

JFK papers bring mob

brothers into view

By Roger Stuart Post-Gazette

Staff Writer

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This article is presented here in its entirety, as best as I can type it. Two pictures of the Mannarino brothers that appeared in the article are not included. I have not obtained permission from the Pittsburgh Press to use this article. (Bill Elwood)

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College Park, MD- A library near the University of Maryland seems an oddly distant repository for information about two long-dead Westmoreland County mobsters. But here, at the National Archives, one can peruse nine boxes of documents about the lives of Sam and Kelly Mannarino, who ran the rackets in New Kensington for most of four decades. It is the FBI's version of their lives, and the 6,400 pages of information about the Mannarino's are a tantalizing, if puzzling, presence in the archives' collection of records pertaining to the assassination of John F. Kennedy. The Mannarino documents were made public last week, when the FBI turned them over to the FBI turned them over to the archives under a 1992 law aimed at allaying lingering public doubts about the investigation of Kennedy's 1963 assassination. The Mannarino files were last reviewed by the U.S. House Select Committee on Assassinations, established 20 years ago to review allegations that previous inquiries had not received the full cooperation of federal agencies. There is no explanation of why the FBI included the Mannarinos in the assassination investigation, but the documents contain many of the elements that have fueled the manufacture of conspiracy theories for nearly 33 years among them Cuba and the Mafia. Two years ago, the Central Intelligence Agency revealed plans it made with the Mafia to kill Cuban President Fidel Castro in the early 1960's. At the urging of the Kennedy White House, the agency developed a "standby assassination capability" that featured poisoned cigars, poison-tipped ballpoint pens, an LSD-like spray and a chemical to make Castro's beard fall out. Though short (Sam, 5 feet 1 inch; Kelly, 5 feet 5 inches), the Mannarino siblings were heralded as giants among Western Pennsylvania's organized crime bosses. They were frequently listed among the nation's top 40 crime czars. Previous FBI disclosures covered Chicago mobsters Sam Giancana and Gus Alex. Last week's release also included files on Philadelphia's don Angelo Bruno. So far, the FBI has released roughly 641,999 pages of records to the archives, including those on Lee Harvey Oswald and Jack Ruby.

## Strong ties to Cuba

The Mannarinos were not only Mafia bosses. Their gambling ties in Cuba went back to the 1940s and their racket activities in New Kensington to the '30's. Kelly was among 65 raceteers who gathered in Apalachin, N.Y., in 1957 for a much-celebrated meeting of national mob leaders. He escaped the arrest and prosecution that befell 20 Mafiosi at the meeting, then hid for more than a year to elude federal subpoenas. Sam and Kelly were rumored to have had hidden interests in gambling casinos in Cuba under Fulgenzio Batista, before Castro overthrew the strongman, and to have had a "substantial interest" in slot machines in the island's interior. Six associates-including Sam's son-in-law, Victor Carlucci, and Cuban frontman Norman Rothman-were convicted and imprisoned for a 1958 gun-running operation to Cuba. But it was never clear whether the conspirators were bent on aiding Batista or Castro. The FBI records don't settle the issue. Kelly was targeted in 1959 by the U.S. Senate Rackets Committee, for which the late Robert F. Kennedy was chief counsel. The Mannarinos also made Attorney General Kennedy's "top hoodlums" list in 1961 and were targeted for prompt investigation and swift prosecution. Their income-tax fraud trial, stemming from their New Kensington gambling rackets, began in Pittsburgh four days before President Kennedy was killed Nov. 22, 1963.

## Unflattering portraits

The Mannarinos were described in the gossipy FBI files- built mostly on information from secret informants- as obese and given at times to feuding with each other. Sources told the FBI that Kelly stammered; often began sentences with "because"; had a fondness for chocolate turtles made by the Catoris Candy Co. in New Kensington; smoked \$1 cigars; and was seen "on numerous occasions with girls who would generally be considered homely and unkempt." Sam's affairs with a woman named Mignon from Las Vegas and another named Jennie from the Pittsburgh area are also chronicled in the FBI records. They say that Sam took to sniffing cocaine and was known to one informant as a "real nut, who falls for all sorts of crazy schemes." FBI reports warned-right up to Sam's death on June 5, 1967, at the age of 61 and until Kelly's passing July 11, 1980, at the age of 64-that they should be "considered armed and dangerous." For Sam, that tag grew from a 1931 arrest as a suspicious person while carrying a concealed weapon. For Kelly, it began with a 1943 arrest for toting a .38-caliber pistol. FBI files said Kelly's gun arrest was a successful ploy to get him draft-exempt 4-F status as "psychopathic inferior" one week after he was made draftable 1-A. Uncorroborated in the files is an informant's 1958 story that Kelly used a machine gun to riddle two blocks of stores along New Kensington's Fifth Avenue one morning in 1937. Another man, whose name the informant could not recall, took the rap for the escapade. The FBI also investigated Sam in 1944 for buying a scrap iron business solely to get an essential industry draft deferral. No evidence of fraud was uncovered.

