# R. A. Cabanne<sup>1</sup>

# The Clifford Irving Hoax of the Howard Hughes Autobiography

Clifford Irving, a writer, with the help of his wife Edith and an associate, Richard Suskind, also a writer, convinced the editorial staffs of McGraw-Hill Book Co. and *Life Magazine* that he had obtained the written permission of Howard Hughes to write the story of his life. Irving did this by relating alleged meetings with Hughes in detail, inserting anecdotes he had found through an exhaustive research of Hughes' past, to members of the McGraw-Hill and *Life Magazine* managerial staff. To further bolster his claim that he had indeed talked with Hughes, and had, in fact, obtained his permission to do the Hughes' autobiography, Irving had "Hughes" write a letter to Mr. Harold McGraw, president of McGraw-Hill, informing him of the arrangement. Irving subsequently produced other letters allegedly written by Hughes. Irving and his associates were successful in proving to *Life* and McGraw-Hill that he had a pact with Mr. Hughes; he was, however, unable to convince Mr. Hughes of that fact. As a result, the matter was brought to the attention of the Postal Inspection Service by attorneys for both Hughes and Irving, demanding justice.

During the course of the investigation, inspectors had obtained letters allegedly written by Hughes to McGraw-Hill and to Irving; they had obtained the McGraw-Hill checks, payable to H. R. Hughes; and they had obtained photocopies of Swiss bank records, allegedly signed by H. R. Hughes, and photocopies of bank, hotel, and immigration records attesting to the existence of a mysterious "Hanne Rosenkranz" also connected with the "H. R. Hughes" funds in Switzerland. (Hanne Rosenkranz was the name of the woman then married to Mrs. Irving's first husband.)

The Crime Laboratory of the Postal Inspection Service at New York was brought into the case on 4 Feb. 1972. John Tarpey and Alexis Callahan, postal inspectors coordinating the investigation of the Hughes autobiography, asked me to join them at the U.S. Attorney's office in New York City to examine some exhibits in connection with the Hughes investigation. As it developed, the U.S. Attorney had obtained exemplars of the handwriting of Clifford and Edith Irving. He had also obtained some "normal course of business" documents known to have been written by Howard R. Hughes.

The first problem presented was directed to a comparison of the handwriting of Mrs. Edith Irving with the "H. R. Hughes" endorsement on Exhibit Q-3 and the questioned signatures "H. R. Hughes" on Exhibits Q-4, Q-5, Q-6, Q-7, and Q-35. (Note: A

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descriptive list of the questioned and known exhibits is included in the Appendix.) Originally, it was stated that the teller who opened the account at the Swiss bank could identify Edith Irving as the lady who had opened the account and had, in his presence, signed the withdrawal slips which were to be used as standards or known writings. Later it was learned that the Swiss bank teller could not make a positive identification of Edith Irving since she was wearing a disguise, namely, a dark wig and a pair of dark glasses.

Comparisons were made between the Hanne Rosenkranz signatures on Exhibits Q-27 through Q-34, which were the photocopies of Swiss hotel registration cards, and photocopies of forms bearing on Swiss bank accounts in the name of Hanne Rosenkranz, with the handwriting of Edith Irving. Agreements were observed between these signatures and the handwriting of Edith Irving which indicated she very probably wrote these signatures. The questioned writings, however, were restricted to the examination of poor quality photocopies which did not provide a proper basis for the handwriting comparison.

The second problem presented was to determine whether Howard R. Hughes had, in fact, written the questioned letters to McGraw-Hill and signed the checks purported to have been endorsed by him.

The first step was to associate all the questioned writing allegedly written by "H. R. Hughes." I then studied the known handwriting of Howard R. Hughes to determine his handwriting characteristics. A detailed study was then made of the questioned writing with the known writing of Howard R. Hughes. The result of this examination was a definite conclusion that the questioned writings were, in fact, forgeries. There were many pictorial resemblances present between the questioned writings and the known writings of Howard R. Hughes which were consistent in many respects. As in any forgery, however, there were conspicuous characteristic differences also present in the writings which definitely established that the questioned documents were skillfully executed forgeries.

