

Bombshell or Dud?

Earle Cabell's CIA Connections

By Steve Roe

We have an opportunity to redeem ourselves when the president pays us a visit next month. Whatever our political affiliation, whatever our political choice, the presidency of the United States is the world's highest office, and the man who holds it should be accorded the highest respect possible. But good behavior is not enough. This cancer on the body politic must be removed. There is a precedent Dallas can remember with pride. When the Ku Klux Klan in the early twenties barreled through the South, Dallas was the Southwest hate capital of Dixie. But men and women of good will were ashamed. They saw their shame turn into courage. They stood against this whirlwind of hate, repudiated it, and saw it fade and die. What has been done once, can and must be done again.

–Earle Cabell on the Adlai Stevenson incident^[1]

By Steve Roe

Last July, the [National Archives began releasing](#) previously withheld and redacted documents from the JFK Assassination Records Collection at the National Archives.

Two documents attracted the attention of [John Newman](#), a prominent conspiracy theorist looked upon favorably by Oliver Stone. Both concerned Earle Cabell, the mayor of Dallas on 22 November 1963, who was subsequently elected to Congress in 1964.

Although Cabell had not figured in Newman's conspiracy theorizing about CIA involvement before, suddenly, on the basis of these two documents, the mayor was promoted to leading culprit—although neither Newman nor others enthusiastic about the revelation ever bothered to explain exactly what Cabell's alleged role was. Guilt by loose association (with the CIA) was sufficient to insinuate that Cabell was now a key cog in the conspiracy.^[2]

One of the two documents was a standard "[Secrecy Agreement](#)" with the CIA that Cabell signed on 17 October 1956. The agreement stated that Cabell might possibly receive information regarding CIA operational matters and bound him not to reveal this information publicly. The other document was a standard "[201](#)" personality file that the CIA opened on Cabell on 23 May

1957. A 201 file is nothing more or less than information about the subject of the file. It might contain personal information; information about operational matters; or anything else related to the subject, including newspapers clippings.



Left to right: Earle Cabell, with his brothers Charles and Ben in 1951. Photograph used with permission of the Dallas Public Library.

The aspect that cemented Cabell's alleged role in a conspiracy, according to Newman's innuendo, was the fact that Earle Cabell's brother, Charles Pearre Cabell, had been deputy director of the CIA under Allen Dulles from April 1953 to January 1962. Theorists have long been aware of this public coincidence, of course, and have speculated in the past that Dulles and Charles Cabell ostensibly conspired against JFK because they were forcibly retired from the CIA following the Bay of Pigs debacle in April 1961. In this sense Newman—and the conspiracy website [Who.What.Why.](#), which was the first to report this “major revelation”—are merely picking up an old, threadbare tale and attempting to give it a sinister new life. Earle Cabell did not conspire merely out of some misplaced sense of fraternal solidarity with Charles, you see. He did so because he was also an agency asset.^[3]

Even though Newman offered not a scintilla of proof that Cabell interfered in the motorcade route—or in any other aspect of what was supposed to be a brief presidential visit to Dallas—questions naturally arise. Who exactly was Earle Cabell? And how did he ever come to need or receive a security clearance from the CIA?

To answer that question, it's useful to put Cabell in context by understanding his family background and career arc.

Being Mayor Ran in the Family

Cabell's Dallas roots trace back to his grandfather, William L. Cabell, who grew up in Arkansas and graduated from West Point in 1850. When the Civil War broke out William Cabell resigned his commission and joined the Confederacy. He was captured by Union forces in Kansas in 1864 and remained a prisoner of war until his release in 1865. Returning to Arkansas, William studied law and was admitted to the bar in 1868. In 1872, he moved his family to Dallas and a mere two years after that ran for mayor, getting elected to consecutive terms in 1874 and 1882 as a Democrat. Firmly established in Dallas, Cabell's descendants would follow his lead in elective office, the law, and military service.[\[4\]](#)

Earle Cabell's father, Benjamin E. Cabell, first tried his hand at mining before following his father's footsteps. After failing to strike it rich in Arizona, New Mexico, and California, Ben Cabell returned to Dallas in 1884 and started up a livery business downtown. He then joined his father William as a US deputy marshal in the Northern district of Texas and Indian Territory (Oklahoma). Subsequently he ran for Dallas County sheriff and served four terms until he too was elected mayor, serving one term. In 1911, Ben was appointed chairman of the Texas State Penitentiary Board. Not unlike most state prison systems at the time, Texas's prisons were designed to punish, not rehabilitate inmates, and were characterized by inhumane living conditions and brutal, capricious punishments. Ben Cabell earned a reputation as a reformer.[\[5\]](#)

