

Memorandum

To: Jack Tunheim
CC: David Marwell, Anne Buttimer, File
From: Tom Samoluk
Date: May 31, 2017
Subject: Report on New Orleans Trip; May 30-June 2, 1995

I. Introduction and Purpose of New Orleans Trip

I visited New Orleans, Louisiana from Tuesday, May 30 to Friday, June 2, 1995 on official business as a staff member of the Assassination Records Review Board. The purpose of the trip was to:

1. Interview potential witnesses for the Review Board's June 28th public hearing in New Orleans;
2. Obtain records in the possession of local government agencies or private parties that should be included in the President John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection; and
3. Interview witnesses to obtain information regarding the existence and location of assassination records, and leads regarding other individuals who may be able to assist the Review Board in the search for additional assassination records.

Chief Investigator Anne Buttimer travelled to New Orleans with me. Some of the interviews were conducted jointly; others we conducted separately. Anne's trip report will cover interviews that she conducted without me and ones for which she was the "lead" staff person. I will note in this report when additional information may be obtained from Anne's report.

II. Activities in New Orleans -- Witnesses Interviewed, Records Search and Hearing Advance Work

Tuesday, May 30, 1995

A. Mr. Stephen Tyler

I interviewed Mr. Tyler during the evening of Tuesday, May 30th at the Lafayette Hotel. He is the producer and director of the well-received 1992 documentary entitled "He Must Have Something," which focused on the investigation in the assassination of President Kennedy conducted by New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison.

Tyler is a native of New Orleans and interviewed numerous people for his documentary, which aired on several PBS television channels across the country. He has maintained an interest in the assassination since completing his documentary and had several suggestions on where the Board should search for additional assassination records.

Tyler agreed to have his documentary and outtakes from the documentary become part of the JFK Collection. I recommend that he be one of the witnesses at the New Orleans public hearing.

Wednesday, May 31, 1995

B. Ms. Betty Lewis

Anne and I interviewed Ms. Betty Lewis, of the New Orleans Criminal Court Clerk's Office on Wednesday, May 31st at the Courthouse. She provided us with the record from the Clay Shaw trial.

Anne's report provides additional information about this interview.

C. Ms. Cynthia Wegmann, Esq.

Anne and I interviewed Ms. Wegmann at her law office located at 1100 Poydras Avenue. She is the daughter of the late Edward Wegmann, a member of the Clay Shaw defense team. As a college student, she attended the trial of Mr. Shaw and assisted the defense team with routine matters.

Ms. Wegmann showed us 3 boxes of records from her father's files. There may be additional files in her attic at home. She will check on those additional files. Ms.

Wegmann agreed to give us the records for inclusion in the JFK Collection after she organizes the records.

Upon our invitation, Ms. Wegmann has agreed to be a witness at the June 28th hearing.

D. Ms. Angela Vachetta, Old U.S. Mint Building

On Wednesday, May 31, I met with Ms. Angela Vachetta of the Louisiana Office of State Museum, which oversees the Old U.S. Mint Building. Ms. Vachetta gave me a tour of the meeting room where the June 28th public hearing will be held. The room suits the Board's needs very well. There is a raised stage for the Board to be seated at tables in the front of the room. There is plenty of room for a witness table, up to 100 chairs, and for reporters and electronic equipment on the side.

The building is located in the French Quarter on Esplanade Avenue, a main street. There will be easy access into the building for members of the public and the media.

Additional details regarding a sound system and other logistics were discussed and are being worked out.

E. Wayne Everard

On Wednesday, May 31, Anne and I interviewed Wayne Everard, Archivist for the New Orleans Public Library. We reviewed records from the Garrison investigation which are at the Library, but remain the property of the District Attorney's Office.

Additional information on this interview and the records are contained in Anne's report.

F. Rosemary James

On Wednesday evening, May 31st, I interviewed Rosemary James at her residence in the French Quarter. Ms. James was a newspaper reporter, and later a television reporter, who broke the Garrison investigation story and covered the trial.

Ms. James provided helpful contextual information about what was going on in New Orleans during the Garrison investigation. She also gave the names of several individuals who could provide us information about records, specifically records of the late Clay Shaw.

Thursday, June 1, 1995

G. Dr. Michael Kurtz

I interviewed Dr. Kurtz on the morning of Thursday, June 1st at Don's Restaurant in Hammond, Louisiana. He is a Professor of History at Southeastern Louisiana University and the author of "Crime of the Century."