## Alumni of Prohibition

A curious inconsistency in FBI files is that Sam was named Salvatore Ruggieri when born New Year's Day in 1906, while Kelly was named Gabriello Ruggiero when born Oct. 31, 1915. Their grocer father-identified in Sam's files as Giacinto Ruggieri and in Kelly's records as Giacinto Ruggiero-emigrated from Italy to the United States in 1897, was naturalized in Pittsburgh in 1915 and changed his name to George Mannarino in 1935. "No information has ever been received why the Mannarino family name was changed," said an Aug. 23, 1961, report on the brothers' personal history. The brothers began their racketeering careers as bootleggers during Prohibition and branched into burglary and robbery, said the FBI report, providing these details: John LaRocca gave Sam his basic training in how to organize, maintain and protect a racketeering operation. After establishing his own gambling enterprise in New Kensington, Sam introduced Kelly to a life of crime. Kelly solidified his racketeering position by marrying Jean Amato, daughter of Frank Amato of Braddock, who preceded LaRocca as Western Pennsylvania's organized crime boss.

## A gambling empire

By 1958, the Mannarino brothers monopolized the pinball machine market in the New Kensington-Arnold area, with about 300 machines pulling in loot. "When collections were made from each location, the collector would take the total amount of money from the machines and divide it in half," an FBI report said. "The first half...would be split evenly between the location and the Mannarinos. The second half would be recorded as the gross... and would be the figure reported for income tax purposes." Their numbers operation was said to gross \$10,000 to \$12,000 per day. The gambling casino in the basement of the Garibaldi building in New Kensington ran seven nights a week. Craps and barbotte games raked in 2 1/2 per cent from each pot. And the second-floor horse room featured 30-to-1 odds. "Luggers" transported gamblers regularly from Squirrel Hill to New Kensington for games. The Mannarinos had influence and protection from mayors, police chiefs and other officials. The late Tom Tannas, Arnold's city clerk, was identified in the files as a top-echelon figure in the Mannarino's empire. He was also the manager of Ezzard Charles, the former world heavyweight boxing champion. Tannas was quoted as saying Sam and Kelly bought thousands of tickets to fund-raising dinners sponsored by the Democratic Party in Westmoreland County and expected gamblers and numbers writers to buy 50 to 100 apiece. "Members of the city council used [Kelly] Mannarino's Jeep and visited his residence," a report said. Things soured after Kelly fled the Apalachin meeting of mob bosses; Kelly was summoned before the Senate Rackets Committee, where he pleaded the Fifth Amendment. Things plummeted Aug 24, 1961, when two canvas-colored trucks rolled up to the Garibaldi Building and 35 federal agents poured forth, swinging axes and smashing doors and windows. More than a dozen underlings were indicted, convicted, fined or jailed. Then came

thier own income-tax fraud indictment. Although Kelly beat that rap, Sam was convicted and spent eight months of a one year sentence in prison.

#### Heavy federal blows

Sam told an FBI agent who interviewd him in 1964 that he had "stepped down out of the organization" and that Kelly had taken his place because he was "too sick and too old to continue." Kelly remained New Kensington's crime boss until he died in 1980. But

an associate noted in January 1972 that "he has taken on a bloated look and has regained all the weight he took so much trouble to lose last year." At that time, things were never worse for the gamblers and other racketeers, an FBI report said. Ten years

ago, the New Kensington gambling was wide open and covered almost all types imaginable... Sam and Kelly controlled everything and were able to provide employment for all the flunkies who were ready and willing to do anything asked of them."

No more.

Federal enforcement efforts had caused gambling to diminish until the casino-type gambling was gone and all that remained were numbers and a few card games." The worst part, associates said, was that "[Kelly] Mannarino does not seem to care that they are in economic distress." Many were forced to take legitimate jobs; others were on welfare payments; a few tried thier hand at more physical crimes, without much success; and many more just moved from the town once billed as "Little Las Vegas."

