

Sniper Recalled in Kansas Hometown As an 'Average, Not Militant' Youth

By LAWRENCE Van GELDER

In Emporia, Kan., yesterday, Mark James Robert Essex was remembered as an "average" sort of young man, whose brushes with the law prior to his death Sunday night as a suspected sniper on a New Orleans roof were no worse than a few traffic violations.

"He was average, normal, not militant — average in grades and behavior," said Robert Lodie, who was principal of Emporia Senior High School when Mr. Essex, known as Jimmy, was graduated in 1967.

"I don't think he was ever in trouble," said Moris Dell, a compositor at The Emporia Gazette, who lives a few blocks from the Essex home and knows the family.

At the Navy recruiting office in the city whose population as recorded in the 1970 census was 23,327, of whom 569 are blacks, records showed the dead man's date of birth as Aug. 12, 1949.

3 Traffic Violations

According to Aviation Ordnance Man 1st Cl. Roger E. Bafus, on duty at the recruiting station, the record of Mr. Essex's recruitment — he entered the Navy on Jan. 13, 1969 — showed that Mr. Essex had been involved in three traffic violations.

One of them, he said, was for failing to heed a stop sign, one for speeding and one for illegal passing. The record showed, the recruiter said, that Mr. Essex had entered the Navy at an advance pay grade, that of seaman apprentice rather than as seaman recruit, because he had had some college training.

At Labette Community Junior College, a two year college in Parson, Kan., with an enrollment of about 320 students, records showed that Mr. Essex had entered the Kansas State College at Pittsburg, Kan., in the autumn of 1967.

The following spring, he transferred to Labette and

completed the semester before spending the summer as a transfer student at the Kansas State Teachers College in Emporia.

Leaves College

According to a spokesman for Labette, the record showed that Essex returned to Labette in the fall of 1968 and withdrew from the college with passing grades in November, when a transcript of his record was forwarded at his request to the Navy recruiting office. In January, 1969, a final transcript was forwarded to the Navy.

The spokesman said that the record showed that Essex had been studying ac-



United Press International
Mark James Robert Essex
in a 1967 high school
year-book photograph.

counting and had grades that were about average.

In Washington, the Navy said Essex was given a general discharge for unsuitability on Feb. 10, 1970. A spokesman said this type of discharge involved "character and behavior disorders," but would not elaborate. Mr. Dell, the newspaper

compositor, said he believed Essex had worked in Emporia for a while after being discharged.

What happened afterward was still unclear yesterday.

At the newspaper office, Mr. Essex's father, who was identified on Navy records as Mark Henry O'Dell Essex, was described as a foreman for the Fanestil Packing Company in Emporia.

Carroll Schubert, Federal projects coordinator for the Board of Education in Emporia, said that the dead man's mother, Nellie, who had recently completed work for a master's degree in early childhood teaching, was employed as a teacher in a year-round Head Start program.

Mr. Schubert said that Mark Essex was one of five children, three boys and two girls. Mrs. Essex, he said, was a teacher in a class of 16 children, 3- and 4-year-olds.

"She was informed of this family catastrophe this morning during her working hours," Mr. Schubert said, "and left the job upon being informed."

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Associated Press

Alex Vega, chief of the New Orleans Police Department's ballistics bureau, holding the .44-caliber rifle found on the roof of the Howard Johnson's Motor Lodge, left, and the shotgun used by Louis Sirgo, deputy superintendent who was slain. Maj. Henry Morris is at right.

Police Head in New Orleans Crisis

Clarence Benedict Giarrusso

BKy JOHN KIFNER

Special to The New York Times

NEW ORLEANS, Jan. 9—

Thirty hours without sleep, his face deeply lined, Police Superintendent Clarence B. Giarrusso slumped on a couch in Downtown Howard Johnson's Motor Lodge and tried to answer the questions peppering him.

Was it a national conspiracy? Had his men acted properly?

Man in the News And, above all, where was the second sniper?

For a day and a half this city, fascinated and horrified had watched, glued to television sets, as thousands of rounds of gunfire echoed only a few blocks from City Hall. Atop the motel one or more snipers, secured in concrete bunkers formed by stair shafts, held off hundreds of law-enforcement officers until one sniper was slain from a helicopter.

For Clarence Benedict Giarrusso, it was the worst crisis in a two-year leadership of a police force that has seen numerous crises.

Uncertain Answers

His answers in the heat of the latest crisis early this morning were uncertain but measured. Later today, after some sleep, the answers were no more certain.

"I'm undecided," he said on the question of the existence of the second sniper. "Right now we have evidence on both sides."

And, although politicians here are decrying an alleged nationwide conspiracy to slay policemen, the superintendent shied away from such assertions, noting only that "there are fuzzy groups, but in our free and open society we permit them to exist."

A cop's cop, Superintendent Giarrusso joined the department on July 5, 1949, after serving as a sergeant in the Marine Corps. His brother was a policeman, one of his daughters is married to a policeman and his nephew is a policeman.

Twenty-one years after he joined the department, he succeeded his brother, Joseph I. Giarrusso, as superintendent.

"I went through, I kept putting his jacket aside."

