

Talking Points

I. Introduction

WMAL is an ABC owned station in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan market. It broadcasts at 630 on the AM broadcast spectrum. Its programming is primarily a news/talk/sports format. Lonna Saunders is the producer and host of the program which broadcasts nightly from 11:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m., Eastern time. The program will take calls from the public which will pose questions and elicit your comments and support for their comments. According to Ms. Saunders, the program listeners are knowledgeable and intelligent. They probably include President Clinton. There should be no surprises from Ms. Saunders, who has a law degree from Northwestern University and has served as chair of the Media and Law Committee of the American Bar Association. Ms. Saunders questions mostly likely will center on what the board does, what it has “uncovered,” the future of the board, the JFK Collection at NARA, and the Zapruder film. There are, however, no guarantees about the questions from listeners. Ms. Saunders explains that the topic of the show will be the JFK assassination with some focus on Wednesday’s hearing regarding the Zapruder film. We have sent a press and information kit to Ms. Saunders. I believe that the listeners’ questions will focus on the assassination, conspiracy theories, government cover-ups, etc. In my conversations with Ms. Saunders, I have explained in depth that the Review Board is not reinvestigating the Kennedy assassination and that our mission is the declassification of government documents related to the assassination.

II. Basic Talking Points

A. The Zapruder Film

1. The original Zapruder film is a 26-second 8-millimeter film considered by archivists, historians and researchers to be among the most important artifacts from the Kennedy assassination. It has been stored at the National Archives since 1978 under a deposit agreement with the Zapruder family. The original Zapruder film is very fragile and must be handled with extreme care by the experts at the National Archives. The original cannot be projected.

2. The Assassination Records Review Board is now in the process of deciding the status and disposition of the original film. The Review Board hearing conducted April 2 (yesterday) was part of that process. It is the opinion of archivists, historians and researchers that the original film is a valuable historical record of the assassination of President Kennedy. The Review Board views the Zapruder film in this context. The Review Board heard expert testimony regarding the legalities involved and the importance of the Zapruder film to the American people. The Review Board will

make a decision on the status and disposition of the film during its April 23-24 hearing in Washington.

B. The Review Board

1. The Review Board is an independent federal panel, consisting of five private citizens.
2. The Review Board's mandate is to identify and secure Kennedy assassination records.
3. It is up to the Review Board to determine which records are to be made public immediately and which ones will have postponed release dates.
4. The purpose of the JFK Act and the Board's work is to provide a full record to the American public, make it available at the National Archives, and allow interested parties to draw their own conclusions about what happened in Dallas 33 years ago.
5. The Review Board is not reinvestigating the assassination of President Kennedy. Our focus is collecting assassination records -- from all sources.
6. The Congress created the Board to have an independent, cost-effective and accountable process for the review and release of these documents.
7. The reality is that there continues to be an intense, unabated interest in the assassination, as reflected in the number of books and documentaries that are still being done. Requests from the public for federal records were showing no sign of slowing and federal agencies were continuing to devote enormous resources to the task of responding to these requests and litigating many of the requests. That costs everyone money. It also costs money to unnecessarily keep records classified. In fact, *The Washington Post* reported that the federal government spends an estimated \$16 billion a year to maintain a system of secrecy.
8. The Review Board will get as many records out in the public domain as possible before it expires. The Review Board's authority currently expires on Sept. 30, 1997. However, we have requested that the President and Congress extend the Review Board for one year. During that time, we will process the extensive Kennedy assassination related CIA and FBI files prepared for the House Select Committee on Assassinations.