

CRIME CLASSIFICATION

INVESTIGATION #48

HERETOFORE THIS CASE WAS CLASSIFIED
AS FOLLOWS:

POLICE DEPARTMENT, CITY OF NEW YORK

SUPPLEMENTARY
COMPLAINT REPORT

COPY

DETECTIVE DISTRICT

BKLYN. HOM. SQD.

PRECINCT

60

COMPLAINT
NUMBER

487

DATE OF
THIS REPORT

11/13/41

NAME OF COMPLAINANT

ADDRESS OF COMPLAINANT

DATE OF FIRST REPORT

People, State of NY.

Kings County

11/12/41

SUBJECT: INVESTIGATION OF THE DEATH OF ABE RELES, WHO WAS BEING HELD AS
A MATERIAL WITNESS BY THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY OF KINGS COUNTY, AT
THE HALF MOON HOTELS, 29th STREET, AND THE BOARDWALK, CONEY ISLAND.

1. At about 7.50AM, November 12, 1941, this office was notified by Act. Captain Bals, Special Investigation Squad, Kings County, that one of their witnesses was found D.O.A. at the Half Moon Hotel.

2. The undersigned, accompanied by Captain McGowan, Act. Lt. Donovan, Dets. Cush, Burns and Opr. Deane, proceeded to the Half Moon Hotel. On the roof of the dining room extension, which is level with the first floor, we observed the body of ABE RELES lying face down, fully clothed. His left hand was lying across two sheets, which had been knotted together; these sheets individually were 74" x 92". At one end of one of the sheets, a piece of insulated radio wire was tied. In his left rear trouser pocket there was a man's peak-cap. The distance from this roof to the sixth floor window of RELES room is 52 feet. A full description of the scene and body was dictated by Captain McGowan to Det. Burns.

3. ABE RELES was pronounced D.O.A. by Dr. Silverman, Coney Island Hospital. Ass't. Medical Examiner Robillard present at the scene and ordered the body removed to Kings County Morgue for autopsy.

4. First officer on the scene: - Ptl. John Bernies, shield 16730, 60 Precinct.

5. Photographs of the scene were taken by Det. O'Neil of the Brooklyn Photo Gallery.

6. Proceeded to the sixth floor of the hotel to Suite #620 which is rented by the District Attorney of Kings County for the safeguarding of Material Witnesses. This suite is divided into six rooms. Room #623 is the one which ABE RELES occupied and as we entered this room, we observed a single bed, considerably mussed, and lying on the floor was the bed-spread, torn into two parts and knotted together, this spread stretched from the bed to the window facing the roof where the body was found. The spread was not attached to anything in the room. An examination of the pipe leading to the radiator valve, directly under the window, disclosed a small area which appeared to have been rubbed by something that was attached to it. It is assumed that the wire which was found attached to the bedsheets, had been tied to this and had become loose due to the weight of the subject's body.

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Detective Hom. Sqd.

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7. Assistant District Attorney Heffernan, A. D. C. I. McGrath and Captain McGowan questioned the following and stenographic notes were taken by Mr. Frank Maguire:

MEYER SYCOFF, alias "Mike", at present being held as a Material witness in room #620 Hotel Half Moon. He stated that he shares a room with AL TANNENBAUM and that he went to bed at about 12:30 A.M., and that RELES was still in the sitting room. He said that he did not notice anything unusual about RELES last night and further said that at no time did he ever speak of suicide or escape. He did state that he had been in ill health and the reason nobody slept with him was because of his bad habit of coughing in a person's face, spitting blood in his hand and showing it to them. He said that the detectives who were assigned to guard them gave them very strict supervision, and that they always slept with their doors open. He said that on numerous occasions, he had observed the detectives at all hours of the night looking into their rooms. He said that RELES' wife visited him last night at about 7:00 P.M. and left at about 10:30 P.M. SYCOFF further said that Dr. Nash visited RELES yesterday morning, but he did not know what had been said. He did not learn anything about RELES being dead until the detectives woke him, a little after 7:00 A.M.

AL TANNENBAUM, Material Witness at the Half Moon Hotel and shares the room with MEYER SYCOFF, corroborated the statement made by SYCOFF.

