

3 Officials Blast Police Theory of Suicide In Death of Man Who Claimed He Knew Too Much About JFK's Assassination

By THOMAS PORTER

Three key figures have ripped apart the police theory of "probable suicide" in the death of a man who claimed that he knew too much about the Kennedy assassination — and was afraid that he would be killed because of it.

Hank Killam supposedly killed himself three years ago by jumping through a plate-glass window in Pensacola, Escambia County, Fla. His jugular vein was severed and he bled to death. But now three top investigators are disputing the police theory.

County Coroner Dr. A.H. Northup told this ENQUIRER reporter: "I didn't know until now that police had listed the death as a probable suicide. In 10 years as a medical examiner, I've never heard of a man trying to kill himself this way."

Insurance company investigator Jim Harper who made a report on the death said: "That is no sure way to commit suicide. If he had been



HANK KILLAM

His "probable suicide" three years ago is being investigated again

cut anywhere else except the jugular vein he would never have bled to death."

And County Solicitor Carl Harper, who has reopened the file of the death, said: "I want to know if Killam jumped or was pushed into that window."

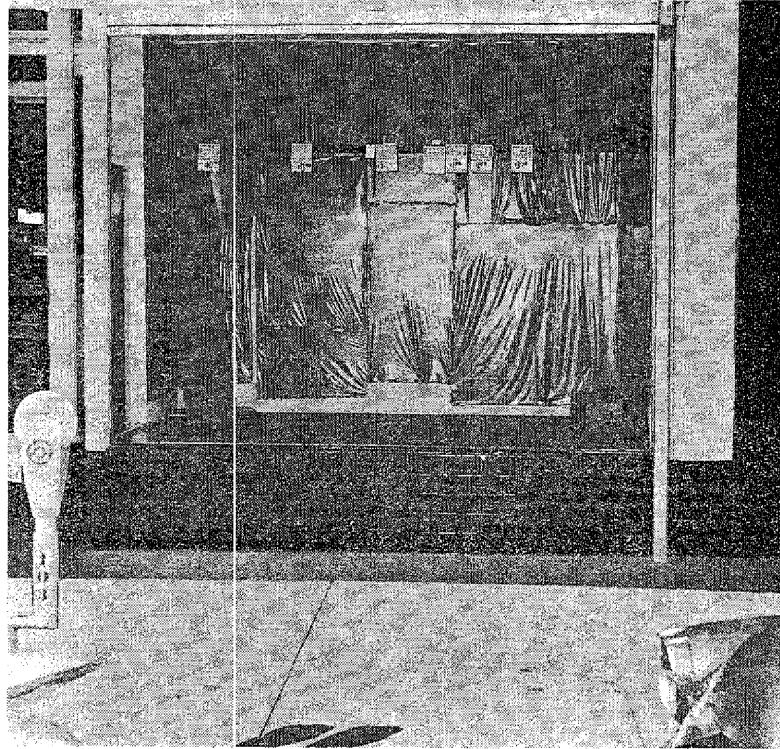
Did he jump?

Or was he pushed?

Could Killam have fallen through plate glass and fatally ripped his jugular vein or was he thrown through the window after his throat was cut?

It gets down to that — the death of Hank Killam — a man running for his life and who died amid shattered glass and mystery. His throat cut, life ebbing from a three-inch slash in the neck, Killam died on March 17, 1964, alone on a deserted street in a pool of his own blood.

And the voice of another person — one of 11 who have met strange deaths since the death of a President — was stilled forever.



"I'm a dead man," Killam had claimed after fear forced him to flee from Dallas where he was linked with both Jack Ruby and Lee Harvey Oswald.

Threats in Tampa, Fla., where he later fled, then sent Killam hurrying home to Pensacola, and to his appointment with death.

He cried in anguish to his brother Earl Killam: "They're going to get me — but I've run as far as I'm going to run."

The statement proved prophetic. And soon, Pensacola — a Gulf Coast city of 185,000 — was stunned and baffled by the way the prophecy was fulfilled.

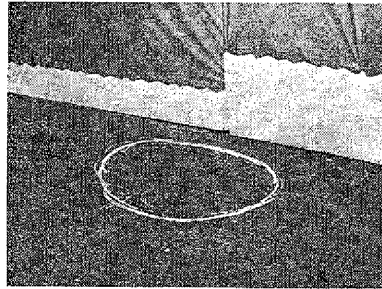
Because two days later Killam, 45, was found dead, lying near the shattered glass of a storefront window on the city's main street. Police listed the death as "probable suicide" — "but did you ever hear," questioned his brother, "of a man committing suicide by jumping through a plate-glass window?"

