2026 IL App (1st) 231761
No. 1-23-1761
Order filed November 20, 2026

IN THE

APPELLATE COURT OF ILLINOIS

FIRST DISTRICT, SIXTH DIVISION

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, Plaintiff-Appellee,

v.

LIONEL PARKS, Defendant-Appellant.

Appeal from the Circuit Court of Cook County.
Honorable William G. Gamboney, Judge, Presiding.
No. 17 CR 17709

JUSTICE HYMAN delivered the judgment of the court.
Justices Pucinski and Evans concurred in the judgment.

ORDER

¶ 1 *Held:* No error where the trial court allowed a police detective to testify that defendant supplied his nickname during preliminary questioning; detective's narration of surveillance videos was not prejudicial; admission of "other crimes" evidence did not materially affect the verdict given that overwhelming evidence of guilt was presented to the jury.

¶ 2 The State charged Lionel Parks with offenses arising from the shooting deaths of five people in 2016. A jury found Parks guilty of five counts of first-degree murder, and the trial court sentenced him to five natural concurrent nature-life sentences. On appeal, Parks challenges the admission of his statement to police about his nickname, a detective's testimony describing surveillance recordings, and evidence of other crimes or wrongdoing. He also contends that the cumulative effect of these alleged errors denied him a fair trial.

¶ 3 We affirm. Parks' statement about his nickname fell within the routine booking exception to *Miranda*. The testimony on the surveillance recordings does not require reversal as it did not

improperly invade the jury's role as factfinder. Nor did the challenged evidence of other crimes or wrongdoing serve solely to show Parks' propensity to commit crimes. We also reject his cumulative-error claim.

¶ 4 Background

¶ 5 On a December afternoon in 2016, five people were shot in a home: Scott Thompson, Nateyah Hines, Shacora Jackson, Shakeyah Jackson, and Elijah Jackson. Shakeyah survived until October 2017. Scott Thompson's nephew, Kalieffe Thompson witnessed the shootings but was not struck by the gunfire. He testified at Parks' trial.

¶ 6 *Pretrial Motion*

¶ 7 Parks moved to suppress statements he made to police during custodial interrogation before he received the warnings under *Miranda v. Arizona*, 384 U.S. 436 (1966). Parks argued that detectives questioned him about his living arrangements, phone, car, financial support, and nicknames. According to Parks, these questions went beyond routine booking information and were designed to elicit incriminating statements before he received the *Miranda* warnings.

¶ 8 At the suppression hearing, Detective Keith Allen testified he investigated the homicides and questioned Parks, a suspect. Before giving Parks the *Miranda* warnings, Allen asked questions he routinely asked suspects in custody, including their name, nicknames, age, date of birth, residence, household members, phone number, Social Security number, employment status, weight, height, cars, and means of financial support. Parks identified his nickname as "Frog." Allen followed with "Frog or Froggy?" Parks repeated, "Frog." Allen then asked, "Frog? Any other names you go by?" Parks answered, "That's it." Asked whether "Dominic" was another nickname, Parks said that Dominic was his middle name. Allen continued questioning Parks about other personal information before administering *Miranda* warnings.

¶ 9 The trial court found that the questions about Parks' name, nickname or alias, residence, and employment status qualified as routine booking questions, an exception to *Miranda*. Excluded were questions about Parks' phone's type and color, financial support, and car.

¶ 10 Parks moved to reconsider the denial of his motion to suppress his statement about his nickname. He argued that the questions were investigative because police already knew that a suspect was called "Froggy" and were trying to confirm Parks' identity. The court denied reconsideration.

¶ 11 *State's Evidence*

¶ 12 Eyewitness testimony

¶ 13 On the day of the shootings, Kalieffe Thompson and his uncle, Scott Thompson, drove from Detroit to Chicago to visit his uncle's friend, Elijah Jackson.

¶ 14 That morning, a man Elijah introduced as "Froggy," stopped by for 10 to 15 minutes. Kalieffe identified Parks as that man.

¶ 15 Elijah smoked a joint with Scott and Kalieffe, and showed Parks two "nickel bags" of marijuana, which Parks declined to buy. Before leaving, Parks said he would call Elijah and return later.

