

References to Leonard
Demler

CONFERENCE HELD AT OTARUHU C.I.B.
ON 19 OCTOBER 1970, AT 1.30 P.M.

PRESENT:

Detective Inspector HUTTON
Detective Inspector BAKER
Detective Senior Sergeant O'DONOVAN
Detective Senior Sergeant SCHULTZ
Detective Sergeant TOOTILL
Detective JOHNSTON
Detective PARKES
Detective KEITH

Mr HUTTON:

We have cause to have another look at the CREWE murder prior to the departure of Detective Inspector BAKER and Detective Senior Sergeant O'DONOVAN, and the main reason in holding it is to try and collectively gather all information, both from within the squad and also from an insight into the file that Mr BAKER and Mr O'DONOVAN have conducted in an effort to bring the enquiry to a satisfactory conclusion.

I think it can be said at this stage that there are two persons who can be considered as suspects for the enquiry, namely:

- (a) Leonard William DEMLER
- (b) Arthur Allan THOMAS

There is no other evidence suggesting any other person, even remotely, as a possible suspect.

Mr BAKER:

Bearing in mind the evidence pointing towards DEMLER, namely the blood in his car, a motive of kinds and, of course, opportunity, I think the weakness at this stage is we have got to put a firearm towards DEMLER more than we have at this stage and here again I think that we just cannot put a firearm towards him. It can be one of two, either (1) that he has acquired one and we don't know anything about it and could be thrown in the river after use or disposed of after use, or (2) is the possibility of him acquiring a firearm like that one of EYRE's where you have got a firearm on the back verandah of the place, and if a guy was this way inclined he could get it.

Another thing as far as DEMLER is concerned, because of the inhospitable nature of the two deceased we are up against just what goes on in the house and we are dependant on DEMLER and because of this we cannot contradict him.

As far as the disposal of the bodies and the attempts at cleaning the place up and the burning, I would not like to theorise on that at all.

As the result of our discussion with DEMLER the other day he could easily do it and wouldn't turn a hair, this would be my picking of him. He showed no remorse whatever about anything you spoke about and whether, of course, this is his nature or that but he just never batted an eye-lid. I think we gave him plenty of opportunity if he was going to show any weakness. As far as sentiment or anything like that went, there was nothing there.

Mr O'DONOVAN:

I felt about him a marked reluctance to talk about or volunteer any information regarding either of the CREWES and anything you wanted had to be extracted from him by direct questions whereas in fact on quite a number of occasions he turned to Mr TOOTILL and made

Mr O'DONOVAN:
Ctd

conversation on other matters relating to the farm which I thought was particularly odd as though he was not interested in the death of his daughter.

Mr HUTTON:

I might mention at this stage that Mrs CREWE forwarded me a letter on date which she previously received from Lenard William DEMLER, and it reads as follows:

"

R.D. 1, Tuakau
15th October 1970

Dear Marie,

I have been wondering, when Harvey's funeral would be, did you know that we provided for Harvey to be buried with Jeannette, could you let me know the date of burial, and what arrangements, you would like.

I have been thinking about Rochelle. How is she? Hope she is settling down quite happily would like to get some news soon.

Yours sincerely,

Len

"

Mr BAKER:

This is in keeping with the whole make-up of this fellow - to sort of get in under him.

Mr HUTTON:

As far as DEMLER is concerned, taking the motive, I agree with you Wal, that the motive is weak really. There is the suggestion of \$12,000 worth of shares with perhaps in addition the transfer of the motorcar being a possible motive - the cause of an argument between DEMLER on the one side and Jeanette and Harvey on the other, and the fact that Jeanette of course has entered in some way into the running of the DEMLER estate in the form of a trustee as a result of May DEMLER's will. So much for the motive.

Now so far as the evidence of DEMLER having committed the crime, there are three things that have caused me some concern and these are:

- (a) the firearm
- (b) the axle
- (c) the wire found around the bodies.

In regard to the firearm, strenuous efforts have been made to put a .22 calibre weapon in the possession of DEMLER. We all know that these enquiries covered what is described as a combination weapon but even today it could not be said that we can prove that Lenard DEMLER had a .22 firearm with which he could have committed these murders.

In regard to the axle, here again we have no evidence that an axle of a similar description as that found with the body of Harvey CREWE was ever on the DEMLER farm or in his possession.

