

* * * LOUISIANA STATE POLICE * * *

FINAL INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

IN RE SENATOR HUEY P. LONG

JUNE 5, 1992

> > THIS REPORT DOES NOT INCLUDE PHOTOGRAPHS OR OTHER EVIDENTIARY ITEMS > >

CASE REPORT



STATE OF LOUISIANA
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND CORRECTIONS

PUBLIC SAFETY SERVICES

EDWIN W. EDWARDS
GOVERNOR

PAUL W. FONTENOT
SUPERINTENDENT

CASE REPORT

DATE:

April 20, 1992

CASE NUMBER:

R1D013191

INVESTIGATING OFFICER:

Lt. Don Moreau

CRIME:

Homicide

SOURCE OF COMPLAINT:

LOCATION OF OFFENSE:

Baton Rouge, Louisiana

TIME AND DATE OF OFFENSE:

Approximately 2122 hours
September 8, 1935

ITEMS TAKEN:

ARRESTEE:

CHARGES PENDING:

COURTESY . LOYALTY . SERVICE

OFFICE OF STATE POLICE. P.O. BOX 66614. BATON ROUGE. LA. 70896

SUSPECT(S):

VEHICLES(S):

VICTIM(S):

U.S. Senator Huey P. Long

LAW ENFORCEMENT WITNESSES:

Lt. Don Moreau

CIVILIAN WITNESSES:

Pat Lane, Louisiana State Police Crime
Laboratory

EVIDENCE:

Documents and Photographs from
Estate of L.F. Guerre
One (1) Browning Model 1910 Pistol
Cal. 32 Auto SN-319446

SYNOPSIS: United States Senator Huey Pierce Long was shot at the Louisiana State Capitol on September 8, 1935. He expired as a result of this wound on September 10, 1935. Files pertaining to the shooting and subsequent investigation were discovered in possession of heirs of the late General L. F. Guerre. In 1935, General Guerre was head of the Louisiana Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation. Due to many unanswered questions regarding the shooting, the Louisiana State Police reopened the case.

NARRATIVE: On September 30, 1991, I was assigned by Lt. Col. Kenneth D. Norris to investigate the shooting and subsequent death of U. S. Senator Huey P. Long. This investigation was prompted by the discovery of the alleged murder weapon and investigative reports. These items were located among the memorabilia in the possession of Mabel G. Bennings. Ms. Bennings is the daughter of General L. F. Guerre. General Guerre was the Commander of the Louisiana State Bureau of Criminal Investigation at the time of the assassination.

Colonel Norris informed me that the investigative team would consist of myself and Pat Lane from the Louisiana State Police Crime Laboratory. Civil Sheriff Paul Valteau of Orleans Parish was charged by the court in New Orleans with maintaining custody of the Guerre papers and the weapon. Dr. Donald Lemieux, an archivist with the Louisiana State Archives, was assigned to assure the proper handling and preservation of all documents and objects.

On October 3, 1991, the files were opened and an initial reading and cataloging of the documents took place. It became apparent almost immediately that we were not in possession of the assassination case file. What we had were notes and correspondence regarding the possibility of a conspiracy to assassinate Senator Long. These documents, while undoubtedly of value from a historical standpoint, shed little light on the shooting of Senator Long.

The handgun was examined and shown to be functional. Also found with the handgun were six (6) .32 auto cartridges and one fired .32 calibre projectile. The fired projectile appeared to be of the same type as the unfired cartridges found with it. All projectiles, both the fired and the six unfired, were tin plated, copper jacketed .32 auto calibre. The fired projectile had visible rifling impressions on its surface and the nose of the projectile was deformed. Scientific analysis of the fired projectile by the Louisiana State Police Crime Laboratory proved that the fired projectile could not have been fired from the .32 calibre pistol identified as the weapon used to shoot Senator Long.

Due to the complete lack of any chain of custody or information as to the history of the weapon, or its possible use since the assassination, it was not possible to draw any conclusions regarding the origins of the fired projectile.