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After reading this I got in touch with Roger Stuart. He provided me with a copy of the press release information given to him by the National Archives. I logged onto the Website provided by the National Archives. A few simple searches led me to the following:

#### AGENCY INFORMATION

AGENCY : HSCA  
RECORD NUMBER : 180-10118-10032  
RECORDS SERIES : NUMBERED FILES  
AGENCY FILE NUMBER : 008136

#### DOCUMENT INFORMATION

ORIGINATOR : USS  
DATE : 05/03/78  
PAGES : 17  
DOCUMENT TYPE : LIS  
SUBJECTS : USSS, FILE

CLASSIFICATION : UNCLASSIFIED  
RESTRICTIONS : REFERRED  
CURRENT STATUS : POSTPONED IN FULL  
DATE OF LAST REVIEW : 06/21/93  
COMMENTS : USSS 148-3.Box 148.

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AGENCY INFORMATION

AGENCY : HSCA

RECORD NUMBER : 180-10118-10040  
RECORDS SERIES : NUMBERED FILES  
AGENCY FILE NUMBER : 008136

DOCUMENT INFORMATION

ORIGINATOR : HSCA  
DATE : 05/03/78  
PAGES : 1  
DOCUMENT TYPE : MEMORANDUM  
SUBJECTS : USSS, FILES; WARRINGTON, JOHN  
CLASSIFICATION : UNCLASSIFIED  
RESTRICTIONS : REFERRED  
CURRENT STATUS : POSTPONED IN FULL  
DATE OF LAST REVIEW : 06/21/93  
COMMENTS : USSS 148-4.Box 148.

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AGENCY INFORMATION

AGENCY : HSCA  
RECORD NUMBER : 180-10118-10041  
RECORDS SERIES : NUMBERED FILES  
AGENCY FILE NUMBER : 008136

DOCUMENT INFORMATION

ORIGINATOR : USSS  
DATE : 10/24/63  
PAGES : 6  
DOCUMENT TYPE : REPORT  
SUBJECTS : WAARRINGTON, JOHN WILLIAM  
CLASSIFICATION : UNCLASSIFIED  
RESTRICTIONS : REFERRED  
CURRENT STATUS : POSTPONED IN FULL  
DATE OF LAST REVIEW : 06/21/93  
COMMENTS : Box 148.

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AGENCY INFORMATION

AGENCY : HSCA  
RECORD NUMBER : 180-10118-1004  
RECORDS SERIES : NUMBERED FILES  
AGENCY FILE NUMBER : 008136

DOCUMENT INFORMATION

ORIGINATOR : USSS  
FROM : PRS - CHIEF  
TO : TAMPA  
DATE : 10/17/63  
PAGES : 6  
DOCUMENT TYPE : PRINTED FORM  
SUBJECTS : SCATES, R.L.  
CLASSIFICATION : UNCLASSIFIED  
RESTRICTIONS : REFERRED  
CURRENT STATUS : POSTPONED IN FULL  
DATE OF LAST REVIEW : 06/21/93  
COMMENTS : Enclosed threatening letters. Box 148.

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AGENCY INFORMATION

AGENCY : HSC  
RECORD NUMBER : 180-10118-10043  
RECORDS SERIES : NUMBERED FILES  
AGENCY FILE NUMBER : 008136

DOCUMENT INFORMATION

ORIGINATOR : FBI  
FROM : FLOHR, DEETER B.  
TO : BOUCK, ROBERT I.  
TITLE : INFORMATION FOR OUR SERVICE AND FILES  
DATE : 10/18/63  
PAGES : 1  
DOCUMENT TYPE : MEMORANDUM  
SUBJECTS : WARRINGTON, JOHN WILLIAM, AKA, SCATES, R.L.; JOHNSON,  
ELWOOD W.  
CLASSIFICATION : UNCLASSIFIED  
RESTRICTIONS : REFERRED  
CURRENT STATUS : POSTPONED IN FULL  
DATE OF LAST REVIEW : 06/21/93  
COMMENTS : Box 148.

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AGENCY INFORMATION

AGENCY : HSCA  
RECORD NUMBER : 180-10118-10042  
RECORDS SERIES : NUMBERED FILES  
AGENCY FILE NUMBER : 008136

DOCUMENT INFORMATION

ORIGINATOR : USSS  
FROM : PEPPERS, ARNOLD K.  
TO : BOARDMAN, EDWARD F.  
TITLE : US VS. JOHN WILLIAM WARRINGTON  
DATE : 10/23/63  
PAGES : 2  
DOCUMENT TYPE : LETTER  
SUBJECTS : WARRINGTON, JOHN WILLIAM, AKA SCATES, R.L.  
CLASSIFICATION : UNCLASSIFIED  
RESTRICTIONS : REFERRED  
CURRENT STATUS : POSTPONED IN FULL  
DATE OF LAST REVIEW : 06/21/93