In between, Mr. Giarrusso rose through the motorcycle division to the narcotics bureau in 1954, where he became a sergeant, then a lieutenant, finally a captain



Associated Press

His personnel folder "kept sticking out."

in command of the narcotics squad in 1968.

Meanwhile, he was studying at night to win three degrees: a law degree from Loyola University and degrees in criminology and public business administration from Tulane.

Mr. Giarrusso, a stocky man of medium height, devotes almost all of his time to his police work and family, and has no hobbies, although he sometimes goes salt-water fishing for redfish.

He was born in New Orleans on March 28, 1921. He and his wife, the former Catherine Viviano, have two daughters, Lea, 21 years old, and Cathy, 20, and a son, Clarence Jr., 6, who was described by a friend as "the light of his father's life."

"Since he took over, the department has been beset by one crisis after another," said Policewoman Carol A. Gomon, the department's public-information director. "His philosophy is to move slowly, accurately and completely. He avoids rumor and sensationalism."

The first crisis came shortly after he took over the department. A group of Black Panthers barricaded themselves in a building near the all-black Desire public-housing project, and a gun battle ensued.

Superintendent Giarrusso's supporters note that he sent his man around the neighborhood first, knocking on doors and warning people to leave the area. But he also received strong criticism from blacks for his conduct of the raid.

A second incident involved the eviction of some Panthers who had barricaded themselves in the basement of one of the buildings in the project.

Mr. Giarrusso, dispatched a force of armed men but then removed them when a lawyer for the Panthers said an injunction was being sought. The superintendent explained to the angry and frustrated policemen that he was seeking "to avoid a bloodbath" and to allow the Panthers legal recourse.

The Panthers were later seized by the police.

Superintendent Giarrusso's term has been marked both by criticism and praise, often from the same groups of people at different times.

New Orleans Sniper Identified; Rifle Linked to Killing of Rookie

By MARTIN WALDRON
Special to The New York Times

1/10/73

NEW ORLEANS, Jan. 9—The police identified the slain New Orleans sniper today as Mark Essex, 23 years old, of Emporia, Kan.

They also said the rifle used to shoot hotel guests and policemen in a 12-hour rampage on Sunday was the same weapon that killed a police cadet and wounded a patrolman in New Orleans on New Year's Eve.

Police Superintendent Clarence B. Giarrusso said there was "some evidence of a conspiracy" involved in Sunday's sniping.

But he said he could not say flatly that Essex was part of a national conspiracy to kill policemen, as has been asserted by other officials in Louisiana.

Essex enlisted in the Navy

in Emporia on Jan. 13, 1969. A Navy spokesman in Washington said he was given a general disability discharge on Feb. 10, 1970.

In an hour-long news conference, Mr. Giarrusso confirmed that New Orleans policemen had been trailing Essex Sunday morning before he slipped into the Downtown Howard Johnson's Motor Lodge and began firing at hotel guests, policemen and firemen.

Three policemen, two motel guests and a hotel employe were killed and 10 policemen and two firemen wounded by gunfire in fusillades of rifle bullets before noon on Sunday. Superintendent Giarrusso said that Essex "was allegedly in-

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involved in an automobile accident" in New Orleans Sunday morning and that he "commandeered a car at gun point" and was "involved in a chase." Mr. Giarrusso would not be more specific, although he denied that the chase was by the police. The police have not completed an investigation, he said.

"We will make a report and the report will be made public," he said.

The superintendent said he still believed that two snipers were involved in the Sunday-Monday shootout, but said he was not so positive today as he was yesterday.

"Right now, after having had a night's sleep, I won't say yes and I won't say no," he said, referring to whether there was only one assailant.

It is possible, he said, that a second sniper slipped out of the heavily guarded hotel. There was a "space of time" before the police could get a copy of the building's plans and found out that there was a way to get from the motor lodge to a nearby building, he said.

Superintendent Giarrusso said there was too much evidence that there was a second sniper to abandon the idea completely. "We have evidence both

ways," he said.

After Essex was shot to death on the hotel roof, a Marine helicopter was fired upon, he said.

"One would have to assume that if there was no second sniper, the police fired those shots, and that's possible but not likely," he said.

He said that some policemen were sure they had seen a sec-

ond sniper and had fired at him.

"Many, many shots were fired at this ghost while he moved," he said. "And the men who were there near the roof heard conversation after the first sniper was shot."

Mr. Giarrusso said that one of the Marine helicopters was hit by bullets after Essex was shot to death. He said the bullet holes had been reported by the Marine lieutenant colonel who was piloting the aircraft.

Mr. Giarrusso would not say what evidence the police had that Essex could have been part of a plot to kill New Orleans police officers. However, he indicated that part of this evidence was the arranging of a room for Essex at the Howard Johnson Hotel by someone else.

The superintendent said that a .44-caliber Magnum rifle was the only weapon found on the

roof of the 17-story hotel when the police stormed it yesterday afternoon seeking the phantom second sniper.

The weapon, smashed into four pieces, was lying near the shattered body of Essex, who was felled by red tracer bullets fired by the police from a hovering Marine helicopter.

