

MEMORANDUM

002191

TO: Ken Klein
FROM: Jim Kelly and Andy Purdy
DATE: August 29, 1977
RE: Interview with James W. Sibert, August 25, 1977,
Sheraton Motor Inn, Fort Myer, Florida.

Mr. Sibert was interviewed because of his presence at the autopsy of President Kennedy. Mr. Sibert lives at 4937 Normandy Court, Cape Coral, Florida, 33904; telephone: 813-542-7195.

Mr. Sibert was assigned to the Baltimore FBI office at the time of the assassination; therefore, Bethesda Naval Hospital was within his jurisdiction. Specifically, Mr. Sibert said the jurisdiction of the FBI was involved because there were civilian personnel on a military base; he says this automatically puts agents on station. Mr. Sibert and Mr. O'Neill, his alternate, arrived at the Naval Hospital before receiving formal word from the bureau. (Ed Tully was the agent in charge who gave them instructions.) Specifically, they were instructed to: 1) get in the motorcade, 2) witness the autopsy and stay with the body, 3) preserve the chain of custody and take any bullets to the FBI Laboratory

When the motorcade from the airport arrived at the Naval Hospital Bobby Kennedy and Mrs. Kennedy were let off at the administration building. Mr. O'Neill

000975

ARRB
MD 85

MD 85

(Frances X) and he helped carry the casket to the morgue with some Secret Service agents. One of the first things he recalls hearing was someone mention "...checking with the wife regarding a partial autopsy and getting clearances." He said the talk was whether or not the body should be opened up to see if the bullet had gone down in the leg region.

One of the first things Sibert did upon getting to the autopsy was to get the names of all the people present. He said either he or O'Neill was present in the autopsy room at all times, except when everyone was cleared out during the X-Rays. Sibert believes it was either Humes, Burkley, or a Secret Service man who wanted to check with Mrs. Kennedy.

Sibert said that during the autopsy he and O'Neill "...took notes." He said that they would listen for the measurements to be called out and "...we would write them down." Sibert and O'Neill took possession of the little bottle containing the metal fragments that had been removed from the body. He believes that there were "...probably two fragments." Sibert believes that both fragments came from the head, possibly from the frontal sinus region.

Sibert said that when the damaged casket arrived the president was put on the table and everyone was

cleared out so that "... X-Rays and photographs could be taken. ...returned before they began cutting."

Sibert said he left once during the autopsy to call the lab, because "...they were having trouble with locating bullets." Sibert said he called Chuck Killion at the FBI Lab and was told about the bullet found in Parkland. Sibert said he doesn't believe anyone called Parkland Hospital that night to find out what had happened there.

Sibert recalls the Doctors looking for a bullet in the body and becoming frustrated when they did so. He said they probed the wound with a finger and Fr. Finck probed it with a metal probe. Sibert said the Drs "...concluded it only went so far and they couldn't find it."

Sibert recalls some discussion regarding the X-Ray of the Femur. There was talk about "...consultation with Mrs. Kennedy before going ahead with it." Sibert believes there were a couple of liaison people to Mrs. Kennedy present.

Regarding the head wound, Sibert said it was in the "...Upper back of the head." Sibert recalls that much of the piece of the missing bone section came in somewhat later.

Sibert recalls the X-Rays of the head being shown in the room. He said the X-Ray had many "...flecks like the Milky Way ... part of the bullet had fragmentized

or disintegrated." Sibert said a lot of the metal fragments were tiny and all that were removed from the body were put in a little jar with a black top. Sibert said that before they left the morgue they signed a receipt for the metal fragments.

Sibert was questioned further about his call to Killion and what prompted it. Sibert said the Doctors were at a loss as to where the bullet went. He said nothing was ever mentioned about the interior neck wound being a possible bullet exit wound. Sibert said the doctors were discussing the amount of fragmentation of the bullet and the fact that they couldn't find a large piece. They were wondering if it was a kind of bullet which "fragmentizes" completely. That is why Sibert left the room to call the lab, to find out about that type of bullet.

Sibert believes the wound in the front neck was characterized as a tracheotomy incision by someone.

Regarding the receipt for the "missile" Sibert said he "...does not recall how the receipt described the fragments." Sibert said the receipt certainly was not for "...a whole missile." He said it was for "...some fragments." He said the receipt was prepared by someone else and typed up by a naval corpsman (probably Chester Boyers, see memo regarding phone conversation with him). Sibert said "...I would have written the receipt listing the items as metal fragments." He also said that

"...to me a single "missile" means quite a bit of substance-more of a whole bullet." In reference to the fact that one of his reports says the copy of the receipt for the missile is attached, Sibert said the Baltimore office may retain the original.

