

Kennedy Friend Denies Plot Role

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By JOHN M. CREWDSON

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SAN DIEGO, Dec. 17—Judith Campbell Exner maintained today that, although she had had a close personal relationship with President Kennedy while she was dating two leaders of a Chicago crime syndicate, she had never acted as an intermediary between the Mafia and the White House.

At a news conference here called to dispel what she termed "wild-eyed speculation," Mrs. Exner, who is about 41 years old, said she had never discussed with Mr. Kennedy her relationships with the late Sam Giancana, then head of the Chicago syndicate, or John Rosselli, an associate of Mr. Giancana.

Nor, she said, had she ever been aware during the time she was seeing President Kennedy and the two crime figures that Mr. Giancana and Mr. Rosselli were helping the Central Intelligence Agency to recruit agents in an unsuccessful plot to assassinate Prime Minister Fidel Castro of Cuba.

Mr. Castro's name, the woman said, was never mentioned in the numerous telephone conversations she had with Mr. Kennedy, beginning in March 1961, or during what she said were a number of private White



United Press International

Judith Campbell Exner at news conference in San Diego

House lunches in the President's office.

Mrs. Exner, whose tan face was partly hidden behind saucer-shaped sunglasses, said that all of her discussions with the President, whom she said she had also seen on some occasions while he was traveling outside of Washington, were entirely "of a personal nature."

Mrs. Exner declined to com-

ment on a report that she had spent some time with Mr. Kennedy in Palm Beach, Fla., but she said that she had paid for whatever trips she had taken to meet Mr. Kennedy when he was traveling around the country.

She added that, although she had not worked during the two

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years that she was close to Mr. Kennedy, she "was always financially able to take care of myself." She said she got her money from her family.

She repeatedly declined to elaborate on her relationship with any of the three men, and replied with a "no comment" when asked whether she had also known the late Robert F. Kennedy, the President's brother, who served as Attorney General in the Kennedy Administration.

A Government source said, however, that Mrs. Exner was known to have attended "a party or two" with Robert Kennedy when he was the Attorney General.

In a prepared statement read before reporters and cameramen crowded into a suite at the downtown Westgate Hotel, Mrs. Exner, who was accompanied by her attorney, Brian Monaghan, and her husband of eight months, Daniel Exner, said that she hoped to "set the record straight" about her relationships with the Mafia, which have been the subject of leaks to newsmen from the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, and about what she called "distortions" concerning her friendship with "Jack Kennedy" by former White House aides.

The first account of Mr. Kennedy's relationship with the woman, then known as Judith Katherine Campbell, was published in The Washington Post on Nov. 16. The Post article reported that Senate investigators had been intrigued by, but had later discounted, the possibility that Miss Campbell might have learned of anti-Castro plots from one of the Mafia leaders and passed on her knowledge of them to President Kennedy.

The Senate committee's report on the C.I.A. assassination plots, released four days later, concluded that there was no evidence to show that Mr. Kennedy or any of his aides had been made aware of the plots while they were under consideration between 1960 and 1962.

Mentioned Briefly

The report mentioned the Campbell relationship briefly, but did not give her name or sex or identify her as other than a "close friend" of Mr. Kennedy who had also known

Mr. Giancana and Mr. Rosselli. The committee said, however, that it had no reason to believe the friend had had any knowledge of the involvement of her friends in a plan to kill Mr. Castro.

Mrs. Exner said today that subsequent reports by the Scripps-Howard news organization, The Chicago Daily News, The New York Times "and other papers" had implied "that I was a go-between for the Mafia," and that leaks of her secret testimony before the committee had been "distorted so as to implicate me in these bizarre assassination conspiracies."

All the news accounts of the matter have noted, however, that the Senate committee concluded that Miss Campbell did not know of the conspiracies. But she insisted today that her sole motive for summoning reporters was nonetheless to clear her name. She said she had no wish to sell the rest of her story to book publishers or to the news media.

