

LA City News wire

178

KENNEDY 5/13/74

1ST LD 156

BY JOYCE PETERSON

CNS STAFF WRITER

LOS ANGELES (CNS). -- CORONER THOMAS T. NOGUCHI TODAY INSISTED THAT THE BULLETS WHICH KILLED SEN. ROBERT F. KENNEDY WERE FIRED AT POINT-BLANK RANGE DESPITE CONFLICTING TESTIMONY FROM WITNESSES TO THE ASSASSINATION.

NOGUCHI SAID HE BASED HIS FINDINGS ON "PHYSICAL EVIDENCE" SHOWING THAT THE GUN COULD NOT HAVE BEEN MORE THAN ONE TO THREE INCHES FROM THE SENATOR'S HEAD.

EYEWITNESSES WHO SAW KENNEDY SHOT IN JUNE, 1968, AT THE AMBASSADOR HOTEL HAVE TESTIFIED THAT CONVICTED ASSASSIN SIRHAN B. SIRHAN WAS STANDING SEVERAL FEET OR YARDS AWAY.

NOGUCHI WAS THE FINAL WITNESS AT A HEARING CALLED BY SUPERVISOR BAXTER WARD TO LOOK INTO THE BALLISTICS CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING THE SHOOTING.

EARLIER, TWO FIREARMS EXPERTS RAISED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BULLETS WHICH COULD BACK UP CLAIMS BY SOME CRITICS THAT MORE THAN ONE GUN WAS USED IN THE ASSASSINATION.

WARD SAID HE WOULD REVIEW EVIDENCE PRESENTED IN THE THREE-HOUR SESSION AND PRESENT HIS FINDINGS TO SUPERVISORS A WEEK FROM TOMORROW.

(MORE)

TE1218PM

180

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1ST ADD 1ST LD 178/ XXX FROM TROMORROW.

NOGUCHI ALSO TESTIFIED THAT SHORTLY AFTER KENNEDY'S DEATH, HE HAD CONTACTED DR. VINCENT P. GUINN, AN EXPERT NEUTRON ANALYSIS, ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF MAKING AN ANALYSIS OF THE BULLETS IN THE SHOOTING.

THE IDEA WAS DROPPED, NOGUCHI SAID, BECAUSE OF OBJECTIONS FROM DE WAYNE WOLFER, LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT'S BALLISTICS EXPERT. NOGUCHI SAID THE WOLFER FELT THE NEUTRON ANALYSIS WOULD DAMAGE THE BULLETS AS EVIDENCE.

ALTHOUGH INVITED TO TESTIFY, NEITHER WOLFER OR DISTRICT ATTORNEY JOSEPH BUSCH SHOWED UP AT THE HEARING.

BUSCH HAS SAID PREVIOUSLY THAT THE "TWO-GUN" THEORY HAS BEEN THOROUGHLY INVESTIGATED AND HAS NO VALIDITY. HE HAS ALSO OBJECTED TO RE-OPENING THE CASE IN WHICH SIRHAN HAS ALREADY BEEN CONVICTED.

NOGUCHI WAS HIS TESTIMONY BEFORE THE GRAND JURY WAS GREETED WITH "SURPRISE" BY THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE. MINOR?

HE SAID THAT AT ONE POINT, A DEPUTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY (WHO WAS NOT IDENTIFIED) HAD OFFERED HIM A CHANCE TO "CORRECT" HIS TESTIMONY BUT THAT HE HAD DECLINED TO DO SO.

(MORE)

TE1230PM

KENNEDY 5/13/74

END ADD 1ST LD 178 XXX DO SO.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE MURDER WEAPON WERE RAISED IN TESTIMONY BY BALLISTICS EXPERTS LOWELL BRADFORD AND HERBERT MACDONELL. (CAPS M D).

BOTH SAID THAT THERE WAS A DIFFERENCE IN THE MAIN BULLET TAKEN FROM SEN. KENNEDY'S NECK AND ANOTHER WHICH HIT A BYSTANDER IN THE AMBASSADOR HOTEL SHOOTING.

THEY SAID THAT THE KENNEDY BULLET -- KNOWN AS EXHIBIT 47 -- HAD ONE MANUFACTURE'S GROOVE KNOWN AS A CANELURE. IN CONTRAST THE SECOND BULLET -- KNOWN AS EXHIBIT 54 -- HAD TWO SUCH CANELURES.

BOTH BRADFORD AND MACDONELL SAID THAT, BASED ON THE EVIDENCE AS NOW AVAILABLE, THEY COULD NOT ESTABLISH THAT THE BULLETS CAME FROM THE SAME GUN.

THEY ALSO URGED THAT THE GUN BE RE-FIRED TO CLEAR UP THE CONTROVERSY.

