

CONTACT PROFILE**Document's Author:** Douglas Home/ARRB**Date Created:** 04/19/96**Contact Description**

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Additional Information

Researcher David Lifton sent ARRB correspondence on 3/29/96 which stated that based on his interview with Dr. Saslaw, Dr. Saslaw overheard a conversation in the AFIP lunchroom the week after the assassination in which Dr. Pierre Finck loudly complained to others at the adjoining lunch table that after he washed up following the autopsy, he could not find his notes taken at the autopsy. Because his notes disappeared that night at Bethesda hospital, Dr. Finck complained to his lunch table audience that he had to reconstruct his notes from memory; i.e., re-do them.

001861

MEETING REPORT



Document's Author: Douglas Home/ARRB

Date Created: 04/26/96

Meeting Logistics

Date: 04/26/96
Agecny Name: Witnesses/Consultants
Attendees: Dr. Leonard D. Saslaw, Ph.D., Mr. Tim Wray, ARRB, Mr. Douglas Home, ARRB
Topic: Dr. Pierre Finck-JFK Autopsy

Summary of the Meeting

At the request of ARRB, Dr. Leonard Saslaw met with two ARRB staff members from 10:00-11:30 A.M. on Thursday, April 25, 1996 to tell us of the lunchroom conversation between Dr. Pierre Finck and others which he overheard at AFIP the week following the Kennedy assassination in 1963. This meeting report is a summary of the story recounted by Dr. Saslaw.

Dr. Saslaw, a biochemist with a 1954 Master's Degree in Chemistry from George Washington University, commenced employment with AFIP (Armed Forces Institute of Pathology) in 1959 as a GS-9 working in the AFIP biochemistry branch. While working at AFIP his salary was actually paid by the VA, not DOD; concurrent with his employment, he was also pursuing his doctoral dissertation in chemistry with Georgetown University (which was granted in December 1963). At the time of the Kennedy assassination, Dr. Saslaw had been promoted to GS-11. His immediate supervisor at AFIP was Dr. Vaman Waravdekar, Chief of Biochemistry. Dr. Saslaw's area of specialization was, and is, food chemistry.

Dr. Saslaw told us that during the week immediately after the assassination of President Kennedy, it became public knowledge within AFIP that Dr. Pierre Finck, a member of the staff, had participated in the autopsy on President Kennedy. Saslaw said that he was not personally acquainted with Pierre Finck, but that he knew who he was because AFIP was a pretty small organization at that time. Just days after the assassination--Dr. Saslaw is positive it was the week immediately following the President's death--he overheard Dr. Finck having a loud conversation at the adjacent table in the lunch room with two other officers.

During this conversation, he said Dr. Finck was loudly lamenting the fact that the notes he had taken during the course of the autopsy on President Kennedy had disappeared, and that he had been forced to reconstruct his notes from memory. Dr. Finck complained that immediately after cleaning up following the conclusion of the autopsy, he looked for his notes and could not find them anywhere; and that even though others who had been at the autopsy had helped him search for his notes, that they could not be found. Dr. Saslaw remembered that Dr. Finck angrily recounted to his lunchtime audience the fact that he had been forced, as a necessity, to reconstruct his notes from memory shortly after the autopsy. Dr. Saslaw said Dr. Finck was clearly still irritated about this event, even angry, and loudly lamented his frustration to his lunchtime companions, two other officers whose identity Dr. Saslaw does not remember.

Dr. Saslaw said he immediately reported this event to Dr. Waravdekar, his immediate supervisor. He said he recently called Dr. Waravdekar and asked him if he remembered Saslaw telling him something in the wake of the assassination [Saslaw did not want to prompt Waravdekar further than this], and all Dr. Waravdekar remembered was that Saslaw had reported that there was something about the JFK autopsy that bothered him, but could not remember the details.

Dr. Saslaw's main concern with what he heard Dr. Finck say is that as a scientist, he is well aware that

001862

any observations which are not written down contemporaneously, but reconstructed from memory after the fact, are not likely to be as accurate or complete as the original observations were. He said he is still curious about what he overheard Dr. Finck say, because he has never heard it reported in the media and has never heard any explanation for this incident. Dr. Saslaw said he has never read any assassination books, only an occasional book review or article in the paper about the Kennedy assassination. He would not speculate about what the missing notes meant, and did not know whether it was important or not, but felt it was his obligation to report it, since we had expressed an interest.

Mr. Wray offered to send Dr. Saslaw a written summary of his interview for review; Dr. Saslaw said he would appreciate this, and would be happy to review this product for accuracy, annotate it with any necessary corrections, and return it to us. END

001863