

Kaplan 'Victim' Said In Havana

A man, for whose murder a wealthy New Yorker is serving a prison term, has been seen in Havana, the daily newspaper "El Heraldo de México" said Friday.

The supposedly slain man is Louis Melchior Vidal Jr., for whose fatal shooting Joel David Kaplan of New York has served more than five years of a 28-year sentence.

Vidal's murder was reported in 1961, soon after a suitcase with his belongings was found in a ditch off the Mexico City-Cuernavaca highway. A short time later a body identified as his was dug up in a nearby forest area.

Kaplan's lawyers have contended that the body was not that of Vidal, a U.S. citizen of Puerto Rican origin.

The newspaper said that U.S. Vice President Hubert Humphrey and former U.S. White House aide Jack Valenti had interceded in the case, which has been linked through the "Kaplan International Fund," with the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency.

El Heraldo said that Vidal was being sought because he had talked to deliver a

consignment of arms ordered by Cuban refugees for a planned invasion of the island. Testimony during the investigation and trial indicated that Vidal had dealings with Cubans in New York.

Kaplan was seen in Mexico with two other men on the day that Vidal vanished from his hotel here. Kaplan's lawyer, Victor Velázquez, claims a man carrying Vidal's passport crossed into Guatemala soon afterward.

Vidal is a son of Louis Melchior Vidal Sr. of New York, described by the newspaper as "the best friend" of the late Dominican Republic dictator, Leonidas Trujillo.

The newspaper said that Humphrey had telephoned U.S. Ambassador Fulton Freeman asking him to help Kaplan, and that Valenti, who was here last fall, visited Kaplan in his cell.

The Kaplan case returned to the front pages here this week with the report that John Raymond of the U.S. magazine, "Ramparts" had been forced to leave Mexico under threats to his life.

Raymond told local newsmen and foreign correspondents he and two other men had been assigned to investigate the Kaplan case.

El Heraldo said Raymond had called the newspaper and said:

"I fear for my life. Some gangsters who don't speak Spanish have given me an hour to leave the country, and the U.S. embassy does not wish to help me."

Ambassador Fulton Freeman is out of Mexico on a vacation, and other officials there said they had no comment on the reports.

← IMP!
(Connects with anonymous Crisman note)

Valenti?



Louis Vidal

from raymond/gonzalez

In the small town of San Dionisio in El Salvador, Feb. 8, 1966,
it was a day like any other. It was warm and humid.

For Luis Melchor Vidal, Jr., 44, American citizen, it was his
wedding day. He was married to Lucia Magana, 48, in a civil
ceremony at the town hall, ~~performed~~ performed by Mayor Miguel Angel
Turcios.

For Joel David Kaplan, 40, it was one more day in Mexico City's
Lecumberri Prison, where the American millionaire added several
more hours to the life sentence ^{18 yrs?} he has been given for the killing
of Luis Melchor Vidal, Jr., in Mexico City in 1961.

American and Mexican officials have never doubted the fact
that Vidal is alive. Kaplan, the nephew of multi-millionaire,
J. M. Kaplan of New York, while ostensibly in prison for murder,
is actually a political prisoner who has admitted involvement
with the Bay of Pigs, with the C. I. A. and who has described himself
as a "soldier of fortune."

Joel Kaplan
~~Concerning the Bay of Pigs~~ who has said everything in this
case centers around "The Bay of the Pigs, but not in the way you

might think."
However, there appears to be two Joel David Kaplans. One is the
apparently affable mild and pleasant character known slightly by

2.

This same Joel David Kaplan also appears to be a bad liar. He cannot look you straight in the face when he's not telling the truth. His color deepens and he looks at something other than your eyes. His answers are given as much through his facial responses as his verbal ones. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~

The other Kaplan is an enigmatic mystery-shrouded figure who lives in a world of intrigue, a man capable of violence who admittedly played a part in the Bay of Pigs, and ^{who} may, considering the tremendous pressures that have kept him in a foreign prison, have some knowledge of the plot that ultimately led to the death of Pres. Kennedy. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~

In explaining his remark about the Bay of the Pigs, he did not in any way tell his part in it, which is another side of the multi-faceted Kaplan. While he either states specifically or hints broadly at his involvement in various activities, including ~~xxxx~~ the Bay of the Pigs, he seldom speaks in the first person, preferring to leave out the personal pronoun.

Therefore, when he talked further about the Bay of the Pigs, he said:

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2. (a)

A conspiracy was hatched in New York in 1961 to make it appear Vidal was killed in Mexico. The conspirators were Vidal, his father, the prisoner Kaplan and others concerned with the fact that Vidal, Jr.'s life was in danger because of his double dealing with pro and anti Castroites. An admitted dealer in ~~gun~~ gun running he had been found nearly fatally beaten one night in New York by a group of Cubans, but he apparently refused to identify them.

