

PROLOGUE

The Newsletter of the Committee for an Open Archives

P.O. Box 6008, Washington, D.C. 20005 - 0708

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COMMITTEE FORMED TO RELEASE JFK DOCUMENTS

Washington, D.C. The Committee for an Open Archives was formed in November, 1991 to help draft a bill to release the documents of the House Select Committee on Assassinations, see that it is introduced in Congress, to lobby for its passage and to disseminate the information once it is released.

Although most of the Warren Commission and FBI documents related to the assassination of John F. Kennedy have been released in censored form, there are still some significant material from the earliest investigations that are still being kept under raps. We are also attempting to get them released.

The most important documents however, stem from the House Select Committee on Assassinations, which concluded its business in 1979. HSCA Chairman Louis Stokes, on March 27, 1979, officially wrote that, "...The Justice (sic) Department is in physical custody of a variety of materials originating from the Select Committee. It can be anticipated that your department will receive requests under the Freedom of Information Act for access to these materials."

"The purpose of this letter is to request specifically that this congressional material and related information NOT be disclosed outside your department without written concurrence of the House of Representatives."

"All government agencies are...to treat the records they compiled for the HSCA investigation in the same fashion as "congressional material" NOT TO BE RELEASED TO THE PUBLIC."

House Rule XXXVI on the "Preservation and Availability of Noncurrent Records of the House" stipulates that such documents can only be made available if they have "been in existence for 50 years."

The Committee for an Open Archives intends to see that a bill is introduced in this congress that will release these documents. Although Rep. Stokes and former HSCA chief counsel G. Robert Blakey are expected to try and block such an effort, there is strong public support for such action and a growing lobby effort to pass such legislation.

It is believed that the bill, once introduced, will be assigned to the House Administration Committee before it is voted on by the complete House.

STONE'S "JFK" SPARKS DEBATE FUELS MOVEMENT TO OPEN ARCHIVES

By William E. Kelly

There have been few major motion pictures to create as much controversy before their release than Oliver Stone's new movie, "JFK."

Like Stone's other films, "JFK" is entertainment, not documentary or history. It's conspiratorial tone, however, has irked a few lawyers and journalists, whose reputations were made and are still threatened by this case.

The film is significant for calling attention to the assassination of JFK, a black hole in American history, and for using the medium to reach and influence a new generation who weren't even born in November, 1963.

While the debate rages over whether President Kennedy was killed by one man alone or by a sinister conspiracy, much of the truth lies locked away in the National Archives in Washington D.C.

Stone's movie may inspire some people to call for an official investigation. That however, has already been done, and done over, by the Dallas Police, the FBI, the USMC, the Warren Commission, the New Orleans District Attorney's office, the Schweiker-Hart subcommittee of the Senate's Church Intelligence Committee and the House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA).

It was this last Congressional committee which compiled many important documents and took the testimony of many witnesses from 1977-1979. The HSCA issued a series of publications, its final report concluding, "there is evidence of conspiracy." The committee then dissolved, leaving its most significant evidence locked in the National Archives.

Because these documents are classified as "congressional documents" they are subject to House Rule #36 which stipulates that they cannot be released to the public for 50 years. They are scheduled to be released in the year 2029.

Nor can these documents be obtained by researchers through a Freedom of Information Act suit since Congress absolved itself from compliance when it approved the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act, over-riding a veto attempt by President Gerald Ford, who had served on the Warren Commission.

Now it will take an act of Congress to release the files and the public support for such an act is increasing.

Former chief counsel of the HSCA G. Robert Blakey said, "I'll rest on the judgment of historians in 2029." But we won't. We want the truth in our lifetime not in 2029.

Committee for an Open Archives
P.O. Box 6008, Washington D.C. 20005-0708

Letter From The Publisher:

The idea for the Committee for an Open Archives (COA) developed several years ago, but it only fermented into a workable concept last November shortly before the Assassination Symposium on Kennedy (ASK) in Dallas.

I had suggested the idea to John Judge, who had first introduced me to the significance of the Kennedy assassination when we were both in college in the sixties, but the concept only percolated until just before we left for the ASK conference. I put together a leaflet for the COA that I distributed to the Symposium participants, and received a tremendous response from an unabashedly biased audience.

