

Jim McKinley/Playboy 4/78 "Inside Sirhan" via Carmen Falzone EW 3/14/78

This account of Sirhan's plotting to steal nukes for ~~Ad~~ qaddafi is enriched Mc
Kinley, barnyard variety.

It all hangs on the totally unsupported word of the professional burgled Falzone.

He appears also to be a professional con man.

There is no basis for believing any of it.

What is made to appear as support is no more than that Falzone passed a lie detector
test. What he was asked is not even indicated. It is not stated, merely implied to be
the details repeated in this crap.

It provides no basis for reconsidering the axiom, ~~if~~ Playboy prints it don't believe
it (on political assassinations).

There is nothing in it that was not public where approximating reality or for the rest
nothing not easily fabricated.

There are disqualifying errors. Like Sirhan re-enacting firing with his left hand.

PLAYBOY

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APRIL 1978 • \$2.00

EXCLUSIVE—FROM PRISON—
SIRHAN SIRHAN ON R.F.K.'S
MURDER AND A PLAN FOR
WORLD-WIDE TERROR

DAVID FROST INTERVIEW

CYCLES FOR
CITY GUYS

Sisters
A Photo
Gallery
Of Sexy
Siblings



PLAYBOY'S
MUSIC
AWARD
WINNERS

PLAYBILL

THIS YEAR MARKS the tenth anniversary of the assassination of Senator Robert F. Kennedy. Yet, to this day, there is still as much mystery clouding the events in L.A.'s Ambassador Hotel as there is surrounding Jack Kennedy's death five years earlier. Sirhan B. Sirhan, the convicted assassin, never once admitted full competence in the commission of the murder and recently requested leave from prison to visit the crime site, allegedly to "jog his memory." Now we have Carmen Falzone, former cellmate and professed confidant of Sirhan. Falzone, a convicted burglar, claims to have discussed the assassination with Sirhan, gaining new insights into his motivation and uncovering a bizarre terrorist scheme involving the theft of nuclear arms. James McKinley, author of our comprehensive 1976 series *Playboy's History of Assassination in America*, was dispatched to do some digging into Falzone's story. His investigative report is titled *Inside Sirhan*.

The Robert Kennedy assassination provided the springboard for America's plunge into the Nixon era, an era vividly brought back to life in a series of syndicated interviews with its namesake produced by talk-show host/journalist David Frost. This month, we turn the tables on Frost: He's the subject of our *Playboy Interview*, conducted by Lawrence Linderman. And, in *The Breaking of Richard Nixon*, James Reston, Jr., reveals just how Frost's team, of which he was a member, dug up some of the dirt on the ex-President.

Last month, you were treated to the first installment of an exciting excerpt from Gore Vidal's latest novel, *Kalki*, a tale of the end of the world. We conclude our excerpt in this issue and if your appetite is whetted, and we're sure it will be, the complete novel will be available from Random House this month. Speaking of excerpts, we've got a dandy one in Elizabeth McNeill's elegant, erotic tale of a sadomasochistic relationship, *Nine and a Half Weeks*. We've chosen a juicy chunk for you from the book of the same title to be published soon by E. P. Dutton. The illustrations are by Meritt Hoffman.

Back for the third part in our series *Pushed to the Edge* is the intrepid Craig Vetter. Still alive after being forced to climb a solid wall of ice and launch himself from a ski jump, Vetter's latest escapade is *The Sky Dive*. If you enjoy death-defying feats best when they are vicarious, Vetter's your man.

Music lovers will be pleased to hear that *Playboy Music '78* offers the results of our annual music poll—along with a roundup of the year in music produced by Contributing Editor and resident rocker David Standish and Associate Art Director Skip Williamson. Research Editors Tom Passavant and Kate Nolan did the digging. The illustrations are by Kim Whitesides. Punk rock was big last year and so were diet fads. We don't dig them unless they're the kind depicted by Associate Art Director Bob Post in our little rib-tickler labeled *A Diet of Sex*. It's not liquid protein, but we like it. You may also have noted that we like beautiful women; in fact, the more the better. And you won't find more beautiful women in one place than you'll find at the famed Crazy Horse Saloon in Paris. Photographer Richard Fegley managed to overheat his camera in producing our pictorial on the Parisian pleasure dome, *The Fillies of Crazy Horse*. Fortunately, by the time Fegley returned to our studio, he had developed a system for air-cooling his camera. Fortunately because his next assignment was to do our centerfold girl, Pamela Jean Bryant. Of all the mail we got in praise of our first hurrah for the *Girls of the Big Ten*, probably half of it mentioned Pamela. Check out the gatefold and see why.

Of course, there's plenty more. Such as a selection of whiskey cocktails from Emanuel Greenberg and *Treads and Threads*, a loving tribute to motorcycles and cycle fashions put together by Associate Editor James Petersen and Fashion Editor David Platt. It's all a great way to spring into spring.



McKINLEY



LINDERMAN



VIDAL



WHITESIDES



HOFFMAN



WILLIAMSON, STANDISH, PASSAVANT



POST



FEGLEY



VETTER

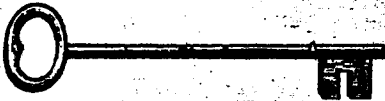
America's silent assassin has never opened up to the press; but he did form an intimate bond of trust with a cellmate who, for the first time, reveals the twisted mind of Robert Kennedy's killer

article **By JAMES MCKINLEY**

This investigation began as a routine follow-up on a tip given to PLAYBOY. As it grew into a major project, James McKinley, our assassinations expert, was put on the case. He completed the research and field work with assistance from a PLAYBOY investigative team and wrote the following article.

