

Chris Scally from Paul Huh 4/22/83

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DPD Channel 1 Dictabelts:  
Chain of Possession

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"Within a few days of" November 22, 1963 Original channel 1 belts, 10 in all,<sup>1</sup> provided to FBI - or more probably the Secret Service - and taken from DPD offices.<sup>2</sup> Returned to DPD Sergeant Jim Bowles "several days later".<sup>3</sup>

November 29-30, 1963 DPD Chief Lumpkin "provided for transcription" the "Police recordings of channel 1" to Secret Service Agents Roger Warner and Elmer Moore.<sup>4</sup> These were "recorded by SA Warner and were sent to Washington Protective Research Section for filtering, rerecording and transcription", and were to be returned to the Dallas Secret Service office.<sup>5</sup>

Start of December 1963 Recordings could not be found by Secret Service or National Archives in 1970,<sup>6</sup> and again in 1982;<sup>7</sup> a transcript was found in the Archives in 1981.<sup>8</sup> The crucial belt began at 12:27 pm.<sup>9</sup>

Mid-December 1963 DPD Sergeant Gerald D. Henslee prepared edited transcript (from belts?).<sup>10</sup> Transcript given to DPD Chief Jesse Curry on December 5,<sup>11</sup> and to Secret Service on December 6.<sup>12</sup>

March 3, 1964 Henslee transcript entered into Warren Commission evidence on April 8, 1964, as Sawyer Exhibit B.<sup>13</sup>

March 6, 1964 Dictabelts handed over to Curry for inclusion in DPD internal investigation files.<sup>14</sup>

Pre-March 23, 1964 J. Lee Rankin, Warren Commission General Counsel, asked FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover to provide the Commission with a transcript.<sup>15</sup>

March 23, 1964 Transcript requested from DPD by FBI.<sup>16</sup>

May 28, 1964 DPD Sergeant Bowles prepared transcript from belts<sup>17</sup> which he said were in "very good condition",<sup>18</sup> the crucial one of which began just after 12:25 pm.<sup>19</sup>

Bowles made 4 copies of the dictabelts: 2 for the FBI (one "filtered", the other "unfiltered");<sup>20</sup> 1 copy for Chief Curry;<sup>21</sup> and 1 copy for himself, from which he later made his own transcript.<sup>22</sup>

One of the FBI copies is believed by Bowles to have been sent outside Texas, to a laboratory in (he thinks) Oklahoma;<sup>23</sup> the other FBI copy was reported missing from the National Archives in 1976.<sup>24</sup>

DPD Inspector J. Herbert Sawyer, via the FBI, provided the Bowles transcript to the Warren Commission;<sup>25</sup> transcript became Commission Exhibit 705.<sup>26</sup>

Warren Commission's Rankin asked Dallas Secret Service SAIC Forrest V. Sorrels to "record the Dallas Police Department tapes of radio broadcasts over channels 1 and 2 on November 22, 1963, between the hours of 12:30 and 2:00 pm".<sup>27</sup>

In 1982, neither the National Archives nor Secret Service could find anything to show that this request had been met, or, indeed, any evidence relating to it.<sup>28</sup>

July 16, 1964 Rankin asked Hoover to provide transcript from "the original tapes of the radio broadcasts".<sup>24</sup>

July 21-24, 1964 Chief Curry provided 10 dictabelts for review and transcription by unidentified FBI agent.<sup>30</sup> Belts covered period 10:00 am to 3:00 pm on November 22, and were described as "badly worn from being played".<sup>31</sup> Crucial belt, according to transcript, covered the period 11:51 to 12:40 and was belt 5 of the series.<sup>31</sup> DPD Lieutenant Doug Gasset, now believed to be in Austin, Texas,<sup>33</sup> was present with FBI agent on July 21.<sup>34</sup>

August 11, 1964 Transcript, which later became Warren Commission Exhibit 1974, was completed, and covering memo from FBI office in Dallas was written.<sup>35</sup>

August 20, 1964 Copy of FBI transcript attached to letter from Curry, signed by Deputy Chief M.W. Stevenson, to Texas Attorney General.<sup>36</sup>

