

Transcript
of
ARRB Staff Interview
of
Homer A. McMahon
(Former CIA/NPIC Employee)
conducted on
July 14, 1997

at Archives II in College Park, Maryland

Interviewers: Douglas P. Horne and T. Jeremy Gunn

(Transcribed by Douglas Horne in May 2012; the time annotations noted in red are only approximations, for they vary a bit whenever the digital recording is searched.) 2

Horne: OK, it's Monday, ah, July the 14th, 1997. My name is Doug Horne, I'm with the ARRB. I'm here with Mr. Homer McMahon, former NPIC employee---National Photo Interpretation Center--- and I'm also here with Michelle Combs of the ARRB; and before we begin, I'd like to confirm with you on the record, Mr. McMahon, is it OK---do we have your permission to tape this interview?

McMahon: Yes, my name is Homer McMahon; not NPIC, I was CIA---that was my cover at the time---

Horne: Oh, OK---

McMahon: ---and you have my permission to---at that time "NPIC" was classified Top Secret.

Horne: Yes, sir. OK. Thank you very much.

McMahon: OK

Horne: Ah, we may be joined later---this is for the record---by Mr. Jeremy Gunn, ah, of the Review Board staff, ah, and also by a new [ARRB] employee, Marie Fagnant, who is in the building today also. Ah, could you summarize for us, sir, ah, your professional experience and training in photography, ah, prior to, up to 1963?

McMahon: I started doing photography in 1938.

Horne: OK

McMahon: I worked one summer at the FBI lab, and I'm not sure of that summer. Ah, my boss was Jimmy Dunlap, and, who later became, left, and went, ah, in business for himself, and I worked for him part-time, at different times. Ah, I was in photography when I was in high school, and I worked as a photographer on the yearbook committee; ah, I used to work at the "Pop Baker" [phonetic spelling], and that was Eastman Kodak photofinishing in Georgetown, also [in] the summers. I was in photography---ah, on the G.I. Bill. I went to the National School of Photography, and I went to the Washington School of Photography; and I took several extension courses at the, ah, USGS [sic, the witness meant "USDA"], ah, Graduate School and the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology at Walter Reed.

Horne: I see. 3

McMahon: Ah, I took several courses up in Rochester and Binghamton, and, ah, ANSCO in Binghamton and Kodak in Rochester.

Horne: OK

McMahon: Ah, other than that, I never had a degree in photography; in those days it was strictly, ah, vocational---

Horne: I see.

McMahon: ---there was no, ah, you could get, you could get a Master's Degree up there, ah, at PPA---[unclear] work, but I, I never came to [garbled] or worked on that level. I think you also had to donate time, [and make], ah, presen---national presentations. I was a member of the Professional Photographers of America.

Horne: OK

McMahon: Ah---Oh, I went to college on the G.I. Bill at the end of the Second World War, and--- then I went to work for the CIA. Ah, my mentor, ah, Mel Fromm [spelled phonetically], was an old OSS, ah, operative in the Second World War.

Horne: OK

McMahon: His Dad ran the National School of Photography, and, ah, I spent two years there; ah, he got me a job interview with the CIA. And I went out at B Street, and that was [the] Printing Service[s] Division, and that was Austin Young, and I worked there a year-and-a-half, or two years; and then I went in business for myself for five years; and then I went back for, I think, 10 years.

Horne: Went back to the Agency, or---?

McMahon: Yeah, but I didn't go back to, ah, the Printing Service[s] Division, I went to the Science Division [DD S&T]. And when, ah, when the, ah, Steuart garage closed down---ah, ah, Kennedy's brother Bob got that built, and, and it was a special building that was behind the barrier, you know, it had the barrier walls you couldn't penetrate, and it was in the Navy Yard, and I worked there for, I guess, close to ten years---and that's when I was Chief of the Color Lab [at NPIC]---

Horne: I see.

McMahon: ---I was GS-11, Step 7, was my grade, when I worked there. 4

Horne: What---do you recall what year it was that you returned, ah, to the CIA, and worked for about ten years, what year was that? More or less?

McMahon: Ha---[smiling]---no, I don't have an accurate recollection.

Horne: OK. Ah, it would be, certainly, before 1963?

McMahon: Oh, yes.

Horne: It would be in the '50s, perhaps?

McMahon: Yes.

Horne: OK, OK. When you went back to the CIA the second time, and--- were you working in the Steuart, ah, Motors Building, with, ah---

McMahon: No, I didn't work for the Steuart garage. Ah, I'm not gonna mention names of people that I've worked with---

Horne: OK, that's fine.

McMahon: ---ah, well wait, I can give you Harry Lieckert [phonetic spelling], 'cause he's retired, but he worked at the Steuart---

Horne: OK

McMahon: ---and I talked to him, and, and, he said, "I'll get you an interview," and, and I went over---or, they came over, I was working for Austin Young on, in Alexandria, right there at, ah, Duke Street, or King Street, I forgot which---

Horne: That's OK.

McMahon: ---and he came over and interviewed me, and, and I transferred. I was ah, LB 16---I was

under, ah, GPO [Government Printing Office] scale, I was in Printing Services.

Horne: OK. Let me go off the record here a moment, and introduce you to some people who just arrived.

[Off the record---tape recorder stopped]

Horne: OK, we're back on the record. Ah, Mr. Jeremy Gunn, Marie Fagnant, and Mr. Steve Tilley [of the National Archives, NARA's daily liaison with the ARRB staff] have joined us. Ah, Mr. 5 McMahon, do you remember when you became Head of the Color Lab [at NPIC]?

McMahon: Oh, when I went over, I was hired for that position. And, I transferred from an LB 19 to a GS-11, Step 7.

Horne: Approximately what year was that? Is it, ah---

McMahon: Late '50s? [Expressing some uncertainty with his tone of voice]

Horne: OK, late '50s.

[Transcriber's note: the transcriber received a document from the CIA in 2011---in response to a wide-ranging FOIA request filed in 2009---that confirmed Homer Albert McMahon had worked for the CIA briefly from September 22, 1952 through March 20, 1953, as a photographer; and that he had recommenced service with CIA on October 30, 1960, and had worked at NPIC from that date until September 11, 1970, as a GS- 11 civil servant with the job title of photographer.]

Were you working at the, ah, National Photo Interpretation Center in November 1963?

McMahon: Yes.

Horne: OK. Ah---we spoke previously on the telephone on, on June the ninth, when Mr., Mr. Dave Montague and I called you---

McMahon: Yeah.

Horne: ---I think you may recall that---and, ah, you mentioned to us during that telephone call that you were involved in analysis and other events involving a home movie of the assassination. Could you tell us how you first heard about this, and who asked you to come into work?

McMahon: OK, it, it, it---I wasn't an analyst---that, that was a technical term for somebody that did photointerpretation, into my branch, and I was a, a phototechnologist. And what I did, I timed, OK, to my best recollection---I was, I worked in the vaulted area behind a barrier, or [that is to say, I worked with] extremely sensitive material; and my classification [sic---the witness meant "security clearance"] allowed me to work on anything and everything if I had a need-to-know---and I won't tell you what those were, but---

Horne: And I won't ask. 6

McMahon: Eh, ah, we had, it was, it was, a 'world beyond'---we had unlimited budget; we had anything we wanted to buy; unlimited money; and it was [a] palace. It was 'Lundahl's Palace,' and I think they said 90 per cent of the intelligence came from our operation [at NPIC]. And that was, that was, what the analysts and the photointerpreters did. And, and they knew, along with, I---I was in the Science Division now---but, they also accessed and used other information.

Horne: OK

McMahon (9:55): OK. But the best that I remember, of how I came to work on this project---and, of course, we all heard of, of, you know, that motorcade, where Kennedy got killed, and I think we shut up shop and went home---af---after that. *And it was within the next two days, a chap was introduced to me---and I was sworn to his secrecy, it had nothing to do with the Agency's secrecy and, and he was, to the best of my knowledge, introduced as "Bill Smith."*

Horne: "Bill Smith" of---what?

McMahon: Of [the] Secret Service, he was an agent. *And he had, he had gotten a roll of film directly from the person that had photographed it, who called the Secret Service and told them that he thought he had that on film---and he shot it with a little 'Brownie,' ah, double 8 [camera]. And he took it, took it to Rochester, and---we had a division up there, I won't go into that--- but they processed the film---it was Ek---it was Kodachrome (I think, I or II, the daylight version, whichever it was), and it was double 8 [film]. And, after he got it processed, they told him there that we were probably the only place that had the equipment that could do what he wanted to, ah, take every frame on there--- [chuckling]---of the entire event, and, and make, ah, the best possible quality reproduction.*

Horne: When you say, "They told him," who do you mean, ah---?

