

Research - Autopsy -
-original sketch attached

MEMORANDUM

To: Ken Klein
From: Jim Kelly ^{kl} and Andy Purdy ^{ap}
Date: August 29, 1977

002272

Re: Interview with Paul K. O'Connor, August 25, 1977, Lot to,
Shady Nook Trailer Park, Gainesville, Florida.

Mr. O'Conner was interviewed because of his participation in the autopsy of President Kennedy. According to Mr. Jenkins, Mr. O'Connor had duties similar to his on the night of the autopsy.

Mr. O'Connor said he heard of the assassination about two o'clock and subsequently went to the morgue because he was on duty that night. Mr. O'Connor said he "...always pulls duty with Jenkins." O'Connor said the whole morgue got very crowded as the time for autopsy approached. He said there were approximately a dozen FBI agents and the gallery was full. O'Connor recalled that he was very apprehensive as Kennedy was his idol.

O'Connor said that he hadn't participated in an autopsy with Humes and Boswell. He said that Humes was the Chief Pathologist and Boswell was the Chief of the Laboratory School. He recalled that there was a Pathologist on duty who was the officer of the day,

probably a lieutenant. O'Connor said that all deaths that occur in the hospital are given postmortems because it is a "teaching hospital." He said they also have brain clinics.

O'Connor can recall "...no one actually giving any specific orders to anyone ... things just sort of flowed together ... it was organized madness." He said that during the autopsy a lot of the people were "...whispering in corners." He said he couldn't tell if anyone in the gallery was taking notes.

O'Connor said that the casket was a pink shipping casket and it arrived approximately eight o'clock. He said the body was in a body bag and the head was wrapped in a sheet. O'Connor said he helped unwrap the sheet. He recalls seeing "...massive head wound..." and a "...gaping wound in the neck..." as well as "... two chest incisions."

O'Connor said that he was chocked at what he saw. He said the head had "...nothing left in the cranium but splattered brain matter." O'Connor said he noticed this particularly because it was "...part of my job to remove the brain and fix it." He said Jenkins duties centered "...on the lower part of the body." O'Connor said there was "...a lot of

bright red blood all over."

O'Connor said that he helped put the body on the table, unwrap the very bloody sheet, and was in the presence of the medical photographer, the X-Ray technicians, and the "medical illustrator." O'Connor said that when they arrived, Humes and Boswell "... assumed command." He didn't recall any flag rank giving them orders.

Regarding the wound in the neck, O'Connor said it "...looked like a very sloppy tracheotomy and I've seen a lot." He said the "...gaping hole ... looked like the whole larynx was gone." O'Connor said that after the autopsy the body was cleaned; however, O'Connor said he "...didn't help this time ... I was a runner ... Mr. Jenkins may have helped clean the body."

Mr. O'Connor said that one of their duties prior to the autopsy is to log in the name, date, and autopsy number. He said this was done by "...whoever got there first." (speaking of either Jenkins or himself). O'Connor said that when the body arrived they usually get the "...death certificate signed by the attending physician..." and a written authorization for the autopsy. O'Connor said he thinks he logged in

the body. He said all the information would have been hand written in the big log book. O'Connor said there is a hospital corpsman incharge of the morgue duty, Rudnicki he believes. (first name: Jan) O'Connor recalls that he didn't write the President's name in, just the number, even though the name is normally written in. O'Connor proceeded to repeat by memory the autopsy number of the President. He said it without giving any indication that he had ever looked it up since the time of the autopsy nearly fourteen years ago.

O'Connor said that in addition to logging the body in they were responsible for identifying it with a tag on the right big toe, and filling in certain information on the autopsy face sheet. They usually then call the Pathologist to find out if he wants to do the autopsy that night or wait. If he wants to proceed, they then call the tissue bank which has priority over the body and later they call the bone bank. On this occasion he made no such calls, saying they were "...not allowed to." He recalls that some calls were made by Generals and Admirals from the phone in the main room and the one in the ante-room.

O'Connor said that the face sheets are pre-

printed forms which normally the doctor fills in with information other than the routine details. O'Connor doesn't recall whether the face sheet was kept on a clip board. He said they usually write on the face sheet in pen. O'Connor does not recall whether he or Jenkins wrote in the information regarding race, eye color, hair color, height, or weight. He did say that "...the scars were noted." However, O'Connor then said he "...never saw a sheet that night ... the whole procedure was abnormal." O'Connor said the information was "...probably written in later." He said the doctors normally write it out at the time and dictate a final report later on.

O'Connor said it was also normal for samples of tissues from throughout the body to be taken.

O'Connor said that he "...didn't write anything, except possibly the information in the log book." He said that if anyone wrote down the preliminary information it was probably Jenkins, Rudnicki, or himself.

Regarding the wound in the head, O'Connor said there was "...no use me opening the skull because there were no brains." O'Connor described the defect as being in the region from the "...Occipital around the

temporal and parietal regions." He said there was a "...massive hole, no little hole." O'Connor believes the bullet came in from the front right and blew out the top.

O'Connor said for a while there was no discussion of any other wounds until later on when they found the bullet wound in the "...back in the neck... just above C-7." O'Connor said it was approximately dead center in the mid-line of the back.