Safire's Accusation

William Safire, a columnist for The Times, accused the Senate committee in an article published Monday of having sought to cover up the details of the Kennedy-Campbell relationship on partisan grounds, but the committee's chairman, Senator Frank Church, Democrat of Idaho, said the decision to include only the barest information about the matter in the assassination report was approved by all the members of the committee—Republicans as well as Democrats—after it was established that the matter was not relevant to the topic of assassinations.

Senator John G. Tower, Republican of Texas, the panel's vice chairman, said last night that Senator Church had "bent over backwards to avoid the appearance of a coverup," and that he did not believe the committee had been used by Mr. Church or anyone else for "political purposes."

Mrs. Exner said in answer to questions regarding her relationship with Mr. Kennedy and the circumstances surrounding her introduction to him and to Mr. Giancana that she would "clarify" such details at a later time and under unspecified conditions.

She said she met Mr. Kennedy through a "mutual friend" in Las Vegas, Nev., in February

1960, when Mr. Kennedy, then a Democratic Senator from Massachusetts, was beginning his successful campaign for the Presidency.

There has been some speculation that that relationship



Associated Press

Judith Campbell in 1960, the year she said she met President Kennedy.

might have been initiated by Mr. Giancana in the Mafia's interest, but Mrs. Exner said today that she had not met Mr. Giancana until March 1960, while attending a party in Miami Beach.

Mr. Giancana, who she said subsequently introduced her to Mr. Rosselli, ran his end of the Castro assassination plot from a suite in the Fontainebleau Hotel in Miami Beach. According to the Senate report, however, that plot was not conceived within the C.I.A. until the following August.

Mrs. Exner declined today to name the friend who introduced her to Mr. Kennedy and then to Mr. Giancana, but Senate sources identified him as Frank Sinatra, the singer.

Lawyers for Mr. Sinatra, whom Mrs. Exner described as a "friend," had no immediate comment on his alleged involvement.

Asked whether she had been aware at the time that Mr. Giancana and Mr. Rosselli were important figures in the Mafia, Mrs. Exner said at first that she "didn't really know," but conceded later that she "prob-

ably knew they were members of the underworld."

Although she said that, to her knowledge, Mr. Kennedy had not know that she was also seeing the two Mafia figures, Mrs. Exner added that she thought Mr. Giancana was aware of her relationship with the President, although she said she never told him of it or discussed it with the Chicago crime leader. Mr. Giancana was slain last June 20 at his home in Oak Park, Ill.

Mrs. Exner emphatically denied reports that she had called Mr. Kennedy at the White House from a telephone in Mr. Giancana's home. One source familiar with the records obtained by the Senate committee said they showed at least one such call from Oak Park, although not necessarily from the Giancana residence.

Asked whether she had ever called Mr. Kennedy from her own home in Los Angeles or anywhere else, Mrs. Exner, who seemed nervous during most of her 45-minute appearance, quickly answered, "Oh, yes."

According to Justice Department sources, the Federal Bureau of Investigation became aware of Mrs. Exner not through her relationship with Mr. Kennedy, but in the course of an investigation of Mr. Giancana's activities in the crime syndicate.

One such source said today that the F.B.I. subsequently discovered that Miss Campbell had placed two calls to the White House switchboard from her home in Los Angeles, and that the apparent relationship between her and the President was eventually brought to the attention of Robert Kennedy and Kenneth O'Donnell, a special assistant to the President, in a memorandum from the late J. Edgar Hoover, then director of the F.B.I., dated Feb. 27, 1962.

The Senate committee reportedly obtained from the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library copies of the telephone logs kept by Evelyn Lincoln, the President's private secretary, which showed 70 telephone calls to the White House from Miss Campbell between March 29, 1961, and March 22, 1962.

Telephone Log

William Moss, the chief archivist at the Kennedy Library, said in a telephone interview today that Mrs. Lincoln's logs only showed calls made to the President's office in the White House, and not any calls he might have made to Miss Campbell or anyone else.

Some of the 70 calls, Mr. Moss said, were placed from Palm Springs, Calif., and Los Angeles, as well as other places

around the country.

Mr. Moss added that there were no records at the library of any calls to or from Mr. Kennedy during periods in which he was away from the White House, and he said that, although none of the library's records of visitors to the Oval

Office bore Miss Campbell's name, those records were not as inclusive as the ones kept by the Secret Service.

