

THE INVESTIGATION

THE ASSASSINATION

The assassination of Robert Kennedy seemed, at first blush, to leave little room for mystery. Everyone near Kennedy saw Sirhan Sirhan firing towards him. But for those watching closely, and for those who would later wonder if there was more to the story, there was abundant reason to look beyond first appearances.

Just after midnight on June 5th, 1968 at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles, after Senator Kennedy had won the California Democratic primary and thanked his assembled supporters, assistant maitre d' Karl Uecker led him through a dimly lit kitchen pantry en route to a press conference. Thane Eugene Cesar, a security guard hired for the night, followed Kennedy closely behind, holding the senator's right elbow and appearing to guide him.

As Kennedy stopped at the edge of a steam table to shake hands with kitchen workers, a 24-year-old Palestinian Christian, Sirhan Sirhan (who had moved to the LA area as a child), began firing at Kennedy from several feet in front of him. After two shots, Uecker grabbed Sirhan's arm and, with the help of others, pushed him down onto the steam table, pinning his gun hand. Though his hand was pinned down and pointed away from Kennedy, Sirhan continued firing wildly injuring five bystanders. According to the eyewitness testimony, Sirhan's gun always remained one and a half to five feet in front of the senator while the coroner's report determined Kennedy was hit three times from behind, with the fatal shot to the back of his head at point blank range of 1 to 3 inches. He died 26 hours later.^[1]

AUTOPSY INDICATES A SECOND GUNMAN

According to respected LA County Coroner Dr. Thomas Noguchi, who performed the official autopsy, the three bullets that entered Kennedy's body were fired from behind him at close range. The fatal shot, Noguchi concluded, was fired from approximately one to three inches behind Kennedy's right ear, penetrating his brain. Two other bullets entered his right armpit and a fourth went through the shoulder pad of his jacket.^[2]

Paul Schrade, a United Auto Workers Union executive, walking behind Kennedy, was struck by a different bullet altogether. Witnesses saw Schrade fall before the senator did, suggesting Schrade was hit by the first shot from Sirhan's gun.^[3] Noguchi later stated that he believed the fifth shot killed Kennedy. Since Uecker had grabbed Sirhan's firing hand after the second shot and, with help from others, pinned his arm to a table in front of Kennedy, Sirhan could not have fired the fifth and fatal shot from behind at point blank range.

In the 1970s, Schrade, along with actor Robert Vaughan and former Congressman, Allard Lowenstein, requested that the LAPD and California courts reopen the case. They were repeatedly denied. Now, at the age of 96, Schrade has long ago forgiven Sirhan for shooting him and has made it his life's work to seek parole for Sirhan and to reopen the case to determine RFK's actual killer. He is supported by attorney Denise Bohdan whose father, Fernando Faura, was a journalist at the Ambassador Hotel that night. Faura uncovered significant evidence indicating an accomplice with Sirhan who was never investigated by the authorities. In fact, witnesses to the accomplice were browbeaten by the LAPD investigator to change their accounts.

Reacting to the news of Cesar's death, Robert Kennedy's son, RFK Jr., revealed he "had plans to meet Thane Eugene Cesar in the Philippines until he demanded \$25,000 through his agent Don Moldea ... ," adding that "Compelling evidence suggests that Cesar murdered my father... Police have never seriously investigated Cesar's role in my father's killing."⁹

BULLET COUNT PROVES MULTIPLE GUNMAN

In addition to the three gunshots hitting Kennedy from behind and a fourth bullet that passed through his coat, five other people were shot and injured, totaling nine shots. Sirhan's .22 caliber gun only held eight bullets so another person would have had to be shooting as well. Within hours, FBI agent William Bailey found two additional bullets lodged in the pantry door frame, increasing the bullet count to 11.^[4] Police and FBI photographs showing two

more bullet holes in the pantry door divider and another hole in the jamb of a backstage door suggested four more shots may have been fired.^[5] Additionally, two witnesses reported hearing at least 12 shots.

In 2005, an expert audio engineer, Philip Van Praag, laboriously examined a sound recording of the shooting and made several important discoveries. There were 13 "shot sounds," with two instances of "double shots" (shots fired so closely together, they could not have come from the same gun). He also determined that five of the shots were fired from the opposite direction of Sirhan's eight shots, indicating that they were fired from behind Kennedy.^[6]

THE SUSPICIOUS SECURITY GUARD

As the shooting began, security guard Thane Eugene Cesar was standing behind and slightly to the right of Kennedy, in the exact firing position described by the autopsy. Several witnesses observed Cesar drawing his weapon and one witness saw him fire. He was interviewed within hours by the LAPD but they never checked his gun. Cesar claimed he was carrying a .38 caliber revolver that night but he also owned a .22 caliber revolver at the time. Cesar later lied saying he had sold the .22 four months prior to the assassination but the sales receipt proved he actually sold it three months afterwards. He also told the buyer it had been involved in a "police shooting."

