

## MEMORANDUM

TO: ASSASSINATION RECORDS REVIEW BOARD MEMBERS

FROM: TOM SAMOLUK

RE: REVIEW BOARD PUBLIC HEARING IN LOS ANGELES,  
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 1996

DATE: SEPTEMBER 13, 1996

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### **I. Introduction**

The Assassination Records Review Board will conduct a public hearing on Tuesday, September 17, 1996 at the Los Angeles Board of Education Hearing Room (Room H-160 of the Hill Street Building) located at 450 North Grand Avenue, Los Angeles.

The hearing is scheduled for 10:00 a.m. The media has been advised that the members of the Board will be available for interviews in the hearing room at 9:30 a.m. We expect that, based on our past hearings and the number of witnesses, the hearing will conclude at approximately 1:00 p.m. Tracy has made arrangements for transportation to the hearing from the hotel and has provided you with details in the attached memo.

It is important that we stay on schedule because KLCS-Channel 58, one of the public broadcasting stations in Los Angeles is planning to tape the hearing for re-broadcast later in the day. In addition, KCET-Channel 28, a larger public broadcasting channel, is planning to cover the hearing and edit it into a one-half hour show for broadcast sometime later.

The rest of this memorandum will cover information regarding the agenda, the scheduled witnesses, their testimony and suggested questions. I have also included a section at the end about the hearing room, so you will have an idea of what to expect when you arrive on Tuesday morning.

### **II. The Agenda**

The agenda for the public hearing will likely be the following:

- A. Opening statements and review of the Board's work to date by the Chair, as well as opening statements by members of the Board who choose to make one.
- B. There are eight witnesses scheduled to testify (this number includes Steve Tilley). The witness, in the likely order in which they will testify are:

1. Robert Tanenbaum
2. Wesley Liebler
3. Eric Hamburg
4. David Belin
5. James Rankin
6. James DiEugenio
7. David Lifton
8. Steve Tilley

C. Closing statement by the Chair and members of the Board who choose to make one.

### III. The Witnesses

Note: The only witness to provide written testimony prior to the completion of this memorandum was Eric Hamburg.

#### **Robert Tanenbaum**

##### Biography

Former Deputy Counsel for the House Select Committee on Assassinations in the late 1970's. He is the author of *Corruption of Blood*, a fictionalized account of his experience with the Committee investigating the assassination of President Kennedy.

##### Description of Testimony

Tanenbaum has informed me that he does not wish to make a formal statement and will not submit a written statement. He would rather respond to the Board's questions. Thus, even the most basic background information will have to come from him as a result of questions from the Board. I suggest that Jack run through the basic questions suggested below about his general background, involvement with the HSCA, responsibilities with the Committee. Jack and the other Board members can ask the substantive suggested questions.

Although Tanenbaum does not have a prepared written statement, I have attached a copy of a recent interview he did with the JFK assassination journal, *Probe*. This should give you a good idea of his thoughts on the assassination and his service with the HSCA.

##### Suggested Questions

1. Please give us a brief overview of your career and how you became involved in the House Select Committee on Assassinations?
2. What were your responsibilities with the Committee?

3. How long did you serve with the Committee?
4. Why did you leave the Committee?
5. Are there any specific records that you recall from your HSCA service that stand out in your mind as particularly significant and which we should be looking for? (I am assuming he will mention a film that he recalls the HSCA obtained from the Georgetown University Library archives. We are looking for it, but have not located it. To the best of our knowledge it is not at the National Archives. We have had contact with Georgetown but have not located it there. Tanenbaum talks about the film in the *Probe* interview. It allegedly depicts anti-Castro Cubans, “soldier of fortune types,” and “CIA operative types” at a secret army training camp. Tanenbaum’s recollection is that this film was considered very important at the time the Committee obtained it.)
6. What do you recall about the film?
7. Why did the Committee consider it so significant?
8. Are there any other records or categories of records that may not be in the Collection that you recall from your experience?
9. With the benefit of your HSCA experience and the benefit of nearly 20 years of hindsight, what areas do you think the Board should pursue as far as enriching the historical record surrounding the assassination? Foreign policy records? Foreign government records? Organized crime? Domestic or international political groups? Medical records? Particular records from federal or state agencies?
10. Do you have any records from your service with the HSCA?

### **Wesley Liebeler**

#### Biography

Former Assistant Counsel to the Warren Commission and currently a professor of law at UCLA.

#### Description of Testimony

Liebeler will hopefully endorse the work of the Board. Beyond that, my discussions with him have involved his anticipated donation of a manuscript that he wrote a few years ago. At the time, he thought he would try to turn it into a book, but he never completed the project. However, he does have several chapters that would be important to have in the Collection because of his vast knowledge and experience with the Warren Commission. He has stated that he will donate his work to the

Collection. The manuscript includes an analysis of the medical evidence (done with Dr. Michael Baden of the HSCA medical panel) and the HSCA acoustical evidence, as well as other areas.