Finally, in regard to the copper and galvanised wire found around the bodies, tests conducted on similar gauge wire taken from the DEMLER farm have revealed that none of the exhibit wire came off the DEMLER property.

Mr HUTTON:
Ctd

Perhaps I might mention that the only similar wire found was a piece of copper wire discovered in the small paddock immediately in front of the small house gate of the CREWE household after the commission of these offences.

One surely must presume from the finding of this similar wire that at the time the offender placed the bodies in the motorcar he was at least in possession of the copper wire used to truss the bodies with and even perhaps suggests he may have had the axle also.

Mr O'DONOVAN:

I feel that it would be very doubtful that the axle came from the dump on that particular night. You recall the blood under Harvey's chair - it indicates to me that at the time the blood stopped falling Harvey was still in the chair and had not been moved. You will also recall that the chair was moved back. To me it does not appear that Harvey's body was removed on the following day - if this had been so I don't think the blood drag marks would have been left on the lounge floor, so they must have left there that night. So that if we assume Harvey's body was removed on the night of the murder, would not it be stretching the imagination to think that the murderer went from Harvey's house to the tip, stumbled around in the dark on a windy wild night and located an axle with which to weigh down one body and something else unknown to weigh down the other body. I feel that we have got to consider that he went to the house prepared to dump those bodies in the river.

Mr SCHULTZ:

I agree this is quite probable. You have got fragments of wire and that if a man had gone to all the trouble of doing this he would go prepared with wire or what you would like to tie the body up with at some stage, probably in the house or near the front gate. I think the blood on the side of the house was from the head - it was a very faint mark and in the early part of it it faded quite a lot. I myself think you would not have got jointed bits of wire - stacks of stuff to tie bodies with.

Mr TOOTILL:

Is it not consistent with short ends tied together - just one more piece he had not utilised.

Mr HUTTON:

I am satisfied the offender was short of wire at the time he actually trussed the bodies up. Now this is a different thing to saying he was short of wire from the source he acquired this wire from.

Mr PARKES:

I think perhaps he only intended taking one body away. I cannot help feeling that whoever did it was aiming for murder-suicide. Because there was that much blood he had to change his mind and take them both away and that is why he ran out - went to truss up one body and had two bodies to get rid of.

Mr O'DONOVAN:

Taking this a stage further, would this explain the attempt to clear up Jeanette's blood by the fireplace?

Mr BAKER:

Furthermore, while on this aspect of it, if there had been any sexual interference here this is another reason why he would want to get rid of Jeanette but not Harvey to make it look Jeanette had knocked Harvey off. Here again we have got two bodies with two different lots of blood and I mean these are the sort of things Pat and I have talked a lot of this between ourselves.

We have not overlooked the possibility of two people being there

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Mr HUTTON: So far as Harvey's body is concerned, there was copper wire wound around the shoulders, under one armpit and over the other shoulder, purely to hold clothing on the body. From the bedspread we found with wire around it we know that wire had been wound round Harvey's neck to keep that on to stop blood getting on perhaps the offender's car. Insofar as the weight is concerned, wire passed twice around Harvey's body in the region of the abdomen had been tied and obviously later the axle weight had been fastened to this wire with a piece of copper wire 8" or 9" long.

Further to this, Jeanette's body just had one single strand of copper wire wound tightly around the two legs just above the two knees and there were clear indications that another piece of wire had been passed through this for the purpose of holding a weight on and had since broken off due to constant friction of the two wires.

Mr O'DONOVAN: If he went to the house with the intention of disposing of the bodies he would have plenty of wire to weigh them down but for the unforeseen circumstance of so much blood which necessitated the use of more wire to bind the bedclothes on.

I think in consideration of the murders I do not think you can ignore the burglaries and the previous fires. If it is to be considered that they are relevant to the murder enquiry this would more or less indicate that DEMLER had nothing to do here because on one of these occasions at least CREWE was with DEMLER at the time of the incident - the burglary.

Mr BAKER: I also think that if we are going to consider that any of these previous incidents are connected with the murder, it tends to eliminate someone from outside the area. This is one of the things we looked at very very initially, Pat, because I say you have got this apparently happily married couple with a young baby visiting the old stamping grounds three weeks before the murder. This I think could tend to inflame someone that we have never attached much importance to but the thing possibly against this is that that person would have to be up here on at least one of these previous occasions if we are going to link these incidents and I don't think you can disregard them because they are three incidents dealing with only one farm in the neighbourhood and one couple in the neighbourhood.

