

Kennedy conspiracy shadows Noguchi trial

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The strange and unprecedented hearings on Dr. Thomas Noguchi's fight to regain his job as County Coroner continue into their third week, with perhaps the most exotic and bizarre charges ever made against a public official.

Noguchi has been accused of threatening to assassinate public officials, praying for airline crashes, taking drugs- and most sinister of all- smiling at an autopsy, to name just a few. Yet until recently, he was praised by the county supervisors as an outstanding pathologist and coroner.

Nobody is quite sure what caused the change, and brought about the strange charges that have been levelled against him, but the following interview with Dr. Noguchi and his attorney, Godfrey Isaac, sheds light on the matter.

P.E. (To Dr. Noguchi): The allegation has been made that your testimony at the Sirhan trial was cut short, and that you were not permitted to tell the full story of the Robert Kennedy autopsy. If you know something that has not been made public yet, it seems to me that you are much more in danger by keeping it to yourself than you would be by making it public. What were you going to say when the judge stopped you?
 NOGUCHI: Well, as I recall, Judge Walker stopped me. The reason he stopped me was that the judge did not want to have a detailed description placed in the transcript. Although I explained the general direction of the four-or-three gunshot wounds, the ones I labelled one, two, and three, and that the general directions of the bullet holes were from right to left and upward. And at that time, I was stopped. However, I have given all the necessary information.

P.E.: Was it your impression that there was more than one assassin?

NOGUCHI: Well, I really couldn't tell, because the only comparable bullet was found in the back of the neck, and the others were fragmented. And another bullet hole went through and through. So I really couldn't tell.

P.E.: Many people had the feeling when the judge stopped you, that he didn't want that testimony to be heard. Was that your feeling?
 NOGUCHI: Well, that was the feeling that I got—that they wanted no detailed description to be placed on the transcript.



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P.E.: At the time you performed the autopsy on Senator Kennedy, the County Supervisors said it was the most thorough autopsy of all time, and praised you highly... isn't that correct?

NOGUCHI: The supervisors said it, and also quite a number of pathologists said it.

P.E.: And now some of these people are attacking you?

NOGUCHI: Some of them are the same people. Supervisors, for example. I don't know what their motivation was, as far as ousting me, but it seems to me that Mr. Hollinger prepared the charges and the supervisors went along with it without checking it.

P.E.: They were going to appoint you to another county hospital, and now they say you are-and were-crazy. If you were crazy, why were they going to appoint you to a county hospital?

NOGUCHI: Will you please tell ME why?

P.E.: Have you been told to be silent and not to tell what you know about the Kennedy assassination?

NOGUCHI: Well, I was ordered not to discuss anything in detail during the trial. However, I don't think that restriction holds now.

P.E.: Have you been threatened or intimidated?

NOGUCHI: Not recently. In the past, yes. Shortly after the assassination our office received a threat and a bomb scare.

P.E.: Was it your impression that these were merely crackpots or serious threats?

NOGUCHI: Well, you never know. I'm sure that Robert Kennedy himself thought that all the threats he received were crackpots, until he received the fatal wound. I do not take such matters lightly because you never know which one is serious.

P.E.: In view of the flimsy case the county has presented against you—no case at all really—what will you do if they refuse to reinstate you? Will you appeal to a higher court?

NOGUCHI: I would think so. But I think we will have a favorable decision here very soon.

To Godfrey Isaac, Dr. Noguchi's attorney:

P.E.: The allegation has been made that Dr. Noguchi is being slandered and discredited because of what he knows about the assassination of Sen. Robert Kennedy... that this whole thing is an attempt to destroy his credibility forever...

ISAAC: Well, let me say this, I've been contacted by many, including the Kennedy Assassination Truth Committee, and when they first contacted me, my feeling was, oh, for heaven's sake! What is all this? But then as we've gone along, I've seen more and more evidence of it and I'll give you an example: the autopsy of Senator Kennedy was on June 5, 1968, and shortly thereafter, I think about the eleventh day of June, the Board of Supervisors passed a resolution commending him on the marvellous job he had done on the autopsy—they called it the most complete and thorough autopsy in history.

