

CONTACT PROFILE

Document's Author: Douglas Home/ARRB

Date Created: 04/29/96

Contact Description

Contact Name: Dr. Robert F. Karnei, Jr.**Company:****Title:****Category:** Witnesses/Consultants**Street Address:**

_____**Phone Number:** [REDACTED]**FAX Number:****E-mail Address:**

HSCA Letter Sent:

Additional Information

We wrote Dr. Karnei on March 6, 1996 and requested that he contact us to set up an interview. Doug Home attempted unsuccessfully, on two occasions late in March and early in April, to set up dates with Dr. Karnei for an interview at ARRB in Washington. He promised to call us to establish dates for a visit after his mid-April vacation.

MEETING REPORT



Document's Author: Douglas Home/ARRB

Date Created: 05/21/96

Meeting Logistics

Date: 05/21/96
Agency Name: Witnesses/Consultants
Attendees: Dr. Robert F. Kamei, Jr., Jeremy Gunn, Tim Wray, and Doug Home
Topic: ARRB Interviewed Robert F. Kamei, Jr.

Summary of the Meeting

Dr. Kamei met with ARRB staff at our request, for an initial assessment interview. This is a summary only (not verbatim) of the significant statements made by him in response to ARRB questions during the interview, which lasted from approximately 1:15-3:20 P.M. on Tuesday, May 21, 1996.

Professional Career: Dr. Kamei said that he was stationed at Bethesda from September of 1962 through September of 1966. He said that he returned there in 1972 to become Head of Anatomical Pathology. When he retired from the Navy in 1991, he said that he was then serving as Director of the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology (AFIP). At the time of the Kennedy assassination, he said that he was 29 years old, and a Navy Lieutenant.

Dr. Kamei was a second year resident at the National Naval Medical Center at Bethesda when President Kennedy was assassinated; he had already completed his first year of residency, which was in pathology. His second year of residency, which was in surgery, was already underway. He was "on duty" the day of the assassination, which meant that any autopsy which was necessitated after hours would have been his to perform, under normal conditions. However, in this case, Dr. Kamei said that a decision was made by higher-ups (perhaps CAPT Stover, or perhaps even Admiral Kenney, he did not know) to use staff pathologists for President Kennedy's autopsy, not residents in training. He said he was notified about 5:30 P.M. by CAPT Stover that Drs. Humes and Boswell would be performing the autopsy. He said he was assigned (and performed) miscellaneous duties, such as arranging security with the Marine guards; providing office space for, and coordinating security arrangements with, the Commanding General of MDW and his aides; escorting VIP visitors up to the tower suite where Mrs. Kennedy was staying during the autopsy; obtaining food for the military security guards and FBI/S.S. agents; and most important, trying to control who was and was not admitted into the morgue during the autopsy. Dr. Kamei checked the I.D.s of several people during the evening as people entered, or tried to enter, the morgue. He also left the morgue several times to perform other duties, and subsequently did not have total control over morgue access.

Dr. Kamei said he did not witness the arrival of the President's body at the loading dock, or its entrance into the morgue, and therefore could not answer any questions regarding the type or color of the ambulance, nor could he through first-hand observation tell us when the body arrived.

However, he did remember seeing a silver-colored casket early in the evening, in the cold room (the anteroom containing the chill boxes) next to the morgue. He said he even sat next to it part of the evening. (Later in the ARRB interview, he remembered that it had one handle broken off.) He also remembered seeing a dark brown, or maroon-colored casket, possibly made of wood, later in the evening; he said that he definitely saw this second casket "after 9:00."

Dr. Kamei said that the first time he saw the President's body on 11/22/63, it was already on the autopsy table, and that it was being undressed. He said he had a vague recollection of pants being removed from the President's body, and of photographs being taken while the body was undressed. The President's hair was covered in dried, matted blood at this viewing.

President's head wound(s): Dr. Kamei emphasized that he did not participate in the autopsy proper, nor did he look inside the cranium. However, he did remember seeing one wound in the right side of the

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head approximately above the right ear, and another wound in the posterior skull, up high in the back of the head, either in the center, or just left of center (which he associated in his mind with a right-front to left-rear trajectory, or vice-versa). He also said that the upper posterior skull sagged a bit; i.e., was a bit concave in shape.

