



Anthony Pellicano: Private Eye

He was born and bred in Cicero, a streetwise young tough who tried his hand at barbering, put in time in the service, and hooked up with a collection agency tracking down welchers before rising to the top of the private investigation profession.

by Debbe Jonak

The secretary was arguing politely with someone on the phone.

"Would you please give me your last name? Mr. Pellicano appreciates last names," she pleaded. They never want to leave their last names.

Suddenly there were two loud stomps outside the door, a pause and then it opened.

"It must be him," she smiled.

Anthony J. Pellicano, private eye, entered his Westchester office dramatic and flamboyant even in worn jeans and a T-shirt. He looked a little tired.

"I was up all night," he said.

One of the hazards of the business. Those late night calls which can't wait.

Pellicano gets many of those calls as one of America's foremost and most visible

detectives. He has found 3,968 missing persons during his career and has uncovered scores of bugging devices everywhere from bedrooms to corporate buildings to government offices.

In his "bat cave" he stores more than \$200,000 worth of electronic equipment, including his own computerized voice identification system, which, he says, when finished will make a person's voice almost as perfect an identification tool as his fingerprints.

Former CIA agent George O'Toole, author of the "Assassination Tapes," wrote, "Pellicano is yet in his early thirties, but he has already become something of a legend."

And Pellicano won't dispute that.

"I've become number one in the country," he announced without a blush. "It just means when Pellicano gets hold of something he goes all the way."

He looks like a private eye. Attractive, with curly, dark locks and a golden Italian good luck charm gleaming against his chest.

Thin, lithe — but no trench coat. He said he doesn't even own one. He doesn't carry a gun either.

"A gun is a physical solution to a mental problem. If I can't handle it with this," he said, pointing to his head, "then what good is a gun?"

"If I'm going to die, I'm going to die and there's nothing I can do about it."

Pellicano has a second office in Beverly Hills — where else but on Sunset Strip. To complete his image, callers put on hold are treated with the theme from James Bond's "Man with the Golden Gun." His secretaries are good looking and his office is done in blood red and metallic silver.

He walked into his private office, collapsed into a chair and told a story.

A government agency had \$500,000 in cash and securities belonging to "Aggie the Catwoman," an old biddy who used to sort



Anthony Pellicano surveys more than \$200,000 worth of electronic equipment including a computerized voice identification system that can identify someone by his voice patterns as easily as by his fingerprints.

through garbage cans with the alley cats. They wanted to find her, but couldn't.

The agency had gone to six other detectives without success. Then they approached Pellicano.

"I took the job," he said. Using the leads the other detectives had produced, he too was unsuccessful in locating her.

"After going through everything I possibly could dream of and imagine, I was at my wits end," he said "I didn't know what to do, so I took a black felt-tip pen and put a dot on the wall.

"I concentrated on that dot. The dot became a hole, then I went in the hole and became the woman. Fifteen minutes later, I picked up the phone and found her at Manteno State Hospital."

He does not solve all of his cases in such a sensational manner. But putting oneself in the place of the missing person is a basic principle in successful detective work, he said.

It all has to do with logic, with owning a sharp mind and using it, he said.

"When you bring everything down to basic logic, you can solve anything. One and one always make two. Always."

He motioned toward the thick red carpeting in his office. "Red is rage . . . it always reminds me not to get enraged, not to get emotional. To think everything out on a logical basis."

Most of his cases are not solved by pounding the pavement or harassing sources. They are solved by reviewing the facts and carefully putting them together like the pieces of a puzzle. Sherlock Holmes style investigating.

But can a hot-blooded Italian really shut off his emotions? Pellicano admits he can't.

"I've cried many times. Many times the tears came down my face," he said. "When I work the case, I don't get emotional. After I solve it, then I get emotional sometimes."

His walls are crowded with photos of tearful faces and embraces. Mothers finding missing sons after twenty years. Children given away at birth in the arms of their natural parents. Pellicano is always looking on in the background.

From time to time he has taken on such tasks at no charge to the clients.

Recently such a case received wide publicity.

Gertrude Gjurkovic of Elgin hired him in 1974 to find her five-year-old daughter Irene, who had been abducted by her former husband in 1971.

He found the girl within a year and returned her to her mother. The husband found out where the daughter was, and snatched her again.