McMahon (12:04): *Well---ah---heh, heh---well, Eastman Kodak had, had contracts with the U.S. government, and if you want to know, you can go through the CIA, they'll tell you [unclear]. OK, but he, he got the film processed, and he brought it to us, and he, and three other people, ah, timed the film, for the---through observation you could tell where the gunshots actually caused the hits and the slumps. We didn't know anything about any audio---ah, it was just visual. And we timed it and determined, where the, the time between the, ah---physically timed it, with a stopwatch---ah, where the gunshot "hits" hit. And we, we, we, we went from, I think, maybe two 7 frames before the first hit, and then we hit every single frame--- through, and we only, *he only counted three hits, possibly four--- ah, couldn't tell, I think, when, when Connally got hit. It was obvious when, when he [JFK] got hit the first time, and then the second time, as his head [was] going off into the angle, up, and---**

Horne: Could I, could I break in and ask you a question? Ah, when you say, "he, and three others, timed the film," does this mean you--- people viewed it as a motion picture?

McMahon: Yes. We were in a briefing room, ah, with the camera [sic---the witness meant "projector"], and a large screen---ah, you said I could use Ben Hunter's name?

Horne: Yes, sir.

McMahon: OK, Ben Hunter, and I think he was a GS-7, and, and he was working with me as a, as a trainee, ah, at the time, in the Color Lab; and Bill Smith; ah, excuse me, there were three of us, including myself---that's "it."

Horne: That's it. That's---

McMahon: ---to the best of my knowledge.

Horne: ***So, the total number of people, that you can recall, is yourself, Ben Hunter, and Bill Smith?***

McMahon: ***Yes, that's all that was involved, to my knowledge.***

Horne: How were you first notified, ah, to go in---did this happen during the workday, or after hours? How did you first get notified?

McMahon: I haven't the faintest idea.

Horne: Do you recall---

McMahon: ---because I didn't, I didn't, I'd been called in so many times, ah---

Horne: For other jobs? Do you recall whether you did this work during the day, or dur--- Jeremy Gunn: [Interrupting] I---I'm sorry---I just want to make sure that we're, we're clear, on the record. When you say that you were called in 'many other times,' was that for other jobs? Or do you mean you were called in many times [unclear]--- 8

McMahon: When 'the Goose laid the egg,' we went on 12 and 12---we [worked] split shifts until we worked out the mission. Ah, or, I, I don't think that's important. The, the other work I did had nothing to do with this.

Gunn: Oh, no, that's fine, but---

Horne: That's all we are trying to do, for the record, is to clarify that when you said that statement, were you referring to this particular film, or other jobs?

McMahon: OK, I---this---I had---I had other clearances; ah, but, but none of these clearances that were given to me under the CIA or other clearances that I held for other government agencies, this was under strictly, a---I was told that none of this could be divulged to anyone (that we had it, that we did it), and I know that it was being used for a briefing, but I don't know who they briefed on it. My only guess---[was] that we normally briefed the Joint Chiefs of Staff; the National Reconnaissance Committee; and the President of the United States, from the work that I did. And I didn't do any of the analysis; I just did the color part that was used in the briefing boards and the teleprompters and that kind of work. And it was also distributed under different Top Secret classifications, to the Community, go ahead---

Gunn: I think what---we just---we just wanted to hear on, is when you said that you were called in several times, only, only if you were only called in once, for the film related to the assassination?

McMahon: I wasn't---I only worked on that one, and, and my---I know I worked on it until it was completed, and I think it was probably more than a workday.

Horne (17:52): When we spoke on, ah, June the ninth, sir, ah, *it was your recollection at that time that ah, that you went in after hours, and that you worked basically all night long.*

McMahon: *Yeah.*

Horne: Does that refresh your recollection?

McMahon: Yes. It was not during my normal, I don't think it was during my normal, ah, I don't think I was there---I think I was called in [after hours], but I wasn't told what I was called in for. 9

Horne: I see.

McMahon: I didn't have the faintest idea what I was going to do.

Horne (18:19): OK. Would you allow me to, ah, test your recollection on something, the firmness of it? *Ah, you, you said a moment ago that you thought this was, ah, within two days of the assassination.* Ah, is there any particular reason why you associate it as being that close to the assassination, any particular other events, or---

McMahon: *I think, I think I was told---that this---to get the film from the individual; take it and get it processed; come back---was, was, a couple of days---I'm not sure. I'm not---I don't know [if I can] recall that.*

Horne: ***Do you recall whether this work that you did was before the funeral, or after the funeral, of the President?***

[**Transcriber's note:** President Kennedy was assassinated on Friday, November 22nd, 1963; and his funeral was on Monday, November 25th, 1963.]

McMahon (18:56): ***I'm pretty sure it was before.***

Horne: OK

Horne (19:01): Ah, before we get into some details of what you did, ah, how would you best summarize the tasking that, that your Agency received from Mr. Smith? Could you revisit that topic again, try to encapsulate it---

McMahon: Well, OK, I don't, I don't know how it came through channels, to us, I wasn't told that. Ah, what I'm, what I'm reflecting is what I *think* happened. I know it wasn't under any clearances that I held; I do know that it was being done for analysis and a briefing, but I'm not sure who that was for. Ah---

Horne (19:59): And what is it that he [Bill Smith] wanted you to do again, one more time?

McMahon: OK, what he wanted us to do, after we came to the decision, after we had timed it, was to take a frame-by-frame presentation of that complete sequence, and make, ah---[to my] best recollection, 5 by 7 internegs---and I printed two-up, on an 8 x10, Ben Hunter and myself---exposed them, and processed them. Then we had a period of time where you have to wait for the drying, ah, of the material, and then we went back and viewed all of the negatives, that we had them marked and identified as to the sequence, and we 10 made 3 each, ah, color contact prints, and again, went back and processed those, and had to wait for the drying. Ah---

Horne: So the color prints were, were, ah, the same size, then, as the internegative?

McMahon: I'm pretty sure we, we---

Horne: Contact [prints], without an enlarger?

McMahon: ---contacted the 8 by 10 negatives that were exposed two-up---and, and then they were cut apart, and identified on the back, and I did not do that, ah, the identification, I don't think I did--but I might have.

Horne: OK

Gunn: I'm sorry, can I interrupt just a second? I, I apologize. It wasn't clear to me about the negatives and the internegatives---you referred to there being 5 by 7 internegatives, and 8 by 10 negatives, and I didn't know whether those were two entirely separate things, or whether you were referring to the same thing---

McMahon: It---it's called a working turn---you take an 8 by 10 negative, and you print a 5 by 7 going 5 by 8; then you turn it, with the frame; set up the liquid gate; ah, and make the other one; and then put it in a box. So you've finished, say, the first two. Then you move the frame to the third frame---ah, these were---this was precision equipment, that could make a one-stage enlargement, and my best guess is, is 40x, is what [we] made the little image to---

Horne: By that, you mean 40 times the original size---

McMahon: Forty times the original, ah, half-frame, super, double 8, or whatever---

Horne: Just for the sake of the---

McMahon: We had three different---OK, we had what we call a ten-twentyforty---

Horne: Is that the, is that the enlarging machine?

McMahon: Yeah, that's the enlarging machine. And you set it up---with, this is a coherent light source enlarger---and we set it up with, ah, a specific optical lens; and a specific, ah, condenser; and a, and a, 11 color pack, with CC filters; so that we could expose all 3 layers of the Kodachrome on the negative. That's---

Horne: You mentioned "wet gate" a moment ago---

McMahon: Yeah, it's a liquid gate---it---it, ah, a liquid gate, is---it's a no-no today, because, ah, it was two parts of, ah---'kay, we made our own liquid, and what the purpose of the liquid was, it has a refraction index to eliminate the, ah, the surfaces of the film, which degrade the image, the front and back surface, and it's called 10- 20-40 fluid---and to my knowledge, it, ah, it was two parts, of, ah, goodness, I don't have, I can't, remember it [garbled, unclear]---

Horne: That's all right. Was this applied by hand, or was it full immersion wet gate?

McMahon: Oh no, you had a little injection [port], and what happened, your front lens came down--OK, it was precision equipment, and the excess fluid went out, so it was full gate, almost like a microscope. All right?

Horne: OK

McMahon: And if you got air bubbles in it, you had to go back to [the] start again and re-inject it, and then bring it back down.

Horne (25:09): All right. May I ask another question? Ah, before we move along, ah, you mentioned double 8 film a couple of times.

McMahon: Yes.

Horne: Do you recall, ah, the condition of this movie when you saw it, was---had it been slit or was it unslit?

McMahon: I think it was *unslit*---the reason I said that, now we might have slit it, but before we used it---but they were---I thought they were told that they didn't want to slit the film. And I don't--I, I don't think we slit it---I think we used it unslit in a 16 mm projector.

Horne: That was going to be my next question---how did you project it? Do you think it was---

McMahon: I think it was unslit. *This was the original film*; it had been---I think they ran dupes of it, but we actually worked from the, the, the, ah, acquisition material, of the original film. 12

Horne: Ah, is this something you observed yourself, ah, or something you were told by Mr. Smith, or, or both; or how did you---how do you come to your conclusion today that you had the original film?

