

# Witness Who Never Met Him Offers His Analysis of Noguchi

Psychologist Testifies His Opinion That Ex-Coroner Seems Manic-Depressive Is Based on Tests by Another

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A psychologist who admitted he had never met or spoken to former Coroner Thomas T. Noguchi told a Civil Service Commission hearing Tuesday that Noguchi's personality showed manic-depressive symptoms.

Dr. James O. Palmer, who is on the staff of the UCLA Neuropsychiatric Institute, said he based his opinion on an analysis he made of the results of tests given Noguchi by another psychologist.

A manic-depressive person alternates between periods of elation and depression.

Palmer emphasized that Noguchi's manic-depressive condition was apparent only as a personality syndrome, or symptom, and not as a psychosis, or sickness.

## Asks About Need of Aid

Dep. County Counsel Martin Weekes called Palmer as a rebuttal witness at the hearing into Noguchi's dismissal in the Hall of Administration.

Weekes asked Palmer if Noguchi could benefit from "psychological assistance."

"Yes . . . he could be helped by psychological counsel," Palmer replied.

The deputy counsel wanted to know whether the test results showed that Noguchi would make a good supervisor.

Palmer said the test answers indicated that Noguchi would have "difficulties at times in supervising others" and that he would be "often unduly affected by aspects of a situation."

On cross-examination, Noguchi's attorney, Godfrey Isaac, brought out that Palmer had studied the "raw data" from Noguchi's tests for three hours on June 3.

## Dictates 3-Page Letter

That night, Palmer said, he dictated a three-page letter to Weekes in which he gave his opinion of the test results.

The psychologist admitted he had read newspaper accounts of the Noguchi case and had watched the hearing on television before he began his analysis, but that he believed the analysis was "unbiased."

Isaac asked him if he was reluctant to draw a conclusion from the test results without interviewing Noguchi.

Palmer said no, that psychologists often send such tests to colleagues to get independent judgments.

He also admitted that everyone has personality syndromes, such as being set in their ways, and that these are only traits, not illnesses.

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The lawyer asked Palmer whether the 112 score Noguchi got in his verbal test was called "bright normal" and the 130 he scored in his performance test was called "superior."

Palmer said this was true.

Was not the Japan-born Noguchi an "extraordinary man," Isaac went on, in that he rose to great heights as a forensic pathologist despite language difficulties?

"Oh, yes," Palmer said.

Earlier, Mrs. Eleanor Gunter, a clinical psychologist, was called as a county rebuttal witness to describe Noguchi's reactions to the psychological tests she gave him under the direction of Dr. Frederick J. Hacker, a Beverly Hills psychiatrist.

Hacker testified previously that his examination of Noguchi, along with the tests, showed him to be normal.

Mrs. Gunter said she gave Noguchi "zeros" on two test questions.

## Asks Question

One of the questions was what he would do if he were the first person to discover a fire in a theater.

The psychologist said Noguchi answered, "I would say 'fire.' If it was a small fire, I would step on it."

The other question asked why people should say away from bad company.

Noguchi's reply, she said, was that he would not stay away from bad company but would "try to help them."

In the Rorschach test, she said, Noguchi saw a similarity to anatomical parts in many of the ink blot designs, but that such identification is common to medical men taking this test.

Noguchi saw in one design, the psychologist said, "an angry Japanese

lord."

Weekes wanted to know if it was not a "manic-depressive" trait when someone taking this test "personalizes" the designs as Noguchi sometimes did.

Mrs. Gunter said it only "reflects his interest in his work."

#### Claimed Extrovert

The tests showed that Noguchi is an extrovert who readily responded to outside stimuli, the psychologist said. He did not appear to be over-emotional, she said.

In another test, Mrs. Gunter said, Noguchi was shown a picture of a man and woman and asked to describe the story it told him.

Noguchi, she said, saw the man as a divorced truck driver who drank too much and had too many women friends, and saw the woman as a visiting psychiatric public health nurse.

The man came to a tragic end when his truck overturned and burned, the psychologist quoted

Noguchi as saying, but he left a large amount of insurance to his previous wife—a double indemnity policy, in fact.

Mrs. Gunter said this reminded Noguchi that, as coroner, many death reports came across his desk which were actually suicides but which the dead persons' families tried to make look like accidents so they could collect insurance money.

Weekes asked whether Noguchi, in telling this story and others, did not have a "rapid change of ideas . . . going on simultaneously."

Mrs. Gunter replied that "the stories were coherent to me."

#### 'Flight of Ideas'

Weekes had used the term "flight of ideas" regarding Noguchi's manner of telling the stories.

"Flight of ideas is jump-

ing from one thing to another without focus," Mrs. Gunter said. "I don't think he ever did this."

On cross-examination, Isaac asked the witness if it were true that the Rorschach test had no "correct" answers.

Mrs. Gunter said this was true, and added:

"You can't take a test like this out of context. That is why machines (computers) don't work."

She said the subject's "cultural background" has to be taken into account when the test is given.

Another rebuttal witness testified he once heard a coroner's investigator warn Noguchi, "If you don't stop taking those pills, you will never be appointed coroner."

The warning came from James Kono, a Japanese-American like Noguchi, said J. D. Mayfield, a senior investigator in the coroner's office. Kono previously testified for Noguchi.

#### Fifth in Test

On cross-examination, Isaac brought out that Mayfield was promoted to senior investigator April 1 on the basis of a Civil Service test in which he placed fifth.

Isaac asked why the top four on the list, all of whom testified for Noguchi, did not get the promotion given Mayfield.

The witness said he understood that the man who placed first turned the job down and that the man who came in second was appointed to another job.

Mayfield said he was picked from the next three on the list "with the understanding that I was the best man."

He said he had served as an acting senior investigator at times of disasters for five or six years.

In past examinations, Mayfield added, he placed first or second on the list but there were no jobs available in this class at those times.

The hearing will be in

recess today and will continue Thursday at 9:30 a.m.

The proceedings were expected to end this week. However, it appears now that rebuttal testimony will not be completed by Friday.

All next week the hearing will be in recess so the commission can catch up on other business, and the Noguchi case will resume June 23.