Ben had married Sadie E. Pearre (from Waco) in 1896 and they had three sons: Benjamin Jr. (1899-1964), Charles (1903-1971) and Earle (1906-1975). Earle graduated from North Dallas High School in 1925, and attended Texas A&M and Southern Methodist universities before starting out as a businessman. He was first a shipping clerk, then a salesman, for Morning Glory Creameries in Houston. He subsequently acquired his own milk and ice cream business in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, where he met his wife, Elizabeth Holder (nicknamed Dearie).

Earle Cabell returned to Dallas in 1932 and formed Cabell's Inc. with his brothers. Earle and Ben (Dallas mayor pro-tem in 1939) ran the business with Charles as a silent partner, since he was preoccupied with his career in what was then called the Army Air Corps. The business, which started out as a chain of ice cream parlors, later expanded into selling milk and eventually morphed into convenience stores selling grocery items. The Cabell brothers sold their chain to the Southland Corporation (parent corporation of 7/11 stores) in 1959, leaving Earle free to concentrate on political ambitions that he harbored.[\[6\]](#)

Like many successful businessmen, particularly those with political aspirations, Cabell had involved himself in numerous associations, both civic and business, to maximize his contacts. He served as a member and/or officer of the Texas Manufacturers Association, Dairy Products Institute of Texas, Dallas Sales Executive Club, Dallas Crime Commission, Texas Law Enforcement Foundation, East Dallas Chamber of Commerce, Dallas Athletic Club, Dallas Council of World Affairs, and the Dallas Retail Merchants Association. He was also a member of the most influential civic group in the city, the Dallas Citizens Council (not to be confused with the White Citizens' Councils then prevalent in the South).[\[7\]](#)

Even though the influential Dallas Citizens Charter Association (CCA) endorsed incumbent mayor R. L. Thornton in 1959, Cabell ran against him as an independent. In a close run-off race, Cabell lost to Thornton by 3,000 votes. Disappointed, but still determined, Cabell ran against Thornton again in 1961, defeating him this time.

The Heritage of Texans



Ben E. Cabell, Sr.
Mayor of Dallas, 1900-04
Sheriff of Dallas
1892-1900





Ben E. Cabell, Jr.
Mayor Pro Tem of Dallas, 1939-1941



Col. Peatre Cabell
U.S. Army Air Force



Gen. W. L. Cabell
Mayor of Dallas,
1874-1882
U.S. Marshal, 1893-1897



Major Earle Cabell
29th Bn. Inf. T.D.G.





- PEDIGREED DAIRY CATTLE
- FRESHER, RICHER DAIRY PRODUCTS

THE proud privilege of being Texans is ours. By tradition we participate in the military and governmental affairs of our state and country whenever these responsibilities must be shouldered and shared by true Americans. But, by heritage, we are primarily cattle people and agriculturists. Cabell's farms, Cabell's dairy herds, Cabell's dairy plants and Cabell's retail dairy stores are only the product of our desire to supply our fellow Texans with the best, fresher, richer dairy products . . . and to furnish Texas dairy farmers with better bred dairy animals. We invite correspondence from all who are interested in obtaining highly-bred registered and non-registered Guernsey stock.

CABELL'S, Inc.

McKinney
★
DALLAS
★
Frisco

Local Tensions Build

The year Cabell took office was a turning point for Dallas. The city was coming to grips with integration of its public schools, and some Dallas citizens were becoming increasingly intolerant in their public utterances—none more so than a local congressman named [Bruce Alger](#), the lone Republican in Texas's delegation to Washington. Alger had helped instigate an ugly demonstration against then-vice presidential candidate Lyndon Johnson near the downtown Baker Hotel in 1960, an incident that made headlines and had profound political ramifications. Although

the city exhibited its share of right-wing extremists before this incident, Alger and his “mink coat mob” brought Dallas into the national spotlight.^[8]

After the furor from that 1960 incident died down, resentment continued to simmer in Dallas’s right-wing circles. The rise of the National Indignation Convention (an ardent anti-communist group) sparked another round of notoriety in 1961; this new group



formed in reaction to the disclosure that Yugoslavian (“communist”) pilots were being trained at Perrin Air Base, just north of Dallas. Meanwhile, John Birch Society chapters flourished throughout the city. The overwhelming majority of Dallasites were against communism, including, of course, Earle Cabell. But everyday or moderate conservatives were increasingly drowned out by citizens who suspected a communist/socialist influence in such rulings as the Supreme Court’s *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, which mandated the integration of public schools.

