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ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Frier to Writing this, his first book, Earold Weisberg was a newspaper and magazine writer, a Senate Investigator and an intelligence and political analyst.

His carlier specialties included

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ILIE D VEISBERG HYATTSTOWN, MD. 20734

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With many warm thoughts

of you and best wishes

STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE MONDRY AUG. 8,1960

In Uniform

1 - 22 L # 1

Island Marine Is Serving With Presidential Guard

MONDAY 8-8-60

By The Mail Clerk

A Castleton Corners U.S. Marine has completed his latest assignment with the Presidential Guard protecting President Eisenhower during the chief executive's vacation at Newport, R.I.

He is Jack Cataneo, son of Mr. and Mrs. Albert Cataneo of

37 Franklin Pt.

The Island leatherneck now will report to Washington, D. C., for further duty with the Presidential Guard.

Cataneo, a former Port Richmond High School student, entered the service in December, 1958. He re-

Jack Cataneo

ceived his initial training at Parris Island, S.C.

The Islander recently received a promotion to lance corporal.

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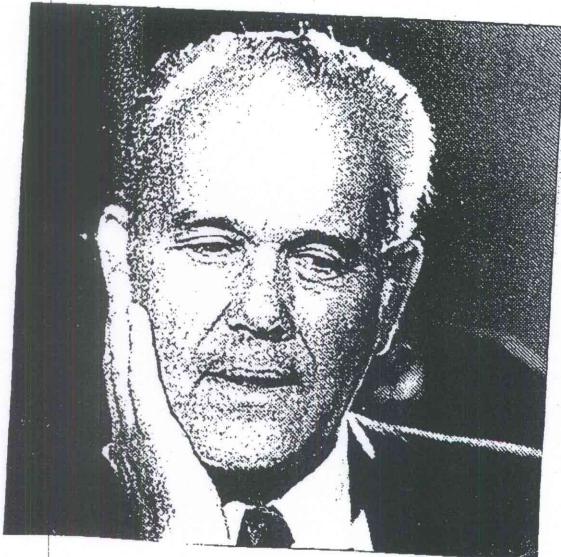
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David Atlee Phillips, chief of CIA operations in the Western Hemisphere, announces his retirement (1975).

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Cuban Intelligence and the JFK Assassination

wo historic meetings took place in 1995, bringing together American researchers and writers who have worked on the JFK assassination, and key former diplomatic and intelligence officers from the Cuban government at the time of the event. Both events were arranged with the help of Coalition Advisory Board member Wayne Smith, Ph.D., and attended by many other Coalition members and officers. The presentations and discussions were recorded, and the Cuban officials were urged to work for release of their government files concerning the assassination.

The first conference was arranged in Rio di Janiero with the help of the Brazilian government, who covered transportation costs for both Cuban and American participants. Brazilian journalist Claud a Furiati, whose documentary film and recent book, ZR Rifle, include information drawn from the Cuban archives, assisted in the invitations. Furiatialso attended the 1995 annual conference of the Coalition, and showed footage of the Rio conference at the event. This meeting got international press attention, and some coverage in the United States. John Newman, Ph.D., and author of Oswald and the CIA, attended and worked with the Coalition from Brazil to release an important story concerning Oswald's connection with the FBI.

A smaller gathering took place in early December in Nassau, Bahamas, attended by General Fabian Escalante, former chief of Cuban intelligence, and his assistant Arturo Rodriguez. and former Cuban diplomatic liaison to the United States, Carlos Lechuga, Cuban and American translators assisted in the meetings. Among the Coalition officers and members who attended were Wayne Smith, Ph.D., Peter Dale Scott, Ph.D., John Newman, Ph.D., James Lesar, Esq., Anthony Summers, Gordon Winslow, Dick Russell and John Judge. Peter Kornbluh, a staff member of the National Security Archives (a non-profit agency), Jeremy Gunn, research director at the Assassination Records Review Board, and several other independent researchers attended. Funds for transportation for the Cubans and other costs were provided by Gulf Stream Airways, Pummayo, and Wayne Smith.

