

VIA FIRST CLASS MAIL

March 26, 1998

Dr. Larry Haapanen
Professor of Communications
Lewis-Clark State College
Lewiston, ID 83501

Dear Dr. Haapanen:

Thank you for your correspondence to the Assassination Records Review Board. We appreciate your interest in the Review Board's work, and regret that we have not been able to get back to you sooner.

Your correspondence raises several interesting issues. The first relates to the handwritten notes of Forrest V. Sorrels, the Special Agent in Charge of the Dallas, Texas Secret Service office in November, 1963. These notes, which were received by the Warren Commission as Sorrels Exhibit No. 3-A, were identified by the Warren Commission as "Handwritten notes taken by Forrest V. Sorrels during an interview with Jack Ruby on November 24, 1963."¹ Exhibit 3-A appears to be a page from a spiral notebook. The page is divided by a hand-drawn, wavy line. Beneath the wavy line appear notes which obviously relate to Jack Ruby. Above the wavy line is information which, by virtue of its content, apparently relates to Lee Harvey Oswald. In your first letter, you queried: "(1) Where are the rest of Sorrels's notes, (if any) on his interrogation of Oswald, and (2) [W]hy was the existence of these notes never mentioned in his Warren Commission testimony or in the identification of Sorrels Exhibit No. 3-A...?"

A member of the Review Board staff went to NARA (National Archives and Records Administration) in College Park, MD, and viewed the original Sorrels Exhibit No. 3-A. The original exhibit consists of what appears to be a *copy* of a page from a notebook.

¹Table of Contents, WC Vol. XXI, p. xvii.

Our staff member was not able to locate Sorrels's actual notebook at NARA, or anywhere else. Nor have we been able to determine whether Sorrels ever took any handwritten notes of his interviews with Lee Harvey Oswald.

It is unclear why the members of the Warren Commission never asked Forrest Sorrels about the writing that appeared "above the wavy line" in Sorrels Exhibit 3-A. As you correctly point out, Mr. Sorrels specifically told Warren Commission Assistant Counsel Leon D. Hubert, Jr. that his notebook contained things other than his notes pertaining to Jack Ruby.² When Hubert asked Sorrels if the notes were made "contemporaneously with the interviews," Sorrels responded, "The ones of Ruby were; yes. Now there is other stuff in here that had nothing to do with that."³ At that point, Hubert stated that they were only interested in the Ruby notes.⁴ Nevertheless, Sorrels again mentioned the "other stuff" in his notebook, stating that it related to such things as record checks, detailed descriptions and fingerprint classifications.⁵ In spite of this, it appears that no one from the Warren Commission actually asked Mr. Sorrels about the notes that appeared above "the wavy line."

During the identification phase of the exhibit, Warren Commission Assistant Counsel Burt W. Griffin asked Sorrels whether Exhibit 3-A constituted notes of Sorrels's interview with Jack Ruby on November 24, 1963.⁶ Sorrels replied, "Yes they are. But there is portions that do not pertain to the interview with Ruby in the Dallas City Jail on the morning of November 24, 1963 - but certain portions happen to be on the same page as the notes made at that time were made."⁷ In response to a follow-up question, Sorrels told Griffin that the Ruby notes appear below a "wavy line."⁸ No one from the Warren Commission asked any follow up questions about the text that appeared above the "wavy line."

Our staff has been unable to locate any other information pertaining to Forrest Sorrels's notebook or to any notes that Forrest Sorrels may have taken during any of his interviews with Lee Harvey

²Testimony of Forrest Sorrels, WC Vol. XIII, pp. 69-70.

³Id. at 70.

⁴Id.

⁵Id.

⁶Id. at 82.

⁷Id.

⁸Id. at 82-83.

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Oswald. Although Mr. Sorrels did speak with members of the staff of the House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA), documentation of these contacts fails to mention any notes of Sorrels's interviews with Lee Harvey Oswald. Copies of these interviews are maintained in the records of the House Select Committee on Assassinations, and are identified by Record Identification Number (RIF#) as follows: RIF # 180-10080-10364, and RIF # 180-10074-10392. Copies of these records are enclosed for your review. We have also enclosed a copy of another record found among the files of the HSCA (RIF # 180-10116-10154), which consists of a summary of an interview that William Manchester conducted with Forrest Sorrels. As you can see, Manchester quotes Sorrels as stating that Oswald told him, "I'm not a communist, I'm not a _____, I'm not a _____ Marxist-I'm a Marxist." These phrases are similar to words which appear above the "wavy line" in Sorrels Warren Commission Exhibit 3-A, to wit, "Says is Marxist. Not a Marxist Lenin."

So far, the Review Board has been unable to locate any additional information about the handwritten notes of Forrest Sorrels. In the event we find any additional information about this subject, we will pass this along to you.

Your next suggestion was that the Review Board try to obtain more information relating to a "list of eighteen items" cited by the United States Secret Service's Chief of PRS, Robert Bouck, in his Warren Commission testimony. Three members of the Review Board staff interviewed Robert Bouck on April 30, 1996. The interview was recorded on audiotape, and our staff members detailed the interview in written reports. In addition, one of our staff members wrote to Robert Bouck on May 23, 1997, regarding the "list of eighteen items about Lee Harvey Oswald that were known to various federal agencies before November 22, 1963." Mr. Bouck responded to our letter on May 28, 1997. Further, the Review Board has queried the Secret Service about the "list of eighteen items" and copies of our correspondence with the Secret Service on this issue are part of our permanent records. All of the records of the Review Board will be transferred to NARA and open to the public, when the Review Board shuts down on September 30, 1998.

The next issue you raised related to all documentation generated by Army Intelligence - specifically, by Army Counter-Intelligence Agent Edward J. Coyle. Our staff has interviewed Edward Coyle on two occasions - by telephone on July 29, 1996, and in person on October 25, 1996. Both of these interviews were recorded on audiotape and transcribed. The audio tapes and transcripts of these interviews are also part of the permanent records of the Review Board.

The final issue you raised related to Air Force One's radio traffic on November 22, 1963, and to various documentation, content and editing questions surrounding that radio traffic. The Review Board has vigorously pursued the issue of trying to locate the original, unedited records of the Air Force One radio traffic. Documentation of our attempts to do so are part of our permanent records.

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Thank you again for comments and suggestions, and for your interest in the work of the Review Board. We hope you will find the information we provided helpful.

Sincerely,

Kim A. Herd
Senior Attorney