AT SOLEDAD PRISON, his fellow inmates called the Palestinian refugee Sirhan the Silent. He granted no interviews and did not mix with other prisoners. The press had no word from him about why he killed Robert Kennedy or whether others were involved. Nothing about his current life, his feelings about the post-Kennedy world he helped create or about his plans (especially if he is paroled when eligible in 1984) emerged from the cloak of secrecy he drew around himself.

Nothing, that is, until Carmen Falzone arrived at Soledad to share a cell block with Sirhan. Police records and our own investigation show that Falzone is a master criminal who specializes in security—safes, locks, alarm systems, breaking



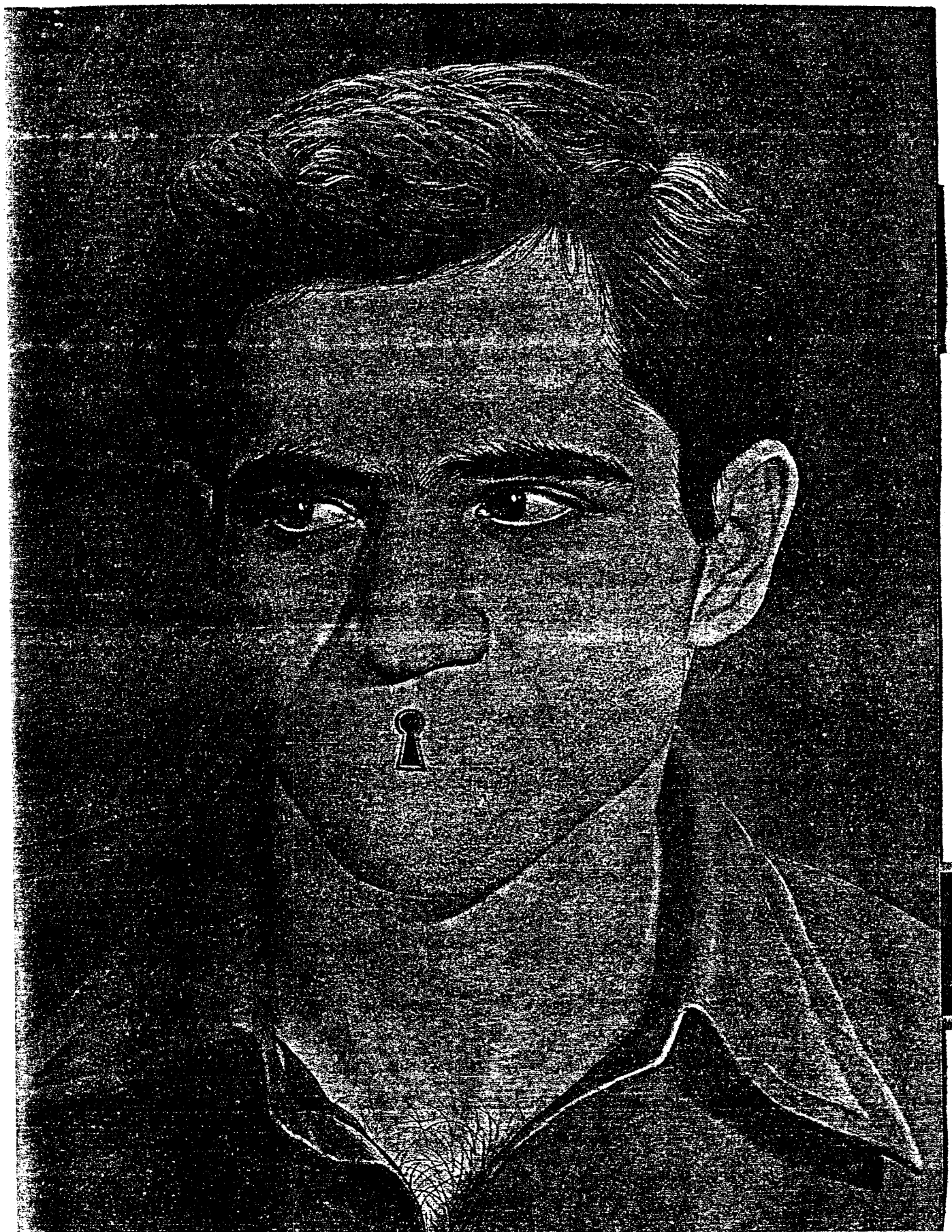
and entering—as well as sophisticated con jobs. Eventually, his artistry landed him in Soledad, with access to Sirhan. Last year, over a period of time and for peculiar motives, Sirhan opened up to Falzone, telling him not only about the Kennedy killing but also a more chilling and irrational tale.

The story begins with Carmen Falzone's identity. When we met, he seemed simply a short, rotund, balding, leisure-suited man with an engaging Italian manner and an incredible story. A story too complicated to verify. He had been with Sirhan, prison records show, from January 1977 to August 1977, in X wing of Soledad, the area where hard cases are kept. Falzone said he was one of the hardest, and that is why Sirhan was attracted to him.