McMahon (26:38): All right, I think it was a combination of everything you said, along with, ah, the quality of the film. Normally, when you dupe it, you, ah, you, you lose a lot of resolution. And, when we made them, you could actu---Kodachrome is, is, a, an additive process; it's black and white film, with filters that give you color separation negatives; and then you use the azo [spelled phonetically] dyes, after you flash them, and redevelop them selectively, onto the original film. And it has a yellow coupler; a magenta coupler; and a cyan coupler---that give you the, the 3 subtractive primary colors that give you the illusion of the, the image and color. And there is very little, ah, dye, ah, that changes [unclear] or, or---it was excellent imagery. Now I don't know whether that still exists or not, ah, but I'm pretty sure that's what, what I used.

Horne: OK. One more follow-up on the first part of the interview, and then we'll move along.

McMahon: All right.

Horne (28:23): ***How certain are you that Mr. Smith said he went down to pick up the film from the person who took it, and then took it to Rochester? Are you---***

McMahon: ***I know he took it to Rochester.*** I'm not certain other than I think he said that---that it---that he got it from the original person himself, but I'm not positive. ***I, I am positive that he said that he took it to Rochester---hand-carried it, got it processed, and then they guided him back to us to do the---***

Horne: So---

McMahon: Rochester wasn't set up to do what we were set up to do.

Horne: In the sense that you had the big enlarger and they did not? Is that what---

McMahon: We had a complete 'world beyond' facility---

Horne: OK

McMahon: ---OK, a, a multi-billion dollar photo lab--- 13

Horne: OK

McMahon: ---that Kennedy's brother got built for us in what---three months, I think. We moved out of the Steuart, right in.

Horne: Did, did, did your---did the NPIC relocate, was it after the Missile Crisis, ah, after the Cuban Missile Crisis in October of '62 that you moved?

McMahon: When was, when was Kennedy inaug---inaugurated?

Horne: Ah, January '61.

McMahon: '61. It was shortly after that.

Horne: OK. Ah, do you remember the approximate number of internegatives that you made?

McMahon: It was before the Cuban Crisis, because I did a lot---look, I'm not going to talk about that. Now, what was the other question?

Horne: Do you remember the approximate number of, ah, frames on the original film of which you made internegatives?

McMahon: The best recollection [I have] is forty (40).

Horne: OK---and---

McMahon: Might have been twenty (20). Between twenty and forty.

Horne: Between twenty and forty, OK. And, which person in the room decided which frames? Who decided which frames would---

McMahon: We all did.

Horne: It was a joint thing?

McMahon: Yeah.

Horne: OK. This---was this subsequent to viewing it as a motion picture? After that?

McMahon: Well after---hindsight, is you know [in] retrospect, ah, Smith said that he wished he'd done the whole damn roll.

Horne: Wow. When did he say that? 14

McMahon: After we'd finished [chuckling].

Horne: Oh, saying---during the same event? OK. Ah, after you viewed this as a motion picture, did you---how did you---did you lay it out on a light table and use a loupe? What did you do for further study, before---I'm trying to, ah, ask you to recall the process---

McMahon: OK, after it was viewed---and I'm not sure whether we used the dupe to view it with, or whether we used the acquisition---we might have used a dupe roll to view it---

Horne: For---OK---for the projection?

McMahon: For the projection, I'm not sure, my recollection isn't good; I know that, that he had dupes made of it.

Horne: OK

McMahon: Ah, and yes, we could use loupes and we could visually look at that, but when, when you put it into the type of equipment we had, you can actually physically see it on the, on the vacuum board, where the film goes---

Horne: I see. That would have been superior to any loupe viewing.

McMahon: Yes, yes.

Horne: Did you gentlemen---

McMahon: And, and we also used a, a 10x magnifier to grain focus the image, each image, before we exposed it on the interneg. So we actually were getting the acquisition, [the] grain of the acquisition material, in sharp focus. 'Cause you couldn't see the image at that [point]--- 10 x 40 is 400---

Horne: So you were focusing on the actual grain? McMahon: On the actual---well, it's not grain, see, it---the---Kodachrome--- the grain is in the negative, and you develop three black and white negatives, and then you selectively expose them with [sic] red, green, and blue light, and develop the complimentary additive primary color, which is yellow, magenta, and cyan couplers. So when these are all developed on this one tri-pack of film, you have, you have a positive dye image. The negative had the grain; the positive had a reciprocal dye image, which would have been a very 15 much finer grain of silver, that---OK, the, the chemical reaction is to, ah, to replace the fine-grain silver positive image with dye, and then you bleach out the silver, and you're left with just the dye image; so, it's not technically grain, it's, it's, ah, perception of what used to be grain.

Horne: OK, thank you for that technical explanation. I---is this process which you have described, was this proprietary to Kodak?

McMahon: Yes---

Horne: OK

McMahon: ---they had a proprietary---well, no; at, at that time they'd passed, ah, a law that they had to relinquish, ah, the processing of Kodachrome, and there were two or three other people, I---one branch of Kodak went out and opened another company---so it, it was *not* proprietary.

Horne (34:58): *Did, at, at any time, ah, during this work, ah, was the motion picture copied as a motion picture?*

McMahon: *No*, not with---not, not in our operation.

Horne: *So you only made internegatives and color prints, is that correct?*

McMahon: [Witness nodded affirmatively]

Horne: And the size of the prints, again? As you best recall?

McMahon: I'm pretty sure they were 5 by 7, to my, the best of---if, if they're the same ones that I made [chuckling].

[**Transcriber's note:** The Witness was aware that a set of briefing boards had been deposited with the Archives, and that he would be examining them later in the interview.]

Horne: OK, when the---after the prints were made, I presume they had to dry; and what happened next, who were they given to?

McMahon (35:33): Ah---now, the, the mounting on the briefing boards, and the, the photointerpretation, so to speak---I was not involved in, OK---

Horne: OK 16

McMahon: ---and, I think I went home. Heh, but Smith probably went to another---it's not even a vaulted area, it's a finishing room upstairs.

Horne: Ah, did you and Mr. Hunter stop work at about the same time, or do you recall?

McMahon: Well, he might have stayed on and helped, but, ah, there was another chap that probably was involved in that work, and it probably was done by the other chap, not---and I'm sure Bill Smith. Now, I think you mentioned that, that, ah, Ben Hunter said he didn't recall Bill Smith as the

name of the, ah, the agent that brought the film in?

Horne: He, ah, he did not independently recall that name.

McMahon: I remember 'Snuffy' Smith, he was a, a Senator from Texas. And I think I asked the guy--- 'cause I met him when I was overseas--- and, I asked him, "Are you any relation?"

Horne: I see.

McMahon: 'Cause I knew he had, he had been in Texas where he got the film.

Horne: So you remember asking him this question---

McMahon: Yeah, I, I remember that, and he said, "No."

Horne: OK, that's interesting.

Horne (37:13): Ah, you just mentioned another chap who may have been involved with briefing boards and photoanalysis---

McMahon: ---and I can't recall his name---

Horne: ---can't recall his name---

McMahon: ---even if I could, I couldn't tell you, because he was young.

[**Transcriber's note:** the witness meant that because this person was a young employee in November of 1963, he might still be "current" or active, in 1997 at the time of the interview, and for that reason he would not divulge his name, even if he remembered it. The CIA culture is very protective of the names of its employees, particularly if they are operating under cover.]

Horne: Let me ask you this question about names: Ah, do you recall anyone named "Sands," S-A-N-D-S, at this event? 17

McMahon: Nope, [I have] absolutely no recollection of that.

Horne: If I was to call this person "Captain Sands," would that help any?

McMahon: OK, we might have had an intermediate---a Naval officer that brought the chap in--- someone had to bring him in, because they wouldn't have had clearance. Ah, to get behind the barrier, it was, was pretty tough to do, without either Presidential, or, or, above Top Secret---

Horne: I see---

McMahon: ---and you're---I had a CIA badge; that would get me past the guard. And to get behind the barrier, I had to have another special badge; ah, and that had to be picked up and turned in, when I went in. And then we were in a vaulted area that had a crypto code that you had to run to get in the door; so it was, it was virtually not penetrable.

Horne: OK

McMahon: And then after you got in the door, you had to have a procedure to disarm the vaulted area or security would be [chuckling]---

Horne: Extensive security.

McMahon: Yes.

Horne: It's good to hear that. Ah, do you recall whether a, a Captain Sands was on the staff at, at NPIC? Was he---

McMahon: Even if I am [sic], I couldn't talk about that. We, we did have security officers---it was a geo-military operation, and I shouldn't probably tell you that.

Horne: I should explain to you the reason why we're asking you this. Ah, Ben Hunter independently recalled that a Captain Sands brought in the film, and he could not remember anyone being with

him. Subsequently, he remembered there might have been a Secret Service fellow, but he remembered a Captain Sands; but he was unclear of, of what the person's job---

McMahon: OK, most of the geo-military that were there were, were under cover, and I can't, I can't, mention any of the names. 18

Horne: OK

McMahon: All right.

