

THE HSCA:

HOW BLAKEY BURIED THE CASE

The Formation of the HSCA

was due to three events:

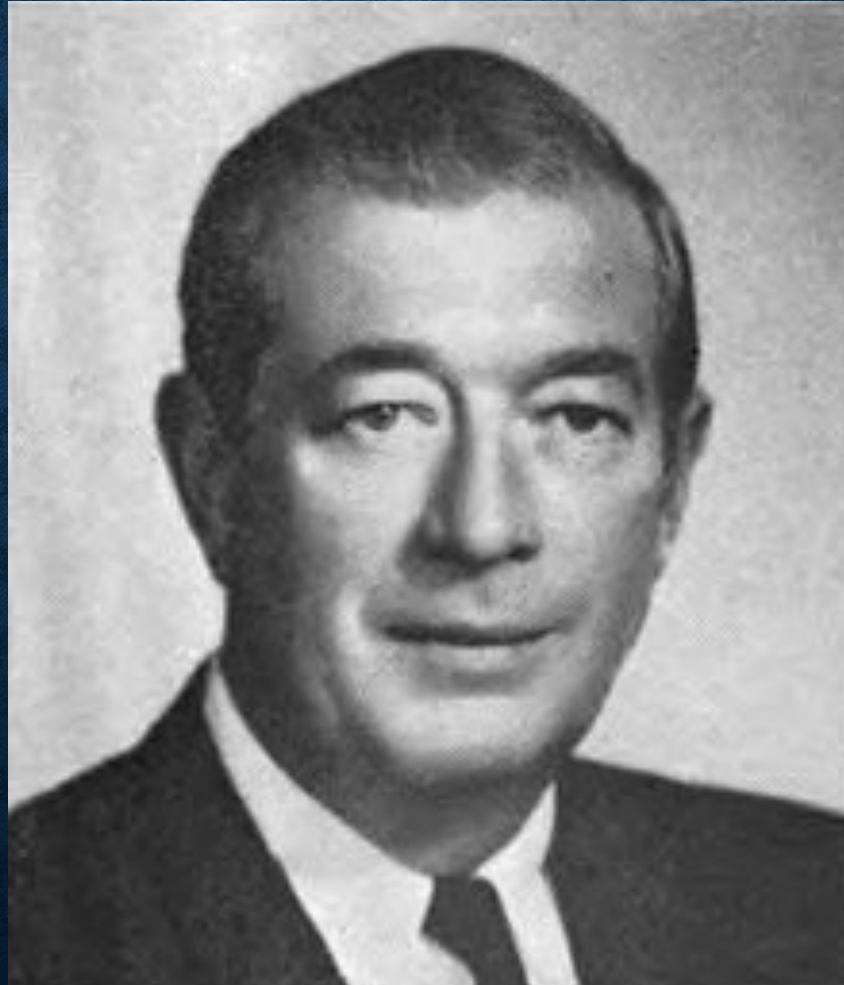
The discoveries of the Church Committee about the assassination attempts by the CIA.

The exposure of the note Oswald left for James Hosty.

