

The Patty Hearst/SLA Case

by Larry Langberg (1969-1999), Society President

February 4, 1974, was just another day in the San Francisco Bay area — nothing special to distinguish it from a week or month earlier. The same was true on the east side of the Bay at the University of California, Berkeley, a hot bed of radical student activity during the 1960s and 1970s.

However that was all about to change. A violent kidnapping, with shots fired by the kidnappers, occurred at an apartment where heiress Patty Hearst resided with her fiancé Steven Weed. The three kidnappers were members of the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA), a small, leftist radical Marxist group that viewed our society as being oppressive, racist and corrupted by capitalism. This action initiated the opening of a major kidnapping case (HEARNAP), at the



Case Agent Monte Hall

time, the largest case the FBI had ever worked. Thousands of Agents worked on this case and thousands of interviews were conducted. The SAC in San Francisco was Charles Bates and the Case Agent was Monte Hall. Hall was assisted by Leo Brenneisen, Arden Keith and Tom

Padden. Agents and administrators from across the country arrived in San Francisco to bolster the office's personnel. This was a "Special," and a highly publicized case.

The victim, Patty C. Hearst, was the 19-year-old daughter of Randolph and Catherine Hearst. Her grandfather, William Randolph Hearst, created the largest newspaper, magazine, newsreel and movie business in the world.

The SLA was previously an obscure group which was formed in the late 1960s or early 1970 in the Vacaville Medical Facility. A University of California Berkeley professor founded the group and sent "tutors" into the prison system to teach and radicalize black inmates. The tutors were mostly white, well-educated, young upper-class leftist men and women. At its strongest, the SLA consisted of 12 members and some associates. An escaped prisoner, Donald DeFreeze, serving time for armed robbery, became the leader of the SLA, adopting the name and title of Field Marshall Cinque — the name of a slave who led a rebellion on a slave ship in the 1800s. The group's first victim was the black Oakland Superintendent of Schools, Marcus Foster, who was targeted because he supported a plan to require students to carry

identification cards. He was shot down in a political murder by SLA assassins using cyanide, hollow-tipped bullets. The murderers were SLA members Russell Little and Joe Remiro.

Starting two days after the Hearst abduction, the SLA issued a series of letters and tape recordings saying that they had Patty Hearst, threatening to execute her. The SLA demanded that the Hearst family distribute food worth \$6 million to the poor areas of the city. The food distribution was chaotic, a riot erupted; so it was temporarily discontinued. Later, in tape recordings from Patty Hearst, sent after 50 some days in captivity, she claimed allegiance to the SLA, and took the name Tania. Her parents offered \$4 million in ransom money. (Hearst later said in testimony that she was kept bound and gagged in a dark closet during the early part of her captivity.)

In April 1974, a video of Patty Hearst was captured by bank surveillance cameras, showing that she was armed and participating in the robbery of a Hibernia bank located near San Francisco, which netted \$10,000.

First Person Recollections by the Author

On May 16, 1974, Patty Hearst and Bill and Emily Harris were implicated in a shoplifting incident involving ammunition at Mel's Sporting Goods store in Inglewood, CA (part of the Los Angeles metropolitan area). Patty Hearst used an automatic 30 caliber carbine to cover for the fleeing Harris. I remember this incident specifically — the Los Angeles Office called all Agents into the office on May 17, 1974 to respond to this and other related incidents once they connected it to the Patty Hearst case. On a golf course with three other Agents, I remember being called off the course to go to work and helping other Agents on the scene follow up on various leads.



Symbionese Liberation Army Leader — Donald David DeFreeze, aka Cinque



"Tania" (left) and "Field Marshall Cinque" (right) at the Hibernia Bank Robbery

However, a short time later, an open radio transmission — no encrypted radios in those days — directed all Agents in the field to respond to a location and large parking area in South Central Los Angeles. (This was probably midafternoon.) When I arrived, there were large numbers of Agents already there, as well as large numbers of other law enforcement officers. This turned out to be a staging area set up by the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD). My memory is that an LAPD informant, a prostitute who knew Cinque, had advised that Cinque and several members of the SLA were staying at a house nearby. This connected to the information from the van left at Mel's Sporting Goods store. The LAPD thought they were at one of three possible addresses. Several LAPD SWAT teams were preparing to assault the appropriate residences. They furnished the three addresses and told those who had gathered to spread out in the neighborhood, no closer than 2 blocks from the various addresses. We had two Agents per car — I was with SA Dwight Morrison. We drove into the area and parked several blocks from the nearest suspected address. This neighborhood of Los Angeles was residential and made up of single family homes, many of which were run down.

