

COPY

**SPECIAL HEARING OF
BAXTER WARD**

In the Matter of:)
Circumstances Involving)
Robert Kennedy Assassination)

0206

Partial Transcript of Comments by:

William H. Lystrup and Dr. Thomas T. Noguchi

Monday, May 13, 1974

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OUR FILE NO. **7989-CT**

1 SUPERVISOR WARD: Thank you, Doctor, for
2 joining us.

3 Just for the record, would you restate
4 your name?

5 DR. NOGUCHI: Dr. Thomas T. Noguchi,
6 N-o-g-u-c-h-i.

7 SUPERVISOR WARD: And title and occupation.

8 DR. NOGUCHI: My title is the Chief Medical
9 Examiner, Coroner for the County of Los Angeles.

10 SUPERVISOR WARD: Thank you for joining us
11 this morning.

12 Doctor, we're referring to the
13 assassination of Senator Kennedy. Did you, on the date
14 of June 6, 1968, perform an autopsy examination on the body
15 of the late senator?

16 DR. NOGUCHI: Yes, sir.

17 SUPERVISOR WARD: And did you, in the course
18 of that examination, recover spent bullets from the body
19 of the late senator?

20 DR. NOGUCHI: Yes, I did.

21 SUPERVISOR WARD: How many bullets?

22 DR. NOGUCHI: I recovered one bullet from
23 the back of the neck of the senator.

24 SUPERVISOR WARD: Were there bullets in
25 addition?

26 DR. NOGUCHI: That was the nearly-complete
27 bullet. There were a number of fragments which were
28 retained in our office. Those fragments were too small to
do any comparison analysis.

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SUPERVISOR WARD: I see.

So then the most nearly-perfect bullet was that from the neck of the senator's body?

DR. NOGUCHI: Yes.

SUPERVISOR WARD: Did you, at the time you recovered that bullet, identify it in any fashion whatever?

DR. NOGUCHI: Yes. I placed my characteristic initial, T.N., and the last three coroner's numbers, 3, 1, 31.

These two items were placed on the base of the bullet for purpose of future identification.

SUPERVISOR WARD: What device did you use to accomplish that marking?

DR. NOGUCHI: I have a special instrument -- which is sharp, pointed instrument in the autopsy room, which I use regularly.

SUPERVISOR WARD: Is the autopsy room well-lighted?

DR. NOGUCHI: Yes.

SUPERVISOR WARD: Did you, at the time you removed the bullet and either before or after you placed your identification on it, count the number of grooves on the bullet?

DR. NOGUCHI: Yes, I did.

SUPERVISOR WARD: How many grooves did you observe at that time?

DR. NOGUCHI: At that time, I quickly counted a land and a groove number which I thought was a five, and

1 land and the groove ratio was one to one, and a right-hand
2 twist.

3 SUPERVISOR WARD: Was anybody accompanying
4 you in that examination, or were you alone as you counted
5 the grooves?

6 DR. NOGUCHI: I was alone. However, if I
7 just -- just to make a comment, I was just trying to account
8 the grooves in this fashion, and I thought I counted five.

9 SUPERVISOR WARD: Your competence in the
10 counting or examination, have you had forensic training?

11 DR. NOGUCHI: Yes. Forensic pathology is
12 the one that covers the wound. Ballistics as well --
13 although, the exact striation and identification of weapon
14 is not our field, however I believe I have sufficient general
15 knowledge to acquaint general matter regarding a bullet.

16 SUPERVISOR WARD: Therefore, did you have
17 training or experience in a crime lab prior to taking your
18 position?

19 DR. NOGUCHI: Yes. A part of training that
20 I went through at the first-year staff of the Los Angeles
21 County Coroner's office to spend near -- I will say about
22 two months on and on -- the Los Angeles Police Department
23 Crime Laboratory to acquaint to various criminal --
24 criminalistic procedures including identification of firearms.

25 SUPERVISOR WARD: And with this training
26 and experience, would it have included the counting of
27 grooves?

28 DR. NOGUCHI: Yes.

1 SUPERVISOR WARD: And the manner in which
2 that was done?

3 The bullet that you removed from the
4 neck of Senator Kennedy later was introduced to the Grand
5 Jury as evidence in the trial itself.

6 In the trial, was it known as Exhibit 47?

7 DR. NOGUCHI: Yes, sir.

8 SUPERVISOR WARD: Did you have occasion to
9 re-examine that bullet, Exhibit 47, a few weeks ago?

10 DR. NOGUCHI: Yes. On the April 19, 1974
11 I was invited to examine Exhibit 47 at the storage place
12 of the Criminal Court Building.

13 SUPERVISOR WARD: Let me explain, Doctor,
14 to the people here that on that date that you described in
15 April, I had arranged a court order for the photography by
16 the Balliscan camera from your department of many of the
17 evidence bullets in the Senator Kennedy case, and I wanted,
18 at that time, since this was their first reappearance, I
19 wanted at that time to ask you to be present so you could re-
20 examine the bullet known as Exhibit No. 47.

21 Did you find a marking again on the
22 base of the bullet?

23 DR. NOGUCHI: Yes, I did.

24 SUPERVISOR WARD: And it was substantially
25 the marking that you had placed in June of 1968, in your
26 opinion?

27 DR. NOGUCHI: Yes, sir.

28 SUPERVISOR WARD: How many grooves did the
bullet have?

1 DR. NOGUCHI: Under separate conditions,
2 under less pressure, so to speak, I counted again and again
3 and again, many times. It appears six grooves which one was
4 rather deformed on one side which may have been the reason
5 for my reading in the first time as a five, lands and grooves.

6 SUPERVISOR WARD: All right.

7 Dr. Noguchi, at the suggestion of your
8 office we prepared or had prepared some diagrams. Would
9 you please step to the charts to illustrate for us the
10 ballistics entry into the body of Senator Kennedy as
11 portrayed by these diagrams?

12 Mrs. Pinchuk will assist you in this.

13 The doctor will describe the location
14 of the wounds and the trajectory of the bullets in its
15 passage through or into the body of the senator.

16 DR. NOGUCHI: For the purpose of identification,
17 I placed -- three gunshot wounds by labeling "Gunshot wound
18 No. 1 through No. 3." These numbers -- not necessary to
19 indicate a sequential event, however. The gunshot wound
20 No. 1 was the fatal gunshot wound which was found on the
21 right mastoid behind the right ear. This was labeled, in
22 our autopsy report, gunshot wound No. 1.

23 The direction of the gunshot wound went
24 from the back to the front and slightly upward. If I may
25 point out (indicating), like this. Of course, I am referring
26 to it as a direction as the deceased person is in a standing
27 position.

28 The gunshot wound tract penetrates the