

(287) Attachment J: Letter from Howard P. Willens to G. Robert Blakey, December 14, 1978.

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December 14, 1978

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Mr. G. Robert Blakey  
Chief Counsel and Director  
Select Committee on Assassinations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
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Dear Bob:

In the course of my deposition on July 28, 1978, I undertook to comment on the enclosed exhibit purporting to identify the members of the Warren Commission staff that authored particular chapters of the report.

I am sorry for the delay in responding to your request that I review this document. I had hoped to find the time to review materials that I am confident exist reflecting the internal workings of the Commission staff regarding the writing of the report. I have not been able to do so, however, and I am therefore unable to inform you and the Committee on this subject with the thoroughness and precision that I would like to.

Most importantly, this summary is seriously flawed and should not be relied upon by the Committee for any conclusions whatsoever. Without resurrecting old controversies with Mr. Epstein, it is a matter of public record that he interviewed only a few members of the Warren Commission staff

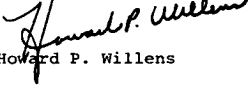
and that only some of those interviewed responded to his questions with respect to the authorship of various sections of the report. Accordingly, his summary substantially overstates the contributions of some members of the staff, understates the contributions of others, and does a disservice to the 20 or more members of the staff that participated significantly in preparation of the final report.

Although I had originally intended to do so, I have decided that it would not be productive for me to try and recall the contribution made by each member of the Commission staff to each chapter of the report. Any effort by me to do so without refreshing my recollection with materials from the files of the Commission would undoubtedly suffer from the same inaccuracies that I attribute to Mr. Epstein's effort to do so.

As I am sure you know from your own experience now, any final report emanating from a committee has numerous authors. Each chapter of the Warren Commission report went through 6 or more substantial redrafts, with different persons assuming editorial responsibility at different times. I am sure this will prove to be the case also as your Committee completes its final report.

I hope that this letter is useful and that you understand my reticence in trying to be more exact.

Sincerely,



Howard P. Willens

Enclosure

Who Wrote What

- Chapter 1 - "Summary & Conclusions" - Norman Redlich
- Chapter 2 - "The Assassination" - primarily written by Redlich, although Specter and Stern contributed.
- Chapter 3 - "The Shots from the TSBD" - originally written by Specter and submitted in June. The chapter was rewritten by Redlich.
- Chapter 4 - "The Assassin" - originally written by Ball and Belin. In late June the Re-editing Committee rejected this chapter. Redlich rewrote the chapter which took him ten weeks.
- Chapter 5 - "Detention and Death of Oswald" - Griffin and Laulicht submitted the draft in August. Goldberg rewrote it.
- Chapter 6 - "Investigation of Possible Conspiracy," Pollak wrote the section on LHO's movements abroad and Slawson wrote the rest. Pollak then rewrote the entire chapter. Goldberg rewrote the chapter again.
- Chapter 7 - "LHO: Background and Possible Motives" - Liebeler wrote it originally and Goldberg rewrote it.
- Chapter 8 - "The Protection of the President" - Sam Stern wrote the first draft. Howard Willens rewrote the chapter.

Rankin appointed Norman Redlich, Alfred Goldberg, Howard Willens, and himself as a "Re-editing Committee."

Goldberg also wrote the Rumors Appendix