#### Suggested Questions

1. In the preparation of your manuscript, did you use source materials that are not in the Collection that you believe should be?
2. Why was it important to you to do the manuscript?
3. Based on your experience with the Warren Commission and the benefit of nearly 33 years of experience, are there records that would enrich the history surrounding the assassination that you believe should be in the Collection?
4. Do you think that there are grounds on which the release of records should be postponed?

#### **Eric Hamburg**

##### Biography

Co-producer of the Oliver Stone movie *Nixon* and a former Congressional staff assistant involved in the passage of the President John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992.

##### Description of Testimony

A copy of Hamburg's testimony is attached for your review. As you will read, he praises the role of Oliver Stone in creating the Review Board. He also praises the Board for the work done to date.

Hamburg states that:

“One area that has been of particular interest to me has been the question of Cuba, and the possible participation of Cuban exiles in the assassination plot. Most serious researchers who have studied the assassination have concluded that there were most likely elements of three groups involved in the plot -- rogue elements of US intelligence agencies, elements of organized crime or “the Mafia”, and elements of Cuban exile groups in the United States. The plot, if there was one, most likely evolved out of the assassination plots against Fidel Castro which involved these three groups.”

His suggestions on records include the following areas:

## 1. Cuba

Hamburg has been to Cuba and met with General Fabian Escalante. Escalante mentions several individuals allegedly connected to the assassination and Hamburg suggests if there are records to corroborate anything he says, the records should be part of the Collection.

## 2. DRE - Cuban exile

## 3. Alpha 66 - Cuban exile group

## 4. MRR - Cuban exile group

## 5. Commandos L - Cuban exile group

Hamburg includes, as part of his testimony, a letter sent to us from Marina Porter which suggests various areas of records to pursue. We have responded to that letter, had conversations with her and are pursuing many of the areas she raised, most of which have to do with the book "Oswald Talked" by Mary and Ray LaFontaine.

Finally, Hamburg includes a list of individuals he suggests the Board should depose, including George Bush, Gerald Ford, Richard Helms, and Howard Hunt.

Suggested Questions

1. Did Escalante tell you of specific records that you think the Board should pursue?
2. Was Escalante acting as an official representative of the government when you met with him?
3. Based on your contact with Escalante, do you think that the Cuban government would cooperate with the Review Board?
3. In dealing with records related to Cuban policy, records of the Cuban government, or records on U.S. policy in Vietnam, what is the time frame that the Board should use as a reference? How far back and how far beyond November 22, 1963 should we go?
4. Are you aware of any films or records that Oliver Stone acquired while working on the movie JFK that might enrich the historical record?
5. Do you have suggestions for private researchers who have acquired records that might be

important to include in the JFK Collection?

## **David Belin**

### Biography

Former assistant counsel to the Warren Commission and author of two books on the assassination, *November 22, 1963: You Are The Jury* and *Final Disclosure: The Full Truth About The Assassination of President Kennedy*. Belin also served as the Executive Director of the Rockefeller Commission in 1975, investigating CIA assassinations of foreign leaders.

### Description of Testimony

As you are aware, David Belin has been one of the staunchest defenders of the Warren Commission for 32 years. I think that Belin's main point for the Board, which he has repeated often, will be that he began calling for the release of all Warren Commission and CIA assassination records in 1975. In addition, he will probably advise the Board that records should be released in full or the Board will suffer a poor judgment by history.

Beyond his likely points above, I asked him to consider some more specific points based on his experience. Although he has not submitted written testimony, the attached articles that he wrote following the release of the movie *JFK* reveal his passion and strength of conviction regarding the Warren Commission's conclusions on the assassination.

### Suggested Questions

1. Are there any records that he would like to have seen while with the Warren Commission to which they did not get access?
2. Are there particular records from the Rockefeller Commission that stand out as particularly important for the JFK Collection?
3. Do you have any records related to either your service on the Warren Commission staff or Executive Director of the Rockefeller Commission?
4. Do you have reason to believe that other former staff members of those bodies may have assassination records that the Board should pursue?
5. Do you remember what the policy was for the Warren Commission and the Rockefeller Commission with regard to Commission Members and staff members retaining records?
6. Given that the JFK Act provides for criteria for the release of records, or parts of records, to be

postponed, do you think there are conditions under which the Board should be postponing records? To protect sources and methods? National security? Privacy?

7. Are there records having to do with foreign policy, intelligence operations, organized crime or other areas that you believe are relevant to the history surrounding the assassination and should be in the JFK Collection?

## **James Rankin**

### Biography

Son of former General Counsel to the Warren Commission, the late J. Lee Rankin. He will testify about his father's personal papers related to his work for the Warren Commission.

### Description of Testimony

Rankin has not submitted written testimony. We are hoping (at the time of this writing) that he will say that the family plans to donate the records to the JFK Collection and give a description of the records. For your information, he has expressed some concern about the personal remarks his father wrote in the margins of draft chapters of the Warren Report. Rankin has also expressed concern that there may be documents in his father's files that are still classified. Jeremy is reviewing the documents with Rankin as I prepare this memorandum and will hopefully calm his concerns.

