

INTERVIEW OF PATRICE ZELLER, SEPTEMBER 14, 2001

Interview of Patrice Zeller conducted by Officer P. L. Sullivan, Marshall City Police, Star #7999, in Room 423 of the Thompson County Hospital, September 14, 2001, 2:00 p.m.

Officer Sullivan: This is just like yesterday. I am going to tape record this, and we will type it later. I need your consent to do this, OK?

Patrice Zeller: Sure.

Q (Officer Sullivan): How are you feeling today?

A: Much better. I am ready to go home, if they will let me.

Q: Well, we went over to your home yesterday afternoon.

A: Oh. I fell asleep. I forgot to tell Marty. He spent the night here last night.

Q: Well, we also talked to a few people. I have a few questions. The day before yesterday, when you went to the store to get aspirin, didn't you know that your husband, Marty, had just bought several bottles of aspirin?

A: Huh?

Q: Marty bought a half dozen bottles of aspirin – the Byrnes house brand, 50 tablet size bottles, a few days ago – on September 8, at Byrnes Pharmacy over on Harlem

A: No.

Q: This morning Byrnes gave us a copy of the receipt with Marty's signature on it, the credit card receipt showing that purchase on September 8.

A: That does not make sense.

Q: Do you go to the basement?

A: Almost every day -- well, four or five times a week. I do the laundry. I store canned goods there.

Q: You did not see those bottles in your home?

A: No.

Q: When were you last in the basement?

A: Tuesday. I was there when the planes went into the World Trade Center. I remember Marty called for me to come upstairs.

Q: You have this photography dark room in your basement.

A: Yes, in the basement. We both take pictures, and we sometimes – well, we used to sometimes develop our own films and do enlargements and prints and the like. We don't use that room any more, as we have digital equipment now, and everything is done on the computers. We even have a website to post some of our pictures. Websites are miracles. Marty loves using the computer.

Q: So, do you use the darkroom?

A: I haven't used it for maybe four years. Marty sometimes goes in there and putters around. I don't think he actually uses the darkroom. He helps out with the laundry sometimes.

Q: Some of the photography chemicals are cyanide?

A: Yes. I told you. So, what are you saying?

Q: We searched your home yesterday afternoon, and we found three unopened bottles of Byrnes house-brand 50 tablet bottles of aspirin on the table next to the door of the darkroom area. Inside the darkroom we found a small blue bottle marked "cyanide" – a container apparently containing cyanide. The codes on the labels show these bottles were identical to the bottles on the shelves at Byrnes Pharmacy on September 8 and September 12. We also found an empty Byrnes aspirin bottle, same codes, in the garbage. We have sent it to be tested for traces of cyanide. We also sent, for testing, some swabs of your mouth from yesterday. Oh, yes, Byrnes has a receipt dated September 8, 2001, from Byrnes Pharmacy #1, showing a purchase of five 50 tablet bottles of ByrMart aspirin.

Q: Marty bought the five bottles?

A: He admitted it -- he said he forgot.

A: How could he forget?

Q: But, he said you were the one who bought the aspirin that made you sick.

A: I bought it, but he handed it to me.

Q: Well?

A: Marty put the cyanide on my aspirin?

Q: You tell me.

A: That doesn't make sense.

Q: No. But it sounds that way, doesn't it?

A: Oh, my heavens! Oh, dear!

Q: Well, another thing? Do you know what happened to the bottle of aspirin you purchased on September 12?

A: It should be at the house. On the table. In the kitchen.

Q: Well, actually, it wasn't. It was not in the house. It was in the garbage out in the alley. We checked, and normally the garbage is picked up on Thursday mornings, but because of the events of last Tuesday, the pickup schedule was changed. None of the trucks have picked up garbage since midday September 11 – and we found the empty bottle in the garbage. The cap had been put back on.

A: With the pills?

Q: No. It was empty, but we have sent it off to the lab to test it for cyanide residue. There were no pills inside. I think maybe they got flushed.

A: Marty.

Q: We also found some newspaper clippings on cyanide poisonings in July, and some scribblings -- numbers and letters. Maybe a website. We are checking.

A: I don't know anything about that.

Q: Well, we'll check the handwriting.

A: You talk to Marty?

Q: Marty. What's ...?

Q: We are charging him with attempted murder.

A: Oh my God! Poor Marty!

Q: Look, let me be blunt. Maybe you should not be thinking about “poor” Marty. The evidence seems to be mounting that he put the poison in those tablets you took.

A: Maybe he thought That’s despicable, to do such a thing.

Q: Well, I want you to think of why he might want to hurt you, and if not you, why would he want to put poison in a bottle of aspirin.

A: Nothing. Nothing.

Q: Well, have you two been arguing over anything?

A: No. Well, we are always tight on money. There is never any extra cash. We had a few arguments over bills, nothing serious. I kept track of the bills, but we weren’t arguing. We are both trying to save a little. You think he did this for money?

Q: Did he ever bring home extra cash?

A: Are you kidding? There was never extra cash. He brought home paychecks. He wasn’t stealing cash or merchandise, though that’s what Byrnes fired him for.

Q: We hear you have a lot of insurance.

A: No, that’s not true.

Q: This is going to sound rude, but I have to ask. Did Marty think you might have had a friend, a male friend? You know, could Marty have been jealous about something?

A: I don’t want to talk any more. I am very tired right now. I am feeling very depressed all of a sudden. I want to call my mother. Please, no more today. I can’t believe he cold pull such a stupid stunt. This is really stupid. Stupid. You know, I want to put an end to this conversation.

Q: Yes, ma’am. We can continue this another time. I am very sorry to tell you this, but Marty will not be coming here to see you I don’t think he will be released on bond. This is the first crack we have had in the poisoning cases, and Marty is our prime suspect.

A: For all those killings, all those poisonings?

Q: He is the best suspect we have had, and the newspapers are going to go crazy with this. You had better brace yourself. We have not told anyone where, what hospital you are in, and we have also posted a guard outside to keep people away. We will make arrangements to protect you from all this publicity, at least for the next few days. You are also a very important witness, so please be careful. We don't know how deep this reaches, whether there are others, confederates, or what. And please, get some rest and do not watch television.

A: Oh, my. This is too much. Please go away. Leave me alone. And tell Marty he can go screw himself.

Q: I am going to turn off the recording machine now.

Whereupon the conversation was no longer recorded.

**This transcript prepared by Janice Murray, stenographer,
this 17th day of September, 2001.**

I have read the above transcript, and it appears to be true and accurate in all respects.

Patrice Zeller. _____

date: 17 September 2001