



CSU
College of Law Library

Cleveland State University
EngagedScholarship@CSU

[All Articles](#)

[Newspaper Coverage](#)

7-23-1957

57/07/23 Coverup Was Tried in Sheppard Probe

Cleveland Plain Dealer

Follow this and additional works at: https://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/newspaper_coverage

[How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!](#)

Recommended Citation

Cleveland Plain Dealer, "57/07/23 Coverup Was Tried in Sheppard Probe" (1957). *All Articles*. 253.
https://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/newspaper_coverage/253

This Book is brought to you for free and open access
by the Newspaper Coverage at
EngagedScholarship@CSU. It has been accepted for
inclusion in All Articles by an authorized administrator
of EngagedScholarship@CSU. For more information,
please contact library.es@csuohio.edu.



Coverup Was Tried in Sheppard Probe

A. Decker 7-23-57

Bay Mayor Attempted to Hide Hayes Affair, Reports Show

By SANFORD WATZMAN

Mayor J. Spencer Houk of Bay Village flunked out in an early attempt to hush up evidence in the Sheppard murder case.

He did not "want it to get out or be known" that Dr. Samuel H. Sheppard had been having an affair with Miss Susan Hayes.

This was revealed in police homicide files that were opened

THIRD OF A SERIES

for the Plain Dealer by Chief Frank W. Story.

Houk was repentant afterward. In confessing his error after police had uncovered the lead from another source, he promised full co-operation to Cleveland detectives.

This is one example of a lack of liaison and fact sharing in the crucial early stages of the probe. The documents also show how the advice of Cleveland police was sought on the day of the murder—only to be turned down.

Recommended Transfer

Detectives Robert F. Schottke and Patrick A. Gareau recommended that Dr. Sam be transferred from his family's Bay View Hospital to the prison ward at City Hospital.

Their questioning of him there could have been restricted, if at all, only by neutral physicians. But Schottke and Gareau were merely consultants in Bay Village. They had no authority.

They were ignored on this
(Continued on Page 6, Column 1)

Coverup Was Tried in Sam's Probe

Reports Show Lack of Liaison

★ From First Page

point, although Mayor Houk and John P. Eaton, the suburb's police chief, agreed that their accusation of Dr. Sam seemed justified.

Within a few days, five independent enforcement agencies were working on the crime—Bay Village police, Cleveland detectives, the sheriff, the coroner and the county prosecutor.

Not one was in a real position of leadership. All were somewhat uncertain about the roles they could or should play, or about their relationship with each other.

Yet the Cleveland Police Department had no rival among

A reprint of yesterday's article is on Page 5.

the other four as the organization best equipped to get the job done.

This was recognized by the Bay Village City Council 16 days after the murder. It again invited Cleveland detectives to participate and appropriated \$5,000 to help defray Cleveland's expenses.

On the following evening, representatives of the five agencies assembled in the office of Chief Story. But the issue of leadership kept spinning on the merry-go-round as the session got under way.

Here are excerpts from the discussion as now revealed in a stenographic transcript. Newspaper reporters had been barred from the meeting.

STORY—I see after reading this (Council) resolution that it merely asks for aid and assistance . . . My question is: Who is to head it up (the investigation)?

HOUK—The resolution speaks for the Council and for itself . . . I will frankly appreciate it if you will decide, in your capacities, who is to head it up. I just want to get the thing solved . . . This is putting me right on the spot.