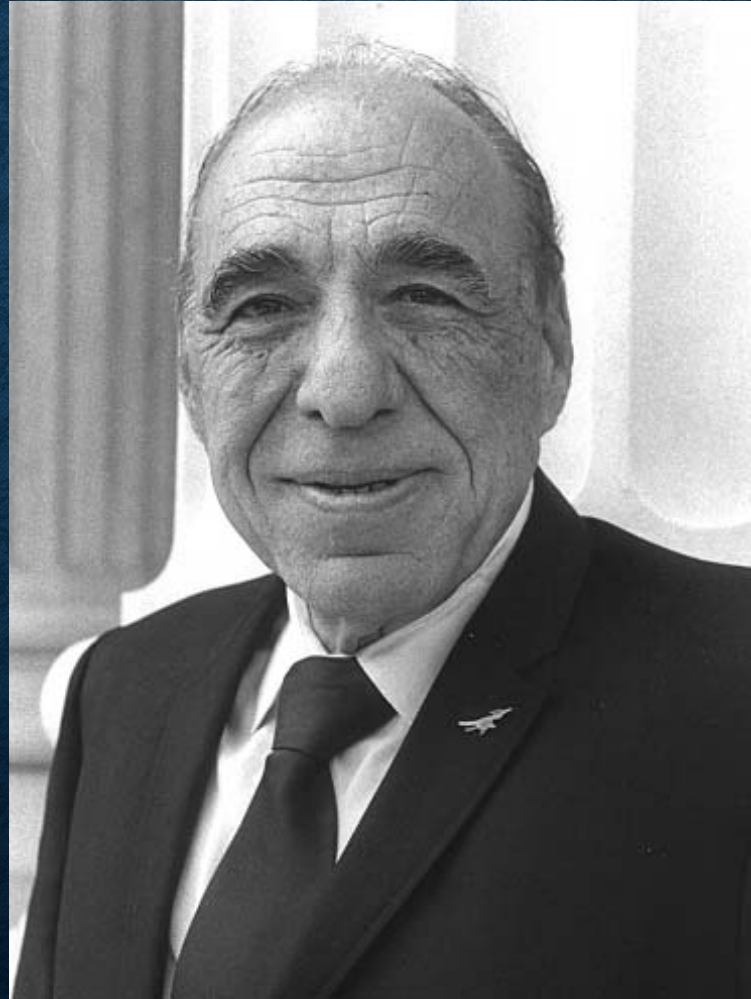
The showing of the Zapruder film on national television.

Two men then worked hard to lobby Congress to pass a resolution to create the committee:

Tom Downing of Virginia



Henry Gonzalez of Texas



It was a difficult, uphill battle to get the HSCA resolution through Congress.

Downing gave some very powerful speeches on the floor to try and shame his colleagues into voting for it.

But still, Downing had to enlist the Black Caucus to get the bill passed, and this entailed adding the King investigation to the mandate.

At this time, he said the CIA now lobbied against the Kennedy case being reopened; the FBI lobbied against reopening the King case.

It is important to remember a key fact at this point in the story:

Downing got into this because he had been shown a copy of the Zapruder film by his son, who was a law student at University of Virginia at the time.

The other person at the private screening was another law student named Andy Purdy.



Purdy was an active member of Mark Lane's lobbying group, "Citizens Commission of Inquiry", in 1975.

This is a crucial point to remember as we learn what happened to the HSCA, because it tells us how power works in Washington.

Downing's bill passed the House in September of 1976.

The House Select Committee on Assassinations was now formed.

Downing was the first chair of the committee with Gonzalez as his second in command.

Two things will now occur which, although no one understood it at the time, will seal the committee's fate:

First, Downing announced he would be retiring from Congress. This would be his last term. Therefore, he was only running the HSCA for five months.

Second, Gonzalez nominated for Chief Counsel Richard Sprague, the spectacularly successful Philadelphia prosecutor who was first assistant for many years to DA Arlen Specter. Sprague had become famous through his cracking open the conspiracy to kill union leader Jock Yablonski.

There was a problem with Sprague: **he announced he was actually going to conduct a genuine homicide investigation.**

It is not possible to exaggerate the impact those two events had on the HSCA.

Downing had real stature and experience on the Hill. And he had a placid and confident personality. It was difficult to upset him.

He would have been just about ideal as the chairman since, in addition to the above, he was truly concerned about the cases. And he spent much political capital in getting them reopened.

Sprague and his Deputy, Bob Tanenbaum, had over 40 years experience in prosecuting homicides and criminal conspiracies.



Between them, they lost one case.

When it became clear that between Downing, Sprague and Tanenbaum, a true investigation was going to take place and the Warren Commission verdict was going to be both discredited and reversed, a counter-intelligence program was put in place to implode the committee from within, and to explode it from without.

It very much resembled what happened to Jim Garrison in 1967.

This program went into high gear just as Downing was leaving office and Gonzalez was taking command.

It consisted of two main components: the planting of disinformation agents inside of Gonzalez' office, and informants in Sprague's office. This managed to poison relations between the two men, and it ended up being fatal to the committee, since both of them ended up leaving within several months.