SOL BERNSTEIN, Material Witness, Half Moon Hotel, room #622, corroborated the statement of SYCOFF & further stated that yesterday RELES told him that Dr. Nash had given him some pills. He said that the detectives were always around and constantly watching them during the night and day.

DETECTIVE VICTOR ROBBINS, Sh. # 382, 61st Sqd., temporarily assigned to Special Investigating Squad of the District Attorney's Office of Kings County to guard Material Witnesses at the Half Moon Hotel. He stated that his tour of duty is 24 hours, from 10:00 A.M., Nov. 11th until 10:00 A.M., Nov. 12th. He stated that RELES went into his room at about 2:30 A.M., and that he looked into his room and saw him in bed at about 3:30 A.M., and again at 4:30 A.M., and said that other detectives assigned there are continually going up and down the corridor, looking into the rooms and checking the witnesses. At about 7:00 A.M., he looked into RELES' room and observed the window wide open and the bed-spread on the floor, having been cut into two parts and knotted together. He said that he then looked out the window and observed a man's body lying on the roof below. He immediately notified the other detectives assigned with him and proceeded down to the roof below to investigate, and stated that he found the body to be that of RELES in the position described previously.

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DETECTIVE JAMES L. BOYLE, Sh. # 1515, 79th Sqd., temporarily assigned to Special Investigating Squad, District Attorney's Office, Kings County, and assigned to guard Material Witnesses at the Half Moon Hotel in Coney Island. He stated that RELES went to bed at about 2:00 or 2:30 A.M., and that he and the other detectives assigned there looked in on him and the other witnesses confined in the suite at about 15 or 20 minute intervals. He said that at about 6:45 A.M., he visited RELES' room and found everything to be in order; RELES was apparently asleep in bed and a pair of green slacks, which he usually wore, were across the back of a chair in the room. He said that Det. Robbins told him at about 7:00 or 7:15 A.M., that RELES had gone out the window. He said that he immediately communicated by telephone with his commanding officer.

DETECTIVE JAMES MORAN, Sh. # 1560, 62nd Sqd., temporarily assigned to guard witnesses at the Half Moon Hotel, stated: that he has been assigned there for the past 19 months. He said that RELES went to bed at about 2:30 A.M., and that he had looked in on him and the others at intervals of about every hour or so and that some one of the men assigned there looked into the rooms about every 15 minutes. He said the last time he made an inspection was at about 6:20 or 6:30 A.M., and at that time, everything in RELES' room was as usual. He further said that RELES had never made any attempt to commit suicide or escape, nor any threats to do so.

PTL. FRANCESCO TREPONE, Sh. # 18388, 6th Pet., temporarily assigned to guard witnesses at the Half Moon Hotel, since Oct. 7, 1940. He corroborated the statements of the other detectives and said he last time he saw RELES was at about 6:05 A.M., and he was then asleep in his room.

PTL. HARVEY McLAUGHLIN, Sh. # 6006, 17th Pet., temporarily assigned to guard witnesses at the Half Moon Hotel, for the past year. He corroborated the statements of the detectives and said the last time he saw RELES was at about 5:30 A.M., and at that time everything in his and the other witnesses rooms was in order.

SGT. ELWOOD DIVER, Sh. # 494, 4th Pet., assigned to Special Investigating Squad, Kings County since March, 1940 and in command of the detail guarding the Material Witnesses in the Half Moon Hotel. He stated that he made visits to the premises on several occasions during the night and day at irregular hours and always found the detectives to be performing their duties as directed; visiting the rooms at intervals of every 15 minutes, etc.

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ACT. CAPTAIN FRANK BALS, Commanding Officer of the Special Investigating Squad, stated that he instructed both Sgt. DIVER, and the men assigned to the Half Moon Hotel to be cautious and on many different occasions he visited the premises and found everything to be carried out as he directed.

8. MR. PAUL FULTON, Manager of the Half Moon Hotel stated that he had found something unusual in room 523-which is directly below the room occupied by RELES. Upon investigation we learned that the window of that room was raised about 6 inches and the screen had been lifted to the upper frame of the window. Mr. Fulton stated that the window had been closed last night and the screen was down on the lower half of the window. It is therefore assumed that ABE RELES, in trying to make his escape reached that window and raised the window and the screen and at about this time the wire which was fastened to the radiator gave away causing him to fall to his death.

9. CASE ACTIVE.

see Fulton statement typewritten by J.