

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

ASSASSINATION RECORDS REVIEW BOARD

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In re: :
PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY :
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CORRECTED TRANSCRIPT

Deposition of DR. J. THORNTON BOSWELL

Pages 1 thru 223

College Park, Maryland
February 26, 1996

MILLER REPORTING COMPANY, INC.

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1 body, and all those were distorted. The true fact
2 was that the casket was a bronze casket that had a-
3 -when it arrived, it had a broken handle, and that
4 had to be taken out of--he was brought in the
5 morgue in that. And the casket was removed by the-
6 -by Gawlers, and then another one was brought in.
7 And all kinds of stories were written about how
8 first there was no body and no casket, and
9 different kinds of caskets were described. Then
10 the wrappings, the President arrived wrapped in
11 sheets and a pillowcase around his head, and
12 different stories were published about that.

13 Jim Humes, immediately when we removed the
14 wrappings, stuck those--we had a washing machine in
15 the morgue, and he stuck those in the washing
16 machine, said he didn't want those appearing in a
17 barn out in Kansas sometime, and they were all
18 laundered.

19 Just offhand, I'm sorry, I can't think of
20 other stories, but there were a lot.

21 Bob Karnei, he was later--when he retired,
22 he was the commanding officer at the AFIP. He

1 know what I was involved. Ludicrous. That is what
2 I did.

3 Q When you made reference to the notes that
4 you copied out, were you referring to the document
5 that's marked Exhibit 2, or is that something
6 different?

7 A Now, this is the product of--yeah. It's
8 the product of those notes.

9 Q The question would be whether there were
10 notes that you copied down as one document and then
11 you used the notes in order to draft the document
12 that's in your hand.

13 A The only thing that was retained was this.

14 Q Exhibit 2?

15 A Right.

16 Q Now, I presume that the notes that you
17 took during the autopsy did not resemble in any way
18 the document that you have in your hand now,
19 Exhibit 2.

*Let to
the
opening
witness*

20 A Well, they did, yes. I mean, I didn't
21 dream this up out of whole cloth.

22 Q Certainly I understand the content, but

1 I'm just referring to the text that is written in
2 Exhibit 2 tracks reasonably closely the language of
3 the final report. And what I'm interested in is
4 what the two to three pages of notes looked like.

5 A I can't recall. I mean, I--they would
6 have been my shorthand version of what you're
7 looking at here, basically, in my own shorthand
8 manner, whatever it may have been.

9 Q You would agree, I assume, that the
10 document you're holding in your hand, Exhibit 2, is
11 a basically completed autopsy protocol that tracks
12 the language of the final autopsy protocol that's
13 Exhibit 1?

14 A Yes.

15 Q And I assume that the notes that you made
16 while you were at Bethesda during the autopsy were
17 not written in sentence and paragraph form.

18 A No. They were shorthand.

19 Q So what kinds of things, then, were
20 written on it? Measurements?

21 A Measurements, yeah, sure. Primarily
22 measurements. That's where these measurements came

1 from.

2 Q So when you drafted--well, first, was
3 there any other draft of the autopsy protocol other
4 than the one that you're holding in your hand now--

5 A No.

6 Q --Exhibit 2?

7 A No. There was not.

8 Q So when you wrote down the information--
9 well, when you were drafting what is now Exhibit 2,
10 would it be fair to say that you had in your hand
11 two or three pages, approximately--

12 A Right.

13 Q --of handwritten notes--

14 A And I converted the shorthand information
15 there to that document.

16 Q When you say "that document," you're
17 referring to Exhibit 2?

18 A Yes, exactly.

19 Q Was there any information that was
20 contained on the handwritten notes that was not
21 included in the document that's now Exhibit 2--

22 A I don't believe so.



mc

1 Q Did you ever make a copy that--a copy of
2 the notes that contained the same information as
3 was on the original handwritten notes that was in
4 any form other than the form that appears in
5 Exhibit 2?

6 A No.

7 Q Have you ever observed that the document
8 now marked Exhibit 1 in the original appears to
9 have bloodstains on it as well?

*Bodily
fluids*

10 A Yes, I do notice it now. These were J's.
11 I'm sure I gave these back to J. I presume I did.
12 I don't know where they came from.

13 Q Did you ever have any concern about the
14 President's blood being on the document that's now
15 marked Exhibit 1?

16 A I can't recall, to tell you the truth.

17 Q Do you see any inconsistency at all
18 between destroying some handwritten notes that
19 contained blood on them but preserving other
20 handwritten notes that also had blood on them?

21 A Well, only that the others were of my own
22 making. I didn't--wouldn't have the habit of



1 destroying something someone else prepared. That's
2 the only difference that I can conceive of. I
3 don't know where these went. I don't know if they
4 went back to J or where they went. I have no idea.
5 I certainly didn't keep them. I kept nothing, as a
6 matter of fact.

7 Q I'd like to show you the testimony that
8 you offered before the Warren Commission. This is
9 in Exhibit 11 to this deposition. I'd like you to
10 take a look at pages 372 to the top of 373, and
11 then I'll ask you a question.