Befitting a politician, Dallas's embrace of far-right politicians sometimes put Cabell in an awkward position. Such was the case when Major General Edwin A. Walker, who had resigned from the Army after he was discovered touting far-right views to his troops, chose Dallas as his new base of operations. A native of Center Point, Texas, Walker received a hearty welcome from many local John Birchers; he was being talked about as gubernatorial candidate, and some said, the presidency was even within reach. When former Texas Governor Coke Stevenson helped organize a "Welcome" at the Dallas Memorial Auditorium for Walker, Cabell presented the decorated general with an "Honorary Dallas Citizen" proclamation and a cowboy hat. As was customary whenever Cabell made a ceremonial presentation, he beamed as news photographers took their pictures. Cabell would soon regret his involvement. Walker proved a flop as a politician, and a beacon for intolerance.

Cabell's true power base as mayor was the Dallas Citizens Council (again, not to be confused with White Citizens' Councils that sprang up in the South in opposition to *Brown v. Board of Education*). Formed in 1937, the Dallas group consisted of top business and civic leaders who brought to bear enormous influence over city policies and officials. If race riots and civil unrest were not good for business, then they were to be avoided, and the Citizens Council would see to it that Dallas found another path. A telling example of the council's influence occurred in response to the Supreme Court's decision regarding school integration. For years the Dallas Independent School District ignored and challenged the federal mandate to integrate public schools. As each year passed, the federal government stepped up the pressure. Aiming to avoid, at all costs, the violence that had broken out in Little Rock, Arkansas, the Citizens Council finally stepped in and pressed the school system to adopt Nashville, Tennessee's plan of "gradual public school integration." Desegregation of the first grade began in 1961, although local civil rights leaders scoffed at a plan that would take 12 years to complete.

As Cabell began tackling problems that had been neglected for years, such as desegregation, he began to draw criticism from some pro-business conservatives but also the ire of extreme right-wingers. A case in point was his backing for a plan to build public housing in slum areas south and west of downtown Dallas, an effort that led to charges of "creeping government socialism." Edgar R. Crissey, a prominent insurance executive (and later an anonymous financial donor to the infamous "Welcome to Dallas—Mr. Kennedy" full-page ad on 22 November 1963) blasted Cabell. Writing in the *Dallas Morning News*, Crissey observed,

[Mayor] Cabell is quoted as stating, before the Allied Printing Trades Council "I don't know what a socialist is." This admission was unnecessary, as he proved his point when he backed public housing, which was defeated by Dallas voters in the last election. If a person does not understand the fundamental characteristics of socialism, and Cabell admits he doesn't, he can't understand what it takes to preserve the free-enterprise system. Can Dallas afford to continue in office a mayor who doesn't know what constitutes socialism?[\[9\]](#)

Dark Clouds over Dallas

Prior to November 1963, Cabell and other prominent Citizens Council members were concerned with the outspokenness and growing prominence of the far right. Scattered protests across the city against "communist-inspired" plays, films, and textbooks played out before their eyes. "Impeach Earl Warren" signs, billboards, and bumper stickers—a specialty of the John

Birch Society—were widespread. Still, it all seemed just like a vigorous, if one-sided, exercise in free speech, that is, until the so-called Stevenson incident, which blackened Dallas's reputation nationwide.

Citizens Council member and prominent businessman Stanley Marcus (of Neiman Marcus department store fame) thought it would be a good idea to sponsor a "United Nations Day" event at the Memorial Auditorium on October 24. He invited the US ambassador to the United Nations, Adlai Stevenson, to give the keynote address. As the twice-nominated Democratic candidate for president in the 1950s, Stevenson seemed likely to be treated with respect, even though US participation in the UN was one of the hot-button issues for Birch Society members and supporters of Edwin Walker.