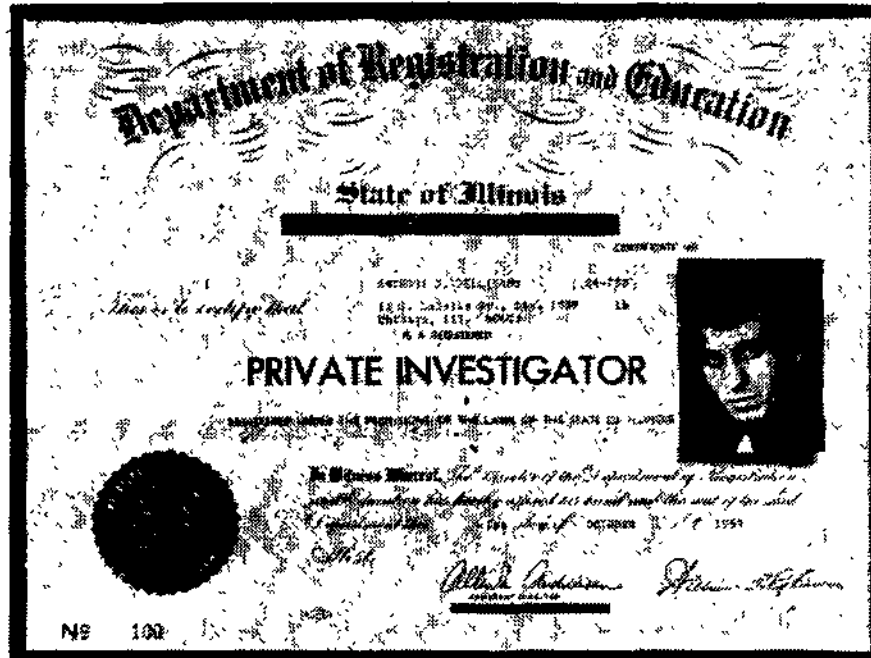
"I told her I'd look for her and find her again — for free," he said. And he did. After conducting an inter-continental search he reunited mother and daughter again in March of this year.

Pellicano has solved many missing persons cases at the request of Beeline, the problem-solving column which was a mainstay of the Chicago Daily News.

In naming him good-newsmaker of the day, Beeline stated, "In the tradition of such private eyes as Sam Spade, Mike Hammer and Mannix, Pellicano . . . showed that . . . people and their human feelings can be more important than money."

Not that Pellicano doesn't get his share. His initial retainer fee is a stiff \$1,500. Cases have cost clients up to \$40,000.

"But I don't get paid until I solve the case," he said.



His list of clients and cases are impressive. He found the daughter of Yoko Ono, wife of Beatle John Lennon, after Ms. Ono's former husband had disappeared with the child.

He uncovered a bug in the phone of a top aide to former Secretary of State Michael J. Howlett, sparking a mini-Watergate scandal in Illinois five years ago.

Acting on an anonymous tip, he located the body of Michael Todd, which grave-robbers stole from a Forest Park cemetery several months ago.

"Now I'm being blamed for undermining the grave robbery as a publicity incident," he complained, insisting he was not involved in plotting the crime.

Embarrassed Forest Park police initiated the rumor, Pellicano said, explaining they did not even search the graveyard for Todd's body in their investigation. That is where Pellicano found it, with Channel Two news in tow.

"Why would I need publicity?" he asked.

Pellicano is far from camera-shy. He has become a media darling and can merely sit and wait for the television or newspaper crews to come knocking at his door.

He has appeared on talk shows on every major television station in Chicago and has been featured in magazines, newspapers stories and books.

The publicity has brought criticism from his colleagues. One big league Chicago detective said a reputable investigator would not make himself as visible as Pellicano.

Pellicano writes off the criticism as jealousy.

"I have a problem with my competitors, because I don't consider them competitors," he said. "Other private eyes always are jealous of the way I get publicity."

The phone rang and after an abrupt conversation he jumped up. It was time to go.

It was late morning, grey and rainy. A somber, ashen-faced man walked out of Pellicano's office.

Pellicano had found his wife in the arms of the school principal the night before.

"I try to avoid domestic cases," he said.

If a client can convince him an investigation is essential for his peace of mind, Pellicano said he will give in. But often a spouse's suspicions are unfounded, he said, adding women are right more often than men.

"Women are more insecure, so they are

more sensitive. The more sensitive you are, the more aware you are. If a woman comes to me . . . she's usually right."

To produce evidence against a guilty spouse, he will take photographs of him or her together with the suspected lover in incriminating circumstances — such as walking into a motel room.

Pellicano said he never goes any farther than that. "I don't believe in crashing down the door and taking photographs"

He has become inventive in the ways he follows a subject.

Several times he used balloons to keep track of a person. When the subject he is following parks his car in a large parking lot, Pellicano ties a helium-filled balloon to the antenna. He then watches for the balloon to move, thus alerting him that his subject is leaving.