Horne (40:01): Did you create, or do you recall anyone else creating, any records or notes during your work?

McMahon: I think, ah, Hunter and I did the only records of the work, and I think it was on, a, either a yellow, or a ah, a ah---[chuckling] add something to this---

Horne: You, you just put your hand on a yellow legal pad---

McMahon: Yeah, it was on a legal type pad, unless it was recorded on---we made our own, ah, marks on some of the---to keep the---but I did not put any classification or any[thing] of that nature---I didn't put any control, no classification or control on any of the documents. Normally that's required before you could leave the vault; it has to be controlled with a Top Secret cover sheet. I did not do that. Now, after the briefing board is made from the material, then that classification precedes the classification of, in the [unclear] cover sheets. We made briefing boards, teleprompters, and view graphs, as---for dissemination to the Intelligence Community.

Horne: For other types of work---ah, routine---but for this job you, you recall that you may have made notes on a yellow legal pad---

McMahon (41:35): Now, I 'm sure that this did---I'm sure that this did not go to the Intelligence Community---it was not part of the CIA---it was not--- this was [done on] a, a "need-to know" basis, and it was used by whoever brought it in [chuckling] for, for either the Warren Commission, or to brief somebody else.

Horne: Kay.

McMahon: And it wasn't for history, I think it was, to---I don't even know what it was, I think we [unclear] exercise [unclear].

Horne (42:08): Before we move along, and before I show you the notes that the Archives has---ah, let, let me revisit with you, ah, *what exactly did Mr. Smith say in regard to secrecy or non-disclosure, ah, regarding this event, can you tell me that story again?*

McMahon: *I know that, that my immediate supervisor was not allowed in the room---that it was so sensitive, and he had all the tickets---and he was not allowed in the room. It was strictly on a "need-to-know" 19 [basis], do the job, and get it out, and no one knew about it, to my knowledge. No record---*

Gunn: [Interrupting] Just---just so the record's clear, when you say "all the tickets," you mean all the security clearances that he had? He had a lot of security clearances?

McMahon: He had clearance, ah, equal to or [the] same as I had, but he was not allowed---it was not, it was not the CIA, or---a---I held other clearances: Atomic Energy, ah, National Security Agency, and, and it was not under any of these.

Gunn: Was there any other compartment, or was it just with a name, such as, ah---

McMahon: I---There was no code name on it that I know of, and if there was, I couldn't tell you anyway [chuckling].

Horne (43:48): Did, did Mr. Smith ever say to you, ah, "This is classified at a certain level"---

McMahon: *Yes.* He said it is definitely classified on a “need-to know;” and he didn’t give me anything other than it was---that I was sworn to secrecy, and I had---I don’t know whether I had to sign the document, I don’t recall that. But I do know that it could not be divulged.

Horne: Did he give you a level of classification, like Confidential or Secret---

McMahon: I have no---no, it did not have---*he said it was above Top Secret---*

Horne: OK---

McMahon: OK, ah, that meant that it had to have a code name. Now, I don’t know what turned up on the briefing boards, I never saw ‘em.

Horne (44:28): Before we, ah, examine the notes that the Archives has, ah, Jeremy, did you want to ask some follow-on questions?

Gunn: Ah, yes. Ah, this goes back to something you said, ah, early on in the interview, where, ah, a couple of things, where you said, as I recall, ah: “He had---he took three hits, possibly four.” And it wasn’t clear to me whether the “he” was Kennedy, or included Connally. Did, did you reach a conclusion as to the number of hits 20 that you thought President Kennedy had [unclear---several words too indistinct to be made out]?

McMahon (45:13): *Ah, my guess was 6 or 8, but the, the consensus of opinion was 2 or 3.*

Gunn: *Hits on Kennedy?*

McMahon: *Yeah.* Connally, they said it hit Kennedy and then went into Connally---ricocheted.

Horne: Did they say that that night? Or is this---

McMahon: That, that, that was the---we, we were just trying to, to get where all the shots of action--and covered frames from both ends of it. And, I la---I know that later, they found some sound audiotapes, and that they deduct---they said they, they can get, like voice prints on sounds, and they can tell how many super[sic]---separate weapons were fired, because of the Doppler---ah, front and back--- and from directions it came from. And it showed up on a police, ah---tape that was recorded---one, one of the motorcyclists had a, had it on. I don’t know.

Gunn (46:25): *Ah, how was it that you and others came to reach the observations of the number of hits?* Was that while the film was rolling, or was that frame-by-frame analysis?

McMahon (46:38): *Well, the, the person who brought the film in, had already seen it; and he knew where---he had already reviewed it.* And he already had pre-knowledge, before we had it, so maybe we were swayed to go along with his, ah, ah, first impression. I don’t know.

Gunn (47:01): Did he say anyth---could you just sort of recount the events as they occurred, in terms of what---ah, this is Bill Smith?

McMahon: *Yeah.*

Gunn: OK, what Bill Smith said about what he already knew about the film and what it showed?

McMahon (47:17): It---you didn’t---you, you didn’t---after it was processed, at Eastman Kodak; *and it wasn’t in---it was not in the Kod[ak] factory---it was at “Hawkeyeworks.”*

Horne: *Pardon me?* 21

McMahon (47:30): *There, there was another Top Secret lab---*

[End of Side One of audiotape; Mr. McMahon was cut off in midsentence. Side Two of audiotape commences below.]

Horne (00:03): We’re back on the record---we turned the tape over.

McMahon: OK, I was just selected to do the one job that I did, that I covered, and, and, I, I really

don't think I should talk about what happened before, because I don't have---it, it's hearsay information, I have no [personal] knowledge of it.

Gunn: Just so it's clear, that---the only things that we want to ask any questions about relate to the film of the assassination---

McMahon: Yes.

Gunn: ---that's, that's all that we, we are asking about. But it's important for us to be able to get as much information as we can about the processing and the analysis of the film of the assassination. So, a-- -any other work we are not asking about, but this is something where we want to try and collect as much as we can. And to the extent that Bill Smith told you something about the film, that's very important for us to, to be able to know and document, and what happened, so if you could just tell us what he, what he said had happened---

McMahon (01:03): OK, to the best of my recollection, he said that he was contacted, through his organization, of a film---a person called up and said they had it, and, and they felt---that, they thought they had [it]--- and they felt that they didn't want us to give it to anyone or to sell it or make a profit on it---they wanted it to go to, ah, the Secret Service and let them have that. And he gave the original film---the person who did the photography---to the Secret Service. And, I don't think anyone else knew about it until much later. All right.

Gunn: Alright, let me, let me try [a] question there. You're acquainted with the Zapruder---what film is called the Zapruder film---is this the Zapruder film, or is this a different film?

McMahon: I haven't seen it for 35 years. Ah---I never heard "Dal Kruder" at the time---I heard that much, much later.

Gunn: Zap---you mean Zapruder? Ah, did you say, "Dal Kruder?" 22

Horne: [Addressing Jeremy Gunn] He did. [Then, addressing the witness] Ah, the, the name of the gentleman who took the historically most famous film is "Abraham Zapruder."

McMahon: "Abraham Zapruder"---I never heard that, or if I did, I don't remember it.

Gunn (2:54): But, but right now, you're not certain whether the film that you processed, or that you were involved in, ah, working with, was the Zapruder film?

McMahon (3:03): Well, I'm told it was the only coverage they had of it, that that was "it." No one else had photographed it. Now, I don't know whether anyone else had, or whether this is the original, or---historic film.

Gunn (3:18): OK, and, ah, *what did, ah, Mr. Smith say had happened to the film prior to the time that he brought it, in terms of processing, where it had been, and how it had been processed.*

McMahon (3:33): OK, because of expedite and the, the expedite part, is, is in---they wanted to find out what happened, and they had, they had film, that was generously turned into them by a very patriotic person, and [they were] told that he would give it to them, because they--- it might help in the investigation. That---this is what, what he was told---*what I was told*---and that it was of the utmost urgency. So he hand-carried it through; *and flew to Rochester; and got it processed at the--- the processing division there, and they were made aware that he was coming.* Ah, and did it immediately for him, and I also think they made duplications of that, which I was told, and then he came back [to Washington D.C.], because they told him they couldn't do what he wanted to get done, and that NPIC could do it. And it fell in our laps, and we did it.

Gunn (4:55): What---when you said, "They couldn't get done what needed to be done," did you mean the enlargements, or was there some other---?

McMahon: They, they didn't have a, a laboratory that, that could do the quality of work that he

wanted. He wanted maximum sharpness, the most “seeability” that, that he could get of the imagery, and that we were set up to do: and we were well beyond the state-of-the-art in, in the quality that was turned out.

Gunn: For the film of the, the assassination, was it your understanding that anything more had been done to it other than developing the original film and making some prints of the original film? 23

McMahon: The prints, the prints were duplications of the original---

Gunn: Film.

