

SMU to house major collection of RFK assassination records

By JAMES H. McDONALD
Journal-Bulletin Staff Writer

DARTMOUTH, Mass. — South-eastern Massachusetts University unveiled yesterday what has been called the world's largest collection of official records surrounding the 1968 assassination of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy.

"This is a spectacular fulfillment of the public's right to know," SMU political science Prof. Philip H. Melanson told more than 200 people at a brief ceremony in the university library.

The occasion marked the formal dedication of the university's RFK Assassination Archives, the only collection of its kind in the world, according to SMU President John R. Brazil. The archives contain books, documents, articles, audiotapes, photos, diagrams, exhibits and the 10,000-page transcript of the trial of Sirhan Sirhan, Kennedy's convicted killer.

Expected to arrive any day is a microfilmed set of the records of the

Turn to RFK, Page A-14 +

0.1 Providence RI Journal 4/21/88

FROM PAGE ONE

RFK

Continued from Page One

Los Angeles Police Department's investigation of the assassination. The records were released Tuesday in California.

The university acquired the collection during years of effort by Melanson. His prodding, and that of others, including CBS News, has led to the release of many government agencies' secret records under the Freedom of Information Act. "And when (the) information arrives from California, the archival collection will be the largest in the world," Brazil said yesterday.

The university's archives include FBI photos and negatives; 40,000 pages of newly released FBI documents; taped interviews, transcripts and documents from the Los Angeles district attorney's office; the papers of journalist Robert Blair Kaiser, who wrote *RFK Must Die!*; 700 hours of taped radio coverage of the assassination, and tapes of various hearings and witness interviews over the past 20 years.

Yesterday's events included a slide show, produced by SMU students Alyson Wihry and Deanna Perry, that conveyed eyewitness accounts of the June 5, 1968, slaying in the kitchen of the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles. A few gasps came from the audience when Coroner Thomas Noguchi told of three bullet wounds in Kennedy's body,



—Journal-Bulletin Photo by NORMAN A. SYLVIA

AMONG ARCHIVES: Philip H. Melanson, left, a professor at Southeastern Massachusetts University, and Louis Golden, a member of the late Sen. Robert F. Kennedy's campaign staff, look at a campaign poster from 1968 yesterday at the SMU library.

one of them behind the right ear.

The archive's official opening took place on the library's fourth floor, where Brazil, Melanson and archivist Helen Koss took part in a ribbon-cutting.

The exhibits include photographs of the crime scene investigation and enlarged excerpts of witness testimony. Volumes of records line every shelf in the room.

According to Melanson, "Eighty-five percent of the assassination files are now available, with more on the way from California. The collection is an invaluable tool not only

for students but also for researchers and scholars."

Among the visitors were former Californians Louis and Lorraine Golden, who moved to Onset, Mass., five years ago. Golden was Robert Kennedy's campaign manager in Fresno, and brought a gift of his own to the archives: a colorful poster advertising an "RFK Gala at San Francisco Civic Auditorium on June 6, 1968," the day after the shooting.

Melanson said the collection "is a means of preserving the historical record of a tragic period in American history."