

Terry Melcher Testimony

Monday, August 23, 1971

MR. BUGLIOSI: The People called Terry Melcher.

THE CLERK: Raise your right hand, please.

You do solemnly swear that the testimony you may give in the cause now pending before this court shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

THE WITNESS: I do.

TERRENCE MELCHER,
called as a witness by the People, testified as follows:

THE CLERK: Take the stand and be seated. Would you spell your name?

THE WITNESS: Terrence Melcher, T-e-r-r-e-n-c-e; M-e-l-c-h-e-r.

THE CLERK: Thank you

DIRECT EXAMINATION BY MR. BUGLIOSI:

Q: Mr. Melcher, what is your occupation?

A: I am a producer of recordings and television programs.

Q: You are actress Doris Day's son?

A: That is correct.

Q: Mr. Melcher, did you previously reside at the address 10050 Cielo Drive in the City of Los Angeles?

A: Yes, sir.

Q: During what period of time did you live there, the approximate.

A: About two and a half to three years, beginning summer of '66.

Q: Between the summer of 1968 and, let's say, early 1969?

A: Right.

Q: And you leased the residence?

A: Correct.

Q: From whom?

A: Mr. Altobelli.

Q: Is that Rudy Altobelli?

A: That is right.

Q: A-l-t-o-b-e-l-l-i?

A: Right.

Q: And when you moved out of the Cielo address, do you know who the next tenants were?

A: Mr. Altobelli leased the house to the Polanskis.

Q: That is Sharon Tate and Roman Polanski?

A: That is right.

Q: Do you know Charles Manson?

A: Yes, sir.

Q: When is the first time you met Charles Manson?

A: Sometime during the summer of 1968.

Q: Where did you meet him?

A: At the home of a friend of mine named Dennis Wilson.

Q: Was that at Dennis' address located at 14400 Sunset Boulevard?

A: It was.

Q: All right. Is Dennis Wilson a drummer for the Beach boys recording group?

A: He is.

Q: And he is a friend of yours?

A: He has been for a long, long time.

Q: Do you recall what Mr. Manson was doing inside Mr. Wilson's residence?

A: I believe he was living there and the day I met him he was playing the guitar and singing songs.

Q: I take it you eventually left the Wilson residence that day. Did someone take you home from the Wilson residence?

A: Yes.

Q: Who was that?

A: Dennis drove me home.

Q: Was anyone else in the car?

A: Manson was in the car, yes.

Q: Where was he located in the car?

A: In the back seat.

Q: So Dennis drove you home to the address 10050 Cielo Drive?

A: Yes.

Q: And Manson was in the back seat?

A: Correct.

Q: Did either Manson or Wilson get out of the car at your address?

A: No, sir.

Q: They dropped you off at the gate?

A: Yes.

Q: And then you entered and they turned around and left?

A: Right -- well, it wasn't at the gate. It was inside the gate, in the parking area.

Q: You entered the gate?

A: Right.

Q: You got out of the car and then they left?

A: Right, that is correct.

Q: When is the next time that you saw Mr. Manson, if at all?

A: I think about a year later.

Q: Do you know the approximate month?

A: I did some while back -- in fact, I think that we ascertained it was about May of 1969.

Q: May of 1969?

A: Yes.

Q: Was the next time that you saw Mr. Manson?

A: Yes, sir.

Q: And where did you see him at that time?

A: That was at an old movie ranch, at the Spahn Ranch.

Q: Spahn Ranch?

A: Right.

Q: Chatsworth, California?

A: That is correct.

Q: Do you know Greg Jacobson?

A: Yes.

Q: Would you briefly explain your acquaintanceship with Mr. Jacobson?

A: Mr. Jacobson was in my employ as a talent scout and from time to time, although he wasn't in my employ at the time, he took me to Spahn Ranch.

Previous to that, he had from time to time brought either composers and/or performers in to audition for me, to record, and that is how I happened to be at the Spahn Ranch that May of 1969.