Kaplan has said that Vidal was engaged in everything from narcotics to gunrunning, although Kaplan continues to insist that his own involvement went no further than ~~gun~~gunrunning and bootlegging. However, when he was asked why he had joined the conspiracy in the first place, he replied that he has always been involved in risky things especially in the family molasses ~~business~~. "Everyone in ~~the~~ business knows that alcohol is a ~~key~~ by-product of molasses. This led straight to bootlegging. All the contracts involved in our business are secret since most of them involve high officials of nearly every government our business has exported to. This is one of the way they made money."

This may be the way the Kaplans sweetened up their fortune in the old days, but Joel Kaplan has said that Vidal was also involved in narcotic and the easiest and most obvious way to smuggle ~~max~~ pure heroin--worth thousands of dollars an ounce--is with large shipments of sugar. The risk is great, the potential profits very great.

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employ of the CIA and had acted somewhere along the line as a double agent. "He doublecrossed ~~them~~ ^{the CIA} as well as the Cubans and therefore wanted to appear dead to all of them", Kaplan told Ramparts reporters.

The conspiracy got under way when Vidal came to Mexico in the first days of November, 1961. He checked in at the Hotel Continental Hilton. He proceeded to make himself conspicuous by having himself ~~wait~~ paged in the ~~lobby~~ lobby and annoying the people in the laundry room. He went to the trouble of going there three times to have them press a pair of pants that had a huge patch on the front. ~~Patch on the front.~~ They told him it would be better for him to have a new pair. However, he insisted.

Later, a ~~man~~ policeman found the pants and a blood-stained jacket on a road off the Cuernavaca highway that is widely known as a popular lover's lane.

In relating this chapter of the evolving mystery, Velasquez said:

"The policeman was asked how it was that he found them in such a crowded place in the darkness. He replied that a friend had given him a pair of ~~binoculars~~ binoculars and he wanted to try them out after work. He then delivered the pants with nearly 700 pesos in them to show his 'honesty' ~~to the police~~ ~~to the police~~

(5) (a)

~~His~~ ~~remark~~ ~~is~~ ~~practically~~ ~~a~~ ~~fact~~. The pants also contained several old cancelled checks ~~is~~ endorsed by Vidal himself ~~amounting~~ amounting to \$3,635 made out to the Paint Company of America, his hotel key, other identifying objects, but no passport."

Velasquez pounded on several of these points.

He asked: "Now, what man who goes to a foreign city doesn't have his passport with him? Who carries canceled checks? Yet, despite these discrepancies, ~~surely~~ the Mexican courts accepted them."

There's a lot more the Mexican courts accepted.

Velasquez said that three days after the clothing was discovered, a body was found in a small town outside Mexico City called Puebla de la Ajusco. It had been covered with a small amount of earth but a foot was sticking out.

"This is the man identified ~~later~~ later as Vidal" Velasquez said, "by a frightened Hilton Hotel chambermaid who sees 500 people a day and by a woman who arrived from New York saying she was his wife. Her name was Teresa Carrasquillo and she appeared voluntarily."

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We later found out she was never ^{legally} married to him and had been earning her living as a prostitute for the past five years. She was taken to see the body and either fainted or pretended to faint and then signed a statement to the effect that it was her husband. And just imagine, the clothing was never even tried on the body. There was such a difference in size, it would have been all too apparent that the clothes did not belong to this dead man."

When Kaplan later was confronted by the above, he admitted to a part in it. "However, I never expected Vidal to disappear quite like this", he remarked not looking at his interviewer.

"What do you mean?" asked his interviewer.

Kaplan evaded the issue. When pushed a little further he said that sometimes he thought Vidal might have purposely disappeared "too well" leaving him holding the bag. "He might have been angry because I wouldn't give him money. He always wanted money.", Kaplan added. Kaplan's part in the conspiracy?

He met Vidal in Mexico City those first days in November of 1961. He came with two other men who were supposed to act as witnesses to the fact that Vidal was "dead." The men were Evsal Petrushansky and Haim Kopelsohn. ~~They were supposed to be witnesses to the fact that Vidal was dead.~~

All four of the men had entered Mexico on forged passports.

...wife Hopeson's connections ~~are~~ with the ~~obscure~~ ~~obscure~~, Petrushansky is neither obscure nor unknown to New York Police. Shortly after pornography charges against him were dismissed by a New York judge in October, 1962, U.S. deputy marshalls picked him up on a request ~~by~~ by the Mexican government for extradition in connection with the "murder" of Vidal.