McMahon: Yeah.

Gunn: Had anything else been done to the film, besides---

McMahon: No, no one else had gotten it---to my knowledge.

Horne (5:52): *Was it your understanding that Mr. Smith had come directly to Washington from Rochester?*

McMahon: *Yeah---mmm-hmmm, yes. He'd gotten off the airplane and came from National Airport directly to, to our building.*

Gunn (6:06): Just so we're, we're clear on something---it was our understanding that the film had been processed by Kodak; ah, *when you said it was done in Rochester, it---was that an inference that you drew, when they said it had been processed by Kodak, or did the---did he mention Rochester?*

McMahon: *Ah, you're, you're getting on classified grounds here, ah, that I can't answer that question. I know, but I can't talk to you about that. There was another Top Secret lab, that the government--- you---*

Gunn: Ah, if you're uncomfortable talking about it, we, we can stop that here, so that---that's fine. But this is something that would---that is important for us to be able to do, so we can go, ah, back to the Agency, and talk to them, so [unclear]---

McMahon: No, you can do that back through the Agency, and I know that hasn't been downgraded, to, to---public domain.

[**Transcriber's note:** McMahon was referring here to the code-name “Hawkeyeworks,” for the Top Secret lab at Rochester.]

Gunn: Ah---

Horne (7:12): I think there's a way to rephrase the question, so that it's ah, not a classified---so that you don't perceive a classified intent. I, I think the way to rephrase the question might be, *did Mr. Smith say, ah, “This was developed at Kodak?” or did he say, “This was developed at Rochester?”* 24

McMahon: *Again, again, I know where it was done; I know who did it. And I'm not going to answer [chuckling]---*

Horne: *Is there any chance that, ah, where it was done was at a Kodak lab in Dallas?* That's another way of raising this question.

McMahon: *To my knowledge, no---*

McMahon (8:08): When you're in bed with the Yellow God

[**Transcriber's note:** the primary color in the Kodak logo is yellow]

---we had their top scientists and photochemists and optical people working in the ‘world beyond;’ we had their people---*I shouldn't even talk about it, I'm sorry. And there was a definite link, on the*

national level, where we had “the best there was” working with us.

Gunn (9:01): *Would it be fair to say that there was, ah, another facility---*

McMahon: *Yes.*

Gunn: *---where [it was] your understanding that this was processed---*

McMahon: *Yes.*

Gunn: *---and that that facility was mentioned to you by name, so that you knew---*

McMahon: *Yes.*

Gunn: *---where it was---*

McMahon: *Yes.*

Gunn: [Is] That fair [garbled] to say---

McMahon: Yes.

Gunn: OK, but in terms of the name of it we don't need that, but just--- there, but, there was reference made to a particular place---

McMahon: But, I don't know if there was any downgrading [of the classification level of that facility's code name, “Hawkeyeworks”]. “National Photographic Interpretation Center” was Top Secret--- you could not say it. You could say “NPIC,” and that was Secret.

Horne: I see. That's--- 25

McMahon: And my cover was that “I worked for the CIA”---I did not work for NPIC. And the military that worked there, worked for the military---whether it was Navy, Army, Air Force, or whatever--- they did not work for [unclear].

Horne (9:55): I, I'd like to ask a follow-on, if I can, on ah, on the opinions in the room while you were discussing the, the hits, the shots that hit the people in the limousine---ah, the Governor and the President. Did Mr. Smith tell you the directions the shots came from, or did you people try to determine that on your own during your study of the film?

McMahon (10:38): OK, let, let me not answer that question, and take a little detour. I'm an Army brat; my Dad was in the First and Second World War[s]; and he was, ah, an officer, and when I was four years old I learned how to do tricks, and I was one of the greatest trick-shot artists. When I was 16, I used to fire at Peary [spelled phonetically], Camp Peary, in Ohio. Now, and I fired in the NRA National Championships---I was always in, ah---now, I'm talking about target-shooting, not, not tricks. I was what they call a sightshooter; I could hit without aiming. In other words, if---I was a trick-shot artist---and my Dad would hold a dime between his fingers, and at 50-foot I could shoot, shoot it out with a little trick gun. And, [he could] throw three balls up into the air, golf balls, and I could pump and shoot three of them before they hit the ground. In other words, I---I used---had a rifle range in my own basement, and, and, I would shoot every day, and I became---it was, it was, like driving a car; after you've done it so long you--- your reflexes---you do it automatically. I could shoot looking at what I was---OK, I didn't close one eye and shoot through a sight. I could actually shoot and hit what I wanted to hit, and I think that I could really see the bullets hitting the object; I could see the trajectory of the path of the bullet[s]. And I could compensate for that if I missed; it was a feedback mechanism. And, I was extremely good at what I did; in fact, I used to make money in the, in the money matches, ah, in the, the larger rifles---and I could make as much as four and five hundred dollars in prize money, firing. So, I was a professional, ah, shooter. And yes, I can look at pictures, and, and tell you where the shots came from, and how many there were, and, and where they came---possibly where they came from---up, down, right, left. Now, this is [in]tuition, and, and I don't know how to explain, ah, how I know that.

Gunn (13:18): *So, what was it that you observed on the film of the assassination?* 26

Horne: Your opinion.

McMahon: *About eight (8) shots.*

Gunn: *And where did they come from?*

McMahon: *Three different directions, at least.*

Gunn: Do you remember where---what the directions were?

McMahon: No; but if you have the film---you can plot vectors. Because you, you can go out---I'm a photogrammatrist, as well [chuckling]--- [you] go out---with a---OK, there's a way to do it, believe me.

Gunn: Were you ever asked to do any of that kind of analysis on the---

McMahon: *No, no.*

Gunn: Did you say this at the time that you were looking at the film with the others?

McMahon: I wasn't a photogrammatrist at that time [chuckling].

Gunn: No, I understand, but if---when---when you---

McMahon: I later, I later worked for Photoscience. This was a photogrammetry [job]---I was a, a, a [sic] aerial photographer, and I, I did aerial photography for, ah, whatever you want to call it, for mapping, for first, second, [and] third order, ah, survey; and I did that for about twelve years.

McMahon (14:38): *And---now, I was a shooter, and that's the only reason I can tell you what I saw, and thought I saw; and it wasn't stereo-vision, it was just intuition. No, I did not agree with the analysis at the time that I was doing the work; but that---I didn't have to, because I wasn't a photogrammatrist [chuckling], I wasn't, I wasn't asked to do that.*

Horne (15:12): *Do you remember what Mr. Smith's analysis was, or what his---*

McMahon (15:22): *He thought there were three shots.*

Horne: OK. *Do you remember what direction he opined?*

McMahon (15:28): *Well, he went with the standard, ah, concept that Oswald was the shooter out of the second story. Now, you've got psychological 27 files on Oswald---ah, you've got tons of it [unclear, garbled] figure out.*

Gunn (15:53): *Were there---there was a selection made of the photographs to be enlarged, or frames to be enlarged---*

McMahon: I didn't make any selection, I just went sequential for that one group. Everything was from sequential, nothing was left out.

Gunn: Does that mean from the time that you first identified there was having been a shot until the motorcade left, or [unclear]---

McMahon: Up, up to what they thought there were three shots.

Gunn: Doug, approximately how many frames are there between, ah, let's say, between the, the sign and the head shot?

Horne: Right. Well, ah, the limous---the limousine occupants disappear behind the sign at about frame 190, and ah, the final head shot, according to the Warren Commission, is frame 313, so that's quite a few frames---

Gunn: That's, that's more than a hundred---

Horne: Yes.

Gunn: ---frames, so then, the question that I have is---

McMahon: Ah---

Gunn: ---is how many frames were actually made---

McMahon (17:07): Maybe then for each of what they thought were the three shots, we went before and after. I'm not real clear on that. But I know that, that we covered three shots, but I thought that--OK, I thought that they were sequential, one frame after the other, when I did it. And again, I'm only talking about 40 shots that I was involved in making---

Gunn: Forty frames.

Horne: Forty frames. McMahon (17:32): ---so that it might have been that it was before each hit that they thought was detectable, but I thought that there were others in there, and that---that's another opinion, that's all. 28

Horne: Did they ask you---

McMahon: *No* [unclear]---

Horne: ---for your opinion?

McMahon: Well, I couldn't convince anyone.

Horne: Did you try?

McMahon: Yes.

Horne: You did express your opinion---

McMahon (17:54): *Oh yes, I expressed my opinion---but you know, it, it, it was preconceived. That's the way I felt about---it was pre-conceived, so you don't fight City Hall. I wasn't there to fight 'em, I was there to do the work.*

Gunn: What do you mean pre-conceived, that the, that the Secret Service agent already had---

McMahon: Yes.

Gunn: ---a notion in mind, and that he was just---wanted others to agree with that?

McMahon: Mmm-hmmm. And, I, I didn't care; I had no, you know, you know, no vested interest in, in what was happening.

