November 11, 1975

TO: House Subcommittee on Government Information and
Individual Rights
Attn: Mr. Timothy H. Ingram, Staff Director

FROM: Donovan L. Gay, Analyst
Government Division
(Kenneth E. Gray, Division Chief)

SUBJECT: Chronology of the custodianship, transfer, and events related
to autopsy data and "autopsy material" of President John F. Kennedy

This memorandum is in response to your request for a definitive
chronology of the custodianship, transfer, and events related to the
autopsy data and autopsy materials of President John F. Kennedy.

According to Warren Commission documents and recent interviews with
Burke Marshall, Esq., the representative for the Kennedy family in these
matters, and Mrs. Evelyn Lincoln, President Kennedy's former secretary
and others, I report the following:

November 22, 1963

1. Upon completion of the autopsy performed on President John F.
Kennedy, at Bethesda Naval Medical Center, Secret Service agents
requested and received from Navy Corpsmen all photographs, X-rays,
and all other related "autopsy material."

NOTE: In a telephone conversation with Lt. Cmdr. Reeves, Chief of
Patient Affairs, Bethesda Naval Medical Center, Bethesda, Md., on
11/5/75, "...normally all autopsy information, or any other evidence,
would remain in the government's custody...and would be sent to
St. Louis, Missouri for future storage..."

2. This "autopsy material" was delivered to Roy H. Kellerman, Assistant
Special Agent in Charge, U.S. Secret Service, who in turn, delivered
these "autopsy materials" to:

3. Robert L. Bueck, U.S. Secret Service, at the Executive Offices Building,
Washington, D.C.
ON OR ABOUT NOVEMBER 27, 1963

4. On or about November 27, 1963, Bouck delivered unexposed film and undeveloped X-rays to James K. Fox, a Secret Service employee, who delivered them to the:

5. U.S. Navy Photographic Laboratory for developing by Lt. V. Madonia, U.S. Navy. Fox remained with the film during processing, and upon returning to the Executive Offices Building, returned them to:

6. Bouck, who then locked them in a safe.

NOTE: Independent investigations have yet to determine if in fact all X-rays, all film, all medical evidence, and all other related autopsy materials remained in the custody of the Secret Service from about November 27, 1963 to April 22, 1965; or if during this period, a "transfer of custody" was made from the Secret Service to Vice Admiral George G. Burkley, The White House Physician.

APRIL 22, 1965

7. In a letter from Robert F. Kennedy (attached) to Vice Admiral George G. Burkley, Physician to The White House, Burkley was authorized to transfer the "autopsy materials" to Mrs. Evelyn Lincoln, President Kennedy's former personal secretary, at the National Archives where Mrs. Lincoln had been working on the Presidential Papers.

NOTE: According to Mrs. Lincoln (telephone interview on 11/6/75), she was on the staff at the time of the Kennedy Presidential Library which is under the auspices of the National Archives. Assistant Archivist, Marion Johnson, insists however that "...we never had (the autopsy materials). They were only in courtesy storage." (Meeting with Johnson, Mark Eckhoff, Chief, Legislative, Fiscal, and Judicial Division within Civil Archives Division, and Subcommittee staff, 10/7/75)

In a letter to the Subcommittee dated October 17, 1975, Acting Archivist James E. O'Neill, states, "Mrs. Lincoln was not a member of the staff of the National Archives and had no authority to accession research materials for the National Archives."

