

13

1 TRANSCRIPT OF RECORDED INTERVIEW OF
2 THANE CESAR
3 RECORDED AT RAMPART DETECTIVE DIVISION
4 JUNE 5, 1968

5 QUESTIONED BY: SGT. R. L. CALKINS #7287, HOMICIDE DIVISION
6 SGT. M. J. MCGANN #10329, HOMICIDE DIVISION
7 REPORTED BY: JUDY C. HERMANDEZ, INTERNAL AFFAIRS DIVISION

8 (*) INDICATES UNINTELLIGIBLE CONVERSATION.

9
10 Q Sit down on the other side over there and be
11 right with you. What is your name?

12 A Cesar.

13 Q Cesar?

14 SGT. MCGANN: He started to fill out a report
15 and everything and never finished it.

16 Q Okay. What's your first name?

17 A Thane, T-h-a-n-e.

18 Q C-e--

19 A --s-a-r.

20 Q Okay. Mr. Cesar, my name's Calkins and his
21 name is McGann. We work downtown, central, Homicide.
22 You're a special officer employed by--

23 A Ace Guard Service.

24 Q Ace Guard Service?

25 A Retired after tonight. I like those quiet jobs.

26 Q Where do you work out of?

27 A You mean--

28 Q The office?

29 A Well, see, I don't--I think I might have a card

284

1 here.

2 Q Okay.

3 A Actually, I don't work out of a office because,
4 actually, whenever he needs us, he just calls us and tells
5 us where--

6 Q I see. Who's "he?"

7 A Tom Spangler. He's one of the guys that was
8 giving the name and the address.

9 Q That's 8720 Woodley Avenue?

10 A Right.

11 Q In Sepulveda. The phone number is 894-5717?

12 A Right.

13 Q Do you have another job also, Mr. Cesar?

14 A Yes, I do.

15 Q Your boss, your immediate supervisor's name is
16 Tom Spangler?

17 A That's right. That's the only one I've ever
18 dealt with.

19 Q Okay. Real good.

20 A That's his home phone number. If you want his
21 home phone number, that's his home phone.

22 Q Let's see. What's that?

23 A That is his home phone number. That's in Simi.

24 Q 805--

25 A Uh huh (yes).

26 Q --526-9660. What did he do, phone you up tonight

285

1 or--and tell you that he wanted you down at the Ambassador
2 Hotel?

3 A I got home from work at 4:30, and he called me
4 about quarter to five, and I wasn't going to work, but I
5 decided to and--

6 Q What is your normal business?

7 A I'm a maintenance plumber at Lockheed.

8 Q You work at Lockheed Aircraft?

9 A Right.

10 Q What department?

11 A 3922 Maintenance, plant B-5.

12 Q You work days?

13 A Right, 7:00 to 3:30.

14 Q Seven a.m. to 3:30?

15 A Right.

16 Q And you got home from work there tonight and
17 you got a phone call from Mr. Spangler?

18 A To go to work.

19 Q To go to work at the Ambassador Hotel. What
20 time did he tell you to report there?

21 A I was supposed to be there at 6:00 and I got
22 there five after.

23 Q Who did you report to there?

24 A Let's see. I got the name here. Well, I reported
25 to the security shack-down at the bottom of the stairs?

26 Q Uh huh (yes).

1 A And then they took me up to--paper right here;
2 took me up to this guy, Gardner. He's the head security
3 guy here.

4 Q Mr. Gardner?

5 A At the Ambassador.

6 Q Is that room 724?

7 A That was beeper number. He had a little page
8 boy.

9 Q And what did he tell you to do?

10 A Well, this is his sergeant here, this guy and--

11 Q That's K-a-w-a-l-e-c?

12 A Kawalec, I guess.

13 Q Kawalec?

14 A And he took me down to the Ambassador Room first
15 and stationed me on the front door and then there was three
16 of us on the front door there, the main door, and everybody
17 that wanted to take a tour through the building and check
18 all the exits and make sure there wasn't kids trying to
19 sneak in.

