

ART KEVIN, KMPC RADIO, LOS ANGELES, DECEMBER 20, 1974 -- WITH PAUL SHARAGA

KEVIN: "Interview with Paul Sharaga -- 12/20/74, 7:00pm...Paul Sharaga, you were a man who had a situation occur in the performance of your duty on the night that Robert Kennedy was murdered here in Los Angeles. So, in your own words tell me what happened, roughly what time, and how it all came to pass.

SHARAGA: "Well, at the evening or the night of the occurrence, I was a sergeant assigned to Rampart Division...in the city of Los Angeles...and I was just adjacent to the rear driveway of the Ambassador Hotel parking lot, the rear parking lot, when the call come out, ah, 'Ambulance shooting,' at-ah, the address on Wilshire Boulevard of the Ambassador. I think it's thirty-seven hundred or thirty-four hundred. I don't recall at this time. Ah, I immediately made a right turn up on to the parking lot, and-ah, I would estimate that I was at the scene and parked in less than three minutes from the incident of the shooting itself...less than thirty seconds from the time the call came out..."

KEVIN: "Would this be at the front of rear of -- "

SHARAGA: "No, this was on the upper level rear parking lot, which would be the rear of the hotel that exits out on to 8th Street. The-ah...first thing that came to my attention, of course, was the-ah...mass confusion...ah...people running in all directions...Ah...An older couple...probably in their fifties...fifties to sixties...ah, came running toward me and I stopped them and asked what-what had happened...and-ah they related that they were outside one of the doors to the Embassy Room, when a young couple in their early twenties...came rushing out...This couple seemed to be in a state of glee, shouting, 'We shot him! We shot him! We killed him!' The woman then stated that she asked the young lady, 'Who-who did you shoot?!' or 'Who was shot?!' and the young lady replied, 'Kennedy! We shot him! We killed him!' -- The only description I could get of this couple were that they were in their early twenties...The woman was wearing a polka-dot dress...Ah, neither of the older couple could furnish any additional information, ah, in that they were quite hysterical at the time, and-ah it was difficult for them to talk."

KEVIN: "Did you take this information down on your notepad then, or just hear it and retain it for later notes?"

SHARAGA: "I...immediately took it down on my notepad -- ah, which was a little-ah notebook that I kept in my pocket...and immediately broadcast...out over the air, what had happened...I informed communications that I was setting up a command post in the area, requested they broadcast the description of the suspects as given to me..."

KEVIN: "Would the suspects have crossed your path then prior to your getting to the scene and bumping into this elderly couple?"

SHARAGA: "I have no way of knowing...The-ah hotel exits-ah on Wilshire Boulevard and on 8th Street and...I have no idea of what way...the suspects went. The older couple didn't indicate which direction they took."

KEVIN: "Did you get their name?"

SHARAGA: "I did at the time...ah, for the life of me I can't recall it now, but I recorded it and gave the name to...ah, the investigating detectives, Rampart

SHARAGA: detectives, Sergeant Bill Jordon. As best I can recall, it was a name like Bernstein...but I...Sorry I can't recall any more.

KEVIN: "They, you indicated, were somewhat hysterical as they retold that story to you."

SHARAGA: "Quite hysterical. Quite hysterical."

KEVIN: "You don't think that they mistook the words that they relayed to you they heard, that is to say in their hysteria, thought they heard, two people, a man and a woman in their early twenties shouting 'We've shot him!' but rather 'He's been shot!' You know, 'He-we've' - that sort of thing."

SHARAGA: "In my evaluation of the situation, based upon the experience of twenty years as a peace officer in this city...I would say, that because of the spontaneity of their answers...that-ah...there's no question in my mind that as to the veracity of it."

KEVIN: "Just in case notes are lost, as sometimes they do become lost, mislaid, misplaced, that sort of thing, to the best of your recollection, Paul, can you describe this elderly couple -- what you think their name is, in the hopes they are listening and if they hear this, they'll know it was they."

SHARAGA: "The couple, as best I can describe them, appeared to be an elderly Jewish couple, the woman about five-foot-two...and stocky. Not extremely heavy, but just-just stocky...The man about the same height, maybe an inch or two taller, and as I recall, thin hair to balding...but I can't recall any further."

KEVIN: "Did they have accents -- Jewish accents?"

SHARAGA: "I can't recall. I can't recall. I don't believe so."

KEVIN: "In the event they are listening, we would obviously want them to contact us here, and just further corroborate your own recollections of that night. I say corroborate, Paul, because interestingly, as you and I had discussed prior to actually taping this interview, there is no record to indicate anywhere in SUS or in the trial of Sirhan, himself, that this report did emanate from you at the time of the incident itself. Now, again, we don't know why at this point that has come to pass, but did you file a formal report, and what has happened to your notes?"

