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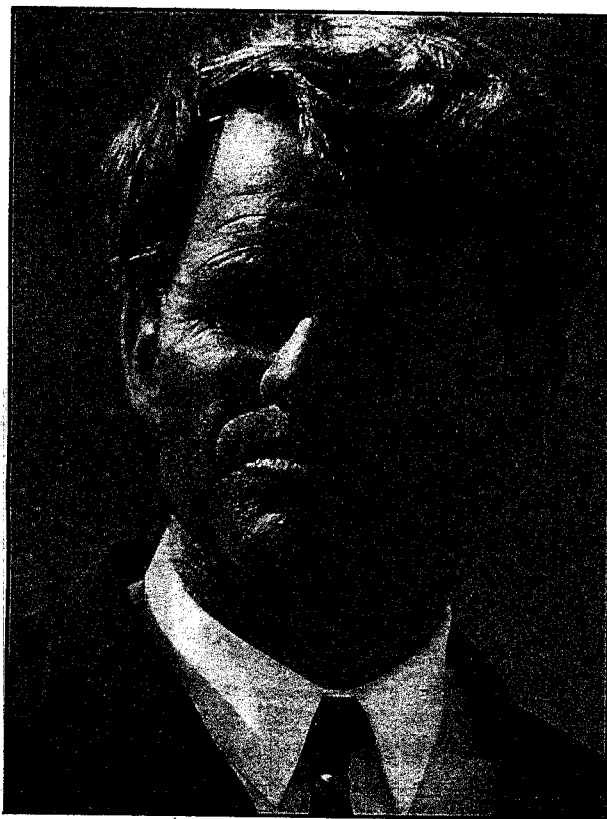
L.A. WEEKLY

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THE LINGERING MYSTERY OF RFK

**A Special Investigation Into
Robert F. Kennedy's Assassination in Los Angeles
and the Coverup That Followed**

In this anniversary year of Bobby Kennedy's death, files recently released by the LAPD plus other new information indicate that police officials and the District Attorney's office distorted and papered-over evidence that Sirhan Sirhan did not act alone. Investigative reporter Andy Boehm spent months looking into the case. His remarkable story begins on page 16.

BY ANDY BOEHM



RFK: The Assassination Re-examined 16
by Andy Boehm

ON THE COVER:
Cover photo: APWide World.

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ROBERT KENNEDY:

For years it has been accepted public doctrine that Sirhan Sirhan acted alone in

killing Sen. Robert F. Kennedy in the Ambassador Hotel here in Los Angeles.

Earlier this year, however, the Los Angeles Police

Department finally was compelled to

release to the public a great deal of its documentation in the case.

Some of it turns out to be startling. Indeed, combined with other new information, it would appear that local law-enforcement agen-

THE

ASSASSINATION

THIS TIME

A NEW INQUIRY

cies acted with gross impropriety in shutting down all

leads to the possible co-conspira-

tors. Examined closely, a very different story emerges

from the official tale — one

that in an ideal world would compel the authori-

ties to take a new

look at the case

and the LAPD's role in

it. In this special investi-

gation, the Weekly

sums up what is known

about the unusual event

that changed the course

of U.S. affairs over the

last 20 years.



L.A. Times Photo

by Andy Boehm

STABILITY, CONTINUITY, orderly transfer of power — these are what civics teachers and poli-sci profs cite as the virtues of American politics, a curious two-party affair nearly devoid of ideology and dominated by business interests. In school they teach us that other democracies suffer by having ideological parties, and not just two of them. Those nations are often wracked by painful political upheavals and angry, polarized masses of citizens. The U.S., they say, avoids such trouble thanks to regularly scheduled elections contested by two groups of men and women who share the same basic agenda and disagree only on the mechanics of achieving it.

The tumultuous years 1963-75 proved this Pollyanna-ish depiction of American stability to be a lie. During those years, America witnessed three major political assassinations, an attempted assassination and the unscheduled, disorderly departure of a president and vice president under threat of impeachment. These events altered the expected outcomes of presidential elections, rapidly shifted power from one elite to another and severely damaged the focus, morale and momentum of black America's quest for equality.

The year 1968 was one in which the "orderly" transfer of power was directed by military, criminal and police violence. For millions of Americans, it is the year they cannot forget and do not want to remember. The euphoria and optimism of its first five months changed quickly to bitter despair as the dark side of American politics came into full view. For many, 1968 became the quintessential bummer that permanently killed their idealism, their capacity for joy, and their willingness to participate in their country's political life.

It was also a year of unsolved mysteries and unanswered questions. Who really killed Martin Luther King Jr.? Why did the liberal "peace candidate" of 1964, Lyndon Johnson, turn into a bloody warmonger? How did Eugene McCarthy, a poetic and peculiar senator from Minnesota, manage to end the warmonger's reign? Without ever entering a primary, how was that other Minnesotan, Hubert Humphrey, able to keep an anti-war option off the November ballot? How did a worthless political has-been nicknamed "Tricky" become president? What really happened in France and Czechoslovakia? How could a year start so hopefully yet end up so bad?

What was not generally considered a mystery in 1968 was the assassination of Bobby Kennedy on June 5 at L.A.'s Ambassador Hotel. After all, about 20 people actually saw a "lone-nut assassin" named Sirhan Sirhan shoot at RFK. Millions read the Palestinian Sirhan's assertion that he had killed to avenge Kennedy's support for Israel. As Ralph Blumenfeld said in the *New York Post*, "Never had a case seemed more closed."

Over the last 20 years, a few people questioned this assessment. They wanted to see the police investigative files on the RFK assassination. They noted that the Warren Commission, for all its many shortcomings, wasted no time in releasing almost all its files to the public. But for almost two decades, the LAPD refused to reveal what it had learned about what's generally called the most spectacular crime in this city's history. Finally, after years of political and legal skirmishing, the LAPD gave its RFK assassination files to the California State Archives. Last April, the archives opened the files to the general public.

Opening the LAPD files did not lay to

rest doubts about the official conclusion that Sirhan acted alone. Many items in the files tend to corroborate earlier private investigations that indicated something terribly wrong with the manner in which the local law-enforcement and criminal-justice systems had reached their conclusions. In fact, the newly opened investigative police files, together with the results of earlier private investigations, give ample reason to believe that Sirhan Sirhan *did not act alone and did not fire the shot that killed Bobby Kennedy* on the night of his triumph in the California Democratic primary.

BOBBYMANIA — THE FINAL DAYS

Wearing the fame like a loaded gun . . .
—Shona Laing,
"Glad I'm Not a Kennedy"

Going into the California Primary, Kennedy seemed to be losing momentum in his

in a book about the 1968 election, such a campaign "could well stir and confuse the excited and unhappy people who abound in the urban wildernesses of Southern California."

RFK's California campaign inspired both death threats and madly adoring crowds that tore off items of the candidate's clothing. In one of his many motorcades, someone tossed a rock at Kennedy, and at the end of the campaign he collapsed from exhaustion at an appearance in San Diego. But by Tuesday evening, June 4, the high voter turnout in black and Latino neighborhoods indicated that RFK's strongest admirers would give him the margin of victory he so desperately wanted. He had apparently reached the end of his dangerous game victorious and unscathed.

THE SHOOTING

Around midnight Sen. Kennedy, feeling



AP/Wide World

Sirhan Bishara Sirhan: he admits, but does not remember, killing Kennedy.

quest for the nomination while his major opponent, Senator Eugene McCarthy, had begun to say he was on a roll. The results of the May 28 Oregon primary had painfully shocked Kennedy. Eugene McCarthy won it — the first defeat for a Kennedy brother in 28 elections. What made it worse was that McCarthy was mocking him: "Bobby threatened to hold his breath unless the people of Oregon voted for him." Worse yet, McCarthy had the gall to tell West Coast voters that RFK and his martyred brother John were among the graduates of "a sort of University of the Cold War" that was responsible for the bloodbath in Vietnam.

The outrage and need for reassurance that gripped the RFK entourage led them into a demagogic, pop-star style of campaigning in California. This was a dangerous game. It certainly drew huge crowds and focused public attention on Kennedy. But as three British journalists later noted

sure of victory, went down from his room at the Ambassador Hotel to the Embassy Ballroom to address a large, boisterous crowd of supporters. After the speech, he proceeded toward the smaller Colonial Room, where reporters were gathered. An earlier plan had been to walk to the Colonial Room through the Embassy Ballroom, shaking hands on the way. However, the crowd there was so thick and so eager to touch the candidate that it would have been impossible to get through to the waiting reporters.

The alternate route to the Colonial Room led through a kitchen pantry behind the ballroom. Walking ahead of his bodyguards, Kennedy entered the pantry and began shaking hands with kitchen workers and others. He was guided in front by Karl Uecker, the Ambassador Hotel's assistant maitre d'. A private security guard, Thane Eugene Cesar, was walking right behind the senator. There were 76 or 77 people

(the 77th would have been the "woman in the polka-dot dress," see below) in the crowded pantry, including a short, thin young man of "Latin" appearance who stepped around Uecker and began firing a small .22-caliber pistol.

After two shots, Uecker says, he grabbed the gunman's hand, forcing the barrel away from Kennedy. Immediately, others joined the struggle while the gun kept firing. Even with the massive L.A. Ram Roosevelt Grier joining the attack, it took a surprisingly long time to subdue the diminutive gunman and wrest the weapon from him. Meanwhile, Kennedy fell wounded to the floor in a pool of blood. Next to him was a clip-on necktie torn from the collar of security guard Cesar, who also went down in the melee. Five other people received bullet wounds.

Carrying car keys but no identification, the gunman was whisked away through a threatening crowd to a police car, whose occupants (including State Assembly Speaker Jesse Unruh) were determined not to have "another Dallas," meaning the pre-trial killing of an assassin. Robert F. Kennedy died 25 hours after the shooting from a head wound that sent lead and bone fragments into the right hemisphere of his cerebellum. The other victims survived.

The gunman refused to reveal his name. Not until nine hours after his arrest was he identified as Pasadena resident Sirhan Bishara Sirhan by his flabbergasted brothers, who saw him on TV and on the front page of the morning paper. The LAPD quickly formed a special investigative task force called Special Unit Senator (SUS). The findings of SUS enabled L.A. County District Attorney Evelle Younger to obtain a guilty verdict and a since-revoked death penalty in Sirhan's trial the following April. In court, the defense did not contest any of the crime-scene evidence or other testimony used to prove Sirhan's guilt.

THE OFFICIAL FINDINGS

By the end of its investigation, SUS had conducted 3,470 separate interviews, collected a disputed number of photos numbering at least 2,500 and written up the case on more than 50,000 sheets of paper. According to the LAPD's then-chief of detectives, Robert A. Houghton, the man who put SUS together, the special task force conducted "the longest, largest and most expensive criminal investigation ever undertaken by the Los Angeles Police Department, possibly the most extensive investigation ever conducted by any local law-enforcement agency."

In his book *Special Unit Senator* (Random House, 1970), Chief Detective Houghton summarized SUS's findings as follows: "1) Sirhan Sirhan fired the fatal shots that killed Sen. Robert F. Kennedy and wounded five others. 2) Sirhan fired those shots with the intent to kill Sen. Kennedy, and his act was premeditated. 3) Sirhan was not under the influence of a drug or intoxicant at the time of the shooting. 4) Sirhan was legally sane at the time of the incident. 5) There was no evidence of a conspiracy in the crime." As we'll see later, the LAPD arrived at finding No. 5 before the formation of SUS, and apparently even before Sirhan's identity had been established.

