



CSU
College of Law Library

Cleveland State University
EngagedScholarship@CSU

1954 Police Reports

Police Documents

12-11-1954

Cleveland Police Report, December 11, 1954, Detective Pete Decker describes the questioning of Sam Sheppard on July 31, 1954 in the Cuyahoga County Jail

Pete J. Becker
Cleveland Police Department

Follow this and additional works at: https://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/police_reports_1954
How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!

Recommended Citation

Becker, Pete J., "Cleveland Police Report, December 11, 1954, Detective Pete Decker describes the questioning of Sam Sheppard on July 31, 1954 in the Cuyahoga County Jail" (1954). *1954 Police Reports*. 47.

https://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/police_reports_1954/47

This Police Report is brought to you for free and open access by the Police Documents at EngagedScholarship@CSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in 1954 Police Reports by an authorized administrator of EngagedScholarship@CSU. For more information, please contact library.es@csuohio.edu.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

CLEVELAND, OHIO

DEPARTMENTAL INFORMATION

DIST. ZONE

December 11th 1954

EXAMINED BY

RANK

FROM

Pete J. Docker-Det. #437

TO

David Kerr, Captain.

SUBJECT

Sheppard Homicide---Interrogation of SAM SHEPPARD at County Jail.

COPIES TO

Sir:-

On July 31st, 1954, I reported for duty at 4:30 P.M. and with Detective Lonchar was assigned to proceed to County Jail and their relative Detectives Schottke and Garsen, who were questioning Dr. Sam Sheppard. This assignment was given to us by Sergt. Harold Lockwood, who at that time told us that in the event that Dr. Sheppard refused to answer questions relative to the night of the murder that we were to try and make him as angry as possible at us, and that he would receive us and use a different approach in his questioning of Dr. Sheppard.

When Detective Lonchar and I arrived at County Jail we signed in and went to the fourth floor where after a few minutes we met Detectives Garsen and Schottke. At that time Deputy Sheriff Rossback and Sheriff Sweeney were on the fourth floor and they advised us that we would have to wait to talk to Dr. Sam until after he had eaten his dinner. Rossback then informed us that after the prisoner had eaten we could use his fourth floor office to question the prisoner.

While Dr. Sam had gone to eat, Detective Schottke and Detective Garsen briefed us as to the progress of their interrogation just finished. They told us that the defendant carried on a nice conversation about anything they might talk to him about except the night in question. They stated that any mention made about the night of July 3rd or the early morning of the 4th, that his usual answer was to the effect that; "UPON THE ADVICE OF MY COUNSEL I WAS TOLD NOT TO TALK ABOUT THAT". They went on to say that the closest that they could get him to the time of the murder, was that when he was asleep on the couch and was awakened by his wife calling.

With the thought in mind that we could possibly get him to talking about the time in question, we had various photographs relative to this homicide brought over to us at County Jail, while Sam was eating.

A short while later Sam Sheppard was brought to the office of Deputy Sheriff Rossback, on the fourth floor. We informed him that we were Cleveland Homicide Detectives, telling him our names, and that we wished to talk to him. We asked him to sit down; there were three chairs in the room and he requested to sit in the straight back chair, so that he could rest his head and the back of his neck against the wall. He was not wearing an orthopedic collar.

We started questioning him about what he had eaten and how he was being fed, and he told us, and further stated that he had taken a shower. We talked to him about a number of subjects removed from the murder, for quite a time. This included a discussion about his age, high school days, various athletics, his college education, his days in L.A. During this time he began talking quite freely and began to ask us about court procedures, and the manner in which indictments and arraignments were made, stating that this was all new to him, and he wondered what the next steps were.

Continued on Page #2

POLICE DEPARTMENT

CLEVELAND, OHIO

DEPARTMENTAL INFORMATION

DIST. _____ ZONE **D.5**

19

EXAMINED BY _____ RANK _____

19

FROM **Pete J. Becker, Det. #437** TO _____SUBJECT **Sheppard Homicide Interrogation #2**

COPIES TO _____

-2-

He asked us about the various degrees of homicide and the penalties in each of these degrees and we explained the differences and the differences in the penalties.

We continued talking to him and advised him that he was in serious trouble and that it was up to him to help himself, if he was as innocent as he professed to be. We then asked him to submit to a polygraph examination because if as long as he was innocent he would have nothing to fear or hide. He stated that his counsel had told him, that if he submitted to a Polygraph examination or to truth serum, that his counsel would drop the case.

We went on to say to him, that it was certainly unusual for an innocent person, in our experience, to be reluctant about taking any examination, that any one would offer, to prove his innocence, if he was that. We went on to say that in numerous homicide cases where the assailant is not immediately apprehended, members of the family are usually in constant contact with our office, asking about the case, the progress that has been made, making suggestions, supplying information, and that it was quite unusual, that in his particular case, where his wife was killed, that he had crawled into a protective shell, and had to this date, not offered any information, nor had he ever called to question our progress. We also told him that the actions of members of his family indicated that they did not want us to question him about this crime.

We went on to ask him what he would do in the event that the positions were reversed and he was a policeman and his answer was that he was a doctor. We asked him why he had engaged attorneys as quickly as he had and he stated: "IF YOU WERE SICK YOU WOULD GO TO A DOCTOR AND ABIDE BY WHAT HE SAYS. I AM ACCUSED OF THIS THING AND I WILL HAVE TO DEPEND ON MY COUNSEL."