SHARAGA: "I filed...an initial report after the-ah...command post closed down, or after I closed the command post down, secured the area...left a detail of security personnel to guard the floor of the hotel the Kennedy family had taken over... or was using...better expression...ah...I then proceeded to Ramparts Station, where I dictated verbally to the Captain's secretary...ah-the report...and this report was dictated immediately after the-the-ah command post. I believe it lasted about thirteen hours, and the dictation roughly off and on for about eight or nine hours."

KEVIN: "Do you remember her name, the Captain's secretary? First name, even?"

SHARAGA: "No, I don't."

KEVIN: "And the Captain was who at that time?"

SHARAGA: "Floyd Phillips. F-yes, Floyd Phillips."

KEVIN: "Was he there as you were dictating, or did he have -- "

SHARAGA: "Off and on. Yes, he was also at the-ah scene of the-ah...ah-the Ambassador. Reported-ah...my Watch Commander-ah...Lieutenant-ah...Robert Sillings, ah, who subsequently made captain, ah, I believe is still a captain on the-ah Los Angeles Police Department, ah, was present. As a matter of fact-ah, ah, set up-ah the-ah...the operations inside the Embassy Room with-ah Sergeant Roland (phonetic)."

KEVIN: "So they were aware at different points, the two gentlemen you mention of the report you were filing, of the nature of it, to some degree?"

SHARAGA: "Oh, yes, yes...Others were aware of it...ah...ah...Deputy Chief Powers. I believe he was Deputy Chief at the time...reported to the scene...oh...some two hours, I think, ah...after the incident, ah..and, came to me and said-ah, 'Who's responsible for this description of the two suspects that's going out on the air?'

KEVIN: "You were still at the Ambassador at this point?"

SHARAGA: "Still at the parking lot, yes....I had the command post set up in full operation at that time...and I reported that-ah....I was responsible...for ...the-ah...description...being put out. It was being broadcast over-ah Control One every fifteen minutes on the quarter hour....and he said, 'Well,' he says, 'let's cancel that-ah...that description. We don't want to make a Federal case out of it. We've got the suspect in custody....'...and-ah. or course, at the time I-in my communication with the inside the Embassy Room with Lt. Sillings and Sgt. Roland, I understood that...ah, one male suspect, ah, Sirhan, had been...taken into custody, and I assumed that this was the... suspect...that the older couple had-ah indicated to me, the male suspect. Ah, I later came to believe that it was not, because he certainly did not fit the description of...as they portrayed it...to me....But at the time I indicated to the inspector that I would-ah...I would discontinue the report of the....male suspect, but I continued-ah requesting broadcast of the female suspect."

KEVIN: "And did the inspector allow you then to continue with the 'female' broadcast?"

SHARAGA: "He didn't have any choice. It was either that or relieve me of my post."

KEVIN: "Alright, so you kept broadcasting that 'young girl, early twenties, polka-dot dress!..'"

SHARAGA: "Well, I indicated to Communications ah-to continue the broadcast. I don't know whether Communications did or not, because I was not monitoring the Control Frequency. I was on the Tactical Frequency."

KEVIN: "But for the first two hours or before your visit from inspector powers, to your knowledge that was being broadcast (?)"

SHARAGA: "Yes."

KEVIN: "Okay. The reason I ask about it, of course, is that hopefully tape logs might

KEVIN: "(continuing) still be available, again, to further corroborate that this was the situation as it took place.

"Ahm, you finally stopped broadcasting then at the behest of Inspector Powers, who indicated there was one male suspect in custody. Did he seem to run-down the possibility of a girl, or of a female suspect at that time or just discount it or what?"

SHARAGA: "....Ah, he made very light of it, ah.....Just a kind of a-an indifferent attitude, ah, 'Let's don't make a Federal case out of this. We've got the suspect...in custody...THE suspect in custody'..indicating that-ah....or at least alluding to the fact that there was only one suspect -- and of course he was in possession of information from the inside of the Embassy Room that I-ah was not, although I had communication with them...by-ah CC units, why, it still wasn't a running dialogue..."

KEVIN: "Paul, it's been obviously seven years since the incidents. As you know, in the course of the trial there were a couple of people who made mention of this polka-dot dress lady....One was a young lady from Pasadena named Sandy Serrano, and LAPD, at the time, discounted her report, indicating that she hadn't truly seen what she'd thought she'd seen. Another man inside the suite that night, a Los Angeles newsman named Booker Griffin, had also said that he saw, in the pantry that night, a polka-dot dress lady. Well, at the Sirhan trial a polka-dot dress lady was produced and this lady apparently satisfied any of the reports of this polka-dot dress incident itself. When you heard the trial developing, and as, you know, heard all this testimony coming down, what were you thinking? Did you figure this was, indeed, the polka-dot dress lady -- or did you know it wasn't by virtue of the description or what?"