Dr. Kurtz has been invited to testify at the hearing and outlined what he would say at the hearing. He discussed the importance of certain Oval Office tapes at the JFK Library and the LBJ Library, Cuban foreign relations records, as well as others.

H. Harry Connick and Camille Buras

On Thursday afternoon, June 1st, Anne and I interviewed District Attorney Harry Connick and First Assistant District Attorney Camille Buras.

Mr. Connick raised several issues relative to his obligation to remain in compliance with Louisiana law when dealing with the records from the Garrison investigation which his office still holds. Ms. Buras has not had the opportunity to review the records which are in her office in a five drawer file cabinet. She wanted to do so before we looked at the records.

Both Mr. Connick and Ms. Buras indicated a desire to cooperate, but believe that they need to conduct more research regarding what they can allow us to do with the records under state law.

Mr. Connick's status as a witness for the public hearing is still uncertain. Following Mr. Connick's departure from the meeting, Ms. Buras indicated that she thought he would decide in favor of testifying.

Ms. Buras and I are scheduled to have a telephone conversation on Friday, June 9th to further discuss their review of records and Mr. Connick's position on testifying at the hearing.

I. Mr. Lyon Garrison, Esq.

On Thursday evening, June 2nd, Anne and I interviewed Mr. Lyon Garrison, one of the five children of the late Jim Garrison. The interview was conducted at his downtown law office. Mr Garrison has at his home approximately five boxes of records from his father's investigation into the assassination of President Kennedy.

He agreed to give the Board the original records, after he reviews them.

Anne's trip report contains more detailed information regarding Mr. Lyon Garrison.

Friday, June 2, 1995

J. Rafael Goyenche III and Anthony Rodosti

On Friday morning, June 2nd, I interviewed Mr. Goyeneche and Mr. Rodosti of the Metropolitan Crime Commission, a non-profit, private citizens group.

We discussed what records they have that could be of interest to the Review Board. They have files on Carlos Marcello and approximately 100 boxes of records at a warehouse. The warehouse records are not clearly labelled, but could contain information on organized crime figures that is important to the JFK Collection.

Mr. Goyeneche and Mr. Rodosti expressed some privacy and informant concerns about their records. They asked for a letter outlining what the Board was seeking from them, which they would present to their Board of Directors for consideration on Tuesday, June 8th. We sent the letter and agreed to continue our discussions after the Board of Directors met. At this time, I do not know the results of the Board of Directors meeting.

K. Herman Kohlman, Esq.

On Friday morning, June 2, I interviewed Mr. Kohlman at his New Orleans residence. He was an assistant district attorney under Jim Garrison. His connection to the case is that he received the call from Jack Martin, immediately after the assassination, during which Martin stated that David Ferrie was involved in the shooting in Dallas. He had no substantive role in Garrison's 1967 investigation.

Mr. Kohlman provided interesting anecdotes and agreed to further consider where the Board could look for assassination records.

L. Mrs. Lindy Boggs

After several telephone conversations and correspondence, former Congresswoman Lindy Boggs agreed to be witness at the June 28th public hearing. She called me at the hotel on Thursday, June 1 to confirm her appearance. Mrs. Boggs will testify in support of the Board's efforts and will state that she will give us access to her late husband's papers at Tulane University.

M. Lou Ivon

Mr. Ivon was the chief investigator for Jim Garrison's assassination investigation. Mr. Ivon was supposed to join us at our meeting at the District Attorney's Office. He did not show up until after we had departed. Subsequently, we missed each other on the telephone. I am still planning on interviewing him.

N. James Alcock

I spoke on the telephone with Mr. Alcock while I was in New Orleans. He was the assistant district attorney who tried the Shaw case for Jim Garrison. Mr. Alcock said that he has no records and has no suggestions on where to locate records, except in the District Attorney's Office.

O. Johann Rush

I spoke to Mr. Rush on the telephone while I was in New Orleans. He filmed Lee Harvey Oswald after Oswald's August 1963 arrest and while he handed out leaflets at the Trade Mart. I believe his films are already part of the JFK Collection as Warren Commission exhibits. Many years after the assassination, he became an assassination researcher. He made some suggestions about the location of records.

We agreed to talk again. Mr. Rush is a potential witness for the New Orleans hearing.

P. BRILAB Tapes Search

On Thursday, June 1, Anne and I went to the U.S. Federal District Court Clerk's Office and had copied some preliminary records from the BRILAB investigation federal prosecution of Carlos Marcello. Audio tapes that were sealed prior to the trial may be relevant to the JFK Collection. The records we had copied could be important in locating the audio tapes.