Ten months later, and two months after the discharge of Dr. Thomas Noguchi, the County of

Los Angeles amended the charges to allege that during the autopsy, he was glassy eyed, his thoughts were dissociated, and that the autopsy would have no value at all if another doctor hadn't been there. This is a flat lie. It is untrue. Not only do I assure you that it's untrue, but Dr. Henry Cuneo, a neurosurgeon of international esteem was there. Dr. Holloway, of the coroner's office who now moderates his view a little bit, but on a taped interview said it was superior. Dr. Victor Gosen, a very fine pathologist at Mt. Sinai Hospital says

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it was the most thorough autopsy in history. The photographer who was there said he was magnificent. John Minor, deputy district attorney of Los Angeles County, said the charges are nonsense: He was fine!

Now, we must ask ourselves the question: Is it possible that there are forces afoot that are trying to discredit the autopsy for reasons not related to Dr. Noguchi but rather are related to the mystery surrounding the Kennedy assassinations? And while at first this did not immediately appear, these facts

would tend to indicate that it is well worth exploring why these events have taken place. And it's been called to my attention that many strange things have come about: Tom Reddin was chief of police in Los Angeles at the time of the shooting; he is no longer. The girl in the polka-dot scarf was allegedly a witness; she is now dead, allegedly by her own hand but under suspicious circumstances. Thomas T. Noguchi was chief medical examiner coroner of Los Angeles county, and performed the autopsy. He has now been fired. While I'm not in a position to say, 'yes there is a connection,' I think I would be naive, and I think observers would be naive if they didn't consider that these ARE strange facts, these ARE multiple coincidences. And it would not be unfair to resolve these multiple coincidences by saying there may well be a direct connection.

P.E.: Have you had any direct threats or attempts at intimidation directed at you since you became involved in the case?

ISAAC: Yes, I will tell you: We've had many telephone calls. We've had some very vicious telephone calls. I understand this is not uncommon when there is a highly publicized matter, but some of these seem uncommon in that they weren't the usual type. Interestingly enough, our automobile that had some of our work, some of the papers relating to this hearing, was stolen two weeks ago. It was found up in Bakersfield. We haven't received it back yet! Strange things have happened to us.

P.E.: Have you had that happen in any other case—had your papers stolen like that?

ISAAC: No. Don't misunderstand me: When you're involved in a widely publicized case, as I have been before, you do get what you would call crank letters and crank calls, BUT THESE HAVE GONE BEYOND WHAT YOU WOULD NORMALLY CALL THE NORMAL CRANK CALLS. We have even had threats on our children. Nobody has related them directly to the Robert Kennedy autopsy, but I think when we look historically at what happened to people related to the John F. Kennedy assassination, then we look at what has happened to other people connected to the Robert Kennedy assassination, certainly it gives us great cause to wonder.

P.E.: If the Commission refuses to reinstate Dr. Noguchi after the feeble, hollow case they've presented against him, what will you do?

ISAAC: In the event we're not successful here, which is difficult to believe at this time since the case of the county has fallen so flat, and they really have nothing... but in the event the com-

mission rules against us, then I intend to go to Superior Court for a writ of mandamus—that's a writ to force a fair hearing. The court then determines whether we get a fair hearing. I think that at this stage—after two weeks of the hearing—the testimony of Mr. Linn Hollinger, the chief administrative officer of the county, is most interesting. He took no notes, no memoranda, and he

didn't remember anything. He retreated into that cave of "I don't remember" which is so aggravating to a lawyer and so revealing to a court or a commission—BECAUSE THE MAN DOESN'T WANT TO REMEMBER... when I asked him why he didn't take any notes or why he didn't make any memoranda, he stated that 'this was just another administrative action to me.' And I said to him, 'Well, Mr. Hollinger, how many department heads have been discharged in the eleven years that you've been chief administrative officer of this county?' And he said, 'One, Dr. Noguchi.' I think that for anyone who has watched and analyzed every witness, it's almost unbelievable.

