

GRAND JURY PROCEEDINGS

SPECIAL INVESTIGATION

APRIL 5, 1967

*Roscoe Blaise Ellinger*

ORLEANS PARISH GRAND JURY

PROCEEDINGS OF

APRIL 5, 1967

PRESENT: MESSRS. ALVIN OSER AND JAMES ALCOCK,  
Assistant District Attorneys

MEMBERS OF THE ORLEANS PARISH GRAND JURY

WITNESS:

RANCIER BLAISE EHLINGER

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Reported By:  
Maureen B. Thiel  
Secretary  
Orleans Parish Grand Jury

RANCIER BLAISE EHLINGER, after being duly sworn by the Foreman of the Orleans Parish Grand Jury, was questioned and answered as follows:

BY ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEYS OSER AND ALCOCK:

Q. State your name please?

A. Rancier Blaise Ehlinger

Q. Where do you live?

A. 103 Homestead Ave., Metairie.

Q. Are you represented by counsel?

A. Yes, I am.

Q. Who is your attorney?

A. Mr. Steven Plotkin.

Q. Is he present in this Building at this time?

A. Yes, he is.

Q. You know, Mr. Ehlinger, that you do not have to testify before this body and incriminate yourself.

Has your attorney explained your legal and Constitutional rights to you?

A. Yes, he has.

Q. You understand that if we ask a question that you feel incriminates you, you can refuse to answer, you understand that?

A. Yes.

Q. You understand that anything you say can be used against you in a court of law?

A. Yes, I do.

Q. And if you commit perjury you can be charged with perjury, Mr. Plotkin has explained to you all of your rights?

A. Yes, he has.

Q. Are you here as a result of a subpoena?

A. No, I am here at the request of Mr. Garrison's office. One Mr. Gurvich called my home at approximately 9:30 Saturday morning and asked me to appear today at 9:30, at which time I did appear.

Q. When did you obtain counsel?

A. I spoke with Mr. Steven Plotkin sometime ago, He has been my attorney for sometime, approximately 3 weeks more or less, I am not exactly sure.

Q. In connection with this probe, or what?

A. Yes, I went to him on my own behalf because of certain activities that I was involved with back in 1961.

Q. You went to him 3 weeks ago?

A. Approximately, may be longer or shorter.

Q. Did he accompany you to the District Attorney's office at the time I took the statement from you?

A. No.

Q. Any reason he did not come with you?

A. Circumstances more than anything else, more the reason that Mr. Gurvich and another person, who I assume was from Mr. Garrison's office also, came to my house on Thursday last week and asked me if I would have any reason not to come down to this building at that time and so I did. I did not even bother to use the phone, I went inside, changed my clothes and came down here.

Q. Are you here freely and voluntarily?

A. Yes, I am.

Q. No one forced you to come before this panel?

A. No.

Q. Do you know Gordon Novel?

A. Yes.

Q. How long have you known him?

A. For approximately 12 years.

Q. What sort of business are you in?

A. None at the present time.

Q. What is your occupation or profession?

A. I have done a number of different things, promotional work, race cars, mechanic work for myself ...

Q. Have you ever engaged in any of these enterprises with Gordon Novel?

A. Yes.

Q. Directing your attention to the summer of 1961, did you know Gordon Novel at that time?

A. Yes.

Q. Was he married at that time?

A. To the best of my knowledge, he was not.

Q. Had he been married?

A. To the best of my knowledge, he had not.

Q. Do you know a girl named Marlene Mancuso?

A. Yes.

Q. Was Gordon Novel going out with her at this time?

A. Yes.

Q. Was he legally married to her at that time?

A. Not that I know of.

Q. Did you know Sergio Archaca Smith?

A. I refuse to answer on the Fifth Amendment.

Q. You take the Fifth on whether or not you knew Sergio Archaca Smith?

A. Yes.

Q. You feel that question incriminates you?

A. Well, I will admit that I met him on one occasion.

Q. What occasion was that?

A. I would rather not go into that for the same reason'-  
the Fifth and ~~Four~~<sup>teenth</sup> Amendments.

Q. In other words you will not tell the Jury where you met  
Mr. Sergio Arcacha Smith because you feel that will  
incriminate you?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you, or did you know David Ferrie?