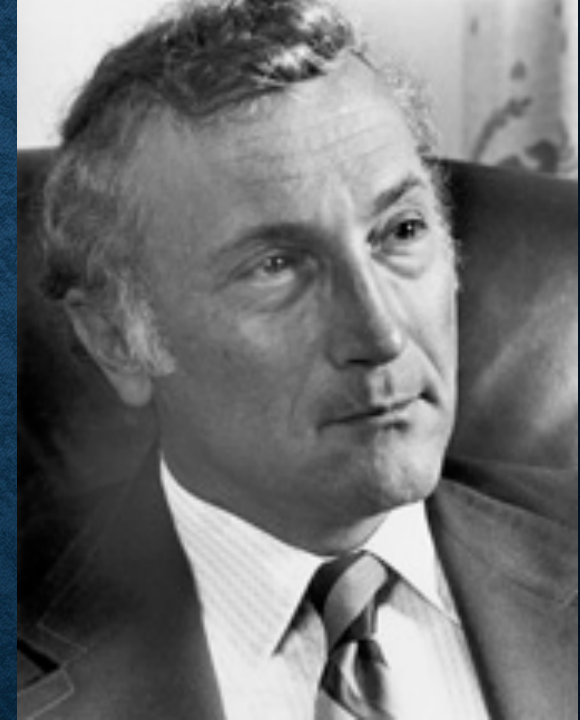
The second part of this program was the recruitment of compromised journalists to discredit Sprague and the efforts of the committee. These included Nicolas Horrock of *Newsweek*, David Burnham of the *NY Times*, and Walter Pincus of the *Washington Post*.

This incessant drumbeat of negative publicity greatly weakened support for the HSCA in Congress.

This effort to destabilize the leadership of the HSCA cannot be overstated, because ...



due to the work done by Gaeton Fonzi for the Church Committee, hand delivered by sub-committee chairman Richard Schweiker to Tanenbaum,



and the photographic presentations made to the committee by people like Bob Groden and Bob Cutler, ...

... 11 of the 12 lawyers now believed the Commission was wrong in its verdict. And the three leaders of the HSCA, Sprague, Tanebaum, and Al Lewis, were all certain there was a conspiracy to kill President Kennedy.

Tanenbaum was so impressed with Fonzi's work for Schweiker that he hired him to work for him for the HSCA.

When Schweiker handed him the file Fonzi had developed on Bishop/Phillips, he told Tanenbaum, "The CIA killed President Kennedy." In an interview with me, Schweiker, quite naturally, disputed this. But he did say that his chief aide, attorney Dave Marston, did think this was the case.

The night Tanenbaum was in receipt of this file from Schweiker, he and chief investigator Cliff Fenton stayed up until the next morning reading it.

At that time, Fenton went to the door. Before he left, he told his boss, “Bob, we are in over our heads.”

These ended up being prophetic words. Fonzi had been hot on the trail of David Phillips. This was the first genuine lead since Garrison to the mid-level of the conspiracy.

In addition to the Bishop/Phillips trail, Tanenbaum had uncovered a film of Oswald at a Cuban exile training camp. After bringing in witnesses, Tanenbaum was convinced Phillips and Banister were also in the film. This film may have been taken by David Ferrie.

Meanwhile, Sprague was hot on the trail of what had happened to the Mexico City transcripts. He had shown copies of them to the Tarasoffs, the husband and wife translating team. They did not recall seeing one particular set.

Sprague secured their original typewriter. He now wanted to do tests to see who actually typed the transcript.

Sprague was determined to find out why the Warren Commission did not believe the story of Sylvia Odio.

Because based on the work done by Fonzi, Sprague did believe her.

This was a very dangerous tenet because it would lead to having an Oswald imposter either at Odio's door or on the bus to Mexico City, since the times overlap.

When Tanenbaum deposed Phillips under oath, he asked him: Since you had photo and audio coverage of the Russian and Cuban consulates in Mexico City, you must have pictures and tapes of Oswald being there?

Phillips replied that the tapes had already been recycled, and their camera was not functioning when Oswald was there.

Through Donald Freed, Mark Lane had secured the FBI document which said that the CIA had sent a tape to the FBI agents interrogating Oswald. The agents said that the voice on the tape did not correspond to Oswald's voice.

