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Subject: JFK Autopsy and Preparation for Burial
MEETING REPORT DOCUMENT'S AUTHOR: DOUGLAS HORNE/ARRB Date Created: 06/21/96 Meeting Logistics Date: 06/21/96
Agecny Name: Witnesses/ConsultantsAttendees: Tom Robinson, David Marwell, Jeremy Gunn, Tim Wray, and Doug Horne
Topic: JFK Autopsy and Preparation for Burial Summary of the Meeting At ARRB's request, Mr. Robinson came to Washington this date for an interview with selected staff (see above for names of staff members). [Information provided below is a paraphrased summation of both questions and answers during this interview; only remarks in quotations are direct quotes of Mr. Robinson.] When asked to provide a chronology of basic events in which he was involved on November 22-23, 1963, Mr. Robinson recalled the following: -Came to work at Gawler's funeral home in Washington, D.C. about 4:00 in the afternoon on 11/22/63; -Everyone at Gawler's thought JFK's body would be coming to Gawler's. MDW had sent a military contingent to Gawler's funeral home...there were guards posted at every door. -About supptime, the plans changed. Joe Hagan told Robinson to "get the House Grips...you're going to Navy." ("House grips" were defined by Mr. Robinson as portable embalming equipment.) -He and Joe Hagan drove from Gawler's to Bethesda at extremely high speed in the Gawler's hearse. They transported in the hearse the new casket selected by the Kennedy aides who had visited Gawler's, a Marcellus 710 model, made of plank mahogany. It was covered in an American flag when transported out to Bethesda. -Mr. Stroble and Mr. Van Hoesen drove out to Bethesda in another vehicle, with the portable embalming equipment ("house grips")...they may have arrived subsequent to Hagan and Robinson. -Robinson said that he and Hagan arrived "early" in the autopsy, prior to the chest incision being made, and just as the gross examination of the head was starting. -Work by the Gawler's team started "after midnight;" -Saw the President's body (in the Marcellus casket) leave Bethesda in the gray Navy ambulance before he left the premisses himself. Observations regarding the autopsy of President Kennedy: -Robinson said he had seen approximately 50 autopsies prior to observing President Kennedy's autopsy. -When asked by ARRB, Robinson said he did see one other casket that night aside from the Marcellus mahogany casket brought from Gawler's: he said it was a metallic, bronze casket which was copper-colored. He said this casket had a dent or break in the handle, where it is attached to the casket by lugs. -He and Joe Hagan arrived "early in the autopsy," meaning that he knew it had not been underway long because the chest incision had not been made yet, and the gross examination of the head was just beginning. -Robinson said he had a "50 yard-line seat" at the autopsy, and was leaning on the rail with his arms, from his seat in the gallery. He said the President's head was to his right, which means that he was on the anatomical left of the President during the autopsy. He said that most of the pathologists and their assistants were opposite him, on
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