We parked near a small open field and waited for further instructions. Unknown to us, the informant had now advised the correct address was a fourth address at 1466 E. 54th Street, Los Angeles. This was not transmitted on the radio for security reasons. Also unknown

to Dwight and myself, we were parked directly behind the subject house across the small open field. (I learned later that a local female TV newscaster walked up to the front door of several of the addresses, camera running and asked if Cinque was there. This was right at the time the SWAT teams were positioning themselves to assault the residence. It was an unprofessional action by the news person and not only jeopardized the SWAT team's safety but she was lucky she was not taken hostage.)

Shortly after that, all hell broke loose. Dwight and I bailed out of our vehicle as bullets began whizzing by and impacting on the houses to our rear. Dwight had a shotgun; I had my .38 caliber S & W 6 shot (how woefully inadequate that seemed considering the conditions.) All the fire going on was automatic and semi-automatic fire. Dwight sought cover behind the rear wheel well, while I sought cover near the front wheel well. We both proned out on the street. I would estimate the firefight lasted about 45 minutes.

The front of the house was where the SWAT teams were pouring rounds into the house, so I suspect most of the bullets impacting in our area were friendlies. I learned later that most, if not all, of the SLA fire was coming out from the front of the house.

First Person Recollections of SA Steven Ducker

Steve was the SRA at the LAX Resident Agency, and he and his fellow RA Agent Carl Pilkvist were both SWAT team members, and both grenadiers. They were also directed to respond to South Central Los Angeles on May 17th. Upon arrival, they made contact with ADIC Bill Sullivan and huddled with the LAPD on-scene Commander. The LAPD advised that their gas had been ineffective. The Agents had M-79s and CS gas. They were directed to lob rounds into the subject house. An Agent in a suit escorted them to a position



Hibernia Bank Robbery

in a vacant house directly across the street from the subject house:

Steve said, "This house, a single-story wood frame building was vacant and devoid of any furniture. There was a great deal of gunfire going off and shortly after we entered that house, a round came through the front of the house about seven feet high. I remarked to Carl, who was about six four, that being short was not always a disadvantage."

"Both Carl and I had a large case containing the M-79 and four types of ammunition. We had two or three inert practice rounds and the same number of white star or white parachute rounds. We had about four rounds of anti-personnel ammunition loaded with a large number of buckshot. The remaining ammunition, about twelve or fifteen rounds, was CS gas. It took no time to open the case, break open the weapon and load it. I believe my first round was a practice round, which, to my surprise went right into the front window of the house the subjects were occupying. Carl and I then alternated shots. As one aimed and fired, the other broke open the weapon, removed the spent casing, and reloaded."

"It soon became very evident that we were at the ideal range for using the battle sights. The projectiles are slow and heavy and at any distance the ladder sights have to be used and the weapon canted, sometimes at a considerable angle. This was not necessary because by chance we were at the perfect range for holding right on the target. We were instructed at Quantico that the CS rounds burn very hot and have a high potential for fire hazard. Once the subject's building began to burn, there was a significant reduction in the amount of gunfire and the house was soon engulfed in flames."

"For what reason I do not know, Carl and I were the only persons in that house that we occupied, from the beginning of our participation to when we left."

Carl Pilkvist died a number of years ago from pancreatic cancer.

The outcome of the gunfight was that all subjects were killed. No friendlies were killed or wounded. Six SLA members: Cinque, Patricia Soltysik, Angela Atwood and Willie Wolfe all died under the house in the crawl space in the southeast corner under the house. Nancy Ling Perry was

also in the crawl space under the house, but at the southwest corner of the house. She emerged from the crawl space firing an automatic weapon. An additional SWAT team that had moved into the area, stationed on a carport near where Perry emerged shooting, engaged her, shot and mortally wounded her.