Petrushansky was held in the Federal House of Detention in New York from October of '62 until April, 1965, pending the outcome of extradition proceedings against him.

Things went badly for Petrushansky. After losing all appeals in the lower courts, his case finally reached the U.S. Supreme Court. ~~The~~ The Court ruled against him, and a petition for rehearing was denied.

At this point another strange twist in the Kaplan case occurred. A personal appeal was made to President Johnson in Petrushansky's behalf by his attorneys.

~~And now we come to~~
And now we ~~come to~~ one of the strangest, and least publicized parts of the muddled Mexico "murder" that never took place. A case that had attracted little or no attention by the press fascinated President Johnson to the point that he overruled the Supreme Court and set Petrushansky free. The order was signed by Secretary of State Dean Rusk.

Obviously Johnson's interest in, and knowledge of, the Kaplan affair far exceeded ~~that of~~ that of the Supreme Court. To this day, his strange actions in a case, apparently involving a simple murder case in a foreign country, have never been explained. The explanation might be as embarrassing to the President as it would be enlightening to the public.

(Kaplan's final remarks to his Ramparts interviewers was ~~that~~ ~~he~~ that ~~he~~ ^{he} is trying to interest President Johnson in his predicament.)

There is one final piece of information on Petrushansky that may in some way shed light on ~~the~~ the "impression" he created with high officials at the White House. He is said to be or have been a CIA agent, who often used the name of Peter Ured.

Another man entered the conspiracy at ~~the time~~. ~~His name is~~
Luis de Garay who represented Joel Kaplan and Vidal, Jr. in the
Sucrose Corporation they had in Mexico.

Velasquez ~~said~~ ^{Said} "the original plan was to only have Garay's
car found with blood on it to make it appear that Vidal had been
killed in an accident. They were going to plant some personal
belongings. They broke stone and glass and filled the drivers
seat with this and blood they bought from the Blood Bank on Calle
de Frontera (Frontera Street). They bought it without even ~~xxxx~~
being sure it was Vidal's blood type. Then they realized this ^{plan} was
foolish because they had to have a body. They bought one at the
public morgue, ~~xxxx~~ Servicio Medico Forense, Calle Niños
Héroe, (Boy Heroes Street) ~~as~~ ^{can.} as easily as any medical student
~~They~~ They didn't have too much time and therefore could not
wait for a body that would fit the clothing that had already been
found. ^{three days before."}

This unknown body was the one dug up and identified as Vidal's.
Velasquez said: "The conspirators plotted this whole thing. There
was no murder. No one was killed. And yet the Mexican courts
accepted this and other evidence and Kaplan is serving time in jail
for Vidal's murder."

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handsome. The man who was identified as Vidal several days later underwent a fantastic change. He was about 65 years old, had blue eyes, a sharp beak-like nose and was definitely of Near Eastern origin."

Velasquez then produced a document bearing the seal of The Republic of El Salvador No. 0009594, stating that Louis Melchor Vidal, Jr., bearer of U. S. Passport No. 2938J2 pass across their frontier.

"This was after the date of the alleged murder in Mexico City while Kaplan and the other conspirators were on their way back to the United States," Velasquez said.

Note: It appears that the frontier pass & the wedding document were forged by Joel's attorney.

Kaplan Admits To Conspiracy

By PEARL GÓNZALEZ

Joel David Kaplan told THE NEWS he was in on the original conspiracy hatched in New York to make it appear that Louis Vidal was killed in Mexico.

He said the plan was thought of by Vidal, Vidal's father and others concerned with the fact that Louis Vidal's life was in danger. Vidal is said to have been running guns for pro and anti Castro Cubans based in New York. After Vidal had been found badly beaten one night it was decided that he had better "disappear."

Vidal came to Mexico and Kaplan, under an admitted false passport, met him here. He was accompanied by two other men. One was a man named Kopelson who is reported to have been in the intelligence of his native Israel. The other

was a Russian born American citizen named Petrushansky, who also entered under a false passport under the name Peter Green.

According to Kaplan, after the conspirators met and accomplished their purpose here, he, Kopelson and Petrushansky all left Mexico the same way they had entered. Kaplan went to see Vidal's father in New York. Vidal's father later signed a sworn affidavit to the effect that Kaplan had nothing to do with the disappearance of his son. This affidavit was introduced by defense attorney Victor Velázquez during the trial.

Kaplan said he was then "advised" to leave the United States until "the whole thing blew over." He said he went to Canada for a while and then decided to go to Spain.

