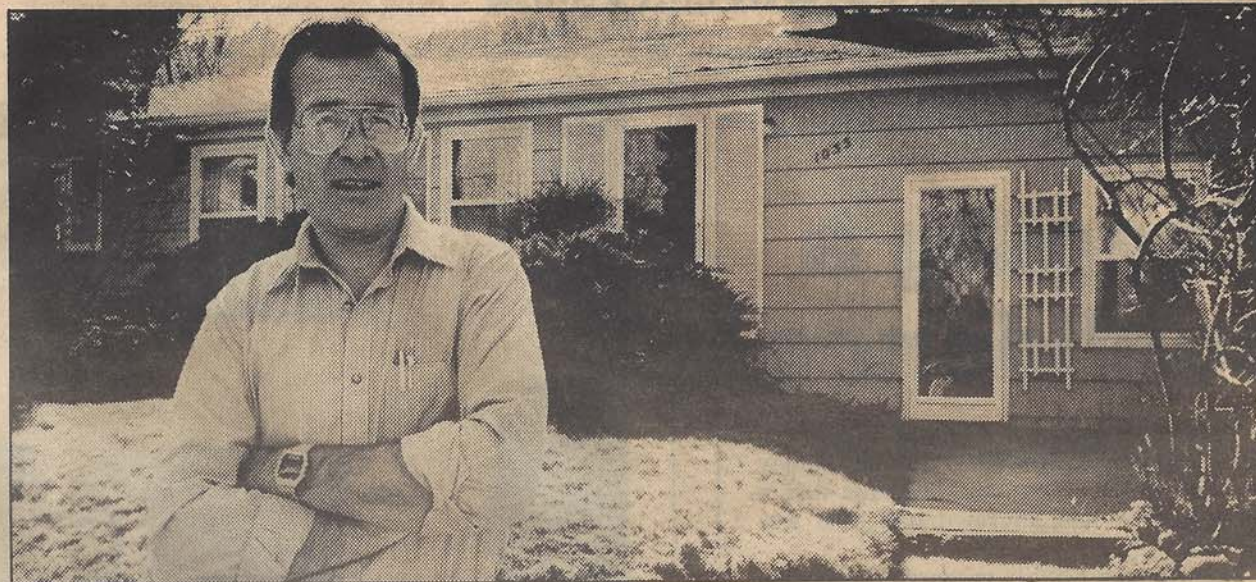
er decade-long writing project tells the truth

ready very fuzzy and the death of Riha was the beginning of the end for her."

Hayes agrees that if indeed Riha was simply a low-level spy, the case doesn't seem to warrant the kind of attention it received. "I think it was a lot of bumbling," she says. "We had an FBI man who made a mistake and talked to the CIA and Boulder police. I don't think there's any massive intrigue or anything malicious on the part of American security. It's just a series of mistakes. They would not admit the mistakes and it snowballed."

Hayes is now in negotiation with a publishing agent. She says she believes she's found the truth behind the whole story.

"I believe I have an ending, and I have it in Galya's words. You can't prove it unless you have actual evidence in your hands, bones, teeth.... I don't think we'll ever have it, but I think I have as close to the ending as anyone will ever have."



Zdenek Cerveny, Riha's nephew, remembers his uncle's humor and intelligence.

VERN WALKER / Daily Camera

## THE NEPHEW

# Recalling the Tannenbaum tangle

Zdenek Cerveny loved Thomas Riha, who was the half-brother of Cerveny's mother. He loved him as family. It was Riha who sponsored Cerveny when he came to this country in the fall of 1968 after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. It was Riha who helped him settle into his new life in America.

Perhaps more than anyone else involved in the disappearance of Thomas Riha, Cerveny ran up against roadblock after roadblock in his struggle to determine the fate of his uncle.

He has only been able to reconcile his sorrow and his frustration by giving up and getting on with his life in Boulder. Cerveny and his wife, Pamela, a teacher, returned to Boulder in January after a year in Australia. He is a mechanical engineer and is looking for work now.