Q: You went out to the Spahn Ranch to audition someone?

A: That is right.

Q: Mr. Manson?

A: That is right.

Q: And was it at Mr. Jacobson's suggestion that you went out to Spahn Ranch to audition Charles Manson?

A: That is right.

Q: So Mr. Jacobson told you about Charles Manson, the fact that he was an artist or he played the guitar and sang?

A: Right.

Q: When you went out there in May of 1969 to the Spahn Ranch, were

you with Mr. Jacobson?

A: Uh-huh, yes, I was.

Q: Anyone else?

A: No.

Q: Did Mr. Manson in fact perform for you?

A: Yes, he did.

Q: Played the guitar?

A: Yes, he did.

Q: Sang songs?

A: Yes.

Q: How long did this audition take place?

A: Perhaps an hour.

Q: Where did it take place?

A: It's hard to pin down. The buildings weren't really inhabitable, they were mostly living outside and it was in a, I suppose you might call it, a gully.

Q: Behind the buildings?

A: Right.

Q: After you listened to Mr. Manson sing and play his guitar, did you talk to Mr. Manson?

A: Briefly.

Q: What did he say to you?

A: Not too much. He expressed a keen desire to record and I asked him a

few basic questions; I gave him a few basic suggestions and found out that he wasn't in any union, like the AFL, which is a musician's union, or AFTRA, which is the vocalists' union; and therefore he couldn't really professionally record.

He told me that he didn't want to join those unions.

Q: Did you give Mr. Manson any money?

A: I did, yeah.

Q: How much?

A: I think it was \$50.

Q: Why did you give him the \$50?

A: Well, they all seemed to be hungry.

Q: When you say "all," whom are you referring to?

A: Well, there were maybe 30 people there.

Q: Manson and several girls?

A: Well, just Manson and a lot of people.

Q: So you felt sorry for them and you gave Mr. Manson \$50?

A: Well, sorry, or charit -- yeah, perhaps sorry.

Q: When you heard Mr. Manson play the guitar and sing were you impressed with Mr. Manson as a singer and a guitarist?

A: No, I wasn't.

Q: Did you end up recording Mr. Manson?

A: No, I didn't.

Q: Is the reason you did not do so that you were just not impressed with him?

A: That, and also the previous reasons that I gave, which were that --

THE COURT: He was not a union member?

THE WITNESS: Correct, sir.

Q BY MR. BUGLIOSI: Did you convey the fact that you were not interested in Mr. Manson, did you convey this fact to Mr. Jacobson?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: When is the next time, if at all, that you saw Mr. Manson?

A: I told Mr. Jacobson that the only way I could see Manson being recorded would be if someone with a remote recording unit were to bring it to the ranch, itself, because he wouldn't be allowed into a professional studio without union status; so I went back there with a friend named Mike Dacy and Jacobson, maybe three or four or five days later, a week later, I'm not certain.

Q: You went back to Spahn Ranch?

A: Right; so that Mr. Dacy might have a chance to hear him sing and play.

Q: Did Mr. Manson then perform for Mr. Dacy?

A: Right.

Q: In your presence?

A: Right.

Q: And was Greg Jacobson also there?

A: Yes, sir.

Q: Directing your attention to defendant Charles Watson, whom I am pointing to right here, have you ever seen him before?

A: Yes, sir.

Q: When did you see Mr. Watson for the first time?

A: Sometime in the summer of 1968.

Q: Where at?

A: At Dennis Wilson's house.

Q: On Sunset Boulevard?

A: Yes.

Q: Have you ever seen Mr. Watson inside your former residence at 10050 Cielo Drive?

A: Yes.

Q: Approximately how many times?

A: I can't be certain -- several. Watson was a friend of Wilson's and Jacobson's and was often tagging around with either or both of those men, so whenever they would drop by -- not "whenever," but often when they would drop by he would be with them.

Q: Can you give us an approximate number of times that you saw Mr. Watson inside your former residence at 10050 Cielo Drive?