Camilla Hall, the sixth member, was also killed in the gunfight. She was not found in the ash remains of the house until the following morning.

First Person Recollections by the Author

That morning after the gun fight, Agent Jack Blair and I were instructed to respond to the Los Angeles Coroner's Office to help identify this final person. There was some



SLA Shootout — LAPD SWAT Team

concern that it was Patty Hearst. We arrived at the Coroner's Office before the body did. When the body was wheeled in, it was so charred, that other than appearing to be human, the person's sex was not apparent. The body had cross bandoleers across the chest and was still smoking. The only thing that was apparent was that the person was fairly tall. Patty Hearst was short. We had an open line to the office and advised them the body appeared taller than Hearst. The office had an open line to San Francisco FBI, who in turn had an open line into the Hearst residence. We stayed with the body until a forensic dental expert confirmed the person was Camilla Hall.

Returning to the shoot-out at Mel's Sporting Goods Store in Inglewood on May 17th, after escaping from the area of the store, Emily and Bill Harris and Patty Hearst drove the van they were in initially, but were followed by a store security guard, Anthony Sheppard. Bill Harris noticed Sheppard and walked towards him with a fully automatic 30 caliber carbine. Sheppard backed off but saw the three abandon the



Burning House, where SLA was located during shootout

van and commandeer a Pontiac sedan. Shortly thereafter, the Pontiac stalled and they commandeered another vehicle, a 1963 Chevy Nova station wagon.

Afterwards, other information developed showing that the three traveled south into Orange County, where they spent the night in a motel near Disneyland. They reportedly watched the shootout on television.

A massive investigation searching for their whereabouts occurred over the next 17 months. Patty Hearst and the Harrises were nowhere to be found.

However, on June 7, 1974, the Harrises made contact with SLA members at a radical Berkeley political rally including Kathy Soliah. They sent a tape recording to the media shortly afterward which was a eulogy for their deceased members. Hearst proclaimed her love for Willie Wolfe on the tape.

Eventually, the trail warmed and centered on South Canaan, PA. An individual with radical connections named Micki Scott rented a farm house there, in which subsequent investigation determined that fingerprints of the Harrises were found, as well as the prints of leftist radical Wendy Yoshimura. A dog hit on Patty Hearst's scent. Investigation later tracked the group to New York City, the Colorado mountains, Wyoming, Oregon, Washington State and eventually back to the Bay area.

During those travels they "allegedly" received assistance in their flight and hiding from several nationally known individuals, including radical sports writer Jack Scott and his wife Micki, Scott's parents—Jack Scott Sr., NBA star Bill Walton, as well as the Weather Underground and AIM.

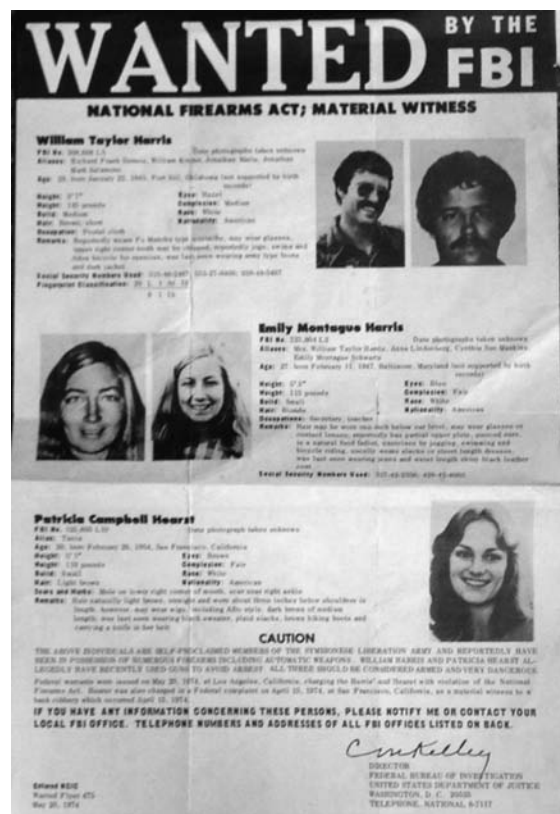
The investigation returned to San Francisco and focused on Kathleen Soliah and her brother Steven.

