

# Slain Private Eye's Secrets

Los Angeles

Los Angeles, a city with a long heritage of fictional private eyes — from Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe to television's Jim Rockford and the movies' J. J. Gittes of "Chinatown" — is talking these days about the murder of a real private detective.

His name was Robert Duke Hall, and he was killed by someone who fired through the open kitchen window of his modest home in suburban Burbank on July 22.

Detectives investigating his death have found a landscape that bristles with clues and secretly recorded telephone conversations that are populated with the names of Hollywood celebrities, a fugitive international financier and a high-living businessman who was convicted of swindling Harvard and other universities.

Two men — one who described himself to the police as a "self-employed pornographer" and the other a former professional wrestler — were arrested Saturday for the detective's murder. A police official said the investigation, which has raised a number of questions beyond the murder itself, is continuing.

A slightly-built, 44-year-old man who wore a Van Dyke beard and loved to play the horses, Hall was reported to be an expert on wiretapping, electronic eavesdropping and counter-measures against electronic bugging.

By the standards of a televi-



ROBERT VESCO  
Costa Rica fugitive



THOMAS RICHARDSON  
Associate of Vesco

sion private-eye series, he was not a very glamorous figure. His house was modest and not impressively furnished — "about what you'd expect from a guy who makes \$15,000 to \$20,000 a year," said one policeman.

Hall is said to have enjoyed his role as a suburban family man. But the investigation has indicated that, besides handling routine marital cases, the detective spent a lot of time in a shadowy world that involved drug traffic and was sometimes a police informant as well as an agent for wealthy businessmen who operated outside the law.

Among his effects, Burbank detectives said they found more than 250 tape recordings, some

of them containing conversations that appear to implicate several prominent show-business people with narcotics and other criminal matters.

A captain on the Beverly Hills Police Department resigned abruptly after some of the tapes found during the investigations were transcribed.

The Burbank detective who is directing the investigation, Lieutenant Al Madrid, said the tape recordings have produced potential leads in the murder case and information that could lead to prosecutions of other crimes.

Federal authorities are interested in two of Hall's clients.

One is Robert Vesco, the

former New York accused by federal officials of bilking tens of millions of dollars from an overseas bank, then attempting to flee the country after an investigation into his activities. Vesco contributed heavily to the Presidential campaign of Richard Nixon.

The other is Thomas Richardson, a business associate of Vesco, who was accused by federal officials of using money obtained through fraud to acquire a lavish home in Beverly Hills and a large fleet of luxury cars.

Vesco is living in Costa Rica where Hall once was accused of eavesdropping on him. Living compound authorities have demanded Vesco on the grounds that he unlawfully contributed to the 1972 campaign, but he has refused here and elsewhere to look for evidence of crimes for which he could be extradited to the United States.

Richardson, who was accused by federal officials of using his private army of mercenaries and his private jets, Vesco, has long been a possible source of information that would implicate Vesco in extraditable crimes.

Richardson was here this spring on charges of manipulations of a company traded on the New York, London and other international stock exchanges. He was sentenced to six years in prison pending an appeal.

The two men were the murder victims' former friends and partners of Hall who were feuding with him at the time of the murder. He was Jack Ginsburg's defense witness in a trial, who told the police he was involved in photographic materials was Gene LeBell, a professional wrestler and prize-fight promoter.

## Exxon Tests Cash Discount

New York

Exxon USA, the second largest gasoline retailer in the country, is testing the idea of giving a five per cent discount on cash purchases, the company said yesterday.

The test is being made at participating stations in Abilene, Tex., and Charleston, S.C., to determine the reaction of dealers and credit-card customers,

and the effect on cash and credit gasoline sales, the company said.

The test will last at least six months, a spokesman said. Exxon believes it is the first oil company to experiment with the idea, he said.

The company said the program was made possible by recent federal legislation giving retailers of all kinds permission to set cash discounts of up to five

per cent.

With cash discounts, customers using credit cards will bear the cost of retail credit and the cash-paying customer will be relieved of the cost.

Exxon said it would decide after the test period whether to expand the cash discount nationwide.