A: I would say approximately six. It's a very rough, rough guess.

Q: Do you recall what part of your former residence Mr. Watson was in on any of these occasions?

A: He could have been in one room or he could have been in all the rooms; I really don't know. I wasn't keeping track.

Q: During what period of time was Mr. Watson at your residence? You said six times -- encompassing, let's say, what period?

A: I guess it would all be -- I'm sorry, let me retract that; All six times would have fallen somewhere in the summer of 1968.

Q: To your knowledge did Mr. Watson ever stay overnight at your residence?

A: No.

Mr. Jacobson took care of my house for me for about four months while I was in Europe doing some recording.

Q: When was that?

A: That was in, I believe I left in the fall of 1968 and Watson may have stayed there then.

Q: You don't know?

A: I'm not certain; it's possible.

Q: Did you have a Jaguar car around this period of time?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: Did you ever loan Dean Moorehouse that car?

A: I did.

Q: Do you know the approximate date?

A: No, I don't, but I am sure that --

Q: In the summer of '68, again?

A: -- in your records -- yes.

Q: To your knowledge did you loan the car to Mr. Moorehouse and Mr. Watson?

A: I loaned it to Mr. Moorehouse.

Q: Was Mr. Watson present when you did this?

A: I believe that Mr. Watson went along with Mr. Moorehouse on the trip, yeah.

Q: During the summer of 1968 did Mr. Watson look the way he does right now?

A: Well, he wasn't wearing a tie.

Q: What about his hair?

A: It was a little longer.

Q: What about his weight?

Would you care to have him stand up?

A: Well, he is thinner.

Q: He is thinner now?

A: Yeah.

THE COURT: Did he have a beard?

THE WITNESS: Not that I recall, sir.

Q BY MR. BUGLIOSI: These six times that you met Mr. Watson, did you notice anything at all unusual about him?

A: Nothing at all, except that he was very pleasant, friendly.

THE COURT: What was the last thing you said, sir?

THE WITNESS: I said --

THE COURT: You said that he was pleasant and --

THE WITNESS: Very pleasant and friendly.

MR. BUGLIOSI: Thanks you.

No further questions.

CROSS-EXAMINATION BY MR. KEITH:

Q: Mr. Melcher, were there about 30 people present in this gully the first time that you listened to Manson perform?

A: Yes, sir.

Q: And had you ever met Manson before that date at Dennis Wilson's, or any other place, when you actually went to the Spahn Ranch?

A: Could you rephrase that?

Q: Yes.

You went to the Spahn Ranch --

A: Right.

Q: -- in May or so of 1969; correct?

A: Correct.

Q: And your purpose in going there was to listen to Manson audition for you; correct?

A: Correct.

Q: Now, had you ever met or seen Manson before that time?

A: Yes, as I testified I met him at Dennis Wilson's house the previous summer.

Q: Had you seen him at Dennis Wilson's once or more than once?

A: I'm not -- I'm not really certain. I don't mean to appear vague, but if I ever went to Dennis Wilson's it wasn't to see Manson.

Q: I gather that; Dennis Wilson was a friend of yours?

A: Right, and so was Jacobson and Jacobson was also living there at the time, so --

Q: And I suppose you also had business dealings with those two people, Wilson and Jacobson?

A: Not really.

Q: But, in any event, you do remember seeing Manson at Wilson's house?

A: Correct; once, I do.

Q: You only have an outstanding recollection of seeing him once there?

A: Yes, the reason for that is because he sang some of his songs that particular day.

Q: Did you ever have a discussion with Mr. Manson at Dennis Wilson's? Any kind of an extended conversation beyond introductions?

A: Not that I recall, no, sir.

Q: And were any of Manson's so-called girls with him at the time you saw Manson and heard him play at Dennis Wilson's?

A: There were quite a few girls there. I don't know if I could classify them as Manson's girls, or whose girls they were, really.

Q: Now, directing your attention back to the Spahn Ranch, were there a number of people in this gulley at the time you heard Manson play?

