

AN INCIDENT AT THE EISENHOWER LIBRARY

During a June 2000 nine day research visit to the Eisenhower Library in Abilene Kansas, an incident occurred which might be of interest to UFO researchers.

Procedures differ at many of these archives. At the Eisenhower Library, a researcher will file a research proposal with the library prior to visiting the library. Once there, the researcher is assigned an archivist who will visit with you usually twice a day to see if you have any questions, suggest files that might be in the area of your research inquiry, and do minor searches for certain letters and documents based on his or her available time. Speaking for my archivist he was very helpful, particularly in light of the topic which was UFOs.

A few days into my stay I showed the archivist an FBI memo from 1954, which identified a particular letter that had been written to President Eisenhower. The archivist knew prior to his search the name of the person writing the letter, the general date of the letter, and the fact that the letter dealt with UFOs. I had searched for the letter for many days using the many finders guides provided without success. Figuring it might be in the "Alphabetical File" I asked the archivist if he could run a search. (The Alphabetical File contains almost 3,000,000 pages which is the largest of the unprocessed segments of the Central Files. It consists of letters from the public, letters referred to the government, and cross-reference sheets to documents in the other collections.)

The archivist disappeared and later in the morning returned while I was coping documents at the photocopier. He stated he had found on one piece of correspondence from the individual in question. The date of the correspondence he had found seemed to fit. The only problem he said is that the letter was transferred to the Secret Service.

I stated that I wanted to see the letter, along with enclosures that I believed had come with the document, so I wished to continue to pursue the letter. The archivist said "Ok. Hang on." He disappeared again and returned shortly with a White House Transfer Sheet. It identified the author of the letter, the date it was written, the date it was transferred, and the agency that the letter was transferred to. I stuck it in my file, and started planning an FOIA to Secret Service to recover the letter.

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Written by Grant Cameron
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It wasn't till at least a day or so later in rereading stuff I had copied that I noticed that the transfer date on the letter was 31 days after the letter was written. The letter therefore could not have been considered a threat on the President as it would have been transferred immediately. The fact that the letter addressed to the President had been held for up to 31 days indicated that the White House may not have seen the letter as a crank letter either, so I started to research the White House records for the date I guessed the letter had arrived and the date the letter was transferred. This included checking the Presidents schedule, the White House phone logs, and any records I could find on the Secret Service.

On the date of the transfer I found what appeared to be a significant meeting that took place in the President's office from 11:15 to 11:45am. There was 4 people in with the President and one had a direct tie in with what would have been in the letter, so I started to attach my findings with a paperclip to the transfer sheet which I had in a file on my table. Each morning I would ask more questions of the archivist about what I had found.

One morning after pulling the transfer sheet out, and asking questions, the room monitor

(there are room monitors in the research room who act much like Grade 3 teachers. They carefully watch what is going on in the room, and quickly point out things you are doing that you shouldn't be doing) came to me and said "Where did you get that transfer sheet. You shouldn't have it." I asked her what she was talking about and pulled it out of my file. "Did you get it from (my archivist). We are not allowed to give those out. The war was on.

I told her that this was a White House record, and the only difference was that it was held by another agency. It told her I had clearly identified the document, I knew it was there, and that I had clearly identified the subject of the letter. She stated "You should have been told we don't have the document. That wouldn't have been lying. We would have been telling the truth. You have it now so there is nothing we can do. You won't get that document out of the Secret Service anyway." She asked what the document was about..." not that I care" she said....so I told her.

She asked for permission to make a copy of the transfer sheet and said that she was going to call up (my archivist) on it. She headed to the phone and a couple minutes later one of the other archivists (the archivist happened to be the same archivist who had told me in an e-mail a

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month earlier that he couldn't find the letter. One of the comments he made to the monitor was " I remember seeing this") appeared in the room, and they quietly began to discuss the transfer sheet. I listened carefully as I was at one of the front tables. It appeared that the other archivist agreed with her. After the five minute discussion, the archivist left the room clutching the transfer sheet. I was very angry, both over what had just happened, and over visions of my archivist being fired for actually helping me. I left the library and walked around the grounds for 30 minutes.

The next morning I was determined to fight with the room monitor about what had happened. I started two minutes after I was in the room with a question to her. "If Bill Clinton had transferred Monica Lewinsky's letters to the President to the Secret Service as soon as the story broke, claiming to the Secret Service that she was stocking him, would that transfer be covered up? Would those documents be gone forever? Are you not allowed to tell us about a transfer to the Secret Service or a transfer to any department? What's to stop the President from pulling a three ton truck up to the back of the White House, loading it full of documents and transferring it to some obscure agency?"

"We haven't decided yet she said. We had a meeting, but haven't decided yet. Don't talk to me. The assistant director is right here. You talk to him." She quickly took off, and the assistant director came up and introduced himself.

He stated the same thing as the monitor. The library had a meeting and no firm decision had been reached about what the policy on transfers would be. "It's a matter of confidentiality," he said. When we see something go to Secret Service we assume trouble."

I pointed out that in Mamie Eisenhower's official files there are two files identified as "crank letters", and that James Hagerty had transferred a letter written by a woman in a state penitentiary directly to the FBI. In both cases no names were withheld and in Mamie's case you could even read the letters complete with name and address of the person sending the letter. He responded, "I realize it appears we haven't been very consistent."

I pointed out to him that the library by withholding the transfer was buying into what Ufologists have claimed for years - that is that documents are being withheld. He said the library took no position on any topic and only provided the documents to researchers for review. The researchers can come up with any interpretation of the documents they choose, and he referred to some researcher who comes to research who writes books denying the holocaust.

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I pointed out that if Eisenhower had sent one UFO letter to the Secret Service, he could have considered all UFO people reporting things as crazy and there could be thousands of UFO reports in the Secret Service. The assistant did not disagree.

I pointed out that with UFOs that is not the case especially related to MJ-12 where the Eisenhower Library is on record claiming that Ufologists are circulating a fake briefing document I did not mention this review I had been given of UFO material so as not to get another archivist in trouble.. I stated researchers can now claim that all the MJ-12 documents were transferred to MJ-12 and the Eisenhower library can claim there are no MJ-12 documents without lying. He said there would be a transfer in the file if this had happened. I replied but the policy is not to release the transfer. That's about where it ended. No decision was made on transfers that I was told about, and I was told to take up my document with the secret service.

What is to be learned from this. There are probably loop holes where agencies and libraries can play the "depends what the definition of the word 'is' is" game. This case study is just one example that has come to light. Also learned from this experience is - sometime you just get lucky and get a good archivist.

Note:

I was provided by my archivist a review of UFO Sources at the Eisenhower Library that was prepared by some archivist inside the archives. It is quite obvious that the library holds a strong bias against Ufology. Terms such as "UFO buffs allege" and "UFO crowd is circulating a fake briefing document"are used in the document.

The document identifies only five UFO documents in the entire 22,000,000 pages of files. They are 1) Special Report No. 14, Project Blue Book, Analysis of Reports of Unidentified Aerial Objects, May 5,1955. (100 pages) 2) CIA report on UFOs, January 17,1953 (8 pages) 3) Air Force memo, 10-13-55 re sighting in Soviet union, (1 page) 4) A reply to a question by a reporter in the Dec. 15, 54 news conference...in which Eisenhower states he knows an Air Force person who doesn't believe UFOs are extraterrestrial 5) A telegram from G.W. Van Tassel re a space craft convention in 1954. The archivist made sure to note the telegram was not seen or answered by the President.

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