"I simply gave up," says the handsome Cerveny, who bears little resemblance to his uncle and speaks English with only a trace of an accent. "I spent enough time with enough people without producing any answers."

When he arrived in 1968, Cerveny was a stranger in a strange land. He ignored his gut feeling that Galya Tannenbaum was dangerous and admits he made some mistakes. But they were innocent mistakes born of blind trust.

Cerveny signed as a witness to the will of Gus Ingwersen, the Denver engineer and friend of Tannenbaum who died of cyanide poisoning. Cerveny says it was a stupid mistake to sign the paper without reading it. Tannenbaum was found innocent by reason of insanity in forging Ingwersen's will.

The check signed by Thomas Riha that Tannenbaum used to pay a Longmont charter service was for a flight she arranged for Cerveny and a friend to take to San Antonio — after assuring Cerveny that it was being arranged by the government.

That whole mess got started when Cerveny innocently asked if he could borrow Tannenbaum's Chevrolet for the trip, he says. Tannenbaum refused, saying it was an armored vehicle with a reinforced frame and bullet-proof glass.

"At this point I'm not sure of anything," says Cerveny of his uncle's fate. But he doesn't believe that Riha was a high-level spy. "I know that he might have had some problems with the Russians,

might have done some small favors, maybe he was embarrassed about it later."

That, says Cerveny, could explain why a brilliant professor with a Harvard education could be hoodwinked by a mentally ill woman who wore a thrift-store trench coat with eagles sewn on the shoulders and referred to herself as "The Colonel."

"He was very afraid of Tannenbaum," says Cerveny of his uncle. "I cannot explain how a man who was so bright could be so naive. Somehow she convinced him that she had some power. She knew something he told her in a weak moment that he believed could compromise him."

Cerveny was afraid of Tannenbaum, too. "I suspected her of being capable of doing bad things. She bragged about disposing of people. Tannenbaum was an old jailbird." During the time that Tannenbaum was free on bond, Cerveny slept with a pistol under his pillow, even though he learned when he went target shooting with her one day that she was a terrible shot. "She couldn't hit a barn from the inside."

To this day, Cerveny remains angry at Senator Gary Hart, who publicly said in 1976 that he believed Riha was living somewhere in Eastern Europe. "Mostly because he wouldn't talk to me," says Cerveny of the repeated attempts he made to contact Hart. "I wanted to ask him very privately if that was what he really thought," says Cerveny, because as a member of the U.S. Senate Intelligence Committee, Hart had access to more information than Cerveny.

"I think that he knew more than he said," Cerveny maintains to this day, though why he isn't sure. "I don't know ... to protect the agency in question?"

The only question at this point, says Cerveny, is who killed his uncle. "I think he's dead. I thought so from the beginning — everything pointed to him being dead. The only question was, was it Tannenbaum, and why did she get so much help getting away?"

Cerveny loves this country but sees his uncle's disappearance in a different light from most: "That's the price of freedom — people are free to disappear. You cannot flee Czechoslovakia without somebody knowing about it."

THE CU PRESIDENT

# Keeping a confidence

About a month after Thomas Riha disappeared, then-CU President Joseph Smiley reassured worried staff and students that a reliable source had informed him Riha was alive and well.

Even though heavily censored documents released by the CIA in 1976 proved the reliable source was in fact a CIA officer, to this day, Smiley won't say who gave him that information.

"A confidence is a confidence," says Smiley, president emeritus and professor emeritus of The University of Texas at El Paso. "I never have until this day revealed from whence that statement came and don't intend to." He lives in El Paso now with his two little dogs and stays busy with travel, keeping house and cooking. His wife, Mary, died in 1981.

Smiley hasn't visited Boulder since 1974 when he was a visiting professor that fall. "I don't miss the snow, I must confess," says the native Texan, though he does miss the friends he made here.

