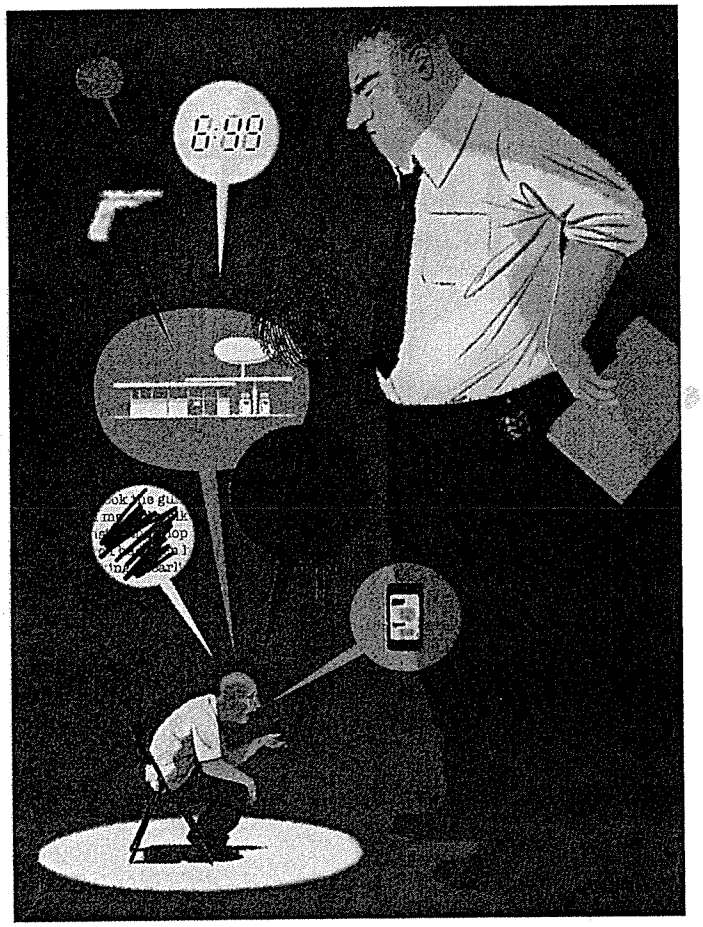
DEPT. OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE

THE INTERVIEW

Do police interrogation techniques produce false confessions?

BY DOUGLAS STARR



On December 14, 1955, Darrel Parker came home for lunch from his job as a forester in Lincoln, Nebraska. A recent graduate of Iowa State, he had moved to Lincoln with his wife, Nancy, who worked as a dietician for a flour-and-noodle company and had a cooking show on the local television station. He found her dead in their bedroom. Her face was battered, her hands and feet were bound, and a cord had been knotted around her neck. The medical examiner later determined that she had been raped before the murder.

Parker called the police and spent the next several days in a fog of grief and sedation. After the officers questioned him, he took his wife's body home to Iowa for burial. Several days later, while mourning with her family, he got a call from the attorney for Lancaster County, Nebraska. There was some new information, the attorney said, and he asked if Parker could come in and help with the investigation. When Parker arrived, he was led into a windowless room and introduced to a large, well-dressed man named John Reid.

Reid was a former Chicago street cop who had become a consultant and polygraph expert. He had developed a reputation as someone who could get criminals to confess. Rather than brutalize suspects, as police often did in those days, he used modern science, combining his polygraphic skills with an understanding of human psychology.

Reid hooked Parker up to the polygraph and started asking questions. Parker couldn't see the movement of the needles, but each time he answered a question about the murder Reid told him that he was lying. As the hours wore on, Reid began to introduce a story. Contrary to appearances, he said, the Parkers' marriage was not a happy one. Nancy refused to give Parker the sex that he required, and she flirted with other men. One day, in a rage, Parker took what was rightfully his. After nine hours of interrogation, Parker broke down and confessed. He recanted the next day, but a jury found him guilty of murder and sentenced him to life in prison.

The case helped burnish Reid's reputation. He hired new employees, took on more clients, and developed more sophisticated methods of questioning. Today, John E. Reid & Associates, Inc., trains more interrogators than any other company in the world. Reid's clients include police forces, private security companies, the military, the F.B.I., the C.I.A., and the Secret Service—almost anyone whose job involves extracting the truth from those who are often unwilling to provide it. The company's interview method, called the Reid Technique, has influenced nearly every aspect of modern police interrogations, from the setup of the interview room to the behavior of detectives. The company says that the people it trains get suspects to confess eighty per cent of the time.