Then, at the same time Vidal's alleged body was said to have been found, he is reported to have crossed the borders of Guatemala and El Salvador. Velázquez presented in court a photostatic copy of a document bearing the seal of The Republic of El Salvador No. 0009594 stating that Louis Melchor Vidal, Jr., bearer of U.S. Passport No. 2933J2 passed across their frontier.

Kaplan said that he expected Vidal to "disappear" but "not quite in this way." He explained his remark by saying that it appeared to him that Vidal apparently was angry because Kaplan would not give him some money he demanded and probably at this point decided to let Kaplan take whatever happened to him. Or, Kaplan speculated, he might be more directly responsible.

Kaplan said he had decided to go to Spain because "my uncle fired me after I returned from Mexico and I wanted to see Otto Carbón who was then in Madrid with his wife. Carbón and I had business in Peru but at that time he was living in

Madrid and was planning to return to South America shortly."

Kaplan said it was then that he was illegally brought back to Mexico, to be tried for the murder of Vidal.

Velázquez showed in court that the original District Attorney charged with indicating Kaplan changed the charge to "withholding evidence" since he found no reason to accuse Kaplan of murder. Two years later when Kaplan was out on bail he said he was threatened that the charge would be changed to murder if he didn't pay out a quarter of a million dollars. His being out on bail lasted a very few days when he was back in jail charged as threatened.

Velázquez pointed out in court that Kaplan could have left Mexico had he been guilty of murder, during the time he was out on bail.

Kaplan has not as yet said why he condescended to be a part of the conspiracy nor how he was actually brought back from Spain.

He has only repeated time after time that it is of the utmost convenience for his uncle to have him stay in prison.

Reporter Leaves Mexico

Claiming Life In Danger

A Ramparts magazine reporter hurriedly left Mexico this week, charging he was threatened with physical violence if he stayed. John Raymond was assigned to investigate the case of Joel David Kaplan, imprisoned here for murder.

Kaplan is the nephew of J.M. Kaplan, head of the Kaplan Fund. The Fund has been called one of the secret conduits for the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). It was Ramparts

magazine that first confirmed the CIA has been using front organizations to distribute funds.

Kaplan was sentenced here in 1961 to a 20 year term. His case has aroused periodic international interest in that his defense attorney insists the body of the man Kaplan allegedly killed was never identified.

Dead, according to local police, is Luis Melchor Vidal, Jr. The body was found in a shallow grave outside the

capital. But, according to Kaplan's attorney, Victor Velázquez, the identity of the body was never proved.

Raymond, the reporter, hinted during his stay here that the Kaplan case was of major importance but that the U.S. Embassy would not even help him (Raymond) visit the prisoner.

"It's obvious," he said, "the Mexican government has something to hide. And the Americans are helping them."

1961 ?

May 22, 1967

Community Affairs



the face is familiar

...OR, THE CASE IS FAMILIAR!

By PEARL GONZALEZ

As if you didn't know by now, there's an American named Kaplan who is in jail here serving a term for having killed another American, Vidal, who has never been proven to be dead.

What is Joel David Kaplan like?

Physically, he stands about five feet eight, has large brooding brown eyes, is about 40 and is balding rapidly.

Mentally, he is quite a giant. He was born in New York but practically grew up in New Mexico where he graduated from Roswell Military Institute, a high school, at the age of 16.

He reads The New York Times daily and Harpers and Atlantic magazines monthly. He speaks English, Spanish and "gets along rather well in French." He, therefore, is as up-to-date on world happenings as the daily newspapers. He has his opinions, too.

"Do you think any Cubans were mixed up in the death of Kennedy?"

"There might be a few independent Cubans involved, but I don't think Cuba had. It involves The Warren Report is obviously full of holes. It's a cover-up so that no one will investigate deeper things."

"What are your politics?"

"I'm not a member of any political party but I'm slightly left in Latin America. That's why I got into gun-running. It's dictators like the Somozas of Nicaragua, who should be gotten rid of. In the United States, there are two parties but they're practically the same, both representing business committees. However, the Democrats are more flexible. For example, Kennedy was in favor of social reforms."

"Your attorney, Victor Velázquez, remarked that you should be a writer. Have you ever tried writing?"

"Yes, short things. However, when you write you must keep in mind what magazine you are writing for since they all have their own viewpoints."

"What did you do when you graduated from military school?"

"The war was on and I wasn't thrilled about the idea of going into the infantry so I joined the Naval Air Force. I spent most of the war in the Miami Naval Air Station in Opa-Locka, Fla. I was in that for the last year of the war and the first year of the peace."

"I've heard that you were in Naval Intelligence during the war. Is that true?"