Of the whole Thomas Riha riddle, Smiley says, "I presume nothing more has been heard. Isn't that amazing? I am appalled that nothing has developed, that there isn't any news, isn't any word of that poor fella."

At one point, Denver District Attorney Mike McKeivitt threatened to subpoena Smiley to find out who told him Riha was alive and well. "I said, 'Listen, McKeivitt. A confidence is a confidence. Maybe you don't understand that.'"

Though Smiley made headlines for refusing to divulge the source, he says he doesn't think about Riha much any more. "I thought a great deal about it" at one time, he says.

"Still, now that you mention it, my mind begins to turn back to those mysterious events, and I'm saddened by it. Maybe I shouldn't be. Maybe he was a double agent, a defector. Maybe he went back to Czechoslovakia. Who knows?" ■



To this day, former CU President Joseph Smiley won't say who assured him, a month after Riha disappeared, that the professor was alive and well.



JULIE SOTOMURA / Daily Camera

"It reminds me most of the Kennedy assassination," says Ann Doubilet of the Riha riddle. "There are still so many questions." Her home since 1979 was Riha's home when he disappeared.

THE PROFESSOR'S NEIGHBORS

# 'What did I really know?'

Daffodils are blooming on the front lawn of the home at the corner of Sixth Street and College Avenue where Thomas Riha lived until March 15, 1969. The trees and bushes have grown taller in the 17 years that have passed since Dr. Riha returned home after midnight, set his breakfast table as usual, and was never seen again.

It's a pretty neighborhood in West Boulder, serenely quiet. It's easy to see why Riha would have bought this house, close enough to the University that he only had to back his 1967 blue Volkswagen Bug out of the rear driveway onto College Avenue and head down the street to work.

Ann Doubilet, a private-practice psychotherapist, bought the house when she moved to town in 1979. She shares it with a housemate.

Last summer, a Denver television station came and took pictures of the exterior for a program about the disappearance of Riha. A couple of years ago, Doubilet mentioned to a gardener working in her back yard that it was the former home of Dr. Riha. The excited gardener and his crew dug around, but found nothing. Doubilet says she's been told a backyard bomb shelter built by occupants of the home prior to Riha has been filled with cement.

She says neighbors occasionally joke about shallow sinkholes on her front lawn and "wonder if he's down there."

"People come in here, and they say, 'Oh, this house is so peaceful.' I thought that when I

bought it," says Doubilet. "I've never felt anything but relaxed here. I kind of like the idea all this happened here. I don't get scared. Having been an old leftist, I never trusted the CIA anyway."

Down the street, Pat Faulkner has lived at the corner of Sixth Street and College Avenue since 1946. She was fond of her across-the-street neighbor Dr. Riha, and to this day wonders what happened.

"You don't like to have totally unresolved things in your life, and it's just unsolved," she says. "You'd hit a stone wall and try another one. And another one and another one. So many dead ends.... People who should have been in the know and weren't saying. It was just a very, very strange thing."

She remembers the Sunday morning when Riha's friends first realized he was gone. "It was a winter day, very snowy, very cold. I don't know why, it just seemed very quiet. I think most of all, it was an intuition.... Monday, I had a distinct feeling that something was wrong."

She watched and waited along with the rest of the town as the story slowly unfolded. She remembers her professor neighbor as a warm, friendly man, with a good sense of humor.

"But in retrospect," she says softly, "you don't know what he was like. Looking back, you know, what did I really know?" ■

# The reporters

From page 8

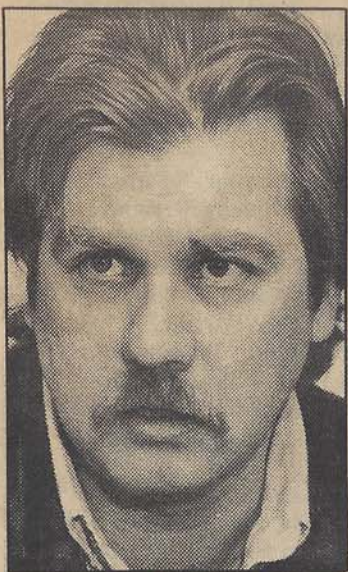
not. If someone suspected her of poisoning, they would have never drunk cherry cider in her parlor there."