A growing number of scientists and legal scholars, though, have raised concerns about Reid-style interrogation. Of the three hundred and eleven people exonerated through post-conviction DNA testing, more than a quarter had given false confessions—including those convicted in such notorious cases as the Central Park Five. The extent of the problem is unknowable, because there's no national database on wrongful convictions. But false confessions, which often lead to these convictions, are not rare, and experts say that Reid-style interrogations can produce them.

Last winter, I signed up for a basic Reid & Associates training course, in Boston. It lasted three days and cost five hundred and eighty dollars. There were about forty people in the class—

The Reid Technique has influenced nearly every aspect of modern police interrogations.

ILLUSTRATION BY LEO ESPINOSA

mostly police officers, federal agents, and private security workers. The instructor, Lou Senese, joined the firm in 1972, shortly after he graduated from college, and is now a vice-president. A middle-aged Chicagoan who resembles a less edgy Dan Ackroyd with glasses, he has the manner of an affable salesman. He mixed lessons in interrogation with homespun stories about how he used his training to outwit a car dealer, and how his daughters used it to manipulate him. The hallmark of lying is anxiety, he said, and interviewing therefore involves watching for signs of anxiety and occasionally causing it.

The Reid Technique begins with the Behavior Analysis Interview, in which you determine whether the suspect is lying. The interview has its roots in polygraph testing, and involves asking a series of nonthreatening questions to get a sense of the suspect's baseline behavior, and then following up with more loaded questions. Such "behavior-provoking questions" might include "What kind of punishment should they give to the person who committed this crime?" You can also imply that you have evidence, a technique called "baiting." You might say, "We're in the process of analyzing evidence from the crime scene. Is there any reason that your DNA would turn up there?"

Senese asked the class, "What do you think is more important, verbal or nonverbal behavior?" Intuitively, we responded, "Nonverbal." "Yeah," he said. "That's the whole ballgame right there." He told us that a video of an interview without sound would be more likely to reveal lying than one that included the audio. He showed us footage of a dark-haired woman being questioned about having changed her prescription for oxycodone from ten pills to forty. She gave equivocal answers, touched her face, and cast her eyes down and to the left. "I say that's deceptive," Senese pronounced. In another video, a bearded bank-robbery suspect sighed and shrugged while giving meandering answers. A teen-ager accused of setting fire to his family's house responded with details that were oddly specific—such as arriving at school at 7:49 A.M.—while picking at his sock, jiggling his foot, and touching his cheek. When the kid paused to rub his eye, Senese turned and shot us a look.

If you decide that the suspect is lying, you leave the room and wait for five minutes. Then you return with an official-looking folder. "I have in this folder the results of our investigation," you say. You remain standing to establish your dominance. "After reviewing our results, we have no doubt that you committed the crime. Now, let's sit down and see what we can do to work this out."

The next phase—Interrogation—involves prodding the suspect toward confession. Whereas before you listened, now you do all the talking. If the suspect denies the accusation, you bat it away. "There's absolutely no doubt that this happened," you say. "Now let's move forward and see what we can do." If he asks to see the folder, you say no. "There'll be time for that later. Now let's focus on clearing this whole thing up."

"Never allow them to give you denials," Senese told us. "The key is to shut them up."

Having headed off denials, you steer the subject toward a confession by offering a face-saving alternative. The process is called "minimization"—downplaying the moral consequences of the crime without mentioning the legal ones. In the case of the woman who tampered with her oxycodone prescription, you can suggest that the dentist did not give her enough pain pills and that she only wanted to save a trip to the pharmacy. "If you were a drug addict, you wouldn't have changed the prescription to forty—you would have changed it to a hundred!" Senese's 2005 book "Anatomy of Interrogation Themes" lists more than two thousand such excuses, in cases ranging from identity theft to murder. No matter how repugnant the crime, he told us, you can come up with a rationalization that makes it easier for the suspect to admit it. The standard Reid Technique manual, first published in 1962 and now in its fifth edition, suggests a way an interviewer can minimize rape:

> Joe, no woman should be on the street alone at night looking as sexy as she did. Even here today, she's got on a low-cut dress that makes visible damn near all of her breasts. That's wrong! It's too much temptation for any normal man. If she hadn't gone around dressed like that you wouldn't be in this room now.

