

# 'In Cold Blood' . . .

Continued from Page 1

"He just made up that ending, which didn't hurt anything," Kidwell said, smiling. Susan didn't go to the cemetery—"she could've, it was plausible, but she really didn't. I don't think she was even here."

Kidwell said she had not seen the movie. "I didn't want to. I didn't think I could."

Many townspeople objected to the movie because Herb Clutter had been widely respected and they felt there was something unpleasant about making a film of the tragedy.

**"Did you ever meet Truman Capote? I did, and that'd sour you on just about anything. It was like shaking hands with a dead fish."**

A.E. Galloway, Holcomb school superintendent since 1968, said of townspeople's objections: "They thought it was too bad that people were morbid enough to make money over such a situation, and that's what this film was for, to make money, as was the book."

There were others who felt differently, he said.

"They saw a chance to get a part in the movie. It was a curiosity. You don't see a movie crew out here very often."

One souvenir of the film crew's visit hangs on a pillar outside El Rancho Cafe—a framed photograph of a scene from the movie in which actor John Forsythe is sitting in a booth with a friend.

Tom Maestas and his family run the cafe. Maestas said he thought Capote's book and all the sensation were uncalled for.

He knew Herb Clutter—"everybody did"—and was shocked like everyone else. But he sees no reason to keep bringing up the tragedy.

"You lose a good man, but you don't stop living. When John Kennedy was killed, America didn't stop. There's always someone to take their place," Maestas said.

Something Else, the town bar, still displays a partially shattered sign protruding from its frame: "Holcomb Club," a remnant of past years. Inside is a pool table and jukebox, over which hangs a black light. On the wood-paneled walls hang tapestries and some "peace" and "love" posters.

Bartender Rufus Delgado serves 3.2 beer to anyone over 18.

Delgado said the murders were particularly hard on Bob Rupp, Nancy Clutter's boyfriend and, at first, the principal suspect.

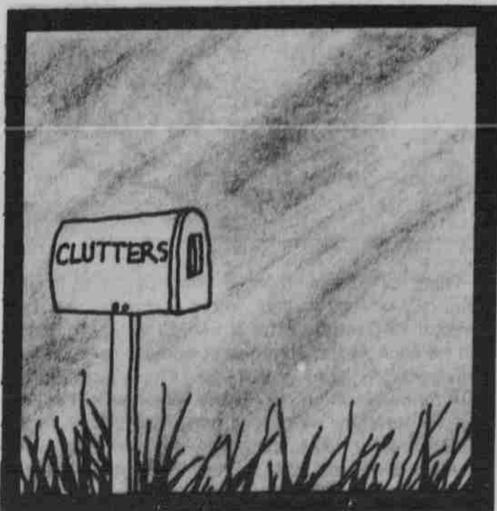
For a time, Delgado said, when Rupp walked into the club, people stopped talking. He said he used to work with Rupp, but that neither ever brought up the subject.

Rupp is now married, has children and lives in a mobile home west of town. He has a machine shop near his home. Townspeople urge the curious not to talk to Rupp about the slayings. They say he has been pestered enough.

Holcomb has been pestered by curiosity-seekers for 13 years. After the movie, tourists' cars lined Highway 50, which cuts through the northern part of Holcomb, while people stopped in the cafe where the actors had been, Delgado said.

The Clutter house can be seen from Highway 50 but can be reached only by driving through Holcomb. "No trespassing" signs have been removed. They didn't work.

The house and yard have not been kept up like they were when the Clutters lived there. The pink paint is fading and peeling (the house used to be white). The yard is barren in spots and choked with weeds in others. The garden is overgrown.



There have been two owners since the Clutters lived there. The first didn't last long.

"There were so many people going out to look at the place that it just drove them away," one woman explained.

The current owner lives in the house by himself and raises corn and cattle.

One Holcomb resident who did not care for Capote or his reporting efforts is Mayor Wayne R. Johnson. He has been mayor since the town was incorporated in 1961.

Johnson lives next door to the new post office. He is a stocky man with glasses and a broad smile.

Johnson said he was unhappy about the book, the movie and publicity about the Clutter killings.

He hasn't read the book—"I wouldn't give 'em the satisfaction." Nor has he seen the movie, which he wishes hadn't been filmed in his town.

Johnson said he met Capote when the writer was working on the book, but was not impressed.

**"Did you ever meet Truman Capote? I did, and that'd sour you on just about anything. It was like shaking hands with a dead fish."**

He said the town used to get a lot of mail asking for information about the slayings and their aftermath, most of which was ignored.

There are some people involved who have not ignored requests for information. Alvin A. Dewey, for example, Dewey is a Kansas Bureau of Investigation special agent who led the search for the murderers and who is mentioned frequently in Capote's book.

His wife, Marie, said: "Alvin still gets letters, mainly from students who are in classes where they're studying the book and they want to know his opinion and they want to know this and they want to know that."

"He answers 'em ever one," she said, "because we have boys and we know what it means to them to get their assignments completed, or if they write for information, they want a reply."

Dewey works for a Production Credit Association office across the street from the Finney County Courthouse in Garden City, where her husband and other investigators struggled to solve the crime and where the killers eventually were tried, convicted and sentenced to die.

She talked during her lunch hour over pizza and iced tea in her Garden City home about the effects of the murders and ensuing sensation on her and her husband's lives.

