

1. Interview with Henry Peavey

Firestone

Coroner's Inquest Transcript The following is the transcript of the shorthand notes taken at the Coroner's inquest held on the body of William Desmond Taylor at Ivy H. Overholtzer [Mortuary] at Los Angeles, California on the 4th day of February, 1922 at 10:00 a.m. Frank Nance, coroner, presided. Henry Peavey, being first duly sworn, testified as follows:

NANCE: Please state your name.

PEAVEY: Henry Peavey.

NANCE: Where do you live?

PEAVEY: I live at 127 1/2 East 3rd Street.

NANCE: What is your occupation?

PEAVEY: Cook and valet.

NANCE: Mr. Peavey, were you employed by Mr. Taylor, the deceased in this case?

PEAVEY: Sir?

NANCE: Were you employed by the dead man in the case?

PEAVEY: Yes, sir.

NANCE: How long have you been working for him?

PEAVEY: About six months.

NANCE: Were you in the house on the evening when he was found dead there?

PEAVEY: Yes, sir.

NANCE: What time did you leave the house?

PEAVEY: I figured it was about a quarter past [seven] that I left the house.

NANCE: Where was he when you left?

PEAVEY: He was sitting in a chair facing ust to the [illegible] now, and Miss Normand was sitting in a chair just the same. They were discussing a red-backed book.

NANCE: In what part of the house were they?

PEAVEY: They were near the dining-room, where you enter the dining-room from the living-room.

NANCE: That is a two-story apartment, is it not?

PEAVEY: Yes, sir.

NANCE: And on the ground floor, how many rooms?

PEAVEY: The living-room, dining-room and kitchen.

NANCE: Now, the entrance to this apartment is immediately into the front there, is it not-the front room, rather?

PEAVEY: The front room, yes sir.

NANCE: They were seated?

PEAVEY: Near the dining-room there, in the living-room, near the entrance to the dining-room.

NANCE: When you went out, which way did you go out, at the front or the back?

PEAVEY: I went out the front way. I always lock up the back door when I go out. I always lock the back door screen; it has a hook on the inside. I used the front door to come out all the time.

NANCE: Did you carry the back door key with you?

PEAVEY: No, sir. I always turn it in the door and leave it just as it is.

NANCE: Now, when did you next see Mr. Taylor?

PEAVEY: The next morning, when I went to work.

NANCE: What time are you in the habit of coming to work?

PEAVEY: I am usually there about half past seven.

NANCE: What time did you arrive there the next morning?

PEAVEY: PEAVEY: just about half past seven.

NANCE: What day was that?

PEAVEY: Thursday morning [February 2].

NANCE: On arriving there, what did you do?

PEAVEY. I picked up the paper first; I stopped in a drug store at the corner of 5th and Los Angeles to get a bottle of medicine - milk of magnesia, he usually takes that every morning; I bought that on my way out. I picked up the paper and unlocked the door. The first thing I saw was his feet. I looked at his feet a few minutes and said, "Mr. Taylor." He never moved. I stepped a little further in the door, and seen his face, and turned and ran out and hollered.

NANCE: Who did you summon? Who did you call to?

PEAVEY: I don't know.

NANCE: You just made a lot of noise to attract all the attention you could?

PEAVEY: Yes, sir.

NANCE: Several people came, did they?

PEAVEY: Yes, sir. I think Mr. Desmond [sic], and the gentleman who owns the court was the first.

NANCE: You mean Mr. Jessurun?

PEAVEY: Yes, sir.

NANCE: Who else came?

PEAVEY: And Mr. - you see, I don't know their names - I just seen them - the two gentlemens next door, Mr. MacLean and Mr. - I can't think of the other gentleman's name - right next door to us [Charles Maigne].

NANCE: You didn't come back there after you had gone away, when Miss Normand was there with Mr. Taylor?

PEAVEY: No, sir.

NANCE: When you went out, was anybody around the place?

PEAVEY: Only Miss Normand's chauffeur; he had his lights all on inside the limousine, cleaning it. I hit him on the back and stopped and talked to him a few minutes.

NANCE: When you first opened the door, did you see any furniture overturned, or any sign of a disturbance in the house?

PEAVEY: Nothing more than a chair that was sitting next to the wall had been pushed out a little bit and his feet was under this chair. The rest of the furniture around the house and room upstairs was just as I left them when I went away that evening.

NANCE: And did you notice whether anything had been taken off of his body, or not - any jewelry?

PEAVEY: I didn't notice that; I didn't touch him at all.

NANCE: Do you know whether he wore any valuable jewelry?

PEAVEY: Yes sir, he had a wrist watch and another watch with a lot of little trinkets on; and a thing you stamp checks with to keep anybody from making the checks any bigger, and a lead pencil.

NANCE: Did he have a diamond ring?

PEAVEY: Yes sir, he had a large diamond ring that he wore.

NANCE: Do you know whether he had it on that evening?

PEAVEY: Yes sir, he was dressed just as when I went that evening, as I found him the next morning.

NANCE: Was the ring on his finger the next morning?

PEAVEY: Yes sir, his other jewelry that I had put away the night before was just as I had put it away up in the dresser drawer.

NANCE: You didn't find anything taken from the apartment?

PEAVEY: No sir, it was just as when I left it when I found it. The rug was a little bit kicked up. It looked like he had kicked it with his foot.

NANCE: There was no other disturbance there?

PEAVEY: No, sir. Even the living-room table that I had moved aside. The rocking chair would hit the table, and I moved the table so the rocking chair would not hit the table. It was just as I left it.

NANCE: By a juror: Were any of the windows up at night?

PEAVEY: No sir, we had those little long pins that runs in the windows. The windows upstairs in his bedroom were up. The windows downstairs I always locked with this peg that slipped in the window.

NANCE: Were they still that way in the morning?

PEAVEY: They were still that way in the morning. The lights were burning just as I had left them that night; two lights, one in the living-room and one in the dining-room.

NANCE: That is all, you may be excused.

I hereby certify that I, as shorthand reporter, correctly took down in shorthand the testimony and proceedings had at the within named Coroner's inquest; that the foregoing is a full, true and correct copy of my shorthand notes and a full, true and correct statement of the testimony and proceedings had at said inquest. E.M. Allen, Shorthand Reporter