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DisplayDate: 11/13/1996

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ComposedDate: 11/13/1996

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Subject: ARRB Interviewed Ken Vrtacnik of AFIP
CALL REPORT DOCUMENT'S Author: Douglas Horne/ARRB Date Created: 11/13/96 The Flayers Description of the
Call Date: 11/12/96Subject: ARRB Interviewed Ken Vrtacnik of AFIPSummary of the Call:Late in the afternoon
of November 12, 1996, Dave Montague asked me to join an interview in progress which had just begun with
Mr. Ken Vrtacnik, a medical photographer at AFIP. Mr. Vrtacnik told us that he was stationed at AFIP from
February 28, 1964-December 3, 1965 as an Army (active duty) photographer. Following his active duty tour at
AFIP during 1964-65, and after about a year-and-a-half break, Mr. Vrtacnik said he returned to AFIP as an
Army civilian medical photographer. He is still employed in this capacity today, and said he will retire in the
near future.Mr. Vrtacnik said he had no specific recollection of seeing any autopsy photos from President
Kennedy's autopsy. He said that it was certainly possible, because he had seen thousands of autopsy and
medical photographs while at AFIP, and that depending upon how they were labeled, he may well have seen
President Kennedy's autopsy photos without knowing it, since such photos are labeled only by number. But he
reiterated that he had no recollection of anyone showing him autopsy photographs represented to be those of
President Kennedy.At this point he volunteered that he had seen President Kennedy's brain during the 1964-
65 period, which he stated had been kept in a locked room at the AFIP's National Museum of Health and
Medicine, which at that time was located in downtown Washington at 7th and Independence. He said that
access to this display item was limited to either AFIP medical staff, or to bonafide medical students at medical
schools. He recalled with a fair amount of certainty that the Museum's director at the time was a Navy
Commander, a Dr. Johnson.At this point ARRB's interviewers asked several clarification questions regarding
President Kennedy's brain. When asked whether it was the entire brain or not, he responded that the item on
display was one long section, tan in color, immersed in liquid, laying in a stainless steel tray inside a glass case.
He repeatedly stated that it had wooden pegs (or arrows) through it which were routinely used in gunshot
wound cases to show the trajectory of bullets. When asked how many pegs there were, he said he could not
be sure this many years later. When asked whether there was one peg, or more than one peg, he said he was
unsure, but later in the interview he again used the word "pegs" (i.e., the plural of the word "peg") to describe
the condition in which the section was displayed. When asked what percentage of the brain the section on
display represented, he said he could not be sure and declined to give an estimate. When asked whether the
section on display was less than one half, or more than one half, of President Kennedy's brain, he said he could
not be sure. When asked how he knew it was President Kennedy's brain, i.e., whether it was hearsay, rumor,
or word-of-mouth, he responded that he was positive for two reasons: it was labeled, in writing, as "President
Record

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