

Agency Information

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Document Information

ORIGINATOR : HSCA
FROM : FRUGE, FRANCIS LOUIS
TO :

TITLE :

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SUBJECTS :

CHERAMIE, ROSE
ODOM, FRANK
FRUGE, FRANCIS LOUIS
DURHAM, NATHAN

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014141

INVESTIGATION INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Identifying Information:

Name Mr. Francis Louis Fruge
Address Rt #1 Box 283
City/State Basile, La.
Date of Birth 8-25-27
Social Security 437-34-5383

Date 4-7-78
Place Home
Telephone 318-432-5109
M or S M
Spouse _____
Children _____

Physical Description:

Height 68 1"
Weight 170
Ethnic Group White

Color Eyes Brn Hair Blk
Special Characteristics _____

Personal History:

- a. Present Employment: Self Employed- Oil Lease Operator
Address Residence
Telephone Above
- b. Criminal Record
 - 1. Arrests None
 - 2. Convictions None

Additional Personal Information:

- a. Relative(s): Name _____
Address _____

b. Area frequented: _____

c. Remarks: See Attached interview sheet

Investigator Robert C. Buras Jr.

Date 4/11/78

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ASSASSINATIONS - Kennedy

NAME Francis Louis Fruge Date 4/7/78 Time 10:00 a.m.
Address Rt. 1, Box 283 Place Residence
Basile, La.

Interview:

Investigator Robert Buras met with Mr. Fruge at the above time and date. Mr. Fruge stated that he is self-employed now but he was a lieutenant with the Louisiana State Police from 1947 to 1967. He retired with twenty years' service.

In 1963 he handled Rose Cheramie in Eunice, La. as a possible mental patient; then as an informant he worked with her and the U.S. Customs from Houston, Texas. This occurred from 11/20/63 through 11/27/63.

From 1965 through 1967, he assisted New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison's investigator, Andy Sciambra, in the Clinton-Jackson area of Louisiana.

From 1965 through 1967, he was assigned to the Louisiana Sovereignty (State) Commission in Baton Rouge, La.

On Wednesday, November 20, 1963, at approximately 10:00 p.m., Mr. Fruge was called to the emergency ward of the Moosa Memorial Hospital in Eunice, La. by Mrs. Louise Guillory.

A patient, Rose Cheramie, was in the ward because she had been struck by an auto on Highway 190 in front of the Silver Slipper Lounge. She had only minor abrasions when she

Interviewer _____
(Signature)
Robert Buras
(Typed)

Date Transcribed 4/17/78 /am

was brought into the hospital by the man that hit her, a Mr. Frank Odom. Mr. Odom was known to Mr. Fruge and is a long-time resident of the area. Mrs. Guillory called Lt. Fruge because she thought that the patient was on drugs. She could not be released due to her condition, so Lt. Fruge brought her to the local jail and locked her up for safekeeping until she sobered up. Rose Cheramie had been hitchhiking when she was struck by Mr. Odom. A short while later, Lt. Fruge was called to the local jail because Rose Cheramie had stripped off all of her clothes and was "cutting up" in the cell. He called a Lafayette Charity Hospital ambulance and accompanied the driver as he transported Cheramie to the East Louisiana State Hospital for examination. He took this action on the advice of Dr. Rodney Derouin, who met him at the jail and sedated Cheramie.

The trip took about two hours and during this time Cheramie was calm and asked the usual questions about why she was being held and where she was being taken. During this trip, she was in a straightjacket. Mr. Fruge stated that this procedure was used on any person that showed signs of drug withdrawal to the extent that they needed medical attention. The people would be treated until their withdrawal symptoms stopped and were then released.

During the trip from Eunice to Jackson, Rose Cheramie stated that she was just passing through town from Miami and on her way to Dallas and Houston. She stated: "We're going to kill President Kennedy when he comes to Dallas in a few days." She talked about traveling with a couple of guys, but Lt. Fruge did not take any of the conversation as serious due to her condition. He admitted her to Jackson at about 3:00 a.m. Thursday, November 21, 1963. She was still calm but she was put into a patient sack for her own protection.