A. I met Dave Ferrie one time.

Q. Was it the same time you met Sergio Arcacha Smith?

A. I refuse to answer on the grounds that it might  
incriminate me.

Q. Look at this picture - without saying anything - have  
you ever seen the person depicted in this photograph?

A. I have seen this person.

Q. Where?

A. I have seen his photograph in the newspapers to the  
best of my knowledge approximately some 2 weeks ago.

Q. Had you seen him prior to that?

A. Yes sir, I did.

Q. Where was that?

A. I refuse to answer that question on the grounds that  
it might incriminate me.

Q. You know the name of the individual without going into where you met him?

A. Yes, I was aware of this man's name because it was mentioned in the newspaper.

Q. What was the name?

A. To the best of my knowledge it was Martens.

Q. Do you know his first name?

A. If I am not mistaken it was Layton or Patrick Layton, something like that.

Q. Where did you meet him?

A. Sir, I gave you an answer to that, I don't wish to be obstreperous, if that is the right word, but I would plead again the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments on advice of counsel.

Q. Mr. Foreman, would you address that question to this witness as to where he met Layton Martens?

FOREMAN:

Will you tell us where you met Layton Martens?

A. Will this be explained to me - previously the same question was asked where I met this other individual, Sergio Arcacha Smith, and I gave at that time the answer that I would plead the Fifth on answering that question and relative to this particular captioned individual, I plead the Fifth Amendment also.



Q. Mr. Foreman, As legal advisor to the Grand Jury, I suggest that this witness be taken before Judge Bagert and the question be propounded and let the Judge decide whether this question will incriminate him.

FOREMAN:

Will you step outside please.

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(Continued shortly thereafter)

MR. ALCOCK:

Q. Now Randy, bypassing the question you refused to answer we direct your attention now to this picture that you have identified as Layton Martens. Have you ever seen Martens and Gordon Novel together?

A. No, except on one occasion.

Q. What occasion was that?

A. That is the same occasion I refuse to testify on the ground that it might tend to incriminate me.

Q. On one occasion you did see Layton Martens and Gordon Novel together, on one occasion without saying where?

A. Yes.

Q. How long were they together on this occasion?

A. Approximately 6½ hours, I would imagine.

- Q. Were they in close proximity to each other?
- A. At various times.
- Q. Did you see them speak to each other?
- A. I can't recall any conversation that took place.
- Q. Were you aware of everybody at this occasion at this time?
- A. Yes.
- Q. To your knowledge would you think that everybody was aware of everybody else there at the time?
- A. I would assume so.
- Q. Again, where was this that you saw Martens and Novel together?
- A. Where?
- Q. Yes.
- A. In Metairie.
- Q. Metairie, La.?
- A. Yes.
- Q. What location in Metairie? If you can recall.
- A. In the 300 block of Athens Drive.
- Q. Your home?
- A. No, I was under the impression that it was the residence of Dave Ferrie.
- Q. Can you tell us whoelse was there?

- A. Arcacha Smith, Marlene Mancuso and possibly one or two others, but I don't remember the names.
- Q. Was David Ferrie present?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Let's see, Gordon Novel, Marlene Mancuso, David Ferrie, yourself and Layton Martens were all present? And possibly one or two others you don't recall?
- A. Yes.
- Q. You remember the approximate date of this meeting?
- A. Yes, upon recollection from my conversation of the other afternoon, the closest time I can pinpoint this thing, this particular meeting, was either in the latter part of February or the early part of March, 1961.
- Q. 1961?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Do you recall whether it was hot or cold?
- A. Variable, about the same as it is now, possibly colder.
- Q. Warmer weather?
- A. Possibly so, it was six years ago and I am not too familiar or have too much memory as to what the weather conditions were.
- Q. As a result of this meeting did you, or any of the

others present at this meeting make a trip without saying where you went or what you did?

A. Yes, we did.

Q. Did you make a trip?

A. Yes we did.

Q. Was it made by motor vehicle, train, plane, bus or what?

A. One motor vehicle.

Q. One or two?

A. An automobile and a truck were involved.

Q. You recall the kind of automobile?

A. A 1956 Lincoln.

Q. Did you own it?

A. No, I did not.

Q. To your knowledge who owned the Lincoln?

A. It belonged to Gordon Novel.

Q. Was there another vehicle on this particular trip?

A. Yes, I vaguely remember a panel bodied truck with a flat front.

Q. Do you know who owned the truck?

A. No.

Q. On going on this trip - without saying where you were going - or what you were going for - how did you go

to the location you were going to - by automobile?

A. By automobile. Yes.

Q. WHO was in the car with you?

A. Gordon Novel, Marlene Mancuso and myself in the front seat and on the rear seat Sergio Arcacha Smith and David Ferrie.

Q. The same David Ferrie who recently died?

A. Yes sir, that is why my attention was directed when I came voluntarily to the District Attorney's Office with the particular information you are questioning me now.