Gunn (18:30): Ah, one time, ah, in, in the course of the discussion, you were talking about the viewing of the film, [and] if I recall correctly, you said---referred to the people who were in the room "and the camera"---and I just wondered if you meant motion picture---

McMahon: Motion picture camera---

Gunn: ---[garbled].

McMahon: ---and I'm sure it was a---

Gunn: Projector.

McMahon: [Correcting himself] Projector. 29

Gunn: A projector. Was there a camera, or just a projector?

McMahon: It was a projector. And we had the, ah, still-frame filters that we could put in and stop it [without damaging or burning individual frames]. We could run it forward and backw---it was a unique one, it was not a cheap one.

Horne: But it was, ah, was it [a] 16 mm projector?

McMahon: OK, now, I seem to recall it as being a 16 mm---that, that---but again, that---we had every kind of, ah, projector. It was in a briefing room, we went up to one of our briefing rooms. And

they have all that equipment up there.

Gunn (19:31): When, when, when you say “double 8 film,” I assume that you are referring to the kind of film where there would be one series of images that goes down one side, and another series of images that comes up the other side. Is that---

McMahon: Correct, absolutely---

Gunn: ---now, when that’s---if that were projected as a 16 mm film, you would be seeing two series of action, one in reverse, and one going forward, with one upside down. Do you have a recollection of whether that happened?

McMahon (19:57): *I, I think that happened from the original film, when I put it on the optical precision enlarger.* OK---because a---but we would center, you can center that film in the liquid gate---the frame---right in the center of it, [and] then you don’t see it.

Gunn (20:22): That was---that was my next question---I had assumed that when you made the, the negatives, you were focusing just on the, on the single frames that would be in the assassination sequence. Do you have any recollection now as to anything that was in the other part of the, the double 8 picture, the part that is not in the assassination sequence?

McMahon: Ah, I have senile dementia; I, I can’t remember, really---anything. Most of, of my reflections are, are, are what I have recalled and remembered after the fact. In other words, I did it once, and then I recalled it, and remembered it. I don’t know how the mind works, but I do know that I---that I’m not---OK, I’m a recovering drug addict and alcoholic. Do you know what a “wet brain” is? You’re looking at one. I damn near died, and I’m not a competent witness, because I don’t have good recall---absolutely not---absolute recall. 30

Gunn (21:41): With, with regard to the other events that you talked about, ah, what, what is your sense of how accurate your memory is of that?

McMahon: I just told you, I don’t, I don’t have a full deck. Ah [chuckling], I don’t know how, how accurate I am, I am presenting anything here. So, this is not---at the time I did it, I was not---I was not impaired, but I later became impaired. So, whether you’re talking to a reliable witness or not is up to you to decide [chuckling].

Horne (22:29): Shall we move on to the notes? OK, ah, I’m going to go off the record just temporarily here, while I break out, ah, some notes that the Archives has. [Tape recorder turned off temporarily.]

Horne (22:39): OK, we’re back on the record. And from Record Group 233, Flat 90A, at the Archives, I have pulled out, ah, document ID number 1993.07.22.08:41:07:620600, titled “Analysis of Zapruder Film.” Ah, the document date on the RIF [Record Identification Form] is 5-22-1975; and I’m now going to hand these, ah, notes to Mr. McMahon and let him read them and tell us whether he’s seen them before. Please take your time. McMahon (24:35): [Witness examines documents for a considerable period of time---a total of five pages, with one page a half-sheet, having writing on both sides.] *Some of the writing is mine;* I don’t know whose this is.

Horne: And by “this”---ah, this page here, sir?

McMahon: I don’t know whose that is.

Horne: OK, the page that we’re not sure about is the page with 3 shot scenarios---ah, one, one [shot scenario] is labeled: “LIFE magazine,” and then the [other] two [are labeled] “other possibilities,” OK.

McMahon: *This is my writing.*

Horne: OK, the one that Mr. McMahon has identified as his writing is on the back side of a half-

page, and the back side reads: “shoot internegatives, one-and-a-half hours; process and dry internegatives, two hours; print test, one hour; make three prints,” [it] looks like, the ‘each’ sign [that is, the symbol “@” follows the phrase “make three prints,” and precedes the time duration of] 31 “one hour; process and dry prints, one-and-a-half hours;” for a total of “seven hours.”

McMahon: Yeah.

Horne: Below that, there are some---*that’s in pencil* [meaning the time duration for the creation of internegatives and prints discussed above]---below that there are some *blue ink*, ah, long divisions and additions.

McMahon: *This is my writing.*

Horne: And those [the arithmetic calculations in blue ink] are also your writing?

McMahon: *Yeah.*

Horne: Also the pencil?

McMahon: *Yes.*

Horne: OK, could you explain what that---well, what are the long divisions and additions, do you recall what those are?

McMahon: [Sighing] Idiot marks---I don’t know what they---it’s my writing, I think.

Horne: OK

McMahon: No, wait---wait a minute---I think it’s my---it’s either mine or Ben’s.

Horne: OK

McMahon: And, have you got Ben’s handwriting?

Horne: I, I can show you one section on these notes that he recalled was his handwriting, ah, if you’d like, and then I can ask you that---

McMahon: This---this looks like Ben’s handwriting, here.

Horne: OK, and now you are looking at the other side of the half-sheet---

McMahon: This looks like my writing here--- 32

Horne: ---OK, the other side of the half-sheet, which is a description of the four (4) briefing board panels, and when you said it looked like Ben’s writing you were pointing at the, the pencil: “Panel I, Panel II, Panel III, Panel IV.”

[Transcriber’s note: these are column headers on the short half-sheet; and below each column header there are two sub-columns, listing print numbers, and corresponding frame numbers, for the prints mounted on each briefing board panel.]

McMahon: Yeah.

Horne: Ben identified for us, right below that, ah, the printing: “print #” and “frame #”---these, these two marks here are the only two that he thought were his writing, right here, in [pointing]---which are underneath the column labeled “Panel I.”

McMahon (27:01): Mmm-hmmm. This is in---this looks like Ben’s writing, to what I...[now, suddenly focusing on the bottom of the half-sheet] *this looks like my writing.*

Horne: And your writing, ah, would be, ah, at the bottom of the half page, where we’re, we’re talking about frame numbers and time between shots.

[Transcriber’s note: the writing referred to here is found at the bottom of the front of the half-sheet, the side containing the content descriptions for the four briefing board panels.]

McMahon: This is---yeah---and, I'm not sure about this---this looks like mine, and this looks like mine.

Horne: OK, so the, ah---

McMahon: Ah---

Horne (27:33): ---just for the record, the descriptions of how long it took to make internegatives and prints are Mr. McMahon's writing.

McMahon (27:54): *This is not mine.*

Horne: OK, Mr. McMahon is now looking at the page, ah, [wherein] the top half says, "at 18 frames per second;" the bottom half [reads] "at 16 frames per second;" and he has just said that---

McMahon: *This is not mine.*

Horne: ---that is not his writing. 33

McMahon: OK, *and, this is not my writing*---and now, that might have been Ben Hunter's writing.

Horne: This next page that is not Mr. McMahon's writing is a page which, in the upper right-hand corner, reads: "Questions from the 8 mm film---how do they know exact frames of first and second shot?" Question---

McMahon: OK, we didn't know---we were told what they thought they were; and this is what we were told they thought they were; and this is what we concluded they were; and this is what we set the photography team [unclear]. Ah [that's the] best I can do for ya.

Gunn (28:57): Do you remember when you prepared the notes that we just examined?

McMahon: Yeah, we were in a briefing room, ah, in building 213 in the Navy Yard. And, it was---we were viewing it there because of the equipment.

Gunn: So they---these were made on the day then that you---[were] processing---

McMahon: Yes, this is when we---these are fairly accurate timing shots---tim-- -the way that, that it, that we timed it. The 16 frames per second--- I, I don't know whether I agree on the 18---it *might* have been 18 frames per second. *This might have been a further analysis.*

Gunn: Do you know whether somebody else was preparing other notes that you don't recognize, at that time, or were they made later [unclear]?

McMahon: Ah, they, they conform to my best recollection of, of what we wrote on, that's all I know. I don't know why I remembered that.

Horne: By that you mean the yellow, legal-sized paper?

McMahon: Yeah.

Horne (30:66): OK, we would like to show you, ah, four (4) briefing board panels which have survived, and ask you if you recognize the prints. [Pause] Let me go off the record while we figure out how to unload the briefing board panels.

[Off the record briefly while removing the four briefing board panels from the box] 34

Horne (30:45): OK, we're back on the record, and from the same Flat, 90A, ah, we're looking at the RIF [Record Identification Form], which reads as follows: document ID number 1993.07.21.15:48:04:930600. This is titled, quote, "Briefing Panels Containing Zapruder Photos of Kennedy's Assassination," end quote. The date on this RIF document is 11-23-1963. I'm, I'm handing, ah, Mr., Mr. McMahon Panel I of IV for his examination.