"The first couple of months, I thought he was kinda neat, and he thought I was kinda neat. He knew who I was—the superburglar on the tier—and I knew who he was. I was attracted to him, sure:

**INNOVATE
SIRHAN**

ILLUSTRATION BY ERALDO CARUGATI



He has an aura of power around him; he's powerful, even if he's small. He's in perfect shape. You can't help being respectful around him." The other prisoners felt that, too, Falzone says. "Sirhan presses 275 pounds and only weighs maybe 140. Everyone was kind of afraid of him. Everybody saw him as an assassin and a gentleman." And Falzone? "I was curious; I wanted to get into his pants. It was a challenge, mental chess. I passed a lot of time fucking with Sirhan."

But who was Falzone, and why would Sirhan confide in him? "I was a one-man crime wave in California," Falzone says. Until his arrest in 1970, he had stolen "millions" in jewels, money, securities, business machines, *objets d'art*. He'd also done things, he said, such as going into Cuba in 1963 to retrieve "two Samsonite suitcases full of cash stashed after Castro grabbed the casinos." He was, he says, an electronics and alarms expert. He could, as he told Sirhan, beat any system the Government had. "If the Government wants me to break into one of its installations to show them how bad security is, I will." Falzone said if he didn't believe it, he would show us the security device he had invented. It was a 12-inch cube called Air-Forse I. A consulting engineer said the premise for the device was perfectly sound and our tests of it seemed to bear out his claim that it was very hard to beat. "Sirhan really dug it," Falzone says. "He'd come into my cell and see me with the schematics and he was fascinated. 'What could you steal?' he asked. 'Anything,' I said, 'as long as I'm financed.' That's when he started seeing me as an instrument, a tool, to get him where he wanted to be and get what he wanted. So I started to build myself up to him."

Could Falzone prove any of this? The Los Angeles district attorney's office confirmed that his arrest helped solve over 600 burglaries, most of them "very sophisticated operations." The Beverly Hills police corroborated this. They were so impressed by Falzone that they had him make a training film for them on how to defeat burglars called *Carmen, the Burglar*. We checked some more. Falzone also appeared on Dinah Shore's and Virginia Graham's TV shows in 1970, while on parole after the L.A. bust, displaying his thieving abilities. But he broke parole (a matter of some stolen certified checks) and was rejailed. In 1972, he escaped from a California prison ("I just walked away from a labor camp").

Falzone went to Chicago under an alias and went into the burglar-alarm business with a friend. (Later, he was recaptured and finally served out his time. He is currently on parole.) Our investigation established beyond a doubt

that Falzone was incarcerated with Sirhan in 1977. But how close were Falzone and Sirhan?

"We walked together, worked out all the time. I was the only one he'd ever done that with. He was fascinated, like I told you, and he needed me. At first, we'd talk about nothing. I'd go to his cell. It was full of books, articles, about missiles, politics, electronics, psychology, philosophy. He said, 'I'm building here, I'm learning. We lack technology; I want to get intelligent enough so I can do something.'"

"There was a map of the Mediterranean on the wall and a picture of Yasir Arafat, I think. Lots of Arabian papers with articles about Sirhan. [That is true. Radical Arab publications, notably *Libya's*, have extolled Sirhan.] Sirhan told me he was a hero in Libya, that during two of Muammar el-Qaddafi's hijackings, the terrorists wanted to exchange hostages for Sirhan. [That was also widely reported.] There was a TV set, too. Sirhan always stood while he watched it, always watched news shows, sometimes a crime movie. I asked, 'Sirhan, why do you stand?' He said, 'So I can pay attention.' Anyway, after a while, he started to ask me strange questions.

"He'd say something like, 'Suppose you had 30,000 troops spread out over 5000 square miles; how would you screw them up?' Next day, he might ask me, 'If you could steal a hundred pounds of anything, what would it be?' That one hit me. I didn't really know. What? Gold? Diamonds? Sirhan, he smiled a sly little smile and said, 'How about plutonium? There are people who'd pay millions for it.' That's when it started getting serious.

"Sirhan tried to change my political philosophy. He told me he lived to unite Africa, the Arabs. He said Qaddafi was his idol and he called Libya 'my country.' He hated Sadat. We went to Bible study together, and he'd say how the Arabs and Jews were the same people, but the Jews weren't where they belonged; they ought to be pushed into the sea. All the Russians and Americans should go home, too. Well, I was curious—you have to remember I'm an opportunist—so we'd argue, but then I'd agree with everything he said. I let him believe he had converted me. Christ, you could see the thirst for political power in him, and I thought, well, this is the guy who killed Bobby Kennedy. So I pumped him every day I was with him. Finally, I asked him about killing Kennedy. I said, 'I want to know where your head is at, because I want to know if I want to know you.'"

Sirhan was put off by the subject, Falzone says. He stayed away from their walks and talks for about three days. "But then I drew him back," Falzone says.

"He'd come and watch me work on Air-Forse I. I knew he had never talked to anybody about what he did. Then he just said, 'Well, you know what Kennedy's position was. He was arming Israel. He talked terrible in the media about us Arabs, like we were dogs.'" Next, by Falzone's account, came Sirhan's whole story of killing Kennedy, followed by the proposal that Falzone spring Sirhan from prison and steal nuclear weapons for delivery to Qaddafi.