We impressed on him that as far as we were concerned, that he didn't act like any innocent person but that of a guilty person by his refusal to cooperate completely, and by the actions of him and certain members of his family. At about this time I arranged a series of photos which were taken at the scene, some depicting the front yard, the entrance, the back yard, the beach, the various inside rooms, the cot, the upstairs stairway, and various other photos. And through these photographs we got him talking about the night in question. We then asked him who he thought might have committed this crime and he stated that he was of the opinion that his wife met her death by someone who knew her and possibly him too, and worshipped her from afar and held her in high esteem. That somehow, this person changed his mind about her, and had to kill her, because he was disappointed, or because of something he had learned about Marilyn, possibly the fact that she was pregnant, and that he had to kill her because he was disillusioned. He described this person as a schizophrenic paranoid, some one with a Jekyll and Hyde personality.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

CLEVELAND, OHIO

DEPARTMENTAL INFORMATION

DIST. ZONE _____

19

EXAMINED BY _____

RANK _____

19

FROM Pete J. Decker, Det. #437 TO _____

SUBJECT Sheppard Homicide--Interrogation of Dr. Sam. #3

COPIES TO _____

Through the photos as mentioned previously, we led him to identifications of the front of the house, the beach, the stairway to the beach, the house inside rooms, the cot and the stairway leading upstairs. At this time he was telling us that he was awaked by hearing his wife shout for him, and that he then ran upstairs. He stated that as he reached the landing on top of the stairs, and before he actually got into the room he VISUALIZED a form, beside his wives bed, he went on to say that at that time he was CLOBBERED from behind he thoug he went on to say that the next thing he knew was when he came to he noticed what appeared to be a shiny object beside him on the floor, and he remembered that it was a badge he had on his billfold. We then went on to question him about whether there was more than one, and he stated that he was of the opinion that there was more than one person at the time, but wasn't sure. We asked him how he could have been hit from the rear if there was only one and how he could have been hit from the rear if he was on the landing and he said everything was hazy. Attempting to get him further we then showed him the photo of Marilyn Sheppard on the bed and he glanced at it momentarily and then closed his eyes and refused to look at any further photos. HE WENT ON TO SAY AT THAT TIME THAT ON ORDERS FROM HIS COUNSEL HE WAS NOT TO DISCUSS IT WITH US.

We attempted to question him further about why he should refuse to discuss it if he had nothing to fear and he SAID HE HAD ORDERS NOT TO TALK ABOUT IT. When asked why he was so hazy about descriptions and describing these individuals as forms, then, they, oilouettes, it, he likened himself to a football player that sometime in a game received a head injury and yet acted normal and played a wonderful game, but that later when he came to could remember nothing about it.

I then realized that we would not get much further with him at this time and thought it better to change my tactics, and try to make him as angry as possible and set him up for Sergt. Lockwood. IN A VERY LOUD VOICE in a sudden outburst I called Sam Sheppard a GOD-DAMNED-LIAR if there were any possible explanations for the missing "T" shirt, the missing weapon, the fact that he apparently had not been attacked by the so called burglar with the same weapon as he was not cut, the fact that the burglar would certainly attack him more viciously because of possible future identification, especially if he was the paranoid he suspected and possibly knew, the fact that in the short time he took to get up the stairs after hearing his wife shout would not allow time for the number of blows she sustained, and the fact that after a burglar is found out he would not tarry around waiting for him to come to after apparently only striking him once to be caught, the fact that his coat was neatly folded on the bed, that there was no theft, the fact that if the thief ransacked the house first he would certainly have seen Sam on the cot, and the fact that he by all means would not ransack the house in such a neat manner after he had been caught and had to fight his way out. We went on to say that we knew his family life was not the picture of harmony he was trying to lead us to believe as we knew that his wife at one time had contacted a West Side private eye with a view of having someone tailed, and that it must have been him, as she apparently knew about Susan Hayes

continued on page 4

POLICE DEPARTMENT

CLEVELAND, OHIO

DEPARTMENTAL INFORMATION

ST. ZONE _____

19 _____

EXAMINED BY _____ RANK _____

19 _____

FROM **Pete J. Becker, Det #437** TO _____SUBJECT **Sheppard Homicide-Interrogation of Dr. Sam--Page #4**

COPIES TO _____

-4-

I told him that I realized why he did not care to discuss the night in question and that there was only one person in the world that could have killed Marilyn Sheppard and that it was him. He was visibly shocked at this sudden outburst, and I continued to abuse him by stating that in my estimation he was nothing but a spoiled, pampered, molly-coddled baby all his life, hid behind his family apron strings, probably always had everything that he ever wanted, and now that he was involved in this serious crime he was still trying to hide behind his family and friends. The result of which due to his selfishness has not only ruined his own life but that of his family members as well, along with Bay-View hospital. I told him that he was a discredit to the entire profession of osteopathy and that as far as him being a brain surgeon that with his meager education in neuro-surgery, which is certainly a specialty, I wouldn't let him operate on my dog. I went on to tell him that any bum on the streets could come up with a story of that type. I told him that from my part in this investigation there was no doubt in my mind as to who had killed his wife. I told him that in my time on the police department he was one of the coldest blooded individuals that I had ever encountered. I discontinued talking to him and Det. Lonchar asked him a few more questions and hearing Sergt. Lockwood in the hallway I left Deputy Rosebacks office.

Before we left Sam Sheppard again asked our name and we told him. We both noted and remarked that he seemed very upset when we left.

Respectfully,



Detective #437