APRIL 25, 1965

8. In a "letter of gift" signed by Mrs. Jacqueline B. Kennedy, Robert F. Kennedy, and Edward M. Kennedy, executors, dated 4/25/65, a transfer of custody, control, and title to the Presidential historical materials of John F. Kennedy was made to the United States Government. This "letter of gift" is now in the possession of the Office of Presidential Libraries.
According to correspondence from Acting Archivist James E. O'Neill to this Subcommittee, dated October 17, 1975, "The letter of gift is a general legal instrument and, together with related correspondence, reflects a generalized transfer of property. There is no specific reference to access by Mrs. Evelyn Lincoln to any portions of these materials. We have asked the archival staff at the Kennedy Library to examine finding aids and pertinent files among their holdings, and they have reported that they are unable to identify any documentation there relating to the transfer of personal effects and autopsy materials of the late President, access by Mrs. Lincoln, or correspondence relating to the transfer of items from Mrs. Lincoln to Miss Novello, Robert Kennedy's former secretary."

APRIL 26, 1965

9. Vice Admiral Burkley in a letter to Mrs. Evelyn Lincoln (attached) transferred all "...the items (on the attached list) relating to the autopsy of the late President John F. Kennedy," Pursuant to the instructions of Robert F. Kennedy (see attached).

10. Mrs. Evelyn Lincoln received a footlocker of autopsy records, data, and related materials at the National Archives in Room 409 (see attached) from Admiral Burkley and Robert Bouck.

NOTE: On August 27, 1972, in an article by Fred Grahan"...Mrs. Lincoln...said that Admiral Burkley delivered a locked chest to her at the Archives and that a few days later Angie Nevelle (sic), Robert Kennedy's secretary, arrived and took it away. Mrs. Lincoln said that she had not looked inside the chest or read Admiral Burkley's inventory."

In a telephone interview with Mrs. Lincoln (11/6/75) she said that she is certain there was a "letter of transfer" mentioning Ms. Angie Novello, and that this letter should be at Archives.

OCTOBER 29, 1966

11. On October 29, 1966, a letter signed by Burke Marshall, Esq., the Kennedy's representative, addressed to the Honorable Lawson B. Knott, Jr., Administrator of General Services, the parent body of the National Archives, states: "...that the personal effects of the late President which were gathered as evidence by the President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy, as well as certain other materials relating to the assassination, should be deposited, safeguarded and preserved in the Archives of the United States as material of historical importance."

In a telephone interview with Mr. Marshall on November 5, 1975, he said that this "letter of transfer" was not initiated by him or by the
Kennedy family, and neither was it drafted by him or the Kennedy family, but rather it was initiated and drafted by the General Services Administration and National Archives.

NOVEMBER 1, 1966

12. On November 1, 1966, a "Report of Inspection" by Naval Medical Staff at the National Archives of all X-rays and photographs of the autopsy of President John F. Kennedy was conducted.

"...the undersigned individuals jointly examined the items of photographic material described below which were represented to us by Dr. James B. Rhoads, Deputy Archivist of the United States, to be the material listed in Appendix B of a letter dated October 29, 1966 from Burke Marshall..." (see attached)

NOTE: The article "Rules For X-Rays of Kennedy Given: Archives Releases Text of Agreement Transferring Records of the Autopsy," appeared in the New York Times 1/6/63, and listed only (7) seven paragraphs of materials related to the autopsy, whereas, in the inventory of autopsy material signed by Mrs. Evelyn Lincoln, there are (9) nine paragraphs listed. (see attached)
April 22, 1965

Dear Dr. Burkley:

This will authorize you to release to my custody all of the material of President Kennedy, of which you have personal knowledge, and now being held by the Secret Service.

I would appreciate it if you would accompany this material personally and turn it over for safekeeping to Mrs. Evelyn Lincoln at the National Archives.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Mrs. Lincoln with instructions that this material is not to be released to anyone without my written permission and approval.

Sincerely,

Robert F. Kennedy

Vice Adm. George G. Burkley
Physician to the President
The White House
Washington, D.C.

cc/Mrs. Evelyn Lincoln
April 26, 1965

Mrs. Evelyn Lincoln
National Archives
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mrs. Lincoln:

In accordance with authorization dated April 22, 1965 from Senator Robert F. Kennedy, the items on the attached list relating to the autopsy of the late President John F. Kennedy are herewith transferred to the Archives for your custody, and in accordance with the instructions contained in Senator Kennedy's letter.

