Discovery of file may break open JFK investigation

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A breakthrough in the investigation of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy may have occurred with the discovery of tapes, documents and other material gathered by Dallas police but never turned over to the Warren Commission.

The material was in the possession of former Dallas Police Capt. Paul McCaghren, who has been subpoenaed to testify before the House Assassinations Committee March 28.

MCCAGHREN, now a private investigator, confirmed the subpoena after committee investigators examined the police material in his office last week.

"They asked me why I sat quiet on this stuff all these years," McCaghren said, "and I told them no one ever asked me."

Committee investigators were described as "ecstatic" when they examined the material in a cardboard box.

"We are strictly 'no comment' people," said one investigator here when asked about the McCaghren file. "If you want any information you will just have to talk to the people in Washington."

A special unit of six high-ranking Dallas police officers was appointed by Police Chief Jesse Curry to conduct an inhouse probe shortly after Jack Ruby shot and killed accused assassin Lee Harvey Oswald in the basement of the Dallas Police Department Nov. 24, 1963. Capt. Will Fritz, who had interrogated Oswald for three days before he was killed, was not a member of Curry's special unit.

Headed by Capt. O.A. Jones, the unit quietly ran down leads for several months after the assassination while the FBI was conducting a separate investigation for the Warren Commission.

JONES, NOW retired, said the House Assassinations Committee has not contacted him. He said the final report and all tapes, documents and other material accumulated during the probe was turned over to Curry, whom Jones thought passed it on to the Warren Commission.

However, no mention of the police probe or its results was made in the Warren report or the accompanying 26 volumes of supplementary reports.

Curry said Friday he didn't "really know" if any material from the probe was sent to the Warren Commission. Curry, who has not been contacted by the committee, said, "I don't remember what all was sent up there now."

Police Capt. Jack Reville, a member of Curry's special unit, said it "surprises me" that the file didn't reach the Warren Commission. He said he has talked to House Assassinations Committee investigators on three different occasions and told them he could not "help because I have nothing to support or disprove your allegations or whatever you are thinking."

The McCaghren file contained tapes of continuous police radio dispatches on the day of the Kennedy assassination that appear to be more complete than the transcripts of those tapes reviewed by the Warren Commission.

Police radio tapes supplied to the Warren Commission reflected six minutes of unintelligible noise from 12:28 to 12:34 p.m. Kennedy was shot at 12:30 p.m.

Reville recalled that he submitted a report after interviewing Ruby twice in jail. Statements taken from every person in the police department basement at the time Ruby shot Oswald were included in the special unit file, Reville said, in addition to a stopwatch timing for the period it would have taken Ruby to walk from the downtown Western Union office to the basement.

RESULTS OF polygraph tests given to certain Dallas policemen were placed in the file, including tests given Sgt. Roy Vaughn, the officer guarding the ramp that the Warren Commission concluded Ruby used to enter the basement.

Other leads checked by the Curry unit — some either apparently not available to the FBI or not reported to the Warren Commission — were contained in the McCaghren file.

McCaghren, lieutenant in charge of burglary and theft investigations in 1963, was director of intelligence for the police department from 1969 to 1972. He was assistant chief in charge of special investigations until demoted to captain in 1972 by then Chief Frank Dyson. He resigned from the force in 1974.

McCaghren is the second Dallas-area resident known to have been subpoenaed by the House Assassinations Committee. The 12-member committee has scheduled 40 days of public hearings on the assassinations of Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. starting in September.

Dallas restaurant owner Joe Campisi appeared Thursday under subpoena before the committee's subcommittee on the Kennedy assassination. He testified behind closed doors.

Campisi knew Ruby, who ate dinner at Campisi's restaurant the night before the assassination. And Campisi visited Ruby in jail one week after Oswald was slain.

Chief committee counsel G. Robert Blakey said Friday he "can't even comment that he (Campisi) appeared or didn't appear."