Evidence of trouble began appearing more than two weeks before the scheduled event. Signs and bumper stickers began popping up around Dallas, proclaiming "US Day or United Nations Day—There Must Be a Choice; You Cannot Ride Both Horses." Walker and his supporters developed a plan to upstage or counteract Stevenson's address. They shrewdly rented the same venue one day before Stevenson was scheduled to appear, and advertised their event as a "US Day" rally. General Walker was one of the featured speakers, and he delivered a fiery speech that not only denounced the UN, but also the CIA and former presidents Roosevelt, Truman, and Eisenhower—even former Vice President Richard Nixon. "Tonight we stand on a battleground identified on this stage as US Day—the symbol of our sovereignty," Walker declared. "Tomorrow night there will stand here a symbol to the communist conspiracy and it's United Nations." Walker succeeded in working his followers into a frenzy.[\[10\]](#)

Stevenson's reception the next evening embarrassed Dallas. Although Jesse Curry, chief of the Dallas police, had pledged adequate protection for the visiting dignitary, most of the officers arrived after the event had already started. Thus many obvious anti-Stevenson protestors were able to simply stroll into the auditorium. Stevenson was jeered, heckled, and interrupted throughout his speech. Frank McGehee, former head of the National Indignation Convention, was finally ejected after standing up and yelling at Stevenson repeatedly. All that paled, however, to the treatment Stevenson received as he attempted to leave. The ambassador was hit over the head with a placard declaring "Who elected you, Adlai?" that was being wielded by a 47-year-old Bircher named Cora Lacy Fredrickson from Oak Cliff. Then a 22-year-old North Texas University student, Robert Edward Hatfield, spat on Stevenson while he was getting into Marcus's waiting car. The whole sorry affair was filmed by the local CBS affiliate, KRLD, and made for riveting footage broadcast nationally over the CBS Evening News, which had recently expanded from 15 to 30 minutes.[\[11\]](#)

"City of hate," Dallas's nickname in the 1920s, when it featured one of the largest Klu Klux Klan klaverns in the nation, was suddenly resurrected. Cabell, along with other leading citizens, hastened to apologize to both Stevenson and President Kennedy, who was scheduled to visit in November during a five-city tour of Texas. Just as suddenly, the ravings of the far right no longer seemed harmless, but bad for Dallas's reputation and therefore bad for business. Cabell lashed out. In an article in the *Dallas Morning News*, which itself had tolerated the intolerance, Cabell declared, "These (the fanatics) are the people who beat their school boards over the heads with minor phrases from school books, who see communists behind every artist's brush, who write bitter letters to the editors . . ." He reminded readers that the far right was to blame for the disgraceful incident involving Lyndon and Lady Bird Johnson in 1960, and for defeat of his public housing program for poor people. "These are not conservatives, they are radicals," Cabell wrote.[\[12\]](#)

Riding, along with his wife, in the fourth car behind the president's limousine, Cabell heard the shots ring out in Dealey Plaza. The motorcade disintegrated in confusion, but Cabell's driver followed the limousine to Parkland Hospital. Once the mayor saw the president being lifted onto a hospital gurney, Cabell immediately realized Kennedy was dead. The nightmare began.

After the Assassination

Cabell's words and demeanor after the assassination struck a raw nerve among many Americans watching television over that long weekend. The instant and widespread tendency was to blame Dallas's proven right-wing extremists along with the city itself. Cabell tried desperately to defend Dallas after the arrest of Lee Harvey Oswald, a 24-year-old self-styled Marxist-Leninist, within 90 minutes of the assassination. He wasn't even really a son of Dallas, some locals pointed out. Cabell's protests rang hollow—or worse—to a grieving public. His remarks incited further hatred and even some death threats. When Cabell attempted to depart from Love Field on Sunday to attend the president's funeral in Washington, an anonymous bomb threat was phoned in. Police searched the airplane and luggage but found no explosive device. Upon Cabell's arrival in Washington, the FBI received another anonymous threat against the mayor, and he was incongruously placed, along with some world leaders in attendance, under special police protection during the funeral.[\[13\]](#)

In the turbulent political aftermath of the assassination, Dallas's business elite decided that Bruce Alger, the five-term congressman who personified and put a handsome face on right-wing zealotry, was a liability who could no longer be allowed to represent the city in Washington. Although Cabell had never harbored the ambition to be elected to Congress, he recognized the urgency of running against Alger and stepped down as mayor in February 1964. Endorsed by no less than the *Dallas Morning News*, Cabell went on to roundly defeat Alger in the fall, temporarily stemming the inexorable rise of the Republican Party in Texas. At 3 AM the morning after the election, Cabell received a telephone call from President Lyndon Johnson, who noted that Cabell's stunning margin of victory (50,000 out of approximately 300,000 votes cast) reflected a mood of "atonement" in Dallas. "They've had enough of it [right-wing extremism]," Cabell agreed.[\[14\]](#)