COMMENTS : Box 148

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After reading the above, concerning threatening letters, I wonder how many other people involved with whatever he was investigating also met suspicious deaths. Dare I ask? I did request any and all records from the County, and this is what I got.  
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May 28, 1996  
To: Skip Rusiewiez  
Westmoreland County Coroner's Office  
602 Courthouse Sq.  
Greensburg, PA 15601

From: William J. Elwood  
5977 S. Gallup #403  
Littleton, CO 80120

I am formally and officially requesting, of the County of Westmoreland, the State of Pennsylvania. A copy of the autopsy report of my father's body. If no such report exists I would like to obtain copies of any and all documents that do exist in the Coroner's Office, relative to my father. His name was William Neale Elwood.

Please note...his date of death is officially recorded (On the death certificate is December 1, 1966.) As per our conversation on the phone, the death date it was listed as Dec. 2, 1966 in the coroner's office.

If there are any other documents that are relative to my father's death in the County of Westmoreland. Please advise me as to what they are, how much they cost and where i can obtain them.

Sincerely Yours,

signed William J. Elwood

First born son of

William Neale Elwood in own hand writing

in red ink

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Here is copy of what is on record.

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6-Dec-1966 ( Date Handwritten)

View Blank

CORONER'S OFFICE  
Greensburg, Pa.

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Name.....William N.  
Elwood,  
Residence.....140 Haser Dr.,  
New  
Kensington, Penna.  
Reported by.....New Kensington  
Police Dept.  
Age.....41 Color.....White  
Sex.....Male  
Occupation.....Captain of City  
Police  
Married  
Place of accident.....Parking lot of Fire Side Inn, 1400  
Strawn Avenue,. New Kens., Pa.  
Date of accident.....Dec. 1, 1966-10:00 P.M.?  
Date Admitted...(Please note: The word "Admitted" is X-ed out. In it's  
place is the word "Death" repeating the above information for date.)  
Dec.1, 1966-10:00 P.M.  
Date of Death...(Please note: The word "Death" is X-ed out. In it's place  
is the word "Found". Given as the "Date of Found.....Dec. 2,  
1966- 6:45 P.M.

Weather Condition....Snowing, Dark  
Place of Death.....As above-Parking Lot  
Cause of Death.....Gunshot wound of right temple, exit of bullet top of head left side  
Undertaker.....Ross Walker Funeral Home,  
New Kensington, Penna.

WITNESS:

Dr. Richard Leydig  
Judy Elwood- Wife  
Sgt. Carl Runski- found victim  
Chief Edward McAfoose  
Patrolman Elwood McGregar  
Joseph Bordonaro,  
Edward Gordon- Chief Co. Detective  
Louis Baddick- Westm'd Co. Detective

DECISION:

Suicide  
Self inflicted- bullet entered right temple. exit left side top of head.  
Bullet recovered above left door laying on side of left roof panel.  
View.....2nd..... Day of December 1966  
Carmen C. Perna, Chief Deputy (No signiture)  
Hand writing hard to read at bottom of sheet...  
appears to say: "Closed Inquest- June 23, 1967Coroner."

End of page 1

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Page 2

Sunbeam Rapier  
Penna. License 291-31V  
Vehicle owned by Joseph S. Mangione  
666 Kimball Ave., Model 1958  
New Kensington, Pa.  
Car loaned to victim, along with gun and 5-\$1.00 bills at 6:45 P.M., on December 1, 1966.  
Victim said he was going on an investigation.  
38 Colt Police Positive Special 320843.  
Mr. Mangione told victim to go down to his garage and get battery charged and some gas.

View	\$15.00
S. & Q.	8.00
Witnesses (8)	28.00
Mileage (New Kensington)	6.00

Jury Fee  
Autopsy

36.00

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Total \$93.00

Fire Side Inn, arrived about 8:00 P.M  
and told Ray Russell he had \$2.00  
on him. Had 2 double headers and a beer and left about 8:30 P.M.  
Mr. Russell went off duty at 9:30 P.M

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End of page 2

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Please note: My father's body went directly from the site where it was  
found to the undertaker. No autopsy was performed. Even his death  
certificate states that he was "at work" when he died.

My father served on the New Kensington, PA Police Department for 17  
years, from 1948 to 1966. Even if my father did commit suicide, its my  
belief and contention that my father died in the line of duty to his  
country.

Thank you for your help,  
William J. Elwood