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54/07/23 Details in Murder of Mrs. Sheppard Are Explored by Coroner at Inquest

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Witnesses Are Police and Friends of Victim

Testimony of witnesses examined yesterday at the inquest into the murder of Marilyn Sheppard, except that of Dr. Samuel H. Sheppard, is here summarized.

INQUEST WITNESS. Testifying at the Marilyn Sheppard inquiry was Mrs. Nancy Abner, who was at the Sheppard home with her husband and children for dinner the night of Mrs. Sheppard's murder.
Q—Now, can you relate in your own fashion just what happened after you went into the living room to watch television?

A—When Mr. Ahern came back we all decided we would watch the movie, Mrs. Sheppard and I had rather hoped we could go to a movie when we finished dinner, rather, then when she joined us in the living room, Dr. Sheppard and she sat in the big red chair that is in front of the television, and Mr. Ahern and I sat on the west side of that chair, and for the first part of the show I sat on Mr. Ahern's lap for a few minutes, and then I brought the other armchair up alongside and we sat and watched the television movie, and thought it was a bit dull.

**Doctor Lies Down**

But we decided that we would stick it out to the end and see if it improved a little. Towards the end of the movie, I would say halfway through, Dr. Sheppard, who had had a very tough day, said he would go lie down on the couch. So he went over on the couch, which was to my right and to Mrs. Sheppard's left, he lay down with his head facing the television and dropped off to sleep with his head on the pillow, on his stomach, sort of wadded up under his head, the pillow, rather.

Then towards the end the movie began to improve for a few minutes and Mrs. Sheppard said to Dr. Sheppard, “Sam, wake up, see the rest of the movie—it might be good.” And I turned around and looked, too, because he was right to my right, and he put his head up and very drowsy-eyed, and looked for a few minutes and said, “Oh, it is not going to be any good,” and put his head down and he went back to sleep.

So when the movie was over, or a few minutes before it was over, Mr. Ahern and I looked at Mrs. Sheppard and she looked sort of drowsy, was sort of trying to keep her eyes open, because of having company I suppose, and I suggested to Mr. Ahern that it would be a good
The minute we got up out of our chair when the movie was over, Mrs. Sheppard immediately woke up and popped up out of her chair and saw us to the door.

When we left, Dr. Sheppard was sleeping very soundly, as far as either one of us could see, and had been for I don’t know exactly how long, but it would seem to me it would have been 15, 20 minutes or half an hour.

Then Mrs. Sheppard saw us to the door, and I am sorry now that we didn’t see whether the door was locked or not when she shut it, but you don’t do those things when you figure there is a man in the house. And we told her to hurry and run up to bed real quickly before she got wide awake, and we jumped in the car and went home. And that’s it.

Q—What time was this?
A—Well, the movie, I assume, was over at 12 o’clock—I am not just sure—or 12:05. I suppose
that can be checked, I really don’t know, but we left before the commercial came on.

Q—What station were you watching?
A—Well, that is a pretty good question. I don’t know. Whatever station Strange Holiday was on.

Q—Strange Holiday. When Dr. Sheppard went over to lie down and go to sleep, what did he have on?
A—He had on his, the same trousers—shall I go through what they were again?

Q—Yes, go ahead.
A—Brown and white or tan and white cord trousers, white sweat socks and loafers, white T-shirt and a brown corduroy jacket.

Q—Was he wearing that when he went to sleep?
A—He was, and when we left.

Q—He was wearing that when you left?
A—Yes.

Q—Did he have a wrist watch?
A—I don’t know. I have tried several times to recall.

Q—Did he have a key chain?
A—I don’t know that either.

Q—Did he have a ring?
A—You don’t want me to assume?

Q—No.
A—I don’t know whether he had them on or not.

Doesn’t Remember Watch

Q—Did Mrs. Sheppard have on a watch?
A—I don’t know, but I know she always wore one.

Q—She always wore one?
A—Every time I saw her.

Q—What sort of a watch was this?
A—A small gold watch.

Q—Was it round?
A—Square.

Q—Square?
A—Yes.

Q—Did she have any rings on?
A—I don’t know, but she always did wear her wedding ring and her engagement ring.

Q—She always, that was part of her costume, was it, the wedding ring?
A—Yes, but by the same token she might not have had it on in that she had been playing golf yesterday, the day before, rather, and of course you do take your rings off when you play golf. Now, that would be the only reason I could think for her not having them on.
Q. Have you had any other occasions to be in the Sheppard home under the same conditions?