¶ 16 Parks came back with another man who had long dreadlocks and a facial tattoo. The second man bought marijuana from Elijah. During this visit, Parks displayed a gun and bragged about having it. Elijah told Parks to put the gun away and leave because his family was present. Parks stayed about 15 minutes.

¶ 17 Parks returned a third time, again with the other man. As Elijah opened the door, they forced their way inside. Both carried guns. Parks approached Kalieffe and Scott and put a gun to Kalieffe's head. The other man stood over Elijah and Shakeyah. Elijah pleaded with Parks, saying, "C'mon, Froggy, you know me…we go back." Parks ordered everyone to be quiet, remove their

clothes, and lie face-down down on the floor. The two men searched for money, drugs, and guns, but did not find what they wanted.

¶ 18 Kalieffe saw Parks for one or two seconds before Parks ordered him to lie face down.

¶ 19 The men made Kalieffe and Scott empty their pockets, took their belongings, including their cell phones, and placed the items in a bag Elijah gave them. They then searched the other rooms . Parks found 18-year-old Shacora Jackson in a bedroom and brought her into the living and dining area with the others. The men were concerned that she had called 911.

¶ 20 The men asked Elijah how to open the back door and backyard fence. The men told a toddler in the dining room to stand in a corner and look away. Parks stood over Kalieffe, who was lying next to Scott, and the men began shooting. Kalieffe thought he heard four to five shots but was uncertain because his ears began ringing after the first shot. He pretended to be dead.

¶ 21 After the men left, Kalieffe put on his shorts, closed the back door to prevent the men from returning, and escaped through a bedroom window. He ran barefoot through the snow toward his car but slipped and dropped his car keys. Unable to find them, he tried to stop a passing car for help. He then approached a couple two doors away and asked them to call 911. Still panicked, Kalieffe again looked for his keys. At that point, he saw Shacora on the front porch. She tried to speak but collapsed. Eventually, he found his keys and drove to a Walmart, where he sought help and called his parents. Another uncle, a retired public defender, brought clothes and took Kalieffe to a nearby police station.

¶ 22 Kalieffe believed Parks had displayed his gun to learn whether Elijah had one. Kalieffe acknowledged that he first told police he had not seen the gunman enter the home on the third visit, although that statement was untrue. And he did not tell investigators about the gun or describe

Parks' Carhartt hat and jeans until the day before trial. He explained that the shooting was traumatic, and he recalled additional details as he repeatedly revisited what happened.

¶ 23 Kalieffe initially declined to identify anyone in a photographic array because he was not certain. Later that day, he identified Parks from the same array during a recorded interview with an assistant state's attorney.

¶ 24 Police Investigation

¶ 25 Officer Carlos Ramos testified that he and his partner responded to a 911 call of shots fired. When they arrived, a young child was alone on the front porch, and an unresponsive young woman lay at the bottom of the porch stairs. After backup arrived, Ramos and other officers entered the house through the back door and conducted a protective sweep. Officers found two men and two women who appeared to be dead. Ramos requested medical assistance and secured the scene until detectives and evidence technicians arrived. Shakeyah Jackson was taken to a hospital by ambulance; she died in October 2017.

¶ 26 Chicago police lieutenant Melvin Branch, then a homicide detective, responded to the shooting with his partner, Detective Pasquell Robinson. Officers had secured the area when they arrived. At the base of the front steps, Branch saw Shacora Jackson, who had apparent gunshot wounds and showed no signs of life.

¶ 27 Branch and Robinson entered through the back door. From the kitchen area, they saw several people lying motionless in the dining and living rooms. Scott Thompson lay face down in the dining room, wearing only underwear and socks, with a gunshot wound to the head. Nearby, Elijah Jackson lay on his side, fully clothed, also with a gunshot wound to the head. A young woman lay next to him, unclothed and apparently dead. The officers found blood throughout the home, including spatter on the walls and a bloody hand smear leading toward the front door.

¶ 28 As part of the investigation, Branch interviewed Parks' girlfriend at the time, Amber Walker, who was living with her grandmother a few blocks from the shooting. Walker identified Parks' nickname as "Froggy." Police obtained surveillance footage from the grandmother's next-door neighbor's security camera. The footage was admitted into evidence and played for the jury. Over Parks' objection, Branch described what appeared in the recordings.