We interviewed a long-term Soledad inmate who is still in X wing and who knows both Sirhan and Falzone. For obvious reasons, he insists on anonymity. This man says that he observed the initial period when Sirhan and Falzone jockeyed for position, for clout with each other and their fellow inmates. Then, he says, they became "inseparable, they were tremendously involved in working up some deal. Falzone would come to my cell and say, 'You're not gonna believe this,' and I'd say, 'I don't wanta know.' But I know Falzone's had more contact with Sirhan than any other guy. They spent hours on the hard cement, on the tier and in the yard, talking and talking." The prisoner vividly remembers one exchange he overheard. Falzone to Sirhan: "I hope you're serious about this." Sirhan: "I hope you're serious, not playing games." In fact, until Falzone arrived, Sirhan seldom left his cell except to exercise. With Falzone, Sirhan "broke his pattern completely with the walks and talks."

We found another witness to the Falzone-Sirhan relations, Bruce Nelson, a psychology graduate student who held therapy sessions for X-wing inmates. Sirhan and Falzone attended several. Nelson remembers Sirhan sitting at a wooden table on the prison tier, his head cradled in his hands, as Falzone told his stories. He recalls hearing Sirhan talk to Falzone in the sessions about politics, about Kennedy, the Near East, nuclear devices. Of their relationship, Nelson says the two were "very tight." "Carmen was closer to Sirhan than anyone I saw," Nelson says. Nelson remembers Falzone's telling him about a discussion with Sirhan concerning the theft of nuclear materials. Nelson's impression was that such a plot was consistent with Sirhan's personality. He had discussed stealing nuclear weapons with Sirhan and he believed Sirhan was deadly serious about the project. "Sure, I don't think he'd hesitate to drop a bomb on New York if he believed it was the right thing to do," Nelson says.

Two other sources corroborate the Falzone-Sirhan relationship. In a telephone conversation, Mary Sirhan—the assassin's mother—affirmed that Sirhan had told her he knew Falzone well and that

(continued on page 206)

SIRHAN

(continued from page 98)

"Carmen was a good man." An investigator for the Los Angeles district attorney's office put it this way: "Mr. Falzone was in the California state institution at Soledad and he did have access to Sirhan and they did have a lot of conversations." Finally, Falzone told us that after his release, he had gone to the D.A.'s office with his story, hoping, he said, that they would do something about the potential danger. We asked the district attorney's office about this. A spokesman said, "We asked Mr. Falzone to take a polygraph examination and he passed the polygraph on the stories Sirhan supposedly told him."

"At one point," Falzone says, "I asked Sirhan, 'If you were angry because the U.S. supported Israel, why didn't you kill the President, kill L.B.J.?' He started to tremble, those dark eyes popping, and he said, 'Don't you understand, I did kill the President. Kennedy would have been President, and if he was that pro-Israeli when he wasn't President, imagine how he would be as President. So I decided to change history.'"

In the days that followed, Sirhan told Falzone more about the murder, stories that portray Sirhan as a cold, methodical political killer—not the befuddled boy,

not the hypnotized *Manchurian Candidate* killer-robot. As far as Falzone could tell, Sirhan was purely a political assassin.

"He told me his act had inspired Qaddafi, that Arab people had told him so. [Qaddafi's coup brought him to power only 16 months after R.F.K.'s death but appears to be unrelated to the assassination.] He told me about that night in the hotel [the Ambassador Hotel, where R.F.K. was shot the evening of June 5, 1968]. I think he said he knew the layout, that he knew somebody who worked there. He definitely said he was in the pantry on purpose. [It has been theorized that Sirhan's position in a pantry off a main ballroom was a matter of chance.] Then he said, 'I did it for my people. When I blew him away, I really felt good.' I could tell he thought he'd become a hero. Sirhan said he thought he would be killed that night, a martyr to the Arabian people. He said he was surprised they didn't kill him. They just pinned him down. His arm was fucked up for six months after that big guy, Rosey Grier, nearly tore it off."

Another time, Sirhan re-enacted the assassination for a startled Falzone. "We were talking about it. I never saw him lose his cool except this once. I asked him

something about politicians, the Kennedys. He said they were all criminals. He said, 'What's the big deal, just because I killed that fucking Bobby Kennedy?' Then, man, it was weird. He smiled, but you could just see the hate oozing out of him." As Falzone watched, Sirhan slowly raised his left hand, the forefinger extended, and then crooked it time and again around an invisible trigger as he mimed the moment of the murder.

We asked Falzone if he knew that Sirhan had re-enacted the crime once before, prior to his trial and supposedly while under hypnosis. According to Robert Blair Kaiser, a writer who witnessed the first re-enactment, Sirhan reached with his right hand for his waistband, where he had, in fact, carried the Iver-Johnson on the day of the assassination. Sirhan then, wrote Kaiser, hammered his right thigh with his hand five times, followed by three spasmodic squeezings of the right forefinger. Why, for starters, the difference in hands?

"I don't know," Falzone said. "I did ask him if he was left-handed. He said, 'No, I shoot with either hand.' He said Kennedy was coming through shaking hands, so Sirhan stuck his right hand out and shot with his left." We admitted that seemed logical. But Sirhan, in fact, shot Kennedy with his right hand, according to witnesses. Falzone maintains that he is simply reporting to us what he heard

HOPPY WOULD HAVE LOVED IT!