On Friday, November 22, 1963, Lt. Fruge was at his home when he heard that the President had been shot in Dallas. He called the Hospital and found out that Cheramie was kicking up again to the extent that he didn't think a trip or talk to her would be fruitful. He asked the doctors at the Hospital to call him when she calmed down. On Monday, November 25, he found out that she was calmed down and he went to Jackson to talk with her. She stated that she was coming from Miami with two men that were either Cubans or Italians and she was going to go to Dallas, then to Houston. The men were going to kill Kennedy and she was going to check into the Rice Hotel, where reservations were already made for her, and pick up 10 kilos of heroin from a seaman coming into Galveston. She was to pick up the money for the dope from a man who was holding her baby. She would then take the dope to Mexico. Mr. Fruge could not remember the name of the seaman that she gave, or the ship's name, or the

name name that she used as an alias at the Hotel. He stated that the U.S. Customs would have this information if anyone checks with them.

Lt. Fruge told Col. Morgan of the State Police and he told Col. Burbank. Col. Burbank was in charge of the State Police at the time Burbank told them to check out the story. Morgan and Fruge called Nathan Durham, Chief Customs Agent in Port Arthur, Texas and gave him the name of the seaman and the ship that Cheramie said the dope was coming in on. Durham called back in about 30 minutes and confirmed that a ship was coming into Galveston by that name and the seaman's name was on the ship's roster. Col. Morgan called Will Fritz of the Dallas Police Department and told him the story about the assassination and the heroin, which had partly checked out. Fritz told Morgan that it was in the hands of the Federal Agents and gave Morgan a name to call. Morgan called the agent and was told that they weren't interested at that time. They made plans to meet with Nathan Durham in Houston to work the heroin. Rose Cheramie, Fruge, Morgan and a State Police Pilot took the LASP plane and flew to Houston on Tuesday. They worked with the Customs people and attempted to get the dope. The Customs people checked the Rice Hotel and reservations were made just as Cheramie had said. The man that allegedly had the money and her baby was checked and his name showed that he was an underworld, suspected narcotics dealer.

While flying to Texas in the plane, one of the men had a daily newspaper and it had a headline or story title that stated that Oswald and Ruby were not connected. Rose Cheramie saw the headline and laughed. She told the men in the plane that Oswald and Ruby were "bed partners" when she worked for Ruby as a stripper. She stated that she worked for Ruby, but Fruge does not remember the name of the bar that she said she stripped at. It wasn't the Carousel. It had a name with something like the Pink Door or Red Door. Fruge thinks that this might have been checked later, but they didn't do anything with it at that time.

When Cheramie was first picked up on the highway in Eunice, La., she had two cardboard boxes of clothes and belongings. Fruge looked in one of the two boxes and found baby clothes and shoes. This led him to believe that she at least had a baby, but he didn't check the boxes any further. An Agent named Bob Woody checked into the Rice Hotel with Cheramie and acted as her sugar daddy. An Agent was assigned to follow the seaman. The seaman got onto a bus from Galveston to Houston, but he lost the tail. No one contacted the room at the Hotel and Rose Cheramie missed her time schedule. The whole deal fell through on the dope. The Agent in charge of Customs in Houston called the Agents, probably F.B.I., and asked them if they wanted to talk to Cheramie. They didn't want to speak with her so Fruge, Morgan and the pilot came back to Baton Rouge. They cut Rose Cheramie loose in Houston. Mr. Fruge forgot about the incident.

In 1965 or '66, an investigator for Jim Garrison called and asked about the above information. Lt. Fruge was loaned to the Garrison investigation by the State Police. Lt. Fruge stated that a Dr. Person had somehow heard about the Cheramie case and had called Garrison. Fruge then helped with some of the interviews in Jackson and Clinton, La. He got a set of photos from the Garrison investigation and went to the man who managed the Silver Slipper Lounge, Mack Manuel. Mack Manuel remembered the incident and stated that he had seen Rose Cheramie talk to three men. Two men were with her and a third came in later and talked to the others. Mack Manuel went through the mug shots and other photos and picked out the two men that were with Rose Cheramie the night that she was there. One was Sergio Arcacha Smith and the other was a name like Assanto, unknown if last or first name. The man who came in and talked to them was identified by Manuel as John Paul Jennette. This man, Jennette, might have talked to Assanto previously because he died of a heart attack in Eunice, La. on February 18, 1978. He was born in Worcester, Massachusetts on April 17, 1927. His social security number was 026-20-6157. This man, Jennette, might have known Assanto. Mack Manuel stated to Fruge that Assanto (or a name like that) used to bring girls to the Silver Slipper from Miami. The girls would work for a couple of weeks and then go back. The name of the man should be in some reports of Garrison's investigator. Mack Manuel was shot to death in 1974-75 in Villeplatte, La.

