

Few Show Up to Read Files on the Assassination

By MARJORIE HUNTER

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 7—Bob Katz was a 16-year-old high school student sitting in an algebra class in Chicago when he heard over a public address system that President Kennedy had been assassinated.

Today he was the first of 50 people, most of them reporters, to be handed previously classified files of the Federal Bureau of Investigation on the assassination.

The 30-year-old Mr. Katz got first call on the material because he was sitting in Seat No. 1 in a small, tightly secured room in the F.B.I. Building, a room ordinarily used by experts to brief bureau agents on the latest crime techniques.

He and three colleagues, ranging in age from 25 to 42, asked to see the files as representatives of the Assassination Information Bureau Inc., a private, nonprofit organization set up in 1974 in Cambridge, Mass., as a clearinghouse for information on the Kennedy assassination.

Members of its Advisory Board are Norman Mailer, David Dellinger, Allen Ginsberg, Tom Hayden, Murray Kempston, Jack Newfield, Philip Noble, K. Barton Osborn, Marcus Raskin and Peter Dale Scott. None of them were present for the opening of the files.

An Academic Atmosphere

It was in a classroom atmosphere not too unlike that of the 1963 algebra class in Chicago that Mr. Katz and his colleagues and the dozens of reporters for major newspapers, magazines, radio and television began delving into the F.B.I. files today.

They sat in armless chairs attached to rows of tables facing a blackboard on which those in charge of the project had dotted down the names of John F. Kennedy, Lee Harvey Oswald and Jack Ruby, who killed Oswald. By their names were certain numbers, indicating which files dealt with what subject.

Mr. Katz's organization has been highly critical of the Warren Commission's finding that Oswald acted alone in killing Kennedy.

"We don't think Oswald was acting on his own," Mr. Katz said today. "But whether we'll find anything useful on



Associated Press

Reporters and members of the general public registering at the J. Edgar Hoover Building in Washington to view the Kennedy report.

that subject in these files, well, I doubt it."

Recalling the day that he heard of the Kennedy assassination, Mr. Katz said that it was a "traumatic experience for me."

"It happened to a President I was personally fond of," he added.

Until that day, Nov. 22, 1963, the public address system in the high school he was attending was used only "to announce football games," Mr. Katz said.

Ground Rules Explained

Standing beside the blackboard today, Special Agent John H. Hawkes

explained the ground rules for using the files. Also on hand to answer questions was William Shackelford, a research analyst who had spent 18 months coordinating the files.

But, even with the blackboard notations and the presence of agency personnel familiar with the files, it was necessary for those interested in glean specific information to read through the tremendous mass of material filling nine tall file drawers.

An adjoining room, similarly equipped with tables, chairs and blackboard, had been set aside to accommodate scholars, historians, researchers, assassination buffs and others. However, by late today, the turnout of those wanting to read the files was not large enough to require the use of the second room.

The files can be read without charge in the two reading rooms, but anyone wanting a copy of the material must pay 10 cents a page. Some news organizations bought copies of the entire file of 40,001 pages for a total cost of \$4,000.10. This enabled them to remove the material to their own offices.

Those buying the entire files were the NBC News, The Associated Press, United Press International and The Washington Post.

Sharing the cost of purchasing one entire set were Newsday, The Washington Evening Star, The Wall Street Journal, The Baltimore Sun, The Dallas Times-Herald, the Knight-Ritter newspapers and the Scripps-Howard News Service.