With this 3-year-old question burning in his mind, the long-smoldering fires of frustration burst into flame when the investigation in New Orleans into a plot to assassinate Kennedy began. And Earl Killam requested an investigation into his brother's death.

Like millions of others anxious to know more about the mystery, this ENQUIRER reporter traced Hank Killam's flight from fear and found that the route crossed two principals: his wife, Wanda Davis Killara, a swinging hostess who used to hustle drinks and cigarettes for Jack Ruby in Dallas' Carousel stripjoint; and John Carter, a fellow boarder of Lee Harvey Oswald, and a man with whom Killam worked as a part-time painter.

According to his wife, Killam came home

DEATH SCENE: Killam supposedly killed himself by jumping through storefront window (above). Blood on floor (circled above and in close-up below) was about 4 feet behind window, indicating Killam went through it with tremendous force



the night of the assassination "as white as a sheet." She said he stayed up all night watching television reports. Later, Killam began to keep a file of newspaper clippings on the Kennedy and Oswald slayings.

After the assassination, agents — identified as "federal" by his wife and as "plotters" by Killam — began to hound her husband, Wanda said. They quizzed him about Ruby and Carter — and when one crew stopped, another began.

Finally Killam ran. "Then they browbeat me into telling where he had gone," Wanda said. And again the "agents" and "plotters" tracked him down in Tampa where he was working as a used car salesman. They chased him

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APR 1

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from one lot to another, then to his home and death.

If the men who hounded Killam were FBI agents, there is no record of the investigation in the 26 volumes of the Warren Report.

Said brother Earl Killam: "He may not have been important to the Warren Commission, but he sure was important to someone — maybe 'plotters' like he claimed."

Hank Killam may have been important to someone, but certainly not to the Pensacola policemen who answered the 4:29 a.m. call that March 17, three years ago.

Nor to insurance company investigator Jim Harper whose complete set of records now give the best restaging of the mysterious death.

Nor to Coroner Northup who examined the body and found that it was unmarked except for the throat opening. The death was listed by the coroner as "accidental." Cause: "Hemorrhage from a cut jugular and carotid artery."

Dr. Northup said: "I've seen a suicide where a man put blasting caps in his mouth and lit the fuse — but I've never heard of a man trying to commit suicide by jumping through a plate glass window." Insurance investigator Harper's records follow the same tack.

Said Harper: "I was working the case as a claim against liability and didn't think too much about the mystery aspects of it at the time. The window of the store was broken. Blood went way back inside — 4 or 5 feet. To me, this means that Hank Killam went through the window with tremendous force.



CARL HARPER

Reopens probe into Killam's mysterious death

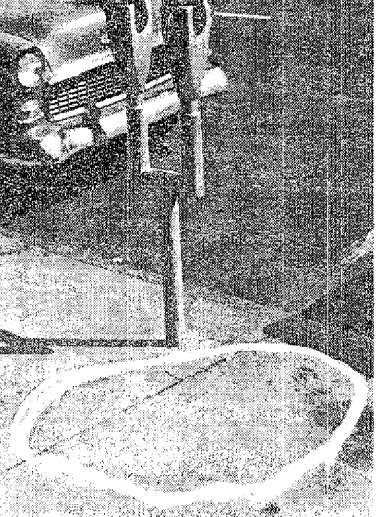
"Because if he had slipped or staggered into the glass, the blood would have been right at the window. And if he had fallen through he would have landed real close to the edge."

Hank Killam would also have had to jump up and over a 2-foot-high section of brick wall even to get into the plate-glass window. And the mystery is deepened by the fact that his body was discovered on the pavement — 50 feet from the window.

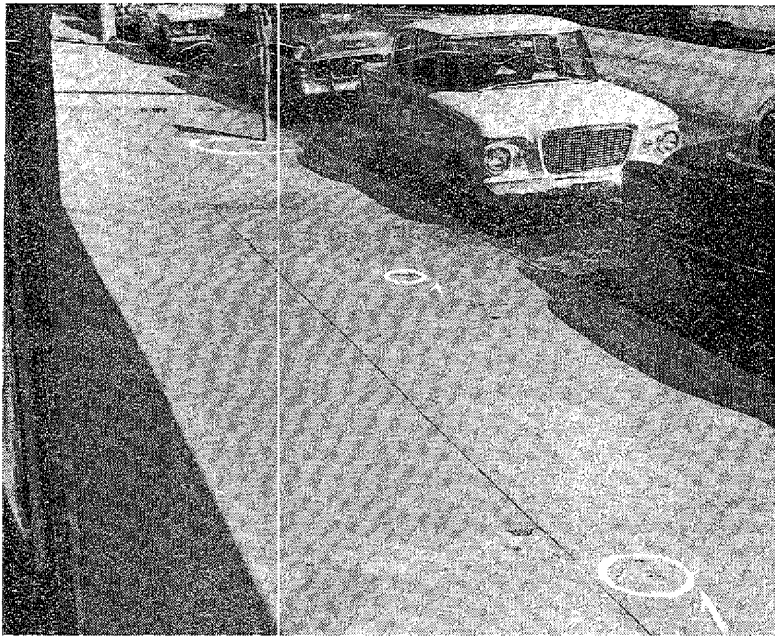
"That is sure no way to commit suicide." The insurance investigator theorized. "If he had been cut anywhere else except on the jugular vein, he would never have bled to death.