¶ 29 Branch testified that at 9:11 a.m., the recording showed a man emerging from the rear of Walker's grandmother's home. The man wore a hat or skull cap with an insignia, a black coat, and blue jeans. At 10:35 a.m., the recording showed a similarly dressed man near the home. At 11:11 a.m., two men appeared—one with a hat, a dark coat, and blue jeans and the other dressed in black with a hat. At 11:46 a.m., the recording showed both men, one carrying a book bag.

¶ 30 At 12:37 p.m., the recording showed two men in the alley behind the home. One carried a bag and entered the rear of the house; the other continued through the alley toward the front of the house. Branch described the second man as wearing a skull cap, black coat, and jeans with something in his left hand.

¶ 31 The prosecutor asked Branch the significance of the bag. Branch began to answer that it was possibly "used to transport" something before the court sustained Parks' objection. The court also sustained an objection when the prosecutor asked whether a black bag had been used at the shooting scene.

¶ 32 Branch identified still photographs from the recordings. When asked about an object in one man's hand, Branch said it looked like firearm. Parks objected and the court sustained the objection, instructing the jury to disregard that testimony. After the instruction, Branch said the man appeared to have "something" in his hand.

¶ 33 Police also recovered surveillance recordings from homes near the shootings. Branch explained that at 12:12 p.m., a teal Buick drove east on 105th Street and turned into an alley toward 104th Place. Branch testified to seeing "two heads" in the car and described the Buick as missing a hubcap. At 12:14 p.m., another recording captured the Buick traveling west on 104th Place before parking on a street behind Elijah's home. Two men got out. At about 12:30 p.m., the recording showed two men returning to the Buick and driving away.

¶ 34 Minutes later, another recording showed a man wearing a hat with an insignia, black jacket, and blue jeans walking from the front to the rear of Walker's grandmother's residence. While describing the recordings, Branch referred to the men as "offenders." The court sustained Parks' objection and directed Branch not to use the term "offender." Branch also referred to a person shown entering and leaving a vehicle as the "black male subject" and the "suspect." Parks objected, arguing that the State had not filed a motion under People v. Thompson, 2016 IL 118667, to permit identification testimony from a non-eyewitness. The trial court sustained the objection.

¶ 35 Parks later moved for a mistrial on the grounds that Branch's testimony had improperly expressed an opinion about the identity of the person in the recording. The court denied the motion but indicated it would consider a curative instruction if the Parks submitted one.

¶ 36 The parties stipulated to the admission of surveillance recordings from nearby residences.

¶ 37 Parks was on electronic monitoring at the time of the shootings. He was authorized to leave his residence for work between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m., Monday through Friday. On the day of the shooting, a Saturday, he left without authorization several times.

¶ 38 Walker testified that in late 2016, Parks lived with her and her family in her grandmother's basement. On the morning of the shootings, Walker awoke with Parks in the basement before going

upstairs to care for her grandmother and children. Parks tried to speak to her, but she was upset and ignored him.

¶ 39 Walker acknowledged telling detectives and the grand jury that Parks had mentioned a "lick," a term she understood could refer to a robbery. At trial, she testified that detectives had warned her that she could be charged as an accessory if she was untruthful and claimed they pressured her to testify so she could return to her children and grandmother. Despite inconsistencies in her statements, she affirmed during redirect that prosecutors had not threatened nor promised her anything in exchange for her testimony.

¶ 40 Chicago police officer Tim Lammert testified that he encountered Parks at Roseland Community Hospital shortly after midnight. Parks identified himself as "Sean Verner" and gave an address of 10743 South LaSalle Street and a phone number. The next morning, police executed a search warrant at that address.

¶ 41 Officers recovered a wallet containing a debit card in Parks' name, mail addressed to him, and several cell phones. They also found a black Carhartt hat hidden in an air duct, a pair of jeans on the bed, and two boxes of live 9-mm Luger ammunition in a crawl space beneath the back door.

¶ 42 Lammert and his team documented the scene with photographs, recovered the evidence, and transported it to the 5th District, where it was given to Evidence Technician Gerald Holden for inventorying. The photographs depicted the residence and the recovered items, including the wallet, jeans, Carhartt hat, narcotics packaging, and ammunition.