With the exception of No. 3 and No. 4, Sirhan's defense challenged none of the SUS findings above or the evidence supporting them. The defense attorneys merely contended in vain that Sirhan acted in a state of "diminished capacity," a

continued on page 18

mitigating factor that is somewhat easier to prove than strict legal insanity.

The findings of SUS satisfied the jury and just about every opinion leader and establishment journalist in America. Much of the general public was at first skeptical about a second "lone nut" killing a Kennedy, but as time passed, most people accepted that Sirhan Sirhan was the sole writer, director and producer of the tragic drama performed in the Ambassador Hotel kitchen pantry in 1968. Even in L.A., where the Sirhan *auteur* theory met several public challenges, most people accept Houghton's five findings as the truth about the RFK assassination. Some local broadcast journalists have challenged the official findings, but this area's most powerful information gatekeeper, the *Los Angeles Times*, has usually ignored such efforts or denounced them in editorials.

Long before the recent release of the LAPD files, however, a very few private citizen-investigators and writers concluded that some of SUS's five conclusions were highly suspect, while others were just plain impossible. Several of these generally ignored, often scorned (especially by the *Times*) but determined citizen-investigators gave generously of their time and their evidence files to help the *Weekly* research this story. Many of their most convincing arguments with Houghton & Co. center on ignored or misinterpreted evidence found at the crime scene or in the course of subsequent scientific tests. While including many hair-splitting details, these items of evidence merit examination. They not only indicate what *really* happened in the Ambassador kitchen pantry on June 5, 1968; they also suggest that some sort of coverup was condoned or possibly even conducted by some governmental authorities pledged to enforce justice in L.A.

THE AUTOPSY

When you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, no matter how improbable, must be the truth.

— Sherlock Holmes

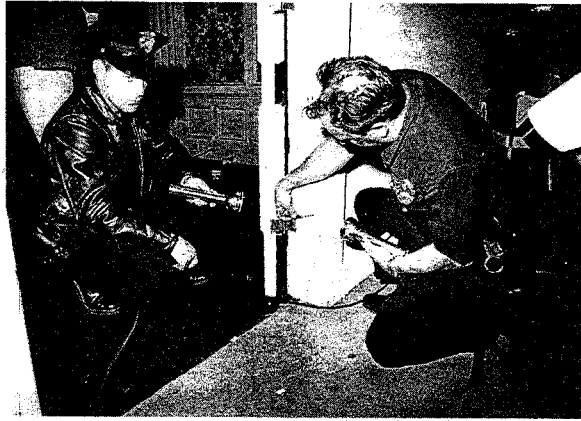
Former L.A. County Chief Medical Examiner Dr. Thomas T. Noguchi lost his job due to allegations of "gallows humor," an unseemly thirst for publicity and various managerial shortcomings. However, as a forensic pathologist, the notorious "coroner to the stars" has always received great respect from his scientific peers, some of whom helped him deal with the Kennedy case. When it became clear that RFK would soon die, Noguchi made the politically astute request that experts from the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology assist him on the Kennedy autopsy so as to reduce the potential for later controversy. One of these AFIP pathologists, Dr. Pierre Finck, had worked on the controversial autopsy of Sen. Kennedy's brother John.

Noguchi, his regular assistants, a photographer, the AFIP pathologists, deputy D.A. John Miner and a few LAPD observers attended what Noguchi called in his book *Coroner* (Simon & Schuster, 1983) "the most meticulous autopsy I had ever performed." In an interview with the *Weekly*, Noguchi said that the findings he released represented a consensus of all the attending pathologists and that none of the observers have ever quarreled with them.

The autopsy revealed that Robert Kennedy received two wounds from bullets entering "underneath and slightly to the back of his right armpit." These alone would not have killed him, nor would the third bullet, which passed through the back of his jacket's shoulder pad without

hitting him. The fourth and fatal bullet entered Kennedy's skull just behind his right ear. Soot on his hair and powder-burn "tattoo" patterns on his ear placed the gun muzzle just three inches away from Kennedy's head. Noguchi double-checked this distance by firing a similar gun from varying distances at pigs' ears, the skin of which is physically similar to human skin. Simply put, a team of top-notch forensic pathologists concluded that Robert Kennedy was shot dead from behind by a gun just three inches from his head.

Noguchi's hurried appearance at the Sirhan trial was nothing but "a formality," he told the *Weekly*. Sirhan's chief counsel, Grant Cooper, refrained from discussing the autopsy in court, apparently fearing the effect of gory details on the jury. Had



LAPD officers Wright and Rozzi examine bullet holes their bosses never acknowledged.

Cooper pursued the matter, the jurors would have become very perplexed, because every witness of the shooting placed Sirhan Sirhan several feet in front of Kennedy when firing his gun. Assistant maitre d' Karl Uecker, who guided Kennedy through the kitchen and stood between the senator and Sirhan, told former Congressman and U.N. Ambassador Allard Lowenstein, "There was a distance of at least one-and-a-half feet between the muzzle of Sirhan's gun and Kennedy's head... There is no way the shots described in the autopsy could have come from the Sirhan gun." Juan Romero, the busboy immortalized in a photo of him cradling RFK's head, was near enough to feel the heat of Sirhan's gun on his face. He said the gun was "approximately one yard from Sen. Kennedy's head." Vincent DiPierro, a waiter so close to the scene that RFK's blood splattered on his face, told the Grand Jury that Sirhan's body was "four to six feet" from Kennedy "when this gun started firing." Numerous other witnesses to the shooting placed Sirhan several feet in front of Kennedy, who was shot the last time from a few inches behind.

Small wonder that in *Coroner* Noguchi states, "I have never said that Sirhan Sirhan killed Robert Kennedy." Did Sirhan have a magic gun capable of firing bullets in what citizen investigator Robert Cutler mockingly called a "boomerang-trajectory flightpath"? Even that wouldn't explain the powder burns that can only be inflicted within inches of a firing gun muzzle.

Actually, Noguchi himself flirts with an explanation that squares his finding with those concluding Sirhan was the lone gunman. Noguchi notes that the first bullet could have hit RFK in the body, causing

him to spin 180 degrees around by the time the fatal shot reached his head. Also, the victorious candidate was seen twisting around while shaking hands in the kitchen. But when it comes to how the gun could have been inches from RFK's head, *Coroner* lamely cites a preposterous mass-hypnotic form of "crowd psychology" whereby Sirhan "lunged toward Kennedy and fired, a move unseen by anyone, and then, as Kennedy spun, lunged back [Noguchi's emphasis] to fire from farther away, a second move also invisible to all..."

In his interview with the *Weekly*, Noguchi indicated he realized the extreme unlikelihood of this by citing Uecker's testimony. In another interview with the *Weekly*, Baxter Ward also stressed the im-

portance of Uecker's testimony. Ward, who reopened parts of the case as both a KHJ-TV newsmen and an L.A. county supervisor, told of meeting Uecker several years after the shooting, at which time Uecker still contended Sirhan was situated well in front of Kennedy.

In his periodical, *Grassy Knoll Gazette*, Robert Cutler speculates that Noguchi's "gobbledegook" about "crowd psychology" came at the urging of "the publisher's legal counsel." Such lawyers worry about lawsuits over controversial books. But who could have sued Simon & Schuster had *Coroner* stated that the killer stood right behind RFK? It turns out that there was indeed a man with a gun standing inches behind Kennedy, a man who (by his own admission) drew his gun, and who was seen wiping his eyes, perhaps to remove powder or soot. He also told a reporter minutes after the shooting that Kennedy was shot at four times, this being even before Kennedy's body and clothes were examined at the hospital. This man was the security guard, Thane Eugene Cesar, to whom we'll return later.

THE BULLET COUNT

There were so many holes in the case.

—William Sullivan, former number-three man in the FBI, on the RFK killing, in his book *The Bureau* (W.W. Norton & Co., 1979)

There were also enough holes in the kitchen that Sirhan could not have been the only gunman. His pistol held eight bullets, and with the massive Rosey Grier and others beating him severely, Sirhan clearly could not have reloaded. Thus, if nine or more bullets can be shown to have

been fired, at least a second gunman, still unindicted and unapprehended, must have been at work.

Six people were wounded and the pantry ceiling had three bullet holes, yet SUS put forth an explanation in which all this damage came from Sirhan's eight shots. One bullet allegedly went through RFK's body and then through a ceiling tile. Another bullet was said to have passed through the shoulder pad of Kennedy's jacket and then into the forehead of labor leader Paul Schrade. (However, the "shoulder-pad shot" went almost straight upward and could not have hit Schrade, who was standing several feet behind Kennedy.) Another shot "struck the plaster ceiling and then struck victim [Elizabeth] Evans in the head." To do that, the bullet would have had to go through one ceiling tile, bounce off the ceiling, exit through another tile and hit Elizabeth Evans, all of which is unlikely but not impossible.

However, Evans stated that she was wounded while bent over looking for her shoe, which had come loose in the milling throng. On this matter, Gregory Stone, a former Lowenstein aide active in efforts to make the police files public, noted, "According to the police theory, the bullet striking Evans traveled downward from the ceiling, but in fact it proceeded at an upward angle in her forehead." [Italics his.] Some of the other multiple hits the LAPD attributed to single bullets were so far-fetched as to require the slugs magically to change direction in mid-flight.

Even repelling the laws of physics can't bring the bullet count in the kitchen down to the maximum eight Sirhan could have fired. That's because additional bullets and bullet holes were seen and attested to by crime-scene witnesses and law-enforcement personnel, although not the LAPD. The following all exceed the official eight Sirhan bullets.

In a signed statement given to attorney Vincent Bugliosi, Ambassador Hotel head maitre d' Angelo DiPierro (father of waiter Vincent DiPierro) said that hours after the shooting he "observed a small-caliber bullet lodged about a quarter of an inch into the wood of the center divider of the two swinging doors [at the west end of the pantry]. Several police officers also observed the bullet." He added, "I am quite familiar with guns and bullets, having been in the infantry for 3-1/2 years. There is no question in my mind that this was a bullet and not a nail or any other object." Martin Patrusky, a waiter, told Bugliosi he participated in an LAPD reconstruction of the crime scene several days after the shooting. He stated that "one of the officers pointed to two circled holes on the center divider of the swinging doors and told us that they had dug two bullets out of the center divider... I am absolutely sure that the police told us that two bullets were dug out of these holes."

Vincent Bugliosi, best known as Charles Manson's prosecutor and author of *Helter Skelter*, had several unusual experiences tracking down additional bullet holes. These are described in *The Assassination of Robert F. Kennedy* (Random House, 1978) by William W. Turner and John Christian, the most comprehensive single work on the case. Bugliosi told the *Weekly* that the Turner-Christian book "accurately describes his many involvements in the RFK case, more of which will be dealt with later in this article."

The Associated Press sent out an unusual wirephoto on June 5, some hours after the shooting. Captioned "Bullet Found Near Kennedy Shooting Scene," it showed two uniformed LAPD officers pointing to a

continued on page 20

bullet "still in the wood" of the frame (not of the center divider) of one of the swinging doors to the pantry. D.A. Evelle Younger in 1969 publicly promised to release information regarding this photo and similar problems, but never did.

In 1975, Bugliosi tried to find the two policemen, with no cooperation from the LAPD and despite an assertion from then-D.A. Joe Busch that the AP caption was erroneous. With help from "workaday cops," Bugliosi identified and contacted the two men in the photo, Sgts. Robert Rozzi and Charles Wright. In a signed statement he gave to Bugliosi, Rozzi said he had seen "a hole in the door jamb, and the base of what appeared to be a small-caliber bullet was lodged in the frame."