General Fabian Escalante was familiar with numerous Cuban and American figures whose names have been associated with the JFK muriler, and Cuba conducted two investigation into these matters. He was in charge of both investigations, carried out in 1964 at the request of the Warren Commission, and in 1978, in cooperation with the House Select Committee on Assasinations. He was also part of a Cuban study done

in 1965-66 of the CIA's AM/LASH operation. Cuba never carried out an independent investigation into the matter, but they attempted to provide answers to the questions raised by the U.S. probes. Escalante and Rodriguez have recently completed a book on the assassination as well. He conducted 157 interviews with Cubans linked to the case, relying on American research to select some of the names. His conclusion is that the plot against JFK grew from a larger plot against Castro and Cuba.

General Escalante and Arturo Rodriguez presented information during the meetings concerning Jack Ruby and what Cuban intelligence knew about his relation to Cuba. What follows is Escalante's recounting of their knowledge about Ruby.

One important witness was Jose del Vescia, an officer in 1959 at a Cuban prison camp for undocumented aliens which included Santos Trafficante, Jr. and other Americans who had worked in the Cuban gambling industry. The documents are still classified, but they reveal Trafficante's presence in June of 1959. Trafficante, well known to the Cubans, was sought out for arrest and detention at the camp until he could be sent back to the United States as an "undesirable alien." He was wanted by the U.S. Bureau of Narcoues and by Interpol.

However, by August, unconfirmed reports suggest that Trafficante was allowed to leave the camp to attend the marriage of his daughter. He was also in contact with Rolando Cubela, the CLA's agent AVVLASH, as was his Cuban lawyer Rafael Garcia Banyo. They were pentioning for his release from the camp. Cubela also had ties to organized crime and to Eddie "Bayo," another CLA plotter against Castro, Earlier, Trafficante and Cubela had also known Carlos Tepedino, an Italian removed by the CIA in 1959, who used the code name ANNVHIP. Tepedino played a role in the CIA recruitment of Cubela, who remained in Cuba until 1963, then worked in Spain for the CIA, involved in a plotagainst Castro with Cubela and Manuel Artime.

In 1961, Cubela was in Mexico City, in touch with a CIA agent whose description suggests that it was David Adee Phillips, a "tall man, Anglo-Saxon type, about 40 years, thin, hair receding, big teeth, bags under eyes, good manners, well dressed, sociable, spoke fluent Spanish." By March, 1961, the CIA and Mafia were working together to plot against Castro, and a plan was hatched toget Rolando Cubela and Juan Cordoba out of Cuba, along with an associate of Santos Trafficante by the end of the month. Cubela had

just returned from Mexico City on March 4, and the CIA Inspector General's report reveals that poison pills were delivered at the same time period to kill Castro.

House Select Committee investigators Robert Blakey, Ed Lopez and Richard Psyor interviewed Cuban Interior and Foreign Ministry officials, including those in charge of the immigradion camps. One Cuban official was terrified of the questions and refused to have his picture taken. He revealed that he knew and remembered Santos Trafficante, and that he still feared that he could be killed. He recalled how important Trafficante was in the camp, and how many visitors he had. A British journalist, Wilson Hudson was in the same camp, and recalled seeing Jack Ruby's associate Louis McWillie at Trafficante's casino. The Cuban official in charge of the camp died without making a declaration, but the Cubans are convinced that Jack Ruby and McWillie visited Trafficante at the camp.