¶ 43 Forensic testing detected gunshot residue on the Carhartt hat and jeans recovered from Parks' residence and in the Buick's front passenger area. DNA testing found a major male profile on the hat consistent with Parks; the results from the jeans were inconclusive. Parks was also a possible contributor to DNA recovered from a lime juice bottle at the shooting scene. Cell phone

records showed that phones associated with Parks and Elijah Jackson connected to towers serving the area around the time of the shootings. The cell-site analysis could not establish who was using the phones or pinpoint their locations.

¶ 44 After the State rested, Parks moved for a directed verdict, arguing that the evidence was insufficient to prove his guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. The trial court denied the motion, after which the defense rested without presenting evidence. The jury convicted Parks of five counts of first-degree murder.

¶ 45 *Post-Trial Motion and Sentencing*

¶ 46 Parks moved for a new trial, arguing (i) the State failed to prove him guilty beyond a reasonable doubt, (ii) the trial court erred in denying his motion to suppress statements, specifically allowing his admission of his nickname during booking, and (iii) the trial court erred in denying a mistrial after Branch referred to the person in the surveillance recording as "the offender." Parks also claimed the detective's testimony about the person holding a weapon was prejudicial, lacked prior disclosure, and invaded the jury's role. Parks' counsel explained that they did not request a jury instruction to disregard the "firearm" reference because "[w]e decided as a defense posture to not highlight that fact and request the Court to give an admonishment, which we think would have highlighted it."

¶ 47 Finally, he argued that the cumulative effect of these errors deprived him of a fair trial. The court rejected all claims of error.

¶ 48 The trial court sentenced Parks to five concurrent natural life terms.

¶ 49 Analysis

¶ 50 *Motion to Suppress Parks' Statement to Police*

¶ 51 Parks first argues that his admission to investigators that his nickname was "Frog" was obtained in violation of *Miranda v. Arizona*, 384 U.S. 436 (1966), and should have been suppressed. He contends the *Miranda* warnings should have been given before the questioning began. The State counters that Parks' statement about his nickname was not the product of a custodial interrogation and thus did not require the warnings. We defer to the trial court's factual findings and review a ruling on a motion to suppress *de novo*. *People v. Braggs*, 209 Ill. 2d 492, 505 (2004).

¶ 52 Before trial, Parks' motion to suppress his statement was granted in part and denied in part. The court ruled that Parks' answers regarding his cell phone and car were inadmissible, but his nickname was in response to routine booking questions and admissible.

¶ 53 Routine booking questions may be asked without *Miranda* warnings. Routine booking questions include a defendant's name, address, height, weight, birth date, and age. See *Pennsylvania v. Muniz*, 496 U.S. 582, 589. 601 (1990). Officers also may ask if the defendant has an alias. See *People v. Dalton*, 91 Ill.2d 22, 26 (1982) ("*Miranda* does not prohibit inquiry into background data even though that information is later used to gather more evidence against a defendant or is itself used as supporting evidence of defendant's guilt."); *People v. Outlaw*, 388 Ill. App. 3d 1072, 1081 (2009) (routine booking questions generally do not constitute interrogation).

¶ 54 Parks argues that Allen's question, "Frog or Froggy?" was investigative because police already knew the suspect was called "Froggy." But the question arose during a series of preliminary inquiries about Parks' identifying information, including his name and aliases. That an answer might later prove incriminating does not, by itself, remove an otherwise routine identifying question from the booking exception. Thus, under the facts here, no error occurred.

¶ *55* *Surveillance Recordings Commentary*

¶ 56 Parks next argues that the trial court erred by allowing Detective Branch to narrate the surveillance recordings for the jury. According to Parks, Branch offered improper lay opinions about the people and events seen in the recordings. The State responds that Branch's descriptions helped the jury follow the recordings from multiple cameras and did not constitute improper identification testimony.

¶ 57 The admission of evidence ordinarily falls within the sound discretion of the trial court. But whether it was proper for a prosecution witness to draw conclusions when the witness had no personal knowledge of the events portrayed presents a legal question, reviewed *de novo*. *People v. Sykes*, 2012 IL App (4th) 111110, ¶ 30.

¶ 58 Parks contends that Branch lacked firsthand knowledge of the events depicted in the recordings and was in no better position to identify the shooter than the jurors, relying on *People v. Brown*, 2017 IL App (1st) 142197, *Sykes*, 2012 IL App (4th) 111110, and *People v. Hampton*, 2021 IL App. (5th) 170341. The State distinguishes those decisions on the basis that Branch described the recordings without identifying Parks as a person depicted in them.