A: Yes.

Q: And were they both young girls and young boys or largely young girls?

A: It was probably maybe a three to one ratio of women to men.

Q: And did Manson do all the singing or did the girls and other people there join in.

A: From time to time they all joined in.

Q: Did Manson appear to be the leader of this songfest?

A: Most definitely.

Q: And why do you say most definitely. We are talking about the first occasion now.

A: Well, he sat on a rock, a large rock, surrounded by the rest of the

people and he played the guitar and none of the others played any instruments except for, I believe, there were maybe several tambourines and he sang songs and they occasionally joined in and it was his party. There was no question about that.

Q: Was there some difficulty in getting down to this gully, Mr. Melcher? In other words, was the access to it difficult?

A: There was a very narrow -- I am not sure what I would call it -- it was a pathway along the side of a cliff with a rope that went down to the gully.

Q: Did you have to use the rope in order to aid your descent?

A: Well, unless you were terribly agile. It was safer to use the rope, yes, I would say that.

Q: Did Manson lead the way down to the bottom of the gully, if you know?

A: I don't really recall.

Q: Did you see Mr. Watson at the Spahn Ranch on this first occasion that you went there and auditioned Manson?

A: I don't recall that either, sir.

Q: Was Greg Jacobson with you on this first occasion?

A: Yes, sir, he was.

Q: And did he go in the gully with you?

A: Yes, he did.

Q: Did Manson appear to react in any particular way when you told him that he couldn't record, unless he was a union member? In other words, did he appear disappointed or mad or upset or did he appear --

A: No.

Q: -- unmoved?

A: The latter.

Q: Did you tell him at that time that you weren't impressed with his singing and guitar playing? By "him," I refer to Manson?

A: Well --

Q: Just yes or no.

A: I am not really certain of that either. If one is in the business of recording people, auditioning them, both vocally and as a composer, you learn to adapt a certain amount of --

THE COURT: Reserve?

THE WITNESS: That is a good way of putting it.

Q BY MR. KEITH: Diplomacy would be another good word to use?

A: Yes. I think if I said anything at all, it was probably to the effect that I would --

Q: "Don't you call me, I'll call you"?

A: I would be in touch with him through Mr. Jacobson.

Q: All right. Now, you did go back a few days later?

A: Right.

Q: And did you again go down to the gully?

A: Right.

Q: And again did it appear to be Manson's show?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: Did it appear to you, Mr. Melcher, to be sort of staged, the whole performance?

A: The first time it didn't, but the second time it did.

Q: And am I using the correct word, "staged"?

A: Staged?

Q: Use your own word.

A: That will do -- staged or rehearsed or whatever you would like.

Q: Again, Manson appeared to you to be the leader?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: And did you see Mr. Watson on this second occasion?

A: I don't recall that either.

Q: Did you ever go back again to the Spahn Ranch?

A: No, I didn't.

Q: Did you ever see Manson after that?

A: No, I didn't. My reason or reasons, rather, for going there on both occasions was as a favor to Mr. Jacobson, not that I was really, you know, looking --

Q: I understand.

A: -- for a new singer.

Q: Now, on these occasions that you recall Mr. Watson being at your home, were you giving parties on these occasions or did he just happen to drop by with Mr. Wilson or Mr. Jacobson or both? Do you understand the question?

A: Yes.

Q: Tell me if you don't understand and I will rephrase it.

A: Yes, I do. Was I giving parties? Others who were present at my house one evening when I had, I suppose you would call it, a buffet dinner for Dennis Wilson and Greg and all the people who were living at Dennis'

house say that Watson was there, but I am not sure of that either and the rest of the times, they weren't -- I don't believe they were parties at all. They were merely dropping by in the afternoon, sort of visits.

Q: Is there any doubt in your mind that Mr. Watson was there at all at your house on any occasion?

A: I am sure he was there on several occasions.

Q: And he appeared to you to be tagging along with either Wilson or Jacobson; is that right?