Q. Who was in the truck, if you can recall?

A. That would be this individual here.

Q. Layton Martens?

A. Yes, and one or two others I don't exactly remember.

Q. Again, without going into why you were going or where you were going, did everybody in this trip know where they were going without saying why they were going?

A. I would assume as much.

Q. Without saying where you were going, or why you were going, did everybody in this group know why they were making this trip?

A. I would assume so.

Q. Why do you make this assumption?

A. Because there was in Metairie before leaving on this trip a meeting and a discussion.

Q. There was a discussion?

A. Yes.

Q. Were all present during the discussion?

A. Yes.

Q. Without saying what was discussed specifically, was the purpose of the trip discussed at the meeting?

A. The purpose of the trip?

Q. Yes.

A. I would assume so.

Q. Did you know where you were going when you left the house?

A. Not the exact location but I had a fairly general idea where we were going.

Q. Did you know you were going into a particular City?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you feel that everybody else knew they were going to a particular City?

A. I would say immediately before yes.

Q. Did you know that everybody knew why you were going to

the particular City?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you recall what time of day or night this was?

A. When we embarked on this trip it was approximately 7:30 or 8:00 o'clock at night, possibly a little later.

Q. While on this trip, at any time, did you all go to the vicinity of the New Orleans Airport, Lakefront?

A. No sir, we did not.

Q. Are you positive of that?

A. Yes, I could almost swear to it - in fact, I am swearing to it right now.

Q. When you embarked on this trip do you recall whether the car was in front or behind the truck in the course of the trip?

A. The automobile was always in front of the truck because I happen never to have seen it in either rear view mirror or the rear of the truck.

Q. Again, without saying why or when you were making the trip, and you arrived at the destination were the six people present same as at the apartment?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you feel that all six people knew why you were at the location you were present at?

A. Yes.

Q. After you returned from this trip, wherever it was, where did you go?

A. We then went back to the 300 block of Athena Drive and there we split up, Gordon Novel, Marlene Mancuso and I, and I may be a little hazy on this, but I think Sergio Arcacha Smith left with us.

Q. I think you said there could possibly have been 7 or more people, six that you knew of, yourself, Gordon Novel, Marlene Mancuso, David Ferrie, Acarcha Smith and Layton Martens - now while at this location, without saying for what reason you went and where you went, did you people participate in any physical activities without saying what you did or where you were located?

A. You mean after?

Q. When you were at this location in Jefferson Parish did you participate in any physical activities without saying what they were?

A. Would you clarify that a little bit to me, I am a bit nonplused by activities.

Q. When you arrived at the location did you all alight or leave the car and truck?



A. Yes at one time or another everyone was out of the automobile and truck.

Q. Martens was in the truck?

A. Yes, as I remember it. As I say I am a bit vague.

The trip happened six years ago and the reason this came to my attention was the fact that Ferrie was a very unusual appearing person - anyone who had ever in their life come to meet this individual would never forget him, and when I read of his being connected with an investigation by the District Attorney's Office it brought to mind to me certain of these activities and to some degree it has been hard for me to recall certain of these activities. It was clarification involved trying to figure out what and who was involved. There is leeway if I get held for inconsistencies in some parts of my testimony because my memory is not absolutely correct on it.

Q. Did you people accomplish the purpose, without going into the nature of that purpose, of the plan set out upon at the apartment in Metairie to that distant City?

A. Yes.

Q. Did everyone present feel that the purpose had been accomplished?

A. Yes.

16.

Q. You mentioned that Gordon Novel - I will show you a picture and ask you if that is the person you identified as Gordon Novel and if he was on the trip, without going into the nature of the trip?

A. Yes.

Q. Now can you identify this picture?

A. Sergio Arcacha Smith.

Q. Now I will show you another picture of this man?

A. David Ferrie.

Q. Now these 4 photographs that you have identified, David Ferrie, Sergio Arcacha Smith, Gordon Novel and Layton Martens were on that trip?

A. Right - and at least one other individual who went on the trip that I am unable to identify.

Q. During the time you were on the trip, without saying what you did or where you went, was there an explosion?

A. As I related this particular incident to Mr. Alcock last Thursday possibly there was an explosion but I don't remember it as I happened to be asleep on the way back. I would not know whether it came from the automobile or the truck.

Q. Did you hear talk of an explosion?

A. I can't really say I did or didn't, I don't recall.

Q. What happened when you returned from this location and accomplished the purpose you had decided on in the apartment - did the same people return directly to Ferrie's apartment in Jefferson Parish?