You can further lower barriers to confession by presenting the crime as

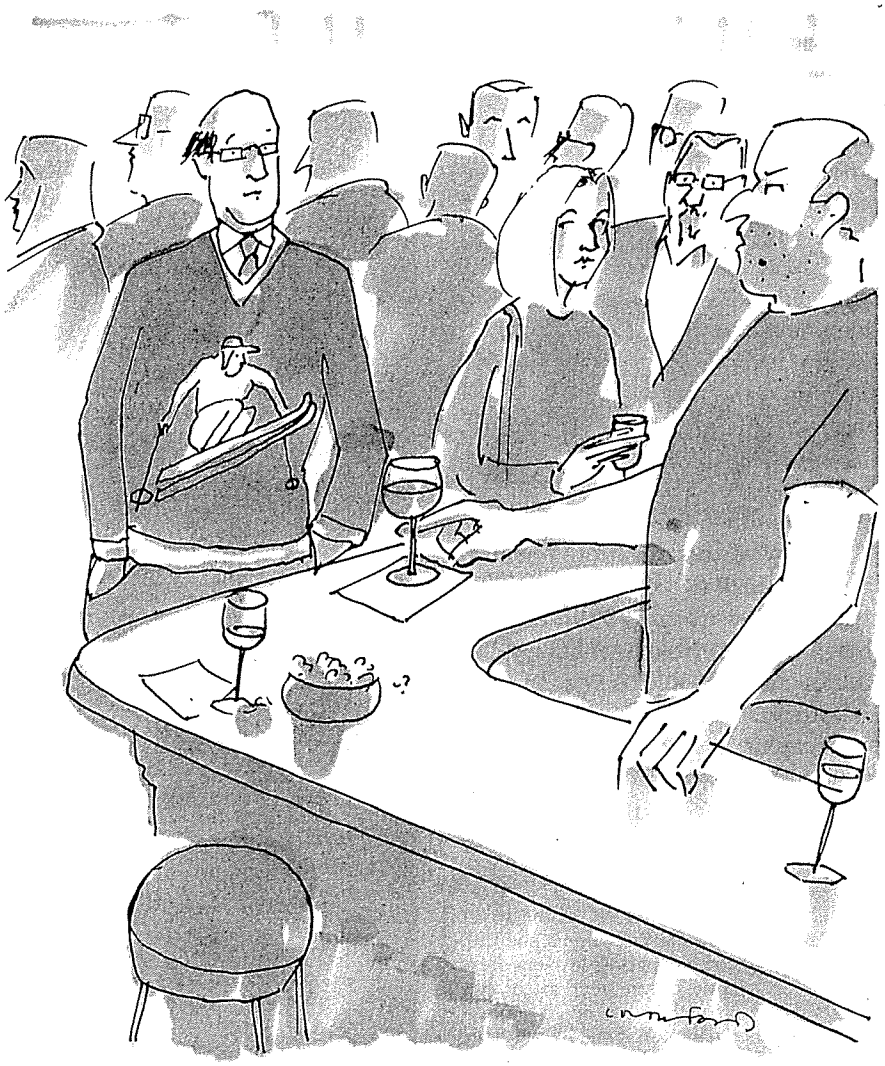
the lesser of two evils. Was this your idea or did your buddies talk you into it? Did you use that money for drugs or to help feed your kids?

You watch for reactions from the suspect. Averted eyes and folded arms tell you that he is shutting you out; facing you with an open posture says that he's listening. You expand on themes that trigger the right response. It can take minutes or hours. You might even lie: "Why were your fingerprints found on that gun?"

When the suspect finally admits to the crime, you praise him for owning up and press for corroborating details. Then you work together to convert the admission into a full, written confession. If he seems to have trouble remembering the details, you can present multiple-choice questions. Where did you enter the house: the front, the back, through a window? As a finishing touch, you introduce some trivial mistakes into the document, which the suspect will correct and initial. That will show the court that the suspect understood what he was signing.

After three days of Reid training, my classmates and I, newly versed in the subtleties of body language, gestured carefully in the hall and elevators, lest we unintentionally give something away. At the end, Senese gave us our certificates and left us with some closing remarks.

"It's been a real pleasure to teach you," he said. "I can honestly say this is the smartest and best group I've ever had." He sniffed, looked down, picked some lint off his shirt, crossed his arms—and got a laugh. From what he had taught us, we knew he was lying.



"That'll be twenty even—ten for the wine and a ten-dollar tax on the hapless sweater."

Thirty-five years ago, a postdoctoral fellow in psychology named Saul Kassin began researching the psychological factors that affect jury decisions. He noticed that whenever a confession was involved, every juror voted guilty. Alibis and fingerprints didn't matter in these cases. Kassin read the U.S. Supreme Court's 1966 Miranda decision and found that it repeatedly cites the Reid Technique manual as the most authoritative source on American interrogation techniques. When he bought the manual, he says, "my first impression was, my God, this reads like a bad psychology textbook. It was filled with assertions with no empirical proof."