Later, Bugliosi telephoned Sergeant Wright, who "unequivocally declared that a bullet had been in the hole." Wright added, "It definitely was removed from the hole, but I do not know who did it." Bugliosi intended to get a signed statement on this from Wright the next day, a fact he inadvertently told LAPD officer Phil Sartuche (now Chief Daryl Gates' top assistant, according to John Christian). Before Bugliosi could meet Wright, the sergeant got calls from Sartuche and, as Bugliosi put it, "Deputy City Attorney Larry Nagen, who instructed him not to give a statement. The sergeant retreated from his positive position of the evening before, now saying that the object only looked like a bullet, and since it was so long ago, he was not at all sure he couldn't have been mistaken." The D.A.'s office also prevented Rozzi and Wright from testifying under oath about the matter in a later civil suit.

Given LAPD stonewalling and obfuscation in 1975 and earlier, Bugliosi, Lowenstein and others troubled by the lone-assassin theory were unable to prove that bullets beyond the eight officially attributed to Sirhan had been acknowledged by the authorities. Local authorities, that is, FBI documents obtained in 1976 through the Freedom of Information Act list four bullet holes in the "doorway area leading into the kitchen from the stage area." These had never been acknowledged by the LAPD. When this was brought up publicly, the FBI said it had not conducted a formal ballistics examination. However, Gregory Stone notes that the Bureau "did not explicitly disavow" the report of the four extra bullet holes. Also in 1976, Vincent Bugliosi got a signed statement from former FBI agent William A. Bailey. Bailey discussed his examination of the kitchen area and stated that he and "several other agents noted at least two (2) small-caliber bullet holes" in the doorway area. He added, "There was no question in any of our minds as to the fact they were bullet holes."

The obvious way to clear up the allegations about extra bullets was to re-examine the door frame, divider post and ceiling tiles, all of which had been removed by the LAPD and held as evidence. Unfortunately, when Bugliosi, Lowenstein and others requested the re-examination in 1975, then-assistant police Chief Daryl Gates announced that the evidence had been destroyed on June 27, 1969. This was just a few weeks after a *Los Angeles Free Press* article by citizen-investigators Lillian Castellano and Floyd Neilson made public the existence of the AP wire photo. Lowenstein found Gates' announcement as curious as the wondrous meanderings attributed to the eight Sirhan bullets, because an earlier police board of inquiry had cited a 1971 inspection "of the ceiling tiles removed from the pantry" as refutation of

questions posed then about a second gun. In the Feb. 19, 1977 *Saturday Review*, Lowenstein asked how "such an inspection could have refuted anything if the tiles had been destroyed two years before."

Thus the testimony of numerous sources, including policemen and the FBI, indicate that more than eight bullets were fired in the Ambassador kitchen pantry the night of the RFK murder. If this is so, then despite the apparent satisfaction of the L.A. police and D.A. with evidence indicating that Sirhan and only Sirhan fired a pistol that night, another conclusion is inescapable: at least one additional gunman was firing bullets during the pandemonium. And unless one accepts the preposterous coincidence of two unconnected assassins shooting simultaneously, the only

Kevin Cody that he believed there were more than 10 shots, but with less certainty than he felt about the first 10 shots.

THE CHALLENGERS

Why are so few people aware of evidence and testimony pointing to a conspiracy? One explanation is that it was "obvious" that Sirhan acted alone. Even his defense attorneys accepted this. All the witnesses saw him shoot at Kennedy. In challenging the obvious, one risked being labeled a crackpot.

Among local opinion leaders, only Baxter Ward and Vincent Bugliosi dared to challenge repeatedly the official version of the assassination. Others prominent in government or law enforcement kept their doubts to themselves. After all, challenging

with the "not another Dallas" syndrome. When Lowenstein and Paul Schrade held their first press conference calling for further investigation of the case, the *Times* didn't report it, even though many out-of-town papers did. Occasionally the *Times* has run unbiased reportage on critics of the lone-assassin theory, but its editorials invariably praise the D.A. and LAPD while ridiculing their critics.

A May 16, 1974 *Times* editorial labeled then-County Supervisor Baxter Ward's attempt to reinvestigate 1968 ballistics evidence "A Strange and Ghoulish Inquiry." An Aug. 17, 1975 editorial that erroneously cited "90 to 100 witnesses" to the shooting attacked "the inane suspicions of those who still want to believe that there is an official conspiracy to conceal critical evidence in the case." Other editorials in the 1970s suggested that Ward and Bugliosi had raised questions about the assassination to enhance their electoral ambitions. As recently as April 30, 1988 a *Times* column by John Kendall complained that "the die-hard doubters, conspiracy buffs and second-gun theorists are at it again."

The *Times* apparently has convinced most of its readers that Sirhan alone killed Kennedy. It has scared off skeptical "conspiracy buffs" who do not wish their sanity and sincerity attacked in public. As Lowenstein noted, the fear of such attacks leaves public criticisms of the official theory "to people who seem flakey, which in turn makes it easier to regard as flakey people who are critical."

Public ignorance of a possible conspiracy also stems from public silence by most of RFK's closest associates. Perhaps this is because uncovering a plot to kill Kennedy might also reveal unsavory truths about him, most notably his relationship with Marilyn Monroe (see below).

Finally, it should be noted that some influential opinion leaders who are neither dupes nor coverup artists have expressed the belief that Sirhan alone killed RFK. Some Arab and leftist journalists contended that Sirhan was a genuine political assassin. To these journalists, the coverup was the portrayal of Sirhan as a "nut," which obscured his antipathy for American support of Israel. In a similar vein, former Minnesota Sen. Eugene McCarthy, RFK's opponent in the 1968 California primary, has explained how hatred of Israel could have motivated the Palestinian Sirhan to target Kennedy, even though all the 1968 presidential candidates supported Israel. McCarthy told the *Weekly* that both he and RFK had publicly advocated the sale of fighter jets to Israel. McCarthy learned from ABC reporter Bob Clark that before audiences in synagogues, RFK had advocated donating the jets to the Jewish state. Sirhan was known to read Jewish newspapers, and McCarthy recollected that Sirhan stated that Kennedy's position "made him mad, made him feel he had to defend his people."

Sirhan's background lends credence to this theory. Born in 1944, he is a refugee from the section of Jerusalem that Israel occupied in the fighting of 1948. (His citizenship is Jordanian and he is a Palestinian Christian.) As a child he was traumatized by the explosions and bloodshed occurring around him. The Sirhan family moved from a refugee camp to America in 1957, but the father, Bishara, returned alone to Jordan after less than a year. Sirhan and his brothers and sister (who died of leukemia in 1965) settled down with their mother in Pasadena. Although shy, Sirhan seems to have led a fairly normal adolescence, graduating from high school and then attending Pasadena

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Attorney Vincent Bugliosi, one of two local leaders unafraid to challenge the "official version."

explanation is what Robert Cutler calls "that dirty word, 'conspiracy.'"

In the 1970s there were all sorts of arguments and counterarguments about ballistics and firearms evidence. Some experts said markings on victim bullets proved or at least suggested that more than one gun was fired, while other experts disagreed. Much of the confusion stemmed from the esoteric minutiae of the "science" of ballistics and firearms, and from differences over what constitutes "proof" among firearms experts.

Superior Court Judge Robert Wenke assigned a panel of seven such experts to re-examine the bullet evidence. On October 6, 1975 the panel reported it found no evidence of a second gun. Most news media, led by the *L.A. Times*, thus pronounced all second gun theories dead forever. Most of the media failed to report that the experts also found no evidence that there was not a second gun. Most of the experts recommended further testing and stated that many questions remained to be answered.

In 1982 electrical engineer Michael Hecker, Ph.D., of the Stanford Research Institute (Menlo Park, Ca.) analyzed three news-media sound recordings from the Ambassador Hotel. According to the *South Bay's Easy Reader*, Hecker's earlier work "included analysis of the Watergate tapes for the White House." On December 15, 1982 Hecker declared in a signed, witnessed statement, "On the basis of audiotory, oscillographic and spectrographic analyses of these three recordings, it is my opinion, to a reasonable degree of scientific certainty, that no fewer than 10 (ten) gunshots are ascertainable following the conclusion of the Senator's victory speech until the time Sirhan Bishara Sirhan was disarmed." Hecker told the *Easy Reader's*

the official story meant challenging the veracity of the "authorities." As Allard Lowenstein noted in an unpublished manuscript, "Lawyers, for example, must deal with the LAPD and the District Attorney's office, and clients want lawyers with good relationships, with law enforcement agencies."

Another reason L.A. opinion leaders ignored troubling questions was the "not another Dallas" sentiment so prevalent among journalists, politicians, police and prosecutors. After the JFK and Oswald murders of 1963, Dallas was stuck with a national reputation as a city filled with hate and governed by inept clowns. In order to avoid similar notoriety, L.A.'s official and unofficial city fathers labored mightily to see that Sirhan got, or appeared to get, a fair trial and that all indications of conspiracy appeared to have been refuted by diligent, impartial investigation. Any call for reinvestigation implied official indifference, ineptitude or worse, which in turn could severely tarnish the reputation of a city that was and still is often a target of national ridicule.

Most Americans expect a free press to be a bulwark against governmental misdeeds or negligence. Yet after Sirhan's trial, only the "underground" *L.A. Free Press* and two establishment journalists, Baxter Ward (then with KHJ-TV) and Art Kevin (KMPC Radio), were willing to rock the official boat by talking about unanswered questions. Also noteworthy in this respect are Robert Kaiser's book *RFK Must Die!* (E.P. Dutton & Co., 1970) and Ted Charach's film *The Second Gun* (1973). Unfortunately, in "official" L.A. — at least until the *Weekly* arrived in 1978 — nothing was really news unless the *Times* wrote about it, and that paper was and still is obsessed

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KENNEDY continued from page 20

City College. Although well read and intelligent, he got poor grades and was dismissed in 1965 for poor attendance. He then pursued a career as a horse trainer and, due to his diminutive size, as an apprentice jockey. This came to an end in 1966 after he was injured in a fall from a horse. Thereafter his employers felt he lacked the nerve required. From 1966-68 he encountered increasing frustration due to lack of money and inability to land a satisfying job. Although not a political activist, acquaintances have said he grew bitter in those years toward Israel and about America's support of the Jewish state. He also developed an increasing resentment toward people of affluence.

There is evidence to suggest that Sirhan hated Bobby Kennedy and sincerely wanted to kill him. But his hate and sincerity do not explain the extra bullet holes nor the autopsy report. And none of Sirhan's motives explain or condone the many questionable activities of the LAPD, the district attorney and mayor after the shooting took place.

TOP-DOWN BUNGLING

The leaders and institutions of Los Angeles have, in the years since the Robert Kennedy assassination, drawn widespread criticism from some quarters for their handling of the RFK killing. And indeed, some of their activities raise disturbing questions about the motivations of those who have sworn to enforce the law, obtain justice and lead the city. Starting at the top, there were legal outrages committed by Mayor Sam Yorty, a flamboyant reactionary who wasted little time injecting himself into the case. Within hours after Sirhan had been identified, Yorty held two press conferences at which he portrayed the alleged assassin as a communist and read inflammatory passages from notebooks the LAPD had seized from Sirhan's bedroom. Yorty inspired Judge Arthur Alarcon to slap a gag order on all witnesses and local officials, forbidding release of information on the case. The order was served on Yorty in person by the Sheriff's Department.