Fruge was asked in 1966 to attempt to find Rose Cheramie. He learned that she was born in Houston, Texas and she died in a small town in Texas in 1965. She was the victim of an auto hitting her while she was either walking or hitchhiking on a highway. Fruge found that the cause of death was listed as a fractured skull and Jim Garrison wanted the body exhumed. Mr. Fruge stated that the local authorities would not exhume the body and were generally unfriendly. Mr. Fruge stated that he found it unusual that a person would be hit by an auto and only have a fracture of the skull without breaking any other bones in the body.

Mr. Fruge stated that he could not find any other records of the driver that hit and killed Rose Cheramie except in the Police Report and at the State Vehicle Office of Registration. He checked the address given and no one at that address had ever heard of the man. He states that someone might have found him later but he (Fruge) doesn't remember hearing about it.

Mr. Fruge touched on a few other points that he remembered. There was a Dr. Silva, who was born in Havana, Cuba, working at the East Louisiana State Hospital in 1963. That is the only year that he worked there and Mr. Fruge does not have information nor does he imply that the doctor was involved in anything illegal. Mr. Fruge only mentions him because he was from Cuba.

Mr. Fruge asked if this Committee had found that diagrams of the sewer system in Dealey Plaza were found in Arcacha Smith's apartment in Texas. He thinks that Captain Will Fritz might have mentioned something about that, but Mr. Fruge was not sure on this point.

Mr. Fruge stated that he had a letter in his possession from Margarett Martens, the mother of Layton Martens, to a Father Toups. The letter (a xerox copy) stated that Mrs. Martens heard talk about killing President Kennedy among Ferrie, Shaw, and Banister in 1963, but she denied that her son, Layton Martens, was involved in the talk. This letter was written, to the best of his memory, after Garrison called her son before the Grand Jury in New Orleans. Mrs. Martens was dating David Ferrie -- or at least was friendly with him. Mr. Fruge remembers checking on Mrs. Martens and learning that Mr. Guy Banister had her committed to Charity Hospital, New Orleans, then to Mandeville, Louisiana on August 16, 1963. She was committed to Charity Hospital, New Orleans again on November 30, 1966 by David Ferrie and Layton Martens. Mr. Fruge and Andy Sciambra talked with her doctor, whose name he doesn't remember. The doctor, a psychiatrist, stated that Mrs. Martens was not insane. He didn't talk with Mrs. Martens. These dates might or might not be significant, but he mentions that in August 1963 Oswald was in New Orleans handing out leaflets and this would be the time that she claims to have heard the talk of killing the President. The 1966 date would be about the time that talk was going around New Orleans that the District Attorney was going to call people before the Grand Jury.

Father Toups is now deceased.

Another point of interest to Mr. Fruge was a statement by one Andy Dunn of Clinton, Louisiana. Mr. Dunn was sitting across the street from the black vehicle that was parked by the voter registration office. He remembered seeing three men in the car -- two in front and one in the rear -- at the time that Oswald was in line to register. That would mean that there is one man that was in the car that has not been identified to this day. Mr. Dunn, who was a local drunk, died in jail in Clinton a short time later. Mr. Fruge does not have the report, but he remembers the story that Mr. Dunn died by hanging himself while lying on his bunk. He had a belt around his neck and around the head of the bunk and he strangled while he was lying there. This has not been verified to his knowledge.

Mr. Henry Sybly of Denin Springs or Hammond, Louisiana was the chairman of the State Sovereignty Commission. Mr. Fruge doesn't remember anything about Mr. Guy Banister's files ever being brought there. It is possible that files were there that he did not know about. Mr. Fruge stated that he never worked with retired Major Russell Willie of the Louisiana State Police while he was with the Commission.

WJH
BJC

Mr. Francis Louis Fruge
Rt #1 Box 283
Basile, La.
8-25-27
437-34-5383

4-7-78
Home
318-432-5109
M

68 1"
170
White
Brn
Blk

Self Employed- Oil Lease Operator

Residence
Above

None

None

See Attached interview sheet

Robert C. Buras Jr.

Mr. Francis Louis Fruge

4-7-78

10:00AM

Rt 1 Box 283

Residence

Basile, La.

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Robert Buras

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End Of Memo