

Vernon Jensen, 1967: "The Legend of Joe Hill," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*

This source is from an academic journal article written by Vernon Jensen, a Cornell University professor and labor historian. Dr. Frank McHugh was the doctor who treated Hill's gunshot wound. In this article, Jensen explains what Dr. McHugh told him in a personal conversation in 1946. [Changed for easier reading.]

At 11:30 on the night of the murder, Hillstrom appeared at the office of Dr. Frank McHugh, about 2.5 miles from the scene of the murder. He was seeking treatment for a gunshot wound in his left side. The wound looked serious, and it was obvious that Hillstrom had lost a lot of blood and that he had walked a considerable distance. Hillstrom explained that he had received the wound in a fight over a woman. He said that he was as much to blame as the other fellow, and that to protect the woman he would not reveal her name. He wanted to keep the matter private.

As soon as Dr. McHugh read the newspaper headlines about the killing of Morrison and his son, he figured that Hill might have been involved. He visited Hill, who said, as nearly as Dr. McHugh could remember, "I'm not such a bad fellow as you think. I shot in self defense. The older man reached for the gun and I shot him and the younger boy grabbed the gun and shot me and I shot him to save my own life." He also added, "I wanted some money to get out of town." Dr. McHugh immediately went to Sheriff Peters of Murray and told him about treating Hill.

Dr. McHugh was called as a witness at Joe Hill's trial. As a Socialist who opposed capital punishment, he did not want to see Hillstrom executed. Because he thought the information Hill had given him was confidential and did not wish to harm him, Dr. McHugh shared only the information directly requested of him. When asked what explanation of the wound Hillstrom had given him that first night, Dr. McHugh repeated the "protected woman" story. He was never asked whether Hillstrom had given any other explanation of his wound, and so he left the witness stand without sharing what Hillstrom had told him at the second visit.

Hillstrom repeatedly refused to testify in his own behalf beyond repeating the explanation that he had received his wound in a quarrel over a woman. Afterwards one of his attorneys remarked, "It seems that he wants to be considered a martyr."

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