On April 28, 1975, SLA members Wendy Yoshimura, Kathy Soliah, Emily Harris, Bill Harris, Steven Soliah, Michael Bortin and James Kilgore, as well as Patty Hearst, robbed the Crocker National Bank in Carmichael, CA. Myrna Opsahl, a church secretary and customer was killed during the robbery. Once again Hearst was caught on camera, armed and involved.

Two young Agents, Jason Moulton and Ray Campos,



SAs Byron Walke, Jason Moulton, Ray Campos and ASAC Larry Lawler shown with weapons seized during the arrest of Patty Hearst and Wendy Yoshimura



Wanted Poster for Bill and Emily Harris and Patty Hearst

were assigned a seemingly innocuous lead, which they thoroughly investigated. Their investigation determined that Steven Soliah, brother of Kathleen Soliah, had rented two houses in San Francisco. In September 1975, Moulton and Campos' investigation confirmed Wendy Yoshimura's connection to the SLA. The rental houses were at the following locations: 425 Morse and 288 Precita. Those locations were 3 miles apart. Surveillance was initiated.

UC Agent Willie Reagan, through surveillance, identified Bill Harris as a resident at 288 Precita, with Emily Harris. Yoshimura and Hearst were thought to be at the Morse address.

On September 18, 1975 at 1 p.m., the FBI requested that



425 Morse Street, location of Patty Hearst and Wendy Yoshimura

the SFPD seal off the area around the Precita residence. A short time later, the Harrises came out of the residence and began to prepare to go jogging. As ASAC Larry Lawler, SAs Monte Hall, Dick Vitamonte, Jason Moulton, Ray Campos and Leo Brenneissen approached them, Bill immediately raised his hand and meekly surrendered to Lawler, Hall and Vitamonte. Emily began to run back towards the house. Agents ordered her to “Freeze.” She complied with their orders. As she was being handcuffed by Brenneissen, Campos and Moulton, Emily Harris said, “You sons of bitches.” A search of the apartment found a stash of weapons — 3 automatic rifles, 2 shotguns, 40 lbs. of explosives and 2 gas masks.

Agent Tom Padden and SA Jason Moulton along with SFPD Inspectors Tim Casey and Larry Pasero were quickly dispatched by ASAC Lawler to the Morse Street address. Padden and Casey went up the rear staircase to a landing outside the apartment while Moulton and Pasero went to the upper level apartment’s front door, knocked and announced. Padden and Casey looked through the window and saw Patty Hearst and Wendy Yoshimura sitting at a table. When the Agents announced their presence, Wendy complied with the orders not to move. Patty ran toward another room and her purse. Agent Padden instructed her to “Freeze, or I’ll blow your head off!” A search of the purse found a loaded 38 special revolver, as did a search of Yoshimura’s purse. Two additional handguns and one sawed-off shotgun and a fully automatic 30 caliber carbine were found in the apartment.

Agents allowed sobbing Patty Hearst to change her panties, which she had soiled, when Agent Padden instructed her to freeze. When booked into the San Mateo County Jail, Hearst said her occupation was “Urban Guerilla.”

Epilogue

On January 6, 1976, the trial began in San Francisco before Federal Judge Oliver J. Carter, for the Hibernia Bank robbery. The U.S. Attorney James Browning led the prosecution. Hearst was represented by attorneys Al Williams, SF radical-connected attorney Terrance “K.O.” Hallinan and Boston defense attorney F. Lee Bailey.

Her defense team portrayed her as a victim of the Stockholm Syndrome, who was coerced or intimidated into

taking part in the bank robbery. She however, refused to give evidence against any of the other SLA members and remained defiant throughout the trial. By many accounts, the trial was a circus and a media zoo.

On March 20, 1976 Patty Hearst was convicted of bank robbery and sentenced to 35 years imprisonment. Her sentence was later commuted to 7 years. President Jimmy Carter further commuted her sentence and she was released from prison on February 1, 1979, after having served 22 months. She was granted a full pardon by President Bill Clinton on January 20, 2001, as his last official act as President.