McMahon (31:34): *They've been trimmed out, but that's what we shot.*

Horne: OK, and you say they've been trimmed?

McMahon: Yes.

Horne: But you do recognize these as prints that you made?

McMahon: They've also deteriorated.

Horne: Yes, sir.

McMahon: To the best of my knowledge [unclear].

Horne: We'll, we'll show you each of the four panels [and] ask you if you recognize---the same question for each. This is labeled Panel II.

McMahon: Yup.

Horne: OK, you also recognize these, for the record, as photographs that you---prints that you made?

McMahon: [Witness nodded in the affirmative]

Horne: You're nodding your head [in the affirmative]---

McMahon: Yeah.

Horne: If at any time, you see prints that do not look like prints that you made, please say so. This is Panel III.

McMahon (32:39): There's something missing. I don't know---they---tell me---I don't know, I---

Horne: This is, ah, the final panel, Panel IV.

McMahon (33:03): *Yeah---I did all this.* 35

Horne: OK, now that you've seen all four panels, ah, do you feel like this represents all of the views that you created, *or do you still feel there is something missing?*

McMahon: *No---there's some missing.*

Horne: OK, as a matter of interest, I might point out that, ah, in the working notes, on the page labeled, ah, "Briefing Panel," it lists 28 different prints---a total of 28. And earlier, you had said that, that somewhere between 20 and 40---

McMahon: Yes.

Horne: ---*and your opinion now is that you still think some that you made are not present?*

McMahon: *Yes. I---yes, I think there's some missing.*

Horne: I know it's a long time ago---

McMahon: No, I'm not [chuckling]---

Horne: Do you recall, do you recall the image content that might be missing, what it might have showed?

McMahon: You mentioned, they went behind the sign and then came out again? I don't think they had all of that sequence there.

Horne: Here's Panel II---

McMahon: Then there was one of the FBI agent jumping up---not the FBI, the bodyguard---jumping up on the back; and then there was one where his head fell down in her lap---that [I] don't see here.

Horne: When you say "his head," you mean the President?

McMahon: The President's head---after the---the one that you showed, the last briefing board that you showed, not this one.

Horne: Yes.

McMahon (34:34): But again, that might have been not used.

Horne: Here's, here's the last one, Panel IV, and the last print on the board shows, ah, Secret Service agent Clint Hill, on the rear of the limousine. It's the only frame that shows him--- 36

McMahon: Yeah, I, I think there ultimately were two agents on the back of the limousine, but that was a---you know, the barn door was---no sense in closing it at that point. Maybe that was their---

Horne: Let's look at Panel I and II. Panel I shows the limousine half behind this road sign---there, there are several road sign shots--- and at the end of Panel I the car is coming out from behind the road sign. Does this sequence look like it represents---

McMahon: Yes, that looks---

Horne: OK

McMahon: ---*fairly entire, but I think there were more before the road sign.*

Horne: Before, OK---this frame here, ah, the frame---

McMahon: Maybe they determined that---

Horne: This first frame on Panel I, although the frame is not numbered on the panel, in the working notes it's labeled as frame 188. *Is it your recollection that there may have been other frames prior to 188?*

McMahon: *Yeah---where, where there was some action of some sort.*

Horne (36:17): I see. I'd, I'd like to clarify, ah, for the record---I, I think we've covered it already but just for the sake of those who listen to this tape later---***did you ever see these actual briefing boards---***

McMahon: *No.*

Horne: ---the night [of your activity at NPIC]?

McMahon (36:37): ***I saw the pictures, the actual pictures; I made the pictures; and I made three (3) each of everything.***

Horne: OK, and did you give them to Mr. Smith when you were finished, or do you recall?

McMahon: Ah, I know that, that Ben Hunter, and if it *was* Smith, whoever it was [chuckling], ah, took them, and had the briefing boards made upstairs, and I might have gone up, but then I didn't stay to, ah, to see the finished product. 'Cause it---they had to take [and] make what they call 'headliners' and text, and, and they might have put 37 classifications on them---I think there was a classification [at] the head [unclear], I'm not positive of that, but---

Horne (37:38): *Do you---in relation to the discussions that were held that night by the workers---by yourself, and Mr. Smith, and Mr. Hunter---do you have any, ah, opinion on what these triangles might mean on the briefing board[s]?* On Panel I there's a red triangle, ah, on the first row; and on the second row there's a blue triangle; there's a blue triangle [on] the second row in Panel II---

[Transcriber's note: the small colored triangles, placed between prints on the various briefing boards, seem suggestive of someone's idea of when shots may have struck occupants of the limousine during the assassination; but if so, they seem inconsistent with the three-hit scenario endorsed by "Bill Smith," who couriered the film from "Hawkeyeworks," in Rochester, to NPIC, in Washington, D.C. There are a total of six colored triangles placed on the four briefing board panels, with two triangles *appearing together* at the frame depicting the head explosion.]

McMahon: *I haven't the faintest idea.*

Horne: OK. Do you recall what happened to the internegatives?

McMahon (38:35): *Yeah*. They were given---all of the information, including the scraps, were given to Bill Smith [chuckling].

Horne: I understand.

McMahon: Everything that we did, including scraps, waste, ah, test sheets, was all given back, and nothing, no part of it, was saved. We didn't even put, put it in classified trash. We, we gave the trash back.

Horne: I see. OK, is there anything about this event that, that we have not, ah, covered yet that, that we should cover? Anything that comes to mind---we've been discussing it now and---for a while--- ah, there may be something important that you feel should be covered that we have not asked you about.

McMahon (39:41): Yeah---you know what opinions are. Opinions---everybody has an opinion. And, and yes, I do have---I'm very opinionated, and I have a lot of opinions. And we all have opinions. And I'd just as soon not---I was trying to reflect, this, this was for history, of, of--- and I don't want to interject, ah, anything into this that shouldn't be. In other words, I'm trying to be as open and honest at, at telling you what I can remember, and I don't have good remembrance anyway. It's ah---I'm almost 70 years old, maybe; 38 or I'm almost 80 years old; [or] I'm almost 90 years old, I don't know. And, so, that was the best of my knowledge.

Horne (40:55): OK, well,, I want to thank you very much for your time, and---I'm sorry, Michelle, before I close, is there anything you would like to ask? You've been taking notes here today---

Combs: I just have one very quick question: Who called you in?

McMahon: *I was not contacted.*

Combs: Were you already in the building? When you all started? Did you come in [unclear]?

McMahon: OK, ah, I think that I was---OK, when I'm contacted, it---from home, it, it, it's by a security officer---

Combs: By the Duty Officer?

McMahon: The Duty Officer, 'cause I probably had to open the lab, turn on the electricity---tricity-- -and I know it was, it was an all-night affair---

Combs: Do you think the Duty Officer called you at home?

McMahon: I'm pretty sure it would be recorded somewhere in, in the security [records]; and the opening of the vault would be recorded---if they kept those records. Ah---

Combs: OK

Horne: OK, OK.

[**Transcriber's note:** subsequent, extended interviews---in 2009 and 2011---of Dino Brugioni, NPIC's Chief Information Officer, by researchers Peter Janney and Douglas Horne, established that Mr. Brugioni presided over an entirely *different* "Zapruder film briefing board event" at NPIC the night before Mr. McMahon did. The product created at Mr. Brugioni's event was entirely different, and the attendees present were entirely different, as was the format of the film delivered for the making of selective enlargements. Furthermore, Mr. Brugioni, whose event commenced the night *before* McMahon's, on Saturday night, 11/23/63, was the Duty Officer of record at NPIC the entire weekend following President Kennedy's assassination: Friday, Saturday, Sunday, as well as on Monday (which became a national holiday because of President 39 Kennedy's funeral). Mr. Brugioni did *not* participate in the second NPIC event, which commenced on Sunday night (i.e., the McMahon event), and as Duty Officer, he did *not* call anyone into work at NPIC on Sunday night,

11/24/63. The McMahon event--- the second NPIC event that weekend---took place *without* the NPIC Duty Officer of record (Mr. Brugioni) being informed, or involved, in any way; we now know that the NPIC Duty Officer (Brugioni) was completely bypassed by those who arranged and conducted the McMahon event, and a completely different NPIC work crew was assembled the second time around (that is, Mr. McMahon and Mr. Hunter, and Navy Captain Sands, in lieu of Mr. Brugioni's team from the night before). **All of these things were unknown by the ARRB staff, and by Mr. McMahon, in July of 1997 when this interview was conducted.** Similarly, Mr. Brugioni was not aware, *until 2009* (when he was interviewed by Peter Janney), that there had been a *second* "Zapruder film briefing board event" at NPIC that weekend, *following his own event*. The "Brugioni event" at NPIC is discussed at length in Volume IV of the transcriber's book, *Inside the Assassination Records Review Board*, on pages 1230-1239, and 1323-1334. This interview transcript can only be properly appreciated when one knows its true historical context; we now know that there were two compartmentalized operations involving the Zapruder film at the CIA's NPIC the weekend of the assassination, and that the McMahon event was the *second* of these two operations.]

