```
1
   possibly have found it present.
2
       0.
            Did you review the arson reports before you did
3
   your investigation?
4
            We reviewed the Houston Fire Department, the
5
   incident run report. But the Houston Arson report, by
6
   the time our report went out in, I believe, November of
7
   that year, the arson report was not complete.
8
                  MR. BARROW: Pass the witness.
9
                  MR. BALDASSANO: Nothing further, Judge.
10
                  THE COURT: All right.
11
                  State, would you call your next witness.
12
                 MR. BALDASSANO: Juan Garcia.
13
                  THE COURT: You may proceed, Counsel.
14
                          JUAN GARCIA,
15
   having been first duly sworn, testified as follows:
16
                       DIRECT EXAMINATION
17
   BY MR. BALDASSANO:
18
       Q.
            Please state your name, sir.
19
            My name Juan Garcia.
20
       Q.
            And how are you employed?
21
            City of Houston, City of Houston Fire
       A .
22
   Department.
23
       0.
            All right. And what title do you have there?
24
           Arson investigator.
       A .
25
           How long have you been an arson investigator?
       Q.
```

- Α. Approximately eight years.
- Before that, did you still work with the City 0. of Houston Fire Department?
- Yes, sir. My total time with the City of Houston Fire Department is approximately twenty-eight years.
- Were you a firefighter before an arson Q. investigator?
  - Yes, sir. Α.

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- And as an arson investigator, do you have the responsibility to determine, if you can, the origin and cause of the fire?
- 13 Α. Yes, sir.
  - I'm going to call your attention back to October 19th of 2007. And did you have an occasion to work follow-up to a fire that occurred that day?
    - Yes, sir. Α.
  - Q. And what was your role as a follow-up investigator?
- Α. Follow-up investigator is collect any information that had been previously submitted on the incident, which includes photographs, the photographed 23 documentation, and review it, go to the scene, observe the scene and start my documentation as far as trying to conclude if there was -- that fire was incendiary or

1 accidental.

- Q. And when you do follow-up, do you work during the day?
  - A. Yes, sir.
- Q. And do you remember on this fire if you started doing the follow-up the same day as the fire or sometime after?
  - A. It happens after.
- Q. Well, I mean, is it after that day? I know it's after the fire; but is it after the day or the same day, October 19th, or another day?
- A. October 19th is a Friday. I started -- I was assigned a case on that following Monday, which is October 22nd.
- Q. Okay. So is anybody working on the case from the time that the -- Investigator Hicks leaves the scene and starts to do his report and all -- is there any follow-up person working the weekend, or is it just kind of sit tight until the weekend is over?
- A. It's -- since it was a night case for

  Investigator Hicks, it's assigned on the following week,
  which would be follow-up investigator, which is my
  shift.
- Q. So the question is, if he finishes his work on Friday morning, is anybody doing anything on the case

1 Friday afternoon, Friday night, Saturday or Sunday? 2 Α. No, sir. 3 And so, you first get it on, say, Monday Q. 4 morning? 5 Α. Yes, correct. 6 0. Do you get a bunch of cases on Monday morning 7 or just one? 8 A . Usually it's going to be just one. 9 And do you work with somebody as a follow-up Q. 10 investigator on the one case, or do you work alone, or 11 do you have a partner? 12 Α. Most of the time it's my responsibility, my case; but I will occasionally take a partner. 13 14 0. Do you remember if you had a partner in this 15 case? 16 A . I remember I did not have an assigned partner, 17 correct. 18 Q. Okay. So about two or three days later, you 19 pick up the case for the first time and you're by 20 yourself? 21 A. Yes. 22 Q. And what's the first thing you do when 23 you're -- I guess, do you find the case in, like, a bin

somewhere, somebody put the offense report in a folder?

Investigator Hicks, or whoever did it, were

24

25

Α.

calling it a 1024, a night case. The report will be submitted into the computer. And then the way I receive the case is a senior supervisor assigns incidents to an investigator.

And in this case, that particular case -Rampart incident was assigned to me. I put -- like I
said, I printed up the case and any documentation that's
available, requested to see the photos from the photo
lab and got started in that direction.

