
Chapter 6:
Pursuit of Additional Records and Information
C. Pursuit of Private Records and Information

[June 30, 1998]

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The pursuit of materials from private citizens and private entities proved to be fruitful and greatly enhanced the historical record of the assassination of President Kennedy.

Private citizens donated, often in the form of a Deed of Gift, their own materials to the JFK Collection for the benefit of historians, researchers, and students of the assassination. The Review Board also received countless essays, interview transcripts, and copies of books written by members of the public, most often not accompanied by a Deed of Gift, and these materials have been transferred to the JFK Collection among the files of the Review Board (See 5.1 file series.)

Notable donations from private citizens and entities include photographs, movies, video, and audio materials.

In November of 1995, the Review Board launched a special initiative in Dallas, appealing to the public to turn over any film or photographs it may have that relates to the assassination. As a result, the Review Board acquired important outtakes from KTVT television. The original 45 minute long, 16mm film containing scenes of President and Mrs. Kennedy in Dallas, and subsequent footage of the aftermath of the assassination, was donated by Janet Veazey. Ms. Veazey's father's friend, Roy Cooper Jr., was a photographer for KTVT. Mr. Cooper retrieved the outtakes from the trash and spliced them together, creating a 45 minute silent film. The original of this film now resides in the JFK Collection.

Another home movie from a private citizen was donated to the JFK Collection from Mr. David Taplin. Mr. Taplin's grandfather, _____

Taplin, filmed the exterior of the Dallas Police Department building on the morning that Lee Harvey Oswald was to be transferred to the county jail, but instead was shot inside the building. The film has images of the arrival of the armored car that Oswald was to have been transported in, footage of other film crews covering the event, and scenes on the street. This film has been added to the JFK Collection.

Mr. Robert Groden, who worked on the staff of the HSCA, was deposed by ARRB staff in an attempt to find additional photographic evidence, and to clarify the provenance of the photographic evidence in his possession (See deposition transcript, file number XX.)

Moses Weitzman

Mr. David Lifton, author of *Best Evidence: Disguise and Deception in the Assassination of John F. Kennedy*, testified at the Review Board hearing held in Los Angeles in September 1996. During his testimony, Mr. Lifton announced that he was donating to the Review Board his copy of a 35mm copy of the Zapruder film, as well as audiocassette copies of interviews he conducted beginning in 1966 with medical witnesses at both Parkland Hospital in Dallas and at Bethesda Medical Center. These materials have been transferred to the JFK Collection (**PENDING**).

Another example of film footage acquired for the JFK Collection by the Review Board is the film taken by Kennedy aide David Powers. Mr. Powers was riding in the motorcade in Dallas in the car behind President Kennedy. Mr. Powers ran out of film minutes before the motorcade entered into Dealey Plaza. This film is held by the JFK Library, and a copy was made and transferred to the JFK Collection.

In 1992 Mr. Stephen Tyler produced a 90 minute television documentary about Jim Garrison's investigation into the assassination, "He Must Have Something." While testifying at the Review Board's public hearing held in New Orleans in June 1995, Mr. Tyler announced that he would be donating a copy of his documentary, along with the outtakes of approximately 30 interviews that he conducted for the documentary.

Among those interviewed for the documentary are Jim Garrison, Perry Russo, and Mark Lane.

The Review Board held meetings with executives at CBS Television, the network holding the largest volume of television coverage of the assassination and subsequent specials about the assassination. This material contains rare interview outtakes with individuals including Marina Oswald Porter. In the spirit of the JFK Act, CBS donated its outtakes from these specials to the JFK Collection.

In its effort to comply with the JFK Act, the Kennedy Library reviewed its holdings for groups of records that could possibly contain assassination records. The records of Walter Sheridan were on deposit with the Library. The Library identified and created record identification forms for thirteen file folders of material related to Sheridan's work as an investigative reporter on the Garrison prosecution of Clay Shaw. The Library contacted Mr. Sheridan to inform him that his records would be processed and sent to the JFK Collection at NARA. Mr. Sheridan requested that the Library return the identified assassination records to him. The Library honored this request. Walter Sheridan died [find out when]. Letter to Nancy Sheridan from the Review Board. No response. **Subpoena to Nancy Sheridan in February/March 1997. Negotiations with her attorneys (Miller Cassidy LaRocca and Lewin). Subpoena to Herbert J. Miller. Negotiations with Miller. Miller produced records. Miller interviewed (how detailed should we be here?).** In September the Review Board filed a motion in U.S. District Court to have the Nancy Sheridan subpoena enforced. Nancy Sheridan filed a motion to quash. NBC filed to intervene to be a party to the suit. In February 1998, the Review Board entered settlement discussions with Nancy Sheridan and NBC. After weeks of drafting an agreement, settlement discussions were abandoned and the Review Board again asked the Court to enforce the subpoena. The Court asked the parties to return to the negotiations, and the matter is pending.