L.A. County District Attorney Evell Younger was probably appalled by Yorty's antics, but his office's prosecution of Sirhan is also open to question. Generally, the D.A.'s office proved to be too unquestioning of the findings of SUS — even when these conflicted with witness testimony and physical evidence. At the Sirhan trial, prosecutors built much of their case on the testimony of witnesses who saw Sirhan shoot, but placed him much farther away from RFK than the autopsy showed was possible. They did this knowing full well that Coroner Noguchi's findings, which no prosecutor disputed, did not square with witness descriptions. In his book and in our interview, Noguchi related how, after he testified to his findings before the grand jury, an assistant D.A. he refuses to name asked him if he hadn't confused inches with feet for the distance between RFK's head and the assassin's gun muzzle. Noguchi told him he had certainly meant inches. This did not deter the D.A.'s office from portraying Sirhan as the only person who could have fired the fatal shot.

Curiously, like many of the key figures who seemed to have looked the other way in the investigation, Younger had ties to the intelligence community. He headed FBI's National Defense Section during part of World War II, then went to the counterintelligence branch of OSS (Office of Strategic Services, the predecessor agen-

cy of the CIA) for service in the Far East.

During the 1970s, many people called for reopening all or parts of the investigation. Younger's successors consistently resisted, claiming that a court of law with its rules of evidence and opportunities to cross-examine witnesses was the only appropriate place to re-examine the case. However, when Superior Court Judge Robert Wenke convened a formal judicial proceeding in 1975 to deal with victim Paul Schrade's questions, the D.A.'s office blocked the testimony of police officers and others who had asserted that unaccounted-for bullets had been fired.

Still it was not the D.A.'s but the LAPD's activities that were the most troubling of all. Here it's worth noting the political leanings of the LAPD in 1968. According to former FBI agent William Turner's 1968 book *The Police Establishment* (G.P. Putnam's Sons), "The basic hard-nosed attitude of the L.A. police is further calcified by a politically conservative leaning that is possibly the most extreme in the nation." According to Turner, many officers of the LAPD belonged to the John Birch Society, making the force "probably the most 'Yahoo' police group in the U.S." He further noted that the LAPD then had dreadful relations with the black community, which was almost unanimously supporting RFK's candidacy. Because Kennedy was considered a leftist radical in conservative circles, it's possible that most of the officials and many of the LAPD investigators involved in the case permitted this attitude, especially in view of the political turmoil of 1968, to influence their investigation.

The LAPD's conservative stance over the years has been well documented. For example, the ACLU and many other local groups have accused the LAPD of infiltrating various left and liberal organizations with spies and provocateurs. On August 12, 1983, the *L.A. Times* reported that LAPD officers had fed information from its spies into a data bank on "subversives" maintained by the notorious anti-communist organization Western Goals, which was started by the late Congressman Larry MacDonald (D-Ga.), who was also national chairman of the John Birch Society. An ACLU lawsuit against such illegal LAPD surveillance was settled out of court on payment of a substantial sum to the plaintiff organizations.

Even before the assassination, the LAPD was involved in a decision that would later be seriously questioned: not to station officers at the Ambassador Hotel, in marked contrast to the L.A. Fire Department, which placed several men there to guard against fire hazards caused by overcrowding. The LAPD has maintained that both Bobby and Ethel Kennedy rejected police protection in an insulting manner. LAPD files document an angry confrontation along a Kennedy motorcade with campaign aide Fred Dutton, who allegedly assailed officers with profanity and comments about police brutality. Police files report that when officers responded to a telephoned death threat against RFK at his speech at Valley College (now Cal State Northridge) on May 15, 1968, campaign workers yelled, "We don't want you fascist police here. We didn't call for the Gestapo." At the time the department was under widespread criticism for its abuses against anti-war and black activists, which included beatings and false arrests on made-up charges, making the comments of the frazzled Kennedy campaigners understandable in light of the passions of the day and the low esteem in which the LAPD was held by blacks and Latinos, the voting blocs most enthusiastically supporting the

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RFK candidacy.

Critics have noted, however, that even though the welcome mat wasn't out, the department was responsible for preserving public safety and preventing disorder. The Ambassador Hotel contained plenty of potential for public danger and disorder on Primary Night, 1968. Three campaigns had victory parties there: Kennedy's, Alan Cranston's and that of the extreme right-wing conservative Dr. Max Rafferty, who'd just won a bitter upset victory over incumbent U.S. Senator Tom Kuchel, a moderate Republican. There was considerable opportunity for alcohol-stoked friction between the thousands of liberals and far-

right activists in the hotel. Thus, critics have said, it was odd that the LAPD wasn't present in such a volatile setting, not even — or so the department maintained — with plainclothes officers.

The *Herald Examiner* of Aug. 24, 1976, ran an interview with "former Police Department security specialist Marion D. Hoover" and "Commander Peter Hagan of LAPD" headlined "Did RFK's Order Seal His Death?" It repeats earlier assertions that RFK and his entourage adamantly rejected LAPD protection. In the article the two cops repeatedly refer to RFK's Secret Service protection as another reason the LAPD was absent. It never existed. The Secret Service did not protect any 1968 presidential candidates (except

incumbent veep Humphrey) until President Johnson assigned it such duties in reaction to RFK's murder.

But allowing the LAPD its rationale for keeping its men away still leaves in the eyes of critics the question of why the department destroyed so much evidence in the case. As already noted, the LAPD destroyed ceiling tiles from the kitchen because, as Dion Morrow of the city attorney's office said, "You can't fit ceiling panels into a card file." The LAPD also destroyed items that could at least fit in a file drawer. In 1969, then-assistant police chief Daryl Gates admitted that along with the tiles, X-rays of the allegedly bullet-penetrated tiles and records of the X-rays had been destroyed because they "proved

nothing." Once they'd been destroyed, they certainly could prove nothing.

This spring, the *Herald Examiner* reported that State Archivist John Burns noted in assembling the police files that "the biggest surprise was the amount of evidence destroyed." Included were several thousand photographs burned in August, 1968 — before the Sirhan trial had even begun. LAPD spokesman Commander William Booth told the *L.A. Times* that the destroyed photos were "superfluous" duplicates. The *Times* reported that Booth's authoritative source for this assertion was "a retired member of the department who does not want to be identified or 'get involved with the press.'" Booth's explanation is tantamount to saying, "Take our word for it," a phrase rarely uttered or honored in criminal-justice and law-enforcement circles. Given the department's overall behavior in the case, there is no reason in fact to take its word.

THE STRANGE SAGA OF SANDRA SERRANO

Most troubling about the LAPD was its investigation of Sirhan's alleged accomplices. SUS files and audiotapes released last spring suggest that the department actually engaged in a campaign to disprove, by any means necessary (including illegal means), the existence of a conspiracy.

Perhaps the most striking example of LAPD malfeasance was the situation of witness Sandra Serrano. The traumatic experiences of this witness suggest that local authorities mishandled the Kennedy-Sirhan case as badly, albeit differently, as their counterparts in Dallas dealt with the assassination of RFK's brother.

Sandra Serrano, 20-year-old co-chair of Youth for Kennedy for Pasadena and Altadena, went outside on the stairs of a fire escape for relief from the heat of the crowd inside the Ambassador Hotel. There she saw ascending the stairs two men and a woman with a "nice figure" and a "funny nose" who was wearing a white dress with dark polka dots, or so she later told various interviewers. Serrano assumed they were together because the woman said, "Excuse us." Later she heard sounds she thought were automobile backfires. About 30 seconds later, she saw the same woman and one of her companions running down the stairs. The woman said twice to Serrano, "We shot him!" When Serrano asked whom they'd shot, the woman, looking "pleased," replied "Senator Kennedy." Re-entering the hotel, Serrano learned of the shooting.

Serrano wasn't the only person to cite a suspicious female in a polka-dot dress. She wasn't even the only one who heard "We shot him" from such a woman. But Serrano differed from other eyewitnesses in three ways: 1) She told the story to NBC's Sander Vanocur and his national TV audience; 2) she tenaciously stuck to her story; 3) after seeing newspaper photos of Sirhan, she said he appeared to be the woman's companion who went up the stairs but did not come down.

The police treated Serrano more like a suspect than a witness, subjecting her to many repetitive interrogations that wore her down. Recordings reveal a distraught tone in her voice after several days of questioning. However, she did not change her story in any significant way. This clearly displeased the LAPD, who'd failed to nab the woman in the polka-dot dress and had apparently lost interest in her companion (even though he'd also been cited by other eyewitnesses). In his book *Special Unit*

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Senator, Chief of Detectives Robert Houghton refers to the "vexing case of the polka-dot girl," which had created a "fever" that had "in the press and public mind reached a high point on the thermometer of intrigue." According to Houghton, only Serrano herself "could put that spotted ghost to rest." To help her do that, SUS called on a polygraph operator, Sergeant Enrique "Hank" Hernandez, whose unusual activities in foreign climes will be examined later.

Listening to the tapes of Hernandez administering his lie-detector test to Miss Serrano on June 20, 1968 is an unpleasant experience. The tape, made available last spring, is filled with intimidating psychological abuse, which probably explains why, unlike all the other tapes released from SUS files, the index card for this tape reads, "Do not play or have transcribed without permission of Captain Brown" (Hugh Brown, then commander of LAPD's Homicide Division and titular head of SUS).

Houghton's book asserts that Serrano "readily agreed" to the test. The tape, however, reveals Serrano resisting and questioning the validity of the test. Hernandez pressed on, cajoling, telling Serrano "the country can't afford" the uncertainty that would result from not testing her. He added the familiar refrain, "We want to make sure that we don't have something like we did in Dallas, Texas." Finally, after lying that the polygraph results are "just between you and me," he convinced Serrano to consent to the test without first consulting an attorney she'd recently hired.

The tape shows Hernandez wearing Serrano down with the same questions she'd been answering for two weeks. At one point Hernandez invoked "the family of Senator Kennedy . . . Don't you have any sentiment for them?" When Serrano refused to retract her story, he suggested that Robert Kennedy was witnessing the test and urged her, "Don't shame his death by keeping this thing up." She nevertheless held to her story.

After telling Serrano the polygraph showed her to be lying — an assertion for which Hernandez is the only witness — Hernandez turned up the heat and begged Serrano to let RFK "rest in peace." As her resolve crumbled, the tape shows, Hernandez insisted that Serrano confess her "lie," which he described as "a deep wound that will grow with you like a disease, like cancer." By then, the tape shows, Serrano was reduced to whimpering, but she still held to her story. Hernandez, now sounding frantic, then urged Serrano to "let this thing that is going to grow with you and is going to make an old woman out of you before your time come out of you . . ." This statement appears to have broken Serrano, who said, "It's too messed up. Even I can't remember what happened anymore."

After more grilling, Hernandez eventually convinced the defeated girl to agree to the following: 1) The woman's dress may not have had polka dots; 2) the woman may have said, "He shot Kennedy"; 3) that she got "all messed up" by the commotion and by leading questions from police investigators on assassination night. Ultimately, the tape shows, Hernandez convinced Serrano that she got much of her story from a waiter (Vincent DiPiero) who'd reported seeing Sirhan with a "shapely" woman in a polka-dot dress in the kitchen just before the shooting began.