Yours sincerely,

George O. Burkley
Vice Admiral, MC, USN
Physician to the President

Witnesses:

[Signatures]

[Names]
1. One broken casket handle

2. Envelopes numbered 1 to 10 containing black and white negatives of photographs taken at time of autopsy

3. 7 envelopes containing 4 x 5 negatives of autopsy material

4. 5 envelopes containing 4 x 5 exposed film containing no image

5. 1 roll of exposed film from a color camera entirely black with no image apparent

6. Envelope containing 8 X-ray negatives 14" x 17"; 6 X-ray negatives 10" x 12"; 12 black and white prints 11" x 14"; 17 black and white prints 14" x 17"; all negatives and prints pertaining to X-rays that were taken at the autopsy

7. 36 8" x 10" black and white prints - autopsy photos
   37 3 1/2" x 4 1/2" black and white prints - autopsy photos
   27 color positive transparencies 4" x 5"
   1 unexposed piece of color film

8. 27 4" x 5" color negatives of autopsy photographs
   55 8" x 10" color prints of autopsy photographs

9. 1 plastic box 9 x 6 1/2" x 1" containing paraffin blocks of tissue sections
   1 plastic box containing paraffin blocks of tissue sections plus 35 slides
   A third box containing 35 slides
   1 stainless steel container 7" in diameter x 2" containing gross material
   3 wooden boxes, each 7" x 5 1/2" x 1 1/4", containing 50 slides - blood smears taken at various times during life
   Complete autopsy protocol of President Kennedy (orig. 5 7 cc's) - Original signed by Dr. Humes, pathologist
   Letter of transmittal of autopsy report (orig. 6 1 cc)

Office Memorandum from James K. Fox to SAIC Fouck Nov. 29, 1963, concerning the processing of film in the presence of Lt.(jg) V. MacClure, USA (orig. 5 2 cc's)

Orig. memo from Lt. MacClure to J. K. Fox, U. S. Secret Service, White House, Special Officer, dated Nov. 29, 1963, concerning receipt of certain films and prints and the processing thereof (Orig. 5 1 cc)
Certificate of destruction of preliminary draft notes on protocol of autopsy (1 cc signed by Dr. J. J. James)


 Thermofax reproduction of memo from Francis X. O'Neill Jr., Agent FBI, and James M. Sibert, to Capt. J. H. Steyer, Commanding Officer, USN Medical School, regarding receipt of missile, dated 11-22-63.


 2 page memo from Captain Steyer, MC, USN, Nov. 22, 1963 to Roy H. Kellerman concerning receipt of photographic material.

George S. Buckley George S. Buckley Vice Admiral, MC, USN Physician to the President

Witnesses:

Robert J. Buck

Edward E. Benitez

Received April 26, 1965 in Room 410, National Archives, Washington, D.C. from Dr. Buckley and Robert Bouch.
The Letter on Kennedy Autopsy Photos

Burke Marshall, the special counsel for the executive of President Kennedy, in a letter to the editor of The New York Times, January 6, 1963.

The materials pursuant to this paragraph II (b) shall be authorized until five years after the date of this agreement except with the consent of the Kennedy family representative designated pursuant to Paragraph II (c). For the purposes of this paragraph, the determination of whether such an expert has suitable qualifications and serious purposes shall be made by the Kennedy family representative. No access shall be allowed to persons or to the contents of the materials without the consent of the Kennedy family representative.

Date: January 6, 1963.

Burke Marshall
Special Counsel for the Executive of President Kennedy.
The text of the agreement, released today by the National Archives, was made public under which the Kennedy family will keep the autopsy material secret until Oct. 29, 1971.

Robert H. Bahrer, director of the Archives, released the text of the agreement under which the Kennedy family gave the autopsy material over to the Archives.