James Doyle - donated film footage that may show Oswald in New Orleans in summer 1963, still photos of film.

Mark Oakes -- donated videotapes created by him with supporting info.

The Review Board also acquired important audio materials from the public that relate to the assassination of President Kennedy. The Review Board deposed Mr. Robert White, a private collector who has a voluminous collection of Kennedy memorabilia. Mr. White had in his possession

The Board received additional audio materials from members of the public. Everett Kay donated an audio surveillance tape of Joseph Milteer. Mr. Vincent Palamara, who has conducted extensive interviews of former Secret Service personnel, donated three audiocassettes containing these interviews.

Alyea and Bronson films -- never acquired although negotiations took place.

Private Paper and Records

The Review Board also received extensive paper files from private citizens. Many of these people played a role in prior government investigations into the assassination, and others are surviving family members of these individuals. The Review Board praises their efforts to place these important records into the JFK Collection so that they are available to the American public.

The first private records to be made a part of the JFK Collection came from the families of Jim Garrison and Edward Wegmann. After being approached by the Review Board, the family of the late Jim Garrison agreed to donate a collection of records on the assassination of President Kennedy that Garrison kept at his residence. The 15,000 paged collection included records from his investigation and prosecution of Clay Shaw, as well as other files on individuals or subjects that Garrison thought were connected to the assassination.

The family of the late Edward Wegmann, who was a member of the legal team that defended Clay Shaw, agreed to donate Mr. Wegmann's files. Some of the documents in the Wegmann collection came from the office files of District Attorney Garrison. William Gurvich, an investigator for Garrison, made copies of many internal memoranda and witness interviews from the district attorney's files when he left the office after becoming disenchanted with Garrison and the investigation. He turned the documents over to Clay Shaw's attorneys. There are approximately 6,000 pages of material in the Wegmann collection.

To make this collection of Garrison-era material even more complete, the Review Board acquired the personal papers of Clay Shaw. (*We received copies of part of the collection from David Snyder, a retired New Orleans reporter, and then later received the complete, original set of materials from Jack Sanyer, who wishes not to be named.*) The papers were kept by one of Shaw's friends, and in May 1997 he donated the seven boxes to the Review Board. The collection of Shaw's materials includes a diary, records from his criminal case, correspondence, business records, his passports, personal records, and photographs.

President Gerald Ford donated his desk diaries that he kept while serving on the Warren Commission. These diaries provide insight into the day-to-day operations of the Warren Commission.....

In July 1997, the Review Board announced that the personal files of the late J. Lee Rankin, General Counsel of the Warren Commission, were available to the American public. The files were donated by Rankin's son, attorney James Rankin, Jr., who several months prior had testified at the Review Board hearing held in Los Angeles. The files include memos and handwritten changes to the draft chapters of the final report that were recommended by Commission members, including Representative Gerald Ford (R-MI), John McCloy, and Allen Dulles.

Mr. Wesley Liebeler, former Assistant Counsel to the Warren Commission, also testified to the Review Board at the Board's hearing in Los Angeles in September 1996. He handed over to the Review Board a copy

of six (*double-check this number*) chapters that he has written for a book that was not completed. He also submitted a report that was done at his request by a former UCLA faculty member in the Physics Department, Brian Jones. The report pertains to the Zapruder film, specifically the kind of motion exhibited by President Kennedy when he was struck by bullets.