12 A All right.

13 Q I'll read that into that record while
14 you're reading it yourself. Mr. Specter asked the
15 question: "And what do those consist of?" The
16 question is referring to some notes. "Answer: In
17 privacy of my own home, early in the morning of
18 Sunday, November 24, I made a draft of this report,
19 which I later revised and of which this represents
20 the revision. That draft I personally burned in
21 the fireplace of my recreation room."

22 Do you see Mr. Specter's question and your

1 answer?

2 A Yes.

3 Q Does that help refresh your recollection
4 of what was burned in your home?

5 A Whatever I had, as far as I know, that was
6 burned was everything exclusive of the finished
7 draft that you have as Exhibit--whatever it is.

8 Q My question will go to the issue of
9 whether it was a draft of the report that was
10 burned or whether it was--

11 A I think it was--

12 Q --handwritten notes--

13 A It was handwritten notes and the first
14 draft that was burned.

15 Q Do you mean to use the expression
16 handwritten notes as being the equivalent of draft
17 of the report?

18 A I don't know. Again, it's a hair-
19 splitting affair that I can't understand.
20 Everything that I personally prepared until I got
21 to the status of the handwritten document that
22 later was transcribed was destroyed. You can call



1. it anything you want, whether it was the notes or
 2. what, I don't know. But whatever I had, I didn't
 3. want anything else to remain, period.

4. This business, I don't know when J got
 5. that back or what.

6. Q When you say "this business," you're
 7. referring to Exhibit 1?

8. A Exhibit 1, right.

9. Q Dr. Humes, let me show you part of your
 10. testimony to the HSCA. Question by Mr. Cornwell--
 11. I'll read this into the record. It's from page
 12. 330, and it is Exhibit 21 to this deposition.

13. "Mr. Cornwell: And you finally began to
 14. write the autopsy report at what time?"

15. "Dr. Humes: It was decided that three
 16. people couldn't write the report simultaneously, so
 17. I assumed the responsibility for writing the
 18. report, which I began about 11 o'clock in the
 19. evening of Saturday November 23rd, having wrestled
 20. with it for four or five, six hours in the
 21. afternoon, and worked on it until 3 or 4 o'clock in
 22. the morning of Sunday, the 24th."

*J. Say
 re sum
 prepared
 Sat. Morning*



1 "Mr. Cornwell: Did you have any notes or
2 records at that point as to the exact location of
3 the--"

4 "Dr. Humes: I had the draft notes which
5 we had prepared in the autopsy room, which I
6 copied."

7 Now, again, the question would be: Did
8 you copy the notes so that you would have a version
9 of the notes without the blood on them but still
10 notes rather than a draft report?

11 A Yes, precisely. Yes. And from that I
12 made a first draft, and then I destroyed the first
13 draft and the notes.

14 Q So there were, then, two sorts of
15 documents that were burned: one, the draft notes,
16 and, two, a draft report?

17 A Right.

18 Q Is that correct?

19 A That's right. So that the only thing
20 remaining was the one that you have.

21 Q Why did you burn the draft report as
22 opposed to the draft notes?

1 A I don't recall. I don't know. There was
2 no reason--see, we're splitting hairs here, and
3 I'll tell you, it's getting to me a little bit, as
4 you may be able to detect. The only thing I wanted
5 to finish to hand over to whomever, in this case
6 Admiral Burkley, was my completed version. So I
7 burned everything else. Now, why I didn't burn the
8 thing that J wrote, I have no way of knowing. But
9 whether it was a draft or whether it was the notes
10 or what, I don't know. There was nothing left when
11 I got finished with it, in any event, but the thing
12 that you now have, period.

13 Q Well, the concern, of course, is if there
14 is a record related to the autopsy that is
15 destroyed, we're interested in finding out what the
16 exact circumstances--

17 A I've told you what the circumstances were.
18 I used it only as an aide-memoire to do what I was
19 doing and then destroyed it. Is that hard to
20 understand?

21 Q When I first asked the question, you
22 explained that the reason that you had destroyed it

1 was that it had the blood of the President on it.

2 A Right.

3 Q The draft report, of course, would not
4 have had the blood of--

5 A Well, it may have had errors in spelling
6 or I don't know what was the matter with it, or
7 whether I even ever did that. I don't know. I
8 can't recall. I absolutely can't recall, and I
9 apologize for that. But that's the way the cookie
10 crumbles. I didn't want anything to remain that
11 some squirrel would grab on and make whatever use
12 that they might. Now, whether you felt that was
13 reasonable or not, I don't know. But it doesn't
14 make any difference because that was my decision
15 and mine alone. Nobody else's. ✓

16 Q Did you talk to anyone about your decision
17 to--

18 A No, absolutely not. No. It was my own
19 materials. Why--I don't feel a need to talk to
20 anybody about it.

21 Q Did the original notes that you created
22 have any information with respect to the estimated