Mr O'DONOVAN: I think in addition to the burglary you have to consider the odd stuff that was taken at the time of the burglary - a brush and comb set, engagement ring and I think a necklace, all the property of Jeanette, when there was money in the house.

Mr SCHULTZ: I myself don't think they are connected. They are too remote in time. It is over 18 months since the last one before the murder - that was when Jeanette was in the home with the baby.

Mr BAKER: The relevant dates are:
Burglary - 20 July 1967
Fire in house - 7 December 1968
Fire in hay barn - 28 May 1969

Mr HUTTON: Just looking at these three dates, they bear no resemblance to Jeanette and Harvey's wedding anniversary, if they have any bearing to the commission of these two murders.

Mr SCHULTZ: I think we are clouding the issue with these things.

Mr BAKER: Here again that is why we are here, there are so many bits and pieces.

Mr HUTTON: If these fires and burglaries have any bearing on the deaths of these two people and the offender is not DEMLER, surely one would have expected them to have known and to have mentioned who they feared this person was as the facts must surely indicate that for a person to commit these offences and then commit murder they must have a very real grudge indeed against the CREWE couple.

Mr BAKER: I cannot agree more. Harvey was always saying "Who would do this to me" or words to this effect. He mentioned ██████ that was any suspect.

Mr SCHULTZ: Were the words "Who would do this to me?" or "Why should this happen to me?"

Mr O'DONOVAN: I don't think they really gave the intention Harvey thought he was being got at or it was something sent from above.

Mr TOOTILL: I think if they had known some person had a definite grudge against them there would be some mention of it in letters or diaries or something.

Mr SCHULTZ: He would be quick to seize on a point like that.

Mr BAKER: I think ██████ would have been the first one in the lead.

Mr TOOTILL: I think Harvey would have taken some definite action to offset any danger.

Mr O'DONOVAN: I think this was committed in anger.

Mr HUTTON: So far as Len DEMLER is concerned, I think it would be fair to say that against him:

1. His actions prior to and after discovery of the blood stained house.
2. Lack of remorse.
3. Non-assistance in search.
4. Blood in his car of same group as Jeanette's.
5. Scratch on his back - explanation for this obviously not acceptable.
6. Explanations concerning:
 - (a) Blood
 - (b) Likely suspects ██████ and unidentified mushroom picker
 - (c) Movements (noté found in his possession to assist memory).
7. Knowledge that he had sufficient strength to move two bodies.
8. Proximity to scene of offence, opportunity for, availability of ready transport and unlikelihood of detection.

Mr HUTTON:
Ctd

Facts against DEMLER possibly being offender:

- A. Lack of evidence re .22 firearm or any of this calibre ammunition in his possession.
- B. Lack of evidence re axle being in his possession.
- C. Lack of similar wire being found in his possession to that being found around both bodies.
- D. Indications that in relation to the fires and burglaries that he is not likely to have committed one of the burglaries as there is a suggestion that he may have been home and visited by the CREWES when this crime was committed.
- E. Lack of other blood stains in either of DEMLER's vehicles, similarly lack of fibres from blankets, etc.

Mr HUTTON:

We will now discuss the other suspect for these offences, [REDACTED]

Mr JOHNSTON:

History re trailer with 1929 front axle, formerly the property of [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] owned a 1929 Nash car in 1956. At that stage he moved from Auckland to Pukekawa and took with him a trailer which he had made up from a 1929 Nash axle assembly with pressed steel wheels. He subsequently sold this trailer shortly after he arrived at Pukekawa to an unknown person at Meremere. This person's name is probably [REDACTED]. This person in turn sold it to [REDACTED], father of [REDACTED], on 14 April 1959. This was the date shown on the transfer of the ownership papers in relation to the trailer. [REDACTED] was shown the axle recovered from the body of Harvey CREWE and he was unable to positively identify the axle. However, attached to the axle was a portion of the tie rod which had been drilled in a similar manner to the way that [REDACTED] had anchored the wheels of the axle, that is the tie rod had been drilled to allow the U bolts to hold the tie rod to the axle.

[REDACTED] was subsequently seen and the ownership papers in relation to the trailer were obtained from him. When asked as to the present whereabouts of the trailer he was unable to tell us. However, he thought the trailer had been left on the farm prior to him leaving it in 1964.

Another [REDACTED], [REDACTED] told the Police that he thought the trailer had been left at Meremere where a new trailer had been made up from parts of the original trailer.

