

Those Missing Exhibits

The photographs and X-rays taken of President Kennedy's body at the autopsy after the assassination have been turned over to National Archives by the Kennedy family—fourteen X-rays, twenty-five black-and-white negatives and twenty-six 4-by-5-inch color transparencies. The mystery of the missing exhibits, first brought to public notice with careful attention to detail by Jacob Cohen in these pages ("The Vital Documents," *The Nation*, July 11), has now been cleared up. The photographic material turned up, as Mr. Cohen suggested it might, in the possession of the Kennedy family.

Much of the wild speculation about the assassination, and the controversy over the Warren Commission Report, might have been obviated if these exhibits (which would clearly have been offered in evidence if Oswald had been placed on trial) had been turned over to the Warren Commission. Chief Justice Warren did see them, but neither the staff nor the other members of the commission had a chance to study them. Close restrictions have been placed on the availability of the exhibits; they will be open to federal law-enforcement agencies (the FBI) but scholars and other unofficial investigators will have to secure permission before inspecting the exhibits, and first indications are that such permissions will not be granted for a period of five years. News media representatives may have to wait even longer before gaining access to the exhibits. This would seem to repeat the mistake that was made in the first instance; the restrictions will simply invite further speculation and controversy. Eventually the public may learn what if any light the exhibits shed on controversial aspects of the Warren Report but the sooner they can be inspected by responsible scholars and investigators—and the news media—the better it will be for all concerned.