1 IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE THIRTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
IN AND FOR HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY, STATE OF FLORIDA
2
3
- X
4 IN THE MATTER OF: :
:
5 EXECUTIVE ORDER NUMBER 00-256; :
INQUIRY RELATED TO THE CONDUCT :
6 OF THE HONORABLE ROBERT BONANNO, :
A CIRCUIT JUDGE :
7 - X
8
9
10 **GRAND JURY TESTIMONY OF MYRA GOMEZ, SYLVIA GAY and GREGORY P. HOLDER**
11
12
13
14 DATE: October 11, 2000
15 TIME: Beginning at 12:45 p.m.
16 Concluding at 4:30 p.m.
PLACE: Grand Jury Room - Third Floor
17 Hillsborough County Courthouse
419 Pierce Street
18 Tampa, Florida 33602
19
20
COURT REPORTER: LYNDA J. MILLS
21 Registered Merit Reporter
Notary Public
22 State of Florida at Large
23
24
25

1 APPEARANCES:

2 On behalf of State:

3 **HON. JERRY HILL, STATE ATTORNEY**
HON. ALFRED C. THULLBERY, JR.
4 Office of the State Attorney
Tenth Judicial Circuit
5 255 North Broadway
Bartow, Florida 33831-9000
6 (863) 534-4800

7 ALSO PRESENT:

8 **MICHAEL EDENFIELD, ESQ.**, Counsel for Witness
Sylvia Gay
9

10

11

12 **I N D E X**

WITNESSES:	EXAMINATION BY	AT PAGE
13 For the State:		
15 **MYRA GOMEZ**	Mr. Hill	3
	Grand Jurors	27
16	Mr. Hill	34
	Grand Jurors	34
17	Mr. Hill	39
18 **SYLVIA GAY**	Mr. Hill	40
	Grand Jurors	96
19	Mr. Hill	97
	Grand Jurors	99
20	Mr. Hill	100
	Grand Jurors	101
21 **GREGORY P. HOLDER**	Mr. Hill	113
22	Grand Jurors	177
	Mr. Hill	179
23	Grand Jurors	181
	Mr. Hill	182
24	Grand Jurors	185
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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 Whereupon,

3 MYRA GOMEZ,

4 was called as a witness, and being duly sworn by Alfred
5 C. Thullbery, Jr., Assistant State Attorney, was
6 examined and testified as follows:

7 DIRECT EXAMINATION

8 BY MR. HILL:

9 Q How are you, Mrs. Gomez?

10 A Just fine, thank you.

11 Q I have got to ask you to speak up good
12 and loud.

13 A I have lost my voice somewhat.

14 Q Okay. If you can't hear, let us know.
15 If you don't understand the question, let me know.

16 A Okay.

17 Q Would you give the Grand Jury your full
18 name and spell your last name?

19 A Yes, Myra S. Gomez, G-O-M-E-Z.

20 Q You are currently employed in the court
21 system here in Hillsborough?

22 A Yes.

23 Q In what capacity?

24 A Substitute judicial assistant.

25 Q How long have you been employed in that

1 capacity?

2 A Approximately four-and-a-half years.

3 Q Okay. What is a substitute judicial

4 assistant?

5 A It's a judicial assistant that moves from

6 division to division working with the different judges

7 when their secretaries are either out on medical leave

8 or on vacation.

9 Q Are you a member of a pretty significant

10 pool that does that?

11 A Yes.

12 Q About how many people are involved in it?

13 A Probably about 20.

14 Q Is there a way to give the Grand Jury an

15 idea of what an average stay is when you are assigned

16 to a judge, or does it vary too much?

17 A It varies according to divisions. In the

18 Civil Divisions we are somewhat like a legal secretary,

19 answering phones, scheduling hearings, scheduling

20 hearings for your judge, appointments for your judges.

21 In the civil -- in the Criminal Divisions

22 it's a little different. We don't schedule any

23 hearings at all. The Clerk's office do that. But

24 other than that, you know, we assist the judges with

25 whatever they need us to do.

1 Q Okay. Your husband is a judge?
2 A Correct.
3 Q What is his full name?
4 A Frank A. Gomez.
5 Q And he is a Circuit Judge?
6 A He is a County Judge.
7 Q County Judge. How long has he been a
8 County Judge?
9 A Five-and-a-half years.
10 Q Okay, wonderful. You have a cousin
11 that's in the system?
12 A Correct.
13 Q And who is that?
14 A Chief Judge Alvarez.
15 Q Okay. How would you describe you all, as
16 close, as friends, how would you characterize it?
17 A Very close. First cousins brought up
18 very close and still remain very close.
19 Q Okay. And from the way you say that, I
20 believe you hold him in high regard?
21 A I certainly do.
22 Q Okay. There was a point in time this
23 year when you were -- when you worked with Judge
24 Holder; is that correct?
25 A Correct.