Thane Eugene Cesar held extreme right-wing views, supported George Wallace for President and openly admitted hating the Kennedys. At that time, he was working at Lockheed, home of the U-2 spy plane, with a high-level security clearance from the Department of Defense. A week before the assassination, he took a part-time job working evenings as a security guard for Ace Guard Service. Kennedy was assassinated on Cesar's second assignment.

Given this incriminating information, Cesar remains a key suspect as a second gunman. Dan Moldea, the author of a book presenting Sirhan as a lone assassin, claims Cesar passed a polygraph test that proved his innocence.^[7] However, Moldea has never been willing to release the results of that test, calling into question its existence and, if so, its actual results. Announcing Cesar's death in 2019 in the Philippines on Facebook, Moldea disclosed he was the godfather to Cesar's son, handled his media inquiries and held his Power of Attorney.^[8]

Reacting to the news of Cesar's death, Robert Kennedy's son, RFK Jr., revealed he "had plans to meet Thane Eugene Cesar in the Philippines until

he demanded \$25,000 through his agent Dan Moldea ... ," adding that "Compelling evidence suggests that Cesar murdered my father ... Police have never seriously investigated Cesar's role in my father's killing."^[9]

These sessions also produced new evidence of "range mode" programming possibly used to set up Sirhan as a distraction in the pantry, while a second gunman fired the fatal shot from an inch behind Kennedy's right ear. After Brown identified physical and verbal cues, on three occasions, Sirhan assumed a firing stance, entered "range mode" and fired at imagined targets, as Brown believes he did on the night of the assassination. Brown also believes Sirhan was conditioned to forget his actions and connections to others involved while in this dissociated state. He believes the girl in the polka dress, who was seen with Sirhan and later running away from the crime scene, gave Sirhan the cues to enter "range mode" and fire involuntarily at Kennedy, with no conscious intent to kill him.²¹

A POSSIBLE HIGH-LEVEL CONSPIRATOR

Authors David Talbot ("Brothers: The Hidden History of the Kennedy Years") and Lisa Pease ("A Lie Too Big to Foil") have identified Howard Hughes' right-hand man, former FBI agent, and the CIA's Castro assassination plot coordinator, Robert Maheu, as the likely planner of Robert Kennedy's assassination. Multiple government documents prove that Maheu worked for the CIA in assassination plots and other covert activities in the 1960s. Maheu also admitted to Talbot that he hated the Kennedys.

Maheu's principal accuser is former top Howard Hughes executive and Maheu associate, John Meier. Meier knew that Thane Eugene Cesar was an employee of Maheu's private security firm that performed top secret activities for the CIA. Meier also described suspicious conversations he heard between Maheu and Donald Nixon, Richard Nixon's brother, shortly before and after the assassination and wrote about them in his diary (partially published in Gerald Bellett's "Age of Secrets"). Hughes had long been a major financial supporter of Richard Nixon and a close collaborator with the CIA. Meier, now 88, has continued to try to get his information about the case out to the public.

These sessions also produced new evidence of "range mode" programming possibly used to set up Sirhan as a distraction in the pantry, while a second gunman fired the fatal shot from an inch behind Kennedy's right ear. After Brown identified physical and verbal cues, on three occasions, Sirhan assumed a firing stance, entered "range mode" and fired at imagined targets, as Brown believes he did on the night of the assassination. Brown also believes Sirhan was conditioned to forget his actions and connections to others involved while in this dissociated state. He believes the girl in the polka

dress, who was seen with Sirhan and later running away from the crime scene, gave Sirhan the cues to enter "range mode" and fire involuntarily at Kennedy, with no conscious intent to kill him.²¹

SIRHAN'S ALLEGED MOTIVE

Sirhan was arrested with a newspaper clipping in his pocket criticizing Kennedy's campaign pledge to sell jet bombers to Israel to replenish jets lost in the Arab-Israeli War the year before. A notebook found in his bedroom contained repetitions of the phrase "RFK must die ... RFK must be assassinated by June 5 '68," the first anniversary of the Arab-Israeli War.

