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Subject: Russo Videotaped Interviews
Doug, I tried to send this to you and Jeremy earlier, but my memo showed that it did not get through to you. If you already got it, disregard. You and Jeremy can call me at (617) 482-1350, if you want to talk about it. Thanks. Tom
I. Introduction
On Monday, March 10, 1997, I viewed approximately three hours of a videotaped interview made by Rick Russo with five witnesses to President Kennedy's autopsy. The witnesses were: Floyd Riebe, Jerrol Custer, Dennis David, Paul O'Connor, and James Jenkins. The interview was conducted in Pittsburgh during late 1992 or 1993. Russo had the five men sit at a table together and they were all on camera answering questions from him (and later Wecht, as well as a few questions from Mark Crouch whose questions were conveyed through Russo) at the same time. The format sometimes led to more than one person talking at one time and the questioning was sometimes leading and imprecise. Russo failed to clarify a lot of statements that were made. Nevertheless, there were some interesting statements made. I will chronicle below what I believe to be the highlights of what each individual had to say during the interview. Because they were being interviewed together, I will record what each individual said, in order, as the interview was conducted.
II. The Interview
Dennis David (David) He said that the President's body arrived at Bethesda in a "gray shipping casket," transported in a black hearse. Approximately 25 minutes later, the entourage that included the First Lady and the Secretary of Defense arrives at the front entrance to the building.
Paul O'Connor (O'Connor) The body arrived in a "grayish pink" casket and was contained in a body bag. The President's body was unclothed with a sheet around the midsection. He described a massive head wound and used his hand to describe it, moving from the side head into the back of the head. (As is often the case when someone is describing the head wound, it was imprecise and the parameters of the wound were not made clear with his hand.)
James Jenkins (Jenkins) The body arrived in a "grayish brown" casket. In response to a question, O'Connor, Custer and David all said that they heard a helicopter or helicopters around the time that the official entourage arrived at Bethesda.
Jerrol Custer (Custer) He said that he had already taken a full set of x-rays by the time the official entourage arrived at Bethesda.
Custer He said that he took 14 or 15 x-rays of the President's body. He made three trips out of the morgue to his department to get more film.
Jenkins When the sheets were taken off of the unclothed body of the President, Jenkins filled in the cover sheet of the autopsy report as Boswell dictated to him.
O'Connor He said that the bullet wound in the back did not penetrate the plural cavity. The bullet bruised the intercostal (sp?) muscle, but did not traverse the body.
Jenkins He described the removal of the organs and the probing of the back wound. At one point, Jenkins said that one could see the impression of Humes' finger, as he probed the wound, against the plural cavity, but it was not
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