One time, however, the method backfired.

As he was watching the balloon, a balloon vendor walked out into the parking lot. With a sudden gust of wind, the vendor lost a grip on his wares and the balloons blew free.

"While I was looking at all those balloons, my subject was getting away," he laughed.

The most unusual unfaithful spouse case actually was a debugging assignment, Pellicano said.

A woman hired him to search her house for electronic eavesdropping equipment, because her husband seemed to know the details of her phone conversations.

Pellicano found a tape recorder and microphone in her bedroom but the batteries were missing, making it inoperative.

Then he noticed a saucer of milk underneath her bed. Upon close scrutiny, he found a lemon inside a nylon stocking between the mattress and the bed slats.

Pellicano recognized it as an old European method of detecting whether a spouse was guilty of extramarital affairs. If she was, the lemon would burst under the extra weight and activity on the mattress and curdle the milk.

The milk was curdled, he noted.

Pellicano prefers talking about his missing persons cases and his work in electronics, both of which he finds much more rewarding.

Seventy percent of his time is spent tracking down missing persons. He claims a 100 percent success rate, adding he never gives up on a case.

They usually begin with a call from a distraught relative. Pellicano meets with the client and gathers as many facts as he can on the missing person.

"I try to determine why that person is missing. I try to become that person. Then I look for the one person who knows where the missing person is."

Someone always knows where the subject is, he said. His job is to find that someone and convince him to talk. So far, he has been successful. Sometimes the result is relief and joy for worried parents. Other times it is grief.

For John and Marilyn Tomaszewski of Woodale, the result was long-awaited joy. They gave up their first son, born out of wedlock when they were teenagers. More than 20 years later, they wanted to find him. Pellicano found him last October working in the coal mines in Carlinville, Ill.

For another client, the search's end was not as happy. He recently found the skeleton of Robin Lee Reade, a Lake Forest woman missing for five years, buried outside Honolulu.

Pellicano said he forces himself to remain detached emotionally from cases with such gut-wrenching endings. Otherwise he wouldn't survive in the business.

He limits the number of missing persons cases he handles, he said, as they are getting tougher as he becomes better known.

"I get the cases other people can't solve now."

One case he is itching to investigate is that of missing candy heiress Helen Brach, who disappeared without a trace from her Glenview mansion. But so far he hasn't been called.

"All these theories the people are coming up with are silly," he said, noting one which says she was ground up in a huge meat grinder and fed to the dogs.

"When they get done with all that, they have two choices," he said. "Hire me. Or hire someone like me and wait years . . . But I absolutely can find her."

Pellicano claims he has mastered the missing persons aspect of his detective work, and he is turning more and more of his efforts to developing electronic tools of the trade.

His pet project right now is the computerized voice identification system.

"In an interview with Playboy last year, they asked me my opinion of voice identification," he said. "I said that machine over there is the best we can do."

He pointed to a large machine with a reel of tape which merely converts a voice to lines on a sheet of paper. He then pulled out two paragraphs of the same person saying the same word.

"Could you positively say these are the voices of the same girl? I couldn't and neither could the courts," he said. "So I told Playboy I could develop a better machine. And that's what we're doing here. We're doing it by computer."

The computer will compare two voice prints and determine whether they are from the same person. It will be accurate enough to use in court as evidence in connection to recorded bomb threats, wiretapping and "anything that has to do with a voice that's recorded," Pellicano said.

"It's just another challenge. What I'm doing has never been done before."

He stopped for a moment and looked thoughtful. "By the way," he said. "I only brag about what I'm good at. I don't brag about what I don't know about."

The phone rang. It was the anxious attorney of one of Pellicano's clients, saying he needed some photographs by the next day. Pellicano politely told him it was impossible, but after some discussion agreed to do what he could.

"Lawyers," he said with a sigh as he hung up. "I've got to go."

(Continued on page 6)

Pellicano:

(Continued from page 5)

Pellicano's voice was low and sincere on the telephone. Confident and appealing. It was easy to see why strangers with secrets bared their soul to him.

He was recovering from a bout with Montezuma's revenge after a one-day trip to Mexico, he said. And a strep throat was getting the best of him. Not a good time to be sick. He had just accepted a big case involving some newspapers in Wisconsin and agreed to help a man in jail prove he is innocent.

"He's crying over the telephone from jail. It really touched me," Pellicano said. "He is innocent. I'm convinced of it."

There are many calls which don't convince Pellicano. Like the guy from a Foto-mat store who feared it was bugged.

"Since Watergate, everybody is paranoid," he said.

Bugging is not as common as many people think, but it is a serious problem in the business world, he said, adding all but court sanctioned buggings are illegal.

