

# JFK and a Woman

*Judith Campbell Exner, the Mobsters,*

BY JACK NELSON and  
RONALD J. OSTROW

© 1975, Los Angeles Times-Washington Post News Service  
Washington — The Senate intelligence committee's report on assassination plots disclosed that President John F. Kennedy had a close friend who associated with two underworld figures who were principals in one death plot.

But the report concealed that the friend was a California woman, Judith Campbell Exner.

Officials of the Senate committee Tuesday confirmed published reports that the friend met then Sen. Kennedy at the 1960 Democratic convention in Los Angeles which nominated him for the presidency.

She was in contact with the White House "frequently" thereafter, according to the Senate committee reports. It said records showed 70 telephone calls between her and the White House during a 54-week period in 1961 and 1962.

The woman was identified by a committee source Tuesday as Exner, a dark-haired artist who, according to her attorney, has been living in San Diego for the past year.

The committee discovered Exner's relationship with Kennedy while investigating a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) plot to assassinate Cuban Premier Fidel Castro. The plot involved two underworld figures (Sam Giancana and John Roselli) who the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) learned were friends of Exner.

Giancana, a Chicago Mafia leader, was murdered last June shortly before he was scheduled to testify before the Senate committee. Roselli, once a protege of Giancana, testified in secret session about a week after Giancana's slaying.

Both committee Chairman Frank Church, D-Idaho, and Vice-Chairman John Tower, R-Tex., denied Tuesday that there had been any effort to cover up any information pertinent to the committee's assassination inquiry.

Church said that there was no evidence that the women knew anything about the plot against Castro and that "no one on the committee thought that the president's personal relationships with her, whatever they were, were the proper business of the committee.

"We would have been accused of being salacious and sensational and rumor mongers if we had tried to go into personal relationships and it would have been highly improper," Church said. "Any attempt to characterize the report as a cover-up is really outrageous."

The Senate committee's two-page reference to Kennedy's close friend in its 347-

## With Mafia

*the CIA and the Castro*

## Friends

*Plot*

page assassination report went largely unnoticed when the report was issued Nov. 20. Attention focused on the committee's central findings that the CIA under four American presidents had plotted the death or overthrow of five foreign leaders.

Kennedy's telephone contacts with Exner were cited in a section of the report entitled, "Did President Kennedy learn anything about assassination plots as a result of the FBI investigation of Giancana and Roselli?"

The report concluded that there was no way to know for sure, but said Kennedy could have learned about the Castro plot from the FBI investigation.

Shortly before the committee's report was released last month the Washington Post and Scripps-Howard newspapers reported that the committee had established a link between Kennedy and a Judith Campbell. The news accounts also mentioned her relationship with Giancana and Roselli and said the committee was attempting to determine whether Kennedy could have learned from her about a CIA plot to kill Castro.

The report, however, gave few clues as to the identity of Kennedy's "close friend," mentioning neither sex nor age.

This prompted New York Times columnist William Safire to charge that the committee "has attempted a cover-up from the government's end; the Mafia, by silencing Giancana forever, has clamped down the lid from its end."

(See Column, Sec. 4, Page 4)

Safire, who served in the White House



SAM GIANCANA



JUDITH CAMPBELL EXNER

under former President Richard M. Nixon, said it was the public's business when a president shares a close friend with a Mafia figure selected by the CIA to arrange the assassination of Castro.

Church denied Safire's charge of a cover-up.

Exner, who was in her mid-20s when she first met Kennedy, testified in closed session that she had no knowledge of any assassination plot against Castro.

Roselli also testified the woman had no knowledge of the plot.

Roselli could not be reached for comment Tuesday, but a source close to him said, "Roselli became very annoyed at the committee for trying to defame American womanhood and the reputation of a past president."

The source said Roselli refused to answer some questions about the Kennedy-Exner relationship.

The committee report noted that all

living CIA officials who were involved in the underworld assassination attempt or who were in a position to have known of the attempt had testified they never discussed the assassination plot with the president.

By May 1961, however, the president's brother, Atty. Gen. Robert F. Kennedy and FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover had reason to know that Giancana was involved in the plot, the committee reported.

Although there was no evidence to indicate that anyone in the FBI had concluded that Giancana was involved in the plot, the report continued, the committee uncovered "a chain of events which would have given Hoover an opportunity to have assembled the entire picture and to have reported the information to the president."