- Q. All right. And when you printed up the case, do you remember if there were printed up written statements from people?
- A. No, sir, I did not receive any written statements.
- Q. Now, have you had that happen before in other cases where you picked up as a follow-up and there were actual written statements from people?
  - A. Yes, sir.
- Q. Is that a relatively common tool for your office is to take written statements?
  - A. Yes.

- Q. And why would you take a written statement?
- A. That would -- if there is a witness or someone that has viable information, that would lock that in, that information in --

1 Q. All right. 2 -- the written statement. 3 And do you sometimes do audio statements? 0. 4 you sometimes find those in the file? 5 Yes, sir. A . 6 0. Were there any audio statements in this case? 7 No, sir, there was not. Α. 8 0. All right. So you do a printout and do -- you 9 just get the police or the incident report from 10 Officer -- or Investigator Hicks; is that right? 11 Correct, yes. 12 0. Do you run the Houston Fire Department incident 13 report from the actual firefighters? Not -- not in most cases, not initially. 14 Α. 15 Okay. Did you do it in this case? 0. 16 Α. Yes. 17 All right. So you have the incident report and 0. 18 you have the offense report, right? 19 Yes, correct. A. 20 Q. And do you get the 911 tape? 21 It depends on the seriousness of the case. A . 22 Q. Keep talking about this case. Do you get the 23 911 report in this case? 24 A . No, sir. 25 You have no statements, no 911; but you have Q.

1 the incident report and the offense report? 2 A . And the photographs, yes, sir. 3 0. And those are photos taken by Matt Milam 4 (phonetic) with the Houston Arson? 5 Α. Yes, sir. 6 0. And he was out there on that scene? 7 A . Yes. 8 0. And do you have anything else to start your 9 investigation? Do you gather anything else? 10 Α. No. 11 Did you have the hospital pictures? 0. 12 Α. No, sir -- well, that's part of the 13 photographs, yes. 14 And did you have the hospital report; that is, 0. medical records? 15 16 Α. No, sir. That hasn't been requested. 17 So what do you do next now that you have this 0. stuff? 18 19 I go through the report. And what I like to do 20 is go to the fire scene and walk through the fire scene 21 and observe the fire scene and make contact with the 22 individual or individuals that are involved in the fire 23 and any witnesses or the individuals where the 24 statements were obtained from.

Q. Now three days after the fact, did you

1 sometimes find it hard to, like, you know, find the 2 people that were involved in the fire since three days 3 have gone by? 4 Yes, sir. A . 5 0. All right. So do you go to the fire scene, I 6 guess, that Monday morning? 7 Monday midday, after the photographs were A . 8 collected, yes. 9 And what did you see at the fire scene, Q. 10 generally? Are the cars still there? 11 No, sir, the vehicles were not there. 12 0. Do you see the burn damage and take a look 13 around? 14 Yes. I observed that it was a shopping strip Α. 15 center and made my way around the perimeter and made 16 my -- introduced myself to the -- I would say the 17 individual that was in custody of the vehicles that were 18 involved. 19 What was his name? 0. 20 Α. Efrain Mendoza. 21 And how many people did you talk to that first 0. 22 Monday afternoon? 23 Two individuals. Α. 24 Q. Who were they?

Efrain Mendoza and John Morin.

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Α.

- Q. Okay. And is John Morin the same person on trial here today?
  - A. Yes, sir.

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- Q. And what was he doing when you went out there?
- A. He was at a different location, and I asked him what was he doing. He was detailing a vehicle when I -- at another location.
- Q. Okay. And -- well, let me go back to the first location. So you go back to 7200 Rampart, or you go there for the first time and you talk to Efrain Mendoza?
  - A. Correct, yes, sir.
- Q. And do you take a written statement from him, like where you type it up, or a recorded statement?
- A. Those were notes on the scene. And yes, eventually they turned into a written statement.
- Q. Well, I guess my question is this: Did you take Efrain Mendoza back to Houston Arson to get a statement from him, a written statement?
- A. No, sir.
- Q. Okay. And do you take an audio-taped statement at the scene or take him back for any kind of an audio-taped statement?
  - A. No, sir, I did not.
- Q. So he tells you things, and you take notes; is that right?

