

# Los Angeles Times

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*From the Los Angeles Times*

## Chris Gugas, 86; polygraph expert

By Jocelyn Y. Stewart  
Los Angeles Times Staff Writer

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Chris Gugas built a career on one simple human foible: the tendency to lie.

A polygraph expert, Gugas spent decades ferreting out the truth using a lie detector test. The tests he administered helped confirm the sins of the guilty, and helped free the falsely accused. In the business world, the polygraph steered employers away from job candidates who were likely to embezzle or engage in other misdeeds. Gugas' faith in the test was unshakable.

"Polygraph is not perfect; it can never be perfect. But it is the closet thing we have to determining the truth," he said in a 1976 article in *The Times*.

Gugas, a past president of the American Polygraph Assn. and a leading figure in the history of the profession, died from congestive heart failure Oct. 20 at a hospital in Fairfax, Va., said his wife, Anne. He was 86.

Over the years, Gugas was as much a PR man for the polygraph test as he was a professional practitioner. He defended it against those who questioned the test's accuracy and railed against a law that prohibited most employers from requiring or pressuring employees or job applicants to submit to a polygraph test.

Polygraph testing has "done so much good, but our press relations have been rotten," Gugas told *The Times* in 1989. "You can't refute articles saying the polygraph is no good."

The polygraph was a way to help an employer "make sure he's getting an employee who will do an honest day's work and isn't a drug addict or alcoholic," he said.

In his 1979 book "The Silent Witness," Gugas wrote of some of his most memorable cases. He also co-wrote "Pre-Employment Polygraph," published in 1984. Gugas, who earned a bachelor's degree at USC and a master's degree at Cal State Northridge, operated Professional Security Consultants in Hollywood for decades.

In addition to running his own businesses, Gugas worked for the CIA in Greece and Turkey, was assistant director of security for the Los Angeles Board of Education, administered the polygraph to candidates for the Burbank Police Department and was public safety director for Omaha in the early to mid-1960s.

As a polygraphist, Gugas worked with attorneys, psychiatrists, marriage counselors, doctors and the media. The work also placed him at the center of some of history's -- and pop culture's -- most vexing questions.

Gugas twice administered a polygraph test to James Earl Ray, who was convicted of killing the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

Ray was "the most nervous guy I ever had," Gugas told the *Omaha World Herald* in 1998.

"He was shaking in the chair," Gugas said. "His hands were very sweaty. Every time he shook his head, it was slimy wet. I had to give him something to eat and give him an hour's bed rest before I could polygraph him."

In 1978, a test was conducted at the request of investigative journalist Jack Anderson for his TV show, "The Truth With Jack Anderson."

"When I asked Ray if he had killed Martin Luther King Jr., he said no," Gugas said in the Omaha World Herald article. "His blood pressure went up, his heart rate went up and his breathing was shallow, all of which are indicative of lying."

Ray later conceded that he had read a book about polygraphs and Gugas suspected that he had tried to beat the test.

A polygraph measures a person's physiological responses, such as changes in blood pressure, heartbeat, respiration and the skin's resistance to electricity, when questions are asked.

The results are then interpreted by the polygraphist. Gugas called his profession "part science, part art," and said it is accurate 97% of the time.

Terry Moore, an actress, said she had married billionaire Howard Hughes on a ship and that he had fathered her child who died hours after birth. Gugas put her to the test on the Anderson program as well. She told the truth, he said.

Gugas also administered tests to the couple whose experiences with the paranormal were made famous in "The Amityville Horror" book and film.

"They called up and wanted a polygraph test to show they were telling the truth about it all, and they did pass," Anne Gugas said this week in an interview with The Times. "I felt sorry for them because they were really affected by what went on in that house. People thought they were lying for publicity, but it was the truth."

Chris Gugas Sr. was born Aug. 12, 1921, in Omaha to parents who were from Greece. He first encountered the polygraph test during World War II when he was in the Marine Corps and set out to learn all he could about it.

Gugas married in 1942 and the couple eventually had three children. In addition to his wife, he is survived by two sons, Steven E. Gugas of Ventura and Chris Gugas Jr. of Raleigh, N.C.; a daughter, Carol Hawker of Warrenton, Va.; nine grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren.

By 1979, Gugas had conducted 30,000 tests and found that 70% of those tested were telling the truth, he said in a Chicago Sun-Times article.

"So, in reality, the polygraph could be called a truth detector," he said. "Every person I'm able to clear through the test is a source of joy to me."

[jocelyn.stewart@latimes.com](mailto:jocelyn.stewart@latimes.com)

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