"How could it be? I was only 17 at the time and intelligence didn't take anyone that young."

"What did you do after the first year of the peace?"

"I went into my father's business. He has a branch in Veracruz. It was just there and he needed me."

"How did you meet Vidal?"

"Our fathers were in business together. I think I first met him in New York in 1950. We weren't close friends but he seemed a pleasant enough fellow. Friendly."

"Did it occur to you that there might be some unfriendly reason for his wanting you to meet him here in 1961? Like his seeming to have disappeared, leaving you in a situation like this?"

"Yes, it's occurred to me quite often. I've had a lot of time to think about it. Maybe it was because he wanted money which I refused to give him. We were in business together in molasses you know."

"What's life here like?"

"I have a rather large room. They've cleaned out the rats. I live alone. I have my radio and my books. My wife brings me food every day. It isn't too bad."

"You're speaking of the Mexican girl you married as your wife, aren't you? When did you divorce the girl you married in New York a long time ago?"

"By a twist of circumstances, I had to marry the Mexican girl before the New York divorce. However, my attorneys in New York are taking care of it now. I intend to stay married to the Mexican girl. She's been very kind and loyal to me. When I first came to this prison (Lacumberril) every human privilege was denied me because I wouldn't pay for it. I married this girl because it was the only way I could have had visitors."

"Somehow, I don't see you as a military student. Did you really like it?"

"Well, I wouldn't exactly call myself rebellious, but I did cope with it. My father was a typical Russian Jew who ruled his family with an iron hand. Military school was his idea. Although my father and I got along, not too badly in business, we had tremendous disagreements on other things."

"It would appear then that you had to fight for your individuality."

"That's always been true. The conformist fulfills a certain function. But he never goes beyond that. The individual is the one who makes progress. This doesn't necessarily mean that he's a happy individual, though."

Kaplan Intrigue Thickens

Continued from Page 1

can Republic. Vidal's father is said to have been a great friend of the late dictator, Trujillo, of that country.

The business grew into tremendous proportions and Kaplan's father then established the Kaplan trust now worth 20,000,000 dollars.

"Before my father died," Joel David Kaplan said without apparent malice, "my uncle persuaded him to turn over the entire estate to him, therefore he is now legal administrator."

But he added that it wasn't logical somehow that since his uncle controls all that money that could be the reason for wanting his nephew kept in jail.

"I think it has more to do with the fact that my uncle is politically powerful and ambitious to be even

more politically powerful in the American administration. Somewhere it helps him to help the CIA."

In retracing the circumstances that led up to his being accused of killing Vidal, Kaplan said that he and the alleged slain man also had business dealings in molasses dehydration. In 1962 Vidal was in Mexico apparently related to business matters. He sent for Kaplan who came here from San Antonio, Tex. Vidal had made a reservation at the Del Prado Hotel but preferred staying at the Hilton, which turned out to be the last place he was supposed to have been seen alive. Vidal had come to Mexico with a soldier dressed in civilian clothes, "a Central American type, I couldn't tell exactly from what country, but his name was Mendez. He was never heard from again."

Kaplan said that he had come with a man named Koppelson of Israel and another named Petrushansky, a Russian-born American. Both were later acquit-

ed at the same trial. The prisoner explained that he and the two above mentioned men were told to wait for Vidal by Vidal at the Hilton. Vidal never showed up.

When Kaplan was tried for his murder his defense lawyer, Victor Velázquez pointed out that Vidal had talked to other people after the date of his alleged death. He was later reported to have crossed the Guatemalan border, then the El Salvador border.

Nevertheless, a dead body was produced, never having been proved to be that of Vidal, and Kaplan was convicted.

Since Kaplan spends his days reading books and newspapers he knows the latest rumor in the case that Vidal is reported to have been seen in Cuba. He said: "This is a good possibility even though Vidal played a double role of helping Castro and the CIA. It might be convenient now for Castro to overlook Vidal's past dealings with him because of the help Vidal can give him now. This is why I think Vidal wanted people to believe him dead. He crossed so many people his life was in danger. He had made many clandestine trips to Cuba."

Kaplan said his case was appealed many times by Velázquez and that ten judges refused to handle it. "I have been denied every recourse to law" he said firmly.

And does he fully trust his defense attorney?

"Yes, I do. But I'm not so sure I trust Louis Nizer in New York who is represented by Velázquez here. I think a lot of pressure is being put on Nizer and that he hasn't helped as much as he could. Besides, of late, he seems to want to wash his hands of the entire matter."

Kaplan Can Only Wait and Watch

By PEARL GONZALEZ

THE NEWS spent a half hour Saturday noon talking with Joel David Kaplan in Lecumberri jail.