At trial, the strange "automatic writing" in Sirhan's notebooks was cited as evidence of the cold, callous, premeditated nature of the crime but Sirhan claims he has no memory of writing in the notebooks nor of the shooting itself. And it has never been explained how it was possible for Sirhan to have written the most incriminating page on May 18th, two days before Kennedy made his first campaign speech promising bombers to Israel. ^[11]

"SIRHAN'S CONFESSION"

Supporters of the lone assassin story point to Sirhan's "confession" in which he stated "I killed Robert Kennedy willfully, premeditatively, with 20 years of malice aforethought." Sirhan's claim that he had been planning the RFK killing since the age of four was ridiculous and nobody in court took his outburst seriously.

The outburst came after days of pleading with the Judge to fire his attorney due to the dismal defense he was being provided. Yet, the "confession" has been taken out of context and used against him ever since. ^[12]

THE COVER-UP

Sirhan's lead attorney Grant Cooper (who had the threat of an indictment hanging over him for lying about the source of stolen grand jury transcripts in another case) never raised any of the obvious discrepancies at trial. Cooper accepted that his client was guilty but mounted a defense of "diminished capacity" claiming he was in a dissociated state and not fully responsible for his actions. The jury did not accept that theory and Sirhan was convicted of murder and he has remained in prison ever since. ^[13]

There were serious concerns about LAPD criminalist DeWayne Wolfer's work on other cases and the L.A. District Attorney failed to conduct an independent evaluation of the firearms evidence, despite an offer from the L.A. Sheriff's Office to do so.^[14] Wolfer mis-labelled and mis-represented the bullet and gun evidence to the Grand Jury at trial, such that at no time was the bullet recovered from Kennedy's neck ever matched to Sirhan's gun. The test bullets he presented were not from Sirhan's gun, but from a wholly different gun taken from an LAPD evidence locker. He also lied in a subsequent investigation in the 1970s to cover his tracks which became evident when the records of his daily logs and other LAPD and trial items became available in the 1980s.

The LAPD also destroyed crucial evidence including photos seized at the scene, door frames and ceiling panels with bullet holes and suppressed their files on the case for 20 years.^[15]

Witnesses who gave accounts conflicting with the official story of Sirhan as a lone assassin were either given coercive polygraph examinations by LAPD Sergeant Enrique Hernandez or their testimony was ignored. In audiotapes of these sessions, Hernandez is heard browbeating witnesses into retracting their statements.^[16]

Researchers later discovered that the two LAPD officers in charge of the investigation were connected with the CIA. The LAPD were working closely with the CIA on their Operation Chaos program in the late 1960's using domestic surveillance, agent provocateurs and other tools to target anti-war and civil rights activists. The two men in day-to-day control of the LAPD investigation, Enrique Hernandez and Manuel Pena, had both trained police officers in South America for the CIA-connected Office of Public Safety.^[17] Pena signed off on every report and decided which leads to follow and who to interview. According to FBI agent Roger La Jeunesse, Pena had performed assignments for the CIA for a decade.^[18]

[1] Shone O'Sullivan, *Who Killed Bobby? The Unsolved Murder of Robert F. Kennedy* (Skyhorse Publishing, 2018), 7-11, 64-5.

[2] L.A. County Coroner's Autopsy Report

[3] O'Sullivan (2018), 66

[4] Dan Moldea, 87; O'Sullivan (2018), 335-8

[5] Photo Set: RFK Grand Jury Request Exhibits

[6] Declaration of Philip van Praag, 14 November 2011 and RFK Must Die Epilogue (2008)

[7] *Ibid.*, 23, 283-299, 303, 312

[8] Moldeo post on Facebook, September 11, 2019: <https://bit.ly/2kuUCcC>

[9] RFK Jr. post on Inslogrom, September 11, 2019: www.inslogrom.com/p/82THyP9H2h9/

[10] CIA may have used contractor who inspired 'Mission: Impossible' to kill RFK, new book alleges," *The*

Washington Post, 9 February 2019: Pease, "A Lie Too Big to Fail," S June 2019

[11] O'Sullivan (2018), 93-S

[12] Ibid., 265

[13] Ibid., 176, 237-8, 268-77, 316-7

[14] Ibid., 457-8

[15] O'Sullivan (2018), 122-8, 132-5, 364-8

[16] Ibid., 122-128, 132-6, 369-71

[17] Ibid., 363

[18] Bill Turner and John Christian, *The Assassination of Robert Kennedy* (Carroll and Graf, second edition, 2006), 64-66