In the years after the assassination, a majority of Americans harbored doubts about the official conclusion put forward in the *Warren Report*. Innumerable books came to be written spouting various theories, with allegations ranging from the mafia did it, to pointing the finger at Cuban exiles, Fidel Castro, Texas oilmen or rouge CIA agents as the responsible culprits. In some of the more obscure books, Earle Cabell also made the list of those culpable, owing to the aforementioned fact that his brother, Air Force General Charles P. Cabell, was the deputy director of the CIA and resigned after the Bay of Pigs fiasco.

The fingering of Cabell is traceable directly to the notorious and grotesque investigation of the assassination by New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison. The most first and most notable proponent of CIA involvement in the assassination, Garrison never stopped believing elements of the CIA were responsible even after he failed to achieve a conviction in the 1969 trial of Clay Shaw, who Garrison secretly (and erroneously) believed was a high-ranking CIA operative, owing to Soviet disinformation.[\[15\]](#)

By 1971, not one to admit failure, Garrison had conjured up another theory: the Cabell brothers (Charles and Earle) were somehow linked to the assassination. This speculation came to light during a highly controversial trial of Garrison in federal court for his alleged participation in a pinball kickback scheme. Pershing Gervais, one of Garrison's lead investigators during Shaw's trial, was cooperating with federal investigators and agreed to wear a wire in March 1971, in hopes of getting Garrison to implicate himself in the delivery of payola from local pinball operators (pinball machines were commonly used for gambling in many bars/establishments in New Orleans for many years). On one of these tapes, Garrison discussed with Gervais the possibility of charging General Charles Cabell with complicity in the assassination; belatedly, Garrison had stumbled on the fact that Charles was the brother of Earle after reading the publication, *Who's Who of the South and Southwest*.^[16]

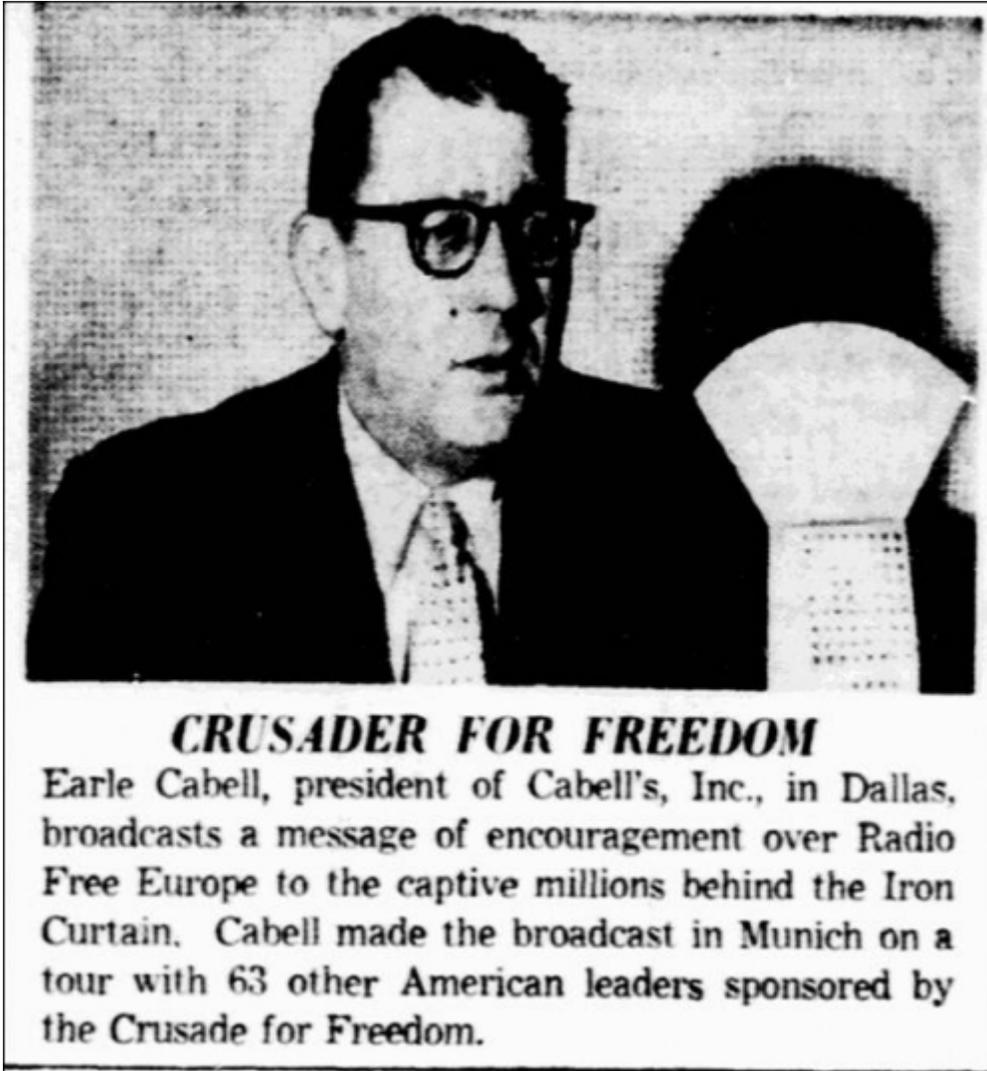
Garrison then declared on tape that if he could somehow prove that the CIA's number two man was in New Orleans around the time of the assassination, his longtime belief that the CIA killed Kennedy would be corroborated. "Wait till the country finds out that—I've] been yelling CIA," Garrison said, "wait till they find out that the number two man in the CIA is [sic] the man in charge of the Bay of Pigs and the brother of the mayor of Dallas." There proved to be only one problem in bringing General Cabell to justice. He passed away of natural causes in May 1971. When word later reached Earle Cabell that Garrison had considered bringing charges against his brother Charles, the congressman observed, "That guy is nuttier than a fruitcake."^[17]