McMahon (42:17): These have deteriorated rather badly. Ah, there's dye--- tremendous dye loss. You could see the features in the faces, and everything else, much clearer, when they were originally, when I originally made them; so that there's been a tremendous loss of image and quality. Ah, you've lost at least 60% of the, the, ah, the magenta, ah, resin-core coupler; and about 80% of the yellow resin-core; and maybe just 10% of the cyan. So ah, they were---a lot of information is not there. Ah, that's, that was a problem with the old resin-core couplers. They were not stable, even with, ah, proper dye buffing; buffing solutions couldn't stabilize the dyes for 35 years.

Horne: I see.

McMahon: But---

Horne: Well, I thank you very much for sharing your time and your recollections and your opinions with us. And, ah, there have been many things about these notes that were actually, ah, either not understood, or I think misunderstood by many people, including 40 myself. This has been very helpful for the record, thank you very much.

McMahon: OK. [Off the record---tape recorder turned off briefly]

Horne (44:18): We're back on the record, this is Doug Horne with Mr. McMahon. I, I just found one more, ah, photographic print---it's separate from the briefing boards. Ah, it looks to me like it's 8 by 10, or very close to 8 by 10---it's bigger than the photos on the briefing boards. It's ah, document ID number 1993.07.22.08:33:27:250600, dated 11-23-63. It's an 8 by 10 color print of a frame from the Zapruder film in-between the road sign and the head shot; and on the back, there's a color crayon marking, "80x"---I'd like to ask Mr. McMahon to explain what this is.

McMahon (44:53): This was made from the 40x internegative, and it was a 2x enlargement, done on a, ah, ah DeVier [spelled phonetically], not a precision enlargement. And it, it, ah, it shows---I'm not sure of the sequence, where it is---but it was made to show what the enlargement would look like, compar---the contact print was of a better quality, because we didn't have a 2x briefing board enlarger set up to do it. We had to do it on a, on a, on a cheaper, Italian DeVier [spelled phonetically] enlarger. If we'd put it on our briefing board enlarger with the liquid gate, we, we, we could have gotten equal quality to resolution and sharpness. But it wasn't available for some reason, so we couldn't use that piece of equipment; and we had to use a lesser, and, they would rather go--- it was big enough, and they'd rather go with the sharpness, ah, and the resolution, so it was elected, there was too much loss---

Horne: Too much loss with reproducing the image in the manner it is in this one print?

McMahon: Well, it was, it was, it was not a liquid gate; it was a 2x, ah, conventional enlarger.

Horne: OK---

McMahon: And it---

Horne: ---from the internegative?

McMahon: From the original, the, the, ah, the 40x interneg. 41

Horne: Right.

McMahon: So we elected not to go that way.

Horne: OK, so this would have been a test, made, ah---

McMahon: That was---

Horne: ---prior to the prints on the briefing boards, perhaps?

McMahon: Well, we made a contact print, and we made a 2x enlargement---

Horne: I see, I see.

McMahon: ---and the contact print was far better in quality, than this.

Horne: OK

McMahon: But it wouldn't have been if we'd-a-had one of the briefing board enlargers, to make the 2x---

Horne: I see. But you didn't---

McMahon: It was---for some reason it was down, for the copying.

Horne: So this "80x" on the back, [it] looks like colored pencil, is that your writing?

McMahon: Yes, that's my writing.

Horne: OK, there's a, there's a number in the corner, a blue number, it's either a nine (9); or a six (6), upside down; I think it's a nine (9)--- looks like a nine (9)---do you recognize that number?

[End of tape---and of interview]

[Final transcriber's note: Since Mr. McMahon made three identical contact prints from each 40x internegative he created from the Zapruder film, this strongly implies that *three sets of briefing boards* (of four panels per set) were subsequently made, using his product. (After all, it was "Bill Smith" of the Secret Service who told the NPIC staff, Mr. McMahon and Mr. Hunter, what to make that night, so surely, making three sets of prints from each internegative implied a need for three sets of briefing boards.) At the time of the interview---indeed, at the time of this transcription in May of 2012---only **one set** of briefing boards 42 from the "McMahon event" at NPIC is known to have survived--- the set placed in the National Archives in 1993 by the CIA's Historical Review Group, in response to the JFK Records Act. It is not definitively known how this surviving set of four briefing board panels from the "McMahon event" at NPIC was used, or to whom it was shown. Various speculations that the four panels were shown to the Warren Commission, or to President Johnson, are to my knowledge not supported by any evidence; these things may have transpired, but I have seen no primary evidence supporting that, only claims made in secondary sources.

There exists a Rockefeller Commission document dated May 7, 1975---a letter from E. H. Knoche of the CIA to Senior Counsel Robert B. Olsen of the Commission on CIA Activities Within the United States (i.e., the "Rockefeller Commission")---which forwarded an undated, unsigned, two-page addendum (or summary) describing the making of briefing boards at NPIC for the Secret Service in 1963. The anonymously authored addendum, in my opinion, *conflates* the two known

NPIC briefing board events (event #1, the “Brugioni” event; and event # 2, the “McMahon” event), *either intentionally, or through ignorance*. The addendum’s language describes the making of *two sets* of briefing boards (which is what happened at the Brugioni event), and the language in the addendum continues with the statement that the briefing board sets contained *four panels each* (which was unique to the McMahon event, for Brugioni’s briefing board products contained only *two panels each*---not *four*---and the Brugioni briefing boards were *not* loose, but were *conjoined by a hinge*). Thus, the author of the addendum was mixing “apples and oranges.” Additionally, the addendum’s author further confuses the historical record by stating that the Secret Service representatives (plural) took the film and one set of briefing boards away with them that night, and that one set of boards was retained by Mr. McCone (the CIA’s Director). This is again conflating the two distinct NPIC events that weekend, for at the Brugioni event (event # 1) the two Secret Service representatives left at 3 or 4 AM the next morning *with the film, but without the briefing boards* (for they were not completed yet). One of the two briefing boards made by Brugioni was indeed intended for the customer (the Secret Service), but both were delivered to Mr. McCone (Director of the CIA) Sunday morning, 11/24/1963, by Mr. Arthur Lundahl, the Director of NPIC. (It was up to Mr. McCone to subsequently deliver one of the two products to the Secret Service.) Mr. “Bill Smith” (the lone Secret Service representative at NPIC event # 2) may indeed have taken three (3) four-panel briefing board sets with him when he departed early Monday morning, 11/25/1963, but if so, their intended recipients 43 were never recorded by anyone. The probable---almost certain--- author of the confusing addendum was Mr. Hicks, who was the Director of NPIC at the time it was written, and subsequently sent along to the Rockefeller Commission by Mr. Knoche, on May 7th.

Mr. Hicks was uniquely positioned to know about both different types of briefing boards, to wit: In 1975, Mr. Hicks was told by Mr. Brugioni about the two sets of briefing boards Brugioni had made in 1963, and indeed, *was shown the one surviving set* (of two conjoined panels) that had been returned to NPIC from Mr. McCone’s office after his retirement. He angrily ordered Brugioni to “get the damn thing out of here,” expressing great displeasure. (Brugioni sent it back to Director Colby’s office, and it has not been seen since.) What Mr. Hicks *did not tell Mr. Brugioni* at this time was that he himself had found a briefing board set, consisting of four panels, at NPIC. Mr. Knoche of the CIA *did inform* the Rockefeller Commission of the *four panel set* of briefing boards in writing, on May 14, 1975; and in fact, Mr. Hicks (who had acknowledged their discovery in writing, in an internal CIA handwritten memo dated May 13th) was scheduled to brief Mr. Olsen, in person at NPIC that same day, on May 14th, so presumably he even showed the *four panel set* to Mr. Olsen. But the CIA withheld from the Rockefeller Commission the additional discovery of a *two panel set* of NPIC briefing boards, the set shown to Hicks by Brugioni. Based on this legerdemain, I have concluded that Mr. Hicks (the NPIC Director in 1975) was not only the likely author of the confusing, unsigned addendum about the creation of NPIC briefing boards sent to the Rockefeller Commission, but that the **conflation** of the two events in that addendum **was an intentional act of obfuscation**. After all, Mr. Hicks had seen both sets of briefing boards, and very well knew that they were quite dissimilar. The fact that he withheld his knowledge of the four panel set (the McMahon product) from Mr. Brugioni, his Chief Information Officer and “briefing board czar,” speaks to his duplicity. The quality and consistency of the memories exhibited by Mr. Brugioni in 2009 and 2011, in multiple interviews, makes it most unlikely that he was confused in any way about the product he created---*two sets* of briefing boards, of *only two panels each, joined with a hinge*, containing *far fewer* than the 28 total photographs found on the four panel set in the Archives. Mr. Brugioni examined good photographs of the four panel briefing board set in the Archives, in both 2009 and 2011, and denied having anything to do with them, insisting that they were *not* what he created at NPIC.] END