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Bay Still Divided On Guilt of Sam

BY HOWARD BEAUFAIT

Bay Village once again has settled back into its green well-to-do calm. But its scars are deep.

It was a year ago today that the quiet west shore suburb was struck by the lightning of an extraordinary crime of violence—the murder of Marilyn Sheppard.

The village swept to notoriety last July 4 in the thunderclap of headlines that swept its name around the world. Its 12,000 population of average men and women was divided over the guilt or innocence of Dr. Samuel H. Sheppard.

There are those today who will tell you—

“They got the right man. He killed

his wife all right . . . His story about a burglar was the bunk.”

“Sam Sheppard couldn't do such a thing. Why, he was devoted to saving life, not taking it away. He loved Marilyn.”

And then occasionally the visitor to Bay Village will hear one of its residents say thoughtfully:

“I just don't know. Many of the facts are compatible with Sam's guilt—but they could also indicate his innocence.”

And there you are.

It is doubtful if anyone will ever know for sure what actually happened in that rambling, white house at 28924 West Lake Rd., a year ago today . . .

Live Down Notoriety

In the ensuing year while Bay Village has been trying to forget its harsh notoriety, much talk and many events have run away under the bridges of time.

Dr. Sam was convicted of the brutal killing of his wife by a jury that was praised for its diligence. His lawyers are still engaged in a \$100,000 legal fight to break the verdict, get him a new trial and save him from the Ohio Penitentiary . . . His mother committed suicide without mentioning his name . . . His father died of an internal hemorrhage.

Susan Hayes has gone back to California to mend the broken pieces of her life.

County Detective Carl Ross-

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bach, who spent so much time and energy trying to penetrate the mystery of the crime, died of a heart attack.

Outwardly, the passing year has not been cruel to Dr. Sheppard. He looks about the same, perhaps a pound or two heavier. He sleeps a good deal, as much as 18 hours a day—psychiatrists say this may indicate schizophrenia and a desire to escape from the horror of a crime into the world of unreality.

Dr. Sam has now been in County Jail longer than any other prisoner, a year lacking 26 days. But it is "lost time" and does not count against his life sentence which must be served in the Ohio Penitentiary.

Occupies Small Cell

The six-foot handsome, 31-year-old doctor of osteopathy occupies a cell that is barely seven feet square. He wears a sweat shirt, blue slacks with an elastic waist band, and loafers. In cell block B with him are 21 other prisoners, including four bank robbers, a couple of thieves, and a miscellany of other criminals.

Dr. Sam spent the anniversary of his wife's death writing letters and playing chess with one of his cellmates. In his letters to his brothers, Drs. Stephen and Richard, he often speaks of Marilyn. . . . Once he said he should like to join her in death, but thought she would be disappointed if he did that.

Months ago, when he was still a new tenant in County Jail, he had pictures of his wife and seven-year-old-son, Chip, on the wall of his cell. But these were ordered taken down to prepare the jail for painting.

Needs Are Simple

Now his small cell contains only a toilet, a wash bowl, a wooden stool and a four foot pile of books and magazines which makes it necessary to squeeze in and out through the small cell door.

The books range from "Treasure Island" to cheap fiction, and medical volumes. The magazines include "Confidential" and "Low-down" and a few "slicks" dealing with racing cars which once was his hobby.

When he is awake he reads, plays chess, or exercises in the narrow 100 foot corridor outside his cell.

Dr. Sam takes the prison food, heavy with starch and light on proteins, without complaint. His friends and relatives brings him plenty of fresh fruit from the outside. Occasionally, he asks for aspirin from the jail dispensary.

The other prisoners accept the doctor as an equal. Sometimes he plays pinochle or gin-rummy with them—but none of them mentions the crimes that put them where they are.

Dr. Sam is not lonely.

"Brother Sam is one million per cent innocent of this crime," Rev. Roberts said. "My heart and my God tell me he did not commit it."

"I remember one time when Brother Sam was really fervent and tearful. It was the day after his father died. I read him a few chapters from the Old Testament concerning Job and the time he was tempted by Satan to give up his faith. . . . I think it really helped him."

'Susan Not Motive'

Rev. Roberts observed that Susan Hayes was not a valid motive for murder.

"Murder and sex are different affairs," he said. "Because a man commits adultery is no proof that he has killed."

"Brother Sam will be a true servant of God when he is free. He will keep all the commandments and do things that are righteous and true," he added. Rev. Roberts has a room at 695½ Broadway, Bedford.

Rev. Peyton lives at 2030 W. 28th St., with his mother. His permanent home is in Hinton, W. Va.

"Leslie is non-denominational," his mother said. "I have three boys who are sons of God."

Mrs. Peyton said her son had resigned a church job, had been employed in a plant, but returned Friday to West Virginia.

"I was with my son when he visited Dr. Sam," she said. "Leslie thought he needed the word of God. We did not discuss his case, but he sure looks innocent. He told us that no one would ever know what he had gone through during the past year."

House Mirrors Tragedy

Today, on the anniversary of his wife's death, Dr. Sheppard's thoughts, too, must return to the white home on the lakefront where he spent some of the happiest and the most tragic times of his life.

At the age of 30 he was a dashing, romantic, handsome fellow with an income of \$33,000 a year as an osteopathic surgeon. At 31 he was a broken man, convicted of a revolting crime—the club murder of his pregnant wife.

The scene of violence and horror in Marilyn Sheppard's bedroom, whether it was created by her husband or a murderous burglar, must flash again before the eyes of her husband today, as it will every fourth of July as long as he lives.

Visited by Family

His brothers and their wives see him once a week and bring him fruit, pipe tobacco, magazines and books. Mrs. Guilford Brown, an aunt of murdered Marilyn Sheppard, also visits the prisoner regularly.

Dr. Sam's spectacular case has also attracted two ministers who never heard of him until he was engulfed by the crimson business at his Bay Village home. They are the Rev. Drew Roberts and the Rev. Leslie Peyton. Neither have churches.

Rev. Roberts, 33, a serene man with a full black beard first appeared at the County Jail last Feb. 6 and was there with Dr. Sam from 6:10 p. m. to 8:10 p. m. He has been there at least once a week ever since and usually brings a large bag of fruit.

Rev. Roberts is employed in the tool and die department of the Ford plant at Walton Hills. After work he said he has about 20 people to whom he gives spiritual consolation.

Prays with Dr. Sam

"God leads me where to go," he said. "God told me to visit Dr. Sam through fasting and prayer."

The prisoner and the minister call each other Brother Roberts and Brother Sam. While Rev. Roberts said he started out as a "Free Baptist," he has now taken up the doctrines of the Seventh Day Adventists.

Dr. Sam and Brother Roberts open their meeting in a private interview cell by kneeling in prayer. They close the meeting in the same manner.