Today, Kassin has appointments at Williams College, in Massachusetts, and at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, in New York, and is widely regarded as a leading expert on false confessions. He believes that the Reid Technique is inherently coercive. The interrogator's refusal to listen to a suspect's denials creates feelings of hopelessness, which are compounded by the fake file and by lies about the evidence. At this point, short-term thinking takes over. Confession opens something of an escape hatch, so it is only natural that some people choose it.

In the mid-nineteen-nineties, Kassin devised an experiment to explore how easy it was to induce false confessions. Two students would sit at a table with a computer. One student, an accomplice of the researchers, would read individual letters from a chart for the other to type, at varying speeds. The experimenter would warn the students not to hit the Alt key—hitting it would cause the computer to crash. The computer was programmed to crash sixty seconds after the experiment began, and the experimenter would angrily ask the participants if they had hit the forbidden key. Ripping a page out of his notebook, he'd scribble an admission and demand that the student sign it. These conditions gave a baseline confession rate, after which various Reid tactics were used to see which ones provoked additional false confessions.

The first time Kassin tried the experiment, with seventy-five participants, the students were so intimidated

by the accusatory question that about a quarter of them signed the confession. When the experimenter added false incrimination—instructing the accomplice to say that he had seen the subject hit the Alt key—the rate of false confession nearly doubled. When another of the experiment's accomplices, posing as a fellow-student, asked what had happened, the subjects put the blame on themselves, saying things like "I hit the wrong button" rather than "They accused me of hitting the wrong button." Some even confabulated details, such as "I hit it with the side of my hand." Not only had they internalized their guilt; they had come up with a story to explain it. Although Kassin made sure to inform the students afterward that the experiment was a hoax, they sometimes replied, "You're just trying to make me feel better."

Researchers throughout America and Europe replicated the "computer-crash paradigm." In 2011, Kassin used the model to test the effect of implied evidence—the "bait," in Reid parlance. The experimenter told subjects that their keystrokes had been recorded on the server and would be available for verification. The tactic more than tripled the rate of false confession.

Kassin's experiments have been criticized for not closely mimicking reality: the "crimes" could be accidental, and confession bore no serious consequences. In order to address these concerns, Melissa Russano and her colleagues at Florida International University came up with an experiment that they called "the cheating paradigm." Students were asked to solve various problems, some with a partner and others individually. A few students—confederates of the researchers—were told to become noticeably upset while working alone. Inevitably, some students helped their partners during the individual section of the experiment—in other words, they cheated. Unlike hitting the Alt key, this misdeed could not be committed by accident, and the confession bore real consequences, since cheating violated the university's academic code. The experiment also had the advantage of producing guilty as well as innocent subjects.

Russano and her colleagues used the model to test tactics associated with the Reid Technique. Direct accusations elicited confessions from innocent and guilty subjects alike, and minimization proved especially effective: when the experimenters told subjects, "You probably didn't realize what a big deal this was," the confession rate among guilty parties increased by about thirty-five per cent. Yet Russano observed "collateral damages"—the confession rate among innocents tripled. In subsequent experiments, she has found that other Reid tactics are extremely effective in producing confessions but not very good at separating true ones from false ones.

As Kassin and his colleagues were examining interrogations in the lab, social psychologists were observing them in the field. In the mid-nineteen-nineties, Richard Leo, a law professor at the University of San Francisco who had undergone Reid training, spent more than nine months sitting in on nearly two hundred interrogations at the Oakland, Hayward, and Vallejo police departments. He found that most police officers used key elements of the Reid technique, but many skipped the initial interview and went straight to the interrogation.

Leo has reported that the Miranda decision, which is supposed to shield suspects from involuntary confessions, generally does not: more than eighty per cent decline their Miranda rights, apparently in order to seem coöperative. He and Richard Ofshe, a social psychologist, have observed what they call "persuaded" false confessions—an innocent suspect, worn down, fabricates a story to satisfy his questioners.

I saw this effect in a video of an interrogation that an Iowa defense attorney sent me. His client, a young man who was eighteen at the time of the interview, had been wrongly accused of molesting a three-year-old girl at the day-care center where he worked. The detective never raised his voice or appeared anything other than sympathetic. But, in under two hours, he had the young man saying that he had blanked out and fondled the little girl. As if in a trance, the young man said, "I know it happened but I don't remember any of it. . . . I guess it must have happened." After a break in the interrogation, during which the young man was allowed to see his sister, he retracted his confession and maintained his innocence. The district attorney dropped the charges.