The committee reported it had evidence indicating "that a close friend of President Kennedy had frequent contact

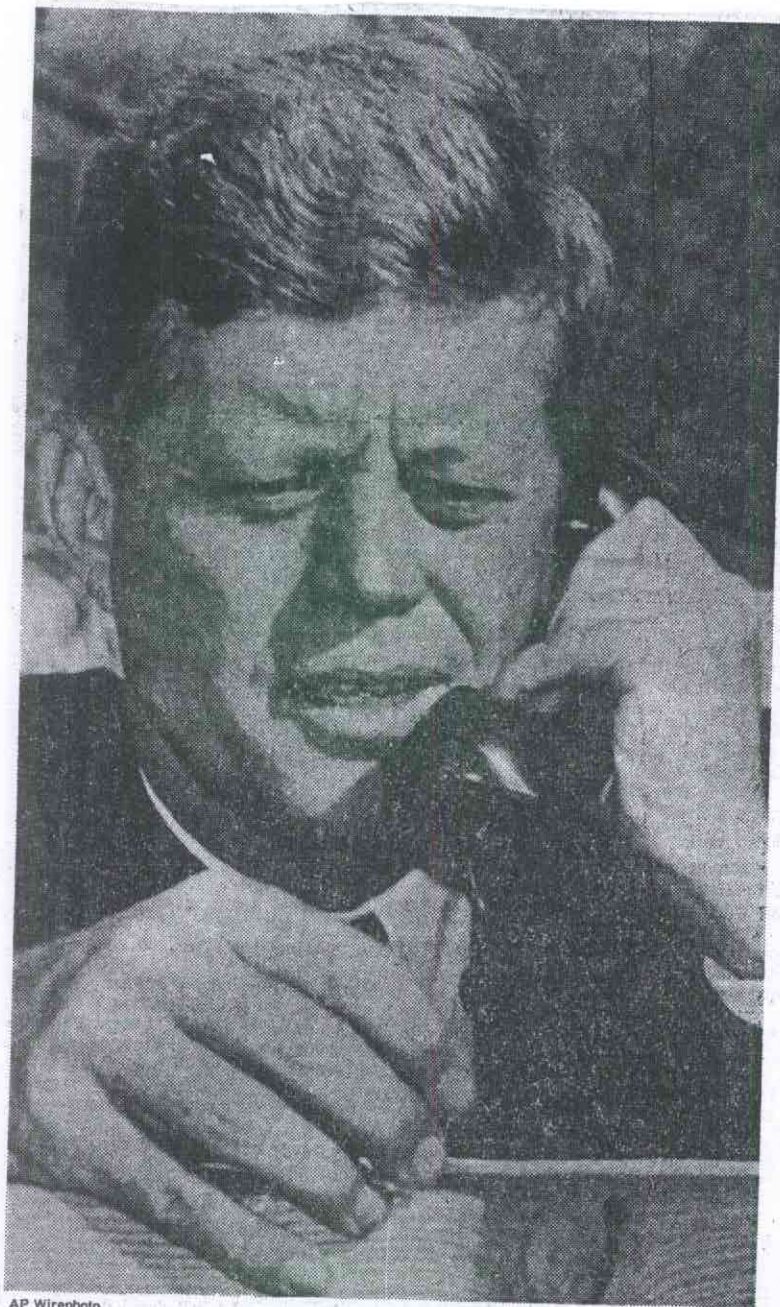
with the president from the end of 1960 through mid-1962. FBI reports and testimony indicate that the President's friend was also a close friend of John Roselli and Sam Giancana and saw them often during this same period."

White House and the President's friend whose testimony confirms frequent phone contact with the president himself."

On Feb. 27, 1962, the report continued, Hoover sent identical copies of a memorandum to Atty. Gen. Kennedy and Kenneth O'Donnell, special assistant to the president, stating that an FBI investigation of Roselli had revealed that Roselli had been in contact with the president's friend.

"The memorandum also reported that the individual was maintaining an association with Sam Giancana, described as 'a prominent Chicago underworld figure,'" the report said.

"Hoover's memorandum also stated



AP Wirephoto

**JOHN F. KENNEDY**  
Telephone Contacts Cited in Report

that a review of the telephone calls from the president's friend's residence revealed calls to the White House. The president's secretary (Evelyn Lincoln) ultimately received a copy of the memorandum and said she believed she would have shown it to the president."

Lincoln said Tuesday she received a copy of the memo from O'Donnell, but could not recall sending it to the president and so testified before the Senate committee. O'Donnell said he never sent

a copy of the memo to Lincoln and does not believe the president ever knew about it.

The committee reported that the association of the president's friend with the "hoodlums" and "that person's connections with the president was again brought to Hoover's attention in a memo-

Mention of the telephone calls between Kennedy and his friend was made in a footnote:

"White House telephone logs show 70 instances of phone contact between the randoM preparing him for a meeting with the president planned for March 22, 1962."

By that time, the FBI's files on Giancana contained information disclosing Giancana's connection with the CIA as well as his involvement in the Castro assassination plot, the committee reported.

