Seeking JFK's Missing Brain, 'Secret' Files

National Archives Has Surge of Public Requests to See Evidence Related to Assassination

Washington Post Staff Writer By Michael Isikoff

brain really missing from the Nathat can't be opened for another 37 those "secret" assassination files tional Archives? And what about President John F. Kennedy's

evidence relating to Kennedy's surge in public requests to inspect week. The movie has generated a chives, staff members said last questions have caused more than a wondering the same thing. Such about a sinister conspiracy to kill few headaches at the National Arthe late president, you might be If you've seen "JFK," Oliver three-hour docudrama

sy photographs." mation and to see documents. Alof the Warren Commission that in ence Division, oversees the records as director of the Textual Refersaid Michael R. McReynolds, who, few months we've been very busy," most all of them want to see autopters from people asking for inforsination. "We're getting a lot of letthe Nov. 22, 1963, Kennedy assasthis from Day One, but in the last 1964 completed its investigation of "There's always been interest in

hundreds of thousands of pages of tion's records, the Archives retains more than 360-cubic-feet of mate-As official custodian of the na-Commission records—

> Ruby's Dallas nightclub, the Carstrippers who worked at Jack Harvey Oswald to pictures of the rial: from the Italian-made Mann-licher-Carcano rifle used by Lee

chives applies the same standard to sy material has been restricted to nedy family, for example, the autopexplained that you can't just wander public, the businesslike McReynolds material evidence. "serious" researchers, and the Ar-Under an agreement with the Kenin off the street and take a peek. But while 98 percent of this ma-

kept. "We say, 'No. . . . It's not a serious request.' " reporter on a tour through the dimwalk in and say, 'Can I see the rifle?' " said McReynolds, leading a ly lit rooms where the records are "We have a lot of people who

will never be made public. that at least some of that material chives officials indicated last week vault. McReynolds and other Arregated in 20 boxes in a secure ing 2 percent of classified Warren celerated its review of the remain-Commission evidence, which is seg-Meanwhile, the Archives has ac-

There are, for example, Oswald's tax returns. "That's protected by statute," said Jill D. Brett, an Archives spokeswoman.

ated by Stone's movie centers on the unpublished records of the another set of assassination documents also stored at the Archives: But much of the interest gener-

> until the year 2029, Conspiracy the-House Select Committee on Assassinations, turned over to the Clerk of the House in 1979 and sealed orists have long contended that to the Freedom of Information these "secret" records-not subject Act—hold critical clues to the as-

staff member about Oswald's trip to page report written by a committee example, are records of staff interuments in the committee files, for haps most intriguing, a 200-plusviews, files on informants and, perthe assassination. Mexico City a few months before the Cuban and Soviet embassies in Among the 400-cubic-feet of doc-

search Center and who has been it was not Oswald, then who the hell questions whether "it was Oswald suing the government for more yer who heads the privately funded files, said he believes the report than a decade for release of the Assassinations Archives and Rethat visited those embassies. And if James Lesar, a Washington law-

spoke before the National Press Club last week, his publicists passed out red, white and black "JFK Free suspicious as Stone makes it sound. files in "JFK," and when the director the Files" buttons. Archives officials nation committee records is not as insist the sealing of those assassi-Stone makes much of the "secret"

lished records of House committees Under a House rule, all unpub-

"Records of the Merchant Marine committee records at the Archives. said Bob Corren, who oversees meetings-are sealed for 50 years, as minutes of executive session years, and certain categories-such Corren, who added that he has nev-Committee, they're all closed," said Committee ... the Agriculture

er taken a look at the JFK files.

possibility" of supporting a House week said he was "exploring the to do so is mounting. Stokes last consistently opposed calls to resinations, and the panel's chief counsel, G. Robert Blakey, have House Select Committee on Assaswho was chairman of the former ics say Rep. Louis Stokes (D-Ohio), resolution that would unlock the lease the files. But now, momentum Lesar and other committee crit-

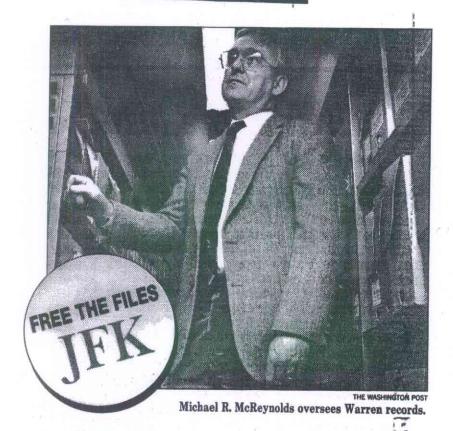
president's brain. the Archives somehow lost the in the epilogue—suggesting that other assertion in Stone's moviebers are more concerned about an-Over at the Archives, staff mem-

"It's important to us that we clear this up," said spokeswoman

nedy's former secretary, Evelyn that had been turned over to Kentopsy records at the Archives thologist and longstanding Warren Wecht, a prominent Pittsburgh papermitted to examine Kennedy au-Commission critic, after he was Lincoln, at the National Archives by 1972. An inventory of materials The claim was first made by Cyril

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Kennedy's personal physician, George G. Burkley, in April 1965 had listed nine categories of autopsy-related items, including a "stainless steel container—seven inches in diameter—containing gross material" and microscopic tissue slides.

Wecht said that seven years later when he opened the material that had been locked in a footlocker, the stainless steel container and slides were gone. "There's something very sinister about this," Wecht said yesterday. "It's the most important piece of physical evidence in the case. At the very least, they [the Archives] were inept and negligent."

But Brett contends the charge is

unfair. In fact, she said, the material turned over by Burkley belonged to the Kennedy family. She said that a few days after Burkley gave the material to Lincoln in 1965, a secretary to Sen. Robert F. Kennedy retrieved it. Not until Oct. 29, 1966, did Burke Marshall, a lawyer for the Kennedy family, return the material in a footlocker to the Archives and officially deed its contents to the government.

"We have no idea what happened to the gross material and tissue slides," said Brett. "But the point is they were never in the custody of the National Archives. . . . The movie implies they were part of the [Archives] records and that sinot accurate."

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