The most significant pieces of evidence in the documents obtained from Ms. Billings were a series of photographs. The first of these photographs depicted a man's double-breasted suit coat marked with a label "C Napolitana New Orleans" and the handwritten marking "Long-34". The second photograph depicts a white sleeveless garment, possibly an undershirt, marked with a label "Godchaux's New Orleans Custom Made", and handwritten markings "L-34", and "HPL". The third photograph depicted a long sleeve shirt labeled "Made For Godchaux's By The _____ Guild", and a handwritten marking "L-34". The coat, undershirt, and long sleeve shirt had all been cut open and tacked to a display board. All the garments displayed what appeared to be bullet entry and exit holes. There was obvious tearing and sooty residue on the front of the suit coat.

The photographs were examined by the Louisiana State Police Crime Laboratory and comparison test firings were done with the alleged murder weapon. The Crime Laboratory interpreted the hole in the front of the coat to be a "loose contact bullet entry". There is another hole slightly lower in the back of the coat. This hole is interpreted as a bullet exit. The holes in the white sleeveless garment and in the long sleeve shirt are in conformity with the damage done to the coat. All evidence available indicates that these items of clothing were worn by Senator Huey P. Long when he was shot.

Over the years, there have been several books written on the subject of the assassination of Senator Huey Long. These books have advanced various theories on how Senator Long came to be shot. The historical or official theory is that Huey Long was shot in the abdomen at pointblank range by a "small man in a white suit". This man was shot in turn by bodyguards and later identified as Dr. Carl Weiss, M.D. The other most popular theory has been that a bullet from a bodyguard's gun passed through Weiss and struck Long or that a ricocheting bullet struck him. The damage to the coat speaks for the "official" theory. Huey Long was shot in front of numerous witnesses. Two of these witnesses, Murphy Roden and Judge John Fournet were very close to Senator Long at the time of the shooting. Both of these men testified at a coroner's inquest held on the death of Dr. Carl A. Weiss, the alleged assassin. Both of them identified Dr. Carl Weiss as the man they saw shoot Senator Long. Five other witnesses came forward to say the same thing. Senator Long himself lived for two days following his shooting, and at no time did Senator Long identify anyone other than Weiss as his assailant.

The other documents contained in the collection provided by Ms. Binnings revealed several other facts concerning the assassination and subsequent investigation. A series of what appeared to be coded reports were found. These proved to be the written reports of private detectives employed by the William J. Burns Detective Agency of New York. These detectives were apparently hired by the Louisiana Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation to conduct clandestine surveillances on members of the Weiss family following the assassination. Why private detectives were used for this purpose instead of the Bureau's own investigators remains a mystery.

One enigma in the events immediately following the shooting of Senator Long has been that Harry Costello, then Director of Sports Publications at Louisiana State University, reportedly received a call from Washington, D.C. identifying Carl Weiss as the assassin. This call was received at 9:33 P.M. September 8, 1935, approximately eleven minutes after the shooting. This has been cited by some as evidence of a conspiracy involving President Franklin Roosevelt, a political enemy of Senator Long. The Binnings documents provided a copy of a telegram from Allen Coogan, then employed by United Press International. Coogan revealed that a correspondent had obtained the identification of Weiss from Allen Ellender, the Speaker of the House, at Our Lady of the Lake Hospital minutes after the shooting and had telephoned the identity to the Washington, D.C. Bureau of United Press International.

It is significant that in none of the internal memos and correspondence between General Guerre, then head of the Louisiana Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation, and other investigators and members of the Long organizations, is there any mention of the possibility that someone other than Dr. Carl Weiss fired the fatal shot.

Huey Pierce Long was shot once by a small statured man in a white suit. The shot was fired at "loose contact" distance. The projectile entering the upper right abdomen and exiting from the lower right back after traversing the body. The description of the wounds given by the attending surgeons coincides with the bullet hole locations observed in the photographs of Senator Long's garments.

All observations made of the photographic and other evidence was supportive of the official version of the shooting. A careful examination of literary sources and historical information provides no credible contradictions. The lack of any chain of custody on any of the evidence is distressing. But every effort was made by the investigators to be as thorough as possible while remaining professionally skeptical.