Cuban archives contained a copy of an entry card that proves Jack Ruby entered the country in August and September of 1959, from both New Orleans and Miami, and that appears in the HSCA materials. They suspect he helped to extract gambling money back to the United States. He knew McWillie, who was linked to Trafficante's casino. Trafficante was finally expelled in January, 1960, and Ruby never returned to Cuba. Trafficante was released, despite evidence of criminal activity, because the Interior Ministry said there was no arrest order for him in the United States, based on conversations with the U.S. Embassy, and he could no longer be detained legally. The person who approved Trafficante's release was Cesa Blanco, an officer in charge of public order at the time. He had full authority to do so, and it was not unusual, lacking orders for his arrest. Peter Dale Scott wondered if this official was Cesa Blanco Gutierrez, a counter-revolutionary in the November 30 Movement. Escalante recalled that the official had gone to the United States. After Trafficante was released, he stayed at the Havana Riviera hotel, He was ned to two Cubans, Fernando Ortega who managed his casino "Sans Souci," and Hermenio Diaz Garcia, his bodyguard.

Hermenio Diaz Garcia took part in a plot to kill Castro in November, 1960 with Chicago Mafia figure Richard Cain, Diaz was also involved in the plot against JFK. He died in Cuba in May, 1966, confronting Cuban troops in an attempt to enter Havana illegally. American researchers have tied Jack Ruby to Robert McKeowan, who ran a coffee business in Cuba in



the 1950s, and who was engaged in arms trafficking, McKeowan was tied to Carlus Prio Socarras, a former Cuban president, and to CIA agent Frahk (Fiorini) Sturgis. American sources say that McKeowan sent a letter to Jack Ruby, asking him to sell weapons to the Cubans in 1959. The Cuban intelligence network has little knowledge of this incident, although one Cuban ex-officer recalled an offer of cheap weapons made by Americans at the same time Ruby was in Cuba.

Coalition members and others present attempted to fill in the details about Ruby's Cuban connections. Peter Dale Scott recalled a CBC documentary in 1977 which interviewed people in Chicago who had done import-export business with Cuba. They got partial cotroboration that Ruby was part of these operations, but did not use it. Ruby visited Trafficante at Transamerica. McWillie told the HSCA that he had gone to Cuba, and perhaps Ruby had come with him. McWillie met Dino Cellini and John Lansky there. Cellini was part of the CIA/Mafia plots against Castro. He also saw Guiseppe di Giorgio, a major courier in narcotics traffic at the time. Di Giorgio was involved in moving stolen securities from Canadian to Swiss banks, and Ruby may have known about this case. Di Giorgip's lawyer, Louis Kunner, knew Ruby well in Chicago. Di Giorgio also used the alias Pierre

Fsculante revealed that no records of registration at the camps still exist, and that the arrangement in the 1960s was not that formal. Just before
the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961, all record archives
were moved several times to protect them, and
non-essential files were destroyed to preserve the
most important information. Documents were
stored and hidden in boxes, but were not retrieved
later if they were not crucial. Many caches remain
hidden and unopened. Over the years, the documents have deteriorated with humidity and age,
and are now urreadable. Resources for preservation are better now, and an effort will be made to
restore the information and seek government
permission to release these files.

The files Escalante used in his research on Ruby have yet to be released, and there are few of them. Others may exist, but their location is not known. There is no formal declassification procedure for documents in Cuba, it has not been discussed. Selected files were given to the Warren Commission and the FISCA by Cuba to use as they saw fit. Contacts with Warren Commission staff were made through the Swiss Embassy, and the Department of State wrote for clarification on Ruby's visit to Cuba.

Escalante was aware of statements made recently by Fidel Castro concerning an offer to declassify JFK assassination documents, and had read about it in Paris Match. He suggested direct contact with Castro to determine which documents were being discussed. One researcher was told by a Cuban official that declassification would take two to five years. Escalante confirmed that the location and release of these files was not a priority for their officials, since survival was more critical. He suggested that the matter be presented to the National Congress in Cuba. At the time of the HSCA, Castro met with their staff and offered to give files to them, but they showed little interest in the records. Jeremy Gunn of the ARRB asked whether Castro would be willing to renew the offer now.