Following release from prison, Hearst married her former body guard Bernard Shaw. They resided on the east coast and had two daughters. Hearst has also taken a few minor acting jobs over the years since her release from prison. Her husband has since passed away.

Kathleen Soliah, as noted above, had ties to the SLA. Later, she was indicted for placing pipe bombs (which failed to explode) under two Los Angeles Police Department squad cars. She fled and eluded authorities for 20 plus years. After a lengthy investigation, Los Angeles Agents Mary Hogan and Rick Denny, along with LAPD detectives, and with help from the TV show *America’s Most Wanted*, identified Soliah living in Minnesota under the alias Sara Jane Olson. She had lived there for many years after marrying Dr. Gerald “Fred” Peterson and raising three daughters. She was arrested by FBI Agents and Minneapolis police on June 16, 1999. Mary Hogan, one of the arresting Agents, told Soliah upon being arrested, “FBI, Kathleen. It’s over.” She was returned to Los Angeles to stand trial for placing the bombs under two police cars. In 2001, she eventually pled guilty to two counts of possessing explosives with intent to murder. In 2003, she pled to second degree murder stemming from her SLA activities and involvement in the bank robbery in Carmichael, CA during which Myrna Opsahl, who was depositing church donations, was murdered in the 1970s. She was sentenced to 14 years in prison. She was accidentally released on parole in 2008; reincarcerated after five days; released finally in March 2009, after which she returned to Minneapolis.

During the research for this article, independent investigation has discovered that former Cleveland Agent William Barclay, Elyria RA, conducted a revealing interview of Jay Weiner at Oberlin College, Oberlin, OH. This was in the mid-1970s. Weiner was a former student at Oberlin College where Jack Scott was Athletic Director. Weiner was a “confidante” of Jack Scott, who was thought to have knowledge of the Patty Hearst case. Weiner provided information about a farm in Pennsylvania where Hearst, Wendy Yoshimura and others were staying. He said Hearst was driven by Micki Scott to Oberlin and stayed with Jack and Micki Scott for about a week. He said Micki Scott drove Patty to Jack Scott’s parents’ house in Las Vegas. The interview also connected Kathleen Soliah to Patty Hearst. This was an unrecognized piece of investigative work that was key to capturing Patty Hearst and others according to Mike Bartley



Patty Hearst Booking Photos — San Mateo County Sheriff’s Department

and other sources. Bill was a former San Francisco clerk and eventually finished his career in Sacramento. He passed in 2000.

The author thanks Case Agent Monte Hall (now 94 years old) for his assistance in writing this article. He was interviewed regarding HEARNAP. His tenacity as the Case Agent was instrumental in bringing this matter to a conclusion. Former San Francisco Agent Max Noel had previously interviewed Agent Hall for an oral history project. Noel was especially helpful in providing background about the case, which was invaluable in writing this story. He had prepared a power point summary (with notes) documenting

the case. He used this to make presentations about the case to interested groups.

This case study was written at the request of Society Historian, Raymond J. Batvinis, as part of a series of recollections about major FBI cases, many having already appeared in *the Grapevine*.

All photos courtesy of Max Noel.



Max Noel

PHOTO FROM THE FILES



NAC #5 1965 entered on duty September 13, 1965

First row: Rockne Wilson, Edward Conroy, William Reagan, John Carroll, Robert Kelly, Preston Perdue, Robert Norton, Jr and Robert Denz (Class Counselor); second row: Ronald Hotem, Ronald Jarrell, James Link, William Sanford, Thomas Paskewitz, Joseph Hodgins, Joseph Yurgine, Nile Duke and Thomas Hill; third row: Leonard Hale, Stafford Holle, James Rose, Jon Stahl, James Jakubowski, Gerard Kenna, Eugene McCarthy, William Roberts, Michael Moroney and Norman Middleton; top row: Daniel Stankoski, Roger Patrick Watson, Charles Sullivan, Ronald Hadinger, Edward Quinn, John Dolan and Timothy McCollum