The Reid interrogation technique is predicated upon an accurate determination, during Behavioral Analysis, of whether the suspect is lying. Here, too, social scientists find reason for concern. Three decades of research have shown that nonverbal signals, so prized by the Reid trainers, bear no relation to deception. In fact, people have little more than coin-flipping odds of guessing if someone is telling the truth, and numerous surveys have shown that police do no better. Aldert Vrij, a professor of psychology at the University of Portsmouth, in England, found that law-enforcement experience does not necessarily improve the ability to detect lies. Among police officers, those who said they paid close attention to nonverbal cues did the worst. Similarly, an experiment by Kassin showed that both students and police officers were better at telling true confessions from false ones when they listened to an audio recording of an interview rather than watch it on video. In the experiment, the police officers performed less well than the students but expressed greater confidence in their ability to tell who was lying. "That's a bad combination," Kassin said.

Such studies suggest that a troubling chain of events can easily take place in the mind of an interrogator. During the Behavioral Analysis Interview, the detective begins to form an impression, based in part on the suspect's body language. The impression could be wrong, but the detective, sensitized to those responses, notices them more and pays less attention to others—an instance of confirmation bias. Increasingly convinced that he's dealing with a liar, the detective questions more aggressively, and this, in turn, triggers more nervousness. The behaviors create a feedback loop, ratcheting up the suspicion and anxiety to the point where the detective feels duty-bound to get a confession. Psychologists call this cycle the "Othello

error," for the tragic escalation of accusation and fear that leads Othello to kill Desdemona.

Gregg McCrary, a retired F.B.I. agent, told me that Reid-style training creates a tendency to see lies where they may not exist, with an unhealthy amount of confidence in that judgment. "They just assume they're interviewing the guilty guy," he said.

Joseph Buckley, the president of John E. Reid & Associates, is a well-dressed man, graying at the temples and with just enough jowliness to make him look prosperous. Buckley is the second person to serve as the firm's president; his predecessor, John Reid, died in 1982. His office at the Reid headquarters, in downtown Chicago, resembles that of a partner in a successful old law firm. When I interviewed him there, I noticed that his nonverbals were excellent. His posture was relaxed but not slumped, and he sat facing me in an open, nondefensive way. He gestured when appropriate, without overdoing it. He looked at me steadily but not so fixedly as to arouse my suspicion.

When I asked Buckley if anything in the technique had been developed in collaboration with psychologists, he said, "No, not a bit. It's entirely based on our experience."

Buckley, who earned a B.A. in English in 1971, originally planned to become a journalist, but met Reid socially and was invited to join the firm. He described Reid as a true gentleman, who always wore a business suit and treated everyone, even criminals, with respect. "His attitude was 'There but for the grace of God go I.' "

Buckley said that the principle of compassion still guides his company, and that Kassin and other critics misrepresent him. He told me that the Reid Technique's sole objective is to elicit the truth, and that the police interrogate only people whom they suspect of involvement in a crime. He said that critics ignore the various ways a suspect can show that he is telling the truth, and pointed out that a properly trained interviewer begins an accusatory interrogation only if the suspect appears to be lying or withholding information during the behavioral-analysis interview. He argued—and judges have regularly agreed—that if a suspect infers leniency from an interrogator's guise of sympathy, that's the suspect's problem. (Critics may not like the fact that police sometimes lie to suspects during interrogations, but a 1969 Supreme Court decision affirmed their right to do so.)

Buckley doubted that studies could replicate the stresses of an actual interrogation. Students who lie will not go to jail; nor do those people who interrogate the mock criminal have formal Reid training. The differences make the laboratory work "worthless," he said. "There's no context, no sense of factual information that you would have in the real world." He was especially scornful of Kassin's Alt-key experiments. "You tap on a computer all day long, right? Did you ever hit the Alt key without meaning to? It's ridiculous."

Buckley stressed that his company has no interest in simply gaining confessions. Yet the word "confession" constantly came up in the training I took. Other researchers have reported that, while Buckley and the Reid manual give a nuanced interpretation of the firm's methods, the training does not. He mentioned that he has testified for the Innocence Project to get wrongfully convicted people out of jail and help them sue for reparations. (Peter Neufeld, the co-founder of the Innocence Project, told me that he finds it easier to win a case for his clients by having Buckley testify that the police violated their training than by trying to show, with a team of psychologists, that the training itself was "slipshod.") According to Buckley, false confessions may occasionally arise when the police deviate from their training. But, in one of the most notorious cases of false confession in recent memory, part of the interrogation was conducted at Reid headquarters by a Reid trainer.