The Review Board also acquired the handwritten notes of two individuals who had interrogated Oswald while in custody after the assassination. Former FBI agent James P. Hosty, Jr., was deposed by the ARRB staff in XXX 199X. At this time Mr. Hosty donated notes that he said he took during his interrogation of Oswald. Mr. Hosty testified to the Warren Commission that he destroyed these notes, as was routine, but he said that he later found them. A few years later, in November 1997, the Review Board announced the acquisition and release of notes taken by former Dallas Police Captain J.W. "Will" Fritz. Captain Fritz headed the homicide and robbery bureau, and he was the primary interrogator while Oswald was in custody from the afternoon of November 22 until the morning of November 24, 1963.

Martin Underwood

Mr. Frank Ragano, who passed away in 1998, was an attorney for Jimmy Hoffa and Santo Trafficante, major figures associated with organized crime. In 1994, Mr. Ragano published his book *Mob Lawyer*, which purported to be "the inside account of who killed Jimmy Hoffa and JFK." In his book, Mr. Ragano claimed that Jimmy Hoffa had used Ragano as a messenger to ask organized crime figures Trafficante and Carlos Marcello to arrange for the murder of President Kennedy. Mr. Ragano wrote that Trafficante, in 1987, confessed to involvement in President Kennedy's assassination. The book, co-authored by *New York Times* reporter Selwyn Raab, stated that original notes of Ragano supported his assertions.

Believing Mr. Ragano might possess original, contemporaneous notes regarding meetings with organized crime figures relating to the assassination of President Kennedy, the Review Board subpoenaed the notes and deposed Mr. Ragano (G.. Robert Blakey, former counsel to the House Select

Committee on Assassinations, had also recommended that the Review Board depose Mr. Ragano). Mr. Ragano produced several handwritten notes regarding the assassination, but he could not definitively, and under oath, state whether they were written contemporaneously with his meetings in the 1960's or later in connection with his book. *See* Transcript of Frank Ragano Deposition, dated February 11, 1997. The Review Board submitted the original notes to the Secret Service to see if the notes could be dated. The results of the Service's analysis was inconclusive. *See* July 1, 1997 Review Board Staff Memorandum on the Secret Service Report Re Ragano Notes. Copies of the relevant notes are included as exhibits to the deposition of Mr. Ragano. The transcript and audio recording of Mr. Ragano's testimony are available to the public as part of the Review Board's records.

In an attempt to locate any records of FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover and Associate Director Clyde Tolson regarding the assassination, the Review Board subpoenaed the estate of John Mohr, former Assistant to the FBI Director. Mr. Mohr had died in early 1997. Mr. Mohr reported directly to Director Hoover and Associate Director Tolson at the time of the assassination and was executor for the estate of Mr. Tolson. In addition, Mr. Mohr was involved in the controversial disposition of Mr. Hoover's files upon Hoover's death in 1972. With the cooperation of Mr. Mohr's family, the Review Board staff was able to inspect materials that Mr. Mohr had in his possession on the assassination. The Review Board confirmed that these materials were copies of publicly available material. *See* August 14, 1997 Review Board Staff Memorandum Regarding Review of John Mohr Records.

Warren DeBrueys

Ed Butler and the Information Council for the Americas

Letters to the HSCA and Church Committee Staff
--Eileen Dineen/Kevin Walsh

Holland McCombs papers

The Review Board staff reviewed several donated collections of records relating to the Kennedy assassination at the Special Collections Division of the Georgetown University Library. Among these collections were approximately 90,000 pages of documents released under the Freedom of Information Act in the late 1970s. Georgetown acquired redacted versions of the FBI files on Lee Harvey Oswald, Jack Ruby, and the JFK Assassination Investigation following their release under the FOIA. These records did not receive much use over the years at the Georgetown Library, and Georgetown decided that they would donate them to the JFK Collection at NARA.

The Review Board acquired the minute-by-minute account contained in the Associated Press (A.P.) wire copy of the events of November 22 through November 26, 1963 from Mr. Richard Barnes, a former A.P. reporter. The material chronicles the first news reports of the shooting of President Kennedy, the arrest of Lee Harvey Oswald, Jack Ruby shooting Oswald, and the funeral of President Kennedy. Mr. Barnes was assigned to A.P.'s San Francisco Bureau at the time of the assassination. He asked the news editor if he could keep these reports, as they would routinely be thrown out. Mr. Barnes took possession of the wire copy approximately one month after the assassination, and held on to the material since then. Mr. Barnes donated a copy of these materials, and the wire reports are now a part of the JFK Collection.