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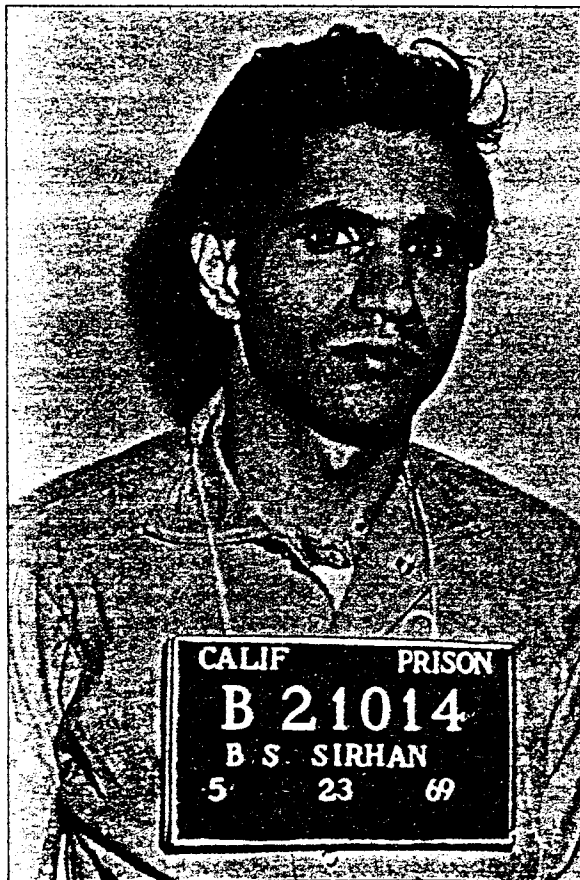
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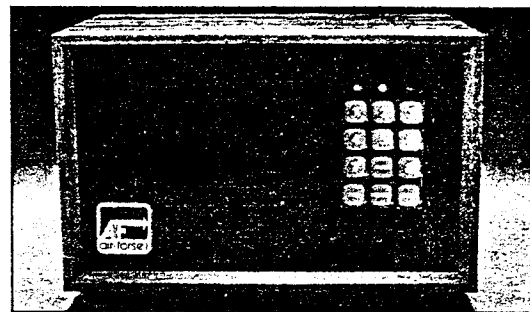
THE MAN WHO GOT THROUGH TO SIRHAN



Carmen Falzone in prison and today. According to authorities, he is the only man who was able to get close to Sirhan. In the course of their relationship, Sirhan gradually revealed himself to Falzone, who is now out on parole after a rather spectacular career as a "one-man crime wave." Since his specialty in those outside-the-law days was breaking through security systems, he now sells security devices and markets his skills as a consultant to industry and private individuals.



Sirhan Sirhan, who shot Robert Kennedy, has been America's most secretive assassin. Virtually nothing has emerged from his cell. Now a former fellow prisoner comes forward with shocking assertions about his state of mind, his motives and his bizarre plans.



Falzone, who was once a master criminal, developed this device, called Air-Force I. It monitors change in air pressure so that a building cannot be entered or left without setting off an alarm, yet those inside can move around freely.



Muammar el-Qaddafi, the feared Libyan leader who has openly advocated violent solutions to political problems in the Mideast, figures as a key character in Falzone's account of what Sirhan would like to do to again change history.

and saw at Soledad. Assuming Falzone's account is accurate, was Sirhan crazy when Kaiser saw him? Hypnotized or shamming? Was he conning Falzone? Was he insane there in the prison cell while he showed Falzone how he'd stuck a gun to within an inch of Kennedy's right mastoid and begun squeezing? Obviously, these are impossible questions to answer fully, but we tried, beginning with the contention of Sirhan's defense team that he was disturbed, "a chronic and deteriorating schizophrenic."

We asked another Soledad inmate. He said, "The little guy [a sobriquet applied to Sirhan out of his hearing] is smart, not crazy."

Nelson, who spent over 20 hours counseling Sirhan, put it simply: "Sirhan is not a crazy man by any definition at all." He was "a dedicated political assassin but not part of a conspiracy." Nor was he in a trance, as Nelson sees it. "He had one objective. That was to put a bullet into Kennedy."

We talked with Baxter Ward, the Los Angeles County supervisor who has been receptive to "second gun" speculations. It was Ward and another Los Angeles County supervisor who recently met with Sirhan at the assassin's invitation. The meeting produced a suggestion that a return visit to the Ambassador be arranged. The supposed purpose of the visit was to refresh Sirhan's memory, to see if the amnesiac, entranced Sirhan could remember what had happened. Ward told us, "I learned of the request when I saw him in jail at Soledad in early June 1977. It was the only time I've ever visited him. I was startled at his mental alertness. He could describe things in language that was unusual but very precise. He had no difficulty putting together thoughts rapidly . . . some of my questions he could not have anticipated." Did he seem paranoid? Ward answered, "He might have been paranoid, but I think he surely has recovered from that condition. When you talk to him, you realize he isn't crazy." We wondered if Ward thought that Sirhan was dedicated to the Arab cause. "I'm sure he is." For good measure, Ward told us Sirhan refused his suggestion that he be hypnotized again, even by a Palestinian psychiatrist. "It troubles me," Ward said. "I think he's wrong. I don't know why he'd be uncomfortable with that."

