

## MEMORANDUM

July 29, 1996

To: The File  
cc - Jeremy Gunn

From: Joe Freeman

Subject: Trip to Review Holland McCombs Papers at UT-Martin

Last week (July 22 through July 25) I traveled to the University of Tennessee branch campus at Martin for the purpose of scanning relevant portions of the Holland McCombs Papers for assassination records. The Review Board had been alerted to the presence of assassination records in the McCombs Papers by researcher Wallace Milam, who lives in nearby (40 miles) Dyersburg, TN.

Having traveled to Martin on the evening of the 22nd, on the morning of the 23rd I had an early breakfast with Milam to review the preliminary work he had already done before proceeding to the Special Collections section of the Paul Meek Library at UT-Martin. Milam accompanied me to the Library for this first day of review. The Director of the Special Collections department, Mr. Dieter Ullrich, was waiting for us and was extremely helpful throughout my stay.

Holland McCombs (1901-1991) was a Life Magazine correspondent in Dallas at the time of the assassination and for a number of years thereafter. He was a man of varied pursuits and experiences (as touched upon in the attached biographical sketch prepared by Wallace Milam), but our interest in him is a function of his work for Life in the aftermath of the assassination.

The McCombs Papers -- open to the public since early this year -- number in the hundreds of boxes, but seven of these (Series 5, Boxes 150-157) are directly concerned with McCombs' work on and ongoing interest in the assassination. The largest single component of these seven tightly-packed boxes is news clippings, both from the immediate post-assassination period and from the Garrison/Shaw trial period. The second largest component are handwritten notes, often difficult or near-impossible to read (especially in the kind of limited time-frame available to me last week). The remainder of the boxes is made up of the kind of records I spent my two days at UT-Martin looking at: typed textual material. This usually consisted of internal Life memos to and from McCombs and Life's New York office, assassination-related correspondence, etc. Broadly, these records fall into four general groups: 1) immediate post-assassination follow-up, circa 1963-1964, 2) some original investigative material (interviews, analysis) from Life's subsequently aborted "reinvestigation" of the assassination, circa late 1966 and 1967, 3) photo and film acquisition records, and, 4) correspondence and internal memos relating to the trial of Clay Shaw in New Orleans (Shaw had been a friend of McCombs since the late 1940's and McCombs took an active, personal and partisan interest in the case).

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I scanned every folder of the seven relevant boxes, photocopying items that seemed of most interest. These included, especially, any original investigative efforts McCombs/Life undertook during the 1966-67 period. I also photocopied a large amount of records detailing Life's photo/film acquisition efforts in Dallas. These, I hope, may prove of some use to our own agency's efforts in this area. In all, I photocopied in the vicinity of 600 pages of records.

Since returning from Martin, I have organized these photocopies in subject-heading folders and placed them in a hollinger box in our SCIF labeled "McCombs Papers." In many cases, I have indicated the record's physical location in the McCombs Papers by penciling in the original box and folder number.

In addition to the eight boxes of textual material (Boxes 150-157), the McCombs Papers also include three boxes (Boxes 390 and 391, and a box of oversized photographs) of photographic material in which assassination-related photographs can be found. In Box 390, for instance, there is photo of Drs. Perry and Clark at Parkland immediately following the death of President Kennedy, a collection of domestic photos of Marina and her children (circa 1964), a photo of Jesse Curry announcing Oswald's death, photos of Jack Ruby with his "girls" from the Carousel Club, contact sheets containing multiple shots of the Ruby trial and bond hearing, shots of the rifle range where Oswald was alleged to have practiced, aerial views of Dallas, etc. Box 391 contains a folder of photos taken during the May, 1964, Warren Commission reenactment of the assassination in Dallas. Lastly, in the oversize photograph box, there are photos of Oswald's rooming house, Oswald under arrest, Marina arriving at Parkland Hospital on the 24th of November, Oswald's funeral, etc. (In Box 154 there are also contact sheets of photos taken at Parkland during Jack Ruby's death watch.) In some cases, I made a photocopy of these photos for inclusion in the material I brought back from Martin. Should it be determined that we desire actual prints of any of these photos, UT-Martin (for a fee) would produce negatives for us.

Also attached to this memo is a Wallace Milam-generated index to some of the boxes and a folder-title index of the relevant boxes generated by UT-Martin (available on the internet at [WWW.UTM.EDU/DEPARTMENTS/ACADPRO/LIBRARY/SPECCOLL](http://WWW.UTM.EDU/DEPARTMENTS/ACADPRO/LIBRARY/SPECCOLL)).

Finally, there are other potentially relevant files in the McCombs Papers (not part of the JFK Assassination Series) which I was not able to peruse in the limited time I had at UT-Martin last week.

For instance, there are folders entitled "RFK Assassination", "International House - Trade Mart", "Richard Billings" and "Autobiography - Rough Draft." I have alerted Wallace Milam to these and others folder titles, and he will likely review them and provide us with feedback in due course.

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Attachments

Freeman e:\wp-docs\072996

File 4.29.7 UT-Martin (McCombs Papers)