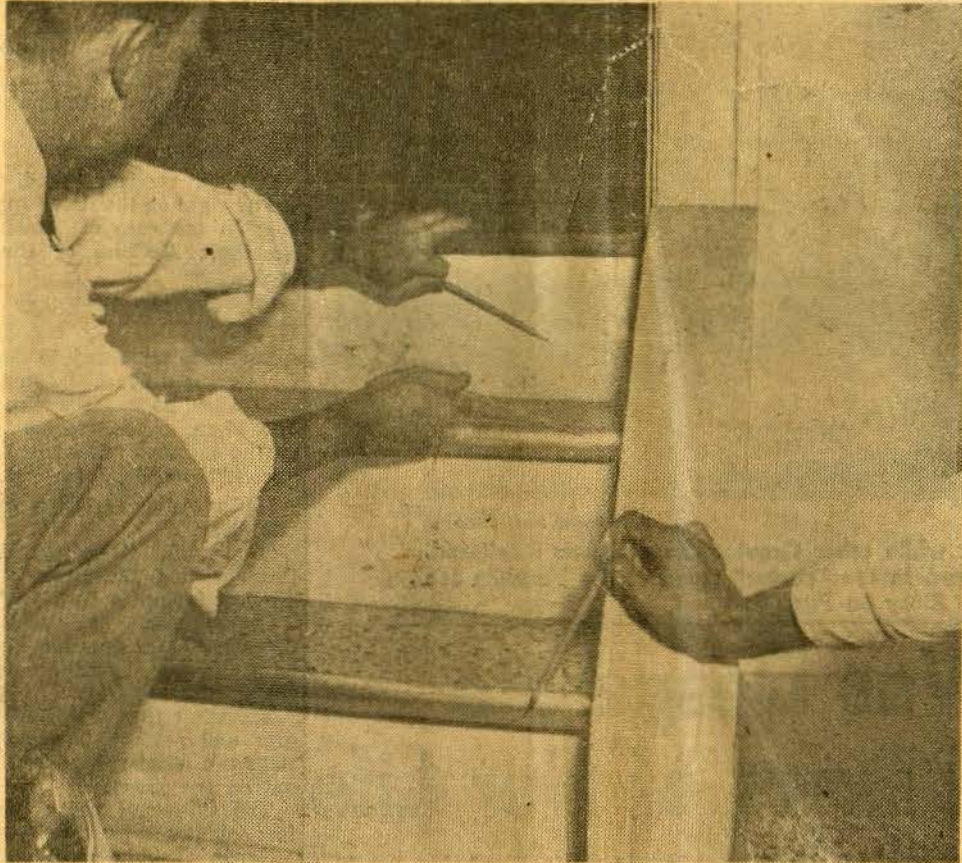
STORY—Yes, I know that, but the request is coming from your city.

HOUK—All I can say is that the resolution was passed by Council . . . I didn't ask for any legislation.

STORY—I am not certain what your city has asked us to do, and you want us to do what? . . . We want you to say so.

HOUK—Specifically that is what we are asking for.

STORY—You want us to do



Police technicians checked for blood spots in the Sheppard home after Cleveland detectives officially took charge of the investigation. (Photograph taken from police files.)



"Burglary" scene in the Sheppard home was one of the outstanding angles of the case. Drawers were pulled out evenly. Household items were in neat piles on the floor. (Photograph taken from police files.)

it, and if that is so we want reports and other things.

HOUK—Anything we have is available to you immediately.

STORY—Somebody has to head it up, somebody has to

call the shots, somebody has to make decisions.

JOHN J. MAHON (chief trial prosecutor)—We are willing to co-operate with anyone. We don't seek any particular glory. The only thing we want is the perpetrator of this crime brought to justice.

Cleveland police wheeled out their huge investigative apparatus soon afterward as Capt. David E. Kerr, chief of the homicide squad, was recalled from a Florida vacation.

But, even before this, Detective Chief James E. McArthur was tapping his sources over the country.

Through a contact with Capt. James E. Hamilton, intelligence chief of the Los Angeles Police Department and a personal friend of Story, McArthur and Kerr, valuable evidence already was being gathered.

The assistance of Capt. Hamilton was a key factor in the later presentation of Miss Hayes and Dr. Lester T. Hovester as the state's principal "motive" witnesses.

Nowhere in the homicide reports is there any indication of disagreement among the detectives—Dr. Sam was always the best suspect. Yet other candidates were not overlooked. Investigators spent much of their time checking out useless data of the "he said, she said" type. Ultimately, most of it was pigeon-holed as gossip, including a great deal of information detrimental to Dr. Sheppard.

For days detectives checked every "P" listing in the Chicago telephone directory—covering more than 100 pages.

This was a futile attempt to find a tipster who offered another suspect. She wrote police a letter from Chicago, signing it only "Miss J. R. P."

Arthur was not satisfied with the performance of Bay Village police.

This dispute centered on the tardiness of Bay Village in checking out the story of Mrs. Jessie Dill, a potential state's witness. Evidence tying in with her statement was lost in the suburb, apparently through an inadvertence.

Mayor Houk later explained his attempted suppression of the Susan Hayes data in this way, homicide detectives wrote:

"He had accepted the conditions existing at the Sheppard home on his arrival at what he termed face value and sincerely believed Sam's story of the intruder . . .

"He anticipated the disclosure of the affair as only adding to the burden of a man who, at the time, he believed to be bearing a heavy enough burden of grief.

"He has since altered his viewpoint considerably and expresses regret."

Houk asserted in a later interview that he had told Dr. Stephen A. Sheppard he would divulge nothing about Miss Hayes.

Dr. Steve replied, according to Houk: "We understand each other."

TOMORROW: Inside County Jail—the interrogation of Dr. Sam.