Falzone thinks he knows why. "Sirhan is saner than you or me. He told me he made up all that trance and hypnosis stuff. Faked it. Just like this wanting to go back to the hotel so he can remember. That's a fraud and a scam. He even said he might try to escape if they let him go to the hotel. Shit, he remembers everything. He told me about it all. He said he was totally alone, no one else. The only funny thing is, he thought somebody was shooting at him, because he felt bullets

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buzzing by while he was shooting his gun." (There have been numerous theories that a second gunman was involved, but the vast majority of the 70-odd witnesses say they saw none. Two witnesses think they did but have been unable to prove it. The odd ricochets in the pantry that the police say account for 12 bullet paths from an eight-shot pistol could account for Sirhan's impression.)

So, for Falzone, Sirhan was a sane, obsessed assassin. The "psycho act," Sirhan told Falzone, was "to soften up public opinion for when he gets out. He told me the love for the Kennedys was declining, so now he wanted to make himself look more sympathetic in the media. He said, 'I'll show everybody I'm not the animal they think I am.'" Falzone found out, he says, that Sirhan was far from an animal. After the Kennedy disclosures, Sirhan steered their conversation toward stealing nuclear weapons. "I found out Sirhan was highly intelligent, one-directional, emotionless and suspicious, the perfect terrorist," Falzone says.

It was June 1977 when the two began to plot in earnest. Falzone remembers Sirhan leading up to the proposal with more teasing questions. Had Falzone ever stolen anything protected by highly sophisticated electronic systems? Yes, Falzone told him. Moreover, while he was on the lam, running his alarm business, he'd been to the Mobility Equipment Research and Development Command at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, the Government installation that develops and tests security systems, among other things. He demonstrated the air-pressure device. "I told Sirhan that they liked it, and they did, but that I also knew what they have now, and I could steal anything they got." (A spokesperson for MERADCOM confirmed that Falzone had shown his device to officials there.)

Sirhan asked if Falzone had ever gotten away with anything surrounded by armed men. Falzone told him about emptying "maybe 100" safe-deposit boxes in a large California bank. "I came in dressed like a priest, with a wheelbarrow full of pennies and nickels. Said it was the parish's athletic fund the kids had collected and could I please use their coin sorter? I knew it was in the safe-deposit room. The rest was easy. They even took my pennies and nickels, about three grand worth. Shit, I told Sirhan, if I tell you I'm going to steal something, make book on it."

Sirhan started making book on it. He again talked about the Mideast, about Qaddafi. He hinted that he received messages from Qaddafi through his brother Adel. He told Falzone that Qaddafi was a man of the people, like Sirhan himself, that the colonel sometimes went into the desert dressed in a burnoose and sat in tents to talk with his people. Sirhan repeated that he was a hero in Libya. He showed Falzone clippings that quoted

Qaddafi as saying he'd give millions for a nuclear capability to match the Israelis'. Falzone: "I wanted to know what was up, so one day I just said, 'Look, Sirhan, you've given me flour, yeast and water. I know you're making bread. So what country do you want me to take over?'"

Conquest, however, was not in Sirhan's plan. Terrorism was. The ultimate dream was to present Qaddafi in person with the nuclear devices. "They'll make you a prince," Falzone was told. (As long ago as 1973, according to reports, Qaddafi ordered an Egyptian submarine to torpedo the Queen Elizabeth II, while she was carrying American and European Jews on a pilgrimage to Israel. Qaddafi's archenemy, Sadat, vetoed the order.) Sirhan insisted that Falzone make a total commitment to the plan, to go all out, including killing people, if necessary. "He told me he'd already got his credentials by killing Kennedy, that he didn't have to kill again. But he would, he said, kill 30 or 40 or however many, to get the nuclear stuff. I had to agree. He's serious, man, serious as a heart attack."

Falzone asked Sirhan what the Libyans would do with, say, some small nukes. "He told me they'd make demands, tell the Sixth Fleet to get out of the Med and quit protecting the Jews. Get the Russians out, too. He said if they said no, we'd just take out three or four cities, maybe starting with New York, to show they weren't fucking around. He said, 'After that, we'd make them all come to a meeting naked, with dildos sticking up their asses, because they're all criminals.' I tell you, ten years in jail ain't cured this prick."

We asked Falzone if this seemed like rational talk. Falzone repeated, "He's saner than you or me. He's just obsessed. He told me he knew that Arab terrorist teams were already in the U.S. looking for a nuclear facility to loot." But Sirhan wouldn't say how he knew. Falzone suspected that Sirhan's visitors, who spoke to him by telephone—Sirhan refused "contact visits," even from his mother—included Arabs. Maybe that was the contact. "There's a lot of hocus-pocus Sirhan didn't tell me. He wouldn't tell me anything I didn't need to know. One time, he said, 'Carmen, you're the only man I ever talked to about this, you better not fuck me.'" Sirhan did, though, tell Falzone that such terrorists were all muscle and no brain, that "they have no technology, they'd just try to bust in." (The Pentagon's Defense Department Studies, Analysis and Gaming Agency has been conducting secret, high-level war games to prepare for possible terrorist attacks. The reason, according to the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, is that "there is no doubt that mass annihilation is feasible—and resourceful, tech-

nically oriented thugs are capable of doing it.")