The third problem was to determine, if possible, who forged the questioned letters and checks. A detailed examination of the known handwriting specimens of Clifford Irving was then conducted with a view to establishing the idiosyncrasies and habits of this writer. When this phase of the examination was completed, the questioned writings were then compared with the handwriting specimens of Clifford Irving. Since it was apparent that the forger had attempted to simulate the handwriting characteristics of Clifford Irving appeared in any of the questioned material. At the conclusion of an examination which covered various sittings over a period of several days, the definite conclusion was reached that Clifford Irving had, in fact, executed the questioned writings.

Normally, in cases of this kind, it is possible to definitely establish that a forgery has been committed, but it is seldom possible to identify the actual forger. The reason for this is that many of the natural characteristics or traits of the forger are lost, since he assumes the habits of the person whose writing he is attempting to copy or simulate and at the same time fails to leave enough of his own characteristics to permit a proper comparison. In the case at hand, however, an unusually large quantity of questioned writing was available for comparison. Consequently, many of the unconscious habits or traits of Clifford Irving were injected into the questioned handwriting.

Handwriting testimony was presented to the Federal Grand Jury, Southern District of New York, on 16 Feb. 1972, eliminating Howard R. Hughes as the writer of the questioned letters or check endorsements. Further, Clifford Irving was identified as the forger through enlarged illustrative charts, which were introduced at the grand jury proceedings to demonstrate the basis for the findings reached. By examining Exhibit A (Fig. 1) with Exhibit B (Fig. 2), a comparison can be made of the questioned writing on Lines 1, 2, and 3 (Exhibit A) with the handwriting of Howard R. Hughes (Exhibit B). Observe first the pictorial resemblance with respect to the questioned and known writings. Now consider the handwritings more in detail. Attention is directed to the formation of the letter "o" in the word "Howard." The "o" has a tendency to be higher on the right side in the questioned writing, whereas in the known handwriting specimens of Mr. Hughes the emphasis is on the left shoulder of the letter "o," as can be seen on Lines 2, 5, and 6 of the handwriting of Mr. Hughes.

Next, observe the manner in which the letter "w" in the word "Howard" has a descending appearance in the known handwriting of Mr. Hughes, whereas in the questioned writing the letter form of the "w" is considerably larger and more uniform in height. In the standard handwriting of Mr. Hughes, the formation of the letter "g" in the surname "Hughes" is skillfully executed and gives the appearance of being a figure "8" with the lower part of the "g" containing a very large round loop. The questioned handwriting, however, contains a letter "g" with the lower part of the letter "h" as it descends to the baseline of writing in Mr. Hughes' specimens has a tendency to curve to the left in a clockwise direction. Conversely, the staff of the letter "h" in the questioned writings on Lines 1, 2, and 3 has a tendency to move in a counterclockwise direction.

Mr. Hughes normally writes the "es" in the surname "Hughes" rather small, with a long tapered sweep in the "s." The "es" combinations in the questioned writings, however, on Lines 1, 2, and 3 are extremely large; the "e" is very rounded and the "s" contains a loop or eyelet with a very short blunt ending stroke.

On the basis of these significant characteristic differences observed between the questioned handwriting and the standard signatures of Howard R. Hughes, a definite conclusion was reached that the questioned signatures were, in fact, skillfully executed forgeries.