Escalante recalled that the HSCA only sought answers to specific questions they asked, and the relevant documents were declassified and handed over. Escalante directed a Cuban investigation into the history of the assassination in 1992-3, based on access to documents. This inquiry looked in directions that the HSCA never mentioned. Castro knew only about what the HSCA asked for. An exchange of documents concerning the Bay of Pigs and the Cuban Missile crisis have recently begun, and might be expanded to include the JFK records. As a result of the Nassau meeting, a new request for records will be made, but the decision does not rest with Escalante. Given Castro's previous responses, there is a likelihood that it will be approved.

In addition, information about the assassination was shared between Cuban intelligence and the Soviet KGB from the Warren Commission period. The KGB sent a file they had on Oswald to Cuba, concerning his activities inside the Soviet Union. Escalante felt it did not provide much new information. The Review Board was urged to contact the Cuban government to ask for further declassification of documents, and the Cubans present indicated their intention to seek permission for release of the files.

Many other important topics were covered at this meeting, including details concerning the relationship between John F. Kennedy and Castro, and Carlos Lechuga's recollection of an attempt by U.S. Ambassador Atwood, on behalf of the president, to open dialogue just before the assasination. Word of these approaches, according to Escalante's intelligence information, was spread to the anti-Castro Cubans in Miami, and may have precipitated the timing of their involvement in the assassination.

CIA agent David Ailee Phillips, in charge of the JMWAVE operation, was a topic of discussion. The Cubans have additional information that Phillips used the alias "Maurice Bishop" in contacts with anti-Castro Cubans and Lee Harvey

Oswald. This led to a full exchange of information concerning the various anti-Castro groups and individuals who are linked with assassination attempts against Castro and the Kennedy murder. Escalante mentioned the background of Elladio del Valle, an associate of David Ferrie. Del Valle had been a police officer and a legislator in the Batista government, and had worked with Santos Trafficante, Rolando Masferrer and other Barista associates to overthrow the Cuban government. David Ferrie and del Valle participated in overflights and raids of Cuba in 1962. Cuban intelligence had penetrated the group, and knew that del Valle often spoke of killing Kennedy to solve the "Cuban problem." Tony Questa revealed to Cuban intelligence agents in 1978 that del Valle and Herminio Diazwere involved in the JFK plot. Escalante protected the information at the time, since they did not know who del Valle was, but feels no further obligation to conceal it now that Questa is dead. Del Valle and Ferrie died, or were murdered, on the same day.

Oswald's activities in New Orleans with the anti-Castro Cubans was another topic of scrutiny. The Cubans made clear their hypothesis that his Fair Play for Cuba membership, and other manufactured links of Oswald to the Cuban government, served a purpose in Dallas. Had the plan not gone awry, the Cubans believe that Oswald would have been killed, and then Castro blamed for the murder of Kennedy, as a pretext for invasion of Cuba. Oswald's reported visits to the Cuban and Soviet embassies in Mexico was the major topic of the last hours of the conference. Arturo Rodriguez presented a slide show of documents and photographs that explained in great detail the American surveillance methods that were in use at the time at both embassies in Mexico City.

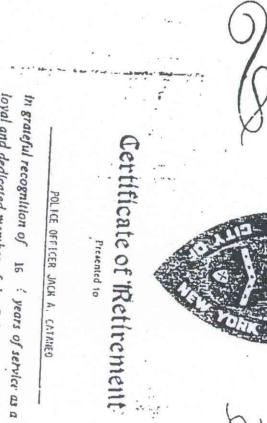
This was an historic meeting between longtime JFK assassination researchers and the Cuban officials who witnessed the events at the time of Kennedy's murder and beyond. As the sharing of information progressed, a bond of openness and trust developed with the Cubans. Both groups were forthcoming, attempting to get at the truth of the events from their divergent perspectives. The meeting ended with general agreement that a more ambigious conference should be planned for the future, perhaps to involve high-level Kennedy administration officials in the discussion. Similar meetings have been held recently between American, Cuban and Soviet officials concerning the lustory of the Bay of Pigs and the Missile Crisis, and have shed light on the events of the early 1960s. The Coalition will continue to encourage this exchange, and seek full release of all governments' files on the Kennedy assassination.

Open Secrets

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