It was Falzone's technical expertise that Sirhan sought to enlist, first to escape and then to steal the nuclear weapons. Falzone described his James Bondish escape plan. It suggests his ingenuity, but it also makes you wonder about his truthfulness—or Sirhan's common sense. The scheme was complexity itself. First, Falzone would get outside on parole. Then he would inform Sirhan via coded letter of the exact date for the escape, sometime shortly after Christmas 1977. Why, then, we asked? Sirhan, though a Palestinian, was a professed Christian who regularly got Christmas packages. The necessary cutting tools, FM transceiver and amphetamines would come to him as gifts, in canned hams. "They never open or X-ray stuff sealed at a factory," Falzone said, "so I'd put the gear in a couple of hams, lay some money on a guy who works in a packing plant, have him seal the cans and ship them off to Sirhan from his mother." Sirhan's next move would be to return a coded letter confirming the date. The code, Falzone said, was elementary. The significant words would be those occurring before a comma. His letters to Sirhan would always be from a woman with two common names; e.g., Ruth Esther. Since Sirhan received many billets-doux from admiring ladies, Falzone's would not be suspect. Sirhan's reply would be to the same fictional woman at the return address.

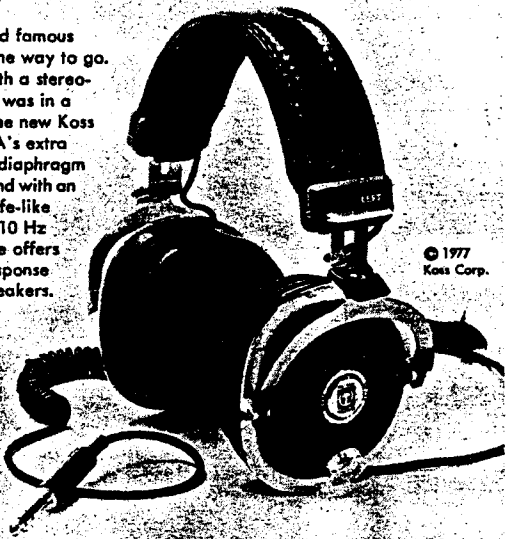
Finally, the Great Escape would take place. Sirhan would saw his cell bars, drop some speed and radio Falzone, who would be waiting five minutes away with a helicopter. As Falzone's chopper appeared, Sirhan would leap to the roof ten feet beneath his window, Falzone would lower a cargo net, "he grabs and we go."

That's not all. This \$300,000 operation—financed by Qaddafi's oil money—would include an airlift to a tractor-trailer rig, the transfer of Sirhan to the truck and his transport to a safe place along the nation's interstates. "I'd have radio scanners, TV monitors, living space, the works, in the truck," Falzone said. When we expressed skepticism over the baroque plot, he shrugged. "Can you imagine the heat that would come down when Sirhan escaped?" We did and recalled that James Earl Ray, a much-wanted quarry, was brought to bay by two bloodhounds and six sweaty mountaineers. But Falzone stuck to his story. After parole, he was, through Adel or maybe on his own, to contact Qaddafi's agents, sell them his ability to steal Sirhan and the nukes, get the money, spring the assassin and move at once to phase two, the taking of the nuclear materials.

"I would have buried Sirhan in Chicago," Falzone said. "Or, if the heat got close, I'd have air-freighted him there in

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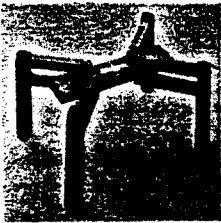
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a crate. I used that several times on jobs. You can go anywhere, you got a radio, oxygen, insulation, food, drink, books, a guy on the other end. He even told me it didn't matter if it was a choice between springing him and getting the devices—get the devices. Really, he's beyond himself. He doesn't care what happens to his physical body. He's only concerned about achieving his goal."

The goal, according to Falzone, was to be reached this way: "I would use misdirection and deception. I could probably go onto a SAC base, meet some people, force some favors, then fly in a cargo plane or roll in the right vehicle, all with the right-looking people, and hand them some dummy papers, then drink a cup of coffee while they load what I want for me. Military security is garbage." (The Pentagon lost \$118,000,000 in gear last year, though it says none was weaponry.)

Falzone says Sirhan wanted 50 tactical nuclear weapons; specifically, the eight-inch howitzer projectile. These are rated at as much as 20 kilotons each. The resulting blast and fire from such an explosion will extend from ground zero at least a quarter of a mile in every direction, inflicting about 60 percent human casualties and nearly 100 percent material destruction, under favorable conditions. The guns themselves, with a range of 17 to 20 miles, were lost by the dozens in Vietnam and might well be available to potentates of the right persuasion.

Falzone claims Sirhan also wanted fissionable material, preferably plutonium, so that Arab scientists could produce warheads in the 200-kiloton range, such as the ones carried by the Cruise missile. (For the sake of comparison, a one-tenth-kiloton device could take down one of the World Trade Center towers and kill everyone within 200 yards, at least.) "I tell you, he had it all worked out," Falzone vowed. The vulnerable points, they decided, were plutonium manufacturing facilities, such as the one at Richland, Washington, or any university reactor that uses enriched-uranium fuel and that as a result produces plutonium as a by-product (there are several). Or a truck transporting ordinary fuel rods. Even spent fuel rods, which are not themselves "rich" enough to produce a bomb, can be reprocessed (using a fairly simple gaseous-diffusion process) to produce weapons-grade materials.