Brain: Dr. Kamei said that he did not see the Brain removed, but he did see Humes, Boswell and Finck very carefully inspecting it outside of the body after it had been removed. He had vague memories of damage to the "right hemisphere," but could not remember whether the cerebellum was damaged or not.

Thorax wound: Dr. Kamei says that when he re-entered the morgue at about 9:00 P.M., he saw Dr. Pierre Finck probing the wound in the upper right shoulder repeatedly with a succession of flexible metal probes, in unsuccessful attempts to find the path of a bullet. He said that the wound in the shoulder was the only wound he personally saw probed that night. At the time Dr. Finck was probing the back wound, Dr. Kamei said that no incisions had yet been made in the President's body. He said the various probes, when inserted as far as they would go without making a false passage, described a downward angle into the President's body.

Photography: Dr. Kamei said that he remembered repeated instances, during the numerous attempts to probe the back wound, when photographs were taken of a probe in the President's body (at approximately 9:00 P.M.), and seemed more certain of this recollection than of any other during his ARRB interview. He remembers that John Stringer was photographing the autopsy, and that Stringer used both an old-fashioned type camera that required the use of film-holders for individual sheets of film, and also a 35 mm camera. (He could not remember whether Stringer used a tripod the night of the Kennedy autopsy.) He said that there was a second person taking photographs also, whom he initially described to ARRB staff as an FBI or Secret Service agent, and that this person used a different (second) 35mm camera (separate from Stringer's). When challenged to remember why he was of the opinion that the second photographer was an FBI or S.S. agent, Dr. Kamei said it may have only been an impression of his, because he thought that all civilians in the room were Federal Agents. When asked how autopsy photographs were normally identified, he said that it was standard procedure for the autopsy number to be placed on some measuring device (showing scale), and then to be photographed somewhere in the field of view in each autopsy photograph. However, he also said that he could not remember whether this procedure was used the night of the autopsy, or not. When asked whether John Stringer had used a ladder at the autopsy to take pictures, Dr. Kamei was of the impression that Stringer (who was short, only about 5'2" in height) had "stood on something" to take some photographs, but could not remember what he had stood on. He could not remember what type of civilian clothing Mr. Stringer and the second photographer had worn. Dr. Kamei could not recall any photographs being taken during the embalming, but explained that he was present only during the very late stages of the embalming and burial preparation procedures.

X-Rays: Dr. Kamei could remember X-Rays being read in the morgue after developing, but could not remember any specifics of their interpretation, or what they looked like. He did remember that federal agents escorted the X-Ray film, and the technician who had taken it, upstairs, and back down again each time it was developed and returned to the morgue.

"Control of the Autopsy:" Dr. Kamei made clear that in his opinion, Drs. Humes and Boswell were in charge of the medical procedures during the autopsy, but he was under the general impression that the scope of the autopsy they were allowed to perform had been limited by Robert Kennedy, and that Robert Kennedy (he felt) had wanted to limit dissection of the body as much as possible. He recalled that Dr. Humes had twice asked permission for the scope of the autopsy to be expanded, to first allow access to the chest, and then to allow access to the abdomen. In each case, it was Dr. Kamei's impression that Dr. Burkley had personally gone upstairs to the tower suite on the 17th floor to obtain permission to expand the scope of the autopsy. In a different context, Dr. Kamei talked about photography in general by saying that it was controlled by "the people controlling the autopsy." When asked what this meant, he replied that the FBI and Secret Service (and then clarified that he meant Federal Agents in civilian clothes) were "controlling everything to do with pictures," including confiscation of all photographic and X-Ray film, including unexposed X-Ray films, and unexposed (and unopened) rolls of photographic film. He said that this control was so tight that he was surprised that the prosecutors were allowed to take their notes with them when they left the room after the autopsy.

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Tissue Slides: Dr. Kamei exhibited more uncertainty in this area than in others, but was fairly certain that the tissue slides were not prepared (not "cut") until Sunday; he says that a Federal Agent sat by the tissue processor all night the night of the autopsy, and possibly even Saturday night, and thought this peculiar since in his opinion the slides were not cut until probably Sunday.