A. Yes.

Q. Did Dr. Sheppard go to sleep on those occasions?

A. Yes, very often. He was quite a hard-working man.

Q. It was, then, characteristic of him?

A. Yes. He had a very good appetite.

Q. Wait a minute.

A. What I meant was he had a very good appetite and he most always got sleepy after dinner.

Q. You are telling me that you usually ate late, is that it?

A. We did when we were swimming or water-skiing or playing badminton or something like that. The children, we often fed them earlier.

Q. Would you say you and Marilyn, all four of you, were rather confidential, sociable?

A. We were very good friends.

Q. Very good friends?

A. Yes.

Q. Says She Confided

Q. Did she ever confide in you?

A. Yes.

Q. Did she tell you that she wouldn't tell other people?

A. Oh, I don't imagine so.

Q. Did she tell you that she was pregnant?

A. Yes.

Q. When did she tell you that she was pregnant?

A. About two weeks before that.

Q. Two weeks before July 4th?

A. Yes. I say about two weeks.

Q. Can you recall the circumstances?

A. Yes. We were going to dinner at the country club. Dr. and Mrs. Sheppard and their young son were going to a buffet supper. I wasn't quite ready and Mrs. Sheppard came upstairs while I finished powdering my nose and I remarked about what an attractive dress she had on and she said didn't I think it was just a little bit snug, and I said why no, I didn't think so. And she said, "I fill it out quite well, don't you think?" and then she told me. And I hadn't thought about it. I hadn't known about it before.

Q. Who were present?

A. Just myself.

Q. Just the two of you?

A. In my bedroom, yes.

Q. Did she tell you when she expected the baby?

A. No.

Q. Didn't she say how many months she had been pregnant?

A. Yes.

Q. What did she say?

A. Four months.

Q. Did she tell you when she found out that she was preg-
A-No.

Q-Did she tell you who her doctor was for her pregnancy?

A-No.

Q-Did she tell you who had married her before this man?

A-Neither.

Q-Did she ever tell you how she was going to have her baby?

A-Neither.

Q-What did she say?

A-What sort of thing would she say?

Q-I don't know, just tell me what she said. Did she ever or not have any difficulties with her husband or was she ever unhappy?

A-I am not sure whether a doctor's wife needs a life of her own.

Q-What did she say?

A-What did she say?

Q-Did you ever hear anything about the door that goes from the garage to the kitchen?

A-No. Dr. Sheppard had heard her talking. She perhaps said something about it, but I don't remember. She was very often at home alone, and she just never quite realized what was going on around her. She was a little bad to go on a case or something, and she always was rather lonesome.

Q-What did Mrs. Sheppard say?

A-Mrs. Sheppard had heard her talking. She had been out with Miss Hayes and didn't seem to think much of it. She did not tell me about it. That is what she said to me.

Q-Did she tell you about it?

A-No.

Q-That she wasn't upset?

A-That she wasn't upset?

Q-She didn't talk to you about anything?

A-Neither. She told me that she had bought a watch for a friend a few weeks ago. She had been in the house alone with Miss Hayes and she had told her everything.

Q-Did you notice the room that I could see there, the two chairs, the armchairs?

A-Yes. I don't know of any-where she was when we went there.

Q-You didn't notice the room looking there-where she was sitting, were there any changes in that room?

A-Not what you would call. She was so lonesome that she never paid attention to things.

Q-Did you notice the door locked?

A-No. I know. Dr. Sheppard had not locked the door.

Q-That word angry is kind of hard to describe. I have never seen Dr. Sheppard that angry, angry.

Q-Did you see her looking ill there?

A-Yes. As a matter of fact she looked ill there.

Q-That she wasn't upset?

A-That she wasn't upset.

Q-That she didn't say anything was wrong there?

A-I don't remember if she did or not.

Q-Probably it would be closer to two months or a month ago. on the day she thought of married life?

A-That was the day. It was the last day of the trip and they had just come home together.

Q-Did she ever tell you how long ago was this?

A-That was open and scattered.

Q-Or.

A-That was open and scattered.

Q-Six months ago? A-When I came back from the trip early this year by the end. I am not speaking of anything that we are talking about, a few days after that.

Q-What did she tell you?

A-What did she tell you about being married to a doctor, left. When I brought the last of our family life, and she was thinking of married life? at any of those?