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something noteworthy about the woman's nose. Many others reported seeing this woman apart from Sirhan. Nevertheless, SUS used Serrano's partial retraction to write off all but one of the other witnesses who hadn't recanted during re-interviewing by the police. SUS attributed the tales to "contagion" stemming from the considerable media coverage of Serrano's story. This may be appropriate for skeptical Scottish constables dismissing tourist sightings of the Loch Ness monster, but it seems too slipshod a justification for concluding there was definitely no conspiracy to kill a popular national leader.

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world." He came to this firm conclusion by comparing victim bullets with bullets he'd test-fired from the Sirhan gun. He entered into evidence an envelope containing three of the test-fired slugs. After the trial, it was noted that the gun serial number on the envelope was that of a gun seized by the LAPD several months before the RFK murder. It was the same make and model, but not the same gun. Wolfer said it was all a clerical error, but it led to years of arguments over ballistics, which were compounded by the fact that the alternate gun could not later be test-fired to see where the comparison bullets at the trial came from. The reason? The LAPD had destroyed it.

Wolfer also:

- conducted the sound tests at the Ambassador that the LAPD said "proved" Sandy Serrano could not have heard the gunshots that, in fact, she never claimed to have heard.
- came up with the official eight-bullet explanation that many witnesses, wounded victims and investigators find to be far-fetched, if not simply impossible.
- lost or never compiled important laboratory records related to bullet and gun examinations in the case.

Not surprisingly, Wolfer's professional judgment was called into question. Noted forensics expert Marshall Houts, in a June 26, 1971, letter to Attorney General Evlette Younger, claimed, "Wolfer suffers from a great inferiority complex for which he compensates by giving the police exactly what they need to obtain a conviction. He casts objectivity to the winds and violates every basic tenet of forensic science and proof by becoming a crusading advocate."

An L.A. Times article of Dec. 3, 1975, states that the California State Court of Appeals concluded "Wolfer gave false testimony bordering on perjury" in another case. It quoted the court that his "testimony on acoustics and anatomy was negligently false." On May 31, 1980, the Times reported that LAPD Chief Gates hit Wolfer, by then the head of the LAPD's Scientific Investigation Division, with a 30-day suspension without pay because Wolfer "had failed to provide proper storage and analysis of bullets and other evidence and had improperly supervised firearm and explosives investigators." Wolfer is still a criminalist for the LAPD.

In *Special Unit Senator*, Chief of Detectives Robert Houghton — the man who put SUS together — stated that, on the day of the shooting, he was vacationing in Yosemite Park, and "I did not know what had happened at the Ambassador Hotel until the morning of June 6." The L.A. District Attorney's Office files on the RFK case contain a tape of a 1975 interview of local FBI agent Roger "Frenchy" La Jeunesse by CBS producer Lee Townsend. In reference to June 5, La Jeunesse stated, "I then got together with Bob Houghton that same morning" to discuss the RFK investigation, and "I remember meeting with Bob Houghton the first morning." How curious.

Baxter Ward told the *Weekly* that in the late-1970s D.A. John Van de Kamp (now state attorney general) invited him to a re-creation of the murder involving some of the actual 1968 witnesses. Reportedly, one witness, Lisa Urso, "had told officers that night [June 5, 1968] that the gun was fired point-blank." According to Ward, when the man playing Sirhan in the re-enactment placed his gun right next to the RFK surrogate's head, Urso objected, saying, "I testified point blank, but not that point

blank." Ward recollected that she estimated the distance as three or four feet. Later, he said, those running the re-creation said they convinced her to change her estimate to theirs, "but that was not her immediate recollection." No police department wants such Keystone Kops antics publicized, least of all the LAPD, which had, thanks in part to *Dragnet*, a sterling reputation for cracking difficult cases.

Some investigators believe the LAPD went so far as to cover up the conscious, willing participation of some of its officers in an RFK assassination conspiracy. So concludes Jonn Christian, co-author of the 1978 book *The Assassination of Robert F. Kennedy*. His explanation for this will soon

appear in the South Bay weekly *Easy Reader*. It centers on Paul Sharaga, the first police officer to reach the Ambassador. In the hotel parking lot, Sharaga encountered a middle-aged couple who said that on an outside terrace (probably one floor above Sandy Serrano) they "were almost run over by a younger couple rushing out of the [Embassy] ballroom." The younger woman, wearing a polka-dot dress, shouted, "We shot him!" twice. When asked whom they'd shot, the young woman replied, "Kennedy! We shot him!" With that, "the youngsters clattered down the fire-exit stairs and disappeared into the night." The older couple told Sharaga the other two "were smiling gleefully."

Sharaga radioed in a description of the two suspects and sent his interview notes to an LAPD command post in the hotel. SUS files mention Sharaga's notes about the couple, but the two never appear again in the files, a striking and curious gap in the investigation. Not much later, LAPD inspector John Powers canceled Sharaga's radio alert, assuring him, Sharaga told author Jonn Christian, that the sole killer was in custody and adding, "We don't want this thing turning into a big federal conspiracy case." This was many hours before Sirhan's identity had been established.

Sharaga's notes vanished after he sent them to his command post, but he remem-

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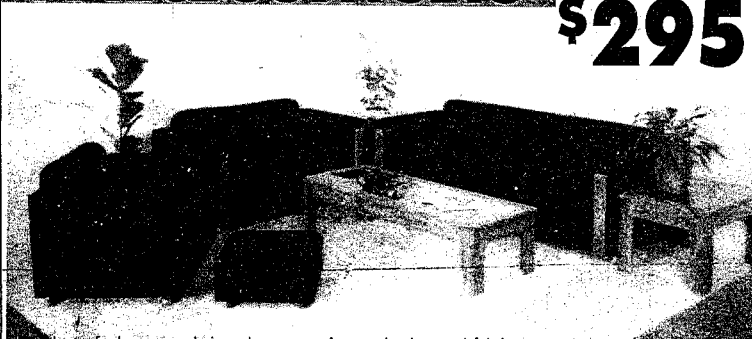
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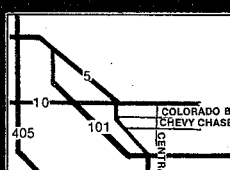


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KENNEDY continued from page 31

bers the older couple's story. A detailed report he gave SUS also disappeared. Not long after, he told Christian, his superiors "began turning on me" and he retired from the force. Shown as SUS interview with himself by Christian, Sharaga swore it was a phony that "contains false and deliberately misleading statements."

The allegedly phony report downplays details suggesting a conspiracy. Christian concludes that there was a "railroading of an investigation by highest-level LAPD Officials... as obvious co-conspirators in RFK's assassination were being aided and abetted in escaping by SUS operatives." [Italics his.] Sharaga still has a copy of his original vanished report and wants to show it to government officials he feels he can trust. He has, however, given a copy to researcher Christian, who insists that it is "explosive new evidence" sufficient in itself to warrant a re-opening of the case.

Even if there is another explanation for the alleged Sharaga forgery other than that LAPD officers were involved in the killing itself, at minimum it would seem to represent dramatic evidence of a departmental effort to cover over the fact that there was a conspiracy. With the Hernandez tapes, there is available to prosecutors this second stunning piece of evidence — assuming Sharaga is telling the truth — that unknown officials of the LAPD behaved in the most negligent and possibly criminal manner possible to thwart a full department inquiry into a conspiracy.

ENTER THE GODDESS

Incompetence and complicity may not be the only possible reasons for an RFK coverup. As Watergate demonstrated, many coverups hide earlier coverups. In this case there is considerable evidence of an official 1962 LAPD coverup involving Bobby Kennedy. This evidence centers on the unnatural death that, second only to RFK's, was the most talked about in Los Angeles history, that of Marilyn Monroe.

Much unfounded speculation has been printed about Monroe. However, one book, *Goddess* (Macmillan, 1985), is quite credible thanks to author Anthony Summers' diligent research and to documentation obtained through the Freedom of Information Act. Summers, one of the world's best reporters, makes a convincing case that Monroe and RFK had an intense love affair that Kennedy abruptly ended after learning that the Mafia and the Teamsters Union were collecting information on the affair, this to blackmail or discredit him. Devastated over having been shunned by RFK, the already unstable Marilyn consumed increasingly large quantities of sedatives and alcohol. Summers cites strong indications that to end things amicably, RFK visited Monroe secretly on the night of August 4, 1962 and found her in a fatal coma at her home, which was very likely bugged by his enemies.

Further evidence uncovered by Summers suggests that as soon as Monroe died RFK persuaded J. Edgar Hoover to save him from scandal by obliterating all evidence, such as telephone company records, linking him to Monroe. Summers mentions that LAPD chief of detectives Thad Brown reportedly knew of the affair and notes speculation in newspapers that LAPD Chief William H. Parker had kept RFK's name out of the investigation into Monroe's death "to curry favor with the Kennedys." Summers also suspects that LAPD officers helped a private detective hired by RFK to obscure his links to

Monroe. In 1975 the LAPD conducted a reinquiry into Monroe's death under the supervision of Daryl Gates, who refused to make the investigative files public.

As for the D.A.'s office, Summers notes it no longer has the reports on Monroe and RFK filed years ago by one of its own investigators, Frank Hronek, now deceased. On the Nov. 5, 1988 edition of Fox TV's *The Reporters*, former deputy D.A. John Miner said his own report on Monroe is also missing from the D.A.'s office. Miner, by the way, attended both the RFK and Monroe autopsies and was the only official to hear the secret tapes of Monroe's psychiatrist, Dr. Ralph Greenson, who in refusing to talk to reporters once said, "Ask Bobby Kennedy." According to Jonn Christian and William Turner, Miner was later the secretive executor of the estate left by a hypnotist, William Joseph Bryan, who privately claimed to have worked for the CIA and to have hypnotized Sirhan some time prior to June 1968.

If Summers is correct, local police and prosecutors were investigating Monroe's death at the same time the FBI was eradicating local evidence of her affair with RFK. Local officials therefore had to have known of Hoover's illegal effort to save Kennedy from scandal. Certainly it is hard to imagine that LAPD Chief Parker didn't know the FBI was seizing or destroying evidence on his turf. That the affair remained secret for years suggests that the LAPD and the D.A. acquiesced in, if they didn't assist, Hoover's cleaning up after RFK. Thus a sincere and thorough probe of a possible conspiracy to kill RFK might well have revealed local officials' complicity in Hoovers' actions six years earlier. This may explain why local law-enforcement agencies apparently covered up, dismissed and ignored the many indications that Sirhan was not a "lone-nut" assassin.

THE AUTHORITIES REPLY

Before criticizing the D.A. and the LAPD, the *Weekly* sought out their sides of the story. The LAPD flatly rejected the interview request. According to department spokesman Commander William Booth, "It was so long ago, no one here was involved." This is not true; several key men from the investigation are still working for the LAPD. Booth added, "We decided to let the [newly released] files speak for themselves." This is something the LAPD strenuously resisted for 19 years.

The D.A.'s office granted us a lengthy interview with their number-three man, Assistant D.A. Curt Livesay. Also sitting in but saying little was Steve Sowers, head deputy D.A. of the Special Investigations Division. Livesay was not part of the Sirhan prosecution team, but he was on staff then and reviewed the entire case just last April.

