

A vibrant tropical beach scene. In the foreground, a red and white life preserver floats in clear, turquoise water. The middle ground shows a lush green coastline with palm trees and a few buildings. In the background, a range of jagged, green mountains rises against a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds. Palm fronds are visible in the top corners of the frame.

Spellbound

Death & Betrayal
in the South Pacific

Kara Rubinstein Deyerin





The door to Larry's cabin (and the bow cabin).

1. Treachery

My uncle Larry lay in a two-by-six-foot bunk, much like a coffin, with the Levolor door to his tiny cabin locked shut. He locked the door even though he knew it would not hold against the slightest assault. The flimsy lock however offering a false assurance he was safe.

The pitch-black dark of the night encircled him. He couldn't see his own hands clutching a wrench to his chest. It was the only item resembling a weapon he could find on his way to the cabin before going to bed. Larry could hear his heart pounding in between the waves lapping at the sides of the boat. The 53-foot yellow sailboat, the *Spellbound*, lay anchored just off a small island in the middle of the South Pacific Ocean. Somewhere in the ocean was the watery grave of his parents. His parents were dead, and he was scared he would be next.

Larry's breathing was shallow, and sleep would not be easy. The waves rocked the boat, moving with the turmoil of his emotions. He tried to quiet himself, synchronizing his breath with the rocking—breathe in, breathe out, breathe in, breathe out. All he managed was a sigh. He could feel adrenaline pumping through his veins. Squeezing his eyes shut against

the night, he listened. Far from civilization, he felt utterly alone, even though his brother Gary was somewhere on the boat.

Where was Gary? he wondered.

Then he heard it. Footsteps. He could smell his brother on the other side of the door. Sweat, liquor, and cigarettes. His hand gripped the wrench tighter. His mind telling his body to be ready to attack if the door opened. They hadn't bathed in a few days and it was hot even at night. The odor permeated the tight quarters of his cabin; his sense of smell heightened by fear. Larry did not know how long his brother stood outside his door.

Sleep was impossible that night.

After what seemed like hours, Larry figured Gary had given up lurking and went to bed in his bunk at the other end of the boat. He pictured him asleep. Despite the darkness and fear, Larry smiled. It was ironic that his brother had managed what he could not. He imagined Gary's steady breathing mimicking the sway of the sea, gentle and slow. "Gentle and slow," he huffed to himself.

No, he thundered in his mind, Gary's breathing was likely the peaceful slumber of a murderer.

The words patricide and matricide tumbled about in Larry's head with the steady gait of the *Spellbound* in the water. Just thinking the words tore at his heart, imagining how his brother could have killed their parents. The happy pictures of his mom and dad from just a few months ago flashed before him. The excitement of finishing the *Spellbound* and finally leaving on their adventure. Their trip down the coast of California. Memories of growing up with his sullen and angry, yet charming, younger brother tugged at his consciousness.

Movies of his "Brady Bunch" family rolled past his clamped shut eyes. He searched his mental footage for some indication foretelling the horrific events just two weeks earlier.

Nothing.

He rummaged through his memories again, wondering what he was missing. Sleep never did come to Larry that night. The dawn was a welcome light; perhaps this day he would learn what really happened.

* * *

I have often wondered how my uncle Larry could spend the night, many nights in fact, on the sailboat his parents built by hand, with the man who may have ruined our family's future and dreams. Could my uncle Gary, and perhaps my aunt Kerry and their friend Lori, really have committed such an unthinkable atrocity—murder? Or, could this all really have been a series of accidents? What sequence of events could have occurred during the last weekend of February in 1978 that left my grandparents dead and Kerry critically wounded?

These questions have haunted me my entire life. As a four-year-old girl, I stood on the edge of my family tragedy. As a teenager, it was a public nuisance that marked me. Now, as an adult, it swirls about me, a constant reminder of how easily lives can be changed, something that helped to prepare me for another unexpected, devastating change of course later in life.

What happened on board the *Spellbound* in 1978 is something one part of my mom's family continues to seek answers for, while the other endeavors to forget by accepting it was an accident. I am ready to dive into my family's dark past to try and piece together what happened.

I am asking you to take this journey with me to investigate the unsolved murder of my grandparents, Jody and Loren Edwards, in French Polynesia in early 1978. These are the memories of a woman trying to make sense of a life-altering event that ripped her family in half, literally, and continues to tear at the fabric of our souls.

Some members of the family believed the explanations uncle Gary and aunt Kerry gave, while others found too many holes and contradictions in their stories. I cannot guarantee the accuracy of any information. All I can do is tell the story as I heard it growing up, refined by what I discovered in my research and interviews. I now ask you to help me make sense of, and hopefully solve, one of the greatest mysteries of my life...

Funeral announcement for the
memorial service for Loren and Jody Edwards
held 1 April 1978.

Will those driving in pro-
cession kindly turn on their
headlights for safety



Green Funeral Home

Colonial Chapel — Kirkland
822-4151

Chapel of Flowers — Bellevue
747-6240

Sunset Hills Chapel — Bellevue
747-6240

Chapel of the Valley — Redmond
885-1529



God hath not promised
Skies always blue,
Flower-strewn pathways
All our lives through;
God hath not promised
Sun without rain,
Joy without sorrow,
Peace without pain.

But God hath promised
Strength for the day,
Rest for the labor,
Light for the way,
Grace for the trials,
Help from above,
Unfailing sympathy
Undying love

In Loving Memory

LOREN I. EDWARDS
November 24, 1927 February 24, 1978

JODY EDWARDS
April 30, 1934 February 25, 1978

Memorial Services
April 1, 1978 10:00 A.M.
Green's Colonial Chapel
Kirkland, Washington

The Rev. Gary Barckert, Officiant

Services Conclude in the Chapel

Song list for the memorial service
for Loren and Jody Edwards
held 1 April 1978.

SONGS FOR MEMORIAL SERVICE

Moonlight Serenade	Archie Bleyer and Orchestra
Melody of Love	"
Sunrise Serenade	"
Around the World	"
Ruby	"
Twilight Time	"
Lawd, You Made the Night Too Long	Louis Armstrong
Over the Waves	Loretta Brank

(over)

Farther Along	The Byrds
Christian Islands	Gordon Lightfoot
Changes in Attitude, Changes in Latitude	Jimmy Buffett
I am Woman	Helen Reddy
Gentle on My Mind	Glenn Campbell
Desiderata	Fred Warren - Les Crane
Weary Blues	Louis Armstrong
Done Gone	Loretta Brank
The Impossible Dream	