Now compare the questioned handwriting on Lines 1, 2, and 3 of Exhibit A with the handwriting of Clifford Irving on the last three lines of Exhibit A. Consider first the letter "o" in the "Howard." As previously stated, the emphasis is on the right top of the letter "o" in the questioned writing and, in comparing the letter "o" with the handwriting of Clifford Irving on Lines 4, 5, and 6, the same characteristic habit is prevailing. Observe the formation of the "w" in Lines 1, 2, and 3, in the word "Howard," as compared with the "w" as written by Clifford Irving on Lines 4, 5, and 6. Notice the proportions of the letter "w" in the questioned and known writing and the manner in which the bridge of the "w" drops in Line 1 in the word "Howard" and also in Line 6 in the word "Howard." Now notice the formation of the letter "r" in the word "Howard" on Lines 1 and 3, as compared with the composite on Line 6. Observe the manner in which the terminal stroke of the letter "r" has a tendency to terminate with a little curve at the baseline of writing in Irving's writing and the questioned writing, whereas in Mr. Hughes' writing there is a sharp angle and a reverse of direction connecting, or attempting to connect, the letter "r" to the letter "d" which follows. Observe the similarity with respect to the formation of the letter "g" in the word "Hughes" on Line 4 in Clifford Irving's handwriting, with the formation of the letter "g" as it appears in the questioned writing on Line 3 of the same exhibit. Also, observe the formation of the letter "g" as it appears on Line 1 in the word "Hughes," as compared with the known handwriting of Clifford Irving as it appears on Line 5 in the second illustration. Reference is made to the formation of the letters "es" in the word "Hughes" on Lines 1 through 3 in the questioned writings, as compared with the "es" combinations as they appear on Lines 4, 5, and 6 in the known handwriting of Clifford Irving. Observe the unusual agreements with

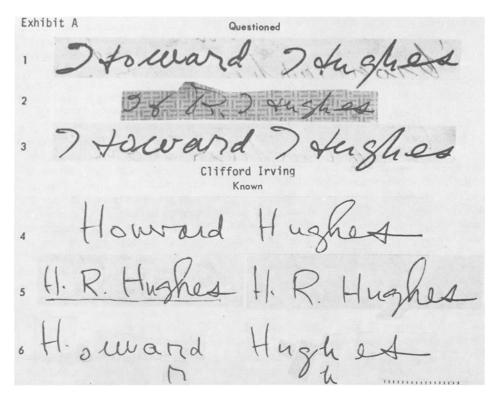


FIG. 1—Exhibit A shows questioned signatures of Howard Hughes and Clifford Irving's known writing of signatures of Howard Hughes.

respect to the large, balloon-shaped letters "e" and the pointed top on the letters "s," the eyelet in the base of the letters "s," and the difference in height ratios of the letters "s" to the small letters "e." Considering that an attempt had been made to successfully imitate or simulate the handwriting of Howard R. Hughes and the excellent agreements observed between the handwriting of Clifford Irving and the questioned signatures, I arrived at a definite conclusion that Clifford Irving did, in fact, forge the questioned signatures.

Exhibits C and D (Figs. 3 and 4, respectively) demonstrate the differences present between the questioned letters to McGraw-Hill and the known handwriting of Howard R. Hughes which eliminated Hughes as the author. In addition, Exhibit D is shown again in Fig. 5, to the left of the known normal handwriting of Clifford Irving in Exhibit E (Fig. 6), as information. Observe how the unconscious habits and traits of Clifford Irving are evident in the questioned small letters "a," "n," "p," "s," and the "i" dots, as contrasted with the differences in the handwriting of Mr. Hughes.

Observe the letters "a" and "o" as they appear on Lines 1 and 2 of the questioned writing. Note that only the first letter "a" has an inside hook somewhat similar to the letters "a" found on Line 1 of the known handwriting of Howard R. Hughes. However, the second and third letters "a" on Line 1 and the letters "o" on Line 2 begin at the top of these letters, whereas the habit of Howard R. Hughes is to have an approach stroke on the inside of the body of the letters "a" and "o," as found on Lines 1 and 2 of Exhibit D.

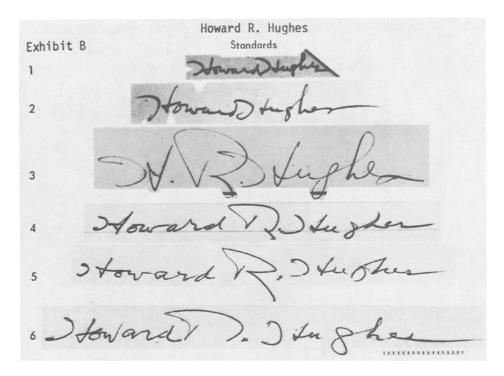


FIG. 2-Exhibit B shows known signatures of Howard R. Hughes.