Livesay said the D.A.'s office was and is completely satisfied with the SUS investigation, on which Sirhan's prosecution was based. As of today, "We haven't found any credible evidence that there was a conspiracy . . . or that there was more than one gun." Asked about the autopsy findings clashing with eyewitness accounts, he replied, "It's so well recognized in the criminal law that persons observing an event see it from different perspectives and form different opinions as to what happened . . . that it's a jury instruction." Asked about people reporting having seen Sirhan with one or more companions, Livesay made the curious reply that "there's no credible evidence to put forth

continued on page 34

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KENNEDY continued from page 33

that we could argue, that a prosecutor could ask a jury to believe." Apparently this means that the prosecutors didn't consider indications of a conspiracy worth following up unless they would lead to the conviction of a conspirator.

Livesay's unqualified approval of the LAPD investigation and the Sirhan prosecution basically rests on two foundations. One is that the prosecutors "proved their case to a jury, the pinnacle of our entire justice system, beyond a reasonable doubt." When I mentioned that Sirhan's defense never brought up questions about extra bullets and girls in polka-dot frocks, Livesay replied, "Well, I ask you why not." That's a reasonable reply, suggesting that the defense knew such questions wouldn't serve their client's interest, which wasn't synonymous with the public interest.

However, when I brought up the fact that Noguchi's report conflicted with eyewitness accounts, Livesay stated, "It was litigated . . . and 12 people gave Sirhan Sirhan the death penalty." Of course, the muzzle distance never was "litigated" in any sense of the word. Such replies are indicative of a closed system of thought wherein a guilty verdict validates every assertion by the prosecution and nothing else matters. For 20 years, Livesay's office has failed to appreciate, at least publicly, that there was and is a legitimate public concern over what really happened in the Ambassador kitchen pantry, a concern that cannot be allayed by simply convicting one defendant.

At the start, I asked Livesay whether the D.A.'s function is simply to obtain a conviction. He replied that "the purpose and function of the district attorney's office is to obtain justice." Here, justice may have been obtained in the sense that a criminal was punished, but no larger sense of justice seems to have prevailed.

The other foundation for official satisfaction with the RFK investigation and trial is the March 1977 Kranz Report, a mind-numbing single-spaced, 136-page investigation of the RFK murder by "special independent outside counsel" Thomas F. Kranz. In reply to many of my questions, Livesay said I could find his office's answers in the Kranz Report. Kranz gave the 1968-69 investigation and prosecution a clean bill of health at a time police and prosecutors were concerned "not with the validity of the verdict in the Sirhan case, but [with] the erosion of public confidence in the system of justice in Los Angeles County due to the many questions that were continually being raised in the Sirhan matter" (from the report's introduction).

The Kranz Report did indeed help restore public confidence in the D.A.'s office and LAPD, but to serious students of the case it was simply a whitewash of official blunders and misconduct. In July 1977, Allard Lowenstein cut the Kranz Report's validity to shreds with a point-by-point analysis of its findings and methodology. This list of corrections to Kranz's many misquotes, misstatements, misrepresentations and omissions is too lengthy to deal with here, but as the D.A.'s office relies on the report to justify SUS and its handling of the case, it's worth looking at two major flaws in the report:

1) Kranz was neither "independent" nor "outside." He was special counsel to the D.A.'s office, and as such he assisted in blocking the testimony of important witnesses in the proceedings before Judge Wenke mentioned earlier, in which gunshot victim Paul Shrader obtained a sepa-

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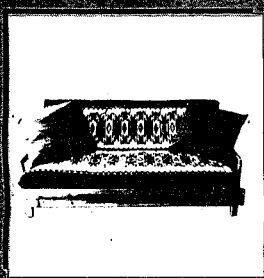
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rate evidentiary hearing into the case. (Among those prevented from testifying: Noguchi, LAPD officers Rozzi and Wright, Ambassador Hotel maitre d' DiPietro and Robert Alfeld, who claimed he found empty cartridge shells in the Ambassador after the police had supposedly swept it clean for evidence.) Furthermore, Kranz freely admitted in the report's introduction that he wanted to become district attorney. People with such ambitions are not likely to rock the boat by strongly criticizing the police and the prosecutors with whom they hope to work. Kranz's ambitions never came to fruition; he now works for the U.S. Army.

2) The Kranz Report duplicates the LAPD's pick-and-choose approach to eyewitness testimony. Nowhere does the report mention that *not one* eyewitness in the kitchen said that Sirhan's gun muzzle was within inches of RFK's head. At an April 5, 1977 L.A. County Board of Supervisors meeting, Baxter Ward asked Kranz whether there was "eyewitness testimony of a point-blank firing." Kranz responded, "Oh, absolutely not." When Ward noted that acting D.A. John Howard had recently cited "a great many witnesses who saw it point-blank," Kranz said, "Well, there haven't been any. There never were." Yet despite the fact that *all* witnesses were, in the D.A.'s eyes, ipso facto wrong about the distance, Kranz — like the LAPD — freely used the same witnesses to corroborate other parts of the 1968 investigation.

In fact, the number of prosecution witnesses who saw a second gunman shoot RFK is equal to the number of those who saw Sirhan fire close enough to conform to the autopsy report. Or as Ward said to Kranz, "You must acknowledge that no one saw much of anything. And that's what has always troubled me." Sad to say, it apparently never troubled the institution sworn to "obtain justice" for the residents of L.A. County.

ACCOMPLICES

If Sirhan did not act alone, who were his accomplices? Enough names have been raised by journalists and citizen-investigators to fill a book. Below are sketches of the three most popular suspects. The people who may have hired them will be discussed later.

The Mystery Woman — The recently released LAPD papers and tapes show that quite a few people other than Sandy Serano and Vincent DiPietro told police about a suspicious woman in a polka-dot dress. Prior to June 20, when Hank Hernandez "proved" she didn't exist, the police were busily searching for such a woman. Perhaps the most startling item in the LAPD files is a puzzling half-page report dated October 14, 1968 showing that police actually apprehended a woman they believed to be Sirhan's companion. Since this woman's 1988 recollection of the incident differs from the official record, both versions are worth examining.

According to the terse police report, the LAPD took into custody and interviewed a Cheryl Wessels on the afternoon of June 5. Police interest in Wessels was "a result of a call from an informant, naming her as the then-outstanding suspect wearing a polka-dot dress wanted in the Kennedy shooting." The interview was recorded and she "was released from custody after being photographed and fingerprinted to facilitate a record check." Not much is known about the woman except that she was only 20 at the time and said she "liked to party."

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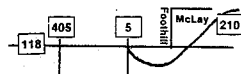


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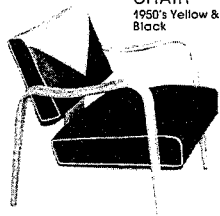
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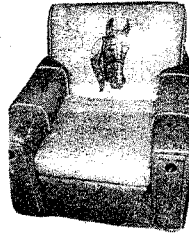


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KENNEDY continued from page 35

When police reviewed the tape in October, it was "found to be blank." The report closes by saying Wessels was re-interviewed by phone and said she was at home at the time of the assassination and had no idea of the identity of the informant. It concluded, "She owns a polka-dot dress, but has not worn it for several months. She is unable to furnish any additional information regarding the investigation." Presumably, the LAPD knew the informant's identity and should have checked out Wessels' story with her parents, at whose house she claimed to be on Primary Night. However, no record that the LAPD made such a routine follow-up appears in the report.

With help from California marriage records and a relative of Wessels, the *Weekly* and private assassination researcher Jonn Christian found the woman living out of state under her new married name. Last month she gave Christian an account of her adventures. She says she was formally arrested "for the murder of Robert Kennedy" by three LAPD plainclothesmen while visiting a friend in jail on a drug charge. They told her, she recalls, that "someone called them and said I was the one who was there . . . It had to be someone who knew me well and where I was going, and they also had to know that I had a polka-dot dress . . . It would have had to have been a woman." The interviewer, LAPD officer Joe Goodman, did not tell her the call was being recorded. Both Wessels and the report agree she was questioned on June 5, and she says she was released on the same day. The report doesn't say when she was released. Her mug shots are dated June 6, 1968.

Wessels recalled receiving a call some months after her arrest, but it wasn't from police investigators. Instead, the caller said he was Police Chief Thomas Reddin. The caller apologized for the arrest and "said everything would be taken off my record . . . He said he was sorry, but they had to follow up on every lead that they had."

In the SUS files, Christian found a log that showed a call to Wessels' Anaheim number at 8:10 p.m. on Oct. 14. The call was placed not by Chief Reddin, but by Sergeant Dudley Varney of the SUS.

The Wessels affair raises far more questions than it answers. What happened to the tape? Did someone forget to push the "record" button, or did SUS have its own Rosemary Woods who went around erasing "problem" tapes? Why would an SUS agent call a witness and pretend to be the police chief? Is the brief official report of Wessels' arrest and interrogation a reliable document? Was Wessels truthful with Christian? How good is her memory? Finally, the biggest question pertains to the identity of the informant and what he or she said that led police to arrest Wessels.

Thane Eugene Cesar — This security guard is on many informed lists as the real Kennedy assassin, and not just because he drew a gun while standing close behind the victim. Cesar was a right-winger who disliked RFK. He once owned a .22-caliber pistol, which he told the D.A.'s office in 1971 he had sold to a friend before the assassination. The friend said he bought the gun from Cesar after the killing and had a receipt to prove it. The gun was later stolen.

According to the Turner-Christian book, Jim Yoder, to whom Thane Eugene Cesar sold his pistol, said Cesar worked at Lockheed "in an off-limits area which only special personnel had access to. (This was,

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said Yoder, the CIA-controlled U2 spy-plane facility)." Yoder also told Turner-Christian that Cesar "looked a little worried, and he said something about going to the assistance of an officer and firing his gun. He said there might be a little problem over that." In a similar statement in the film *The Second Gun*, Yoder recalled Cesar talking about firing the gun and worrying about "repercussions."

Soon after Cesar's gun was publicized by Ted Charach, director of *Second Gun*, the gun was stolen from Yoder's retirement home in Arkansas. However, Yoder said it was probably taken by local kids.

When the *Weekly* inquired after Cesar, most people, including assistant D.A. Curt Livesay, believed he had died. However, investigative journalist Dan Moldea, working for *Regardie's* magazine, tracked down Cesar last year (who commented re the widespread speculation that he was dead: "I want it that way"). Cesar admitted to Moldea that he had changed parts of his story in different interviews with police, but maintained he did not shoot RFK. He said he does not know how his clip-on necktie ended up on the floor next to RFK's body.

In an interview with the *Weekly*, Moldea stated that he found nothing incriminating in Cesar's background and history, though another author, David Schein, has cited inconclusive links to mobster John Alessio. (Cesar was a 26-year-old plumber who moonlighted as a security guard at Lockheed at the time of the assassination.) Cesar claimed that on assassination night he volunteered to be interviewed by an uninterested LAPD. He later publicly admitted to Ted Charach that he owned the .22 pistol and that he had agreed to take a lie-detector test. The LAPD did not take him up on this, although it conducted polygraph exams on quite a few witnesses.

Despite contradictions and false statements from Cesar in the past, Moldea told the *Weekly*, "I don't believe he went in there intentionally and did it." Moldea wouldn't amplify on this statement, which leaves open the possibility a panicky Cesar accidentally shot RFK during the commotion following Sirhan's volley. The fatal bullet was so damaged that there's no certainty from what kind of gun it issued. Nevertheless, the LAPD failed to examine Cesar's pistol on June 5, 1968. At a recent public appearance by Moldea at Santa Monica's Midnight Special bookstore, citizen-investigator Jack Kimbrough pointed out that if Cesar did not shoot Kennedy, he "must have seen who did" because he was right in back of the victim.