August 21, 1964 Letter from Hoover to Rankin said transcript would be sent to Commission "in the immediate future", and referred to the "badly worn condition of the original tapes".<sup>37</sup>

Early in 1967 Belts copied to tape for author Judy Bonner by DPD Sergeant Gerald Hill; Bonner's tape later given to, or copied for, Dallas researcher Mary Ferrell.<sup>39</sup>

1969 Material, which as well as the tape copy made for Curry in 1964 by Bowles, was variously described as containing "the dictabelts", "a dictabelt", "dictabelts", and "a Dictabelt and a tape...covering from 10 am to 2:15 pm",<sup>43</sup> was found in a locked cabinet outside Curry's office.<sup>44</sup> Material given to DPD Intelligence Dept Director Paul McCaghren.<sup>45</sup>

1969 to 1978 McCaghren kept the material in his office until 1971 or 1972, when he moved it to his home for safekeeping.<sup>46</sup>

End September 1977 HSCA in possession of Mary Ferrell's tape,<sup>47</sup> as well as a "filtered" copy of her tape, obtained from Gary Mack.<sup>48</sup>

February 11, 1978 McCaghren told HSCA investigator Jack Moriarty about the material in his possession, and handed it over to HSCA shortly thereafter.<sup>49</sup>

May 12, 1978 Tape, probably Mrs. Ferrell's, given to Dr. James Barger of BBN by the HSCA.<sup>50</sup>

July 1978 Material, believed to be from McCaghren, and consisting of the Bowles/Curry tape from 1964 and "the entire series of dictabelts", given to Barger by HSCA.<sup>51</sup> Crucial belt was "rather centered on 12:30",<sup>52</sup> was apparently quite old, had been played a great deal, was in poor condition, and was marked as "Being recorded from Channel 1".<sup>52</sup> Belt was copied to tape by Dr. Barger and found to "virtually identical" to the Bowles/Curry tape copy.<sup>54</sup>

October 1978 Dr. Barger's tape copy, and the Bowles/Curry tape, given to Mark Weiss and Ernest Aschkenasy by HSCA.<sup>55</sup>

1979 All HSCA acoustics material apparently handed over to Justice Department by HSCA.<sup>56</sup>

November (?) 1981

Ramsey Panel obtained "original Dictaphone recordings" from DOJ. Crucial belt covered the period 12:05 to 12:40 and was in poor condition, "shrunken and stiffened". Contained handwriting "11-22-63, PL2, 10" by Doris Schwartz, who serviced DPD Dictaphone in 1963. Also contained handwritten times 12 5 and 12 40 and the letters J and H, not written by Ms. Schwartz.<sup>57</sup>

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References

Note: The following abbreviations are used throughout -

- WCE - Warren Commission Exhibit
- WH - Warren Commission Hearings. Thus, 23 WH 832 is Volume 23 of the Warren Commission's Hearings, page 832
- TCI - The Continuing Inquiry newsletter
- SS - Secret Service Document, on file at the National Archives. Thus, SS 324 is Secret Service Document Number 324
- EOC - Echoes Of Conspiracy newsletter. Thus, 4 EOC 1 is Volume 4, issue Number 1, of Echoes of Conspiracy
- B/B - "The Plot To Kill the President", by G. Robert Blakey and Richard N. Billings (New York: Times Books, 1981)
- HH - Hearings before the House Select Committee on Assassinations. Format of reference as for WH.
- HR - Report of the HSCA
- RR - Report of the NAS/Ramsey panel