1 Α. Yes, sir. 2 Q. And then your notes become part of your report 3 later? 4 Correct. Α. 5 And were there some cases where you go further Q. 6 and you actually do take a written statement from 7 somebody or an audio-taped statement in a situation like 8 that? 9 Yes, sir. Α. 10 Do you talk to anybody else at the 7200 Rampart 11 scene? 12 A . No, sir, not that day, no. And you said you dealt with the defendant. How 13 Q. 14 did you know where to go, and where did you go? 15 Α. Mr. Mendoza directed me to where he was. 16 0. And where was he? 17 He was at -- he didn't know the address, but it A . was M & M Auto Detail. I believe that's --18 19 Okay. And where was that compared to Rampart? 0. 20 How far away? 21 Approximately half a mile. A . 22 Q. Half a mile? 23 Half a mile away, correct. Α. 24 And while -- when you went there, can you Q. 25 describe his physical condition when you saw him?

- A. He was outside standing, like I said, doing detail work on a vehicle. He seemed to be in good physical health. Not very talkative.
  - Q. Were you trying to interview him?
- A. Yes.

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- Q. And at that point, were you seeing him as a suspect or just somebody of -- you know, that you want to talk to?
- 9 A. Someone I wanted to talk to.
- 10 Q. And did you understand that he was at the fire 11 when it occurred?
- 12 A. Right. That was the reason for me to make 13 contact with him.
  - Q. Did you know whether or not he had gone to the hospital that night?
  - A. I did know that, yes.
  - Q. And did you have any kind of conversation with him about the fire?
  - A. Yes, we did.
- Q. Did you notice -- did he complain of any kind
  of injury or tell you anything about, you know, I was in
  a coma yesterday, or I was out cold yesterday, or did he
  tell you anything like that about his physical shape?
  - A. No, sir, nothing like that.
- Q. How long did you spend with the defendant?

- A. I would say approximately fifteen to seventeen
   minutes.
  - Q. All right, sir. And did you take him down for any kind of written statement?
    - A. No, sir.

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- Q. All right. What did you do next after visiting with the defendant as he was working on cars?
- A. For that particular case, that was the -- I'd say, the end of that investigation for this day.
- 10 Q. All right. And, so, did you pick it up on a
  11 Tuesday?
- 12 A. No, sir.
- Q. When is the next time you did something on the case?
- 15 A. It would be October. Monday, October 29th, the 16 following Monday.
  - Q. And what did you do on October 29th?
- A. That morning at the office, I received a call from a private investigator with information about the case.
- Q. Was that the guy who just testified here, Brian Heintz?
  - A. Yes, sir.
- Q. And was the discussion about the areas of origin in the cars?

A. Yes, sir.

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- Q. And after speaking to Brian Heintz, did you have an occasion to then go and investigate for yourself?
  - A. Yes, sir.
  - Q. What did you do?
  - A. He faxed me some information that he had that he had drawn out the plat, so to speak, of the vehicle placements. So I felt it needed to be looked at immediately. So I went to 7200 Rampart and spoke to Efrain to see where the vehicles were located. And he gave me directions to get to the location, and I went to the location where the vehicles were located.
  - Q. All right. And did you see the cars there, including a Camaro?
- A. Yes, sir.
  - Q. And did you have an occasion to take a close look at the Camaro?
    - A. Yes, sir.
- 20 MR. BALDASSANO: May I approach the 21 witness, Judge?
- THE COURT: You may.
- Q. (By Mr. Baldassano) I'm going to show you
  what's been labeled as State's Exhibit No. 25 and ask
  you to take a look at this. Do you recognize that disk