In 1992, an eleven-year-old girl in Waukegan, Illinois, was raped and stabbed to death while babysitting a neighbor's children. Police brought in a nineteen-year-old man named Juan Rivera for questioning. Rivera might have seemed an unlikely suspect: on the night in question, he'd been at home, something that could be confirmed by records of a phone call he made to his mother in Puerto Rico and by an electronic ankle monitor that he was wearing. (He was awaiting trial for the theft of a car stereo.)

Rivera had a low I.Q. and a history of mental illness. Police interrogated him on and off for four days, during which he slept no more than four hours. At least twice during those four days, police brought Rivera to the Reid headquarters for questioning. A turning point came when a Reid employee ad-

"Who's the temp?"

ministered a two-part polygraph test and got mixed results, but told Rivera that the evidence conclusively showed he had caused the girl's death. Even then, Rivera vehemently denied the accusation, but afterward, when the interrogation was continued back at the jail, he confessed. By then, he had been reduced to a state of psychosis: according to a prison nurse who saw him, he had torn off a clump of his scalp and was shackled in a padded cell. A jury found him guilty and sentenced him to life.

In 2005, DNA evidence came to light showing that another man's semen had been found in the victim, and Rivera was granted a new trial. Prosecutors offered a couple of theories to explain the DNA—that the child must have been sexually active and bore the semen of one of her partners, and that Rivera, while raping her, had failed to ejaculate; or that Rivera had a partner who also raped the child. Rivera was found guilty again. He appealed the case and won. In January, 2012, after twenty years in jail, he walked free. He is now suing John E. Reid & Associates, his prosecutors, and members of the police and sheriff's departments who questioned him.

"Just a minute, Mister. You're not going out of here looking like that."

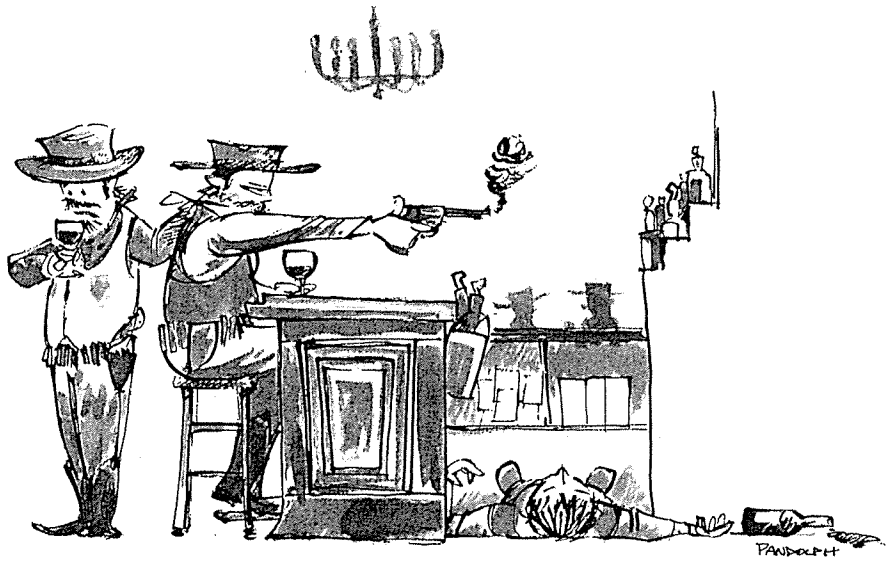
Last fall, I travelled to Washington, D.C., to meet James Trainum, who spent seventeen years as a homicide detective there before retiring. He was trained in the Reid Technique and used it for years, but he came to doubt it after a murder investigation in 1994. The case involved the murder of Lawrence O'Connell, a family man and Voice of America employee who disappeared shortly after leaving work at the V.O.A.'s office in Washington, on Friday, February 25, 1994. After his disappearance, someone tried to use his A.T.M. card at a nearby bank machine. A couple of hours later, his American Express card was used at a liquor store, a drugstore, and at a Chinese restaurant in a strip mall about thirty miles away. The next day, his body was found, bound and beaten, on the banks of the Anacostia River.

Police learned that O'Connell led a secret life: he had run up considerable debt, and his wife suspected him of consorting with prostitutes. They speculated that those he owed money to grabbed him, took him to the bank machine (which didn't work), and beat him to death.

