

DETECTIVE'S DEATH STIRS LOS ANGELES

NYTimes SEP 13 1976
Shooting of a Wiretapping Expert
Produces Tangled Case That
Involves Many Big Names

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Special to The New York Times

LOS ANGELES, Sept. 12—Los Angeles, a city with a long heritage of fictional private eyes—from Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe to television's Jim Rockford and the movies' J. J. Gittes of "Chinatown," is talking these days about the murder of a real private detective.

His name was Robert Duke Hall, and he was killed by someone who fired through the open kitchen window of his modest home in suburban Burbank on July 22.

Detectives investigating his death have found a landscape bristling with clues and secretly recorded telephone conversations and populated with the names of Hollywood celebrities, a fugitive international financier and a high-living businessman who was convicted of swindling Harvard and other universities.

Two men—one who described himself to the police as a "self-employed pornographer" and the other a former professional wrestler—were arrested yesterday for the detective's murder. A police official said the investigation, which has raised a number of questions beyond the murder itself, is continuing.

Wiretapping Expert

A slightly-built, 44-year-old man who wore a Van Dyke beard and loved to play the horses, Mr. Hall was reputed to be an expert on wiretapping, electronic eavesdropping and countermeasures against electronic bugging.

By the standards of a television private eye series, he was not a very glamorous figure. His house was modest and not impressively furnished — "about what you'd expect from a guy who makes \$15,000 to \$20,000 a year," said one policeman. His two cars, including one beat-up model he used for undercover work, were not new or fancy.

Mr. Hall is said to have enjoyed his role as a suburban family man. But the investigation has indicated that, besides handling routine marital cases, the detective spent a lot of time in a shadowy world that involved drug traffic and was sometimes a police informant as well as an agent for wealthy businessmen, who operated outside the law.

In his effects, Burbank detectives said they found more than 250 tape recordings, some of them containing conversations that appear to implicate several prominent show-business people with narcotics and other criminal matters.

A captain on the Beverly Hills Police Department resigned abruptly after some

of the tapes found during the investigation were transcribed.

The Burbank detective who is directing the investigation, Lieut. Al Madrid, said the tape recordings had produced potential leads in the murder case and information that could lead to prosecutions for other crimes.

Federal authorities are interested in two of Mr. Hall's clients. One is Robert Vesco, the former New Jersey businessman accused by Federal authorities of bilking tens of millions of dollars from an overseas mutual fund, then attempting to block a Federal investigation of the fraud by contributing heavily to the 1972 Presidential campaign of Richard M. Nixon.

The other is Thomas P. Richardson, a businessman and associate of Mr. Vesco who was accused by Federal officials of using money obtained in a stock fraud to acquire and furnish a lavish home in Bel Air and buy a large fleet of luxury cars.

Flight to Costa Rica

Mr. Vesco is living in Costa Rica, where Mr. Hall once flew to hunt for eavesdropping devices at his living compound. Costa Rican authorities have refused to extradite Mr. Vesco on the charge that he unlawfully contributed \$200,000 to the 1972 Presidential campaign, but Federal officials here and elsewhere have been looking for evidence of other crimes for which the Central American country would be willing to extradite Mr. Vesco.

Mr. Richardson, who has been accused by Federal investigators of using his private plane to ferry guns and prostitutes to Mr. Vesco, has long been considered a possible source of evidence that would implicate the financier in extraditable crime. He was convicted here last spring of fraudulent manipulations of stock that his company traded on behalf of Harvard, Columbia University and other institutions. Sentenced to six years in jail, he is free pending an appeal.

As part of their murder investigation, the Burbank authorities subpoenaed tape recordings in Mr. Richardson's possession

that are believed to have shed new light on Mr. Vesco's activities.

Mr. Hall's role in all this is not clear. There has been speculation

that he may have communicated from Mr. Richardson to Mr. Vesco a demand for money to keep Mr. Richardson from talking. But one Federal investigator noted that Mr. Richardson would not seem to need the detective for this role because he has maintained a "direct line" to Mr. Vesco.

The two men arrested for the murder

were described as former friends and business partners of Mr. Hall who had been feuding with him recently. One was Jack Ginsburgs, 37, a minor defense witness in Mr. Richardson's trial who told the police that he was involved in publishing pornographic materials; the second was Gene LeBell, 44, a former professional wrestler and the son of a prominent Los Angeles prize-fight promoter, Aileen Eaton. Mr. LeBell recently officiated at a fight between the heavyweight boxing champion, Muhammad Ali, and a Japanese specialist in martial arts.