Offices are bugged so a corporation can learn ahead of time what its competitor is planning to bid on a project or market the next month, what new client it is going to contact.

The corporation with the bug then can sabotage its competitors plans.

Pellicano uses x-ray equipment and "highly sophisticated electronic equipment" to find surveillance devices.

In one case, he found a bug in a clock in the corporation president's office. The incredulous president turned white at the discovery — his father-in-law had sold him the business and this was a gift from his recently estranged wife. They were plotting together against him.

Pellicano said he is involved only in finding bugs — not planting them.

He has been in the investigation business for more than 15 years, starting out with a collection agency where he tracked down missing persons.

"I got very good and one day I realized I was at the top of my profession," he said.

He was paging through the yellow pages looking for a firm, when he came across the detective heading.

"I thought there has got to be a market for locating missing people," he said. And shortly thereafter he entered the world of private investigation. He was licensed to run his own business in 1968.

He had never planned or even dreamed of going into detective work. As a child he was more interested in cutting hair and cutting school than plotting out a serious career. Still, he said, his youth prepared him for his chosen profession.

Born in Chicago and raised by his mother in Cicero, he was an inquisitive and street-wise child.

"My mother was a working lady and never made more than \$150 a week. I had to fend for myself . . . I worked in a barber-shop for a dollar and a lesson.

He was not interested in getting a formal education — something he now regrets, as learning has become almost an obsession with him.

"Still I always had an inquiring mind. I was always looking for answers to things," he recalled. "I spent a short time in a Catholic School where they taught Mary was a virgin and Jesus died for our sins.

"I always wondered why. I was never one to take information as truth without investigating."

Pellicano described himself as a teen-aged "young tough," with oily hair and tight black pants. He was kicked out of high school for fighting.

He joined the service shortly thereafter, where he finished his high school education and discovered the value of learning and the futility of muscle. His thirst for knowledge since then has driven him to constantly improve himself, he said constantly tackle new challenges.

He also learned to scorn emotion.

"I could never really understand emotion. Finally I did and learned I was very emotional, he said. "One day I looked in the mirror and said, 'Do you want to be a boy or a man?'"

"You know if I ever die, I don't care how many accomplishments I've had in my life. I want my epitaph to say Tony Pellicano was a man."

If he ever dies, Pellicano is not sure he will. It is a cockiness, a confidence expressed in an Oriental proverb he often quotes:

A man who knows how to live can walk abroad without fear of Rhinoceros or Tiger . . . For in him the Rhinoceros can find no place to use its horn nor the Tiger a place to use its claws. And he will not die, because there is no place for Death to enter.

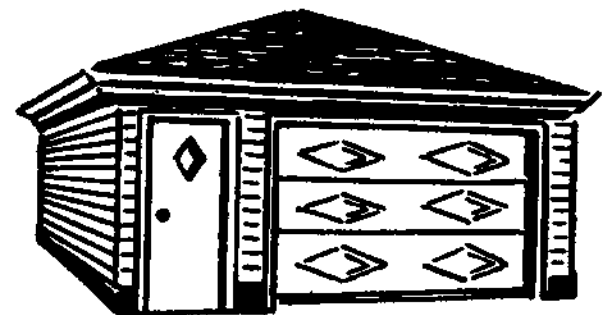
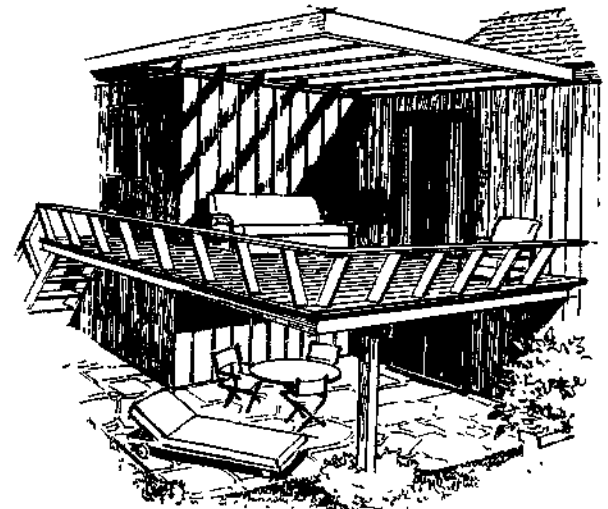
"Do you know what that means?" he asked. "It means absolute confidence can conquer death. That's what I have. That's why I've been able to accomplish what I've accomplished."

Another phone clamored somewhere in the background. "I've got to go," he said. A client and eternity were waiting. §

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