
Martin Underwood

Martin Underwood, a former advance man for Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, was part of the advance team that went to Texas in November 1963. The Review Board's primary interest in Underwood was to clarify and obtain additional information regarding Underwood's alleged contact with Win Scott, a former CIA Chief of Station in Mexico City, several years after the assassination. The Review Board first received information on Underwood's meeting with Scott from Gus Russo who had interviewed Underwood as part of his research for Seymour Hersh's book, *The Dark Side of Camelot*. Russo informed the Review Board that President Johnson had sent Underwood to Mexico City in 1966 or 67 to see what he could learn about the Kennedy assassination which he had regarded as one of the two "cancers" attacking his presidency. Russo gave the Review Board copies of Underwood's handwritten notes, which were penned on White House stationery, ostensibly documenting his meeting with Win Scott.

The handwritten notes stated that Win Scott confided in Underwood that the CIA "blew it" in Dallas in November 1963. On the morning of November 22, 1963, CIA had intelligence information that a plane arrived in Mexico City from Havana. A mysterious passenger got out of the plane and then boarded another plane for Dallas. According to these notes, Win Scott told Underwood that CIA had identified this passenger as Fabian Escalante.

Review Board staff interviewed Mr. Underwood in person in July, 1997. This meeting was conducted informally and off-the-record. Underwood was cooperative and loquacious about his days as an advance man, but his account of his meeting with Win Scott differed from the version furnished by Gus Russo. Underwood explained that he went to Mexico City in 1966 to advance President Johnson's trip and to ensure that there would be a big crowd for him as there had been for President Kennedy. He stated that the Mexico City trip was so successful that it turned out to be the career maker for him. He recounted how he had met with Win Scott whom he knew to be the person who "could make the wheels go round." The purpose of the trip had nothing to do with the assassination of Kennedy, however, the subject of the assassination came up in course of their conversation. When asked about the specifics of his conversation with Win Scott, he went on to retell essentially the same story that he had given in the handwritten notes,

i.e. CIA's surveillance of the mysterious passenger at the Mexico City airport.

Underwood was under the impression the Win Scott had a guilty conscience about the assassination because he felt that CIA could have done more to prevent it. Scott apparently lamented the fact that since the Mexico City airport was outside of CIA's jurisdiction, he could do nothing other than pass the information on to the FBI in Dallas. According to Underwood, Scott was distressed that the FBI did nothing with the information and that it should have shared it with the Secret Service as a routine procedure.

Mr. Underwood initially claimed to have no memory of any notes he took regarding his trip to Mexico City. When shown the copy of the notes that Gus Russo had given to the Review Board, Mr. Underwood did remember writing the notes but explained that he had written the notes in 1992 or 1993 for Mr. Russo who had sought his story as part of the research he was conducting for Seymour Hersh's book. When later asked why they were written on White House stationery, Mr. Underwood explained that he had a lot of White House stationery left over from his days working under President Johnson. When the Review Board asked whether he had the originals of these notes, Mr. Underwood could not remember.

Subsequent to this meeting, after the Review Board requested Mr. Underwood to agree to be interviewed under oath, Underwood forwarded to the Review Board a different set of typed notes of his trip to Mexico City and meeting with Win Scott. These typed notes documented Underwood's activities in Mexico City and briefly mentioned his meeting with Win Scott. However, in these typed notes dated April, 1966, Underwood made no mention of his conversation with Scott about the Kennedy assassination. These notes strictly spoke of Underwood's seeking the Chief of Station's assistance in staging a big welcome for President Johnson. They backed up this part of the story that he had shared personally with the Review Board.

The Review Board staff also sought to verify additional information provided by Russo and Hersh, that Underwood had knowledge of the alleged connection between President Kennedy, Judith Campbell and Sam Giancana. To this end, the Review Board wanted to follow up on a story that Underwood had been instructed to "keep an eye" on Judy Campbell Exner during a 1960 train ride to Chicago to deliver a satchel of money to Giancana. Underwood denied both having ever been on a train with Ms.

Campbell and having any knowledge of her making a delivery to Giancana.

In light of the discrepancies in what Marty Underwood told the Review Board and what he allegedly shared with Russo, the Review Board wanted to give Underwood the opportunity to tell his story under oath. Due to serious health problems, Mr. Underwood has been unavailable to meet with the Review Board again and has declined repeated invitations to make a statement under oath.

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