¶ 59 In *Brown*, the officer identified the defendant as the individual in the surveillance footage. *Brown*, 2017 IL App (1st) 142197, ¶¶ 56, 64. The court found nothing in the record to indicate the officer had familiarity with the defendant beyond the eyewitness descriptions of what the shooter wore, eyewitness statements that the defendant was the shooter, and a photograph of the defendant from police computer files. *Id*. ¶ 64. In sum, the officer's identification was no more likely to correctly identify the defendant and the victim than the jury. *Id.*

¶ 60 As the court observed in *Brown*, "[p]utting aside for the moment [the detective's] identification testimony," the testimony otherwise was appropriate as "perceptions did not need to

be based on the live event [] because [the witness] was not providing an eyewitness account; rather, his testimony was relevant to the scenes depicted in the recording. * * * [T]his testimony merely laid an evidentiary foundation for admission of the surveillance recording." *Brown*, 2017 IL App (1st) 142197, ¶ 62.

¶ 61 Similarly, in *Hampton*, 2021 IL App. (5th) 170341, the court held that an officer improperly testified that an object in surveillance footage did not look like a gun because the jury could identify the object shown just as well as the officer. *Id*. ¶ 85-86.

¶ 62 The witness's interpretation in *Sykes* constituted improper lay opinion testimony on circumstances materially different from those here. *Sykes*, 2012 IL App (4th) 111110, ¶ 42. The State's witness, a loss-prevention officer for a store that was burglarized, testified that an original, higher-quality surveillance camera recording he had viewed showed the defendant removing money from a cash register, while the jury received an inferior version of the recording. *Id.* ¶¶ 33, 37. The witness lacked firsthand knowledge of the event and was in no better position, based on the evidence before the jury, to determine what occurred. *Id.* ¶ 42. Moreover, the witness's testimony offered the central evidence establishing the defendant's conduct. *Id.* ¶ 6.

¶ 63 This case is similar to *People v. Mister*, 2016 IL App (4th) 130180-B, ¶¶ 28, 77, where the court found the narration admissible under Rule 701 because it aided the jury without offering improper opinion testimony. In *Mister*, the court held that it was proper to allow a surveillance manager to narrate footage despite having no personal knowledge of the events. *Id.* ¶ 77. The footage spanned several hours, involved multiple cameras, and was difficult for a jury to follow without context. *Id.* ¶¶ 28, 77. The witness explained movement and continuity based on clothing and positioning but did not identify the defendant. *Id*. ¶¶ 28, 77-78.

¶ 64 A lay witness may identify a defendant in surveillance footage when the witness is more likely than the jury to make a correct identification. *People v. Thompson*, 2016 IL 118667. But an opinion is inadmissible when "the jury is as capable as the witness of drawing inferences or conclusions from the recording." See *Hampton*, 2021 IL App. (5th) 170341, ¶ 83. Branch's descriptions of the recordings assisted the jury in following the movements of people and vehicles shown on several cameras and was based on his review of the footage alongside other investigative information.

¶ 65 Although Detective Branch testified that the person in the still photo taken from a recording was the offender, after a sidebar in which Parks' motion for a mistrial was denied, the court told the jury to disregard the previous inquiry. Parks' counsel could have but declined to craft a "limiting instruction," believing it would highlight an aggravating error.

¶ 66 Branch's descriptions of the recordings assisted the jury in following the movements of people and cars shown on several cameras. Unlike the officer in *Brown*, 2017 IL App (1st) 142197, Branch did not identify Parks as a person in the recordings.

¶ 67 Neither was Branch's testimony prejudicial as in *Hampton* where the officer's testimony that an object seen on the surveillance video did not "look like" a gun related to the defendant's claim of self-defense. *Hampton*, 2021 IL App. (5th) 170341, ¶ 86. Instead, Branch's narration was similar to that permitted in *Mister,* 2016 IL App (4th) 130180-B. Narrating the videos to clarify locations and times assisted the jurors' factfinding task.