WARD HAS REPEATEDLY URGED SUCH RE FIRING BUT HAS GOTTEN NOWHERE WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT AND COURT OFFICIALS.

ORIGINALLY, WARD HAD ALSO PLANNED TO TAKE TESTIMONY FROM WILLIAM HARPER, A PASADENA CRIMINOLOGIST WHO TOUCHED OFF THE ORIGINAL CONTROVERSY ABOUT THE BULLETS IN 1971.

HOWEVER BECAUSE OF HARPER'S ILLNESS, AN AFFIDAVIT ON HIS EARLIER FINDING WAS READ INTO THE RECORD.

WARD, A CANDIDATE FOR THE DEMOCRATIC GUBERNATORIAL NOMINATION, CONDUCTED THE MEETING IN HIS CAPACITY AS CHAIRMAN OF THE CORONER'S DEPARTMENT.

AS SUCH HE HANDLED THE QUESTIONING IN A BRISK MANNER, AFFORDING NO CHANCE FOR CROSS-EXAMINATION.

OPENING WITNESS AT THE SESSION WAS FORMER COUNTY CLERK WILLIAM SHARP WHO AGAIN DENIED THAT HIS OFFICE HAD MISHANDLED EXHIBITS IN THE SIRHAM CASE.

SHAPP INSISTED THERE WAS ADEQUATE SECURITY OVER BULLETS AND OTHER MATERIAL.

(PICKUP 3RD PGH BGNNG; THE FORMER XXX)

TE110PM

KENNEDY 5/13/74

~~LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT~~
~~THAT THE BULLETS HANDLED WERE IDENTIFIED AS THE ASSASSINATION OF~~
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THE FORMER OFFICIAL SAID HIS OFFICE HAD NEVER RECEIVED INFORMATION ON SPECIAL PACKAGING WHICH HAD BEEN DISCUSSED BY THE COURT.

SHARP SAID THAT SPECIAL CHECKS WERE MAINTAINED SO THAT ONLY AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL WERE ALLOWED TO VIEW THE BULLETS INVOLVED IN THE ASSASSINATION.

HE ALSO DENIED THAT ANY PORTIONS OF THE EXHIBITS THEMSELVES WERE STOLEN BUT CONCEDED THAT ZEROX PAGES COPIED FROM SIRHAN'S NOTEBOOK WERE MISSING.

SHARP TESTIFIED AS WARD OPENED A DAY-LONG HEARING INTO THE BALLISTICS CONTROVERSY INVOLVED IN THE KENNEDY CASE.

IE 1024AM

KENNEDY 5/13/74

4TH ADD 1ST LD 178 KXX KENNEDY CASE.

MEANWHILE, WARD CAME UNDER STINGING ATTACK FOR RUNNING A "SIDESHOW" FROM LYNN C. COMPTON, ASSOCIATE JUSTICE OF THE STATE COURT OF APPEAL. COMPTON ISSUED A SEVEN-PAGE STATEMENT RECALLING HIS ROLE AS HEAD OF THE SIRHAN PROSECUTION DURING THE TIME HE (COMPTON) WAS CHIEF DEPUTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY.

HE SAID HE HOPED " TO PREVENT THE PUBLIC FROM BEING DELUDED INTO BELIEVING THAT PERSONS OTHER THAN SIRHAN SIRHAN WERE INVOLVED IN THE ASSASSINATION OF SENATOR KENNEDY."

COMPTON SAID THAT KE/ LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS HAD BEEN AWARE AT THE TIME THAT A CONSPIRACY THEORY MIGHT BE ADVANCED AT A LATER DATE. BECAUSE OF THIS, COMPTON SAID, ALL LEADS WERE PURSUED IN DEPTH.

" THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRETY OF THIS COORDINATED INVESTIGATIVE EFFORT, NOT ONE SCINTILLA OF EVIDENCE WAS EVER DEVELOPED TO INDICATE THAT THE ASSASSINATION OF ROBERT F. KENNEDY WAS ANYTHING MORE THAN THE PRODUCT OF A SINGLE MIND -- THAT IS, THE MIND OF SIRHAN SIRHAN,"

COMPTON SAID HE WAS CONVINCED THAT NO OTHER PERSONS AIDED SIRHAN AND THAT THE KILLING WAS NOT THE RESULT OF ANY CONSPIRACY.

COMPTON COMPLAINED THAT THE HEARING WAS BEING CONDUCTED IN A FORUM "WHICH LACKS A MEDIUM OF SIMILARITY TO A JUDICIAL PROCEEDING."

" THIS HEARING CAN ONLY HAVE AS ITS OBJECTIVE THAT OF CREATING SUSPICION IN THE PUBLIC MIND THAT OTHER PERSONS INVOLVED IN THE ASSASSINATION HAVE GONE UNDETECTED," HE ADDED.

TE355PM