But they had to find witnesses to corroborate the theory. Trainum and his colleagues used a grainy photograph from the A.T.M. and a composite sketch based on a description offered by the liquor-store employee to put out an alert for a short white woman wearing a baseball cap. They got a tip about a woman named Kimberly who had a troubled history and was living in a D.C. shelter with her children. They took her to the station, and, in the course of a sixteen-hour interview, she confessed to forging O'Connell's name for the credit purchases. A handwriting analyst verified the writing as hers. Later, she described how she and two men had confronted O'Connell, and how a series of incidents had led to his death. She was charged with first-degree murder.

Some weeks later, while in custody, Kimberly recanted her story. Trainum searched for more evidence, and got the logbook of the shelter where Kimberly had been staying. Based on when she had signed in and out, he didn't see how Kimberly could have taken part in the murder—she'd been inside the shelter during the critical times. Struck by the contradiction, Trainum took the credit-card receipts to the Secret Service and the F.B.I. Their experts contradicted the original handwriting analysis, and everyone concurred that the signatures at the shelter log did belong to Kimberly. The case fell apart, and she was released.

Trainum was mystified by Kimberly's confession. He reviewed the videotapes of his interview, but could not find where things had gone wrong. Over the next decade, he became aware of other false-confession cases, particularly that of the Central Park Five, and decided to take another look. He showed me a video of Kimberly's interview. It was a Reid trainer's dream: Trainum sympathetically asking questions as the suspect sat crumpled, speaking through sobs. But, with the distance of time, Trainum started to see how he had inadvertently fed Kimberly information. At one point, he showed her the credit-card slips to "refresh her memory," as he recalls. She could see the names of the drugstore and the Chinese restaurant. Once she had that information, she started guessing at the answers that would win his approval. Asked what she bought at the



"Well, now, hold on, Jed. I think this is a Malbec."

• •

drugstore, she said "personal items." Asked what she ate at the restaurant, she named several foods until she came up with the right one: shrimp. "She'd guess about twenty times, but we'd only remember the two things she said right," Trainum recalled. "It almost became a game of twenty questions. It was all very piecemeal: as time went on, she picked up bits and pieces until her story became more and more believable."

The experience shook his faith in the Reid training and in other interrogation techniques he had learned, and he started to read about the psychology of false confessions. His research led him to Saul Kassin, who not only shared his work with Trainum but asked him to speak to his students at John Jay College, in New York. Trainum later got in touch with a British research group, whose members informed him of an alternative interviewing technique that was practiced in several countries, including Britain and Canada.

In 1990, after a flurry of false-confession scandals in Britain, the government appointed a commission of detectives, academics, and legal experts to develop an interview method that would reflect up-to-date psychological research. After two years' work, the commission unveiled their technique, called PEACE, for Preparation and Planning, Engage and Explain, Account, Closure, Evaluate. Training was provided for police departments throughout England and Wales, starting with major-crimes units. By 2001, every police officer in England and Wales had received a basic level of instruction in the method.

The method differed dramatically from previous practices. Police were instructed not to try to obtain confessions but to use the interview as a way to gather evidence and information, almost as a journalist would. They were to focus on content rather than on nonverbal behavior, and were taught not to pay attention to anxiety, since it does not correlate with lying. Instead, police were trained to ask open-ended questions to elicit the whole story, and then go back over the details in a variety of ways to find inconsistencies. For the suspect, lying creates a cognitive load—it takes energy to juggle the details of a fake story. Part of the process involved thorough preparation: police learned to spend hours drawing diagrams of the route they hoped an interview would take. Bluffing about evidence was prohibited. "We were not allowed to lie, coerce, or minimize," Andy Griffiths, a detective superintendent with the Sussex Police Department, told me. Their job was simply to get as much information as possible, which, along with corroborating evidence, would either inculpate the suspect or set him free.

Originally a street cop, Griffiths earned a Ph.D. in criminal-justice studies at the University of Portsmouth. He spent last fall at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. He showed me a video of British police using the PEACE method to interview a man named David Chenery-Wickens. In January, 2008, Chenery-Wickens, of East Sussex, was accused of murdering his wife, Diane, a makeup artist who worked for the BBC. Two days after her disappearance, he had reported her missing. He told the police that the two had taken the train into London, but she never showed up for the return trip home. He thought she might have run away to Spain.

The officer leading the interview, Detective Constable Gary Pattison, was respectful and polite, asking open-ended questions about Diane's disappearance. He gave the suspect plenty of time to talk. After an hour and a half, when he got all the information that Chenery-Wickens was willing to give, Pattison ended the interview.

