

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

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I was employed by the State of Louisiana Department of Veterans' Affairs. To the best of my memory, Mr. Festus Brown brought Mr. Banister to my office at 535 St. Charles Ave. and we went out to lunch together. It seems to me that that was our first meeting -- I had seen him before but that was the first time we met. At that time, to the best of my memory, he had his own private investigating office on Lafayette St. and he invited me to drop around any time. He had some interesting papers and books on Americanism, congressional reports on counter-subversive activities of the House Un-American Activities Committee and much other material, including histories, that I was interested in. I may have made an error in this statement as it seems to me that Jerry was with me, and Mr. Banister, and we went out to Mr. Banister's house. What I remember about that was a room surrounded by books. I don't remember just what we talked about but it was probably about the Americanism work that we were both interested in. I think his house was on Noyave St. After I retired and dropped around to his office, I told him if I could be of any use in this counter-subversive work he was interested in, I would be glad to lend my assistance. Before I left, he said, "Well, there's a desk right here; nobody's using it." When I borrowed a typewriter as he didn't

have one at the time, I was that time and this investigation was being conducted by the State of Louisiana and I was

who were mixed up in integration. He showed me the best way to compile the data for making a report. I found it very interesting. I would check his own files to see what names would correspond with those who were in local activities. Doing that and reading numerous circulars that came in from publications of any material that would be of any interest in this counter-subversive work. I was with him in his office about six to eight months.

Q - Mr. Melville, I'll show you seven pictures of male subjects. Would you tell me if you recognize anyone in these pictures?

A - Well, the only one I positively recognize is Mr. Banister himself. There's three others here, a man sitting at a desk, man neatly dressed in shirt and collar, curly-haired, and another younger man - just the head - husky looking young fellow -- I think I've seen the face somewhere but I can't identify him.

Q - Do you recall if you have ever seen the man in the three pictures that look somewhat familiar to you in the company of Mr. Banister at any time.

A - No, I can't positively identify them as having seen them with Mr. Banister.

Q - During the time that you were in the office with Mr. Banister, do you recall ever seeing any Cuban type persons with Mr. Banister?

A - None that I would definitely identify as Cuban. One young man that used his office and I think worked with Mr. Banister, it seemed to me he had a Spanish or a French name. I think he did investigative work for Mr. Banister from their exchange of conversation.

Q - Mr. Melville, would you know this man by sight if you saw him in person or a picture of him?

A - I seem to have such a poor memory for faces that I doubt if I could positively identify him.

Q - Mr. Melville, do you recall if you have ever seen Oswald with Mr. Banister?

A - No. I don't remember ever seeing anyone that looks like the man in that picture.

Q - The names David Ferris, Jack Martin, and Vernon Gerdes -- do they mean anything to you?

A - Not in connection with Mr. Banister. I've seen the name Gerdes or heard it somewhere but I can't associate it with Mr. Banister. I may have just seen it in the newspaper.

Q - Did you know any of Mr. Banister's employees, male or female, by name?

A - Well, there was a Mrs. Roberts - I didn't know her through his office particularly because she has always been active in conservative groups, Daughters of the American Revolution, and then there was Mrs. Bringal. Those are the two whose names I remember.

Q - Is there anything else that you can think of along these lines?

A - I remember him discussing with me a contract he was trying to get in the rocket complex in Alabama I believe it was -- some security work or something for them, and then of course we discussed his books.

Q - The books you are talking about were histories, Americanism and things of this sort?


A - Yes, that's correct.

Q - Did Mr. Banister ever introduce to you Communist cases or any other cases he was working on?

A - No, he never did, and I never questioned him.

Q - Mr. Melville, is this statement true and correct to the best of your knowledge and do you give this statement of your own free will?

A - Yes sir.


LAWRENCE CHARLES MELVILLE

ROBERT A. SIMMS, Witness

This statement was typed in the office of the District Attorney on February 5, 1967.

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