



JUN 13 1985

State of New Jersey

OFFICE OF ATT. GEN. T.W.C. COMMISSION OF INVESTIGATION

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JAMES J. MORLEY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

June 12, 1985

Thomas Cannon
Public Information Officer
Department of Law & Public Safety
Hughes Justice Complex, CN-112
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

Dear Tom:

As we discussed, I am enclosing the affidavit which was submitted to the Commission by Mike Piserchia in connection with the Sears/Taggart investigation.

Sincerely,

James J. Morley
Executive Director

JJM:er

enclosure

To the State Commission of Investigation
May 29, 1985

My name is Michael Piserchia and I am a reporter for The Star-Hedger of Newark and work out of our Trenton office.

I was quite disturbed from Mr. Morley last Friday that it has been alleged that I knew of the Sears/Taggart deal at least one day prior to the original March 13th joint Attorney General - Division of Motor Vehicles release, which you now know deleted any reference to William Taggart.

I had intended to testify in person before the SCI on Tuesday but I required an emergency kidney transplant operation the Saturday

before I was to testify I am currently recuperating at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital in Philadelphia.

Nevertheless, I am giving this notarized copy of my involvement in the Sears-Taggart story. My statement is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God.

First off, it is absolutely untrue that I was aware of Bill Taggart's involvement in the Sears Photo Driver's License plan prior to the original March 13 press release.

In fact, I first became aware of Tassant's involvement nearly one month later - the day the Asbury Park Press broke the cover up story -

I will now try to explain to you what did happen in those two days prior to the original March 13th press release.

Approximately two days before the initial announcement I saw DMU Director Clifford Snedeker standing in the halls of the statehouse.

Since DMU is one of my assigned beats, I went up to Snedeker to ask him if any thing was going

that was newsworthy. Snedeker replied, "What are you doing the day after tomorrow (March 13). We're going to have a big announcement regarding photo driver's licenses. I think your newspaper would be interested in it."

I asked Snedeker what was it about, could he go into any further detail? He replied "No" but that it would be worth my while to be in on March 13th.

I then went back to my office and called Arthur Smith, DMU's spokesman, and told him what

Siedeker had just told me at the Statehouse.

He said he too could not give me any further details and that I would have to wait for the official release.

I decided to dig up the story on my own. I called up a number of motor vehicle agents, who were directly involved in issuing photo driver's licenses, to ask them if they heard any news that was going to be announced that week by DMU.

A few said they heard rumors about a better delivery system but did not have any concrete detail

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It was getting late in the day, so I decided to call it quits and would pursue it again tomorrow.

During the course of the following day, I was talking to Fanwood Police Chief Anthony Parenti, who along with Snedeker and Irwin Kimmelman are members of the New Jersey Drunken Driving Task Force since I had already covered one of the task force's meetings I contacted Parenti to find out if anything new was going on.

During the course of that conversation, Parenti said he had recently been talking to Art Svedeker.

I asked Parenti did Svedeker mention to him anything new about photo licenses that he was going to announce shortly. At first, Parenti said no. But then he said, "Oh yeah, DMU is going to let motorists get their photo driver's licenses at some Sears stores."

By this time it was late in the afternoon on March 12 and ~~him~~ I immediately called Art Smith for confirmation.

when I finally reached Smith
and told him that I heard
about the Sears photo drivers
license plan.

Unknown to me, Sneiderker was
in Smith's office when I called
and I heard Smith tell Sneiderker

"The ledger knows,"

I then told Smith I didn't know

that much and that I needed

more details to write the story.

He refused to give me any detail

and pleaded with me not to write

a story prior to DMU's formal

announcement, expected the following

day.

"The administration will be all over

us if the ledger breaks the story.

Please as a personal favor, don't write
the story yet."

I said I would have to talk to my boss, Josh McLaughlin. I told him what had happened and what I knew. Since I really didn't have enough to write a complete story that contained such information as how much was Seaver's going to make on each license, how many people were to be hired and whether there would be any middlemen involved we decided to hold the story until DMU made its formal announcement the following day.

I called back Smith and told him we decided to hold the story.

He expressed his appreciation and passed the phone to Snedeker -

All Snedeker wanted to know was who gave me the story. Although Parenti's statements were made to me on the record, I did not feel compelled at that time to disclose Parenti's involvement

In light of what has occurred since March 13, I have obviously changed my mind and welcome all the facts in this very bizarre case to be disclosed

Sincerely yours,

Michael Puchner

Witness
Linda Leever / Patient Services
Thomas Jefferson Univ Hospital

over for notes

Sworn to and subscribed before me
this 29th day of May, 1985
Marie Rowello
Notary Public, Philadelphia, Philadelphia Co.
My Commission Expires January 31, 1988