Jerry Owen — Owen was an itinerant preacher known as "The Walking Bible" for having memorized the Old and New Testaments. Immediately after seeing Sirhan's photo in the paper later that day, Owen told police he had picked up a hitchhiker downtown on June 3, 1968. He later recognized the hitchhiker as Sirhan Sirhan, he said. Owen said he had entered into a tentative deal with the hitchhiker to sell him a horse to be delivered at the Ambassador Hotel parking lot late on Primary Night. Owen described some friends of the hitchhiker, including a woman resembling the famous one wearing a polka-dot dress. Owen believed that the horse deal, which he did not follow up, was an attempt to set up a means of escape for Sirhan.

The LAPD concluded that Owen was lying in order to attract publicity, and lost interest. Authors Christian and Turner also feel that Owen lied, but not for publicity. They found links between Owen and Sirhan preceding June 3.

Owen in 1970 sued local KCOP-TV for
continued on page 140

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KENNEDY

cancelling his TV show and for telling some of his followers he'd been involved in the RFK killing. Vincent Bugliosi defended KCOP in the 1975 trial. Despite severe limitations imposed by a judge who wanted to try a civil suit, not a murder case, Bugliosi got several witnesses to admit under oath to having seen Owen together with Sirhan before June 3, with Owen flashing a big wad of bills. (Sirhan, who like Owen was habitually broke, had four \$100 bills on him when he was arrested.) The LAPD and the D.A. never showed any interest in these revelations. The LAPD blocked the release of its files on Jerry Owen, which Bugliosi wanted to put on the record.

Official disinterest extended to another curious part of the Jerry Owen story. At the KCOP trial, Owen had intended to introduce as a character witness his brother's former secretary, Gail Aiken. He cancelled this plan when Bugliosi discovered that Aiken was the sister of Arthur Bremer, whose nearly-successful murder attempt on George Wallace altered the course of the 1972 presidential election almost as much as RFK's murder altered the 1968 race. Nevertheless, local officials were not sufficiently intrigued to reopen a probe into Owen's 1976 activities.

A POSSIBLE SCENARIO

Supporters of the SUS investigation often note that Sirhan has confessed to the killing. Indeed, at his trial he yelled out "I killed Robert Kennedy with 20 years' malice aforethought!" Since he was only 24, this is obviously nonsense. However, he admitted it elsewhere. But, like most other people, Sirhan came to his conclusion because, as he also said at the trial, "all the evidence has proved it." He felt it was too obvious to deny.

In fact, Sirhan repeatedly said that he does not remember shooting RFK. His mind drew a blank from sometime late in the evening until he found himself struggling with Rosey Grier and others around 12:15 a.m. This memory failure has helped prompt endless speculation about trance states and hypnosis. Sirhan had definitely been dabbling in self-hypnosis at home. However, some critics believe he was a "Manchurian Candidate" hypnotized by someone else to kill and then forget what he did and who told him to do it. Others argue that his lack of memory is a lie meant to protect co-conspirators.

Sirhan left in his bedroom a set of notebooks in which he stressed the necessity of RFK's death. Like the diary of George Wallace's would-be killer, Arthur Bremer, Sirhan's notebooks were extremely incriminating and helped convince the jury and the media of his premeditation. On one page he wrote, "My determination to eliminate RFK is becoming more and more of an unshakable obsession." On the same page he scrawled, "RFK must die" and "RFK must be assassinated." Right near these phrases he wrote, "Please pay to the order of." This phrase, sometimes followed by his name, appears numerous times in the notebooks.

Not surprisingly, this has helped convince many "assassination buffs" that Sirhan was hired to kill or help kill RFK. The notebooks are essentially a collection of written babble, much of it nonsensical, sometimes called "automatic writing" by experts in hypnosis. Sirhan testified that he did not remember writing the notebooks, but he agreed that he must have.

If RFK's death was a murder-for-hire,

A team of topnotch forensic pathologists concluded that Robert Kennedy was shot dead from behind by a gun just three inches from his head. Every witness of the shooting placed Sirhan Sirhan several feet in front of Kennedy when firing his gun.

critics speculate that there may have been several assassination teams at the hotel, since RFK's route wasn't known in advance, and the crowd was so thick that killers in the pantry could not have moved elsewhere in time to encounter Kennedy. One theory holds that there were possibly two or more women in polka-dot dresses. The Turner-Christian book notes that the barrel of Sirhan's gun "was heavily coated with lead, yet copper-coated bullets such as Sirhan allegedly fired leave a lead-free bore." These bullets literally "clean out the lead," and the bullets recovered from the victims were definitely copper-jacketed. This has led them to speculate that a duped or hypnotized Sirhan may have fired blanks while someone else did the real shooting. Furthermore, their book continues, some witnesses saw a lengthy "tongue of flame" come out of Sirhan's gun, which firearm experts say is more consistent with firing blanks than with copper-jacketed bullets.

As for the one or more women in polka-dot dresses who ran out of the hotel shouting "we killed him," et cetera, they would have been decoys to direct attention from the escaping killer(s) and to simply add a loud and lasting note of confusion to the proceedings. Jonn Christian, who has studied the assassination almost since it happened, believes that something like this took place. A similar scenario also takes place in Donald Freed's "faction" novel, *The Killing of RFK* (Dell Publishing, 1975).

THE MEN AT THE TOP

If there was a conspiracy to kill RFK, it surely wasn't organized by Sirhan or anyone else in the hotel that night. To determine who might have led an assassination conspiracy, the obvious procedure would be to make a list of the victim's enemies. In the case of Bobby Kennedy, the list of enemies is extremely long and covers the entire political spectrum. Starting at the left, Fidel Castro undoubtedly hated both Kennedy brothers because they were active in efforts to overthrow or even kill him and destroy much of his country's infrastructure by financing attacks by anti-Castro Cuban exiles and murderous soldiers of fortune. Oddly, many of these Cuban exiles also hated the Kennedys for not sufficiently supporting the Bay of Pigs invasion and for calling off the later "secret war" against Castro mounted by the CIA and Cuban exiles.

The far right hated RFK for his general

continued on page 141

READINGS

THIRD ANNUAL NIGHT OF EROTICA L.A. scribes and artists read selections from their favorite erotic literature. Beyond Baroque, 681 Venice Blvd., Venice, Fri., 8:30 p.m.; \$5, \$3 members/students. (213) 822-3006.

ABOUT AFRICA is a musical presentation from the Junior Arts Center's fall storytelling series; African mask workshop follows. Bamsdall Park, Gallery Theater, 4800 Hollywood Blvd.; Sat., 2-5 p.m.; free. (213) 485-2433.

POECESTRIC EVE with Katrina Alexy, John W. Hart, Lauran Lee Hoffman and Willie Silms; with special musical guests The Life Is Grand Band. Heliotrope Theater, 660 Heliotrope Dr.; Sat., 11 p.m. (213) 394-9795.

CAST FOUNDRY READING SERIES presents *Bed* by Karen Spritzer, Sat., 3 p.m.; and *Frank and Tony* by John DeRegno and John Agnes, Sun., 1 p.m., and *UFOs Over Oregon* by Ken Arkadie, 3 p.m. Cast Theater, 804 N. El Centro Ave., Hlywd. (213) 659-2263.

WANDA COLEMAN reads from her new book of short stories, *A War of Eyes*. Sisterhood Bookstore, 1351 Westwood Blvd.; Sun., 2 p.m. (213) 477-7300.

PIKME-UP presents an evening of readings with Dana Snow, Angelique, Josher, Rich Ferguson and Adam Throne. 5437 W. Sixth St.; Sat., 8 p.m.; free, but donations to the artists cheerfully encouraged. (213) 938-9706.

SOUL VISIONS features the poetry of Sunji Ali and friends. Artworks-4, 3436 W. 43rd St.; Sun., 4-6 p.m.; \$3.50. (213) 295-1189.

SCULPTURE GARDENS POETRY SERIES features Patricia Bevan, Joan Bransfield Graham, Mary M. Harris, Marilyn Hochheiser and Moná Locke. Sculpture Gardens Restaurant, 1031 W. Washington Pl., Venice; Sun., 3-5 p.m.; free. (213) 396-8809.

POETRY AND MOONSHINE The National Park Service hosts a moonlight hike and open poetry-reading (poetry need not be original). Franklin Canyon; Tues., 8 p.m.; free. Call (213) 858-3834 for directions.

POETRY WORKSHOP All workshop participants should bring 12 copies of a poem to read; a discussion of the poems follows the readings. Presented by Toltec Productions. Douglas Park, 2439 Wilshire Blvd., S.M.; Tues., 8-10 p.m.; \$1 donation. (818) 845-7788.

ESPRESSO BAR holds open poetry readings. 34 S. Raymond Ave. (behind, down the alley), Pasadena; Wed., 9 p.m. (818) 356-9055.

OPEN POETRY READINGS are presented every Wed., 7-9 p.m., with sign-ups at 6:30 p.m., at System M Cafe/Gallery, 213-A Pine Ave., Long Beach. (213) 435-2525.

—Lou Lou Hallatt

BRAIN COOKIES Where the experimental and uncategorized go splat. KXLU 88.9 FM, Sun., 7-9:30 p.m.

ALIEN AIR MUSIC Electronic, progressive and out-of-this-world. KXLU 88.9 FM, Sun., 9:30-11 p.m.

IN TOWN TONIGHT An entertaining variety of miscellany arranged by John McNally. KCRW 89.9 FM, Sun., 9-11 p.m.

RADIO COLLUSION A wide-ranging conspiring of unusual pop and art music from Paul Sanoian. KPFX 90.7 FM, Mon., 6-7 a.m.

SA**P** Deirdre O'Donoghue takes you to the edges of the avant pop. KCRW 89.9 FM, Mon. & Wed.-Fri., 8-10 p.m.

LATE NIGHT NOTES Keep-the-neighbors-up grooves from late-nighter Ron Coleman. KCRW 89.9 FM, Mon., 11 p.m.-3 a.m.

IMAGINARY LANDSCAPE Experimental composer Carl Stone plays the same. KPFX 90.7 FM, Tues., 9:30-11:30 p.m.

Spoken Word

MIKE HODEL'S HOUR 25 J. Michael Straczynski and Terry Hodel take over the controls of this excellent call-in program for the speculative fiction fan. KPFX 90.7 FM, Fri., 10 p.m.-mid.

THE COMMANDANTE BALDY SHOW Peter Bergman engages in covert political laughter. KPFX 90.7 FM, Wed., 7:30-8:30 a.m.

JOE FRANK: Work in Progress Off-beat monologues for the New Age. KCRW 89.9 FM, Sat., 11 p.m.-mid.; repeats Wed., 7-8 p.m.

THE HEALTH CONNECTION in holistic health. Dr. Gerston Lesser is more. KCRW 89.9 FM, Wed., 12:30-1 p.m.

ACCENT ON WOMEN Interviews, info and the latest dope for women to cope. KCSN 88.5 FM, Wed., 6:30-7 p.m.

NewsViews: **ALL THINGS CONSIDERED** NPR-grade reportage from D.C. and around the world. KCRW 89.9 FM, Mon.-Fri., 4-7 p.m.

TIMES IN REVIEW Comprehensive news and analysis for those with the politic stomach. KPFX 90.7 FM, Mon.-Fri., 6-7 p.m.

AMERICAN DIALOGUES Host Robert Foxworth examines U.S. foreign policy abuse. KPFX 90.7 FM, Fri., 3-4 p.m.

NUCLEAR CONNECTIONS A weekly forum on peace-oriented issues. KPFX 90.7 FM, Thurs., 3-4 p.m.