1 Q What brought about the need for Judge
2 Holder to have a temporary J.A.?
3 A His judicial assistant Lori Nasco had
4 been out on medical leave. Well, when she came back
5 she had been out on medical leave a little over a year.
6 And I went to him shortly after another
7 judicial substitute, judicial assistant left to go work
8 for another judge on a permanent basis. And I
9 approached him and I told him that if he was in need of
10 a judicial assistant for the few months left that his
11 judicial assistant would be out, that I would be happy
12 to work for him.
13 Q How long did you actually work with Judge
14 Holder?
15 A Five months.
16 Q Five months. Now again, just so I
17 understand, were you assigned there? Did you ask to go
18 there? Did he ask for you? How did you end up going
19 to that position?
20 A I went in and I asked Judge Holder. He
21 and I met in 1994 on the campaign trail so we knew each
22 other very well. He told me that he needed to check
23 with Judge Alvarez to make sure that it was appropriate
24 that I come to work for him.
25 So he went to Judge Alvarez and asked

1 Judge Alvarez. And Judge Alvarez told him that he does
2 not do the hiring, that it's strictly the individual
3 judge's decision as to who he hires to work for him,
4 and that it was totally up to him.
5 Q Okay. And obviously, based on that you
6 went to work for him?
7 A Yes, I did.
8 Q All right. How would you characterize
9 that experience; was it a positive one?
10 A Very positive.
11 Q Can you give us kind of a verbal picture
12 of Judge Holder as far as his organizational skills go,
13 the way he keeps his office, the way he runs his
14 docket?
15 A Right. He is a military man. And as
16 probably all of you all are aware, they're normally
17 very organized. He's very organized. He runs his
18 docket very strict. He's always on time.
19 Q Kind of a no-nonsense type person?
20 A Very much so.
21 Q But, nonetheless, strikes me as a man
22 with a sense of humor?
23 A Sense of humor, and very much a
24 gentleman, and very nice to work for.
25 Q Did you and he ever have discussions

1 regarding matters, I'm going to call them human
2 interest matters, --
3 A Okay.
4 Q -- but matters involving judges in the
5 courthouse?
6 A No.
7 Q Okay. Were you aware of his on occasion
8 sending e-mails either to the JQC, or to the Governor's
9 office, or to anyone else regarding judges?
10 A No.
11 Q Were you aware of any file, paper
12 clippings, or other matters contained in it, that
13 related to personnel here at the courthouse, primarily
14 judges?
15 A No.
16 Q Okay. How often would you see Tara
17 Pisano over in -- when I talk about the judge's office,
18 it really is a series of rooms, four rooms; is that
19 right?
20 A That's correct.
21 Q It consists of his immediate office?
22 A His private office.
23 Q Private office.
24 A His hearing room.
25 Q Hearing room.

1 A The Judicial Assistant's office.
2 Q That's your office where people will
3 gather?
4 A And the coffee room.
5 Q Did you often see Tara Pisano in his
6 area?
7 A Daily.
8 Q Was she working close by Judge Holder's
9 office?
10 A Well, bailiffs in the Civil Division, the
11 General Civil Divisions, are not assigned to any one
12 particular judge. Bailiffs in the Family Law
13 Divisions, such as Ms. Gay, are assigned to one
14 particular judge. Therefore, Tara Pisano occasionally
15 would be sent to Judge Holder's division if Ms. Gay was
16 not there to work.
17 Q Would there be other reasons that Tara
18 Pisano would come by Judge Holder's offices?
19 A Other than the fact that Sylvia Gay and
20 Ms. Pisano were very close friends, I don't know of any
21 other reason.
22 Q Okay. Well, that's really what I was
23 driving at.
24 A Right.
25 Q Would they visit almost on a daily basis?

1 A Yes, they would.
2 Q And those visits would occur probably in
3 the break room?
4 A Yes.
5 Q You know, certainly you've heard
6 discussion about this document that Tara Pisano
7 prepared?
8 A The one that was prepared in Mr. Cohen's
9 office?
10 Q Yes, ma'am, or for Mr. Cohen.
11 A I have read it in the newspaper.
12 Q Okay. All right. You never had any
13 discussions with her?
14 A No.
15 Q Help me with this. You and Tara Pisano
16 were not good friends; is that right?
17 A We were acquaintances.
18 Q Acquaintances. I didn't mean otherwise,
19 but you weren't close?
20 A No.
21 Q Did you ever see her sitting in that
22 break room working on the document?
23 A No.
24 Q Okay. Let's go to I believe the date is
25 Thursday, July 27th, 2000.