The man who has served over five years of a 28-year sentence for the alleged slaying of Louis Vidal, Jr., ap-

peared docile and patient as he waits to hear the outcome of the recent statement of defense lawyer Victor Velázquez that he will soon be released because it had been a perversion of Mexican law to convict him since there was never any proof that Vidal was ever killed.

Does Kaplan believe he

(Editor's Note: Joel David Kaplan of New York is serving a 23-year sentence in Lecumberri Prison for murder. An appeal is now pending with a decision expected in June. Kaplan's attorney, Victor Velázquez, maintains the body of Kaplan's alleged victim, Louis Vidal, was never properly identified. In recent weeks Kaplan has been linked with the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. He is the nephew of J.M. Kaplan, head of the Kaplan Fund which reportedly acted as a front for the CIA. Kaplan admits entering Mexico under a forged passport in 1961. Shortly after his arrival police reported the death of Louis Vidal. Kaplan was then brought here under cloudy circumstances to stand trial. Pearl González is reporting on the case.)

Mexico, D. F., Friday, May 12, 1967

World News

Kaplan Case Compounded

Continued from Page 1
THE NEWS some of the circumstances involved.

He said that he came to Mexico to look into the matter of Kaplan's having been sentenced to 23 years in prison after he was convicted of killing Luis Melchor Vidal, Jr., a fellow New Yorker, in 1961 when both were here.

Kaplan is the nephew of J. M. Kaplan, president and treasurer of the J. M. Kaplan Fund, Inc., a supposed channel for transmission of funds abroad for the CIA. Raymond's San Francisco-based magazine was the first to confirm the CIA has been using front organizations to distribute funds.

Raymond said that after he had been denied entrance to Lecumberri jail to see the prisoner Kaplan last Sunday two tall, heavy, burly Mexicans knocked on his door at the Hotel Hilton the following morning. A friend who was in the room with the reporter answered the door and was asked if a Mr. Raymond was there.

Raymond remarked that "they weren't the types you would ask in for tea" and the fact that he wasn't alone and that waiters and chambermaids were busily running about the halls at that hour probably was the reason nothing happened.

The reporter then checked out of the hotel and went to the airport. After he checked through customs a man who looked like one of his morning "callers" appeared at the gate, but could not get through for lack of papers.

Raymond said that when he was in New York working on the case about three weeks ago, he received an anonymous phone call tell-

ing him to "lay off the Kaplan case."

Since Kaplan's defense attorney has been quoted as saying that it was a perversion of Mexican law to convict him, and that there was no proof whatever that a man named Vidal was in fact killed, it is expected that the tribunal will free Kaplan shortly.

However, Raymond has reservations about this optimistic viewpoint because of the many difficulties encountered during his recent week's stay here.

The California reporter said that he expected to have his story ready for publication in Ramparts magazine in about two months.

Dear Mrs. [redacted]

Your brother, Joel, is in a very bad state. It appears that he's trying to drink himself to death. Some of the other prisoners have told me if someone doesn't help him soon, they don't think he'll last much longer. There have also been rumors that he's tried to cut his wrists.

At different times he told his defense attorney Victor Velasquez and me the same thing. "I wish I could talk but I can't." From his behavior it appears he prefers to die - and it also appears that your Uncle Jack isn't doing anything that we know of to help him as he said he would.

I've been told.

However, there are two ways Joel can be helped. That is, if he wants to be. First of all, even the warden told me anyone with money could buy his way out and he never understood why Joel hasn't tried! He said it must be a political reason. Well, the talk among the prisoners is that it costs 80,000 dollars to get out.

The other way is a lot less expensive, legal and longer. I just spoke with Velasquez and he said that he hasn't been paid by your Uncle Jack, not even for Court, filing and other fees since your Mother passed away. I told this to Ezra and he said it was just something "someone had overlooked!" I told it to Begger and he seemed shocked saying "Jack wouldn't do a thing like that, I'll tell him at once." It's boiled down to where Jack has written Velasquez to itemize his expenses - as if to say, if we need you any further, we'll let you know. This brings us to the second way to help Joel.

Velasquez can file for a rehearing based on new evidence. But he said even though he'd forego the fee he can't lay out any more money. In order to institute this new procedure he'll need at least 5,000 dollars which I know sounds like a lot, but there's a lot of people to be paid off, etc. I'm writing this part to your Uncle Jack thru Berlack, who "allows" me to ask questions which he either doesn't answer or gets around - and if he doesn't volunteer the money, I'll plainly insinuate that it appears as though he wants his nephew to stay in jail. I intend writing this to Nizer too, enclosing a news story quoting him as saying Joel isn't guilty and that he'd do anything he could to help him. What he actually said and what I didn't write because I didn't want any more doors slamming, is that he'd help Joel even if he had to go to the State Department!