**"Now, Truman felt some compassion for Perry Smith because he could relate his life to Perry's, to an extent—unhappy childhood."**

Aside from the telephone calls and letters requesting information and the fact that they are now close friends of Truman Capote, "it hasn't changed our lives," she said. "The only bad thing about it (the publicity) is that we are constantly contacted by people asking questions. And you'd think after 13 years maybe people would be stopping. We'd like to forget it like everybody else, but we can't."

Dewey talked about their friendship with Capote—a friendship that takes them to Capote's parties in New York and his retreat in Palm Springs.

"Our family has kind of become Truman's family. We visit him in New York and we've gone to Palm Springs. In fact, we've used his home in Palm Springs twice, when he wasn't even there. He is a wonderful person. He still calls once or twice a week," she said.

The Deweys were guests of Capote at a celebrated masquerade ball he threw in New York in 1964.

"We were just treated royally," Dewey said. "People think jet-set, you know, a bunch of snobs. But you'll find people are no different, regardless of who they are or how much money they have."

Dewey met Jacqueline Kennedy two years later at a cocktail party thrown by Capote and recalled what the former first lady told her. "She said, 'Oh, Mrs. Dewey, I've been so anxious to meet you. I thought of you so when I read the book, the suspense you must have been in, the trying time it was.'"

Dewey said it was ironic. "I said to her, 'Well, you're saying to me exactly what I feel about you.' She was sorry for me in my position and I was feeling sorry for her in her position."

Capote invited the Deweys to New York for the premiere of *In Cold Blood*, something she said she dreaded doing more than anything she ever had to do.

"I particularly didn't want to see the part where they murdered the Clutters," she said.

As it turned out, the scenes with the Clutters were brief and did not portray the murders.

"It really wasn't as hard to see as I expected," Dewey said, "though I sat there trembling the whole time."

Dewey had only one major complaint about the film. "What I didn't like about the movie, and we told Richard Brooks (the director), is that he slanted it so sympathetically toward Perry Smith. Now, Truman felt some compassion for Perry Smith because he could relate his life to Perry's, to an extent—unhappy childhood."

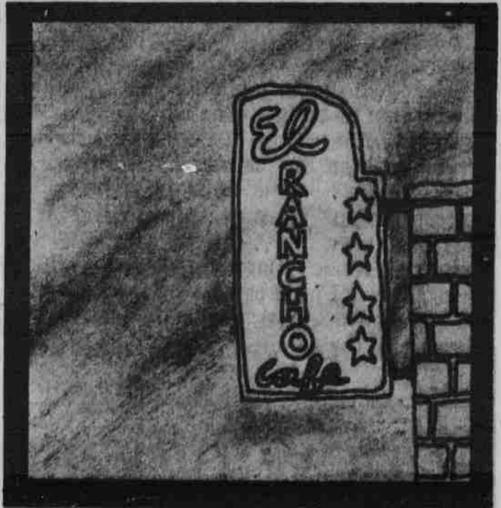
"But Truman said you come to the crossroad and you can either make something of yourself, or go down the wrong road—and that's what Perry Smith chose to do."

She said that although Capote does not believe in capital punishment, he admits that if Smith or Hickock had ever been released, they would have killed again—especially Smith.

Dewey said the time after the murders and before the killers were executed took a heavy toll on her husband.

"I thought the Clutters were four victims and Alvin was going to be the fifth, because he was on trial for those six years and not Smith and Hickock. Every time their attorneys took it to another court, Alvin had to take the stand, and he was interrogated. Smith and Hickock never took the stand."

While her husband was investigating the murders, Capote was conducting his own investigation.



"Some people thought, 'Oh well, you've become good friends because Alvin gave him so much information.' Well, that is not true," Dewey said. "When Truman was here, Alvin didn't answer a single question that he or Harper Lee had other than what was given in the press conferences."

Harper Lee, author of "To Kill A Mockingbird," often accompanied Capote to Holcomb.

Dewey said Capote tried to coax her husband into giving him inside information about the case. "He would say, 'Well, I'm not a reporter; what I'm going to do is going to be years later; you can talk to me.'"

**Although Capote does not believe in capital punishment he admits that if Smith or Hickock had ever been released, they would have killed again—especially Smith.**

But Dewey never gave the writer inside information and Capote was unaware of leads the investigators were tracking down.

"He gave Alvin the nickname 'Foxy.' One time Truman asked him a question and Alvin didn't tell him yes and he didn't tell him no, so Truman said, 'You're just being foxy.'"

So Capote did his own investigating and got his answer.

"He's always been proud of the fact that he'd be a good detective," Dewey said, "and he would."

After the killers were apprehended, there was no reason to keep the investigation secret anymore, so the Deweys then did talk to Capote. They have been good friends since.

Friendship with Truman Capote is one pleasant side-effect for some in Holcomb and Garden City of what otherwise was an uncomfortable experience.

Reporters rarely come to Holcomb anymore. Tourists are not so plentiful as before. Local conversation has returned to ordinary things—how good the harvest is, when they're going to hunt some of those pheasant, how busy their children are with school activities.

Though the memories are still there, they have been shoved to the backs of peoples' minds. It is doubtful they will ever be completely forgotten. But if townspeople ever do forget, it will be because outsiders let them.