There's a charge here that Dr. Noguchi ingested dexemil capsules. This charge is made on no foundation but out of 130 people in the coroner's office, one said that one time over six years they saw what appeared to be a green capsule with clear on the other side. There are hundreds of capsules, Dr. Noguchi does not take that type of drug. He does take an occasional librium, and

he's taken occasional darvon, and an occasional aspirin over the years.

But when one listens to what they're doing, when one sees what they're trying to do to this human being who's basically a good human being, a fine man, a dedicated man, then one cannot help but get angry at the system that allows it. One hears a lot about the establishment. I tell you what's going on here today in the hearing of Dr. Thomas T. Noguchi sheds doubt on the ability of the establishment to have true values, to give true justice and to give due process.

But the credibility of the county's witnesses has been so low that it's unbelievable! As an example, the last witness they had here today: Dr. Noguchi whose responsibility it is to do autopsies to determine if an offense has been committed, such as murder, or whether there's a grave disease, or a public health problem, recommended that instead of seven or eight tissues to a slide, he recommended that there be one tissue. We had a forensic pathologist from Wales, Dr. Bernard Knight. Dr. Knight said that in all of England and

Europe they wouldn't think of putting more than one on. We had Dr. William Exkert, from Wichita Kansas, a leading pathologist in the country, and he said this is by far the preferable method. We had Dr. William Sturmer from the University of Chicago and he said we wouldn't think of doing it any other way, and he's been in the coroner's offices of New York and Chicago. And yet they are literally crucifying this man for making a decision that was scientifically beneficial for the benefit of the public. For example, if there were a man accused of

murder, it may be that there was not murder. It may have been a natural death. Dr. Noguchi feels that we can't let a man go to jail if there is insufficient evidence. So, they claim that it's
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too expensive. So the last witness today was a man who got up and told what the cost of putting one tissue on one slide in the veterinarian department, of the county.

P.E.: They're trying to characterize him as a squanderer of public funds?

ISAAC: Right! And in order to show this they show us what it costs to make tissue slides on

dogs. It's almost funny. If it were not tragic for Dr. Noguchi. His reputation, his livelihood, his peace of mind has been shattered by this, but he is coming through like a giant. He's been calm, cooperative, helpful; he's willing to go back to the job and accept all the people in the coroner's office. And I tell you, this is a fine human being and probably the best coroner the county of Los Angeles ever had, or ever will have.

P.E.: Several newsmen and other observers have told me that another issue involved here is the desire of the L.A. Medical Association to control the coroner's office and do as they please with it—particularly with reference to medical malpractice cases, and being able to control the outcome of coroner's verdicts in such cases...

ISAAC: Yes. The Medical Association and the medical schools ...

P.E.: USC and UCLA?

ISAAC: Yes, We're talking about the "medical establishment." The "medical establishment" wants to control what goes on in the coroner's office. And it is in the public interest that the chief medical examiner in the coroner's office be totally independent—that it be autonomous in itself.

P.E.: And the medical schools and the Medical Association have no intention of letting that happen?

ISAAC: Oh no! That's the issue. And we're now entering the age of transplants. We're transplanting hearts. We're transplanting almost every organ in the human body. And what better source for transplants could there be than the coroner's office. You see, the young vital people may get killed in an accident, or get shot. So, these organs are going to be increasingly valuable. And if the wrong type of person, if a dishonest person were to get it, this could be a real mess. The Medical Schools want to be able to control this and literally have the control of life and death. This is a public function and should be done by a public official... and that honest men like Dr. Noguchi protect all of us.

P.E.: In other words, the Medical Association would like to control the prices, so that only the rich can afford transplants, and the rest of us will just have to die.

ISAAC: Right.