Mr JOHNSTON:
Ctd

[REDACTED] now residing at [REDACTED] who made the new trailer up for [REDACTED] said that he could not recall retaining the old axle from [REDACTED] trailer as it would have been no use to him. As far as he could recall the axle and the two wheels were taken away by [REDACTED] when the new trailer was made.

AA Thomas

[REDACTED] has been seen and his farm searched but the trailer could not be found there.

Mr BAKER:

Also, this trailer is registered for the 70/71 period isn't it?

Mr JOHNSTON:

Yes. Two trailers have been registered by [REDACTED] - one he is in possession of now and also a second trailer which was first registered on 14 April 1959.

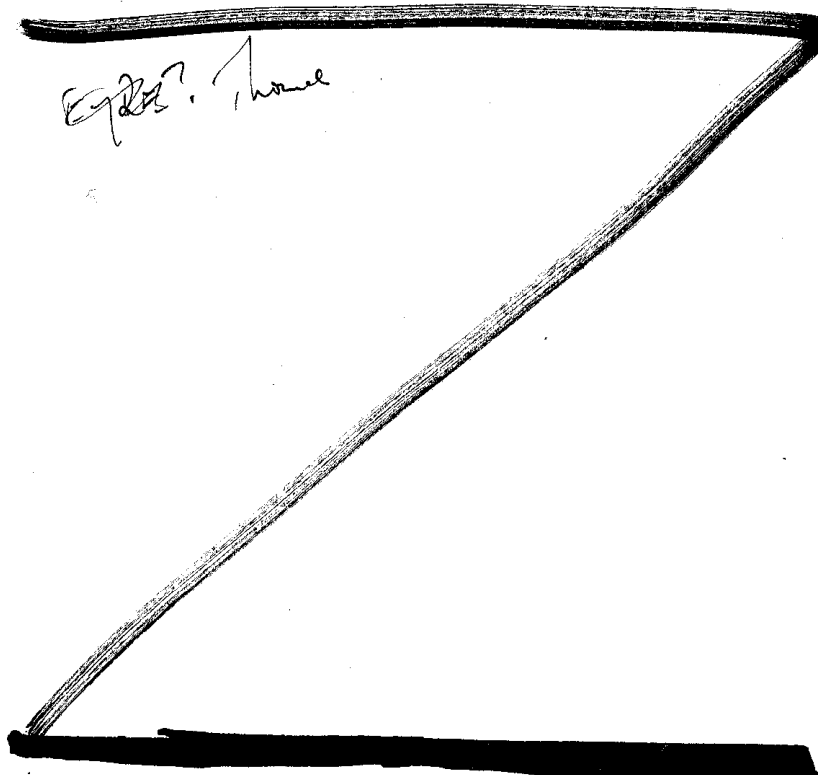
Mr HUTTON:

This information has been obtained from the interview of [REDACTED] and has yet to be verified.

Mr PARKES, concerning the previous interview of [REDACTED] when it was considered he was a possible suspect, can you give a brief summary of your impressions of [REDACTED] his build, and that type of thing.

Mr PARKES:

eggs? Thomas



Mr SCHULTZ:

Do you think his wife would support him if he had done this murder?

Mr PARKES:

I don't think she would. I don't think she is covering up for him.

I have since seen him again and have spoken to him three or four times now and we have never got through to him as much as before when it was put on him that he was the offender. He is more cagey now - expecting to get his face slapped.

Mr JOHNSTON:

Wire was taken from the old cow shed adjacent to the present one on [redacted] farm. It should be noted a piece of copper wire was joined to galvanised type of wire, probably electric fence wire.

Also a packet of .22 ammunition, hollow nose, was taken.

There is plenty of electric fencing wire on the farm. There could be more copper wire.

I thought the way the wire was tied on his farm was somewhat similar to the wire on the body - looped through and twisted.

Mr HUTTON:

Prior to throwing it open for any other discussion, I will just briefly cover the position concerning the two suspect firearms.

As a result of a further examination by Dr NELSON on Sunday the 18th, we have now reached the following stage. The two suspect firearms belong to:

- (a) [redacted]
- (b) [redacted]

During this enquiry some 70 odd .22 firearms have been test fired and all but [redacted] and [redacted] firearms have been excluded. These two firearms are both pump action Remingtons and have six lands with a right handed twist in the barrels. The lands in both weapons are identical in width.