Now consider the letters "k" on Line 1 in the questioned writing as compared with the letters "k" on Line 1 of the known handwriting of Howard R. Hughes. Observe that the questioned letters "k" on Line 1 are written in one continuous motion, whereas on Line 1 in the known handwriting, the habit of Howard R. Hughes is to make a split "k"; that is, the staff of the letter "k" is made first and then the pen is lifted from the paper and placed approximately halfway up the staff to form the body or hook to complete this letter form.

The formation of the letter "f" in the questioned writing on Line 2 is somewhat similar to the handwriting of Howard R. Hughes, as found in the formation of that letter on Line 2 of the known writing. There is, however, one significant difference. The lower part of the letters "f" in the questioned writing continue in a counterclockwise movement, whereas Mr. Hughes' habit is to terminate this letter in a clockwise direction.

Referring to the letters "p" on Line 3 in the questioned writing, the approach stroke is conspicuously absent before the formation of the initial downstroke of the letter. Mr. Hughes' habit in forming the letters "p" is a slight upward movement of the pen before the initial downstroke is made to form the staff of that letter. Also, Mr. Hughes' habit of hooking the loop or body of the letters "p" in the initial and terminal strokes of that part of the letter formation are at variance with the letters "p" as they appear in Line 3 of the questioned writing.

There is a marked pictorial resemblance between the capital letters "I" on Line 4 in the questioned writings with the last two capital letters "I" as written by Howard R.

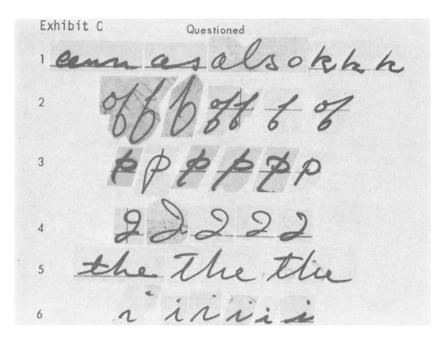


FIG 3—Exhibit C shows questioned writing in letters to McGraw-Hill, which demonstrates differences in respect to the known writing of Howard R. Hughes in Exhibit D.

Howard R. Hughes Exhibit D Known ank 1 alla ed. 2 07 0 07 3 2 4 5 2 6

FIG. 5—Exhibit D shows known writing of Howard R. Hughes for the purpose of comparison with the known normal writing of Clifford Irving in Exhibit E.

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Howard R. Hughes Exhibit D Known 5 edacted 19 1 B 2 2 7 010 3 2 NN 4 re 5 o.th 0 6

FIG. 4—Exhibit D shows known writing of Howard R. Hughes, which demonstrates differences in respect to the questioned writing in letters to McGraw-Hill in Exhibit C.

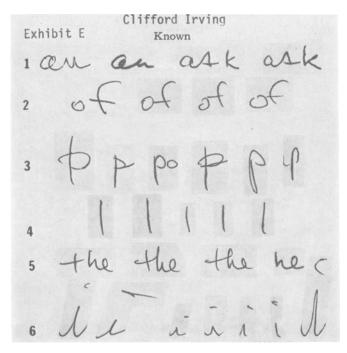


FIG. 6—Exhibit E shows known normal writing of Clifford Irving for the purpose of comparison with the known writing of Howard R. Hughes in Exhibit D.

Questioned Exhibit F ead agreement with 1 benga aland re On 2 ession condit. 25 3 hand con ingu 5 6

FIG. 7—Exhibit F shows questioned writing in letters to McGraw-Hill, which demonstrates idiosyncrasies and agreements with the known writing of Clifford Irving in Exhibit G.

Clifford Irving Exhibit G Known read agreement un 1 slish and and CI 2 osession conditions 3 andcon Jac 4 osed ing encl 5 CCC d ear 6

FIG. 9—Exhibit G shows known normal writing of Clifford Irving for the purpose of comparison with the known writing of Howard R. Hughes in Exhibit H.