1. Although there is dispute over the number of dictabelts created on Nov. 22, 1963, the figure quoted here is from the only documented count currently available, in WCE 1974 at 23 WH 832 ff.
2. FBI 89-43-10553, p.2. An FBI report, dated October 1, 1980, concerning FBI interviews with Jim Bowles on August 20 and September 15, 1980.
3. TCI, Karch 1982, p.5
4. SS 324; Reproduced in TCI, March 1982, p.5
5. Ibid.
6. Paul Hoch correspondence with National Archives and Secret Service in the period November to December 1970.
7. Author's correspondence with National Archives and Secret Service in the period September to December 1982.
8. SS 168, referenced in 4 EOC 1, p.3
9. SS 168 transcript, p.47
10. 6 WH 325-7, Henslee's testimony of April 8, 1964
11. Sawyer Exhibit B, p.1, at 21 WH 398
12. SS 468, referenced in Whitewash II, by Harold Weisberg (Private publication; Hyattstown, Md; 1966), p.25
13. 21 WH 398-400
14. 2 HH 108, Paul McCaghren testimony; B/B, p.93; Dallas Morning News article "Discovery of file may break open JFK investigation", by Earl Golz, Saturday March 18, 1978.

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References: (Cont.)

15. Rankin letter to Hoover dated April 7, 1964, in Warren Commission files at the National Archives.
16. TCI, March 1982, p.6
17. FBI 89-43-10553, p.3; TCI, March 1982, pp.6,7
18. TCI, March 1982, p.7
19. Ibid.; letter to the author from confidential source, October 25, 1982
20. TCI, March 1982, p.6
21. Letter to the author from confidential source, November 15, 1981
22. TCI, March 1982, p.6; letter to Professor Norman Ramsey from Gary Kack dated November 12, 1981, reproduced in TCI, November 1981, pp.4-6.
23. TCI, March 1982, p.7
24. TCI, September 1977, p.6; "National Archives - Security Classification Problems Involving Warren Commission Files and Other Records", Hearings before the House Subcommittee on Government Information, 1976, referenced in Coincidence or Conspiracy, by Bernard Fensterwald Jr and Michael Ewing (New York; Zebra Books, 1977), p.430
25. Whitewash, by Harold Weisberg (Private publication; Hyattstown, Md. 1965), p.98; Rankin letter to Hoover dated July 16, 1964, in Warren Commission files at National Archives.
26. WCE 705, at 17 WH 361-494
27. Rankin to Sorrels letter, May 28, 1964. Copy in author's files.
28. Author's correspondence - see Reference 7.
29. Rankin letter to Hoover dated July 16, 1964 in Warren Commission files at National Archives; Rankin letter to Texas Attorney General Carr of July 16, 1964, in Warren Commission files at National Archives.
30. 23 WH 832 ff.
31. 23 WH 832-3
32. 23 WH 838 ff; see also in TCI, March 1982, p.7
33. TCI, March 1982, p.7
34. 23 WH 832
35. Ibid.
36. Texas Attorney General's Report, Vol. 14, referenced in TCI, January 1977, pp.4-5
37. Hoover to Rankin letter dated August 21, 1964, in Warren Commission files at National Archives.
38. TCI, April 1981, p.2
39. Ibid.
40. 2 HH 17, Narration by Dr. Blakey.
41. 2 HH 110, McCaghren testimony; 2 HH 89, Dr. Barger's testimony; B/B, p.91.
42. 8 HH 62, Barger/BEN report; HR 67.
43. B/B, p.93
44. 2 HH 109, McCaghren testimony; B/B, p.93.
45. Ibid.
46. Id. at pp.109, 110; B/B, p.93.

References: (Cont.)

- 47. B/B, p.91; GALLERY magazine, July 1979, p.65-9; letter to the author from confidential source, November 15, 1981.
- 48. Letter to the author from confidential source, November 15, 1981.
- 49. HR p.67; B/B, p.92.
- 50. 8 HH 62, BBN/Barger report.
- 51. Letter to the author from Dr. Barger, January 29, 1982; 8 HH 63, BBN/Barger report.
- 52. Letter to the author from Dr. Barger, January 29, 1982.
- 53. 2 HH 89, Barger testimony.
- 54. Ibid.; 8 HH 62, BBN/Barger report.
- 55. 8 HH 4-5, Weiss/Aschkenasy report; 5 HH 556, Weiss testimony.
- 56. Washington Post, May 26, 1981, p.A8; RR 67.
- 57. Evaluation of the documents made public by the NAS/Ramsey panel in their Public Access File suggests that the panel received access to the dictabelts around mid-November, 1981; RR 67; RR 81-2.

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