Rankin did provide us with the attached inventory prepared by his brother. As you will read, there are some very interesting listings. Some of the material may be in the JFK Collection. However, based on Jeremy's initial review (I have just talked to him on the telephone) there are records that are not in the Collection. He has identified no explosive documents, but the records certainly will enrich our knowledge of the inner workings of the Warren Commission.

### Suggested Questions

Please note that James Rankin does not know that much about the contents of the records. The inventory was prepared by his brother in Texas. Jeremy is going to work with him on a statement for the hearing. The following are possible questions for Rankin, depending on what his final statement ends up looking like:

1. Do you believe that these are all of your father's records?
2. To your knowledge, did your father share the records with anyone? Media? Historians? Researchers?
3. Were the records kept in a secure location?

4. Approximately what percentage of your father's papers related to his service on the Warren Commission?
5. Did your father share any of his experiences on the Warren Commission with you or other members of your family?

### **James DiEugenio**

#### Biography

Author of *Destiny Betrayed: JFK, Cuba and the Garrison Case*, an analysis of New Orleans's District Attorney Jim Garrison's inquiry and the assassination itself.

#### Description of Testimony

Although DiEugenio had not submitted written testimony prior to the completion of this memorandum, he did provide the attached outline of what he would like to tell the Board. As you can see from the outline, his main areas are:

1. Garrison
  - a. CIA records
  - b. Justice Department Records
2. Clay Shaw
  - a. Permindex
  - b. Army Intelligence
  - c. CIA
3. Oswald
  - a. Suggestion of FBI files suggesting they knew of his alleged intelligence connections
4. HSCA files
  - a. HSCA staffers, Gonzalez, Fonzi, Delsa, and Buras, who investigated alleged New Orleans and Miami connections
5. CIA acronyms and Project Codes
  - a. Example: QKENCHANT
6. Suggested Interviews Under Oath
  - a. Ruth and Michael Paine

In connection with the Paines, during my interview with him he gave me the attached memo from researcher Steve Jones.

- b. FBI personnel involved in Warren Commission
- c. HSCA witnesses
- d. Warren Commission witnesses
- e. CIA contract agents
- f. Angleton's wife

### Suggested Questions

1. Are you aware of any HSCA staffers who have records that the Board should be pursuing?
2. Since you have focused attention on the Garrison investigation, are you aware of any records in private hands that the Board should pursue?
3. Have you compiled any records that may be relevant and are not in the Collection that perhaps should be?
4. When you discuss HSCA records and refer (in your preliminary testimony outline) to "some extraordinary testimony that was buried in the Archives," could you explain in more detail what that means?

### **David Lifton**

#### Biography

Author of *Best Evidence: Disguise and Deception In The Assassination of John F. Kennedy*, which focused on the medical evidence in the case. He is currently working on a book about Lee Harvey Oswald.

#### Description of Testimony

Lifton is going to donate copies of audio tapes of early witnesses who he interviewed in the 1960's and 1970's. Many of the witnesses were never interviewed by official government bodies, or if they were, they were asked questions that Lifton asked them.

Lifton's witness interviews fall into two categories: Medical and Eyewitnesses. The witnesses include: Doctor Humes, several doctors from Parkland Hospital, and other people involved in the medical care of the President or the transportation of the body from Dallas to Bethesda.

### Suggested Questions

1. What is the significance of these interviews?

2. How do they enrich the historical record surrounding the assassination?
3. What kinds of questions did you ask of these witnesses that were not asked by official investigators?
4. Do you know of other researchers who have records that would enrich the historical record?

### **Steven Tilley**

#### Description of Testimony

Steve will give his usual update on the contents of the Collection. I expect that it will be very similar to what he said at our September public hearing on the CIA Sequestered Collection. Although I do not have written testimony from Steve, a copy of the transcript from his August 6th testimony is attached for your information.

#### Suggested Questions

1. What is the approximate size of the Collection, in terms of pages, now?
2. Are there any new donations expected soon?
3. Are there any records that have not been added to the Collection yet, but in your view are important?

### **IV. The Los Angeles Board of Education Hearing Room**

The Los Angeles Board of Education Hearing Room is a room with fixed seating and a fixed table in a horseshoe shape at the front of the room for the governing body. This area is separated from the rest of the room by gates on each side of the horseshoe table.

There is fixed seating for approximately 100 guests.

Witnesses will stand at a large podium facing the Board that could actually accommodate two people standing at it.

Television cameras will be located in what the Board of Education staff calls the “pit”. This area is to the right and left of the podium. There will also be a PBS camera behind the Board. This camera is part of the “gavel to gavel” coverage that KLCS will provide.

I have attached a map of the room for your information. Board members will be able to enter the room at the front and close to the table where the Board will be seated for the hearing. This door is

on the left side of the map.