#### CABANNE ON THE CLIFFORD IRVING HOAX 13

Clifford Irving Exhibit G Known read agreement with give publish and and 2 have hand cont nact 3 · According enclosed ord

FIG. 8—Exhibit G shows known normal handwriting of Clifford Irving, which demonstrates idiosyncrasies and agreements with the questioned writing in letters to McGraw-Hill in Exhibit F.

Howard R. Hughes Exhibit H Known 1 reach ggrement with 2 gave publicity and and 3 p man ation con ione · have and cons District saccording when · Clifford Dring

FIG. 10—Exhibit H shows known writing of Howard R. Hughes for the purpose of comparison with the known normal writing of Clifford Irving in Exhibit G.

Hughes on Line 4 of his writings. There are, however, considerable variances present between the questioned capital letters "I" and the first three specimens of that letter on Line 4 as written by Hughes.

Observe how the final letters "e" in the words "the," on Line 5 of the questioned writings, terminate in an upward direction, whereas Hughes' habit is to terminate these letters in a downward movement.

The questioned "i" dots on Line 6 are made as a "half-moon," with the opening to the right or as a horizontal dash or period. Howard Hughes dots his "i" with vertical dashes or what sometimes resembles a small, printed figure "4."

Based upon these and other significant characteristic differences, it was concluded that Howard R. Hughes did not write any of the questioned letters, but that they were, in fact, imitated forgeries.

Exhibits F and G (Figs. 7 and 8, respectively) demonstrate the idiosyncrasies and characteristic agreements present between the questioned letters to McGraw-Hill and the known handwriting of Clifford Irving, which support a definite conclusion that Mr. Irving wrote these letters. To the right of Exhibit G (shown again in Fig. 9), is the handwriting of Howard R. Hughes, designated as Exhibit H (Fig. 10), for comparison and ready reference.

When confronted with the evidence amassed against them, Clifford Irving pleaded guilty to his part in this conspiracy, as did Edith Irving and Richard Suskind. As an interesting sidelight, when Clifford Irving finally decided to tell his story to the U.S. Attorney, including the fact that he had authored the questioned "Howard Hughes" letters, he had become so proficient in copying Hughes' style of handwriting that he was able to write several pages of "Hughes' handwriting," at the request of the U.S. Attorney, in a matter of minutes.

#### Summary

The problem was to determine whether Howard R. Hughes, Edith Irving, or Clifford Irving wrote the questioned material on Exhibits Q-1 through Q-35. The findings were as follows.

1. Howard R. Hughes was eliminated as the possible writer of the questioned handwriting on Exhibits Q-1 through Q-35. Although there were pictorial resemblances between Hughes' handwriting and the questioned material enumerated above, significant characteristic differences were also present which unequivocally eliminated him as the writer.

2. Edith Irving was identified as the writer of the "Edith Sommer for deposit only" endorsement on Exhibit Q-11.

3. Edith Irving also very probably wrote the "Hanne Rosenkrantz" on Exhibits Q-27 through Q-34, but the questioned writings were restricted to the examination of poor quality photocopies which did not provide proper basis for the handwriting comparison.

4. There were indications that Edith Irving also may have written the questioned endorsement "H. R. Hughes" on Exhibit Q-3 and the questioned signatures "H. R. Hughes" on Exhibits Q-4, Q-5, Q-6, Q-7, and Q-35, by simulating the handwriting of Howard R. Hughes on those questioned exhibits. She could not be identified, however, based on the available handwriting specimens obtained from the federal grand jury on 8 Feb. 1972.

5. Clifford Irving was identified as the writer of the questioned material on Exhibits Q-1, Q-2, Q-8, Q-9, Q-12a and Q-12b, Q-13a and Q-13b, Q-14, Q-15a through Q-15c,

Q-16a and Q-16b, Q-22a through Q-22i, Q-23, Q-24, Q-25, and Q-26. A study of the questioned handwriting with the known handwriting of Howard R. Hughes revealed a definite attempt on the part of Irving to simulate the handwriting of Hughes, having seen Hughes' writing in earlier issues of *Time-Life*.

