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Witness to the King-Kennedy Assassin

An Interview with Glenda Grabow by Jim Douglass

One key to the assassination of Martin Luther King has always been the identity of a mysterious man named Raul. James Earl Ray says that after he escaped from Missouri State Penitentiary in 1967 Raul used him in gun-running schemes across the Canadian and Mexican borders, then set him up in Memphis to take the blame for King's murder. However, government authorities have always insisted Raul exists only in Ray's imagination.

In November 1994 Ray's attorney William F. Pepper took the deposition of a woman who said she knew Raul in Houston in the 60's and 70's and that he admitted killing King. In Orders to Kill, the labyrinthine story of his 18-year investigation into the assassination, Pepper includes the story of this unidentified witness and her husband under the pseudonyms "Cheryl and Bob".

While attending a July hearing in Memphis on the testing of Ray's rifle, I met "Cheryl and Bob," who are Glenda and Roy Grabow. The Grabows told me there was more to Glenda's story than had appeared in Pepper's book -- and more than any judge would allow her to say on the witness stand in defense of James Earl Ray.

So that her entire story can finally be made public, Glenda Grabow agreed to the following interview. It took place in Memphis on July 17, 1997. In it she testifies to her knowledge of a man involved in assassinating not only Martin Luther King but also John F. Kennedy.

Jim Douglass

Jim Douglass: Please tell us your story.

Glenda Grabow: When our family moved to Jacksonville in the early 50's, we just dove into bad poverty.

We had ten brothers and sisters all together.

Jim: What number were you in the ten?

Glenda: Third.

Daddy wasn't home a lot. He'd sell cars. And he'd drink a lot.

So it was up to me and my brother to hunt coke bottles and stuff like that to try and get milk for the babies.

You get so tired of hearing babies cry. Sugar water is what they had.

It was just total poverty.

Jim: What else do you remember about Jacksonville?

Glenda: In Jacksonville there was a lot of molesting going on.

Jim: You lived in Jacksonville until you were how old?

Glenda: I was about ten or eleven when we moved to West Memphis.

In West Memphis there was molesting, too, with my uncle.

Then my aunt and uncle went to Houston first. After Hurricane Carla, fourteen of us piled up in the car and went there.

The molesting was still going on. It's hard to talk about something like that.

Jim: What was your life like in Houston?

Glenda: I went to school by myself. I walked home on Highway 45. It went right to Dallas, just a little trip.

Jack Ruby would come down 45 all the time and go past the police department.

Jim: You knew Jack Ruby?

Glenda: Yes. I was about 13.

Nobody knew about him then.

Jim: That was when?

Glenda: Around 1962.

I used to ride home in the car with Jack. And he would take Polaroid pictures of me in the car.

He said he would sell some kind of a Lolita book.

I was used to men bothering me, ever since I was selling papers when I was little. I'd just do anything men'd tell me to do.

Jim: How much did you know about Jack Ruby?

Glenda: Well, about two weeks before Kennedy was assassinated, him and a blonde-headed woman took some uniforms to...We called him "Dago," but his name's Raul...To that little service station where Raul was.

Jim: What kind of uniforms?

Glenda: They looked like police uniforms.

Jim: To whom did Jack Ruby and the woman give the uniforms?

Glenda: To Dago. My little brother and I were there at the same time.

Jim: You're saying that Jack Ruby knew Raul?

Glenda: Yes. And my uncle knows he knew him, too. But my uncle won't say anything.

Jim: According to the Pepper book, you met Raul by seeing him at that Houston service station.

Glenda: Yes, all our family did. Nobody ever remembers seeing him work. But he was always there. He was among a lot of other men.

My sisters knew him. My uncle knew him. They refuse to say anything. They don't want to get involved.

Jim: What was Raul like? Or "Dago," as you knew him then?

Glenda: He was real nice. He got me chips and cokes. That was when I was staying with my aunt and uncle. They wouldn't even give me a quarter for lunch.

Raul was good to me.

Jim: How long did you see Raul at the service station?

Glenda: Right after the assassination me and my brothers saw him quite a bit.

Jim: What assassination?

Glenda: Kennedy.

