

DRAFT

MEMORANDUM

February 28, 1996

From: Joe Freeman

To: Jeremy Gunn

Subject: House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA) Contacts with New Orleans District Attorney's Office, re: Garrison Investigation Records

A review of HSCA records reveals that the Committee had a series of contacts with the office of New Orleans District Attorney (NODA) Harry Connick concerning access to and review of Garrison-era files pertaining to the trial of Clay Shaw. These contacts are documented in Outside Contact Reports (OCRs) and memoranda generated by Committee staffers. These original OCRs are located in HSCA files presently located at the Review Board's office in Washington, D.C.

The first documented HSCA contact with NODA designed to secure Shaw trial records occurred on December 17, 1976. This contact is detailed in HSCA Record 180-10082-10184, a February 16, 1978 memorandum from HSCA Staff Counsel Jonathan Blackmer to Chief Counsel Robert Blakey (Exhibit A). While early HSCA efforts at record collection from NODA were focused on Grand Jury transcripts, Blackmer makes clear that his request of Connick's office was for *all* materials generated by NODA in connection with the Shaw trial.

As part of the HSCA's ongoing if sporadic attempts to obtain Shaw trial records, HSCA Staff Investigator Martin J. Daly met with Connick in New Orleans on March 20, 1978. This meeting is referenced in Daly's OCR of the same day, which constitutes HSCA Record 180-10076-10347 (Exhibit B). According to the OCR, Connick assigned Lt. Raymond Comstock, Chief Investigator for NODA, to assist Daly. Lt. Comstock "informed the undersigned [Daly] that he had in his office a (5) five drawer file cabinet containing papers, tapes, statements and interviews pertaining to the original investigation...". Again according to Daly's OCR, Daly reviewed these files, copied some of them and returned to Washington with the copies: "After perusing these files the following papers were obtained (copies) for inclusion into this Committee's system." Daly's OCR lists 12 documents as having been copied. The file routing slip for Daly's OCR, part of Exhibit B, references "Contact Report and Documents" and lists the subject matter of the copied documents being entered into the HSCA filing system.

Presumably on the basis of Daly's preliminary review of the contents of Lt. Comstock's file

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cabinet, two HSCA staffers -- researchers Betsy Palmer and Patricia Orr -- visited New Orleans and again examined the five file drawers over April 11th through April 14th, 1978. This visit and document review is referenced in:

- HSCA Record 180-10084-10080: a Betsy Palmer OCR entered into the Committee's filing system on April 21, 1978 (Exhibit C).
- HSCA Record 180-10088-10476: a memorandum, dated April 19, 1978, from Betsy Palmer to the Director (Exhibit D).
- HSCA Record 180-10102-10373: a Patricia Orr OCR dated May 16, 1978 (Exhibit E).

Exhibit C references Palmer's and Orr's review of the five file drawers. Exhibits D and E go further in that they include detailed, original indexes of the contents of the drawers which Palmer and Orr generated as a function of their review. Palmer produced a 5-page index for three of the file drawers; Orr a 14-page index of the other two.

Together, these indexes itemize literally hundreds of documents, tapes, photos, etc. Moreover, Orr's OCR (Exhibit E) itemized -- separate from her index --- 28 documents described as "received from" NODA. Palmer also copied and left NODA's office with numerous documents which constitute "Attachment D" of her memorandum (Exhibit D). Betsy Palmer references in both her OCR and her memorandum that she and Orr's examination of NODA files was constrained by the amount of time they had, and it is clear that their review and interest extended to all the contents of each of the five drawers, not simply to the documents they had time to copy.

Within the HSCA collection as currently organized by the National Archives and Record Administration, Palmer's OCR is followed by five folders labeled "Attachment D," constituting the original copies Palmer brought back from New Orleans as well as instructions on which HSCA staffers should receive copies of the documents. Many of these documents have original HSCA staffer notations on them referencing the NODA drawer and file from which they were copied. Similarly, there are two folders of original copies of NODA documents in the HSCA collection which follow Orr's OCR. At least one of these contains an original ink notation signed by Orr. The HSCA routing slip for Orr's OCR references "Materials brought from New Orleans by Orr" (part of Exhibit E).

HSCA records also document a subsequent visit to the NODA office by HSCA Investigator Martin

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Daly, on May 17, 1978. This visit is referenced in two OCRs: HSCA Records 180-10091-10248 (Exhibit F) and 180-10091-10242 (Exhibit G). On this visit Daly secured from Lt. Comstock an original artifact which remains in the HSCA collection to this day: a New Orleans Public Library card taken out in the name of Clem Bertrand.

Freeman e:\wp-docs\022896

File 4.0.2. Garrison Investigation