O'Connor said it was "...a funny autopsy." He said one reason was because when they started viscerating the body O'Connor was asked to leave. He noted that Jenkins remained. He said Dr. Boswell or Humes told him to go outside the room (he was guarded by a Marine while he did); he remained outside approximately thirty or forty minutes. He said during that time the X-Rays of the "...entire body..." were taken, according to what an X-Ray technician told him.

O'Connor returned to the room after the suturing was done and found out later he had missed the probing by the Doctors. When he had returned he said the doctors had the back up and appeared to be "...very interested in it ... to see what the spine looked like."

O'Connor said he later asked Jenkins about what he missed and noted that they both were very afraid to talk

about it. O'Connor recalls that Jenkins or someone else told him that the doctors had "...found a fragment of a bullet lodged in the intercostal muscle on the right rear side.." of the President's body. O'Connor was also told that "...alot of blood infiltrated the intercostal muscle." O'Connor believes he was told this information by "...one of the corpsman, possibly the photographer."

When O'Connor returned to the autopsy room he heard "...someone say there had not been a normal autopsy." O'Connor said a normal autopsy includes a "Y" incision. He said in this case the doctors "...just looked around and put everything back in." O'Connor said that the defect in the cranium was filled with plaster of paris. There were no bones to fit in over it. He said brown sheeting rubber was put in to seal the head. He noted that too much plaster of paris was put in so that doctors had to "...chip away the plaster."

O'Connor said that after everything was closed up the body had a big bandage put on it and then a plastic body shirt. He said all the clothes were put on without cutting. He said the embalmers did a great job (he heard the morticians came from New York City). O'Connor said he helped put Kennedy in the mahogany casket and put the rosary in his hand. He then helped Jenkins scour the entire morgue.

—On that following Monday he was called to the Admiral's office and told to sign a whole stack of papers which indicated that he would not talk about the autopsy "...until an appropriate report came out." O'Connor said he hasn't discussed this very much with anyone.

O'Connor stated that in 1959 he was stationed at Guantanamo, Cuba during the Bay of Pigs Invasion. He said he has been "...very distraught regarding the whole autopsy thing." O'Connor believes he was followed at one time, and told us of an alleged incident in Dupont Circle which he never reported. He said the experience of the autopsy took him a "...long time to get over..." He said he dropped out of school and transferred to Cecilfield and then went to Viet Nam where he was wounded. O'Connor is currently suffering from some back trouble and will have a third operation on his spine very soon.

O'Connor has had a number of years of law enforcement experience in police departments in the area where he lived in Florida and believes he knows what bullets do and is very dubious about the single bullet theory. O'Connor added that he didn't think the doctors were trying to establish anything by the autopsy, saying they were "...just glanced at the throat wound..." and later found the hole in the back. It did not seem to O'Connor that the doctors ever considered

the possibility that the bullet had exited through the front of the neck.

Regarding the possibility that there had been a medical illustrator in the room, O'Connor said he was "...sure there was a medical illustrator in there." He said there was a medical illustration department of the medical school there.

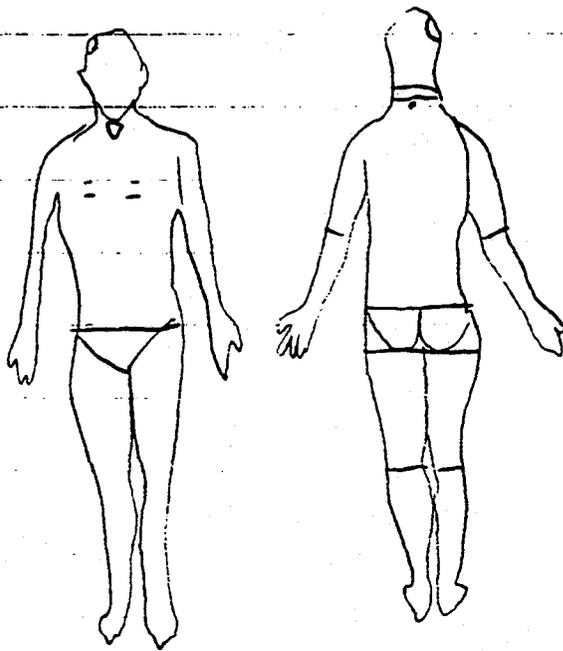
Regarding commission exhibit 386, O'Connor said it did "...not reflect what I saw. The little head hole was not there." He also said that the back wound was more centered than it appears in the drawing. O'Connor said the CE-385 looked fairly accurate. He noted that when he observed the front throat wound it "...looked like something toward the trachea and larynx."

Regarding the autopsy descriptive sheet in the Warren report, O'Connor said "...what gets me is now sloppy it is." He said he believes the writing is Humes' or Boswell's. He said he and Jenkins "...usually fill in the top information." Regarding the number which is typed or stamped in, O'Connor said they didn't type it in. He believes he hand wrote the number in the log personally.

Regarding the location of the back hole on the autopsy sheet, O'Connor said it was "...too far down." O'Connor said the front neck wound did not look like a half

moon shape as portrayed there; rather, it was "...a big old gash." O'Connor said he didn't recognize any of the writing on the autopsy descriptive sheet as being his. He also said he had never seen the head drawing which was on the back of the descriptive sheet but said that it "...looks like Humes' writing."

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Paul [Signature]

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