Tanenbaum called Phillips back and confronted him with a copy of the FBI memo. Phillips did not contest the contents of the memo. He just walked out without replying to it.

At this point, Tanenbaum went to the Committee; he said that it was now necessary to recall Phillips.

Phillips had to explain why he said what he did and why it did not correspond to the FBI memorandum.

If his explanation lacked credibility, there would be only one recourse:

He would be indicted for perjury.

The HSCA leadership balked at taking this step.

With links between Phillips and Oswald established, with a film linking the mid-level of the plot to the lower level, with a shot from the front decided upon, and with an indictment for perjury contemplated, a vote was called to reconstitute the HSCA.

It was clear the committee would not survive with Sprague at the helm. On the same day this vote was taken, George DeMohrenschildt was discovered dead in Florida. The HSCA was so bereft, there was no independent inquiry into his death.

Sprague's battle with Gonzalez had resulted in Gonzalez leaving.

Now, Sprague left.

Tanenbaum and Lewis decided to stay on until a new leadership team was in place.

Louis Stokes had replaced Gonzalez. But no one wanted the Chief Counsel job after watching what happened to Sprague.

Finally Robert Blakey was recruited.

Because of his background of being an academic, and because of what had happened to Sprague, Blakey's approach was quite different than Sprague's.

Sprague was going to conduct all his forensics tests in public, including the test of the SBT. He would hire no one from the government, or who had been associated with the Commission in any way to work for him. Third, his inquiry was open-ended from the start.

Blakey called no press conferences after his first one. **His tests were done in private. He hired people like Vincent Guinn and Larry Sturdivan who had been associated with the Warren Commission.** And doctors who had been associated with Russell Fisher of the Clark Panel.

Another huge difference was that Sprague and Tanenbaum befriended the critics. It was Tanenbaum who hired Groden and made Baden hire Cyril Wecht.

Blakey altered this policy also.

He called a Critics' Conference so the critics could have their say. But the interaction was very much limited after that. And he also assigned a staffer to comb through the critical literature to find errors in the work.

His approach was not open-ended.

He called in a few of the critics when he took over. He told them that they had to make “their conspiracy smaller”. When asked, “How small?”, he replied maybe 5,6 or 7 people.

This betrayed a remarkable lack of knowledge as to how the CIA works: the “need to know” basis.

If he did find a conspiracy, he revealed to lawyer Jim McDonald at the start, it would be Mafia-oriented.

In addition to hiring Sturdivan and Guinn, Blakey hired Cecil Kirk, a photographic authority, on his photo panel.

Kirk was one of the driving forces on the panel, yet he also had worked for the Warren Commission at a young age.

Kirk continued to defend the Commission all they way until 1986 when Vincent Bugliosi used him for his pseudo trial in London. Where, as detailed in *Reclaiming Parkland*, he clearly misrepresented two key evidentiary points.

Further, as Cyril Wecht has pointed out, the HSCA very much relied on the findings of the controversial 1968 medical revisions of the Warren Commission for the Ramsey Clark Panel helmed by CIA friendly Baltimore Medical Examiner Russell Fisher.

Cyril Wecht very much objected to the use of Fisher's professional colleagues for the Rockefeller Commission. He also did this for the HSCA. Because the pattern of using Fisher's friends was repeated by Blakey and Baden.



Dr. Michael Baden

Two egregious examples would be the appointments of Charles Petty and Werner Spitz.

Both these men had been assistants to Fisher for years on their way up the ladder in the forensic pathology world. And as Pat Speer discovered, they even edited books on forensic pathology with Fisher.

Again, Bugliosi used Petty for his London pseudo trial, where again, Petty made some ridiculous claims, like he didn't need Kennedy's brain since he felt he could rely on the photos and X-rays instead.

When in fact, the brain was never sectioned to determine directionality!

It is hard not to conclude that these panels were stacked in such a way as to favor a repeat of the Warren Commission.

Especially when, according to Ed Lopez, when Blakey took over he called in both Baden and Andy Purdy.