20 Q Uh huh (yes).

21 A And from there, oh, I'd say about 8:30, I went
22 down to the ballroom, which is downstairs--

23 Q Uh huh (yes).

24 A --and was there for a while; I'd say about a half
25 hour.

26 Q Was that the Embassy Ballroom?

1 A Uh huh (yes). Let's see, this is where I was,
2 right here, at this door.

3 Q Uh huh (yes).

4 A And he took me down to--golly. They called it
5 the ballroom, but I think it was right underneath this.

6 Q Below the Embassy Ballroom?

7 A Uh huh (yes).

8 Q Uh huh (yes).

9 A There's another ballroom. I don't know exactly
10 what they called it, but we went down the stairs and back
11 around. It seemed like it was under there.

12 Q Uh huh (yes).

13 A But I was there for about half an hour, an hour
14 and a half, and then from there I came back up here and
15 right here this is a hallway here leading into the kitchen
16 area and I stood guard right here at this kitchen area
17 because people were trying to sneak in through the press
18 room here and through here to get back into the Embassy
19 Room and the Fire Department at that time didn't want any
20 more people in there. So--

21 Q Uh huh (yes).

22 A --we were covering all the entrances then, so
23 that nobody would come in, and we were only letting the
24 press in at that time, if they had a press card.

25 Q You were standing here?

26 A Yeah. There's a swinging door right here. That's

288

1 where I was.

2 Q And they were coming down this way right here?

3 A They were coming in through the press room and
4 through this swinging door to get through here into the
5 Embassy Room.

6 Q Now, the press room, is the Colonial--

7 A Colonial Room.

8 Q That's the same, right?

9 A Right.

10 Q Right. They were just using it as temporary
11 press room?

12 A Right.

13 Q I see.

14 Q They were walking down--did the party, the
15 Kennedy party was supposed to come down this way here?

16 A Yeah. This is where they came down originally,
17 through here, or actually they came through here.

18 Q And from where you were, could you see them
19 coming or anything?

20 A Well, now, this was earlier in the night. Now,
21 around--I would say around eleven o'clock, they transferred
22 me to this door right here--

23 Q Uh huh (yes).

24 A --and I stayed there until Kennedy came through,
25 and when Kennedy came through the first time.

26 Q When he was going to the--

289

1 A To the stage, right.

2 Q Yeah.

3 A All I did was hold the people back and, of
4 course, I was stationed here when he came out.

5 Q Uh huh (yes).

6 A And at that time I was right behind him all the
7 way down to where the steam table was.

8 Q Uh huh (yes).

9 A And then, just as he got to the steam table,
10 I was up to him where I had ahold of his arm here. I
11 was pushing people away from the other arm.

12 Q You were on--

13 Q You were on which side of him?

14 A I was on his right side.

15 Q His right side?

16 A Yes.

17 Q Uh huh (yes).

18 A And at that moment when we got on the edge of
19 the steam table, he had reached out and sort of turned
20 to shake hands with somebody.

21 Q Turned to his left?

22 A Well, he was walking this way and he turned
23 just like this, just his body, because, when he did, my
24 hand broke loose--sort of broke loose, away from his arm,
25 and, of course, I grabbed it again because people were all
26 over the place.

Q People were pressing in pretty close?

A Right. Now, at that time, I just happened to look up and that's when I seen--all I could see was an arm and a gun.

Q Uh huh (yes).

A And I reached for mine, but it was too late. He had done fired five shots and when he did, I ducked because I was as close as Kennedy was, and from what I can remember, from what I did, I grabbed for the center and fell back. When I ducked, I threw myself off balance and fell back and when I hit--there's iceboxes right here; right in this area, there's iceboxes, and I fell against that and then the Senator fell right down in front of me and then I turned around; then seen blood coming down this side of his face.

Q Which side is that?

A Right. Well, see, he was laying back this way. It would be his right side.

Q Right side of his face?

A Right. And I reached down to--really, then, I was in pandemonium. I did look up to see that everybody that was in the area had grabbed this gun. There must have been 12 guys and all they were doing was kicking him and beating him and trying to get the gun away from him, because one guy did force his hand up and he did have the gun in the air.

1 Q Uh huh (yes). Did you get a good look at this
2 guy?

3 A I never seen his face because he was a short
4 man. He was standing behind the camera crews and all I
5 could see was his hand and the gun. His face was immediately
6 hidden from me. That's how short he was.

7 Q Did you get a look at the gun?

8 A I really didn't get a real good look at it.
9 I knew it wasn't a .38 when it went off because I've
10 shot a .39 and a .22, and I can tell the difference.

