



Christine Demeter

Peter Demeter and his lawyers, left, Joseph Pomerant and, right, Edward Greenspan.

The body was discovered by Peter one evening in 1973 as he and some friends were returning from shopping. He pushed a button, and the garage door went up like a theatre curtain to reveal Christine sprawled in a huge pool of fresh blood, her brains spilled on the floor.

It was soon established that Peter had been miles away when his wife's skull was crushed by some heavy instrument, but his manner, abusive and callous, aroused suspicions that would grow as time went by. ("Who would have thought Christine had so much brains?" he would jocularly ask acquaintances.)

Police Superintendent William Teggert ordered a wiretap put on Peter's home phone. Csaba Szilagyi was called in for questioning and told police that Peter had been plotting Christine's murder for years. Csaba agreed to help the police eavesdrop on Peter, and from then on he carried a concealed microphone whenever they got together.

The police were convinced that Peter was the guilty man. He had both the manner and the motive—he had persuaded Marina Hundt, a former Viennese girl friend, to join him in Canada, and he and Christine had insured each other's lives for \$1 million each.

The police recorded hundreds of conversations.

Once, when Peter was under the false impression that Christine had had him watched by a private detective, he concluded that the surveillance, luckily, had been for only a limited time and purpose.

PETER: . . . I mean, Christine had me watched for a short time until she found out that I have no girl friend in Toronto.

CSABA: Yes.

PETER: . . . but in the completely neutral first days.

CSABA: (after a further exchange). How do you know, Peter that they haven't watched you in the last days?

PETER: Because I am at large and free . . .

Actually Christine had never had Peter watched. The idea had been planted in Peter's mind by Police Superintendent Teggert. Soon after this recorded exchange Teggert had Peter arrested and charged with having arranged his wife's murder.

At this point the Crown's whole case against Peter consisted of Csaba's statement that Peter had in the past contrived many bizarre plans for killing Christine and the not-quite-explicit recorded conversations. Peter was released on bail.

The taping continued.

Peter and his lawyers became aware of Csaba's duplicity only at the preliminary hearing when he took the stand for the prosecution and testified that for a period of nearly five years and a half, almost since the honeymoon, Peter had talked of murdering his wife and that he had asked him to help with the job.

The trial began on September 23, 1974, in London, Ontario. The first three weeks were filled with arguments concerning the tapes. Peter's senior attorney, Joe Pomerant, argued that they should not be admitted because they were unreliable—many of the conversations were unintelligible and most were obscure. Furthermore, the tapes of conversations between Peter and his attorneys violated the lawyer-client privilege. Pomerant also argued more forcefully that the integrity of the tapes had been destroyed when the thrifty police erased conversations they considered irrelevant in order to reuse the tapes.

Pomerant had one further fragile, but interesting, argument. Parliament had passed the Protection of Privacy Act after the tapes were made