My mother took some of the kids to the front gate at Hobby Airport in Houston when the motorcade was coming up that way.

Jim: When Kennedy was in Houston?

Roy Grabow: On the day before the assassination.

Jim: Did you see Raul then?

Glenda: Yes, up on a car with a gun.

Jim: What?

Roy: He was standing on the top of a car with a rifle with a scope on it. He was looking through the scope.

Jim: In Houston on the day JFK went through?

Roy: It was the day before the assassination.

When Kennedy's plane come in, Raul was standing on the top of the car.

We pulled up and got out of our car. He got down off the car. He threw the rifle into the car.

Glenda: There was another man. I don't know who he was.

Roy: There were two of them. One sitting in the car. And Raul on top.



Jim: Could you see the President getting off the plane?

Roy: Yes, but it was still pretty far away.

Jim: So this wasn't an attempt to kill him?

Glenda: I don't think it was.

Roy: I told her maybe it was just secret service out there watching.

I didn't know she knew Dago. She never told me.

When he saw her right after the assassination, he told her just to forget what she saw.

Glenda: He knew I wouldn't tell, because I never told about being molested or nothing. I mean everything was always kept in.

Jim: Do you think Raul had any connection with the actual assassination the next day?

Glenda: From what they told me, he was upstairs in the Depository.

Jim: Who told you this?

Glenda: He did. And years later his cousin Armando and Felix Torrino did. All of them did.

Jim: So Raul and these other men told you that he was upstairs in the Texas School Book Depository when President Kennedy was killed?

Glenda: Yes. He just told me about it. He would sort of laugh about it.

Jim: What was Raul's role upstairs in the Depository?

Glenda: With the gun.

Jim: He shot at the President?

Glenda: Yes.

Roy: She always thought he was just bragging. Kidding around. She never paid much attention to it.

Jim: So you didn't take it seriously in those days.

Glenda: No, I never did. And I didn't know hardly anybody. It really didn't matter to me. I mean, I was fifteen.

Jim: What can you tell us next about Raul?

Glenda: He just disappeared.

Jim: When did you see him again?

Glenda: In the early 70's.

I took him down to the Alabama Theater [in Houston] one time. That's when I started hauling guns for Felix. I'd take him



and Raul and Raul's cousin Armando to the docks. And we'd get boxes and bring them over to Felix's.

Jim: Gun running.

Glenda: Yes. We'd put the guns together.

That's when I found out what Raul's real name was -- from his cousin.

Jim: How did you learn that Raul killed Martin Luther King?

Glenda: Felix and Armando and Manuel always talked about it. They said he did it.

But then he told me himself he did it. I mean right out told me.

Roy: That's when he raped her.

Jim: You don't have to say all that again. I read the story.

(As narrated by William Pepper in Orders to Kill, one afternoon Glenda drove <sup>Raul's cousin</sup> Armando to Felix Torrino's house where the usual group was meeting. She put her car keys on the table. One of the men picked up the key ring and looked into its plastic viewfinder. Then he tossed it to Raul, who also looked in it and became enraged at what he saw -- with terrible consequences to Glenda.

25 years later in Memphis, Glenda handed me an identical viewfinder and invited me to see for myself.)

Glenda: I had one of these little keychain things.

Jim: What was it that angered Raul?

Glenda: He saw the pictures.

Jim (looking in the viewfinder): What I see on the left is a picture of John Kennedy. In the center is Martin Luther King. And on the right is Robert Kennedy. It says over the top of these pictures: "Immortal Americans".

Raul saw this?

Glenda: Yes, they were looking through it and passing it down when he saw it. And that was what confirmed it. He admitted it then to me. He admitted it.

Jim: He admitted he had killed Martin Luther King?

Glenda: Yes. He admitted it. But they had always told me about it.  
I hate thinking back.

(What Glenda hates thinking back to is described by Pepper. Infuriated by the pictures, Raul shouted, "I killed that black son of a bitch once and it looks like I'll have to do it again."

He dropped the keys on the floor and stamped on the plastic viewfinder. Then he grabbed her, put a gun to her head, and forced her into a bedroom where he proceeded to rape her.