Oliver Stone, Garrison's film hagiographer, did not invite even more ridicule by making either Cabell a key cog in the conspiracy depicted in his 1991 blockbuster, *JFK*. Nonetheless the film was faithful to Garrison's fantasy about the CIA acting in concert with the "military-industrial complex" made famous in Eisenhower's 1961 farewell address. Thanks largely to Stone's film, alleged CIA involvement is alive and well as a conspiracy theory. And when the long-classified CIA documents about Earle Cabell were released last July, credulous outlets and authors, ranging from Russ Baker's *Who.What.Why* to Jeff Morley's *JFK Facts* to Dulles biographer [David Talbot](#), treated the revelation as striking, perhaps even a bombshell.^[18]

Origins of the CIA Connection

Like many public and private citizens during the cold war, Earle Cabell wanted to actively oppose the further spread of communism. He chose to associate himself with an organization called the Crusade for Freedom for the purpose.

The Crusade got started in 1949 in New York city. A group of American businessmen, lawyers, and philanthropists—many of them active in the Council on Foreign Relations—started the National Committee for Free Europe (NCFE). The organization was in many ways modeled on the pre-World War II organization, the Committee to Protect America by Aiding the Allies. This private non-profit group, also organized and financed by Americans interested in foreign policy, had advocated in favor of interventionist stance in opposition to the fascist Axis powers at a time when isolationist sentiment in the United States was strong.



Founding and notable members of the NCFE included Allen Dulles, then a Wall Street lawyer in private practice but soon to become CIA director. Unlike the Committee to Protect America, the NCFE from the outset was conceived to work in tandem with open and official US government policy, i.e., the containment of the Soviet Union. The NCFE, in effect, was a domestic “overt arm” of official policy, in particular, the nascent CIA’s covert psychological warfare program aimed at countries in the Soviet bloc. The NCFE solicited private funds to support anti-communist émigrés in the United States who were willing to spread the word back to their native countries about the American view of freedom and democracy. This soon led to the well-known Radio Free Europe operation, which began broadcasting in 1950 to countries behind the Iron Curtain. Along with these broadcasts, the NCFE sponsored hot-air balloons carrying propaganda and literature, which were calculated to land throughout the Soviet bloc.[\[19\]](#)

The Crusade for Freedom movement received an important boost in 1950 from then-president of Columbia University (and soon-to-be GOP presidential candidate) Dwight D. Eisenhower. The retired general highly valued the psychological warfare component as a result of his experience during World War II. Now a private citizen and national icon, Ike gave a speech in Denver on September 4, urging American citizens to support financially the establishment of

powerful radio stations abroad to combat Soviet propaganda. Citing the Radio Free Europe station in West Germany, Eisenhower extolled the virtues of an operation ostensibly supported by private monies.[\[20\]](#)