A: Yes, sir.

Q: And I take it he didn't have much to say? Mr. Watson, that is?

A: Well, I never got to know him, really.

Q: You wouldn't describe him as a scintillating personality, would you, when you saw him at your home, I take it?

A: The visits were, as I recall, brief and he was along with a friend. He was a friend or -- well, let's say a friend of a friend.

Q: And your reaction to Mr. Watson was limited to believing that he was a friendly, pleasant fellow, right?

A: Uh-huh, that is correct.

Q: You had no philosophical discussion with him, did you?

A: Not that I recall, no.

Q: Now, when did you leave the Cielo Drive residence for the last time? I mean, what was the approximate date?

A: Sometime in -- sometime around, well, it was just after the New Year of 1969.

Q: And was this buffet dinner that you gave, at which you think Mr. Watson was present, the last time you saw him, to your knowledge, until court today? If you don't remember, say so.

A: No, as I said previously, I am not certain whether or not Mr. Watson was present at that buffet dinner.

I recall that testimony and that buffet was maybe a year and half prior to my leaving the Cielo residence.

Q: Could you describe to us how Mr. Watson appeared to you physically when you observed him at your residence on these half a dozen or so occasions when he was with Wilson or Jacobson or both? Maybe I could make some suggestions.

A: All right.

Q: He didn't appear as thin as he does now, for one thing; is that right?

A: Well, I am not really sure. I have been told that he has lost a lot of weight and I have read that.

Q: Don't tell us what you read or heard from other people. We have to elicit your testimony from your own personal knowledge and not what other people told you or not what you may have read. You understand that, don't you?

A: Yes, sure, okay.

Q: Do you remember anything about his physical appearance in 1968, when you saw him on these occasions? Did he appear neat or did he appear dirty or was he smelly or was he well groomed? Did he wear old clothes? Did he wear modish clothes? Do you remember anything?

Did he look like a hippie or did he look straight?

A: Well, if I had to choose between his having appeared as a hippie or as a straight, as you put it, I would say a hippie.

Q: Now, what led you to that belief?

His hair was about as long as your is, was it?

A: I think so.

Q: And he didn't have the beard, though, is that correct, to the best of your recollection?

A: Not that I recall, no, sir.

Q: And did he wear blue jeans?

A: I presume so. That's what most young people wear.

Q: But you don't recall independently --

A: No, I didn't.

Q: -- whether he wore --

A: I didn't take snaps.

Q: Did he wear love beads and leather thongs and things like that?

A: I don't recall that, either.

Q: You don't recall whether or not his clothes were even dirty or disheveled, do you?

A: All I know is that he didn't have on a tie or tails or --

Q: All right, he didn't wear a business suit, obviously.

A: That's correct.

Q: But you wouldn't classify him as a hippie, would you, just because he didn't wear a coat and tie?

A: I don't classify anybody as a hippie, sir.

Q: Therefore, you wouldn't classify Mr. Watson as a hippie when you saw him?

A: Well, I did for your purposes, when you asked me whether he was a hippie or a straight.

THE COURT: You were limited to two choices, so you took the one?

THE WITNESS: That's right.

Q BY MR. KEITH: What you are telling me is I used some inadequate language in posing the question in the first place?

A: Not --

Q: Because you don't feel that anybody is a hippie --

A: Well --

Q: -- or you feel that it is a bad description of anybody?

A: I wouldn't say inadequate; I would say -- well, I'm not certain what I would say about that.

Do you classify yourself as a straight, perhaps, or how do you --

MR. KEITH: I have to; I wear a coat and tie.

I don't have any further questions.

THE WITNESS: I don't know how to classify --

REDIRECT EXAMINATION BY MR. BUGLIOSI:

Q: During the summer of 1968, though, you haven't seen Mr. Watson except, of course, in the newspapers?

A: He may have been at the Spahn Ranch on either or both of my two visits there, but not that I recall.

MR. BUGLIOSI: Thank you.

No further questions.