

# Magazines/Rac

## The Magazine Reader

# Who Killed Hitler's Niece, Reconsidered

By Charles Trueheart  
Washington Post Staff Writer

Angela "Geli" Raubal was found dead and bloody in her bedroom in Adolf Hitler's Munich apartment on Sept. 19, 1931. She'd been shot in the chest with the gun found at her side—Hitler's gun. She was his half niece, nearly 20 years his junior and undoubtedly his mistress.

There was a clumsy coverup by Hitler's staff, terrified at the prospect of a scandal as the *Fuehrer* of the National Socialist Party was beginning his ascent to dominion *ueber Alles*. But Geli Raubal was, in fact, covered up—buried in Vienna with only a perfunctory autopsy. The official verdict: suicide.

Sixty years later, the dauntless Ron Rosenbaum wishes to resurrect the scandal. His tantalizing exploration of the case is in the April *Vanity Fair*, giving credit to many others who have made the Raubal mystery their life's work and obsession.

The questions surrounding what happened to the bewitching Geli—beginning with the basic one: murder or suicide?—would be familiar to anyone who follows Agatha Christie. But there are certain elements more reminiscent of James Ellroy's dark and twisted whodunits, notably evidence that Geli was suffering from the unspeakable sexual demands "Uncle Alfie" was making, and that she desperately wanted out. We learn from Rosenbaum that six of the seven women whom Hitler is said to have known intimately either committed suicide or made a serious stab at it. And we are made to wonder whether Hitler himself pulled the trigger, in cold calculation or frenzied passion, on poor Geli—perhaps (so goes one theory) because she was pregnant, and by a Jew.

This is kinky, kooky stuff, and its wherefores are probably destined to remain unanswered, particularly if Austrian authorities continue refusing to exhume Geli's remains. (More association with Hitler and Nazism the Austrians don't need.)

So why is Rosenbaum bothering—and why is his usual wryly cynical approach largely missing from this impassioned quest for answers? He seems to anticipate the question:

"Here's a man who would go on to murder millions, who made the Big Lie his essential mode of operation. But a young woman is found shot with his gun a few steps away from his bedroom, and Hitler gets the presumption of innocence because his friends say he wasn't



there at the time? Why give him a posthumous exoneration for *any* death without doing everything possible to hold him accountable?"

### Shortlist Season

*Vanity Fair*, as it happens, heads the list of finalists for the 1992 National Magazine Awards. It won nominations in general excellence and six other categories, suggesting the breadth of the magazine's achievement after less than 10 years of publication: personal service, feature writing, public interest, design, photography, and essays and criticism. Among the nominees are Rosenbaum's article on suicide doctor Jack Kevorkian, two of Norman Mailer's columns, Gail Sheehy's menopause opus and Leslie Bennetts's report on child-molesting Catholic priests.

*The New Republic*, last year's general excellence winner in its circulation category (under 100,000), was nominated for the same award again, and for three others—twice for essays (by Michael Kinsley and Tatyana Tolstaya) and once for reporting (by Michael Kelly from the Persian Gulf War). *TNR* garnered the second-highest number of nominations.

*National Geographic*, another Washington-based magazine, was nominated (as it often is) in photography as well as in public interest ("The World's Food Supply at Risk," by Robert E. Rhoades) and general excellence. (*Business Week* and *Time* were the only other magazines with three nominations.)

Six other Washington publications are among 77 finalists in 14 categories: *Washingtonian* (general excellence); *U.S. News & World Report* for Michael Satchell's story on U.S.-owned factories despoiling Mexico (public interest); *Congressional Quarterly*, for "Where the Money Goes," December's whopper on the appropriations process (single-topic issue); *Common Boundary*, a Bethesda bimonthly that examines the intersection of psychology and spirituality, for an article on incest (personal service); *Modern Maturity*, the bimonthly of the American Association of

Retired Persons, for articles on various swindles (personal service); and *Ranger Rick*, the kids' magazine of the National Wildlife Federation (single-topic issue—on frogs).

Who says Washington isn't magazine central?

Other salient points about the finalists for the awards, which will be given April 16: The proliferation of kid-oriented magazines was reflected in nominations to *Kids Discover* (twice), *Creative Classroom* and the aforementioned *Ranger Rick*. One of *Time*'s nominations was for its provocative investigation of Scientology, and one of *Business Week*'s for its cover story on astronomical CEO pay. *Mother Jones* was nominated for Scott Armstrong's report on U.S.-Saudi relations. *The Atlantic* and *The New Yorker*, which often dominate the nominations, were nominated only twice each, and *Esquire*—ditto—not at all. And *The Angolite*, published by inmates at a Louisiana penitentiary and chronic nominee of high-minded judging panels, is a finalist yet again.

### Maxwell House of Representatives

Corporate sponsorship of ostensibly sacred American institutions like bowl games and Smithsonian museums is now an accepted, if still outrageous, fact of life. John Rothchild, writing in the April/May issue of *Worth*, lets his warped imagination wander, and it comes to rest upon a conjecture:

A rental-car company getting behind a document of democracy would give us the Dollar Bill of Rights. And each amendment could use an appropriate sponsor—the Time Warner First Amendment, the Smith & Wesson Second Amendment, the Jack Daniel's Fifth Amendment etc. You could have a First Union First Lady, a Hormel habeas corpus, a Pledge of Allegiance and a John Hancock Declaration of Independence.

Now you try. How about the Lockheed Pentagon or the R.J. Reynolds Department of Agriculture, for bringing the money full circle?

DECLASSIFIED AND RELEASED BY  
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
SOURCE METHODS EXEMPTION 25X2  
NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT  
DATE 2001 2007

0  
7  
we  
"W  
tion  
jur  
lat  
As  
Pic  
for  
the  
tion  
say  
nar  
nar  
at  
En  
for  
cor  
tea  
wh  
Le  
thr  
al  
pri  
bu:  
a  
En  
de  
day  
mo  
phy  
the  
dis  
est  
the  
(10  
Do  
get  
wa  
to  
yea  
sion  
im  
We  
Wit  
for  
cor  
Go  
a li  
for