—Bill Raden

Poetry

Artemis

I am thinking about romance and its purpose.
Children and why I didn't have any.
I would have left the cave and them with it
or I would have tied them to me forever
with my own sad dreams and finicky order.

I've liked young animals better. I could put
their heads in my mouth. I could lick and clean
them like a mother, but I could not raise a child.
The first thing a child should see
is the pink sunrise of a nipple, not the green wind
of a branch whipping in passing.

I chose to keep animals around me instead
because we are the same. We have habits
and make strange circles before we sleep.
We don't like to be watched while we eat.

—Eloise Klein Healy

First published in Jacaranda Review, Winter '88.

liberalism and his alliances with blacks, the poor, and other anti-establishment groups in the volatile 1960s. White Southerners hated him for his vigorous use of the Attorney General's office to pursue civil rights for blacks. The Teamsters Union and the Mafia hated and feared RFK because of his legal attacks on them, first as a Senate Committee investigator and then as his brother's attorney general.

Until the tragedy in Dallas, John and Bobby Kennedy were a team, sharing the same supporters and enemies. Thus, it's hardly surprising that the same organizations that had reason to want JFK dead are also among the likely suspects in the RFK murder. JFK's murder, which even a House special committee declared in the late '70s to be a likely conspiracy, could have been intended to end his younger brother's war on labor corruption and organized crime, both of which required solid support from the White House. Also, it is possible that JFK's assassins may have feared that Bobby, if elected president, would use the power of that office to discredit the Warren Report and reopen the JFK-Oswald-Ruby investigation. A popular rumor had RFK personally investigating a lead in his brother's murder while campaigning in California.

Bobby Kennedy had a well-deserved reputation for ruthlessness. He made enemies of men and organizations far more ruthless than he. This writer believes that the most likely organizers of an RFK assassination conspiracy come from one or more of four groups listed below. These groups are not mutually exclusive; in fact, they've had overlapping memberships for years. Three of these powerful, unscrupulous groups have long been cited, particularly by the House special investigation, in connection with the murder of President Kennedy, and the fourth also had a high public profile. Still, connecting any of them conclusively to the killing at the Ambassador Hotel is an extraordinarily difficult task, certainly one that law-enforcement officials were unable or unwilling to tackle. But since 1968, journalists and citizen-investigators have unearthed compelling information linking these groups to suspicious people known to have been in the hotel on June 5, 1968, or who were involved in the subsequent investigation and trial.

The Intelligence Community — There is a curious moment recorded on one of the SUS audio tapes when Hank Hernandez is talking with Sandy Serrano. She has expressed her doubts about the validity of lie-detector tests, and he concedes that such doubts are appropriate regarding unqualified polygraph operators. He then touts his own qualifications: "I have been called to South America, to Viet Nam and Europe, and I have administered tests. The last test that I administered was to the dictator in Caracas, Venezuela. He was a big man, a dictator. Perez Jimenez was the man's name." Hernandez's official SUS resume mentions none of these activities, which obviously are not among the typical duties assigned to Los Angeles policemen. Assuming that he was truthful, Hernandez was probably giving tests in Viet Nam, Europe and Venezuela while on loan to, or while a member of, the CIA or another U.S. intelligence agency. William Turner told the *Weekly* that the CIA was probably signing up the deposed dictator as an "asset," and that Hernandez was brought in to establish the veracity of the man's information.

In an interview with the *Weekly*, Bill Blum, author of *CIA: A Forgotten History*,

said that Robert Kennedy, as U.S. Attorney General, had arranged for Spanish-speaking Los Angeles police to train cops in the Dominican Republic in "crowd-control" techniques, to quash anti-government riots. This program was successful and resulted in the "White Helms" police unit. Perhaps this explains Hernandez bragging on tape to Sandra Serrano that he had personally received a commendation from Bobby Kennedy.

Hernandez wasn't the only apparent link between RFK assassination investigators and the world of spies and spooks. In his book *Special Unit Senator*, Chief of Detectives Robert Houghton spoke glowingly of Lt. Manuel Pena, Houghton's choice to head the investigative section of S.U.S. According to Houghton, Pena "had connections with various intelligence agencies in several countries." Authors Turner and Christian, in *The Assassination of Robert F. Kennedy*, cite evidence that both Pena and Hernandez had worked for "the Office of Public Safety of the Agency for Interna-

Public ignorance of a possible conspiracy stems in part from public silence by most of RFK's closest associates. Perhaps this is because uncovering a plot to kill Kennedy might also reveal unsavory truths about him, most notably his relationship with Marilyn Monroe.

tional Development (AID)." They described (accurately, as attested by congressional investigation) this office as "a cover for the CIA's clandestine program of supplying advisers and instructors for national police and intelligence services in Southeast Asia and Latin America engaged in anti-communist operations." They also stated that other L.A. policemen had trained or worked with the CIA.

Turner's *The Police Establishment* offers a possible explanation for strong ties between U.S. intelligence agencies and the LAPD. He notes that despite ideological compatibility, there was a feud between J. Edgar Hoover and William Parker, L.A. police chief from 1950-66. Because of the feud, Parker's "officers were not accepted at the prestigious FBI National Academy..." Nevertheless, the LAPD had long been known for its many officers well trained in the deceptive arts of intelligence. In addition, the CIA is known to have infiltrated many police departments during those years.

Enemies of Fidel Castro — The Bay of Pigs fiasco left John and Robert Kennedy very distrustful of the CIA and the anti-Castro activists and Cuban exiles allied with "The Company." In William Turner and Warren Hinckle's book *The Fish Is Red* (Harper & Row, 1981), the brothers are depicted as quite eager to inflict damage on Castro. However, they organized their own "secret war" on Cuba,

under the supervision of Bobby Kennedy, that excluded many of the groups and individuals prominent in earlier anti-Castro crusades. Among the excluded were some harshly conservative Cuban exile groups, various CIA operatives, and Mafia figures like John Roselli and Sam Giancana, who had been part of the CIA's ineffectual plots to kill Castro. Also, RFK's Justice Department and other parts of the federal government began to crack down on some of the Cuban exiles and soldiers of fortune who had been launching free-lance attacks on Cuba.

For a time, Sirhan worked for a horse-breeding farm partly owned by Desi Arnaz. Turner and Christian point out that Arnaz "came from a wealthy Cuban family and was a fervent opponent of Fidel Castro." They also cite close ties between Jerry "The Walking Bible" Owen and Arnaz's lawyer, Jerome Weber. However, there's no evidence that Sirhan ever met with Arnaz.

Organized Crime and the Teamsters — As attorney general, RFK vigorously prosecuted Teamster Union boss Jimmy Hoffa as well as numerous leaders of organized crime. Both the Teamsters and organized crime were involved in the CIA plans to kill Castro. Informants have reported that Hoffa and various mobsters separately discussed killing RFK. Whether any of them moved from talk to direct action is impossible to tell.

David Scheim, author of *Contract on America* (Shapolsky, 1988), cites others' assertions that Thane Cesar may have been tied to a mobster named John Alessio. Scheim also notes that prior to Sirhan's trial, his chief attorney, Grant Cooper, had "represented one of four co-defendants of Mafioso Johnny Roselli in a gambling case." Roselli was involved in the CIA-Mob attempts on Castro's life. (In 1972 Cooper stated that "had there been any information available to the defense that Sirhan had not actually fired the shots into Senator Kennedy, my approach to his defense would have been materially altered." He failed to mention that such information was available in the autopsy report and eyewitness accounts.)

Nixon Supporters — The chief political beneficiary of RFK's death was Richard Nixon, who probably would have lost to any anti-war Democrat. Hubert Humphrey was the best possible opponent for Nixon in 1968, especially with George Wallace's strong third party taking millions of Southern and blue-collar votes from the Democrats while many RFK and McCarthy supporters were refusing to vote. Nixon was also the main beneficiary of Arthur Bremer's crippling assassination attempt on Wallace four years later. Wallace would have probably walked out of the liberal 1972 Democratic convention and on to 50 state ballots had he been able to walk at all. Unlike 1968, in 1972 Wallace would have taken most of his votes from Nixon. Although "everyone knows" that George McGovern lost in 1972 because he was "too far to the left," the Prairie Peacenik could have won had Wallace stayed healthy.

Although he passed through Dallas on November 22, 1963, Richard Nixon makes for an unlikely assassination conspirator. However, Tricky's supporters included many in the ranks of the three previous groups cited from which a plot to kill RFK might have sprung. This is particularly true of the mobster-Teamster group. The Teamsters endorsed Nixon, and the Trickster had organized crime ties through Bebe Rebozo and San Diego's C. Arnholt Smith, whose U.S. National Bank failed in 1973 due to illegal financial machinations. John Alessio was on the bank's board.

CONCLUSION

Many of the people who have doggedly pursued this case hope that the April release of the Special Unit Senator files and tapes can eventually answer these three questions: Who killed Bobby Kennedy? Who hired the killer(s)? Why?

This reporter does not believe that these ultimate truths will ever be uncovered. Too many memories have dimmed over the years. More importantly, too many influential, powerful people and institutions have too much to lose if the official conclusions are overturned. And these people and institutions seem to have the power to hide much of the truth for decades to come, if not forever. Certainly, the District Attorney's office, now under Ira Reiner and absent public pressure, has no compulsion to reopen the case, despite its many obvious flaws. Nevertheless, a resumption of public curiosity about the RFK assassination together with ongoing and new investigations could uncover a great deal more than is known today, producing an informed speculation. This is a lot more useful than the duped historical ignorance generally prevailing at the moment.

The events that propelled America into three of our last five wars remain somewhat mysterious. Yet today, far more is known about the sinking of the *Maine*, the sinking of the *Lusitania*, and the August, 1964 events in the Gulf of Tonkin than the official explanations put out at the time. Such knowledge may help forestall future unjustified military adventures.

Similarly, the more that can be learned about the RFK assassination, the less likely we are, perhaps, to be deceived again by illicit, organized, covert power. That in itself might forestall yet another assassination of a political leader. ■

Acknowledgements

This writer could never have finished this article without special help from these special Weekly staffers:

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- Jack Kimbrough, who kept reminding Weekly staffers that there was an important, untold story about the RFK assassination. Jack provided needed focus and valuable warnings about "bottomless pits of speculation."
- John Christian, whose unbelievable tenacity exceeded only by his uncanny ability to detect important, hidden truths in a mass of boring, petty details. John was unstintingly generous in providing leads and ideas for this article, although he was writing one of his own.
- Robert Cutler, America's premiere "assassinologist," whose wit and well-drafted crime-scene diagrams cleared up a lot of confusion this writer had regarding the RFK shooting. People interested in any or all political assassinations should subscribe to Cutler's unique bimonthly, *The Grassy Knoll Gazette*. For info, write Box 1465, Manchester, MA 01944.
- Lillian Castellano, with whom I never talked because she passed away a few years ago. A self-employed accountant in Hollywood, Castellano became a legendary citizen-investigator who was perhaps the first to point out publicly (in the L.A. Free Press) unexplained peculiarities in the official explanations of what happened in the Ambassador kitchen pantry. Her work led to and inspired most of the subsequent investigations.
- Theodore Charach, director of the film *The Second Gun*, which is available in some video stores from Video Treasures, Inc. Charach, with whom I also never spoke, did some of the most important early work regarding Thane Cesar, the witness-autopsy discrepancies, and the meaning and existence of unaccounted-for bullet holes.