"There were no other marks, no bruises, in any shape or form, on Killam's body."

This, too, pushed brother Earl Killam even deeper into speculation. He remembered the weekend his brother died; how Hank had seen a strange man wearing the collar of a priest, several times near 316 West Romana St., where Killam was staying with his mother, Mary. No Catholic priests



DEATH SPOT: Circle indicates where Killam died on a Pensacola sidewalk.



TRAIL OF BLOOD: Killam staggered down the street dripping blood (circled) after, according to police, he jumped through window. He got as far as parking meter, where he died.

or Episcopal clergymen ever visited that area.

Hank Killam was frightened of the stranger who seemed to be shadowing him and told his own Baptist minister: "Be careful they don't put a knife in your back after being seen talking to me."

The minister, the Reverend George Blue, also said Killam hinted in those last days of his life that his special knowledge of "that thing in Dallas" would lead to his death.

"I don't know if it did or not," said Earl Killam. "But I know this: My brother was scared. I know my mother said he got a phone call at 4 a.m. the night he died, went out of the house, and a car door was heard to slam. "I know he didn't have a car. And I know that less than 30 minutes later he was found dead.

"I know, too, that it is possible that someone picked him up, slit his jugular vein, threw him into the window to make it look like an accident."

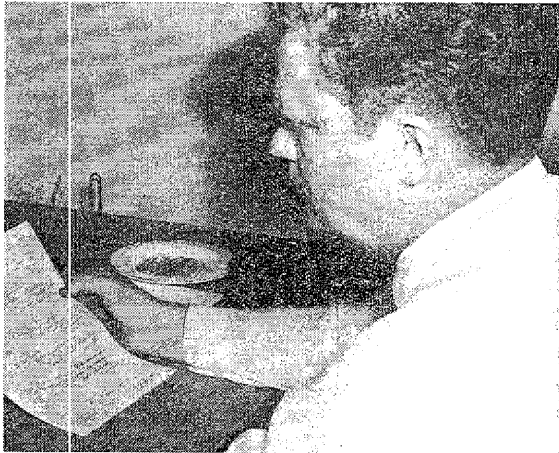
Then, as has everyone else who comes in close contact with the case, Earl Killam popped the poser: "Who would have thought of suicide? You don't commit suicide by jumping through a ground floor window."

Nobody, as far as The ENQUIRER could find, even considered suicide a possibility except the Pensacola police.

The "probable suicide" is listed on the report of officer S.N. Reeves, then a rookie cop, who was first on the scene. It read: "The plate-glass window of Linen Department Store was shattered. Because of the presence of blood approximately 4 feet inside the show window, it is my opinion Killam jumped through the window."

But earlier that same evening, officer Reeves had answered another call concerning Killam. Reeves was summoned to 316 West Romana Street, where he had found Killam walking in front of the house. There was fear showing in Killam's eyes and he claimed then that he was going to be killed.

Reeves chalked it up to mental condition, because Killam's mother had told him she was going to see about getting her son to see a psy-



CORONER: Dr. A.H. Northup, in his 10 years' experience, never heard of a man trying to kill himself the way Killam supposedly did.

chiatrist (he actually had an appointment for 1 p.m. on the day he died) or into a hospital (Killam had a police record of drug addiction.)

Other policemen arrived minutes after Reeves.

"We saw it was Killam," said a detective, "and let it go."

For Killam was well known by the police. He was a fringe area hoodlum with a string of arrests starting from a fifth-grade reform school lock-up — but he had never been jailed for anything big.

He sometimes worked with the officers, fingering and informing. He was questioned once about a murder, but later released.

And Killam has been traced to New Orleans where DA Jim Garrison contended that three men, including Lee Harvey Oswald, planned the Kennedy killing.

Hank Killam was in and out of New Orleans during September, October and November of 1963. He is also listed in police files there.

But did his death link to JFK?

"I don't know," says County Solicitor Harper, who has open lines to investigating officials in Tampa and the DA in New Orleans. "But I want to resolve it to my own and to everyone else's satisfaction. But most of all I want to know if Killam jumped or was pushed into that glass window."

See Next Page