

MEMORANDUM

April 18, 1996

To: Jeremy Gunn
Via: Tim Wray
From: Doug Horne
Subject: JFK Autopsy X-Ray Technician Jerrol Custer

On March 5, 1996 ARRB mailed a contact letter to Jerrol Custer. The letter included a full information packet on the JFK Act, and asked him to write us, or call collect so that we could set up a telephone interview with him at a time of mutual convenience.

I recently suggested to Tim Wray that it was time to initiate telephonic contact with Mr. Custer to find out if he had received our letter, and if so, to set up a date for a telephonic interview. He agreed and I made the call yesterday, on April 17, 1996. The call report is attached. I wish to emphasize that except for apologizing for reaching him during dinner (and offering to call back at another time), asking whether he had received our letter, and explaining that the only purpose of my call was to set up a date for a telephonic interview, I did no talking, and simply listened to what Jerrol Custer had to say. He was very uncooperative, very tense, and hung up on me after he had made his statement. I did not even have the opportunity to respond to his concerns, or better explain our purposes and interest in talking to him.

This autopsy participant is an important witness to history, since he appears to be the person who positioned the portable X-Ray machine in the morgue at Bethesda, actually took the X-Rays and then delivered them upstairs several times for developing before bringing them back down to the radiologist, Dr. Ebersole. Furthermore, he has voluntarily consented to several interviews in the past with researchers. Those that I can cite are listed below:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Interviewed By</u>
9/30/79	David Lifton (telephone)
10/07/79	David Lifton (telephone)
circa 1980	David Lifton (on film)

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circa 1988	KRON-T.V. from San Francisco (on videotape)
1/04/88	Harrison Livingstone (telephone)
10/08/90	Harrison Livingstone (telephone)
10/29/90	Harrison Livingstone (telephone)
3/20/91	Harrison Livingstone (telephone)
3/25/91	Harrison Livingstone (telephone)
3/26/91	Harrison Livingstone (telephone)
4/28/91	Harrison Livingstone (telephone)
9/23/91	Harrison Livingstone (telephone)
11/22/91	Harrison Livingstone (telephone)
November 1993	Manhattan News Conference (reported on by Reuters and AP)--sponsored by Harrison Livingstone; also appearing were Drs. David Mantik and Gary Aguilar
Spring 1995	Walt Brown (telephone)
March 1996	David Mantik (telephone)

A great number of statements and allegations have reportedly been made during Mr. Custer's many contacts with the research community which are contrary to the official record. Because Mr. Custer never testified before the Warren Commission, and was never interviewed by the HSCA, cautious scholars of the case are skeptical of quotations attributed to him by assassination researchers who, in many cases, because they are selling a book or television program, are not viewed as completely neutral or unbiased conduits for the statements attributed to him.

The Review Board is in a unique position to conduct completely neutral, unbiased questioning of Jerrol Custer regarding his observations and experiences on the weekend of November 22-23, 1963. We have the capability, and I would argue, the obligation to create the first government records of his observations at and following the autopsy, and to place this record of our contact with him in the JFK collection at the National Archives, so that the American public can independently evaluate its significance in relation to the entire universe of medical evidence.

Accordingly, although our first attempts to contact him have not borne fruit, I do not feel we should abandon our attempts. I recommend that we send Jerrol Custer another letter which explains in plain language that we have no connection whatsoever with the Warren Commission or the HSCA, and that we have no official position on the assassination, and no active interest except preserving records for history, and clarifying existing records, where possible. We should emphasize the important part he can play in clarifying critical aspects of the medical records related to the death of President Kennedy. We might also mention our power to grant immunity, and to issue subpoenas, and offer to do so if he desires. This letter should be sent Registered Mail, as an attention-getter,

and should request that he call us by a clearly identified suspense date. (Rationale: Jerrol Custer is one of the individuals who received a written Order of Silence from the Navy in late November, 1963 threatening him with Court Martial if he discussed the events of 22-23 November, 1963 with anyone. He reportedly claims to subsequently have had an unpleasant experience with an HSCA staffer. For these reasons, this witness to history who obviously has not been hesitant to talk to researchers, may be wary of talking to officials of the government, and may require special reassurance.)

Jerrol Custer (who took the autopsy X-Rays), like John Stringer (who took the autopsy photographs), is in a unique position to clarify numerous questions about existing medical records. If he does not respond to the letter of encouragement I have suggested above, I believe we should seriously consider issuing him a subpoena.

In conclusion, I am prepared to draft such a letter of encouragement if so directed.