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and asked me to come down and look and see if anything had been changed. I didn't go in the house at all all day Sunday.

Dr. Gerber: That is all .

DON J. AHERN

Questioning

Dr. Gerber: 

Q-Can you tell us when you saw Dr. Sheppard and Marilyn Sheppard on Saturday, July 3d?

A-Initially about six o'clock in the afternoon.

Q-Where did you see her?

A-At our residence.

Q-And what occurred?

A-They were there for approximately two hours. During that period of time we all had perhaps two cocktails apiece. We discussed the progress of Mrs. Sheppard's golf, inasmuch as my wife had been assisting her in golf. She had played very little before. Other than that I think it was just of a general nature, nothing unusual in particular.

Q-Then what happened?

A-From there we went down to the residence of Dr. Sam Sheppard.

Q-What time did you leave your home?

A-About 8 o'clock.

Q-What time did you arrive over at the Sheppards' home?

A-Perhaps two minutes later.

Q-Then what happened, what happened then?

A-Some time between the time we arrived and started eating dinner I recall that Sam and I walked down to the beach to look at the water inasmuch as he had planned on skiing the following day.

Q-Was Dr. Sheppard there when you arrived?

A-Yes, he was. He was there at the house.

Q All right, go ahead.

A-I recall the water was very rough that evening, and it was a little disappointing because he had invited a number of interns for the following day to ski. We were down there for perhaps 10 or 15 minutes and came back up to the house and shortly thereafter we went down in the basement, that is, Dr. Sam, our two children, and their son Chip. And Sam was showing the children how to use the punching bag. We were down there for perhaps 10 or 15 minutes and came back up. Shortly thereafter, we had dinner on the porch, that is, the adults did, and the children ate in the kitchen.

Q-What happened then?

A-After dinner, the two girls, that is, my wife and Mrs. Sheppard, cleared the table off and then brought dessert out, and we ate our dessert, and following that I took our two children home, Mike and Leslie, and that
was about 10:30. Then I returned perhaps 10 minutes later.

What Happened Then?
Q-What happened then?
A-Well, I recall little Chip, just as I came in the living room, little Chip dressed in his pajamas came down the steps and his mother, he said something to his mother which I didn’t recall and she advised him to go on back upstairs and go back to bed, which he did. Then we began watching a movie on television. Of course, I had been listening to the ball game to that time. Nothing unusual happened for the balance of the evening. We stayed there until the conclusion of the movie, which was on television, and also listened to the ball game. And as I recall it, it was about 12:30 when we departed. Do you want me to continue?
Q-Yes, go right ahead.
A-I would say somewhere between 11:30 and perhaps a quarter to 12 Sam had been drowsing a bit in the chair, and he then went over to the couch and laid down. I think especially the girls were trying to keep him awake so that he would watch the movie. He finally went to sleep, I would say, about a half hour before we left.

JOHN SPENCER HOUK
The mayor of Bay Village was the first witness to be questioned by Coroner Gerber.

Mayor Houk, who also described himself as a retail meat dealer, opened by telling of a two-and-a-half-year friendship with Dr. Samuel Sheppard and his wife, Marilyn.

Houk told under questioning of his joint ownership with Sheppard of a 14-foot aluminum boat. Gerber labored for some time on questions concerning the equipment used in water skiing, specifically the ropes and holding bar and their attachment to the craft.

The mayor said he last used the craft Friday night before the
murder and left it in a neighbor's boathouse adjoining his property. It was in the same place the next day and on July 4, he related.

The mayor then related at length the events which followed a telephone call from Sheppard awakened him from sleep shortly before 6 Sunday morning, July 4.

"My God. Get over here quick, Spen. I think they've killed Marilyn," the mayor quoted Sheppard. After he found Sheppard leaning half over a chair in his den, Houk recounted, Sheppard said he did not know what happened. "He told me he was awakened from sleep on the couch by his wife's screams upstairs, that someone clobbered him on the stairs," Houk continued. "He said he had pursued someone to the beach and was struck down there. He said he came back to the house and tried to do something for Marilyn."

The mayor told how he summoned police and an ambulance after Mrs. Houk returned from Mrs. Sheppard's bedroom. He authorized the police to summon all necessary outside help, he said.

No one had requested his permission or sought his advice on removing Sheppard from the house, Houk said. Quizzed on latrine conditions that morning, Houk said there were swells, but the water was not exceedingly rough at the time.