A few days later, they reconvened. Chenery-Wickens, a lumpy blond guy in a light-colored sweater and faded bluejeans, sat comfortably in his seat, facing the officers in an open and relaxed posture. ("You can see what a load of bunkum this body-language stuff is," Griffiths said.) As the questions wore on and Pattison kept reëxamining certain parts of the story, Chenery-Wickens found it increasingly difficult to keep his facts straight—not because of anxiety, it seemed, but because of the simple cognitive challenge. For example, he had previously denied visiting a nearby town on a certain date and selling his wife's jewelry. Pattison showed him a parking ticket from that date.

"Something is not right, David," Pattison said. "Please help me, David, because I'm struggling with this." Chenery-Wickens spent several minutes trying to prevaricate, and finally said, "I'm baffled. I'm really baffled."

Later in the interview, they discussed David's claim that Diane had sent him text messages while he was on a homeward-bound train from London. Cell-phone records revealed that both phones had been on the train at the same time. Pattison inquired about the issue at length. He spoke slowly, as Chenery-Wickens's explanations for

how his wife's phone came to be on the same train became hollower and hollower. Griffiths stopped the video and said, "As you can see, this guy is digging a bigger and bigger hole. And this is what is presented to the jury." At no point did Pattison directly accuse Chenery-Wickens of murder or attempt to get him to confess. But the accumulation of lies and evidence condemned him. He was found guilty of murder and sentenced to eighteen years.

Some American law-enforcement officers are trying to develop approaches similar to PEACE. Trainum has taught a seminar on such interview techniques at various police organizations. Michael Johnson, a former civil-rights attorney with the U.S. Justice Department, teaches a PEACE-inspired course to private industry. Neil Nelson, a retired homicide detective in St. Paul, Minnesota, devised a system called RIP, which stands for Rapport-Investment-Partnership. "It's all about information-gathering and not about getting a confession," he said. He teaches the course to police departments that hear about him, usually by word of mouth. But Kassin, who has spoken to many police departments and prosecutors' offices, holds out little hope for the kind of wholesale change that was adopted in Britain. The culture of confrontation, he feels, is too embedded in our society. Still, training can be improved, he says, by requiring the videotaping of all interrogations, setting time limits on interviews, and making it illegal to lie to a suspect. Buckley supports videotaping as well, and claims that the Reid Technique already incorporates elements of PEACE. Eric Shepherd, one of the psychologists who developed PEACE, disagrees. "I think the Reid Technique was a child of its time," he told me. But science has moved on. "What you see now is a rear-guard action to defend the indefensible."

In the late nineteen-sixties, following the Miranda decision, Darrel Parker filed habeas-corpus lawsuits in the Nebraska Supreme Court and the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals, on the ground that the 1955 confession he made to John Reid was obtained by coercion and should have been suppressed. His case made its way to the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled that he should have a new trial. In 1970, the state of Nebraska offered him a deal: rather than go through the trial again, it would parole him for time served.

Parker took the deal, moved back to Iowa, remarried, and started his life again. In 1988, a man named Wesley Peery died in the Nebraska State Penitentiary, and his attorneys announced that he had confessed to the rape and murder of Nancy Parker. Peery, an ex-convict at the time, had briefly been a suspect. His car had been seen parked near the victim's house on the day of the crime, and he had been detained by police, questioned, and released. Since then, Peery had accumulated a grim record, including armed robbery, the rape and assault of a pregnant woman, and the execution-style killing of a rare-coin-shop owner—a crime that had put him on death row. In 1978, Peery gave his attorneys the manuscript of a memoir that included a detailed description of the attack on Nancy Parker. Bound by attorney-client privilege, his lawyers did not release the statement until Peery died, of a heart attack, ten years later.

Parker requested a pardon, and received it, in 1991. But there's a difference between a pardon and an exoneration, and in 2009 Parker saw another opportunity to clear his name. The Nebraska legislature, shaken by a recent false-confession scandal, passed a law that makes it possible for anyone who can show that he or she has been wrongfully convicted to sue the state for up to half a million dollars.

In the summer of 2011, Parker's attorney filed suit. A year later, without waiting for the court's decision, the state attorney general, Jon Bruning, called a press conference. He publicly apologized to Parker, who was by then eighty years old, shook Parker's hand, and offered him the full five hundred thousand dollars in damages. "Today, we are righting the wrong done to Darrel Parker more than fifty years ago," Bruning said. "Under coercive circumstances, he confessed to a crime he did not commit." ♦