After his phone call Sibert returned to the morgue and told the doctors about the bullet. He says he didn't "...recall Kellerman saying anything about it." He said that he and O'Neill were close enough to get anything that the doctor said about measurements. He also said that if he "... couldn't understand the measurements spoken by Humes he had him restate them." He also said he didn't recall the neck opened up for examination. One thing that struck him was when the President's body was turned on its side he noticed the famous scar on the President's back which he said occurred during the P.T. boat incident.

Mr. Sibert had the impression that the doctors were getting clearances "...step by step from the Kennedy family..." before proceeding with the steps of the autopsy.

Sibert remembered that in his call to Killion he had asked about some discussion the doctors were having about a possible deflection of the bullet through the body caused by striking bone. He said he thought this might have accounted for the extensive fragmentation.

He also said that he remembered that the phone call came after the probing. Sibert said that it was his impression that Finck and Humes agreed that there was no exit wound of the bullet through the back and said he had no recollection of how far in the probe went.

Regarding the photographs and X-Rays, Sibert said they were "...collected by the Secret Service ... neither O'Neill nor I handled them." Sibert said that neither he nor O'Neill ever touched the photographs. Regarding the listing of those materials in his report he said "... Humes told us the number of X-Rays and photographs ... we had no independent verification ... we didn't count them." He went on to say that they merely took notes during the autopsy and checked those notes when they made up the draft of their report. He said that he and O'Neill had typical agent notebooks which they wrote in. He recalls getting the measurements of the back wound and the skull bone but has no recollection of writing down the location of the entrance wound in the President's head. Sibert said he was present when the bone piece was brought in which had been found in the limousine. He said it was X-Rayed and the doctors had determined it had evidence of metal particles.

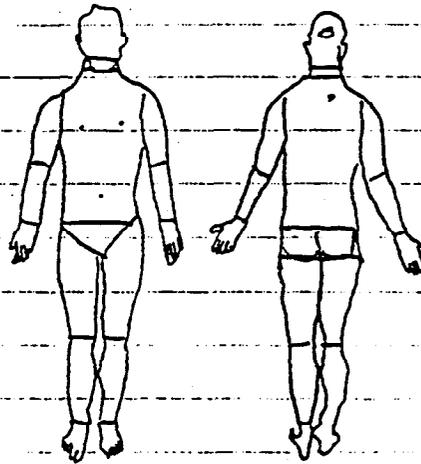
000980

Sibert examined the autopsy descriptive sheet found in the Warren Report and said it was done by Dr. Boswell. He said the "...drawing was pretty accurate as to what we described." He said the general location of the wounds "...looks accurate." Sibert also said that CE385 and CE386 looked accurate as well.

On reflection Sibert said he believes Humes is the one who measured the back wound and Sibert himself wrote it down. He said he never retained any notes (the notes he used to draft report were destroyed following usual Bureau procedures). Sibert mentioned that he has a sister who lived in Quitman, Georgia till approximately 1967 or 1968; her name is Mrs. Claude Harris.

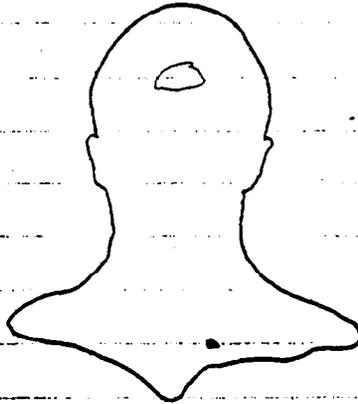
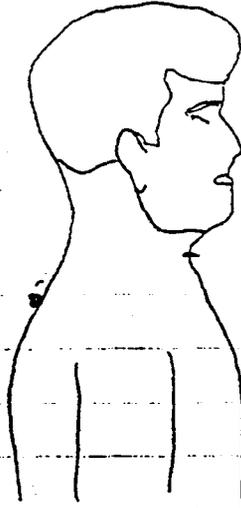
For some time during the interview Sibert was trying to remember a conversation he had at some time with agent Greer of the Secret Service and right near the end remembered eating with Greer, possibly on lay the autopsy, and remembering Greer say "...if I'de just been driving a little faster." He said he was driving so slow because the President insisted on it.

000981



James H. Silbert
8/25/77
Fort Meyer, Florida
Witnessed by: Donald A. Rudy, Jr.
James P. Kelly

000983



James A. Stewart
8/25/77
Fort Meyer, Fla
Witnessed by: Donald A. Rudy, Jr.
James Kelly

000983