Persons who have seen the 65 X-rays, black-and-white photographs and color transparencies that were taken during the autopsy say they give strong support to the Warren Commission's conclusions that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone in killing President Kennedy.

The agreement specifies that 13 X-rays, black-and-white photographs and color transparencies and the autopsy material will not be made available to any individual or organization except a new permanent Presidential Commission, if one is appointed to further investigate the assassination.

The X-rays and photographs were delivered to the Archives on Oct. 20, 1966, together with articles of the President's clothing that he was wearing when he was killed.

Under the terms of the agreement, none of the items will be placed on public display during the first five years. They will be allowed to be examined by researchers who have "serious purposes relevant to the investigation of matters relating to the death of the late President." After that period, "any recognized expert in the field of pathology or related areas of science or technology, for serious purposes relevant to the investigation of matters relating to the death of the late President," may see the material for the first five years.

The agreement does not specify which researchers will have access to the material. It states that the Kennedy family may be named as a representative of President Kennedy's family, but that he would not authorize any person to see the items until Oct. 29, 1971.

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Mystery Cloaks Fate
Of Brain of Kennedy

By FRED P. GRAHAM

WASHINGTON, Aug. 26 --- The Department of Justice has placed in the Archives and the slide of tissue removed from the brain of President Kennedy, plus microscopic slides of tissues removed from the bullet wounds, have been withheld, apparently by the Kennedy family, from the assassination evidence in the National Archives, a medical expert said today.

The expert, Dr. Cyril H. Wecht, was the first critic of the Warren Commission's report on the assassination to be allowed to see items from the autopsy on the President.

He asserted that questions about President Kennedy's wounds would remain unanswered so long as these objects were not available for examination. A spokesman for the Kennedy family replied that all evidence requested by the Justice Department had been placed in the Archives.

Dr. Wecht had turned to microscopic evidence in the Archives because the evidence did not support his doubts about the official finding that the assassination was the deed of Lee Harvey Oswald alone.

Dr. Wecht spent two days in the Archives last week examining the material. He made his assertions afterward in an interview at the Archives.

Interviews with Government officials and President Kennedy's former personal secretary, Evelyn Lincoln, disclosed that the slides and possibly the brain, which was removed from the body in the autopsy in 1963, were not available for examination in 1953 and were preserved in a container of formalin, were

Continued on Page 57, Column 1.


The bullet that killed President Kennedy had apparently been removed from the President's body by his doctors as soon as he was shot. The autopsy report, which was conducted by Dr. James H. embry, the chief of the Pathology Department at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School, stated that the bullet entered the President's head from the right side and exited from the left. The bullet was found to be a .22-caliber bullet, and it was determined that the President was hit in the head and body by bullets fired from the rear.

The Warren Commission, which was appointed to investigate the assassination, did not release any photographs or films of the Kennedy family's possession that has been in the Archives for years—"destroy" the Warren Commission's theory that the same bullet caused the same wounds to John B. Connally, then Governor of Texas, sitting in the President's car.

He said that the bullet's "amost perfect condition" made it virtually impossible that it could have caused such damage, and that the angle of the shot through President Kennedy made it unlikely that it would have struck Governor Connally in the car's "jump seat" in the back.

He concluded that Oswald could not have fired the three bullets so fast on his self-loading rifle, adding: "This proves it could not have been done." Dr. Wecht said that the autopsy pictures and X-rays turned over by the Kennedy family raised two additional questions:

**Positions of Wound**

One is why the wound in the back of President Kennedy's head was stated in the Warren report to have been four inches lower than the Warren report's drawings show the bullet wound to be in the back. It is a mystery that has never been solved. The photograph above the headline on the back left side of the President's head. This might have been an entrance or exit wound, but it has not been reported before.

Dr. Wecht said that he would write to Mr. Marshall, asking to have all these questions to be answered. He added: "It is a terrible thing to do to that family."