(Orders to Kill, p. 376)

Glenda: Roy knew something was wrong with me that day when I came home.

I didn't tell him, though, what happened. He knew something was wrong. I was real upset.

Jim: Did you ever have a further conversation with Raul about the assassination of Martin Luther King?

Glenda: No. I didn't see too much of him after that.

Jim: Did his cousin or anyone else ever say anything further about it?

Glenda: I don't remember. I remember they were all embarrassed and scared that day.

Raul was in charge of everything. Usually Felix was, but if Raul was around, he was.

(In 1993 Glenda Grabow saw a newspaper article about James Earl Ray's suit against Loyd Jowers. Jowers, owner of a tavern across from the Lorraine Motel balcony where King was shot, had become a focus of William Pepper's investigation. With witnesses lined up to testify against him before a grand jury, Jowers went on "Prime Time Live" and said he had been paid \$100,000 to facilitate the killing of Martin Luther King. He said a man named Raul had delivered a rifle to him, which Jowers had kept hidden in readiness for the assassination.

Glenda responded to the article on Jowers by contacting his attorney and offering to share her own knowledge of Raul. Investigators

then located Raul. That led to Glenda's phone conversation with him, as recounted now in the interview.)

Glenda: Raul's like Jekyll and Hyde. Real nice. And then he'd blow up.

Jim: Different from the man you once knew, who was a friend to you in those early years.

Glenda: Yes, like a Jekyll and Hyde. There're two different people. That's like when I talked to him on the phone for six minutes!

Jim: Now this is when?

Glenda: A couple of years ago.

Jim: How did you come to talk to Raul on the telephone a couple of years ago?

Glenda: I called information and got the number.

But the investigators didn't want me talking to him. They wanted me just to go through them.

Jim: Why did you telephone Raul?

Glenda: Sort of like a dry run.

Roy: She just wanted to verify it was him and see how he talked. She called and talked to him about six minutes.

Jim: Where is Raul living now?

Glenda: New York.

Jim: Did he acknowledge on the phone that he knew you?

Glenda: Yes, he called me O-Linda.

Roy: That's the way he always pronounced her name.

Glenda: And I asked him if he'd seen [Lyndon Johnson's onetime speech writer] Jack Valenti. He said, "Hey, I haven't seen him in a long time."

Jim: So Jack Valenti knew Raul?

Glenda: Yes.

Roy: She'd drive Raul to the Alabama Theater in Houston.

Glenda: That's where Jack Valenti was at.

Jim: Do you think Jack Valenti knows Raul's connection with the King assassination?

Glenda: Sure.

Jim: What else did Raul say on the phone?



Glenda: He said he was still dealing a lot of guns and doing wine import.

Jim: Raul wasn't uncomfortable hearing from you after 20 years?

Glenda: No. I told him I was coming back up to New York.

The investigators had taken us on a plane up there. And they promised to take us back.

So I made an appointment to go see him. But they wouldn't take us back. They got mad at us for just phoning.

Jim: Did you call Raul again?

Glenda: Yes. It was three-party. The investigators made it go from Memphis to our house all the way to New York. And they were all listening in.

That's when he blew up.

Jim: Can you describe the second call?

Glenda: The daughter of an investigator began by speaking in Spanish. She got to talking to his daughter.

Jim: So that's a whole new ball game.

Glenda: Yes. They didn't know what they were getting into.

Roy: Raul got on the phone and started talking to Glenda.



Glenda: He was denying everything. His wife was on the phone. And all the investigators. Of course, he didn't know that. There were about nine people on that line.

I didn't know what to say because I don't talk on the phone much anyway. Here we got three lines, and nine or ten people on them.

Jim: What did you say?

Glenda: I was telling him I heard that Felix had died, or something like that. He was denying knowing him.

Jim: Did he deny knowing you?

Glenda: Yes.

Roy: He just blew up: "I don't know why you called me!"

Glenda: Between the two telephone calls you wouldn't believe the difference. They were totally different.

Jim: Isn't there a chapter of your story about Percy Foreman that we've skipped?

Glenda: Oh, yes.