The [redacted] firearm has no individual groove marks whatsoever which would help to identify it as the firearm that had fired any particular bullet.

The [redacted] firearm has five lands with no individual markings but the 6th land in test firing has revealed two slight marks which would very likely be sufficient to identify it as the rifle that had fired a particular bullet.

The bullet recovered from the head of Jeanette CREWE has six lands with right handed twists suggesting that it was possibly fired from a weapon of the same make. The five lands which are clearly identifiable on the exhibit bullet have no individual groove marks and unfortunately the sixth land is badly scored, very likely as a result of coming in contact with bone structure.

The remains of a bullet, which I might mention were badly fragmented, recovered from the body of Harvey CREWE indicate in one of the three lands visible two small marks which may or may not be similar to the marks revealed on the sixth land of a test fired bullet from the rifle of [redacted].

I might add that I have used the phrase that it may or may not bear some resemblance to the marks on the test fired bullets from [redacted] rifle due to the fact that the bullet which entered Harvey CREWE's skull was so badly fragmented that Dr NELSON feels that he must say that the marks which are visible in one of the three lands may possibly have been caused by contact with bone structure either at the point of entry or where the bullet ultimately broke up on the right side of Harvey CREWE's skull. Dr NELSON points out it is possible that similar individual marks

Mr HUTTON: land of the bullet recovered from the skull of Jeanette, and that
Ctd the bone structure may have caused the erasure of these marks.

Mr O'DONOVAN: I think you have covered it fairly well against him - suspect
rifle, previous association, and axle which may lead back to the
[redacted] farm.

Mr PARKES: The association with Jeanette was in 1960 - [redacted].

Mr O'DONOVAN: Another thing which intrigues me about [redacted]
[redacted] Jeanette and she had one stolen in the
burglary - not the same one.

Mr PARKES: He was living at [redacted]

Mr BAKER: [redacted]

Mr JOHNSTON: Jeanette was teaching at Maramarua. He left the company he was
working for after working there five years and went into the
Forestry at Maramarua at the time Jeanette was working in the
district.

Mr BAKER: [redacted]

Mr PARKES: [redacted]

Mr JOHNSTON: At the Onewhero Golf Ball he saw Jeanette and Harvey there and never
spoke to them - that was after they were engaged.

Mr BAKER: [redacted]

Mr JOHNSTON: [redacted]

Mr PARKES: And also the DEMLER house.

Mr JOHNSTON:

[REDACTED] about the same time as the CREWES.

Mr HUTTON:

Points against [REDACTED]

1. Possible motive - jealousy.
2. Previous relationship - infatuation.
3. Firearm (suspect rifle).
4. Proximity to scene.
5. Availability of transport.
6. Knowledge of CREWE farm through having worked there.
7. Axle (yet to verify whereabouts of similar axle on trailer formerly the property of [REDACTED]).
8. Fires and burglaries. (If these are connected [REDACTED] could be implicated as it will be noticed that one of these incidents has occurred for each year following the marriage of Jeanette and Harvey CREWE, culminating in the double murder in the fourth year.)

Points in favour of [REDACTED] not being the offender:

1. Alibi for the evening of 17-6-70 - appears as though wife and boarder will verify that he was home on the night in question and did not go out.
2. Well thought of in the district.
3. Married man - well settled on homestead farm.
4. Time lapse since association with Jeanette.

Points still to be covered re [REDACTED]

1. Finances.
2. Examination thereof re possibly being identical with No. 8 ammunition similar to bullet recovered from both bodies.
3. Wire - further search to be made of farm for copper and galvanised wire similar to that found on bodies, and together with present exhibits of wire from [REDACTED] farm to be taken or sent to Wellington for examination.
4. Verify movements for all of 17 June 1970 re possibility of [REDACTED] attending the clearance sale at Bombay and the rate-payers' meeting at Glen Murray.
5. Further attempts to be made to identify as many persons as possible who attended that meeting.
6. [REDACTED] whereabouts during previous fires and burglaries - employment check may assist.
7. M.O. check.
8. Reading material.
9. Query re non-participation in search for bodies.
10. Close inspection of transport.
11. Pliers.

Conference considered that apart from THOMAS and DEMLER, from the enquiries there does not appear to be any other person remotely involved.

Conference concluded that every effort must be made immediately either to confirm THOMAS as a suspect or exclude him altogether from the enquiry.