A. Yes.

Q. Where the trip terminated?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you get out of the car at that time?

A. Yes.

Q. Did the people in the truck get out of the truck?

A. Yes.

Q. Without going into any activities, were there any physical activities involved at this time?

A. Yes, there was.

Q. At any time that you were together with these people, either at David Ferrie's apartment or on this trip, or on the return of this trip, did you ever see or hear all of the individuals taking part in conversation at any time?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you and David Ferrie exchange words?

- A. Possibly, he spoke to me.
- Q. Did you talk to Gorden Novel?
- A. Yes, there was a great deal of conversation on the way up.
- Q. During the travel up and on the return, would you say that everybody had conversation with everybody else at some time?
- A. I would assume that the people in<sup>the</sup>/automobile at one time or another had conversations. I do remember that Sergio Arcacha Smith spoke very little, but for the reason at that time his English was not too good and it was hard to understand him. To speak with him you had to speak slowly and distinctly to be understood.
- Q. How did the people in the truck, without saying what the conversation was, was there a conversation between the people in the truck and the people in the car as to where they were going or how they were going there?
- A. You mean prior to our leaving Metairie?
- Q. Yes.
- A. There was conversations between all involved.
- Q. In other words, all knew the purpose of the trip?
- A. Yes.
- Q. No one was blind as to the trip?
- A. No.

- Q. Who drove the car you were in?
- A. Gordon Novel.
- Q. Can you tell us how was Ferrie referred to, was he called David Ferrie, or what?
- A. The only time he was spoken to he was referred to as Dave.
- Q. How were you referred to?
- A. Randy.
- Q. How was Sergio Arcacha Smith referred to?
- A. They said Sergio.
- Q. How was Layton Martens referred to?
- A. I don't remember - I did not hear as I was not with him.
- Q. How was Gordon Novel referred to?
- A. Gordon + first name.
- Q. You said on the return back from wherever you all had been that in the automobile there was you, Dave Ferrie, Sergio Arcacha Smith, and Gordon Novel driving?
- A. Right.
- Q. And Marlene Mancuso was in the car?
- A. Yes.
- Q. On the return trip from wherever you all had been, in the truck was Layton Martens and one or two others that you don't remember?
- A. Yes.

Q. While down there at this location, wherever it was, did you see Layton Martens, without saying what he did, engage in any physical activities, such as lifting and carrying?

A. Yes.

Q. When you came back to Mr. Ferrie's apartment, without saying what he did, did you see Layton Martens, engage in any physical activities, such as lifting and carrying?

A. Yes.

Q. Prior to your leaving for this trip, was there any discussion between the driver of the automobile and the driver of the truck, without saying the nature of the discussion, as to the way they would go, wherever you all were going?

A. Yes, there was some discussion.

Q. Discussion between Gordon Novel and Layton Martens as to who went first?

A. There was some discussion as to who would lead and who would follow.

JUROR:

Novel probably explained to Martens where you were going?

A. Novel had knowledge of where we were going and why we

were there.

Q. Ferrie seemed to be in charge of those people -  
You said that Ferrie told Martens and Novel how to  
go?

A. He was in charge at his house and he directed who was  
to be in the truck, who was to drive, etc. that  
particular angle was handled by Ferrie.

Q. Who drove the truck?

A. Sir, I don't remember who drove the truck, it could  
have been that kid, Martens, or someone else I  
remember as having the name Andy - I have given a  
verbal description to the District Attorney's Office  
a as to how he was dressed and so forth ... but I do  
not know his name and cannot identify any of the photo-  
graphs as being him.

Q. BY MR. OSER:

Q. What is the description of this other man?

A. Approximately 5'11" or 6', tall, dark black hair, wavy,  
was obsessed with firing a rifle that he had in his  
possession the whole time at Ferrie's house and he  
was constantly pulling the bolt on this weapon, he  
was dressed in a Marine fatigue uniform.

Q. Was he a Cuban or an American?

A. He did not speak with an accent, I had the impression that he was in the Service, or had just been released from the Service.

JUROR:

You never saw him before or after?

A. No sir. Never.

Q. Do you live in Metairie?

A. Yes

Q. Are you en-employed at present, you say?

A. Yes sir.

Q. Do you have an apartment?

A. No, I live with my parents.

Q. They are supporting you?

A. Yes. I work at small jobs for myself on occasion, now I am between jobs.

Q. How old are you?

A. 28 years of age.

That is all, thank you, you may leave.

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C E R T I F I C A T E

I hereby certify that the preceding transcript  
is a true and correct copy of the testimony given,  
under oath, before the Orleans Parish Grand Jury, on  
the 5th day of April, 1967, and reduced to typewriting  
by me.

Maureen B. Shif