Notes and Diagrams: Dr. Kamei said that he remembered Dr. Boswell making diagrams, but did not specifically recall anyone writing down notes. When asked, he had no knowledge of Dr. Finck's notes being missing, or of Dr. Finck looking for his notes.

Embalming: Dr. Kamei said that he only witnessed the embalming near the end of the procedure, when he entered the morgue (after having secured the third floor of Bethesda so that Mrs. Kennedy could depart safely) and saw President Kennedy's body lying on "the other" (i.e., the one not used for dissection) morgue examination table (there were two tables in the morgue) in a fully-clothed condition. At this time, he said that the embalmers were putting some wax into a tear or laceration on the side of the face near the eye, and that when they were finished, you could not even tell that there had been any damage in that area. He said that following this procedure no damage was visible anywhere on the President's body, and that in his opinion an open-casket funeral was completely feasible; he summarized by saying the President "looked good." Dr. Kamei said he did not witness the President's body loaded into a casket after embalming--his duties must have called him elsewhere and precluded him from witnessing this event.

Autopsy Conclusions: Dr. Kamei said that "about midnight" the prosecutors still had not found a bullet track through the body, nor had they found an exit wound for the entry in the shoulder, and had only a bruise atop the right lung as further evidence of damage--he did not observe the bruise, but seemed to remember them discussing it. He said that Humes had concluded that two shots had hit the President from the rear. He told ARRB staff that he was aware of hearsay that Dr. Humes had called Dallas to talk to a surgeon later in the evening before the body left the morgue, and had then learned that the tracheotomy had been made through a bullet wound in the front of the neck, thus causing Humes to conclude that the tracheotomy had obscured an exit wound. However, he could not remember who told him this, or when.

Order of Silence: Dr. Kamei remembered himself, Drs. Humes, and Dr. Boswell being told to sign the "gag order" in CAPT Stover's office on approximately Monday after the assassination. He remembered signing one, and then told ARRB that he thought it contained a written time period of about 20 years which defined the length of the period of silence that was being enforced upon threat of court martial. ARRB staff then showed him a photocopy of an onionskin carbon copy in which the letter's text, and second endorsement were both signed by CAPT Stover, but which contained no signature by Dr. Kamei, only a notation (apparently written by CAPT Stover) which says "original is signed--JHS." Dr. Kamei seemed surprised that he could not find any statement in the text of this letter which defined the order of silence in terms of number of years.

Written Chronology of Events of November 22-December 6, 1963: Dr. Kamei provided a typewritten chronology and timeline of events which he constructed himself, long after the autopsy, based upon a combination of his memory, the Warren Report, and David Lifton's book Best Evidence. He stated he prepared this chronology so that he could brief his residents whenever they asked him questions about the autopsy. He told ARRB staff that he did not read the Warren Report or Lifton's book in its entirety, but only selectively perused them for the times of certain events, in order to supplement his memory of the things he personally observed. A copy of this chronology is attached to the file copy of this meeting report.

END

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CALL REPORT: PUBLIC



Document's Author: Douglas Home/ARRB Date Created: 03/10/97

The Players

Who called whom? Douglas Home called Robert F. Kamei of Witnesses/Consultants, Douglas Home called Jr. of Witnesses/Consultants

Description of the Call

Date: 03/10/97
Subject: ARRB Called Robert F. Kamei

Summary of the Call:

I called Dr. Kamei today and asked an important follow-up question which ARRB staff neglected to ask in May of 1996 during our interview of him at the Review Board's offices.

I asked him if he ever witnessed, or participated in, a supplementary exam of President Kennedy's brain, subsequent to the autopsy on President Kennedy.

He definitively answered "no, I was never at any brain examination, and in fact my involvement with the events related to President Kennedy's autopsy ended after November 22-23, 1963."

I asked him if he had been acquainted with Dr. Richard Davis at AFIP, and he said yes. I asked him whether he had any reason to believe that Dr. Davis had been at a brain examination of President Kennedy's brain, and he said that he had no independent recollection which would give him any reason to believe that Dr. Davis witnessed such an event. He did say that Dr. Davis would have been a logical choice to attend, or participate in, an examination of President Kennedy's brain (since Dr. Davis held brain examination seminars for the Bethesda residents one or two times per month, and conducted "cuttings" himself), but that he had no reason to believe Davis had specifically done so. END

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