11 Q What kind of gun did you think it was?

12 A I suspected it was a .22. Now, I mean right
13 or wrong, I can't be an expert at it from just the sound,
14 but it didn't sound like a .38 to me.

15 Q Now, I'll show you a gun here, serial number
16 H53725. Does that appear to be similar to the gun that
17 you saw?

18 A Well, to be honest with you, all I can say that
19 I can remember is looking up and seeing the end of the gun.
20 It appeared to be a .22. It appeared to me to be a .22.

21 Q Was it a revolver?

22 A Yes, it looked like a revolver because as soon
23 as I looked up and spotted it, the shots went off; so it
24 was an instantaneous thing. I mean, I didn't have a second
25 chance, you know, to get a good look at it or him, but I did--
26 I did look up just as I say and to me it looked like he was

1 arching his arm a little bit like he was getting over the
2 group of men in front of him.

3 Q Reaching around somebody or something?

4 A Yeah. This is why I suspected he was short
5 also. I didn't see his face.

6 Q Uh huh (yes).

7 A And, in fact, there was so many guys that jumped
8 on him, I did not see his face afterwards; and then, of
9 course, after I did turn around and saw them jump on him,
10 two or three guys fell back against me again. I don't
11 know where they came from and then Murphy--I think it was
12 Murphy, one of the security guards--grabbed--helped me
13 up and he says, "Let get out in front here and stop the
14 pandemonium," because we knew what was going to happen.
15 And so I got up and went with him. We went out to these
16 swinging doors and held the people back because this corridor
17 was just loaded with people.

18 Q Uh huh (yes).

19 A Because we knew what was going to happen.

20 Q Who was on this door here.

21 A I don't know. You mean after the shooting?

22 Q No, before the shooting?

23 A Well, I was until, I would say, about 9:30,
24 ten o'clock; then they moved me up here to this door
25 because this is where they were heading, so we figured we'd
26 let them--if they finally mingled in here, we'd concentrate,

293

1 too, on this point right here and try to--

2 Q In other words, so far as you know, nobody was
3 on this door here then at the time?

4 A No, that was it. When we--when the Senator
5 came out, nobody--no security guard, nobody was in this
6 kitchen here; so this man could have walked in at any
7 time.

8 Q Nobody was here then?

9 A Nobody was here.

10 Q Could have come in as free as anything?

11 A Right. Anybody could have walked in there.

12 Q Which was a bad situation.

13 A Which was a bad situation, but they just didn't
14 have the help. They didn't ask for the help and they
15 should have.

16 Q All-righty. We'll reproduce this. We've got
17 our machine here.

18 A I don't care.

19 Q Do you want this?

20 A No.

21 Q Okay, Cesar. You going into semi-retirement?

22 A I am. I don't know about anybody else down
23 there.

24 Q Okay.
25
26

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date 6/11/68

THANE EUGENE CESAR, 1852 Morley, Simi, California,
was interviewed at his place of employment, Lockheed Aircraft
Corporation, Burbank, California.

CESAR advised he is employed on a part-time basis
by the Air Guard Service, 6720 Woodley Avenue, Sepulveda,
California. CESAR stated in connection with this employment,
he was assigned as a guard to the Ambassador Hotel on the
evening of June 4, 1968.

CESAR stated he arrived for work at the Ambassador Hotel
that evening at 6:05 p.m. and was assigned to the Embassy
Room for most of the evening. CESAR stated his main function
during the early part of the evening was to patrol the entrance
to the Embassy Room, control drunks, break up fights, and to
keep young children from sneaking into the Embassy Room.

About 10:50 p.m. the Embassy Room was becoming so
crowded that CESAR, at the request of the Los Angeles Fire
Department, was assigned to the kitchen area behind the
Embassy Room. CESAR stated his function at that point was
to restrict people from entering the Embassy Room from the
kitchen, allowing admittance only to KENNEDY staff members
and members of the working press. CESAR stated that it was
nearly impossible to control people entering the room since
false press badges and staff buttons were prevalent. CESAR
stated he noticed no one in the kitchen who was not wearing
a business suit and noticed no one loitering in a suspicious
manner.

At 11:50 p.m., CESAR was moved to the exit door
leading from the Embassy Room into the kitchen area by FRANK A.
MURPHY, Security Guard, Ambassador Hotel. CESAR stated at
this time he was informed by MURPHY the plan was for Senator
KENNEDY to leave the Embassy Room through this door after
making his victory speech and proceed through the kitchen to
the Colonial Room where a press conference was scheduled to be
held. At approximately 12:10 a.m., Senator KENNEDY emerged
from the Embassy Room into the corridor leading to the kitchen.

