

Dear Phil,

5/27/78

When you describe Lane as fatuous you are really praising him but you are also beginning to understand him.

The stories on his becoming Gracie's guardian are great. He has been spouting off about his dedication to her interest and decency and justice to the point where he has probably come to ~~exaggerate~~ believe it.

Something I thought would get back to him apparently has. He now says he'll not seek to use Gracie as a witness if Ray gets a trial. It would kick back if he did.

The hospital head called Lane a liar politely, Lane foolishly, under circus conditions, giving Lane the kind of opening he never misses. But he is an exceptional liar, so if you know anyone who may have the interest, as when there is a sanity hearing, I'm loaded on Lane. Lanes, all of the many of them.

Am I right in thinking that his word will be an important factor in any such hearing? That he will take the stand, making his credibility an issue?

I like Manley's line (P-S 5/23): Lane said Mrs. Walden is currently living with his family in Los Angeles."

This would, if true, represent a considerable change in Lane's "family" conditions as of my last and fairly recent knowledge and it would represent a rather large change in even our more tolerant attitude toward what a "family" is.

As of my last information Lane's real family was living and for years had been living totally unsupported by Lane. Wife and two kids, helped by others in I think France. He left Analisa years ago, or vice versa.

Are you not touched by his compassionate interest in Gracie, who was being cared for by the State of Tennessee, and his lack of any interest in his own kids? Even when he got a six-figure advance on Code Name Toro, even when he raked in all that lecture-circuit loot and bought himself a town house in D.C. with it?

To the best of my knowledge his present "family" is a young woman named April Argueason, perhaps more than one, as I've also heard. I have been told that he has been passing April off as his wife. I have also been told that they all live together in a house in Venice, Calif., which is also his Flyntstone office.

I know nothing about the current dramatic personae, Judge Evans, Lane, the various reporters who used the shield law and the unidentified Memphis law firm that Lane is using. (I'd like to know this, all partners/members.) Or the hospital director or lawyer, Cohen and Tucker. Or Duncan Ragsdale, Lane's Memphis associate who is named.

If the State hospital "brutalized" poor Gracie, that is nothing what lies ahead for her.

Lane has, of course, relieved the State of a heavy load. But what will soon happen to her?

Maybe Gracie was once "a sensitive woman." This would have had to be before she lived with Carlisle. From him she would have developed an entirely different kind of sensitivity, judging from what he has done to other women, including with a tire iron.

As I recall Paul Ventine's story of about five years ago when I put him onto the Gracie story, she then was non compos and had suffered irreparable brain damage from her alcoholism.

I plan to use the story on Carlisle and the return of the Mustang/House assassins flying down there to grab those green stamps, in an affidavit. So these stories are helpful in more ways than merely informing me and enabling me to pass the information along to reporters.

Thanks and best wishes,

Attorney Lane Takes Offensive In Contempt Charges Defense

By JAMES CHISUM

Author-lawyer Mark Lane, scattering caustic remarks as he defended himself against contempt charges, yesterday declared he helped Grace E. Walden, 62, move to California after he concluded she couldn't get justice in Tennessee courts.

Perhaps heeding the adage that the best defense is a strong offense, Lane took swings at other lawyers, mental hospital officials and Probate Court Judge Joseph W. Evans himself.

But Evans, presiding at the hearing, took the contempt charge under advisement.

Mrs. Walden was a resident of the Main Street boarding house from which investigators concluded the bullet was fired which killed Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in April of 1968. She was committed to Western Mental Health Institute at Bolivar, Tenn., shortly after the murder, with a probate court finding that she was mentally incompetent and a ward of the court.

Lane claimed during yesterday's hearing that her commitment was a plot to suppress her testimony, earlier described as being that a man she saw running from the boarding house did not resemble James Earl Ray. Ray pleaded guilty of the murder in the fall of 1968 but has been trying since to get a new trial. Lane is his current attorney.

Mrs. Walden was released from the mental hospital April 25 and sent to live in a sheltered boarding home in Memphis, with lawyer Larry H. Nance as her guardian. The probate court's incompetency ruling had not been rescinded and she remained a ward of the court.

On May 3, she left with Lane for California, who said yesterday that she is mentally competent and living happily there.

Nance petitioned the court to hold Lane in contempt for removing Mrs. Walden from its jurisdiction.

In a surprise move, Evans asked Nance if he would agree to withdraw as Mrs. Walden's guardian. After Nance replied that he would do as the court wished, the judge dismissed Nance as guardian and appointed Lane and Memphis attorney Duncan Ragsdale as co-guardians. The move made moot a petition filed yesterday by Lane to have Nance removed as Mrs. Walden's guardian.

Lane sought without success to question Mike Lawhead, a television news reporter; Larry M. Plant, a television cameraman, and Associated Press correspondent Les Seago about a discussion of Mrs. Walden between him and Evans on the day he and Mrs. Walden left for California.

The three refused to answer questions, citing the 1973 Tennessee "shield law," which provides that newsmen may refuse to answer questions about their stories and sources and that any challenge of this refusal must be made to the Tennessee Court of Appeals.

