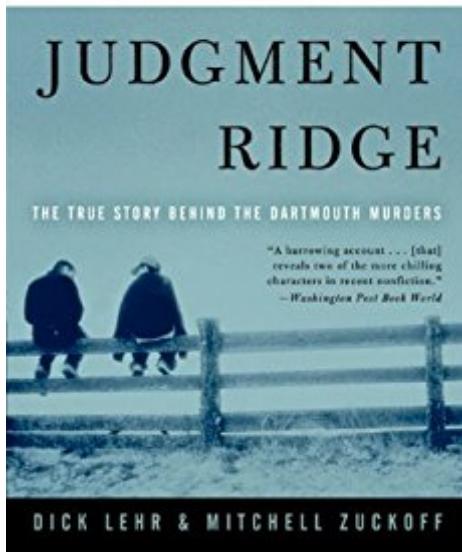


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# Judgment Ridge: The True Story Behind The Dartmouth Murders

How, in a close-knit community,  
could two popular, bright boys  
have become vicious killers?



## **Synopsis**

A riveting investigation of the brutal murders of two Dartmouth professors – a book that, like *In Cold Blood*, reveals the chilling reality behind a murder that captivated the nation. On a cold night in January 2001, the idyllic community of Dartmouth College was shattered by the discovery that two of its most beloved professors had been hacked to death in their own home. Investigators searched helplessly for clues linking the victims, Half and Susanne Zantop, to their murderer or murderers. A few weeks later, across the river, in the town of Chelsea, Vermont, police cars were spotted in front of the house of high school senior Robert Tulloch. The police had come to question Tulloch and his best friend, Jim Parker. Soon, the town discovered the incomprehensible reality that Tulloch and Parker, two of Chelsea's brightest and most popular sons, were now fugitives, wanted for the murders of Half and Susanne Zantop. Authors Mitchell Zuckoff and Dick Lehr provide a vivid explication of a murder that captivated the nation, as well as dramatic revelations about the forces that turned two popular teenagers into killers. *Judgement Ridge* conveys a deep appreciation for the lives (and the devastating loss) of Half and Susanne Zantop, while also providing a clear portrait of the killers, their families, and their community – and, perhaps, a warning to any parent about what evil may lurk in the hearts of boys.

## **Book Information**

File Size: 979 KB

Print Length: 448 pages

Publisher: HarperCollins e-books; Reprint edition (January 23, 2009)

Publication Date: October 6, 2009

Sold by: HarperCollins Publishers

Language: English

ASIN: B001QIGZL8

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #29,300 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #3 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Sociology > Rural #14 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Sociology > Rural #24 in Kindle Store >

## Customer Reviews

If this book had offered less, I would have liked it more. I remember the crime and followed it in the news at the time it happened, so I came to this reading with a lot of curiosity about what the authors would add to the story beyond the press reports. The answer is "quite a bit" -- and for that they get an A+, but (as I said in the subject line of this review) only to a point. I know this may sound counter-intuitive, but there really can be too much of a good thing. In this instance, too much research went into the writing of this book. As a result, the authors lost control of their material. They used no filter to separate what was necessary to the telling of the tale from what was distracting and pointless. As I plowed through the book, I found the pacing often dragged to a crawl due to peripheral information, needless detail, and boring meanderings that contributed little or nothing to the story. By way of illustration, imagine someone describing Christ's Last Supper. Would you want to know what was on the menu, what ingredients were used to prepare the dishes, where the ingredients were obtained, what the attendees were wearing, what kind of fabrics were used to make the clothing, whether a loom was used (and -- if so -- by whom), as well as a precise description of each outfit as well as instructions for building the dining table and hints on where you can buy the tableware. That's the level of unneeded narration you'll find in *Judgment Ridge*. I suspect the authors felt compelled to use every bit of research they gathered regardless of whether it strengthened or weakened their book. A good editor could have saved them from themselves. The structure was another weak part of the book. Chapters jump back and forth in time in an awkward manner.

This is the best true crime book I have ever read. It tells the compelling but horrifying story of the murder of Half and Suzanne Zantop, two Dartmouth College professors, by two teenagers from the rural town of Chelsea, Vermont. Contrary to a previous reviewer, I did not find the book too detailed. There is a lot of detail, but this is necessary for the authors to tell the story properly. The details about the killers, Jim Parker and Robert Tulloch, and their lives in Chelsea before the killing are necessary to the understanding of these two. Neither were the "loner / loser" type that one thinks of in connection with teenagers who kill. Both had good friends in Chelsea, took part in extra-curricular activities in school and were intelligent. Granted, Tulloch's parents are a little strange, but not so strange as to explain his behavior. It is exactly in all the detail the authors provide that we see the transformation of these two reasonably normal acting kids into killers. This

is a great strength of the book. In the end it is clear that Tulloch was a psychopath who manipulated Parker, a "follower" into going along with his criminal activities. The authors use of detail allows the reader to watch as Tulloch gets more and more out of control. Nor do I think the authors show any sympathy for either killer. They simply describe the relationship between them as it was. And, as it was, Parker certainly comes off the more sympathetic of the two. Another strength of the book is that it is happily free of the psychobabble sometimes found in true crime books. The authors are also able to paint a very poignant picture of the Zantops. These were kind, wonderful people.

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