¶ 68 But Branch's references to "suspect" and "offenders," and his opinion that an object looked like a firearm, went beyond describing what the recordings showed. The trial court properly sustained Parks' objection to these remarks, and after denying Parks' motion for a mistrial,

instructed the jury to disregard them. Park's counsel declined an additional instruction, believing doing so would draw further attention to the testimony.

¶ 69 Thus, Branch's narration didn't constitute improper identification testimony. Nor do his objectionable remarks require reversal, given that the trial court's response adequately addressed them.

¶ 70 *Other Crimes Evidence*

¶ 71 Evidence of other crimes or misconduct generally is inadmissible to show a defendant's propensity to commit crimes. It may be admitted for another relevant purpose, such as motive, opportunity, intent, or identity, provided its relevance does not depend on an inference of criminal propensity. Ill. R. Evid. 404(b).

¶ 72 Parks argues that the evidence that he lied to the police by giving a false name when first interviewed, possessed drugs and drug paraphernalia, violated parole, and left his home unauthorized several times on the day of the shootings "portrayed [him] as a man with no regard for the law." He contends that this evidence invited the jury to convict him for his character rather than his conduct. Recognizing these alleged errors in the admission of these other crimes were not preserved, Parks asserts this court may review the unpreserved other-crime issue under the second prong of the plain-error rule. Under the second-prong, a reviewing court may consider an unpreserved error when a clear or obvious error "affected the fairness of the defendant's trial and challenged the integrity of the judicial process, regardless of the closeness of the evidence." *People v. Piatkowski*, 225 Ill.2d 551, 565 (2007).

¶ 73 The challenged evidence must be considered in light of its relevance to the charged offenses and its potential for unfair prejudice. Evidence of a defendant's prior bad acts is generally inadmissible to prove a general propensity to commit a crime, but evidence of prior bad acts may

be admissible, if relevant, to explain the investigatory steps connecting the defendant to the current crime. *People v. Lewis,* 165 Ill.2d 305, 345-46 (1995). Other crimes evidence also may be used to explain police conduct and the investigation leading up to the defendant's arrest, but only if it is "relevant to specifically connect the defendant with the crime[ ] for which being tried." *Id.* See *People v. Pikes*, 2013 IL 115171, ¶ 20 ("[E]vidence of other crimes may be admitted if it is part of the 'continuing narrative' of the charged crime.").

¶ 74 Even assuming some of it was improperly admitted, reversal would not follow if the error was harmless. See *People v. Pinkett*, 2023 IL 127223, ¶ 39 (evidentiary error held harmless where no reasonable probability of acquittal absent error); *People v. Nieves*, 193 Ill. 2d 513, 530–31 (2000) (reference to "other incidents" was improper but error was harmless beyond a reasonable doubt).

¶ 75 The evidence of Parks' guilt was overwhelming. An eyewitness identified Parks as one of the men involved in the shooting. DNA evidence, gunshot residue, and other circumstantial evidence connected him to the crime. Given this evidence, the challenged testimony could not reasonably have affected the jury's verdict. Any error in admitting it was harmless. See *In re Rolandis G.*, 232 Ill. 2d 13, 43 (2008) (reviewing court may "focus on the error to determine whether it might have contributed to the conviction [or] examine the other properly admitted evidence to determine whether it overwhelmingly supports the conviction").

¶ 76 *Cumulative Error*

¶ 77 Finally, Parks argues that the effect of the purported errors unfairly prejudiced him, depriving a fair trial. See *People v. Blue*, 189 Ill. 2d 99, 127, 139 (2000) ("when an error arises at trial that is of such gravity that it threatens the very integrity of the judicial process, the court must act to correct the error, so that the fairness and the reputation of the process may be preserved and

protected."); *People* v. *Hall*, 194 Ill. 2d 305, 350-51 (2000) ("Individual trial errors may have the cumulative effect of denying a defendant a fair trial.").

¶ 78 When looking at cumulative errors, a reviewing court assesses whether they threaten the integrity of the judicial process and should reverse where the fairness and reputation of the judicial process would not otherwise be preserved. *Id*. (citing *People v. Green*, 74 Ill. 2d 444, 455 (1979).

¶ 79 As discussed, we have found no error, and without individual errors, there can be no cumulative error. *People v. Quezada*, 2024 IL 128805, ¶¶ 46.

¶ 80 Affirmed.