On my way home from the conference my train made a six hour stop over in Washington, during which time I visited my Congressman, William Hughes (D. 2nd.N.J.) and then walked over to the Archives, where I learned the exact law, House Rule #36, which has kept the House Select Committee on Assassinations documents locked away. I also visited lawyer James Lesar at the Assassination Information Archives and my college mate John Judge.

While Judge took out the P.O. box in Washington, I put together this newsletter. I called it PROLOGUE a month before I saw Oliver Stone's film, "JFK," at the end of which he notes, "The Past Is Prologue" - the words that are inscribed on the side of the wall of the National Archives. I knew, at least we were on the same wavelength, but I never expected the movie to capture the public's imagination the way it did.

I knew that we had to convince over 218 congressmen, a clear majority, to change the Rules of the House to release the documents. I also knew that of the 15,000 bills introduced into Congress every year, approximately 1,000 make it into law, or 1/15th the number submitted. So I thought we were going to start out with at least a 1 in 15 chance of getting the bill through.

Now however, and as long as the public maintains its interest to influence the people's representatives, the chances keep getting better. Once a bill is introduced, as a similar bill was in 1983 (HR# 160), it is sent to a committee. In this case it would normally be the House Administration Committee. The more committees it is sent to, and the longer it stays in committee, the less of a chance it has to make it to the house floor for a vote, and the less chance it has of becoming a law. Without the public interest, most bills lose out in committee, where they stay "on the shelf" until the year is out, and then they must be reintroduced to be considered again.

We don't intend to let that happen. While Oliver Stone made our job plausible, when it was only possible a few weeks ago, Congress still must be urged to move, each congressman must be individually polled as to where they stand on this issue, the bill must be sponsored, co-sponsored and introduced to the House and assigned to a committee. The committee must hold hearings on the bill and then vote on its merits before the matter can be brought to the floor by the entire House of Representatives. The bill may even be included in a large package of bills to be voted on.

This is certainly an idea whose time has come. Not long ago we were just a few eccentric assassination and history buffs, but now we are mainstream America, with over 70% of the population supporting our cause. Neither Democrat nor Republican, liberal or conservative, leftwing or right wing, nor even lone-nut vs. conspiracy theorists, we just want the facts, and we want them to be made available to the public.

Forget another official investigation. There's already been too many of those. Any new official investigation will merely monopolize the files for another ten years. Let's put all the cards on the table and let them fall where they may. No more secrets, no more lies, just Open the Archives.

William E. Kelly

CAPITOL IDEAS

NOTES FROM THE HILL

By William Kelly and John Judge

Suddenly, with a tip of the hat to Oliver Stone, there is a national consensus to release all of the sealed government files related to the assassination of JFK.

Even Rep. Louis Stokes, David Belin and Arlen Specter have come around. Support from such quarters was totally unexpected.

Yet, the files remain closed, and will remain so until the public pressures Congress to take decisive action to release them.

The ball is moving however, although it is still going uphill. It is being dribbled in the Congressional court at the moment where the House of Representatives is considering a number of bills on the matter. It appears they will play "wait and see," - wait and see if the public loses interest. So watch what they do, not what they say.

So far two relevant bills have been introduced and at least two more are expected. The first, House Resolution (HR) #4090 was introduced by Rep. James Traficant (D. Ohio) on Jan. 3, 1992.

It calls for "...the Senate and House of the U.S. Congress assembled, to require that government held information regarding the assassination of JFK be made available to the general public, other than information of vital national security interests..."

The second bill, HR# 325, introduced by Rep. Henry Gonzales (D. Texas) on Jan. 22, 1992, "...provides for the release for public use of the records of the former HSCA...within 30 days after the adoption of this resolution..."

A third bill by former HSCA chairman Rep. Louis Stokes (D. Ohio) is expected to be introduced, and a fourth, by Rep. Lee Hamilton (D. Indiana) will be if he is not happy with the wording of any of the other bills.

The difference in the wording of the bills is important. Traficant's bill (HR#4090) includes all federal government documents, including the Warren Commission and other federal investigations, but it must be passed by both the Senate as well as the House and signed by the President. It also contains a loophole to exclude any information that is "of vital national security interests." This was the same excuse given to lock the documents up in the first place.

The Traficant bill must pass through three committees, the House Administration Committee, the Committee on Government Operations and the House Judiciary Committee, before it will be voted on by the full House.

The Gonzales bill (HR#325) calls for the full release, but only of HSCA documents, which includes those regarding Martin Luther King. It does not need the concurrence of the Senate or the approval of the president.

