Baylor University. Baylor Collections of Political Materials

Summary Information

Creator
Russo, Gus, 1950 -

Extent (quantity/size)
43 document boxes

Language
English; Spanish; Russian

Abstract
The Gus Russo papers contain notes, clippings, publications, and other research materials related to the John F. Kennedy assassination and Russo’s publication of Live by the Sword: The Secret War Against Castro and the Death of JFK.

Subjects

Administrative Information

Restrictions on Access and Use
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Preferred Citation
When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is:

Gus Russo papers, Accession #98, Box #, Folder #, Baylor Collections of Political Materials, W. R. Poage Legislative Library, Baylor University.

Processing Information
Described by Debra Todd and released on 2016-11-30.

Archivist's Notes: When names which were codenames, pseudonyms, or aliases are used, the individual’s legal name is also supplied when possible. Names of Spanish origin are listed with both last names separated by a hyphen. While this is not standard among Spanish speakers, the hyphen between the paternal and maternal last names serves to indicate to non-Spanish speakers that both names are surnames. The name listed in front of the dash is the surname that the individual would use on a daily basis. Example: Gilberto Policarpo Lopez is listed as “Policarpo-Lopez, Gilberto.” On a daily basis, he would most likely introduce himself as “Gilberto Policarpo.”

Scope and Content
The Gus Russo papers range from 1932-2006, with dates representing both primary and secondary source documents which make up Russo’s research. Materials are related to his 1998 publication of Live by the Sword: The Secret War Against Castro and the Death of JFK. These are organized topically or by name, and include newspaper clippings, government documents, publications, and other research material related to the Kennedy assassination. Additionally, most of the folders in Boxes 33-35 are testimonials before the House of Representatives Select Committee on Assassinations.
Administrative/Biographical History

Gus Russo, investigative journalist, author, and musician, was born in Baltimore, Maryland. He attended Mount St. Joseph High School. Although known for his research of the Kennedy assassination, music was his first passion. Russo explains, “I love to read, but I never thought I’d be a writer. But when you think about it, writing is very much like music: it’s all about the rhythm, the dynamics, the feeling - it’s all about flow. I spent my whole life as a musician. I guess that translates.” Russo keeps up both interests, boasting a successful writing career in which he published 6 nonfiction books, and as professional musician/producer.

As a young man he was active politically, opposing the Vietnam War and working for Robert Kennedy in the 1968 Presidential Campaign. His interest in the Kennedy assassination began at an early age. Russo describes his memories of the assassination: “I was in the hallway before 8th period, Mr. Hall’s biology class. Just going down the hall and there was a whisper, ’Did you hear? Kennedy’s been shot.’...We went to our homeroom and then the announcement came that he was dead. A room full of boys and half of them were crying.” Thirty years later, Russo was one of two leading reporters on the documentary Who Was Lee Harvey Oswald? The Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) project aired in 1993 and was an unforgettable experience for Russo. He recalls, “With a huge research budget, we divided into four teams. All of us were given great latitude. I was allowed to follow up on every lead (conspiratorial and otherwise) I had always wanted to test. We went everywhere Oswald went, from Minsk, Russia to Atsugi, Japan. I crisscrossed the US for eighteen months.” That same year, Dan Rather selected Russo to appear on his TV special Who Shot JFK? Russo also found work with ABC News and Peter Jennings for the piece, “Dangerous World, The Kennedy Years.”

In 1998, Russo published Live by the Sword: The Secret War Against Castro and the Death of JFK, which was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. In 2008, Brothers In Arms: The Kennedys, Castros, and the Politics of Murder was released and awarded the 2008 History Prize by the New York Book Festival. In 2011, Russo looked introspectively and published his autobiography, Boomer Days.

As the 50th anniversary of the assassination approached, Russo’s friend and 60 Minutes Producer, Harry Moses, reached out to him. They partnered with Tom Brokaw and NBC and devised an idea for a documentary. Where Were You? features the stories of everyday Americans and their recollections of November 22, 1963. With only four weeks to prepare, Russo explained, “It’s really tough to do something like this in a very short period of time. With any of these [documentary] shows, you film people for an hour and you use about eight seconds. It’s frustrating having an hour of great material whittled down to a few seconds, especially something as emotional as this.” To do the project justice, a companion guide to feature the full interviews would be published. The program aired on NBC on November 22, 2013.

Related Resources

Related citations


Archival Arrangement

The Gus Russo papers were accompanied by an inventory prior to current processing. The folders have largely been kept in the order in which Russo left them. Most of the folder titles have been altered for clarity and are indicative of the materials in the folders, following the patterns set down by Russo whenever possible. Russo often made notes on the folders themselves. These notes have been photocopied, marked as such, and placed in the appropriate folder. These notes often supply connections to other folders or subjects which might be beneficial to the researcher. The papers as a whole are arranged by folder title, which are organized by topic or individual name.

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Box 1. Folder 1. Sierra-Martinez, Paulino, 1963
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Box 1. Folder 4. Sanchez-Arango, Aureliano, 1960-1961
Box 1. Folder 5. Rojas-Villanueva, Yario, 1964
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Box 2. Folder 14. Castro + Cuba II, undated
Box 2. Folder 15. AMMUG-1 (Vladimir Rodriguez LaHera), undated
Box 3. Folder 1. Espinosa-Hernandez, Victor (Rolando Cubela(s)), undated
Box 3. Folder 2. Kennedy, Robert Francis (Bobby), 1963-1967
Box 3. Folder 3. Kennedy, Robert Francis, excerpts from Of Kennedys and Kings, undated
Box 3. Folder 4. Haig, Jr., General Al, undated
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Box 3. Folder 6. Mexico City, Photos, 1963
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Box 3. Folder 10. Hemming, Gerald Patrick, 1967
Box 3. Folder 11. Church, Frank, 1975
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Box 3. Folder 13. CIA 1975 Assassination Review, 1975
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Box 3. Folder 16. Bishop, Maurice, Mexico City, 1978
Box 3. Folder 17. King, Joseph Caldwell (J.C.), "Thy Will be Done", undated
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Box 4. Folder 12. Kangles, Constantine "Gus", undated
Box 4. Folder 15. Guevara, Che + JFK, 1992
Box 5. Folder 1. Maheu, Robert, undated
Box 5. Folder 2. Cuba Track One, undated
Box 5. Folder 3. Rostow, Walt W., 1972
Box 5. Folder 4. Cuba Planning, undated
Box 5. Folder 5. Cuba and the Kennedys, 1961
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Box 5. Folder 9. Interpen (Intercontinental Penetration Force), undated
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Box 6. Folder 16. Ike’s Farewell, Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1988
Box 7. Folder 1. Washington Post, 1979
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Box 18. Folder 2. ARRB: Clippings, 1998
Box 18. Folder 4. LA Free Press + Flynt, Larry, 1978
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Box 31. Folder 8. Inspector General's Survey of the Cuban Operation and Associated Documents (Part II; Cover sheet-Section III), 1961-1962
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Box 42. Folder 20. Crime of the Century: The Kennedy Assassination From a Historian’s Perspective by Michael L. Kurtz, Photocopies (1 of 2), 1982
Box 43. Folder 1. Flashback: The Untold Story of Lee Harvey Oswald by Ron Lewis, Publications (1 of 3), 1993
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Box 43. Folder 3. Flashback: The Untold Story of Lee Harvey Oswald by Ron Lewis, Publications (3 of 3), 1993
Box 43. Folder 4. The Dallas Conspiracy by Peter Dale Scott, Unpublished Photocopies (1 of 3), 1970-1971
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