MRS. ESTHER HOUK

The wife of the Bay Village mayor revealed that on one of her trips to Marilyn Sheppard's bedroom she noticed wet footprints on the stairs and water on the back porch and steps the morning of the murder.

Mrs. Houk could not recall the time she first noticed the dampness on the stairs leading to the bedroom.

Under Coroner Gerber's questioning she recalled the prints as follows:

Q-Did you notice anything on the steps going upstairs?
A-I did notice what looked like wet footprints.

Q-Did you see water anywhere else?
A-I noticed water on the porch leading to the lake. There was water on the area just off the steps from the porch.

Mrs. Houk said it was her impression the water on the porch was a puddle and on the step area more like a footprint. She said she had not noticed wet spots on the rugs or elsewhere.
Speaking in a voice so low she was requested to speak louder, Mrs. Houk told how she felt for a pulse in the dead woman’s wrist. She could not recall that the bedroom was in any disorder except for the body and blood. A photograph of the scene failed to recall whether anything had been disturbed after her visit to the bedroom.

Sheppard’s brother Dr. Richard N. Sheppard arrived and used a stethoscope to determine whether Marilyn was dead or not, she related. Later Dr. Richard assisted her in readying Chip to take him from the house, she said.

He had demonstrated, using Dr. Gerber’s coat, how a jacket found on the living room couch was folded.

**Never Noted Temper**

Marilyn never confided in her intimate matters and she had never noted Sheppard displaying signs of temper, she said. She recalled Marilyn complaining that Sheppard wanted her to bake two cherry pies and Marilyn had no t wanted to. But she did.

Mrs. Houk recalled meeting Susan Hayes at Bay View Hospital where she had taken her daughter, Lynette, for a blood count. Later at a beach party which included Sheppard she met Miss Hayes again. Miss Hayes was with a doctor to whom she was engaged, Mrs. Houk aid.

Dr. Gerber also requested Mrs. Houk to describe the ropes and bar used in water skiing. Mrs. Houk said she believed there were two such ropes. Marilyn had told her at a Fraternal Order of Police Association dinner near the end of June that she was pregnant, the mayor’s wife recalled. The baby was expected in December, Marilyn had said.

**LARRY HOUK**

The son of the Bay Village mayor related how he was awakened by his father “a little before 7 a.m.” July 4 and instructed to lock all the doors. His father was “shaky” and greatly disturbed, Larry related, and informed him Marilyn had been killed.

Larry recalled how he had gone over to the Sheppard home and followed Sheppard’s brothers, Drs. Stephen and Richard, upstairs through an unused room to a bedroom formerly occupied by Dr. Lester Hoversten. The bed had been used and was unmade, Larry said. He recalled that later someone said Marilyn refused to make the bed for Hoversten.

**PATROL MAN FRED F. DRENKHAN**

Bay Village Patrolman Fred F. Drenkhan, first policeman on the scene, related the steps taken to summon Cleveland detectives and the coroner to the scene. The patrolman told how, after a preliminary examination of Marilyn Sheppard, Dr. Richard
JOHN P. EATON

The Bay Village police chief, John P. Eaton, recalled that Dr. Richard Sheppard, who pronounced Marilyn Sheppard dead, had told him that her death had occurred an hour and a half to two hours previously.

Q-Can you fix the time he told you that?
A-About 6:30 a.m. Before 6:40 a.m.

Q-Did you go up to the bedroom?
A-Yes.

Q-Was there blood? Was it sticky, tacky, coagulated?
A-Yes, the blood on the bed seemed tacky.

Tells of Rumors

Chief Eaton said no one had requested his permission to remove Sheppard from the house to the hospital.

Eaton said he had heard rumors, but only rumors, that Sheppard had paid attention to women other than Mrs. Sheppard.

He said he had read letters written by the wives of Drs. Stephen and Richard Sheppard, advising her not to divorce her husband.

The chief recalled receiving the Sheppards' wet clothing, taken from the hospital.

SERGT. JAY HUBACH

There was no outward evidence of a struggle in Marilyn Sheppard's bedroom, Bay Village Sergt. Jay Hubach testified. He recalled radioing all neighboring suburban police to pick up all vagrants.

Learning Don J. Ahern and his wife were the last to see the Sheppards before the killing. Hubach said, he went to their home to question them. He left before completing his mission upon learning Avon Lake police had arrested two vagrants and were holding them for questioning.