Ballistics tests showed that the rifle had been used to shoot

Dr. Robert Steagall of Roanoke, Va., and Deputy Police Superintendent Louis Sirgo on Sunday and on Dec. 31 to attack two police cadets and a city patrolman, Mr. Giarrusso said.

Cadet Alfred Harrell Jr., a 19-year-old Negro, was killed and Patrolman Edwin Hosli, a white, were shot down in the darkness in the New Year's Eve assault.

The ballistics tests were made by Alex Vega, chief of the New Orleans ballistics bureau. Mr. Vega said the rifle was a .44-caliber Magnum carbine, which holds six shots—five in the magazine and one in the barrel.

The rifle was so badly damaged by the shots of policemen who poured 100 or more rounds of ammunition into Essex's body that it would not fire, Mr. Vega said.

However, he added, he was able to force a slug through the barrel and the rifling marks on the bullet could be compared with the bullets taken from the bodies of Cadet Harrell, Sirgo and Dr. Steagall.

Mr. Vega, who was one of the police marksmen who shot Essex as he fled across the motel rooftop Sunday night, said tests showed that all the slugs came from the same

weapon.

Mr. Giarrusso said that Essex, who comes from a middle-class family—his father is a foreman at a packing plant and his mother a teacher at a day care center—had lived in New Orleans for about six months.

He worked for a Federal agency, the superintendent said, but he would not say which one. Nor would he give the sniper's New Orleans address.

Says Relatives Cooperated

"The relatives have been very cooperative," he said.

The chief said Essex's place of employment did not appear to have any connection with the sniping attack that paralyzed the area for almost 36 hours.

Mr. Giarrusso would not say so but other police officials con-

firmed that Essex had been a suspect for several days in the New Year's Eve attack.

The evidence gathered thus far does not clearly indicate that the Howard Johnson shooting was part of a conspiracy, Mr. Giarrusso said.

"There is some evidence of a conspiracy by other people," he said. If there were others involved, it was a small number, he said, "two, three or four."

Police Weighed and Discarded Many Tactics in Sniper Assault

NEW ORLEANS, Jan. 9 (AP)—The police considered and discarded everything from a frontal assault to helicopter landings and even the use of flame throwers in their 32-hour attempt to kill or capture the sniper or snipers in the Downtown Howard Johnson's Motor Lodge.

Mostly the assault on the concrete bunker atop the hotel included the use of automatic rifles and hand guns, with a few ineffectual shotgun rounds fired from out of range.

Concussion and phosphorous grenades were frequently considered but never used. So were flame throwers. Concussion grenades were ruled out because of danger to the police holding the stairway landing on the floor directly below the snipers.

"We could collapse the whole damned roof down on our people," a police lieutenant said.

Pulling the men back down one floor was ruled out because police officials were afraid a sniper was monitoring their radio broadcasts and would move down with them, get back into the building and start the tragedy all over again.

Phosphorous grenades and flame throwers start fires, and firemen had already been exposed to fire and gunfire.

Elephant Guns Used

"Elephant guns"—300-mm. Weatherbys—and .458 magnum Winchester were ruled out because, as one official said, "if you miss, you could go right through the building and kill someone 10 blocks away."

An attempt to use tear gas was made Sunday, but the wind was so strong it dispersed the gas, making it ineffective.

As the hours dragged by and the sniper returned sporadic fire, the weapons being used by the police could not punch through the heavy walls.

Seven of the "elephant guns" were finally brought into play, however, to hammer a hole in the eight-inch concrete walls of the sniper's bunker. Marksmen began sending the heavy rounds into the pillbox at 2:40 A.M. Monday and in 20 minutes had punched a hole measuring three by two feet.

An armor-bottomed Marine helicopter made at least two dozen passes on the sniper's position while six police marksmen armed with military rifles poured fire into the shadows where the sniper was believed to have been hiding.

The heavy guns drove a sniper from his bunker out onto the open roof of the 18-story building and the airborne marksmen combined their efforts with sharpshooters on surrounding buildings to cut him down.

The police radio sizzled with reported sightings, disclaimers and position reports, all interspersed by Police Superintendent Clarence Giarrusso with the repeated admonition: "No body is authorized to fire. We have men in the building. No one is authorized to fire."

Sharpshooting Approved

About 20 minutes later, a sharpshooter on the Federal Building, 500 yards away, said: "I have a clear shot at him."

Mr. Giarrusso had lost three men in the early flurries, and three civilians had also been killed. He did not want to lose any more.

"Jake, are your men out of that door?" he radioed.

"My men are below the roof level," Jake responded.

Mr. Giarrusso then approved the effort, saying: "406, give it a try."

It was a misty, dark morning and 406 could not see his shots hit.

A radio voice in City Hall, a block away and directly across from the ledge, called his fire: "You're just a hair to the right."

Another shot. "You've got him moving. You're right over his head. Lower it a bit."

Then Jake's voice from the 16th floor: "Uh, that round came into the 16th floor."

A few more attempts resulted in stray shots coming close to men in the building, so Mr. Giarrusso canceled efforts to pick the sniper off under such conditions.

With daylight, the chopper passed and repassed, but failed to draw fire.