Failing to elicit the testimony he wanted from the newsmen, Lane then attempted to make Evans a witness.



Staff Photo

Mark Lane At Hearing

Despite Lane's insistence, the judge refused to take the stand.

Testifying himself, Lane said he met Mrs. Walden in the late summer or early fall of 1977, became her friend and eventually her lawyer. He said he found her to be lucid but brutalized by her treatment at the Bolivar institution. He charged that she was drugged before a television interview early in May and that Dr. Morris D. Cohen, superintendent of the institution, illegally arranged the interview.

But Cohen last night denied that charge. "I didn't arrange the interview," he said, "I granted it." There was nothing illegal about the session, which was conducted in a darkened room and did not show the patient's face, as is customary in such interviews, he said. He also denied Mrs. Walden was drugged or brutalized. "These statements he makes are untrue," Cohen said.

Lane said he had retained a Memphis law firm to take steps to obtain her release from the institution, but Mrs. Walden was moved to the Memphis boarding home before the steps were completed. He charged that Cohen and a staff lawyer at the institution, Margaret H. Tucker, perpetrated a fraud on the court by failing to inform the judge that Mrs. Walden had legal counsel on April 21 when Nance was appointed her guardian.

Lane said when he talked to Mrs. Walden after her release he found that Nance was a callous and incompetent

One TV channel had this as lead item. I thus heard Lane talk for 1st time--& he's fatuous.

guardian who had failed to provide adequate medical attention and failed to protect her rights.

At this point, he said, he realized that Mrs. Walden would not receive justice from Tennessee courts and agreed to her request that she be taken to California. He said Evans had told him no law prohibited travel by Mrs. Walden.

Yesterday's hearing was marked by exchanges between Nance and Lane, and at one point Nance called Lane, who was on the witness stand, a liar.

Lane jumped from the stand, asked Evans to admonish Nance and moved toward his opponent, declaring if the court refused to take action he would do so himself. In the resulting confusion, Nance apologized to the court, saying he had become emotionally involved.

In another verbal exchange, Lane was attempting to describe his relationship with Mrs. Walden.

"Do you know that Grace Walden says I'm the only friend she has in the world?" he asked Nance.

"Well, I do know that she's mentally incompetent," Nance replied.

Lane declared heatedly that he would not consider returning Mrs. Walden to Memphis.

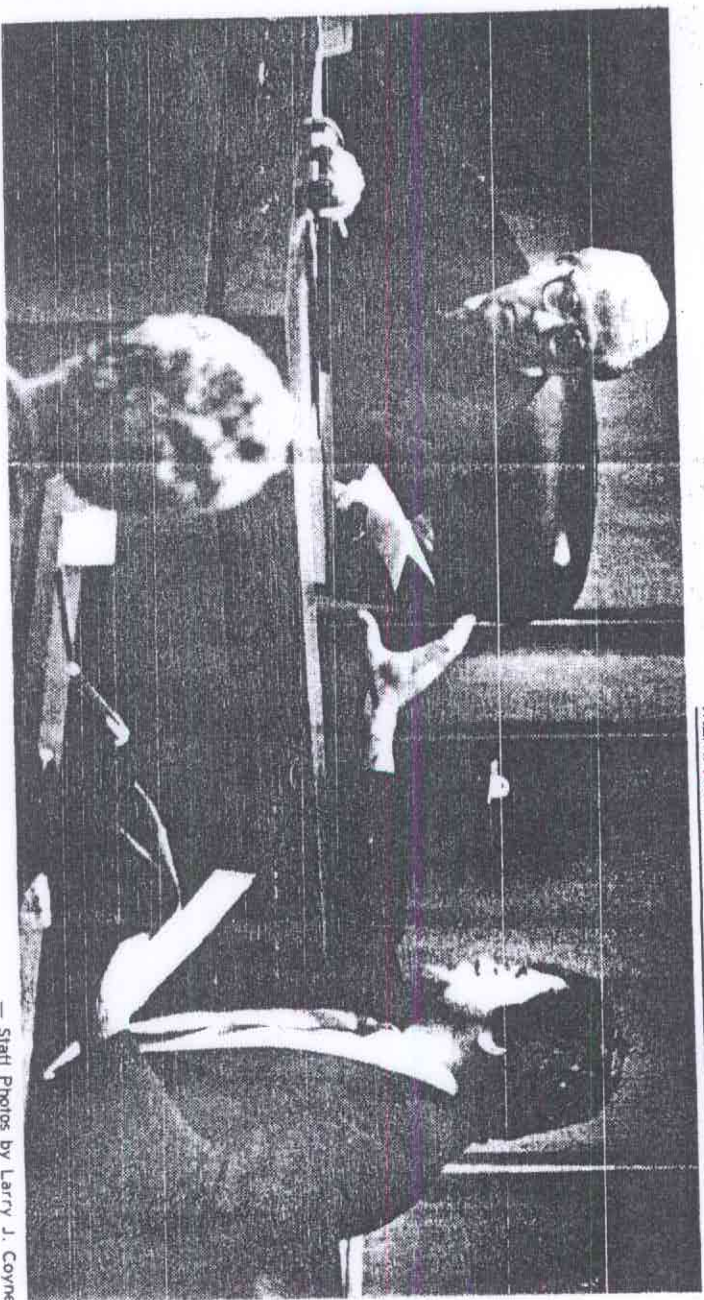
"You will not get her back. This state has held her as a political prisoner for 10 years, and you will not get her back," he said, adding later: "I would not consider doing that for one moment and I would spend the rest of my life in a jail cell in Memphis."