When Purdy emerged from the closed door meeting, he told Ed that they were going with the Single Bullet Theory. Ed argued vehemently with Purdy. But according to Lopez, “From that moment on, Andy Purdy had religion about the Magic Bullet.”

The problem for Purdy, Baden and Blakey today is this:

One of them lied about the Bethesda witnesses not seeing a large, avulsive wound in the rear of Kennedy's skull, as the Parkland witnesses said they saw.

Under questioning by Gary Aguilar, they all admitted this was not supportable today with the ARRB files opened. **But they all denied writing that section.**

Interestingly, once Baden and Purdy sided with the Clark Panel, there was no contemplation of the new problems that now arose with this high in the cowlick wound.

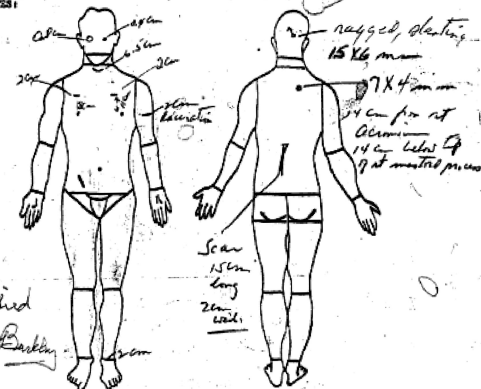
For instance, what did the object in the rear of the skull which was so obvious in the X-rays represent?

And why did this new trajectory not actually match any fractures on the rear of the skull or any bullet trail on the top of the skull?

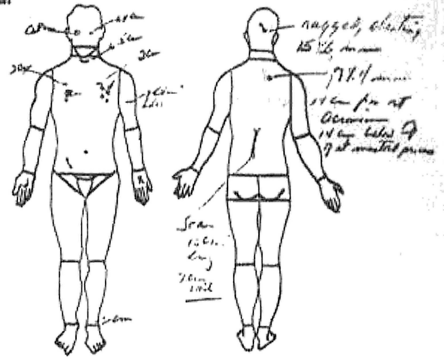
Medical assistant James Jenkins, who was present during the autopsy, revealed a startling fact about the HSCA medical inquiry and Andy Purdy at the Lancer Conference in Dallas at the 50th anniversary.



Jenkins said that the famous autopsy face sheet was actually written up by him.

AUTOPSY DESCRIPTIVE SHEET
 FORM PATH-8 (1-53)
 AUTOPSY
 NOS # 63-212 DATE 7-22-68 HR. STARTED _____ HR. COMPLETED _____
 NAME: _____ RANK/RATE _____
 DATE/HOUR EXPIRED: _____ WARD _____ DIAGNOSIS _____
 PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: RACE: _____ Obtain following on babies only:
 Height in. Weight lb. Hair _____ Color _____
 Crown-rump _____ in. Crown-head _____ in.
 Color eyes _____ Pupils _____ mm, Lb. _____ mm Circumference: _____
 Head _____ in. Chest _____ in.
 Abd. _____ in.
 WEIGHTS: (Grams, unless otherwise specified)
 LUNG, RT. 320 KIDNEY, RT. 1305 ADRENALS, RT. _____
 LUNG, LT. 290 KIDNEY, LT. 140 ADRENALS, LT. _____
 ESAXN _____ LIVER 160 PANCREAS _____
 SPLEEN 90 HEART 260 THYROID _____
 THYMUS _____ TESTIS _____ OVARY _____
 HEART MEASUREMENTS: A 7.5 ca. P 4 ca. T 12 ca. M 10 ca.
 LVA 1.5 ca. RTV .4 ca.
 NOTES:

 Pathologist _____

Boswell "Original"

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 NOTES:

 Pathologist _____
 COMMISSION EXHIBIT 397

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But he also stated that the diagrams which appear both on the front in what is claimed to be Boswell's face sheet (left) were actually recto-verso.

Purdy knew that was a fact. How? Because he had it with him.

Further, the HSCA just accepted the Warren Commission's crime scene evidence; that is, the three shells, the rifle, and the Magic Bullet and the head and tail of the bullet found in the limousine.