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1
   as some PowerPoint that you worked on using photographs
2
   in this case?
3
       Α.
            Yes, sir.
4
            And would this help a jury understand your
       0.
5
   testimony?
6
       Α.
            Yes, sir.
7
                 MR. BALDASSANO: Judge, we'd offer State's
   25 into evidence and tender same to defense.
8
9
                 THE COURT: Okay.
10
                 MR. BALDASSANO: These are -- well, I
11
   could ask the witness.
12
       Q. (By Mr. Baldassano) What is on State's Exhibit
13
   No. 25 regarding photographs?
14
       Α.
            Those are photos of the -- what I saw at the
   location of the vehicles.
15
16
                 MR. BALDASSANO: That's what's on there.
17
                 MR. BARROW: Just for clarification, the
18
   vehicles had been moved?
19
                 THE WITNESS: Yes, sir.
20
                 MR. BARROW: Okay. I have no objections,
21
   Judge.
                 THE COURT: Okay. State's 25 is admitted.
22
23
            (By Mr. Baldassano) Let me back up for a
       0.
24
   second. Did you ever get a telephone number from the
25
   defendant as a way of contacting him or talking to him?
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- 1 A. Yes, sir, I did obtain identifiers and a
  2 contact phone number where he could be reached and if I
  3 had any additional questions for him.
  - Q. And can you tell -- did you note that in your report?
    - A. The phone number?
- 7 Q. Yes.

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- 8 A. Yes, sir.
- Q. Can you tell the jurors the phone number that
  you got from the defendant?
- 11 A. May I reference my notes?
- 12 *O*. Yes.
- 13 A. The phone number that he gave me was 832-630-9363.
- 15 Q. Okay. And did you ever use that number?
- A. Did I ever call him back?
- 17 *O.* Yeah.
- 18 A. No, sir.
- Q. Okay. Okay. If you look to your right, there
  is a little screen there. If you press on the screen,
  you could actually make things happen on the screen,
  like circle things and stuff.
- Okay. These are the pictures. What's this a picture of?
- 25 A. That's the alley at the 7200 block of Rampart

1 on Jessamine Street looking south into the alley.

- Q. And were these pictures provided to you as photographs taken at the scene right after the fire?
  - A. Yes, sir.

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- Q. And did you use these pictures to help come to your origin and cause determination?
  - A. Yes, sir.
- Q. Okay. And are these more pictures of the same thing?
- 10 A. Yes, sir.
  - Q. We've kind of seen these already. And I'm going to show you the picture, this picture, No. 5. Can you tell the jurors if you were actually out here and looking at this scene?
- 15 A. Yes, sir, I was at that location.
  - Q. Okay. And did you look at the Camaro?
  - A. Yes. That's the vehicle that Brian and I had a discussion about.
- Q. Okay. And did you make a determination, based on your own analysis of the Camaro, whether or not a fire had started in the Camaro?
  - A. Yes, sir.
- Q. And what did you see and -- well, what did you see?
- 25 A. What we're looking at, right there where the

arrows are, that's what I would call an exposure fire radiating from other vehicles.

- O. So from the outside heat?
- A. Correct.

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- Q. All right. And did any of this outside heat communicate to the inside of the car, causing damage inside?
  - A. No, sir.
  - Q. Tell us about that. What are we looking at?
- A. That's the rear cargo hatch keyhole of the Camaro.
  - Q. What, if anything, is significant about this?
- A. The center portion where the key -- there is a flap there that moves to the side when the key is inserted, and the entire section is missing.
  - Q. So how could you open this Camaro hatchback?
- A. From what I understand, like a screwdriver or something flat. Flathead-type instrument could be inserted in there and turned counterclockwise, or clockwise.
  - Q. Is this the back hatch of the Camaro?
  - A. Correct, yes, sir.
- Q. Now if a person had the key to the Camaro -well, let me back up. Have you ever seen a car
  burglarized before where somebody tried to punch out a

lock like this? 1 2 Yes, sir. Α. 3 Q. Can you then enter the car without a key? 4 From this area, yes, sir. Α. 5 And if you had a key, would you need to do Q. 6 this? 7 No, sir, not to enter through the rear hatch. 8 0. Okay. And where was the fire in the Camaro in 9 reference to that rear hatch? 10 It's in the center of the rear seat. Oh, from A . the rear hatch, of course, it would be towards the 11 12 forward section, which is the rear seat passenger 13 compartment area. 14 0. Then could somebody open the hatch and start 15 the fire where you saw it in the back of the Camaro? 16 Α. Yes, sir. 17 And was there any fire in front of the Camaro? 0. In the interior? 18 A . 19 In the interior. 0. 20 Α. No, sir, not to the extent that we see here. 21 Did you consider the damage that you saw to the 22 Camaro as independent and separate than the damage to 23 the Sienna? 24 A . Yes, sir.