Just how would Falzone do this? For once, he refused to say, fearing that it would provide a "blueprint for nuts." The string would, he confessed, involve elaborate paperwork, disguises, an inside informant and misdirection operations during normal working hours. Falzone said he would try to cover the theft with so much paperwork that it wouldn't be discovered for at least a week,

guaranteeing the conspirators time to get the materials out.

"Sirhan wanted to use a Gulf port. But there's too much surveillance there. We would have shipped the stuff from Chicago, where I've got friends, and where there are a lot of Arabs. In the dummy hold of a freighter or Great Lakes tanker. Sirhan would go on the ship. I was supposed to go, too. Or else I'd air-freight him to Africa, me riding with the passengers above. Then Sirhan said we'd go to Qaddafi and tell him the weapons were his and that we'd come to help unite Africa, and we'd both be heroes."

Can we credit this scheme? Is it all a hypermacho fantasy spun by a mad Arab assassin to while away time in a prison where the sun never shines? Is Falzone merely an adept con man, with Sirhan and with us?

First, we admit that purloining nuclear materials is feasible. During the Sixties, Israeli commandos allegedly hijacked, and Israeli agents smuggled into Israel, substantial quantities of weapons-grade uranium and uranium ore. Recent reports estimate that in addition to tactical nuclear weapons, the Israelis have as many as 15 larger-yield devices. This fact, Falzone says, was not lost on Sirhan. "He said he knew the Jews had the bombs and so the Arabs needed them." Our Government has just discovered that over 50 private companies that use nuclear materials have discrepancies in their books, failures to account for over 1000 tons of weapons-grade ingredients. "It's all in the paperwork," Falzone had said. In

1974, though nobody knows what became of the stuff, the Atomic Energy Commission lost enough enriched uranium to manufacture a bomb. "You don't need much," Falzone said. He's right. As little as five kilograms (12 pounds) would be enough to trigger a devastating atomic explosion. In fact, AEC once estimated that with \$200 worth of chemical supplies, two dollars' worth of charts and a four-dollar book, all readily available, someone could convert ordinary uranium to weapons-grade richness. We all remember the Princeton student's bomb plan. And not long ago, the Carter Administration called for a world-wide "nuclear fuel bank," meaning a strategy for avoiding the transport by private companies of fuels that might fall prey to hijackers.

Would Qaddafi sanction this improbable plot? It's impossible to tell. He has repeatedly expressed a desire for advanced weaponry. "Sirhan said," Falzone reported, "that Qaddafi would suck my prick for one nuclear weapon, especially after the black eye Sadat has given him." This inelegant phrase contains a plausible thought. An intelligence source in Washington has been quoted as saying, "The bad feelings between Sadat and Qaddafi are such that each is interested in eliminating the other." It's true that in July 1977, Libya and Egypt had a two-day border war. Last December, Qaddafi hosted Arafat and other Arab hard-liners in an anti-Sadat conference. Also last December, the Soviet Union agreed to build a nuclear power station

in Libya, a facility that could reprocess stolen materials, or enrich ordinary uranium, or put together a basic nuclear weapon. And, as we've seen, even the smallest nuclear weapon—a mere one tenth kiloton—could be a monstrous weapon in Qaddafi's hands.

But isn't this Sirhan-Falzone plot a bad dream? The L.A. district attorney's polygraph indicated that Falzone was truthful in relating what Sirhan had told him. But couldn't it all be in Sirhan's scrambled head, despite the fact that many people said he was sane, particularly about the Kennedy assassination? One way to check would be to trace a positive link between Sirhan and Qaddafi.

We contacted the two field offices where Falzone had been interrogated. One official told us, "The investigation is still ongoing, the nature of his allegations demand that, but so far we have been unable to corroborate his story."

The other said, "A lot of people are using us for suckers lately. Still, we're not going to forget this. The allegation alone is serious enough. Personally, though, I do believe the guy is bullshitting us."

In the end, then, we have Falzone's word that Sirhan's head is in very strange sands. It seems we can believe him about that. Even the skeptical FBI affirmed that Falzone had passed his lie-detector test "with flying colors." The reconstruction of the Kennedy assassination rings true, as does the assertion that Sirhan is a monomaniacal and dangerous Arab sympathizer. As for the plot to steal nuclear weapons, it may well be the stuff that bad prison dreams are made on. Falzone undoubtedly was close to Sirhan. He probably is honestly replaying what Sirhan told him, what they huddled and talked about.

Falzone did go to the authorities with his story, and then came to us. That does not mean, of course, that Sirhan had Qaddafi's support and blessing, except in the swamplier synapses of his assassin's brain. Nor does it mean that Falzone was thief enough to steal atomic weapons—only that he got away with Sirhan's story, and so gave us a surprising, even shocking peek at a man who until now has been America's most secretive assassin.

Probably it all means we can relax. As far as Falzone and Sirhan are concerned, our nuclear weapons are safe. Except, as a group of worried scientists said last year, there is no lead-shielded assurance that "one more charge, one more gun, one more pound of explosive could not breach the most sophisticated security system." Or, as Falzone put it, "Those crazy fuckers are out there. They'll get the bombs anyway, someday. The world is lousy with them. And there's no shortage of burglars."



*"It's settled, then. . . .
We can ball anyone we please, except
you can't ball that prissy-assed Mary Thompson and
I can't ball that smart-assed
Bill Fredericks."*