## ENTANGLED IN INTELLIGENCE

Former Colorado Daily Editor and Publisher Tim Lange, who last month left Boulder to work for the Los Angeles Herald Examiner, covered the Riha mystery for the Daily in 1975 when the FBI and CIA cover-ups came to light.

"For a brief period, yes. I was obsessed," says Lange. "Any time you've got something that involves the FBI and the CIA at the levels that did, with a local hook, it makes a great story."

That involvement of the intelligence community achieved international significance in the mid-'70s when it was revealed that then-FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover



JULIE SOTOMURA / File photo

Former Colorado Daily Editor and Publisher Tim Lange was obsessed with the Riha story.

had cut off liaison with every intelligence organization except the White House.

Hoover made headlines when he forbade FBI officers to have any contact with the CIA. Hoover's reason: an FBI officer had refused to tell him the name of the CIA officer who had advised then-CU President Joseph Smiley that the professor was alive and well, about a month after Riha's disappearance.

"My personal opinion is that The Colonel (Galya Tannenbaum) killed him and buried him in her basement or took him to a lake some-

where and dumped the body," says Lange. "It's like the Kennedy assassination. It could easily be coincidence, it could be conspiracy. Conspiracy stories are almost impossible to break. You really do have to become obsessed to dig out the information. You can never know what the truth is, that's the toughest part about it."

## THE DIGGER

Denver Post reporter Fred Gillies was hesitant to answer questions about how he has reconciled the Thomas Riha story, and at first declined to comment. He agreed only on the basis that the questions be submitted to him first "so I could think about them. I wanted to be accurate on dates and things like that."

Perhaps more than any reporter who covered the Riha story, Gillies was known and respected for his accuracy, his diligence, his unflinching dedication and his dogged determination in checking out anything that resembled a lead.

A quiet and meticulous man who wears carefully pressed white shirts, Gillies, who is in his early 50s, has worked for the Denver Post 18 years. He has survived newsroom purges that have removed many older reporters.

He is also the object of unkind sentiment among some of his Post colleagues who think his undying interest in the Riha story is comical.

Asked if he is saddened that there's not much newsworthy about the Riha story anymore, Gillies said in a telephone interview, reading from a prepared statement: "It's always sad when a man disappears without a trace, and there is no resolution of his fate. But few stories, no matter how compelling, can be sustained for more than a decade without some solid, substantial development. There has been no such development in recent years and the press (of other news stories) has inevitably shunted the Riha disappearance to the back burner."

Asked if he still thinks about Riha, or wonders if he will ever be found, Gillies said: "For many years, the Riha story was a consuming passion. A small bit of information often could be expanded to a meaningful de-

velopment. For example, a long-distance call to a bookstore in Toronto where the store owner, responding to an inquiry about Riha, said, 'It is better that you not be interested in that matter.'"

Gillies believes that the Riha riddle can still be solved, "if the searcher could gain the full cooperation of the CIA and the FBI, which have released only the bare minimum of information about the Riha case."

Gillies confirms that in 1970 he participated in digging up the basement of Tannenbaum's Logan Street

home in Denver in a search for Riha's body. "Here, it's best to confirm that I did this," he responded, "but not comment further. Some bones that were found under the basement floor were determined by the Colorado Bureau of Investigation to be dog bones. I also investigated an old mine entrance off Interstate 70 east of Idaho Springs, but that site produced only animal bones and unstable overhead shoring. An investigative visit to St. Mary's Glacier, also east of Idaho Springs, wasn't too productive." ■

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