

while I could. We chatted about his music career. He told his favorite stories in a gentle voice spiced with laughter. Then I asked him if he remembered Mary Sherman.

“Dr. Sherman,” he corrected me with a look that said he would not tolerate any disrespect to her. The old wound was suddenly open.

“Yes, Dr. Sherman,” I confirmed, seeing how difficult this was going to be for him.

“I need to know what she was like?” I said as gently as I could.

“She was a *fine* woman, a *damn fine* woman,” he said without hesitation, challenging anyone to disagree. “Good hearted.” That’s what he meant to say the first time. “She was good to people. Good to me and good to Elmener.” His head shook up and down slowly as he considered his words. Yes, they were the right ones. Then he grew still and gave me a quizzical look, asking me without any words, why, after nearly thirty years, was I asking about Dr. Sherman.

“I am trying to figure out why anybody would want to kill her.”

“I don’t know,” he said simply, knowing that he had asked himself the same question and wished he had a better answer. “But I hope you catch the *son-of-a-bitch*.” There was no hiding the hatred in his voice. He would have gladly beaten the killer with his cane. He told me all I needed to know about Mary Sherman in a few sentences.

So how does “a damn fine woman” wind up injecting mice with monkey viruses in an underground medical laboratory with a violent political extremist?

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- 1 Letter from William Turner (author of *Deadly Secrets*) to Carol Hewett, April 16, 1994. Turner worked with Jim Garrison’s investigators and reported the opinion of the Garrison camp on Sherman’s apolitical perspective. She was not right-wing.
 - 2 Sherman’s biography was mostly compounded from several articles which ran in New Orleans’ *Times-Picayune* and *States-Item* newspapers, July 21, 1964.
 - 3 Probate Record, Mary S. Sherman, deceased July 21, 1964, State of Louisiana, New

Orleans. The husband is somewhat of an enigma; after her death, friends told investigators that she had told them he had committed suicide during the 1940s, but there is no independent corroboration of this.

- 4 Billings Hospital in Chicago was one of the few hospitals that participated in the covert plutonium experiments of the 1940s and 1950s. Three patients were injected with plutonium without their knowledge; Welsome, "The Plutonium Experiments."
- 5 *Tumors of the Bone and Soft Tissue*, edited by R. Lee Clark, contains two articles by Mary Sherman, "Histogenesis of Bone Tumors" and "Giant Cell Bone Tumor."
- 6 "Cancer Work Slain Doctor's Main Interest," *New Orleans States-Item*, July 21, 1964, s.1 p.1.
- 7 Keith, Don Lee "A Matter of Motives," *Gambit*, August 3, 1993.
- 8 Garrison, "Playboy Interview," p. 161.
- 9 Who was the Juan Valdez that reported the fire in Mary Sherman's apartment? Researcher Joan Mellen in her book *Farewell to Justice* said that this same Juan Valdez worked for Clay Shaw at the International Trade Mart. Further, Mellen reports that she was told that Lee Harvey Oswald was well-acquainted with a Cuban named Juan Valdez. Locating a Cuban who knew both Clay Shaw and Lee Oswald, and who lived next to Mary Sherman, might be very important. So New Orleans journalist Don Lee Keith tried to find Juan Valdez to talk to him. Keith told me that he had searched all over the country for Mary Sherman's neighbor. After interviewing 34 people without success, Keith finally gave up, and questioned whether "Juan Valdez" was really his name.

But the spelling of Juan Valdez's name has always been in question and may explain why he had been so difficult to locate. While the newspapers referred to him as "Juan Valdez," the NOPD Homicide Report used another common variation of Valdez and spelled his name as "Juan Valdes" with an "s" instead of a "z", and said that he was a 34-year-old male who lived in Apt. E. But maybe both spellings were wrong. Maybe the correct spelling was yet another variation of the common Spanish surname: "Valadez" with an "A" in the middle. We don't know that answer, but we do note that in 2001 the bulletin of The World Trade Center of New Orleans said that "on October 11, Mr. Juan Valadez, an international security consultant and retired U.S. intelligence officer... made a presentation... for international travelers and businesses."

Later the vigilant Romney Stubbs sent me a newspaper article from New Orleans about this same Juan Valadez, now of New Orleans, which listed the 30 years he worked for the CIA among his many credentials. Did this Juan Valadez work at the International Trade Mart in New Orleans in 1963 and live in the apartment complex with Mary Sherman? If "yes," it means that the man who called the police to report the fire in Mary Sherman's apartment was a CIA agent. This is such an important issue that it deserves a better determination than I can provide here. No, I have not contacted the retired CIA officer to ask him about any contact he may have had with Lee Harvey Oswald or Mary Sherman. But I wish HSCA or ARRB had. Due to the importance of this question, it would be best to get the answer under oath. Doing so would minimize speculation about the similar sounding names and the possible role of the CIA.

- 10 Keith, "A Matter of Motives."
- 11 Davis, *Mafia Kingfish*, p. 372.
- 12 Posner, Gerald, *Case Closed* (New York, 1993), p. 496.

