

Brief Chronology: Los Angeles Police Disclosure Policy  
and the Robert F. Kennedy Assassination

- June 5, 1968 - Robert F. Kennedy is shot in the pantry of the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles; dies the following day.
- April 17, 1969-- Sirhan Sirhan is convicted of first degree murder in the assassination; he receives the death sentence the following week.
- May 16, 1969 - Los Angeles Chief of Detectives Robert Houghton notifies trial judge Herbert V. Walker during a conference in chambers that "the posture of the Los Angeles Police Department is that we think that nothing in this case should be withheld from the public."
- May 28, 1969 - A joint press conference on the assassination investigation is held by Los Angeles District Attorney Evelle Younger and Acting Chief of Police Roger Murdock. Younger announces that "(m)y purpose in causing the work product obtained in the preparation of this case to become a matter of public record is to facilitate full disclosure as to all questions which may be the subject of legitimate public concern... The Los Angeles Police Department has agreed without reservation that the interests of the public and law enforcement are best served by full disclosure of the results of the comprehensive investigation which they have conducted."
- June 8, 1969 - District Attorney Younger states in a television interview: "We did everything humanly possible to let the whole world know that no stone was left unturned in this investigation... There is tons of information over at the LAPD that's going to be made available."
- 1970 - Special Unit Senator, a book on the assassination by Los Angeles Chief of Detectives Houghton is published. "The material herein," writes the author, "was drawn from the files of the Los Angeles Police Department, and particularly from the exhaustive work of Special Unit Senator,

a unique task force created for the investigation." Drawing liberally from confidential official sources, the book contains controversial and undocumented factual assertions and sensitive commentary, such as negative lie-detector reports, about named or known individuals.

1971 -

Robert Blair Kaiser's "RFK Must Die!" is published; challenges fundamental official conclusions concerning Sirhan's background, associations and motives. Significant public disclosure of police materials has not taken place.

1973-1974 -

In private meetings with the Los Angeles Chief of Police and others, former congressman Allard K. Lowenstein and Paul Schrade, a shooting victim and RFK campaign coordinator, attempt unsuccessfully to obtain factual responses to central unresolved problems surrounding the case. Lowenstein submits a three-page list of questions to police, which goes unanswered.

1975 -

Major public concern arises in Los Angeles and around the country about unanswered questions in the assassination. Sirhan Sirhan files for a new trial based on newly-developed crime scene questions; The American Academy of Forensic Sciences and its president, Robert J. Joling, call for re-evaluation of certain physical evidence issues. Superior Court proceedings and limited retesting are initiated.

July, 1975 -

Police decline to provide subpoenaed material from case records in a Los Angeles civil proceeding concerning a suspect in the assassination.

July-August, 1975 -

Lowenstein's list of questions is resubmitted to the Los Angeles Police Commission; the Commission considers requests for substantial disclosure filed by Lowenstein, Schrade and CBS. The commission Chairman pledges that "because of the national importance of the investigation concerning the death of Senator Kennedy, we believe that the public should have full and free access to all information gathered during the department's investigation so long as the rights of privacy of individuals involved are protected and the ability of the department to effectively enforce the law is not seriously impaired... This is not mere rhetoric but truly represents the view of the commission."

- August 21, 1975 - The Los Angeles Police announce that crucial crime-scene ceiling panels and door frames, booked into evidence following the assassination, had been "routinely" destroyed. Substantive records concerning the examination of these items are also reported destroyed. This evidence was central to fundamental issues about the number and flight paths of bullets fired at the crime scene.
- September, 1975 - A list of 14 factual questions concerning the case is submitted by CBS, pursuant to the designated Police Commission disclosure procedures. These and the prior Lowenstein questions remain unanswered.
- November, 1975 - The Los Angeles District Attorney's Office blocks courtroom testimony of two Los Angeles police officers concerning crime scene examination evidence regarding the number of bullets fired in the shooting. Eyewitness affidavits on the same matter are submitted by former Los Angeles prosecutor Vincent Bugliosi. The Superior Court forum for considering these and related questions is extinguished, on procedural grounds, through official efforts.
- 1975-1976 - Hundreds of pages of FBI documents on the assassination begin to become available pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act.
- 1977 - The former special counsel to the District Attorney's Office in 1975 tells the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors that he and another investigator had not been allowed to depose the two police officers referred to above. The Supervisors request and receive from Lowenstein supplementary questions about the assassination, centering on crime scene issues.
- 1978 - The Assassination of Robert F. Kennedy, by William Turner and John Christian is published; challenges official conclusions concerning Sirhan's background and crime scene events.
- 1983 - Renewed written inquiries are directed to the Police Commission, pursuant to their formally designated 1975 disclosure policy. After eight months a spokesman asserts "the Superior Court has ordered that the Department's files on that

investigation remain confidential." (sic)  
Subsequently it is announced that "due to the length of time since the Board last considered the release of this information, commission staff and the Los Angeles City Attorney are currently reconsidering and evaluating previous positions."

- 1984 - The Police Commission Secretary declines to provide a requested assurance that a policy exists against further destruction of official police evidence in the assassination.
- 1985 - Efforts continue to win public access to important categories of police material concerning the assassination and its investigation.

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The Los Angeles Police Department currently holds the vast preponderance of city investigative records on the assassination. Probably less than one percent of this material has ever been accessible to the public.