I don't know if you have ever written to Joel, but if you can for no other reason than moral support it might help him hang on. God only knows what he's afraid to talk about, but he once did tell me "if you knew something pretty horrible that you couldn't prove your own innocence or, would you tell it?"

2.

Do you know an attorney named Sheldon Elsen? He's been to see Joel of late and it might be that he's replaced Bobick. I really don't know.

If your uncle fails to come across with the money for the appeal, can you possibly raise it?

Whatever information or ideas you have in general, please remember everything will be confidential.

Sincerely,

Pearl Gonzalez
Pearl Gonzalez

My home address is:
Ruben Dario 45-1
Mexico 5, D. F.

Phone: 31-05-36

June Decision Due On Kaplan Appeal

By PEARL GONZALEZ

The final outcome of the Joel David Kaplan case will be decided by the Supreme Court of Mexico in June.

These words prompted Victor Velázquez, the defense attorney for the man convicted of killing Louis Vidal, Jr., in 1981 to ask THE NEWS during an exclusive interview: "I wonder what the American government will do, if the decision is negative, to help Kaplan, an American citizen?"

One of Mexico's most outstanding trial lawyers, Velázquez has remarked that it had been a perversion of Mexican law to convict Kaplan, "since there never was evidence that Vidal had been killed."

He said that Vidal, an American of Puerto Rican and Dominican descent (the god-child of Trujillo) was about 30 years old, dark-eyed, short-nosed and handsome. The man who was identified as Vidal five days later "underwent a fantastic change. He was about 65 years old, had blue eyes and was definitely of Near Eastern origin," Velázquez said.

How did this happen?

Velázquez said it was all the result of a plan to show that Vidal was dead because he had been involved in double-dealing too many people. Vidal had gone to the Hotel Continental Hilton and made it known everywhere he could that he was named Vidal. He even annoyed the laundry room to the point of having them press a pair of pants that had a huge patch on the front. They told him it would be better for him to have a new pair. He went back there three different times making sure they would remember him and the pants.

Later a policeman found the pants and a blood-stained jacket. He found them on a road off the Cuernavaca highway that is widely known as a popular lover's lane, said Velázquez. "The policeman was asked how come he found them in such a crowd of people in the darkness and he replied that a friend had given him a pair of binoculars and he wanted to try them out after work."

"He delivered the pants with nearly 700 pesos in them to show his 'honesty'," continued Velázquez. "The pants also contained several old cancelled checks. Who carries old cancelled checks? There were other things, but no passport. Now what man who goes to a foreign city doesn't have his passport with him? The key from the hotel room that was Vidal's at the Hilton was also found in the pants. Later the big patch in them was identified by the people in the laundry room."

Velázquez said that three days later in Puebla de la Ajusco a body was discovered. It had been covered with a small amount of earth but a foot was sticking out, to make sure it would be seen. "This is the man iden-

tified later as Vidal by a frightened Hilton Hotel chambermaid who sees 500 people a day and by a woman who arrived from New York saying she was his wife. Her name was Teresa Carrasquillo and she appeared voluntarily. We later found out she was never married to him and had been earning her living as a prostitute for the past five years. She was taken to see the body and either fainted or pretended to faint and then signed a statement to the effect that it was her husband. "And just imagine," said Velázquez, "the clothing was never even tried on the body. There was such a difference in size, it would have been all too apparent that the clothes did not belong to this dead man."

Velázquez said no one knows what happened to the body because the alleged wife left after she said she was going to stay and see her "husband" avenged, and the body disappeared, too.

The defense attorney pointed out that he has a signed affidavit from Vidal's father in New York that Kaplan came to see him after Vidal disappeared and that he swore that Kaplan had nothing to do with the disappearance of his son.

Death Certificate 'Worthless'

(Editor's Note: Joel David Kaplan of New York is serving a 28-year sentence in Le-cumberri Prison for the murder of Louis Vidal. A decision is now pending in June. Kaplan's attorney, Victor Velázquez, maintains the body was never properly identified. In recent weeks Kaplan has been

linked with the CIA. He is the nephew of J.M. Kaplan, head of the Kaplan Fund which reportedly acted as a front for the CIA. Kaplan admits entering Mexico under a forged passport in 1961. Pearl González is reporting on the case.)

By PEARL GONZALEZ

An entry of the death of a person named Louis Vidal, Jr., has been found in the records of the U.S. Embassy here.

