

## The Story of NBC 6 Miami

During early April, 2013, NBC 6 of Miami aired a commercial advertising a new segment in which they were looking for stories involving public corruption anywhere in the state of Florida. This commercial aired during the 11pm news. It advertised that investigative reporter Willard Shepard was the reporter to contact.

An email was sent to Willard Shepard during the 11pm broadcast. Around 12:30am Mr. Esdale received a reply from Willard Shepard. Mr. Shepard asked if Mr. Esdale could come in 2pm for an interview. Mr. Esdale agreed and drove to the NBC studios where he met with Shepard's producer, Sandra Esquivel. With a cameraman present, Sandra Esquivel interviewed Mr. Esdale about his story. Toward the end of the interview, Willard Shepard came in to say hello. Esquivel told Mr. Esdale that his story needed to be run past the main producers and legal department of NBC 6 to get approval to air.

A month later, Mr. Esdale was contacted by Sandra Esquivel and told Mr. Esdale that NBC 6 was going to cover his story. Esquivel requested many documents from Mr. Esdale which supported his claims of murder and a cover up.

Mr. Esdale was asked to supply a witness list. One of the witnesses on this list was Murray Cohen's stock broker, Stephen Beninati, who was an ear witness to his murder. Beninati had a prearrange appointment to have a phone conference with Murray Cohen about his investments which happened to be at the same time he was being murdered. Mr. Beninati who works in New York City was contact by Esquivel and asked him if would appear for an interview at 30 Rock Center which is the NBC location in New York. Beninati agreed and a lengthy interview took place.

In Mr. Beninati's interview, he confirmed what he had heard the day he called Murray Cohen's house. He also confirmed that Sarasota detective Chris Hallisey had falsified the statements he made during his interview with Hallisey.

In early May, 2013, Mr. Esdale received a call from Ms. Esquivel and informed him that the story was set to air within a week and requested that another interview be conducted in his home to provide a personal touch and informed him that Willard Shepard will be doing the interview. Esquivel shared with Esdale that when they contacted Sarasota Sheriff Tom Knight for a comment, she described him as extremely angry.

During the interview at his house, Willard Shepard stopped Mr. Esdale during one of his answers to his questions. Shepard had Mr. Esdale change his replies to some of his questions.

One of the corrections Shepard had Esdale make was when he asked him "What do you want to come out of the airing of your story?" Esdale replied, "I want my father's killer to be brought to justice and the members of SSO and FDLE involved in destroying evidence

and obstruction justice to be held accountable.”.

Shepard stopped the cameraman and then told Esdale NO. I want you to say that you want SSO to conduct a full blown investigation. Desperate to have his story exposed to the public, Esdale went along with Shepard’s request and changed his reply.

Days after this interview Esdale received a call from producer Sandra Esquivel and she told him “The legal department has signed off and has approved the airing of your story”. She informed Esdale that the story would air on May 22<sup>nd</sup> during their 11pm broadcast.

On May 22<sup>nd</sup>, around 5pm, hours before the story was to air, Mr. Esdale called producer Esquivel to make sure it was all systems go. Esquivel answered the phone and with a stressed tone in her voice, she started to stutter and in a panic told Mr. Esdale the story was pulled and would not air. She also told Mr. Esdale she was not sure if it would be rescheduled or ever air.

Stunned about what he was just told, Mr. Esdale left his home and went to his local supermarket. After exiting the supermarket and getting back in his vehicle, he adjusted his radio to an FM station and all the sudden heard his voice on the radio. It was the commercial informing listeners to tune in to the 11pm news for their special investigative story about the death of Murray Cohen.

Mr. Esdale raced home to call back Esquivel believing they changed their mind and the story was about to air. Esquivel answered the phone and in an excited voice, Mr. Esdale told her that he just heard the commercial on the radio. He asked her if airing the story was back on. Esquivel replied, “You heard the commercial?” You were not suppose to hear it,” it was supposed to be pulled”. She once again she confirmed that the attorneys for NBC 6 pulled the story and was not sure if it would ever air. Esquivel told Mr. Esdale that NBC 6 would get back to him and they never did.

Murray Cohen’s family has been left with the question who had enough power and influence to call a news station and be able to stop a story from airing after a block of advertising time had already been purchased and ran on the radio informing the public to tune into their story tonight at 11pm?