Hoover and President Kennedy had a private luncheon on March 22, but there is no record of what took place there, the committee said. According to White House logs, the last telephone contact between the White House and the woman occurred a few hours after the Kennedy-Hoover luncheon.

Although what actually transpired at the luncheon may never be known since both principals are dead, the committee said one topic presumably was that the president's friend was also a friend of Giancana and Roselli and that this "raises several possibilities.

"The first is, assuming that Hoover did in fact receive a summary of FBI information relating to Giancana prior to his luncheon with the president, whether that summary reminded the director that Giancana had been involved in a CIA operation against Cuba that included 'dirty business' and further indicated that Giancana had balked about an assassination attempt against Castro.

"A second is whether Hoover would then have taken the luncheon as an opportunity to fulfill his duty to bring this information to the president's attention."

Still theorizing, the committee mentioned in a footnote that if Hoover had so notified Kennedy, the president "might then have inquired further of the CIA. The presidential calendar indicates that the president had meetings at which most CIA officials who knew of the assassination plot were present during the period from Feb. 27 through April 2,

1972. All of those persons, however, have testified that the president never asked them about the assassination plot."

Lincoln said that when the president's friend (Judith Campbell, now Exner) telephoned the White House, "I never put any of her calls through to the president." She said she testified to that before the Senate committee.

"She was a campaign volunteer and she called many times, but I don't think there are records that the president ever talked to her at the White House, although I did put through calls from her to him when he was in the Senate.

"I have no way of knowing what she did or how she came to know him," Lincoln said. "She was just one of many, many workers in the campaign. He was a very attractive man, you know, and there were a lot of girls who wanted to work for him."

Lincoln said the woman "called so many times she became a pest," but that she always accepted her calls and talked to her until receiving the FBI memorandum following the Hoover luncheon with President Kennedy on March 22.

"I've never seen the girl, you know," Lincoln said, "She would just call in and want to know how the campaign was going."

However, a committee source said the relationship between Kennedy and the woman was much closer than that and that there was ample evidence they had been in frequent contact. The source indicated the committee thought Lincoln's testimony was somewhat colored by her close association with and deep loyalty to President Kennedy.

Some other former aides to Kennedy questioned whether the woman's calls were put through to the president and said they could not recall Hoover's memorandum on her and the underworld pair.

"I never would have given that memo to the president of the United States," said O'Donnell, who was a special assistant to Kennedy and the man who controlled the flow of persons into the Oval Office.

"The Russians were stopping our convoys, there were problems in Cuba, in Congo and all over the world," O'Donnell said. "I really thought the FBI director and the attorney general could handle organized crime."

While O'Donnell said he had no recol-

lection of Judith Campbell, he added that he thought Dave Powers, another longtime Kennedy aide had met the woman.

Powers, now curator at the Kennedy library in Waltham, Mass., said O'Donnell was wrong.

Powers said, "The only Campbell I ever met was on a soup label."

Powers said that when Senate committee investigators examined White House logs of telephone calls, now stored at the library, he saw no indication that the calls went beyond Lincoln and into the president's office.

John Stewart, chief archivist at the library, studied some of the logs Tuesday and said, "We have no way of telling (from the logs) whether the calls went through directly or indirectly to the president.

"It's our impression that Judith Campbell's name only appeared on Evelyn Lincoln's logs," and not on Kennedy's, he said. He added, however, that this did not take account of any calls Lincoln decided to pass through to Kennedy, an act that would not have resulted in a log entry.

# Exner Denies She Was JFK-Giancana Courier

San Diego (AP)—The dark-haired woman linked to President John F. Kennedy and Mafia figures stepped out of the world of whispers today to say she and Kennedy had a relationship "of a close, personal nature."

Judith Campbell Exner, after a life of public obscurity, told a packed news conference that Kennedy telephoned her "many times" from the White House.

But the artist, estimated to be in her late 30s, denied that Mafia leader Sam Giancana, who was slain in an unsolved shooting last June in Chicago, had used her to transmit messages to the Kennedy White House in connection with a Central Intelligence Agency plot against Fidel Castro.

There has been public speculation that Mrs. Exner — who was once married to actor William Campbell — may have known of Mafia talks with the Central Intelligence Agency about plans to assassinate the Cuban leader.

"I imagine I probably knew they were part of the underworld," Mrs. Exner said.

Mrs. Exner declined to disclose the extent of her friendship with Kennedy. Dan Exner, her husband, sat by her side as she read the statement declaring, "I can at this time emphatically state that my relationship with Jack Kennedy did not involve conspiratorial shenanigans of any kind."

"I originally met Jack Kennedy in early February 1960 in Las Vegas," she said. "We were introduced by a mutual friend. I was introduced to Sam Giancana by the same friend at a party in Miami Beach in late 1960."