All of this evidence is now very questionable today. For example, we now know that the rifle in evidence by the Commission does not match the rifle ordered by Oswald. It is both the wrong length and the wrong classification. Further, the 40 inch model which was found, was not supposed to have a scope on it. Yet this rifle did have one on it.

But there were two good things about the HSCA which survive to this day:

The New Orleans team of Lawrence Delsa, Bob Buras and Jon Blackmer did some very good work in uncovering the Oswald trail in New Orleans in the summer of 1963.

They did fine interviews with people like Delphine Roberts.

Unfortunately, this work was mostly classified. Yet it was integral in showing the maneuvering of Oswald.

Dan Hardway was originally assigned to the CIA inquiry. Ed Lopez was assigned to the anti-Castro Cuban team.

When I interviewed Eddie, he seemed convinced that Phillips was an integral part of the conspiracy. And that since Anne Goodpasture worked with him a lot, that Goodpasture was working for Phillips when she pulled all her skullduggery about the photos and tapes as described in the Lopez Report.



Anne Goodpasture

Dan's view is different. And quite fascinating.

He does not see Goodpasture as an accomplice of conspirator Phillips.

He sees Phillips' role as primarily a cover-up guy.

He sees Goodpasture as an actual conspirator in her own right, working through Staff D with Harvey and Angleton.

There does seem to be quite a lot of evidence for that in the Lopez Report, since Goodpasture told even more lies than Phillips.

In any event, no matter which is right, Hardway and Lopez recommended indicting both of them for perjury.

In the case of Phillips, it was on an entirely different topic than what Tanenbaum wanted to indict him for.

To Hardway and Lopez, Phillips lied about being in Mexico City at the time Oswald was allegedly there. Hardway found documents proving he was not. But Phillips wanted to cover up why the cable about Oswald meeting with Kostikov was so late arriving at Langley.

When Dan and Ed were getting too close to what really happened in Mexico, a place where the Warren Commission never even approached, Regis Blahut was replaced as their liaison.

George Joannides was brought in to replace Blahut. Ed and Dan were kicked out of their Langley office.

A special office with a safe inside a safe was constructed at the HSCA building in Washington.

The CIA now brought files into the building on a delayed basis. Ed and Dan were checked every day to see if they brought anything with them because they were not allowed to take anything out of the office, including their notes.

Once this happened, Hardway and Lopez were seriously handicapped.

It caused all kinds of delays, and then the Agency now began giving them files that had been abridged and retyped.

One of them was a secret debriefing of John Roselli by Sheffield Edwards.

Further, it turned out that all “work product” files were later turned over to the CIA who were allowed to throw them out. This is why “Was Oswald an Agent of the CIA?” does not exist. Since it was never finished it was considered a “work product”.

In New Orleans, Buras and Delsa were suspended for being too aggressive and paying for a polygraph for Thomas Beckham.

People like Patricia Orr were then sent to New Orleans from Washington. Orr had little or no experience with the milieu.

Blakey even sent an investigator from the King side there.

Jon Blackmer was shifted to the autopsy evidence. He has remained silent to this day about his experience on the HSCA.

In the writing of the report, done mostly by Blakey, Dick Billings, and Gary Cornwell:

- 1) Because of the work of Vincent Guinn, and the fact there was no investigation into the crime scene evidence, or the provenance of CE 399, the SBT was preserved. We now know that Guinn's work was "junk science".
- 2) When Kennedy is struck in the head at Z 313, the HSCA still says that shot came from the rear. Even though we now know that there actually is no forward motion prior to that, which is what Sturdivan relies upon for the "neuromuscular reaction".
- 3) The sniper from the front missed, even though he has the closest shot on a flat plane with the target coming towards him.

To me, this might be even worse than the Commission, considering the evidence the HSCA had dealing with the medical side of the case. Which was much more extensive than what the Commission had.

The HSCA had an opportunity to correct all this; instead it became a victim to it all.

In its failure, which now seems repeated by the ARRB, it shows that the murder of President Kennedy digs too deeply into a part of America that is too dark for the gatekeepers to reveal. Because to reveal that truth would demonstrate their own failure, and their resultant complicity in what has happened to America. Which is something they simply will not do.

Which is OK for them, but has been disastrous for America.