

Detective Relies on 'Son of Sam' Accomplice Theory

NEW YORK (AP)—A police detective's theory that David Berkowitz had help as the Son of Sam will be part of his defense today at a disciplinary trial on charges he acted improperly while investigating his hypothesis.

The theory of Detective Henry Ciotoli, a 17-year veteran who faces dismissal from the force, prompted his superiors last year to authorize a "discreet and confidential investigation" into the possibility that Berkowitz had help in killing six and injuring seven others.

There's no question the Police Department hierarchy thought enough of Ciotoli's ideas last Au-

gust to authorize the probe, but evidence produced at the trial, conducted intermittently since mid-May, has served to discredit the accomplice theory.

In ending the three-month probe last year, department superiors remained adamant that Berkowitz acted alone, maintaining that the origin for Ciotoli's theory was a Queens woman whose unorthodox religious practices made headlines in the 1970s when she claimed she frequently had visions of the Virgin Mary.

Shortly thereafter, Ciotoli was charged with nine violations of department regulations. The department rested its case Tuesday,

the previous session.

Defense attorney Charles Simpson maintains Ciotoli is the victim of a cover-up. "My client is here solely for trying to do his job, which if he was allowed to do, might have been damaging to the department," he alleged one day in court.

But the department contends that Ciotoli's chief informant in building the theory was Veronica Lueken, a woman the Roman Catholic Church called a fraud in 1975.

It is further alleged that Ciotoli refused to reveal the identity of his informant not to protect her, but because he "knew that if the

source of his information was revealed, there would be serious questions as to the credibility and reliability of this information."

Worshippers from across the country flocked to Mrs. Lueken's weekly prayer meetings, held outside a church in the Bayside Hills section of Queens until confrontations between civic and religious leaders and her followers in 1975 led to a court-sanctioned adjournment to public parks.

Among the charges against Ciotoli — who admits he sometimes worships with Mrs. Lueken — is an accusation that he interfered with a properly credentialed news photographer during a Feb. 1, 1979,

rally conducted by the woman at the site of the former Vatican Pavilion at the 1964 World's Fair in Flushing Meadow Park.

The confidential department memo quoted the photographer as describing Ciotoli as the "head honcho" of a group of men who act as bodyguards for Mrs. Lueken.

But Ciotoli faces more serious accusations: that he disobeyed orders; that he gave freelance writer Maury Terry confidential information; that he took an unauthorized trip to Minot, N.D., as part of his probe; and that while there he interrogated witnesses in Terry's presence.

Terry and a writer colleague, Jim Mittleger, wrote a series of articles published last year in the Cincinnati Westchester Newspapers about the conspiracy theory.

The Queens district attorney's office reopened its Son of Sam investigation afterward. An official said recently that the district attorney's probe is at "an evaluation stage."

The man Mrs. Lueken suspected of being involved in the Son of Sam killings — named in numerous internal Police Department documents obtained by The Associated Press but not named here because he has never been accused — also has been the subject of attention from the Queens investigators, sources said.

Some of the interest in the conspiracy theory stems from speculation that Berkowitz, who is now serving a 315-year term at Allica State Correctional Facility, knew either or both of Sam Carr's two sons — speculation fueled by the fact that both are now dead.

Sam Carr was Berkowitz's neighbor in Yonkers, an elderly man whom the killer claimed had commanded him to kill to satisfy blood-thirsty demons — thus the term Son of Sam.

In February, 1979 — six months after Berkowitz's arrest, Carr died in Minot of gunshot wounds, possibly self-inflicted.

His brother, Michael, drove his car off the West Side Highway in October 1979 in the midst of the Police Department probe. Investigators say his body contained a high level of alcohol.

In investigating Ciotoli's theory, one of the things a superior recommended studying was whether John Carr actually knew Berkowitz, a confidential Police Department memo discloses.

A secret department memo used as a trial exhibit shows that Ciotoli's Aug. 10, 1979 request to conduct an investigation of the accomplice theory was based on Mrs. Lueken's information that Berkowitz was seen in Queens County shortly before his arrest, in the company of a man whom Mrs. Lueken alleged was active in occult activity — the man she suspected was an accomplice.

There also were reports that John Carr knew the alleged occult activist, as well as Berkowitz.

Within that background, Ciotoli and Terry traveled to Minot during the Labor Day weekend of 1979 to investigate Carr's death and reports that Mrs. Lueken's suspect had been seen in Minot in 1976 and 1977.

The question of whether the Lueken suspect had been in Minot "had become an issue crucial to the investigation which was considered to be highly confidential," according to confidential Police Department documents.

Sources in the Police Department said an internal probe showed Ciotoli and Terry were "working together" when the detective had been specifically ordered not to even talk to reporters about the investigation.

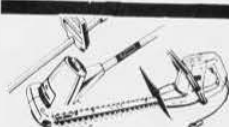
Many of the assertions that Ciotoli cited in arguing within the department for an investigation of his theory appeared in the Terry-Mittleger articles.

A source close to the Queens probe said some of those assertions were overstated. For example, considerable weight is given reports that an auto unlike Berkowitz's was seen speeding from the scene of the last Son of Sam shooting.

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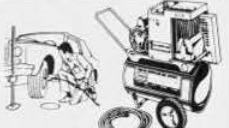


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