SHARAGA: "It's difficult for me to say, because...I did not take an interest in the trial nor follow it. Ah-ah, I believe at the time I was still working either nights or mornings, and-ah...my contacts with radio stations was nil and-ah...reading the newspaper was-ah...ah, just on occasion...So-ah, to say that I followed the trial with even mild interest, ah, would not be factual. I didn't and so I was not aware of the facts...relating to it or the things that were brought out at the trial other than-ah piecemeal that I'd receive."

KEVIN: "Somewhere along the line, though, when did it come to your consciousness that something was not quite together, in terms of the report you'd had from this couple, as opposed to what had happened?"

SHARAGA: "Well, sometime after the incident, ah, after SUS was set up.....I received orders...to make a....report.....of my total involvement in the incident... from beginning to end...with all related facts.....and so...I did to the extent of-ah...going to the parking lot and measuring it out, laying out a diagram which was part of the second report. This was the second report, mind you.....And-ah, I fully covered the incidents as relating to my command post only...Of course, I could relate to anything inside the Embassy Room. I wasn't there.....I made-ah as a basis of this report, incidently, I used the copious notes that I'd had from the incident...and the original-ah typewritten report that was made subsequent to the incident....After completing the report, I had multiple copies run off....and-ah.....kept some at the station and-ah sent copies to SUS....As a matter of fact, I think I personally hand-delivered 'em one night. Ah, there was a deadline on it. They-they wanted them, and I person-

SHARAGA: "(continuing) ally delivered 'em."

KEVIN: "For those in our audience who might not be aware, 'SUS' is the short for 'Special Unit Senator,' which was set up by then-District Attorney Evelle J. Younger to work solely on the murder of Robert F. Kennedy."

SHARAGA: "Yes, it was a a-ah central point where all information would be funnelled in to and-ah.....the final report...based on information from all sources would be formulated...But subsequent to my making this second report, I-ah...I had two copies...in the...Watch Commander's drawer -- Lower right hand drawer -- which I would peruse on occasion when sitting-acting Watch Commander on the morning watch.....and-ah....I had one copy in the Sergeant's Report Room, in the mail box in the Sergeant's Report Room....I thought I'd keep these extra copies there in the event additional copies were needed.....and...approximatelyoh...one or two weeks later -- within two weeks -- after the report was filed.....there was something I wanted to personally refer to...in the report ...and...I found the reports gone. All copies, ah, gone, and, of course, I had assumed that the Watch Commander cleaned-ah, the Day Watch Commander cleaned the desk out, disposed of -- "

KEVIN: "This is at Rampart -- "

SHARAGA: "This is at Rampart Station -- and had disposed of the reports...Ah, I contacted the-ah....Day Watch Sergeant, who-ah.....was usually aware of what was going on and he had no knowledge of the whereabouts of these reports, from the desk nor from the-ah, ah Sergeant's mail box, in the Sergeant's Report Room..... and-ah I asked my Watch Commander, who at the time was Lt. Bill Jordan -- this was on the Night Watch, I'm sure now, on the Night Watch -- and he had no.... idea of what had happened to the reports....and-ah to this day I don't know what happened to the reports.....I-I know that-ah....there were none left at the-at the station."

KEVIN: "But SUS should have had reports. True?"

SHARAGA: "Yes."

KEVIN: "Did you inquire from SUS as to what what happened to them?"

SHARAGA: "I inquired from SUS if-ah, if there was some reason why they had-ah...ah, came ah, come to Rampart and disposed of the copies that I had and-ah.....their attitude was they didn't even know what I was talking about-ah, there was no involvement on their part whatsoever....."

KEVIN: "Do you feel that SUS had your reports, though, the ones that you -- "

SHARAGA: "Oh, the ones that I gave them, yes...ah, at the time I-I really didn't think too much....about the absence of these reports, and I thought nothing of it... really, until....ah, the book, 'SUS,' came out and....when failing to see any mention of the Command Post-ah...and the activities surrounding it, including the description, why this was when the first questions started to form in my mind."

KEVIN: "That would have been about when, Paul, roughly?"

SHARAGA: "Oh...difficult to say. I was in San Diego by then, so it would had to have been in the last-ah...three and a half years."

KEVIN: "And that was the first 'hint' you had, the first suspicion that 'something' wasn't quite run through 'the dryer,' if you will, that should have been (?)"

SHARAGA: "Well, let's just say there was...questions in my mind as to the-ah...ah.....
lack of information."

