

STRANGE ROLE OF THANE CESAR, GUARD WITH A GUN WHO STOOD NEAR RFK JUST BEFORE HE WAS SHOT

By JOHN MOULDER
Of the Tattler Staff

The role of Thane Eugene (Gene) Cesar in the investigation of Robert Kennedy's death has been marked controversy growing out of contradictions in this eyewitness's story of the assassination.

Cesar, a plumber by trade, was moonlighting as a security guard hired by the Ambassador Hotel the night Kennedy was shot.

The guard was interviewed by the police and the FBI in the days following Kennedy's assassination.

As the shooting began in the kitchen-pantry area of the hotel, he said, he was knocked down backward, against an ice machine. He said he never saw the gunman's face — only an arm and a pistol attached and spurting red flame.

His accounts differed slightly each time he was interviewed on whether or not he went for his gun or actually got it out of his holster. Once he said he drew his gun and moved toward the wounded senator.

Another time, he said, "I reached for mine but it was too late."

ONE POLICE OFFICIAL SAID Cesar told conflicting accounts and it appeared obvious he hadn't really seen anything and had nothing to tell the authorities.

The guard, because of the variations in his story, was questioned no further by officials, who felt he was trying to interject himself into a case he knew little about.

But on Oct. 7, 1968, about 16 months after the assassination, Cesar was interviewed by Theodore Charach, a broadcast journalist who produced the documentary film strongly asserting police had bungled the investigation and that a second gun was involved in Kennedy's death.

Charach found Cesar living and working in the San Fernando Valley.

"He was friendly and affable," Charach

told TATTLER. But the new interview brought out even more contradictions, all of which remain unresolved.

FOR EXAMPLE, Robert A. Houghton, the Los Angeles chief of detectives who wrote a book called "Special Unit Senator," detailing the police investigation of the assassination, wrote:

"On July 16, 1969, I held a final Special Unit Senator meeting asking 19 last questions ... to the absolute possibility of any person with right-wing connections being in the kitchen or pantry on the night of June 4-5, 1968 ... Within a week, all of them had been answered satisfactorily."

Less than three months later, Cesar told Charach:

"I definitely wouldn't have voted for Bobby Kennedy because he had the same ideas that John did, and I think John sold the country down the road. He ... he gave it to the Communies, he gave it to everyone else who wanted to, he gave it, he literally gave it to the minority."

Cesar said he had worked actively in the American Party, passing out handbills and getting donations for George Wallace.

THE PLUMBER-GUARD PREDICTED a race war in America.

"The black man, now, for the last four to eight years, has been cramming this integrated idea down our throat and so you've learned to hate him."

"And one of these days, at the rate they're going, there is going to be civil war in this country. It's going to be while against the black, and the only thing I'd say is the black will never win."

Later in the interview, Cesar said, "First of all, I think the white man is going to try and do it (fight back) with his voting power, and if they can't do it by getting the right person to straighten the thing out, then he's going to take it in his own hands. I can't see any other

way to go."

Cesar then told Charach that he was escorting Kennedy, holding onto the Senator's right arm, when Kennedy turned his head to shake hands with a busboy.

"... He started to shake hands with him, and when he did, that's when the shots were fired, and the thing I saw first, wasn't so much the noise, but was the flash. I got powder in my eyes from the flash. And I was a little behind Bobby, so I would say I was about three feet from the flash, 'cause I looked up and seen a red gun flash, and, like I say, I got a little bit of powder in my eyes."

"WHEN THE SHOTS were fired, that's when I reached for my gun, and this is when I got knocked down."

He told Charach he got his gun out of the holster, "but it didn't do me no good, because I'm on the floor. But anyways, I got back up and I had my gun out, but they already had him restrained."

Cesar had told police he pulled his gun after getting up from the floor.

(Don Schulman, a television station employee, insists that he saw a security guard pull his gun and fire after Sirhan Sirhan started firing his pistol.)

Conflicting stories were given by Cesar about his ownership of a .22-caliber pistol like the one that killed Kennedy. Cesar said he was wearing a .38-caliber pistol when he was on duty when Kennedy was shot.

Cesar told Charach in October, 1969, that he had owned a .22 pistol but had sold it about a year before — three months after the assassination.

LOS ANGELES County District Attorney Joseph Busch told a reporter that Cesar had admitted owning a .22-caliber pistol, but he had sold it before the assassination.

"He said that he sold the revolver that he had similar to the one that was used in the murder in February before the shooting occurred," Busch declared.



THANE EUGENE CESAR: His story is hard to follow...

