

# Dissarray of Assassination Panel Faded as 2d Counsel Took Over

By WENDELL RAWLS Jr.

When he was appointed chief counsel to the strife-torn House Select Committee on Assassinations and assumed the burden of brightening the legislative and investigative reputation of that panel, G. Robert Blakey stood before a gathering of reporters and said with a flinty grin:

"This press conference was called to announce that this is our last press conference."

He was not altogether joking. The next news conference was not held until more than a year later and was virtually simultaneous with the committee's first public hearings into the murders of President Kennedy and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The last news conference was held yesterday when the committee formally released its 686-page final report, which said that its investigation of the assassinations had found that both President Kennedy and Dr. King had "probably" been killed as a result of conspiracies. The committee urged the Justice Department to pursue its conspiracy leads.

## Panel Chairman Resigned

Mr. Blakey joined the committee at a time when it seemed likely that it would be dissolved by Congress, which appeared to despair over the panel's internal warfare. The committee was also accused of being disorganized and unproductive.

The committee's chairman, Representative Henry B. Gonzales, a Texas Democrat, tried to dismiss the chief counsel, Richard A. Sprague of Philadelphia, but the committee members backed the counsel against the chairman. Mr. Gonzales resigned and was replaced by Representative Louis Stokes, Democrat of Ohio.

Then Mr. Sprague was replaced by Mr. Blakey, a professor at Cornell University Law School. When he arrived at his new office he found an investigation that had been under way for six months but had not seen a single classified document from the Federal Bureau of Investigation or the Central Intelligence Agency.

## His Job Is Described

Mr. Blakey's job was to put a staff together, plan the investigations of two of the most celebrated murders in the nation's history and present the findings to the public. Along the way, there was a legislative mandate to judge the performances of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Central Intelligence Agency and the Secret Service and make legislative recommendations.

Mr. Blakey was one of 115 people considered for the job, Mr. Stokes said, and one of 13 persons interviewed for it.

Mr. Blakey came under harsh criticism this week from David Belin of Des Moines, the former Warren Commission counsel.



The New York Times

G. Robert Blakey

In an article in The New York Times Sunday Magazine, he accused Mr. Blakey of "excessive secrecy" in the conduct of the assassinations investigations, said that the committee's conclusion that a conspiracy probably existed in the Kennedy assassination "will not stand the test of history" and that when "all the other inadequacies come to light, the folly of the multimillion-dollar secret investigation will become clear to all."

## Response Will Come Later

Mr. Blakey said that he would respond to such criticism "at an appropriate time and in an appropriate place and at an appropriate length."

Mr. Blakey was born Jan. 7, 1916, the son of a Burlington, N.C., banker. He graduated with honors from the University of Notre Dame and was second in his class at Notre Dame Law School.

He was hired as part of a Justice Department Honors Program in 1960 and in 1964 returned to Notre Dame Law School to teach. In 1973, he became a professor at Cornell and director of the Cornell Institute on Organized Crime.

In 1958, he married the former Elaine Menard of Schenectady, N.Y. They have seven children.

Mr. Blakey says that he has little interest in becoming wealthy or famous. He took a pay cut to work for the assassinations committee at \$47,500 a year, and when his job with the committee ended he declined an offer from a Washington law firm and returned to Cornell.

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