

# MEMORANDUM

October 1, 1996

To: Jeremy Gunn  
cc: Joseph Freeman, Laura Denk, Kevin Tiernan  
  
From: David Montague  
  
Subject: Conversation with James Doyle, Jr.  
Oswald Film and Potential Deed of Gift

## Description of the Call

Based on a previous conversation between Doyle, Jr. ("Doyle") and Tom Samoluk for which NARA provided the tip, I called Doyle to inquire about his information regarding the assassination, his film of Oswald and any other records he may have for the JFK Collection.

Doyle said he had a film of Oswald in New Orleans showing him passing leaflets on Castro.

He was cordial and said that he would like to donate the film to the Collection, but he would first like to know more about us. He would also like to ensure safe passage for his materials to the Archives.

I described the work of the Review Board and described the archival facilities for film material at Archives II. I told him that I would explain the Deed of Gift process after we further discussed his potential donation.

## The Film

In 1963, Doyle lived in Oregon with his family. His father, James Pat Doyle, Sr., was the head of the National Electrical Contractors Association. In August, 1963, the Association's National Convention that year was in New Orleans, and Doyle brought his family with him to New Orleans.

Although Doyle was 14 at the time of the assassination, he remembers many of the details from his trip to New Orleans. The Doyle family went sightseeing on either August 20th or 22nd, 1963 (during the convention.) Doyle remembers thinking that New Orleans was "wilder" than Oregon, which he had expected.

Using an 8mm Bell & Howell movie camera with a hand crank and Kodak 8mm film, Doyle filmed people and scenery during their sightseeing. Doyle filmed a man passing out yellow Pro-Castro flyers and a group of approximately 7-8 adult males approaching the leafletter. One of these adult males pulled a stiletto (long knife) on the leafletter and threatened him. Several police officers

approached the leafletter, began questioning the people involved and arrested the leafletter. A crowd of approximately 40 people observed. As the crowd dispersed, Doyle filmed the crowd for a few moments while he was walking backward with his back to the sun. When he returned from the convention, he mailed the film to the Glendale, California Kodak Developing Center, for processing.

On November 23, 1963, the family watched on television as Jack Ruby shot Oswald at the DPD. Doyle's younger sister Sharon mentioned that Oswald resembled the leafletter who was arrested in New Orleans. The Doyle family watched the film to verify the resemblance. Doyle's father, who Doyle described as a "patriotic American" called the Portland FBI office to report the film. The FBI sent two agents to the Doyle home that day to view the film. After viewing it, they said they'd like to borrow the film for further study. Doyle believes the agents provided the family with a receipt. After several months, Doyle's father requested that the FBI return the film, but the FBI did not return the film. After several more years, Doyle retained attorney Richard Senders to attempt to retrieve the film from the FBI. The family recovered the film sometime in the early to mid 1970s. However, when the Doyle family viewed the film they retrieved from the FBI, they discovered that the film was not the same as they remembered. The family noted the following differences:

- 1) the retrieved film makes Doyle's view appear to be much further away than before;  
and
- 2) the "before" film lasted approximately 2 ½ minutes and the retrieved film only lasted approximately 45-50 seconds;

Doyle's father, upset about the differences, later contacted the Glendale, California, Processing Center. A representative (he doesn't remember who) told Doyle's father that the processing center did not have the negatives because the FBI "confiscated" them on or around 11/23/63, the same day that the FBI took the out-of-camera original film from the Doyle family in Oregon.

Sometime later (Doyle couldn't be more specific) people started "hounding him" for access to the film on a regular basis. He believes that his name may have been mentioned in a book on the assassination, perhaps the "4 Days" book. He has been contacted by Robert Groden, Gary Mack, and Jim Garrison. Doyle refused to let Mack borrow the film because he could not guarantee its return. He also offered to fly the film himself to Dallas if Mack bought his ticket, but Mack did not wish to do this. Doyle decided to visit a company named "Photo Art" in Portland, Oregon which was able to transfer 8mm frames to still pictures. Doyle made at least one of all the frames of particular people such as the Cubans, LHO, LHO's brother, the police officer, the crowd, etc. . . . After Doyle sent the stills to Mack and others, he received information regarding some of the people within the film. Doyle was told (he will look for the document re: his source) that the person who approached Oswald with the knife was a CIA operative and that several people in the crowd were FBI agents. He doesn't remember the source, but he heard that Groden obtained a copy of the film from the FBI for approximately \$30 and that Groden wrote about the film in one of his books without Doyle's permission.

On the 30th anniversary, Doyle let the BBC, in conjunction with Public Broadcasting, borrow a VHS copy of the film for a special. Doyle again took the film to Photo Art, but they were unable to transfer it to "broadcast quality" VHS tape. Doyle trusted a man named "John" (doesn't remember the last name) at Photo Art and allowed him to carry the film to Seattle, Washington, for transfer to the proper quality tape. The production company compensated both Doyle and "John" for their efforts. The film is copyrighted in Doyle's name. The film is now stored in a safe deposit box at an Oregon Bank. Doyle has the following items:

- (1) the 8mm film returned to him by the FBI depicting the events he filmed in August of 1963;
- (2) approximately 3-4 still photos made at Photo Art;
- (3) documentation about researchers who contacted him; and
- (4) documentation about FBI contacts with the film, collected by his attorney.

After I explained the Deed of Gift procedures, Doyle agreed to deed all of this material to the JFK Collection so that it will be properly preserved for history. However, Doyle wants to ensure that the film will really make it to Washington, D.C., given his earlier negative experiences with the film. I offered to possibly pick it up from his home and I told him I would check on some possibilities for transfer of the film & would contact him in about a week so he would have time to review the information on the Review Board that I am sending to him. I suggested that, in the interest of time, it might be best to arrange for transfer now (using an official receipt) and then proceed with execution of a Deed of Gift, which may take several months. Doyle seemed amenable to this idea.

I reviewed the above information with him and thanked him for his time.

#### Recommendations

I recommend that we ask Doyle provide a copy of his videotape of the film and copies of some of his documentation to determine whether a trip to his home is warranted.

#### Personal Information

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