Ike would continue to support the Crusade for Freedom throughout his presidency, as part of his administration's overall and vigorous emphasis on psychological warfare operations against the Soviet bloc. But he always kept a most important fact secret. While the operation did take in private donations, the vast majority of its funding came from the CIA. Crusade for Freedom chapters in different US cities, in effect, helped obscure the true source of funds. That secret remained guarded until 1976, when Senator Clifford Chase (R-NJ) revealed the CIA's covert subsidies. By directive, the agency ceased financial involvement with Radio Free Europe.[\[21\]](#)

Earle Cabell became the Texas state chairman in 1955 of the Crusade for Freedom organization. It was part and parcel of his general "joining" pattern in 1950s, in anticipation of that day when he would enter politics. More specifically, it appears to have been an outgrowth of his membership in the Dallas Council of World Affairs, which had affiliates in most major cities. The Dallas branch had been founded in 1951 by H. N. Mallon, president of Dresser Industries, which serviced the energy industry. Mallon had first proposed forming a local council during a meeting of the Dallas Salesmanship Club, which counted Cabell as a member. Mallon stressed "there was a great need for a well-informed public to combat communism and dispel confusion and ignorance, especially with reference to our foreign policy. The purpose of the group will be to interpret and disseminate information to Dallas people on world affairs." The council functioned locally as it did everywhere, by inviting prominent national and world figures to give speeches at luncheons/dinners, followed by a question/answer session by attendees. Thus began Cabell's interest in foreign affairs, leading eventually to his involvement with the Crusade for Freedom organization.[\[22\]](#)

There are no documents among Cabell's papers, housed at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, suggesting that Earle Cabell ever sought the advice of his younger brother about whether to become active in foreign affairs organizations. Undoubtedly, if Earle did ask Charles directly for an opinion, the CIA's deputy director answer would have been a resounding "yes."

Earle Cabell attended an elite Crusade for Freedom meeting in Washington, DC in November 1955. The black-tie event featured Vice President Richard Nixon; CIA director Dulles; former Under Secretary of State Walter Bedell Smith, a key Eisenhower advisor; and the current Under Secretary Herbert Hoover Jr. (In all likelihood Eisenhower himself would have attended but he was recovering from a heart attack). A month earlier, Cabell had been part of a delegation that visited Munich, West Germany, to tour various Radio Free Europe facilities. While there, Cabell gave "words of encouragement" over one of the broadcasts.[\[23\]](#)

Seeking to raise awareness locally in February 1956, Cabell also arranged for a balloon launch at the Dallas Public Library, mimicking the kind of operations routinely staged in Europe. He served as the Crusade's Texas chairman until late 1956, when he was succeeded by Dallas banker Ben Wooten. The Cabells (Dearie was also a member) remained active in the group into the 1960s, and were particularly busy in 1957, when they assisted in the relocation of 90 Hungarian refugees in and around the Dallas area. The previous November, of course, had witnessed Moscow's brutal suppression of an uprising against the Soviet-supported regime in Budapest.[\[24\]](#)

The “201” file opened on Earle Cabell, and the secrecy agreement that he signed, were directly related to his once-prominent role in an instrument devised to combat the cold war. No doubt Cabell considered it his patriotic duty, along with an opportunity to make useful contacts, if not rub shoulders with the kinds of people his brother Charles regularly worked with as deputy director of the CIA. But when the Assassination Records Review Board (ARRB) came across the CIA records connected to Earle Cabell, they marked them as “Not Believed Relevant” to the assassination and delayed their release for almost as long as permitted to do so by the 1992 statute.

The Review Board’s determination of the records relevance—or irrelevance, if you will—was correct, even allowing for the fact that the records could have been released years ago. Cabell was privy to classified information owing to his association with the Crusade for Freedom and Radio Free Europe programs . . . not the assassination of President Kennedy. Neither the secrecy agreement nor the existence of a 201 file has any significance for or connection to the assassination. Cabell was not complicit in the assassination in any way, shape or form.

Steve Roe, a Texas native, is an independent researcher of the Kennedy assassination, with a particular interest in Dallas before and after 22 November 1963. This is his first article for *Washington Decoded*.

[1] “Cabell Appeals for Sanity,” *Dallas Morning News* (hereafter *DMN*), 27 October 1963.