Jack Warner, a spokesman for the Secret Service in Washington, declined today to say whether his organization had any record that Mrs. Exner had ever been cleared for admission to the White House or to the President's office.

Mr. O'Donnell was traveling and could not be reached for comment. Mrs. Lincoln, according to the Senate report, told the committee that she had received a copy of Mr. Hoover's Feb. 27 Hoover memorandum describing Mrs. Exner's Mafia associations and "believed she would have shown it to the President."

Angie Novello, who was Robert Kennedy's secretary when he was Attorney General, said in a telephone interview today that, while she did not recall seeing the memorandum, it might have been delivered directly to the Attorney General by the F.B.I. agent who then acted as the bureau's liaison with the Justice Department.

Worked in Primary

Mrs. Lincoln reportedly told the Senate panel that she recalled Mrs. Exner only as a worker in the President's California primary campaign in 1960, and did not believe the woman had ever seen Mr. Kennedy at the White House or anywhere else after his election in November 1960. Mr. O'Donnell reportedly endorsed this recollection.

Mrs. Exner expressed irritation today at what she characterized as efforts by Mrs. Lincoln and Mr. O'Donnell to sully or distort my personal relationship with Jack Kennedy.

"To me he was Jack Kennedy and not the President," Mrs. Exner said.

Mrs. Lincoln's friends said she was traveling in Europe and could not be reached for comment.

Mrs. Exner said that, whenever she called the White House, she would "always talk to Evelyn Lincoln first," and would then be put through to the President immediately, "if that was my purpose for calling."

Pressed by reporters to say what other reason she might have had for calling the White House, Mrs. Exner said she

could think of none.

The Senate committee reported that the F.B.I. briefed Mr. Hoover on Mrs. Exner's associations with the Mafia a second time, just before a March 22, 1962, luncheon meeting between Mr. Hoover and the President.

The committee said there was no record of whether that subject was discussed during the hour-long meeting, although another participant, who has asked not to be identified, said it never came up while he was present.

The committee report noted, however, that the last telephone call between Mr. Kennedy and Mrs. Exner shown in Mrs. Lincoln's log took place a few hours after the Hoover luncheon.

Mrs. Exner said today she could not recall that conversation with Mrs. Kennedy or ever having discussed Mr. Hoover or the Mafia with the President.

"I know nothing about that meeting other than what I've read," she said.

One source familiar with the evidence said there was "some indication" that Mrs. Exner attempted to call the President after March 22, 1962, but that she was rebuffed.

Mrs. Exner said today, however, that "Jack Kennedy and I last talked in late 1962," about a year before the President was assassinated in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963.

She said she last spoke to Mr. Giancana toward the end of 1964, and had not talked to Mr. Rosselli for "five or six years."

Mrs. Exner said that the Senate committee staff had read portions of the file compiled on her by the F.B.I. in the course of her testimony, and that what she heard seemed "prying, insidious and sounded more like a scandal sheet than a governmental investigation."

She and Mr. Monaghan, her attorney, said they intended to seek the contents of that file under the Freedom of Information Act.

An F.B.I. spokesman in Washington categorically denied that the bureau had used "illegal techniques" against Mrs. Exner in its investigation, or had "harassed" her, as she contended today.

Ex-Husband Comments

LOS ANGELES, Dec. 17 (AP) —Judith Campbell Exner was a "quiet, family kind of girl," her former husband, William Campbell, said here today.

Mr. Campbell an actor, and the former Judith Immoor were married on Oct. 25, 1952, when she was 18. They were divorced in 1958 and Mr. Campbell said

he had lost contact with her.

He said he was never aware of her friendship with Mr. Kennedy, nor did he know that she had remarried.

"I only knew her as a very quiet, family kind of girl," he said. "She had two brothers and two sisters and her parents. She was a high school girl when I met her. It was a typical American home."

One sister was actress Susan Morrow, an actress who at one time was a contract player for Paramount Pictures and was briefly married to Gary Morton, a comedian. He is now married to Lucille Ball, the comedienne.