This report does not answer every possible question which could be raised concerning the shooting of Senator Long. It does, however, shed some light on what had previously been one of history's many mysteries.

CRIME LAB INFORMATION

Louisiana Department of Public Safety
and Corrections

OFFICE OF STATE POLICE

CRIME LABORATORY

P.O. BOX 66614-BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA 70896

(504) 925-6216 LINC 427-6216

REQUEST FOR SCIENTIFIC ANALYSIS

(Type or Print with ball point pen)

Submitting Agency File No.

(If Known)

LAB. No. SP 7007-91

Page: 1 of 1 Pages

Submitting Agency

Address

Type Examination Requested

Suspect(s) 1

Victim(s) 1

Type Investigation *

Case Officer

Phone

Parish

Itemize and Describe Evidence (Type or Print with ball point pen)

1. ONE (1) BRUNNINGS AND 1910-32 CM PISTOL SN-319446
2. ONE (1) FIRED PLASTIC .32 CM
3. SIX (6) PLASTIC ENVIRO-A- CONTAINING PLASTIC (MAG) AND NEGATIVES
4. ONE PISTOL MAGAZINE FOR ITEM 1. CONTAINING SIX (6) UNFIRED .32 AUTO CARTRIDGES.

Evidence Delivered By:

Print Name:

Signature:

[Signature] 11/6/91

[Signature]
Signature of Laboratory Person Receiving Evidence

Date 11-6-91

Time: 10:30 AM

FOR LABORATORY USE ONLY

PRELIMINARY REPORT

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY
OFFICE OF STATE POLICE
CRIME LABORATORY
P.O. BOX 66614
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA 70896
(504) 925-6216

Laboratory No.
SP- 07007-91

Please refer to the above case
number when issuing subpoenas
for Laboratory personnel.

SCIENTIFIC ANALYSIS REPORT
PRELIMINARY REPORT

To: State Police Reg I Det
P.O. Box 66614
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70896

Reference: Carl A Weiss
Huey P Long
Parish: East Baton Rouge

Case Officer: D. Moreau
Agency File No:
Date Submitted: 11-06-91
Time Submitted: 10:30 a.m.
Evidence Delivered by: D. Moreau
Evidence Received by: Patrick A. Lane

Examination Requested: Firearms & Toolmarks
Serology
Date of Examination: 12-02-91
11-18-91

EVIDENCE SUBMITTED:

1. One (1) Browning, Model 1910-32, .32 caliber pistol, bearing Serial No. 319446.
2. One (1) fired .32 caliber projectile.
3. Six (6) plastic envelopes containing photographs and negatives.
4. One (1) pistol magazine for the Browning .32 caliber pistol mentioned in Exhibit 1, containing six (6) .32 auto cartridges.

December 17, 1991
RESULTS:

The tearing and sooty residue around the hole in the right side, near the middle button, on the double breasted coat depicted in the photographs (Exhibit 6, Inventory No. 14-48) is consistent with test patterns produced by firing the Browning .32 auto pistol Serial No. 319446 (Exhibit 1) with the muzzle of the weapon in contact with the linen test cloth at the time of discharge. No residues or tearing are observable around a second hole slightly lower and in the back of the coat in the same photo. This hole is interpreted as an exit hole associated with the contact entrance hole in the front right of the coat.

The full metal jacket bullet (Exhibit 2) is a copper jacketed roundnose open base projectile with a thin silver colored plating over the copper jacket portion of the bullet. The physical appearance of this bullet is the same as the bullets seated in the six "Rem-UMC 32-7.65 M/M" cartridges (Exhibit 4).

The general rifling characteristics observed on the questioned bullet (Exhibit 2) are six lands and grooves with right twist. Land impression measurements are .036-.039 inch. Groove impression measurements are .115-.119 inch.

Reference bullets test fired in the Browning pistol Serial No. 319446 (Exhibit 1) bear six lands and grooves with right twist. Land impression measurements on the reference bullets are .026-.030 inch. Groove impression measurements on the reference bullets are .124 inch.

The questioned bullet (Exhibit 2) could not be matched to the Browning pistol bearing Serial No. 319446 (Exhibit 1).

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