And did you agree with the insurance

25

Q.

investigator that there were two separate and independent areas of origin of this fire?

A. Yes, sir.

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- Q. And is this a red flag as to whether or not it's an intentional fire?
  - A. Yes, it is.
- Q. When did you end your investigation? That is, going back to 2007, did you at any time stop working on the case?
- 10 A. No, sir.
  - Q. Okay. Well, so did you work on the case throughout the years?
  - A. Throughout the years, yes, as we have a -- when you quit working a case, it's called an RTF, return to file. This case was never returned to file by me.
    - Q. Okay. Was it returned to file by anybody else?
- 17 A. No, sir.
- Q. And after you took a look at the Camaro, did
  you visit -- or did you end up doing an origin and cause
  report of the fire and come to a determination?
- 21 A. Yes. I determined that it was incendiary, two 22 separate distinct fires to that location.
  - Q. Was it your opinion that a person intentionally ignited an ignitable substance inside the car?
- 25 A. Yes.

- Q. And after you looked at the Camaro, what's the next thing you did on the case?
- A. That day, again, went to the office and made documentation of what had just occurred, which included the -- I believe it was a fax that I received from Mr. Heintz.
- Q. And after all the documentation and all the report writing, what's the next thing you did?
  - A. That case stayed inactive for quite sometime.
- 10 Q. That's what I'm getting at. The case was
  11 inactive?
  - A. Yes, sir.

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- Q. When you say for quite sometime, how long is that?
  - A. I believe it was till March 30th, 2009.
- Q. Okay. And who started up with the reactivation of the case, or actively working on the case? Who prompted that?
- A. At that time I had a conversation with a coworker, Investigator Hernandez.
- 21 MR. BARROW: Your Honor, I'm going to 22 object to any hearsay at this point.

THE COURT: Sustained.

Q. (By Mr. Baldassano) Can't talk about what he told you, but did that conversation prompt the

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reactivation of the case?
1
2
            Yes, sir.
       Α.
3
            And then since the case was reactivated, has
4
   Investigator Hernandez worked on the case along with you
   and the other investigators?
5
6
       Α.
            Yes, sir.
7
            When the case went inactive, had you had any
   benefit of the hospital records --
8
9
       Α.
            No.
       Q. -- of the defendant? Did you have any benefit
10
11
   of any telephone records?
12
       A .
            No, sir.
13
            Had you, when inactive, had the benefit of any
       Q.
14
   kind of taped or formal written statements by the
   witnesses?
15
16
       A. No, sir.
17
                 MR. BALDASSANO: I'll pass the witness,
18
   Judge.
19
                  THE COURT: Your cross.
20
                 MR. BARROW: Thank you, Judge. May I
21
   approach?
22
                  THE COURT: You may.
23
                       CROSS-EXAMINATION
24
   BY MR. BARROW:
25
       Q.
             Investigator Garcia, is this a copy of your
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#### JUAN GARCIA - October 4, 2011 Cross-Examination by Mr. Barrow

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1
   report?
2
            Yes, sir.
       Α.
3
             Okay. And the date and time indicated there is
4
   the date and time of the fire, correct?
5
       Α.
            Yes, sir.
6
       0.
            And then the date of report time, that's when
7
   you actually typed this up?
8
       Α.
            No, sir.
9
            Well, what is the date of the report?
       Q.
10
             That's the date it was submitted.
       A .
11
            What do you mean, submitted?
       Q.
12
       A .
            We type our reports up. And then some people,
   at the same time, submit the report to the computer --
13
14
   into the computer system. That's when I submitted my
15
   report.
16
       0.
            Okay. Well -- and I guess my question is, was
17
   your report prepared before that date?
18
            Yes, sir.
       Α.
19
            And is there any indication anywhere on the
20
   date that the report was actually prepared?
21
       Α.
            No, sir, not on the report.
22
       Q.
             So the fire date would be 10-19-07, correct?
23
            Yes, sir.
       Α.
24
            And the date you submitted this report would be
       Q.
25
   April the 9th of '09, correct?
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#### JUAN GARCIA - October 4, 2011 Cross-Examination by Mr. Barrow