We are pushing for the broadest and strongest possible legislation to open all government records relating to the assassinations of John and Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King.

Additional files exist at the Defense Intelligence Agency, Office of Navy Intelligence, Army, CIA, FBI and Secret Service and they also should be released to the public.

COMMITTEE FOR AN OPEN ARCHIVES

-P.O. Box 6008 Washington,D.C. 20005 - 0708-

-----THE TRUTH IS OUR ONLY OBJECTIVE-----

- The Committee for an Open Archives is a non-profit organization established to draft, introduce and pass Congressional legislation to declassify and accelerate the release of documents and testimony related to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. The COA was founded by William E.Kelly and John Judge and is funded through donations and membership subscriptions.

- The COA intends to pursue this goal through informing the public about what information is being withheld, creating a broad base of public-citizen support to open the Archives, and initiate an intense lobbying campaign in Congress to pass the necessary legislation to release the documents as soon as possible.

- The COA is also pursuing Freedom of Information and Privacy Act requests for specific documents and will publish the most recently released information, as well as any new developments in the JFK assassination, in our newsletter - PROLOGUE. We are also attempting to establish a nationwide team of independent researchers, disseminate the facts to be reviewed and indexed, and open a computerized network that will store, file and distribute the information as it becomes available.

- Besides the censored Warren Commission documents that remain classified after nearly 30 years, there are the House Select Committee on Assassination (HSCA) files, transcripts and information in the National Archives, which are locked away, according to House Rule #36, until 50 years after the conclusion of the HSCA investigation, in 2029.

- To support this effort to release the facts, please sign and distribute-

SEND TO: COMMITTEE FOR AN OPEN ARCHIVES : P.O. BOX 6008, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-0708
OR CALL OUR VOICE MAIL- (202) 310-1858 - AND LEAVE YOUR PHONE # AND ADDRESS

NAME _____

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PHONE # _____ LEVEL OF COMMITMENT:

SUBSCRIBE- _____ - SUBSCRIBE TO PROLOGUE - THE NEWSLETTER OF THE COA (\$25 ENCLOSED).
SIGN ON - _____ - SEND PETITION FOR CONGRESS TO AMEND H.R. #36 AND RELEASE JFK FILES.
COME IN - _____ - VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME - WORK IN YOUR COMMUNITY - LOBBY YOUR REP.
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IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF PROLOGUE LOOK FOR:

- Oliver Stone Fires Back - the complete Wash. Press Club speech.
- Report from the ASK Conference in Dallas.
- Dallas For Beginners - A Tour De Force of the Scenes of the Crimes.
- Tom Wilson's New Gray Scale Imaging of Photo Evidence.
- The Press Release on the Houston Police Dept.'s Identification of the Tramps.
- New Column by John Judge - Judge For Yourself.
- New Books Previewed and Reviewed. Jean Hill, Mark Lane, John Newman et al.
- What's in the Archives Anyway. Lists of documents we know about and want to see.
- Organizing Your Community and Lobbying Your Congressman-How will your Rep. vote?

OTHER SOURCES:

THE LAST HURRAH BOOKSHOP
BOOKS ON POLITICAL ASSASSINATIONS
CONSPIRACY AND THE KENNEDY FAMILY
937 MEMORIAL AVE., WILLIAMSPORT, PA.
17701 - PHONE: (717) 327-9338

THE THIRD DECADE
A JOURNAL OF RESEARCH
ON THE JFK ASSASSINATION
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"We don't dare confront the implications. I think we've all agreed there was a conspiracy to kill President Kennedy, and we just don't want to know the complete truth. It involves such powerful forces in what we call high places that if we do know, everything might fall apart."
- Leonard Bernstein - 1980

"The very word 'secrecy' is repugnant in a free and open public and we are as a people, inherently and historically opposed to secret societies, secret oaths and to secret proceedings. We decided long ago that the dangers of excessive and unwarranted concealment of pertinent facts far outweighed the dangers which are cited to justify it. Even today, there is little value in opposing the threat of a closed society by imitating its arbitrary restrictions. Even today there is little value in insuring the survival of our nation if our traditions do not survive with it."
- John F. Kennedy

"There is always a tendency in government to confuse secrecy with security. Disclosure may be uncomfortable, but it is not the purpose of democracy to ensure the comfort of its leaders."
- Robert F. Kennedy.



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