KEVIN: "Have you had any trepidations about 'going public' with it at this juncture?"

SHARAGA: ".....No, I'm just reporting a fact of occurrence that-ah, that happened some years ago-ah, the same as I would recor-record anything else."

KEVIN: "There've been various stories of people who've had accidents and worse, people who've been involved with key evidence, both in the John Kennedy assassination and, of course, in the Robert Kennedy assassination. Do you sense any personal apprehension over this kind of thing?"

SHARAGA: "No, but perhaps I'm too naive to..(laughing)...and I don't-ah...I don't for one minute pretend to be naive, but-ah.....!-maybe in-in my mind I can't conceive...I can't conceivably believe that...someone on the...someone or some persons on the Los Angeles Police Department...would have deliberately done...anything wrong-ah...In my mind, as far as I'm concerned it was just-ah an inadequate...investigation.....ah, ah..."

KEVIN: "You are now retired from the force, yes?"

SHARAGA: "Yes...I retired July, 1969, on a service pension."

KEVIN: "Does that mean the same thing as "Honorable Discharge" in the service?"

SHARAGA: "Yes it does."

KEVIN: "I talked to some of your cohorts, at Hollenbeck and Rampart, who had worked with you, and about the worst thing they said about you was that you were kind of 'salty' at times...I guess some police officers can get that was some times."

SHARAGA: "I-I think that-ah...most any police officer can get that way. (laughing)"

KEVIN: "Paul, do you feel, in your own mind, that based on eyewitness description that was given to you -- and based on the fact that there were several other people who had given similar descriptions -- do you feel that the possibility, then, sincerely exists there was one person other than Sirhan -- and, in fact, as I think you indicated earlier -- the description of the male you got from the couple did not seem to match Sirhan's, this might indicate, you know, more than one other person?" (i.e., being criminally involved in RFK's assassination.)

SHARAGA: ".....Purely conjecture.....but based...on the...information, given to me at the time...and...the minute study that I've done since then of the incident... I believe that there were two other persons besides Sirhan....ah, namely the couple described to me by the first people running from the Embassy Room.... that-ah there's always been the question in my mind that....they just didn't

SHARAGA: "(continuing) have time to dream up a story....It was just-ah...it was too fast. It was too spontaneous. They were excited, true, and I-I understand people in-in the heat of excitement, ah, say things, but their statements were...were not hysterical. They were rational statements, although they were ah-to the point of hysterics in being upset over the incident..."

KEVIN: "Two things that I want to clarify: number one, you said that the couple were elderly and appeared to be a Jewish couple, but when I asked earlier, you know, whether they had an accent or not, you thought not -- and I'm wondering how did you, you know, assume that their demeanor was Jewish. I mean, what was the -- "

SHARAGA: "(sighing) Very difficult to-ah....to say-ah, perhaps-ah.....having been born a Jew, ah, you recognize the traits in-in others, ah, of-of like birth. Ahh, I don't know."

KEVIN: "Okay. Second point: the description that they gave to you I believe was a man and woman in their early twenties, and the woman wearing a ploka-dot dress. But why couldn't the description of Sirhan have matched that? Are you saying that Sirhan's dark complexion being what it was, his Middle Eastern birth being what it was, that's something they would have mentioned?"

SHARAGA: "Well, the point that detracts from this, the biggest point that detracts from it, is the fact that this couple...insisted that both the young man and young woman...ran from the hotel...and disappeared out into the crowd -- outside of the hotel. My understanding is Sirhan never left the premises....."

KEVIN: "Paul, I think you've given us all -- both in the studio and out of the studio -- an awful lot to think about. I number one thank you, obviously, for being here and sharing this story with us -- and also for coming forth at this time, in light of the fact that there've been many movements since last Spring, as you know -- number one, through Baxter Ward's office, and recently through Allard Lowenstein and Paul Schrade and others throughout the country to get the Robert F. Kennedy matter re-opened, at least for a 'ballistics' test-firing and other areas and a re-evaluation of it. I think that what you have told us will go a long ways toward getting this thing perhaps re-studied so that all of us could rest a bit more comfortable -- especially the members of the Kennedy family.... Paul Sharaga, I thank you very much."

SHARAGA: "You're quite welcome...."

END OF COMPLETE INTERVIEW

THE PRECEDING TRANSCRIPT IS A TRUE AND ACCURATE ACCOUNT OF AN INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY BY ME WITH FORMER LOS ANGELES POLICE OFFICER PAUL SHARAGA, ON DECEMBER 20, 1974 AT THE KMPC BROADCAST STUDIOS AT 5858 N. SUNSET BOULEVARD IN LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA.


ART KEVIN

DATE: 1/25/76