1 A Correct.
2 Q That's a date you remember, I bet you?
3 A In infamy.
4 Q Just as a matter of habit, do you arrive
5 at work and leave work with your husband?
6 A Yes.
7 Q Okay. It makes sense. Do you have a
8 normal departure time?
9 A 4:30 normally.
10 Q Okay. Was this true of the July 27th
11 date?
12 A Yes, sir.
13 Q Was Judge Holder in town on that date, or
14 where was he?
15 A No, sir. He was out on military duty.
16 Q Did he leave that day or previously?
17 A I believe he left the night before.
18 Q Okay.
19 A On Wednesday evening I believe he left.
20 Q All right. How well-known was it that he
21 was leaving for military duty, if you know?
22 A That's a good question because I really
23 don't know how well-known it was.
24 Q It's not that it was a secret, it just
25 may or may not have been well-publicized?

1 A Right. Unless he sent e-mails to
2 someone, you know, it's not something that he would
3 publicize or I would publicize.
4 Q Right. All right. I can only imagine
5 that if he were out of town Thursday, July the 27th, it
6 was a rather ho-hummer for you as the day goes?
7 A Never a ho-hummer.
8 Q What would you be doing when the judge
9 was gone?
10 A Paperwork.
11 Q Okay.
12 A Just getting copies on Orders to conform
13 and doing what key call case management, trying to
14 manage the cases to make sure that they moved along
15 swiftly. And those were the times that I tried, when
16 he was out on military duty, to do certain things like
17 that.
18 Q Okay. All right. How long was he
19 scheduled to be away, if you recall?
20 A If I recall he was due to come back on
21 Monday, July 31st.
22 Q All right. On July 27th approximately
23 how long had you been working with Judge Holder?
24 A Let's see. Well, that was my fifth
25 month.

1 Q Okay. So really, it was rather late in
2 that work relationship?
3 A Right, yes.
4 Q During those previous five months, how
5 many times did Judge Bonanno come visit with you and
6 Judge Holder?
7 A Not often, maybe once or twice in that
8 five-month period.
9 Q Are you sure it was twice?
10 A Once or twice. I can't tell you exactly
11 but --
12 Q You're sure it was at least once?
13 A It was more than once, I do know that.
14 Q Okay. Was that close in time to July
15 27th?
16 A I have no knowledge of that.
17 Q It had to be during regular working hours
18 or you would not have known that?
19 A Right.
20 Q In your experience was it common
21 practice -- judges I think, as we all know, many of
22 them have passkeys that while it won't fit every
23 office, will fit most offices?
24 A Anyone that works on this side, the main
25 courthouse, Civil Divisions, and I'm talking about the

1 third floor because I can't say whether they work on
2 the second floor or any other floor, all the judicial
3 assistants and their judges have the same keys. They
4 open all the doors.
5 Q So a J.A. or a judge can go into
6 virtually any office?
7 A Any office, yes.
8 Q How often do you use your key to enter an
9 office other than where you're working?
10 A As little as possible.
11 Q Well, but how often?
12 A In the last couple of weeks I've used it
13 twice.
14 Q And was that in a judge's office?
15 A Yes.
16 Q And was that with their knowledge that
17 you were coming?
18 A No.
19 Q Was it after hours or during regular
20 hours?
21 A During in the morning when I came in. It
22 was the two long weekends that we had had, and the
23 door -- the office that I work in has a main door that
24 leads into the hall.
25 That door has a plastic box on it. And

1 they put all the mail for my judge, which is right now
2 I have six retired judges I'm working for, and Judge
3 Barton's mail was all stuffed into that one box. And I
4 take all the mail out, I go into my own private office,
5 I sort the mail, come back out, I open the judge's
6 door --
7 Q Judge Barton's?
8 A Judge Barton's.
9 Q While you were working for him?
10 A Well, no, I'm not working for Judge
11 Barton. I'm working for six retired judges.
12 Q Okay. I thought you meant --
13 A I come out of that, I open Judge Barton's
14 office, I call, there's no one there, I walk in and
15 place his mail on his secretary's desk and walk back
16 out and go back to my office.
17 Q Got you. Very specific purpose?
18 A Yes.
19 Q Certainly not for any social reasons?
20 A No.
21 Q Okay. 4:30 rolls around. Did you have a
22 routine that you followed when closing up Judge
23 Holder's office?
24 A Yes, sir.
25 Q Will you describe that for the Grand