

MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 3, 1997

TO: Jack Tunheim

FROM: Thom Wilborn

SUBJ: Talking Points for WMAL Radio Program

I. Introduction

WMAL is an ABC/Disney 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 posing questions for you. Many, I expect, will be comments reflecting their own thoughts about the assassination. 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 Law and Media Committee of the American Bar Association. Ms. Saunders' questions most 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 focus on Wednesday's hearing regarding the Zapruder film. We have sent an 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.

She said that the station will call you shortly after 10:00 p.m., Central Time, or you may call the studio at (202) 686-3010.

II. Areas of Likely Questions

1. Ms. Saunders has said that her questions will center on the issues revolving around the status and disposition of the Zapruder film and the copyright issue. She expects to draw heavily

from the Associated Press story (Attachment 3). Ms. Saunders says that she will not ask you take a position or offer any legal opinions regarding the status and disposition of the film and she will not enter the area of conspiracy theories on who was responsible for the Kennedy assassination. She will ask questions on the legal issues involved in the status and disposition of the film. She will also ask questions regarding the mission of the Review Board and the previous inaccessibility of the records of the Warren Commission and the House Select Committee on Assassinations. Ms. Saunders said that she will control the questions pose by listeners, deciding which are germane to the discussion.

III. Basic Talking Points

A. The Zapruder Film

1. The original Zapruder film is a 26-second 8-millimeter film considered by many archivists, historians and researchers to be among the most important artifacts from the Kennedy assassination. It was purchased by Time-Life shortly after the assassination for \$150,000 and then sold back to the Zapruder family for \$1.00 in 1975. In 1978 it was placed in the National Archives under a storage agreement by LMH Company, which represents 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 many 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. (Attachment 1 is Mr. Gunn's hearing testimony.)

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 keep records unnecessarily classified. In fact, *The Washington Post* reported that the federal government spends an estimated \$16 billion a year to maintain a system of secrecy.

C. Extension

1. The Review Board is working to make as many records public as possible before its legislative authority expires on Sept. 30, 1997. However, the Review Board has requested that President Clinton and the Congress extend the Review Board for one year. During that time, we will process the extensive assassination-related CIA and FBI files prepared for the House Select Committee on Assassinations. As a result of the JFK Act nearly 3.5 million pages of documents have been made public and are available in the JFK Collection at the National Archives. With one additional year, the Review Board plans to complete its review of the extensive FBI and CIA files that were collected in response to requests from the House Select Committee on Assassinations. Additional time also will permit the Review Board to make other records available, including records now in private hands and in the custody of foreign governments. (Attachment 2 is the Executive Summary from the 1996 ARRB Annual Report summarizing the arguments for an extension.)

IV. Recent Activities of the Review Board

1. The Review Board is deeply involved in the process of reviewing and releasing previously classified information. Through January 1997, more than 10,000 documents have been released either in full or in part as a result of the Board's work. We meet regularly in Washington.

These decisions involve difficult issues related to informants and intelligences sources and methods. They are sensitive issues and are important because of their relevance to other documents which the Board will be reviewing in the future.

2. During its first two years, the Review Board has set the standard for the release of thousands of previously secret government documents and files related to the assassination of President Kennedy. Among the records that previously were classified or unavailable that have now been reviewed and released by the Review Board are:

Thousands of records from the CIA's official file on Lee Harvey Oswald and the assassination of President Kennedy;

The controversial House Select Committee on Assassinations Staff Report on Oswald and Mexico City;

The deposition transcript of "John Scelso" (pseudonym), who was the Chief of the CIA's division of the Western Hemisphere that was responsible for Mexico and who was the first person charged with the responsibility of investigating the assassination for the CIA;

The original Marine Corps personnel file on Oswald;

Copies of the official records of District Attorney Jim Garrison's investigation of the assassination;

The private papers of J. Lee Rankin (General Counsel of the Warren Commission), Jim Garrison, and Edward Wegmann (the attorney who represented Clay Shaw in the Garrison probe);

Thousands of records from the FBI's core and related files on the assassination; and

Thousands of once-secret records of the HSCA investigation into the assassination of President Kennedy.

In addition, the Review Board secured and placed into the public record original outtakes of television film taken on the day of the assassination as well as motion picture film taken by presidential aide Dave Powers on President Kennedy's trip to Texas.

V. Broader Talking Points

1. The JFK Act, which created the Review Board, has given the American public an extraordinary and unprecedented opportunity to gain insight into its government and recent history.
2. The Review Board has the opportunity not only to make previously classified records available to the public, it also has the opportunity to redefine and meaning of, and need for, secrecy in government.
3. Hopefully, the unprecedented powers given to an independent panel of citizens will help to restore a measure of confidence in government.
4. The controversy surrounding the Kennedy assassination is unlikely to disappear even after the Review Board's work is completed. But the American public will know that no information about the assassination is being hidden by the government. Perhaps we will see a way for government business to be conducted more effectively -- and more openly -- in the future.

VI. Photograph Record

1. Last year, the Review Board initiated a public appeal for any photographs and motion pictures that would enhance the historical record of the assassination of President Kennedy. This appeal called on individuals who had taken or were in possession of photographs or motion pictures of Dealey Plaza on November 22, 1963, to present them to the Review Board for inclusion in the JFK Collections at NARA. As a result of this initiative, two very important films were donated showing events that occurred before and after the assassination.

Veazey Film-- The so-called Veazey film consists of KTVT television news film outtakes that had been discarded following the assassination of President Kennedy. Literally rescued from the trash by photographer Roy Cooper Jr., the 45-minute black-and-white 16mm film contains unique scenes before and after the assassination. The film, along with one copy, was held by Cooper and his friend, Eli Sturges, and later their heirs. Janet Veazey, Sturges' stepdaughter, read a Dallas newspaper account of the Review Board's search for photographic materials from the assassination and notified the Review Board of the film's existence in May 1996. The film was retrieved and transported to NARA, where it was viewed and duplicated on video tape. The discovery of the film was confirmation of the Review Board's claim that photographs and films, which have never been publicly seen or reviewed, do exist.

Powers Film-- Last November, the Review Board, with the cooperation of Dave Powers, released a three-minute, 16 mm amateur film taken by President Kennedy's aide, Mr. Powers. On November 21-22, 1963, Mr. Powers accompanied President Kennedy to Texas. The film, never before seen publicly, contains a series of short sequences (some lasting only a few seconds), but does

not show the assassination itself. Powers, who was riding in the Secret Service car directly behind the presidential limousine during the Dallas motorcade, ran out of film minutes before the motorcade entered Dealey Plaza. Because of Powers' position within the Kennedy White House, much of the film was taken from a perspective not permitted to news photographers.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Introductory Comments by T. Jeremy Gunn before Review Board on April 2, 1997
2. Executive Summary from 1996 ARRB Annual Report
3. Two Associated Press reports on ARRB public hearing on April 2, 1997