Charach contacted Jim Yoder, a friend of Cesar's then living in Blue Mountain, Ark., who said he bought the .22-caliber pistol from Cesar on Sept. 6, 1968 — after Kennedy was killed.

Yoder provided a receipt from Cesar showing he had paid \$15 for the weapon.

Yoder said Cesar wanted to sell his gun because "he seemed a little worried, and he said that there might be repercussions..."

After Yoder bought Cesar's pistol for his gun collection, it was stolen in a burglary of Yoder's home in Arkansas.

The burglary was never solved — the gun has vanished.

TOP PSYCHOLOGIST WHO TESTED SIRHAN CALLS DOCTORS' TESTIMONY...

'...The Psychiatric Blunder of the 20th Century...'

A prominent California psychologist hotly challenges the psychiatric testimony given at Sirhan Sirhan's murder trial. He brands it "the psychiatric blunder of the 20th Century."

This statement by Dr. Eduard Simson is just one of the many conflicting aspects of the investigation of the assassination of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy.

Dr. Simson, of Monterey, a psychologist for 17 years with thoroughgoing professional credentials, evaluated Sirhan while the doctor was in charge of San Quentin prison's psychological testing program.

In a recent affidavit made available to TATTLER, Dr. Simson wrote:

"During the summer of 1969, I interviewed and tested extensively and repeatedly during approximately 20 weekly visits one particular inmate on Death Row, Sirhan Sirhan."

After the doctor's visits with Sirhan were terminated, Sirhan sent word to Dr. Simson through his family that he wanted the psychologist to review the psychiatric testimony given at the trial.

After talking to ballistics expert William W. Harper, who contends two gunmen were involved in the assassination, Dr. Simson agreed to review the murder trial testimony.

"I AM APPALLED," Dr. Simson said, "at the conduct of the mental health professionals involved in this case."

He said he and Dr. David G. Schmidt, the San Quentin prison chief psychiatrist, concurred that the findings sworn to during Sirhan's trial were utterly at odds with their own, more leisurely examination.

"Nowhere in Sirhan's test responses was I able to find evidence that he is a 'paranoid schizophrenic' or 'psychotic,' as testified by the doctors at the trial," Dr. Simson stressed.

He accused other doctors of "bias and errors" in "IQ" testing of Sirhan.

Dr. Eduard Simson, a psychologist for 17 years, examined Sirhan in 20 weekly visits while he was imprisoned in San Quentin. "Sirhan is not and never has been a paranoid schizophrenic," the noted physician said, contrary to testimony at the trial.



Simson's tests showed Sirhan scored a verbal IQ of 129 (very superior), a performance IQ of 119 (bright and normal) and a full-scale IQ of 127 (superior).

Doctors at Sirhan's trial testified that Sirhan had a verbal IQ of 109 (average), a performance IQ of 82 (dull to normal) and a full scale IQ of 98 (average).

Dr. Simson is convinced that Sirhan performed below his true intelligence in the first tests because as an Arab, he distrusted and did not want to cooperate with Jewish doctors.

Simson said other doctors erred because of the widespread preconception that Sirhan killed Kennedy.

"HAD THEY KNOWN the ballistics evidence strongly contradicts Sirhan having killed Robert F. Kennedy, their approach to interpreting Sirhan's test responses and spontaneous behavior would have been different," he observed.

The court psychiatrists and psychologists could never "unlock" Sirhan's mind because he did not trust them, Dr. Simson found.

"I was well on my way to accomplishing this task, but could not complete it because my visits with Sirhan were abruptly terminated by San Quentin's associate warden James Park," said Dr. Simson.

The psychiatric-psychological court team, Dr. Simson said, pooled their efforts to prove Sirhan was guilty and insane: A paranoid schizophrenic.

"Subsequent studies I have done in a more neutral, trusting relationship at San Quentin clearly point out the simple truth: Sirhan is not and was never a paranoid schizophrenic."

SIRHAN IS THE CENTER of a drama, "the true center of which probably still lies very much concealed and unknown to the general public," Dr. Simson said.

"Was he merely a double, a stand-in, sent there to draw attention?" Dr. Simson asked.

"Was he at the scene to replace someone else? Did he actually kill Robert Kennedy? Whatever the full truth of the Robert F. Kennedy assassination might be, it still remains locked in Sirhan's mind and in other, still-anonymous minds."

Entries in notebooks found in Sirhan's home indicated his guilt in the assassination.

But Dr. Simson said Sirhan denies having written these entries.

"I strongly suspect the notebooks are a forgery, for the thinking reflected in them is foreign to the Sirhan I carefully studied," Dr. Simson concluded.