[2] The name “Cabell” does not appear in the index of John Newman’s *Oswald and the CIA* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 1995).

[3] Central Intelligence Agency Library, [Charles Pearre Cabell](#), General, US Air Force, 19 March 2007.

[4] Cecil Harper, Jr., [“William Lewis Cabell,”](#) *Handbook of Texas Online*, 12 June 2010.

[5] “Former Dallas Mayor and Ex-Peace Officer Ben E. Cabell Dies,” *DMN*, 9 February 1931.

[6] “A Dedicated Servant Doing His Best,” *DMN*, 25 September 1975.

[7] *Ibid.*

[8] Most importantly, when Senator Richard B. Russell (D-Georgia) heard that Lady Bird Johnson had been endangered by a mob of “unruly, rich, and profane” Dallas Republicans, he formally endorsed the Democratic ticket and agreed to travel on Johnson’s chartered plane during the campaign’s waning days. Russell’s endorsement was vital to the Kennedy-Johnson ticket in the “increasingly unsolid” South; the GOP ticket had been ahead in the Texas polls. John A. Goldsmith, *Colleagues: Richard B. Russell and His Apprentice Lyndon B. Johnson* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 81.

- [9] Letters from Readers, “Cabell and Socialism,” *DMN*, 30 March 1963.
- [10] Mike Quinn, “Walker Says US Main Battleground,” *DMN*, 24 October 1963. At least one spectator was not impressed by Walker’s rantings—Lee Harvey Oswald, who wrote about the rally in a letter postmarked 1 November 1963 to Arnold S. Johnson, a leader of the US Communist Party. [Johnson \(Arnold\) Exhibit No. 7](#), Warren Commission Hearings, Vol. XX, 272.
- [11] Warren Leslie, *Dallas Public and Private* (1964: Grossman Publishers, 1964), 188-212.
- [12] Kent Biffle, “Mayor Flays ‘Far Right’,” *DMN*, 27 October 1963.
- [13] “Flight Delayed By Threat On Mayor Cabell’s Life,” *DMN*, 25 November 1963; “FBI Tipped to Threat on Cabell,” *DMN*, 27 November 1963.
- [14] Max Holland, *The Kennedy Assassination Tapes* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 270-271.
- [15] On the role Soviet disinformation played in the persecution and trial of Clay Shaw, see Max Holland, [“The Lie That Linked CIA to the Kennedy Assassination,”](#) *Studies in Intelligence*, Fall/Winter 2001.
- [16] Iris Kelso, “Garrison Planned to Link General to JFK Slaying,” *Washington Post*, 16 September 1973.
- [17] *Ibid.* In his 1988 memoir, Garrison did insinuate that Earle Cabell was involved in a bogus “last-minute change” in the president’s motorcade route. The alleged parade-route change was one of the leads, Garrison alleged, that pointed to CIA culpability. Jim Garrison, *On the Trail of the Assassins* (New York: Sheridan Square Press, 1988), 176.
- [18] Russ Baker actually pointed to Cabell’s involvement with the Crusade for Freedom as far back as 2013, based on his [LaRouchian](#) conspiracy theory about George H. W. Bush’s alleged involvement in the assassination. See [“Bush and the JFK Hit, Part 6: The Cold War Comes to Dallas,”](#) 24 October 2013, *Who.What.Why*.
- [19] Central Intelligence Agency, [“A Look Back . . . The National Committee for Free Europe, 1949”](#) 29 May 2007.
- [20] Top of the Ticket, [“A Labor Day Speech from Many Years Ago by a Non-president Named Dwight Eisenhower,”](#) *Los Angeles Times*, 6 September 2010.
- [21] Central Intelligence Agency, [“A Look Back . . . The National Committee for Free Europe, 1949.”](#) The secret program was not without its critics before 1976. In 1957, syndicated columnist Fulton Lewis, Jr. berated the program for its European junkets and

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fancy fund-raisers. “Junkets at Taxpayers’ Expense,” *Galveston (Texas) Daily News*, 14 November 1957.

[22] “Plea Voiced for Foreign Policy Group,” *DMN*, 12 August 1951.

[23] “[Anderson House Dinner—29 November 1955](#),” CIA, CREST; “Crusader for Freedom,” *DMN*, 21 October 1955.

[24] “All of Refugee Group Settled in Homes, Jobs,” *DMN*, 3 January 1957.