On 6/11/68 at Burbank, California File # Los Angeles 56-155

by SA's PETER L. REDBURN and 75
JOHN M. CALLAGHAN (PLR:jmk/njc) Date dictated 6/11/68

This document contains neither recommendations nor conclusions of the FBI. It is the property of the FBI and is loaned to
your agency; it and its contents are not to be distributed outside your agency.

O.C.

295

LA 50-156

and CESAR, holding Senator KENNEDY's right arm and holding the crowd back with his right hand, began to escort the Senator through the crowd.

As the Senator entered the kitchen from the corridor, approximately ten feet from a steam table, KENNEDY pulled loose from CESAR's grasp and proceeded over to shake hands with a busboy. At this time, CESAR attempted to stay as close to KENNEDY as possible and at the same time, trying to control the crowd. As KENNEDY was shaking hands with a busboy, CESAR looked up and suddenly saw a hand sticking out of the crowd between two camera men and the hand was holding a gun. CESAR continued he was blinded by the brilliant lights and could not see the face of the individual holding the gun. Just as CESAR started to move to jump on the gun, he saw the red flash come from the muzzle. At the same time, CESAR was shoved by an unknown individual, and the next thing he remembered he was on the floor against the ice machine. CESAR stated he was approximately four feet from the gun when it went off and that Senator KENNEDY was approximately two feet from the gun.

CESAR scrambled to his feet, drew his gun, and moved to the Senator. At this time, CESAR stated there were several men on top of the assassin trying to get the gun from his grasp. CESAR stated he took a position next to the Senator's body to protect him from further attack, and about three minutes later was given orders by Ambassador Security Guard MURPHY to get to the Embassy Room doors and keep the crowd out. CESAR took his position at the Embassy Room door inside the Embassy Room and stayed there until approximately 2:00 a.m. controlling the crowd.

CESAR stated he did not see SIRHAN at all during the evening and never saw anyone in the kitchen area that was dressed in anything other than a suit except for one television employee who turned out to be a delivery man.

- 76 -

LA 50-156

CESAR estimated there were approximately fifty persons in the kitchen area at the time of the shooting. He did not receive any help, newsmen, and campaign workers. CESAR stated the room was in utter confusion but there was not a very little movement of people and he cannot remember anyone attempting to flee from the room. CESAR stated he did not see any person wearing a white

296

he remembered hearing two shots, then a pause and then three more shots. There may have been more shots, but this was his impression at the time. Immediately thereafter, people began rushing DREW back and he saw others lowering Senator KENNEDY to the floor. The coat he was wearing was splashed with a lot of blood. At this point, he realized he was a photographer and began taking photographs. He recalls taking some photographs from the top of a nearby serving table. He recalled that some other photographer took a photograph which showed Mr. DREW on the serving table taking photographs.

Mr. DREW stated that he is retaining his sport coat in its safe condition and with the blood spots still on it in the event that it is needed at some future time by the authorities.

Mr. DREW did not see the Police Officers taking suspect SIRHAN out of the area as during this period he was looking for a phone to call his newspaper. He recalled that originally he believed that he thought the suspect was dressed in some type of a jump suit, however, upon further reflection he believes that he was mistaken. He apparently received this impression of the jump suit because he thought the suspect's clothes were all one color and possibly bluish.

Mr. DREW took no photograph in the kitchen prior to the shooting and he stated that he did not recall seeing suspect SIRHAN or any woman in a polka dot dress in the kitchen prior to the shooting. He did not recall seeing a woman in a polka dot dress in the kitchen after the shooting.

He recalled seeing Reporter RON BENNETT of United Press International in the kitchen after the shooting, but he can not say if BENNETT was present when the shooting occurred.

Subsequent to the shooting, he and BORIS YARO proceeded to the home address of suspect SIRHAN and took a number of photographs. He recalled that YARO discovered what appeared to be a .22 caliber spent slug in a trash box at the back of the house.

Mr. DREW recalled seeing a Police Officer who picked it up. Mr. DREW also took a photograph of a bullet hole in a wall. The bullet hole was placed in a bag by the Police Officer.

297