The entry said that a death certificate had been issued Nov. 27, 1961, in the Mexican Civil Registry Death Book No. 9, Page 57. The embassy then issued its own form, a report of death entered on December 19, 1961, giving a report of death as "November of 1961."

The body was then said to be claimed by the alleged widow and shipped to the

United States. There is also embassy evidence that Vidal's father wrote a letter to the embassy thanking them for their assistance.

"This was all part of the plan to make it appear that Vidal was dead," said Victor Velázquez when confronted by THE NEWS. "But the conspirators themselves bought this unknown body as easily as a medical student could and used it for their purpose," he said.

"I still maintain there never was a death certificate issued," he continued. "There is a notice of an entry. This is a big difference. If there is a death certificate, why wasn't it brought into the court as evidence? What was brought into the court as evidence was a clerk with a book showing an entry."

Velázquez went on to say that in Mexico in order to establish a homicide three things are required. One, a coroner has to show that death was not natural, two, the body has to be identified by at least two reliable witnesses not under pressure and three, a death certificate must be duly signed.

Velázquez said that none of these requirements were met with. The woman who identified herself as Vidal's widow, he said, never showed proof of the fact she was married to him. She even used her own name, Teresa Carrasquillo, he stated. "We even found out later

that she had been married to someone else and, of her divorce after Vidal was allegedly killed. This was proved in the American court and introduced into the court here by the defense with a photostatic copy."

The U.S. Embassy stated that the same paper that registered the entry of death also had another notation a year later signed by a Hotel Continental Hilton employe to the effect that she had signed the identification paper because she was frightened.

SF Chronicle OCT 30 1971

Denial on Escaper

Caracas

A report that a Venezuelan who escaped from a Mexico City prison by helicopter last summer had been recaptured in Caracas was dismissed as "baseless" yesterday by the police here.

The newspaper Ultimas Noticias Thursday reported the capture of Antonio Contreras Castro, who soared over the walls of Santa Marta Acatitlan Prison August 18. He was accompanied in the flight to freedom by Joel D. Kaplan of New York, described in some press reports at the time as "a CIA Agent."

United Press

NOV 1 1971

SF Chronicle

Copter Jailbreak Mastermind Talks

United Press

Caracas

A Venezuelan who says he was the "brains" behind the first recorded prison break by helicopter told a news conference yesterday it cost \$1 million to arrange.

Counterfeiter Carlos Contreras Castro, who soared to freedom over the walls of a Mexico City prison in August with Joel D. Kaplan, a convicted American murderer who has been described as a CIA agent, surfaced in Caracas Saturday. He said he returned to Venezuela three weeks ago.

"The escape was organized from outside Mexico," Contreras told newsmen in the luxuri-

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ous Caracas Hilton Hotel. "It cost a million dollars and I was the brains behind it and the one who carried it out."

DETENTION

Contreras said he was detained by the Venezuelan police from October 7, when he re-entered the country, until Saturday. He said there are no charges pending against him in Venezuela and that Mexico is not trying to extradite him.

"I was being protected by the Venezuelan state against possible attacks from a country whose leaders will never pardon me for having made a fool of them," he said.

Contreras said the helicopter which lifted him and Kaplan from an exercise yard in the Santa Marta Acatitla Prison August 18 hovered just above the ground for eight seconds while the two men clamored on board.

Prison guards, assuming the helicopter contained government officials, stood looking on.

ALTITUDE

The helicopter sped away at 400 feet to avoid detection by airport radar screens. Contreras said the escape plan called for a helicopter to spend no more than 15 seconds within the prison.

He said they flew for 15 minutes to a field illuminated by car headlights and then switched to a small airplane which took them to Tamaulipas state near the United

States border.

Contreras said Kaplan entered the U.S. while he flew in another plane to Guatemala and returned to Venezuela via Panama. He said all pilots involved in the escape were Americans.

SENTENCE

Contreras had been serving a five-year sentence for counterfeiting Mexican passports. He said he had only 1½ months remaining in his sentence when "they offered me a lot of money" to get Kaplan out.

He declined to say who paid him or tell how the helicopter and planes were obtained.

"My companion (Kaplan) had already spent \$200,000 on two abortive escape attempts," he said. "One day we were in the exercise yard playing basketball when I looked up and saw a helicopter. The idea for the escape came to me in that instant."

The Venezuelan said Kaplan, nephew of a U. S. millionaire, did not murder Mexican Melcho Vidal, a crime for which he was sentenced to 28 years in prison. He said Vidal is still alive.

For the Record *Pool, 8/29/71*
• A Venezuelan who made a spectacular helicopter escape from a Mexican jail with American Joel Kaplan last August, was reported recaptured as he tried to enter his country.