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1
            Yes, sir.
       Α.
2
            And so when you tell Mr. Baldasano that the
3
   case was inactive from October the 19th of 2007, until
   March the 30th of 2009, is that correct?
5
       Α.
            Yes.
6
       0.
            And that's approximately a year-and-a-half,
7
   right?
8
       Α.
            Yes.
9
            And you're telling this jury that in a
       Q.
10
   year-and-a-half, you couldn't get hospital records for
11
   Mr. Morin?
12
       A. Correct.
13
           And you're telling this jury that in a
       Q.
14
   year-and-a-half, you didn't get phone records for
   Mr. Morin?
15
16
       Α.
             That's correct.
17
             So when you say inactive, you mean inactive,
       0.
   don't you?
18
19
            Yes, sir.
       A.
20
       Q.
            How many times did you talk to Efrain Mendoza?
21
            Twice.
       A .
22
       Q.
            Twice. Would that be the first time on Monday,
23
   October the 25th of 2007?
24
            I believe it was, yes, whatever Monday date
25
   that was, yes.
```

- Q. Okay. And then you indicated on direct examination that you spoke to him again October the 29th, 2007; is that correct?
  A. Yes, sir.
  - Q. And then you've got notes that indicate on Tuesday, March the 30th of 2009, you spoke to him again; is that correct?
    - A. That's -- I'm sorry. Could you repeat that?
- 9 Q. On Tuesday, March the 30th, 2009, did you speak
  10 to him again?
- 11 A. Yes, sir.

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- A. Correct.
- Q. So how many times did you actually talk to

  Mr. Mendoza, two or three or four or five? How many

  times, Investigator Garcia?
  - A. I talked to him twice when we -- when I submitted my supplements.
    - Q. Well, that's back in October of 2007, correct?
- 20 A. Yes.
- Q. And you just told the jury that you talked to him on March the 30th of 2009, so that's number three.
- 23 How many more times did you talk to Mr. Efrain Mendoza?
  - A. Throughout the investigation?
- 25 Q. Yes, sir.

- 1 Α. I don't recollect. 2 So it was more than twice? 0. 3 Throughout the investigation, yes, sir. Α. 4 Okay. You don't have any idea what that back 0. 5 latch of that Camaro was removed, do you (sic)? You 6 weren't there at the scene of the fire when the fire 7 actually happened. You weren't there, correct? 8 A. Correct. 9 And the first time you saw that Camaro was Q. 10 approximately ten days after the fire, on October the 29th, correct? 11 12 A . Yes, sir. 13 So you have no idea what the condition of that Q. 14 back latch on that Camaro was, do you? 15 Α. No, sir. 16 Q. Did you take a sample from the Camaro to find
- 18 A. No, sir.

- 19 *Q*. Why not?
- 20 A. It had been some time since the fire occurred.
- Q. It had been a week to ten days; is that
- 22 correct, Investigator Garcia?

out if an accelerant was used?

- A. A week, yes, sir.
- Q. Is that too long a time to try to take a sample for an accelerant?

1 In my opinion, yes, sir. Α. 2 So all this information that you received from 0. 3 the Camaro, none of that was done by Houston Arson 4 Bureau, was it? That was all done by a private 5 investigator for an insurance company that told you 6 about it, and then you went out and checked it; is that 7 correct? 8 A. Yes, sir. 9 No initiative on your own to go find that Q. 10 Camaro, was there? 11 MR. BALDASSANO: I'm going to object to 121 him arguing with the witness and basically yelling at 13 him. 14 THE COURT: Sustained. 15 (By Mr. Barrow) You didn't do anything about 0. 16 that Camaro till the insurance investigator called you, 17 did you, Investigator Garcia? 18 A. Correct. 19 MR. BARROW: Pass the witness. 20 MR. BALDASSANO: Nothing further, Judge. 21 THE COURT: Okay. May this witness be 22 excused? 23 All right. Let's take a two-minute 24 recess. And I'll tell you this. I know everybody 25 smiles about my two-minute recesses. Sometimes they