(Percy Foreman was James Earl Ray's attorney when Ray pled guilty in 1969 to assassinating Martin Luther King. Ray says he was coerced by Foreman into the plea. Three days later Ray recanted,

fired Foreman, and has been struggling for a trial ever since.)

Jim: How did you meet Percy Foreman?

Glenda: He was just a lawyer in Houston.

Roy's brother got in trouble one time, and he used Percy Foreman as his attorney.

We never knew he'd been Ray's attorney. We never paid no attention to that. I was raising kids when that happened.

So we went up to Foreman's office to help Roy's brother. Foreman was there.

Jim: How did Foreman's connection with James Earl Ray come up?

Glenda: He had books and all kinds of stuff about Ray in there.

I got to talking to him about that. And about Raul.

Jim: How did he respond to your telling him about Raul killing Martin Luther King?

Glenda: He said he knew Raul.

Jim: Percy Foreman, James Earl Ray's lawyer, knew Raul! What was his attitude toward Ray?

Glenda: Against Ray he would just say, "Take the money and let him hang himself."

Jim: Did Foreman remain in communication with you?

Glenda: He'd scare me. It got to where he'd call the house. I had to have a private line of my own put in.

And then death threats.

Jim: Death threats from whom?

Glenda: Percy Foreman.

Roy: What he said was, "Get out of Houston, and we'll let you live."  
He didn't say it was him or anybody else.

Jim: Did you have any guesses as to who was behind the threats?

Roy: I guessed Raul. Or him. Or them.

Jim: So Percy Foreman had told Raul what you said.

Glenda: Yes. That's when my car...

Roy: Her car got sabotaged. Somebody unloosened all the lugs off her wheel. She like to got killed by a semi truck.

Glenda: Yes, a semi was coming up behind me. I could see it in the rear view mirror. I knew I was going to be dead.

Jim: That's when your wheel came off?

Glenda: Yes, I saw the semi in the rear view mirror. I said, "God, here I come!" I closed my eyes, and the truck went around me by just enough. Like clockwork.

If there'd been another car beside me, he couldn't have done it. No way. It was like it was meant to be that way.

Jim: What condition was the car in? Had such a thing ever happened before?

Roy: No, that was the first time. I took care of her car.

Glenda: We packed up and moved.

And then where we live now...When was it, last year? There were four shots in the back yard.

Jim: Shots fired into your house?

Roy: At the house. We never checked to see where.

Glenda: I was sitting in the bedroom watching TV. I shot out of that room so fast I didn't know there were four shots. I got out of there within three.

Roy: Somebody ran past the neighbors' house.

(The final question was asked by Gerry Vanderhaar, in whose Memphis apartment this interview was conducted.)

Gerry: Are you living in fear right now of Raul or someone else who might try to harm you?

Glenda: Sometimes we do. But I'm not going to let it. All these years, you know...I've been in the yard sometimes...I get kind of scared if somebody wants to take pot shots at me.

Roy tries to keep me out of the yard.

Roy: Out of the front. Most of the time you can see somebody in the back.

Glenda: Yes, but the shots were in the back!

(They both laugh.)

Glenda (smiling): You can't keep me out of the yard in summertime. Look at the calluses on my fingers!

(Glenda and Roy Grabow refuse to speculate on what they don't know, such as Raul's connections with the CIA. They look to other witnesses for pieces to the puzzle they don't have. They will continue to testify to their part of the truth, regardless of the risk to themselves.

In light of the Grabow interview, William Pepper's Orders to Kill becomes enigmatic in a different sense than its recent critics have held. Pepper has been attacked for including more in the plot than he knows, in particular a US Army sniper team (as a back-up to assassinate King) whose alleged commander denies it was in Memphis on April 4, 1968.

But in Glenda Grabow's case, Orders to Kill reveals less than its author knows. William Pepper is very much aware of the massive denial at work in the US media and public psyche concerning the 60's assassinations. He has therefore limited the Grabow story to the King murder, omitting its overlap to the assassination of John Kennedy.

The most disturbing question may not be what William Pepper or Glenda Grabow knows but what you and I are willing to know.

Jim Douglass