Lane declared he has no intention of using Mrs. Walden as the subject of a book, and said she will not be a witness if James Earl Ray is retried. He said he had assisted her simply because of sympathy for a "sensitive woman who was kept locked up because she was a witness who would not lie."

MEMPHIS PRESS-SCIMITAR, TUESDAY, MAY 23, 1978



MARK LANE, ATTORNEY AND AUTHOR



SCENE OF HECTIC HEARING: JUDGE JOSEPH W. EVANS, LEFT, AND ATTORNEY LARRY NANCE

— Staff Photos by Larry J. Coyne

Alleged Witness in King Case Gets New Guardian

By BRENT MANLEY
Press-Scholar Staff Writer

Mark Lane, attorney and author who entered Probate Court to answer a contempt citation for his association with a ward of the court, walked out as co-guardian of the ward — a woman who claims she saw the assassin of Dr. Martin Luther King.

The appointment yesterday by Judge Joseph Evans capped a day-long hearing which at times bordered on the hysterical. After Evans had put off ruling on the contempt charge, Lane said: "I can't believe it." Earlier Lane had sworn he would not forcibly return the woman to Memphis even if "I had to spend the rest of my life in jail in Memphis."

Lane was in court to answer a petition for a citation contempt. He was accused of spiriting Grace Walden — the assassin's witness — out of a boarding house in Memphis and onto a plane for Los Angeles. Attorney Larry Nance — appointed Mrs. Walden's guardian by Evans when the

judge declared her incompetent last month — filed the petition. He claims Lane took Mrs. Walden out of Shelby County without the knowledge or consent of her guardian or of the court.

Lane has written several books on assassinations and currently represents James Earl Ray, convicted assassin of King. He said he met Mrs. Walden last fall at Western State Mental Institution near Bolivar, Tenn., where the woman was confined for 10 years until her release last month. He described the woman as a "political prisoner" in Tennessee, having been locked up because she was the only person who saw who killed King.

Lane said Mrs. Walden is currently living with his family in Los Angeles. However, Nance's dismissal yesterday as Mrs. Walden's guardian actually gained his consent. By the end of the protracted hearing — which included considerable argument and shouting — Nance said he would agree to "whatever the court suggests."

Evans told Lane and another attorney,

Duncan Ragsdale of Memphis, to draw up orders for their appointment as guardian of Mrs. Walden.

The judge also told Lane to contact the court later this week to schedule a competency hearing for Mrs. Walden, who Lane said is in "superior" mental health. Evans said he will rule on Lane's contempt citation following the competency hearing.

Lane contended throughout the hearing that Mrs. Walden's commitment to the mental hospital in 1968 and the court's judgment of her incompetency last month represented "a fraud perpetrated on this court."

He said that Mrs. Walden was not represented by counsel as required by law, and that hospital officials refused to allow an outside psychiatrist to interview the woman before the hearing.

Lane said the woman needs no guardian because her commitment was illegal and because she was fraudulently declared incompetent.

During the lengthy hearing Lane and Nance frequently interrupted each other and often appeared to be trying to shout each other down.

At one point, Lane took the stand to testify for himself. Under cross-examination by Nance, Lane accused his adversary of "being part of the coercion" of Mrs. Walden.

"You're a liar," shouted Nance, at which point Lane bounded from the witness box and, rushing over toward Nance, said to

Evans: "Did you hear what he said? I demand an apology or I will protect myself." The judge admonished Nance, who apologized.

Lane called three members of the press to corroborate his testimony that on the day he took Mrs. Walden to California he spoke to Evans and advised him of the action. Lane contended the judge had told him there apparently was no violation of the law in Mrs. Walden's taking the trip.

All three media representatives — a reporter and cameraman from WREG-TV and an Associated Press correspondent — declined to testify, claiming protection through the so-called "shield law" which protects newsmen and their sources.

Then, Lane attempted to have Evans take the stand to testify about the conversation. However, the judge refused, saying he would have recused himself and testified had Lane given him advance notice of his intention.

Evans, in directing Lane to schedule a time for Mrs. Walden's competency hearing, told the attorney of a court rule that the subject must be present during all such hearings.

Lane said afterwards, however, that Mrs. Walden will not return to Memphis until she is declared competent, which he said will be accomplished through medical testimony.

When Mrs. Walden does return to Memphis, Lane said, "she will file massive lawsuits against those responsible for her illegal incarceration."