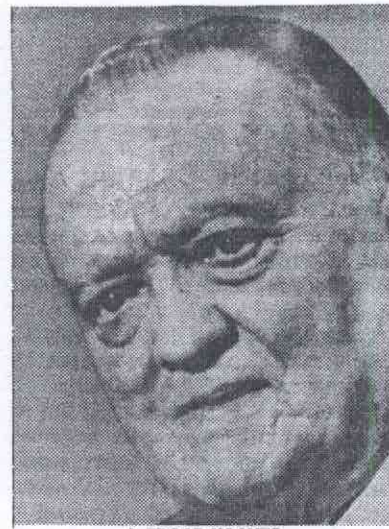




BILL MOYERS
... LBJ aide got letter from Katzenbach



LEE HARVEY OSWALD
... 1953 psychiatric report offers insights



J. EDGAR HOOVER
... first memo pointed to lone assailant

JFK Conspiracy Theory Fervor Dwindles

Archivists Find No Major Rush to Review Newly Disclosed Documents

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By Ronald Brownstein
Los Angeles Times

It's too soon to say for sure, but conspiracy fatigue may be setting in.

The National Archives prepared for last Friday's release of a raft of new government documents relating to the assassination of John F. Kennedy by assembling enough research guides and security officers to handle a full-scale rush on the stacks. But as the day wore on, the archivists often outnumbered the reporters and researchers who turned up to sift through the records.

Awaiting them were 80 cardboard boxes of declassified records from FBI headquarters on Lee Harvey Oswald, along with four boxes of desk diaries and telephone records from Robert F. Kennedy's tenure as attorney general and five boxes of records from the mid-1970s Senate select committee that studied the intelligence community and its possible links to the Kennedy assassination.

Researchers will not assimilate all the material for months or years, if ever. Archives officials who have paged through the documents released Friday say there is no stunning new fact that challenges the conclusion that Oswald, acting alone, shot the president on Nov. 22, 1963.

Of course, there also appears to be nothing in the papers to dissuade those who believe Oswald had help, or was the tool of Cubans, the CIA, the mob, or some combination of the three.

But the ocean of memos, documents and Teletypes offer tantalizing glimpses of the FBI at work, the concerns of top government officials in the days after the assassination, the personality and behavior of Oswald—and the endless collection of loose ends that have entangled conspiracy theorists ever since.

Two memos, for instance, underscore the speed with which the FBI and Justice Department appear to have concluded Oswald acted alone.

Only one day after the assassination, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, in his first memo on the case to President Lyndon B. Johnson, appears to have foreclosed the possibility that others assisted Oswald. In the five-page memo summarizing Oswald's background and the evidence against him, Hoover uses only singular, never plural, terms to describe the "assailant" and "the person responsible for this assassination."

On Nov. 25, the day after Oswald was killed, Deputy Attorney General Nicholas deB. Katzenbach wrote Bill Moyers, then a top aide to Johnson, urging that the FBI make public "a complete and thorough report" on Oswald as soon as possible to discourage the emergence of conspiracy theories.

"The public must be satisfied that Oswald was the assassin; that he did not have confederates who are still at large; and that the evidence was such that he would have been convicted at trial," Katzenbach wrote.

He added: "Speculation about Oswald's

motivation ought to be cut off, and we should have some basis for rebutting thought that this was a Communist conspiracy or (as the Iron Curtain press is saying) a right-wing conspiracy to blame it on the Communists."

In December 1963, the FBI turned over to the Justice Department a report, which was leaked to reporters, that concluded Oswald acted alone.

But as the documents released Friday illustrate, conspiracy theories about the murder proliferated anyway.

The portrait of Oswald that emerges from the papers is at once desolate and poignant. One of the most compelling documents is a psychiatric report ordered on Oswald by a New York City family court judge in 1953 after he was brought in for excessive truancy. The psychiatrist describes Oswald, then 13, as "seriously detached, withdrawn . . . laconic and taciturn."

The report continues: "There is a rather pleasant appealing quality about his [sic] emotionally starved, affectionless youngster. Grows as one speaks to him, and it seems fairly clear that he detached himself from the world around him because no [one] in it ever met any of his needs and love."

But, the psychiatrist added, Oswald "acknowledged fantasies about being powerful and sometimes hurting or killing people but refused to talk about the dreams, other than to admit that they sometimes contained violence."