## APPENDIX

## Exhibits

Q-1	Original McGraw-Hill, Inc. Check No. 110866, drawn on the Chase Manhattan Bank, dated 22 Sept. 1971, payable to H. R. Hughes in the amount of \$275,000, and bearing questioned endorsement "H. R. Hughes."
Q-2	Original McGraw-Hill, Inc. Check No. NE111112, drawn on the Chase Manhattan Bank, dated 2 Dec. 1971, payable to H. R. Hughes in the amount of \$325,000, and bearing questioned endorsements "Deposit only to the account of H. R. Hughes" and "H. R. Hughes."
Q-3	Original Bankers Trust Co. Check No. 016561, dated 5 April 1971, payable to H. R. Hughes in the amount of \$50,000, and bearing questioned endorsement "H. R. Hughes."
Q-4	Photocopy of Swiss business form, dated 13 May 1971, in the name of H. R. Hughes, and bearing questioned signature "H. R. Hughes."
Q-5	Photocopy of Swiss business form, dated 13 May 1971, in the name of Helga Hughes and bearing questioned Signature "H. R. Hughes."
Q-6	Photocopy of Swiss business form, dated 13 May 1971, in the name of Helga Hughes and bearing questioned signature "H. R. Hughes."
Q-7	Photocopy of Swiss business form, dated 13 May 1971, in the name of Helga Hughes and bearing questioned signature "H. R. Hughes."
Q-8	Photocopy of Swiss bussiness form No. 4769127, dated 10 Sept. 1971, for \$100,000, from McGraw-Hill, and bearing questioned signature "H. R. Hughes."
Q-9	Photocopy of letter dated 3 Dec. 1970, to Director, Schweitzerische Kreditan- stalt, Zurich, beginning "I would be grateful" and ending "to my account number 320-496," and signed "H. R. Hughes."
Q-10a through Q-10m	Photocopies of pp. 1, 62, 110, 131, 153, 224, 357, 375, 397, 702, 772, 825, and 878, from Hughes' manuscript for his autobiography.
Q-11	Original Chase Manhattan, Branch 242, Check No. 854396, dated 21 Dec. 1971, payable to Edith Sommer in the amount of \$5000, and bearing questioned endorsement "Edith Sommer, for deposit only."
Q-12a and Q-12b	Original handwritten letter on The Beach Inn, Paradise Island, Nassau, Bahamas letterhead, dated 11 Sept. 1971, beginning "In the event that" and ending "returned to me," and signed "Howard Hughes."
Q-13a and Q-13b	Original handwritten letter on yellow ruled paper beginning "Thank you for the gift" and ending "learn of his passing," and signed "H. R. Hughes."

Q-14 Original handwritten letter on yellow ruled paper beginning "I have in hand" and ending "my very serious consideration," and signed "H. R. Hughes."

Q-15a Original three-page letter on yellow ruled paper beginning "I thank you for through the pleasantness" and ending "this request very unfavorably," and signed Q-15c "Howard Hughes."

- Q-16a Original handwritten letter on The Beach Inn, Paradise Island, Nassau,
  and Bahamas letterhead dated 11 Sept. 1971, beginning, "I have read and
  Q-16b understood" and ending "agreement dated 9/11/71," and signed "Howard Hughes."
- Q-17 Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Smith Inc. Check No. 47964, dated 8 June 1970, payable to East Side Tennis Club, Inc., Account No. 052-00241, in the amount of \$650,000 and bearing no endorsement.
- Q-18 Check Register copy, Debit Memo No. 47964, dated 8 June 1970, to East Side Tennis Club, Inc., Account No. 052-00241.
- Q-19 Original McGraw-Hill, Inc. Check No. 111109, drawn on the Chase Manhattan Bank, dated 2 Dec. 1971, payable to Clifford Irving in the amount of \$25,000, and bearing questioned endorsement "For deposit only, Clifford Irving."
- Q-20 Original McGraw-Hill, Inc. Check No. 110865, drawn on the Chase Manhattan Bank, dated 22 Sept. 1971, payable to Clifford Irving in the amount of \$25,000, and bearing questioned endorsement "Clifford Irving, for deposit only."
- Q-21 Original McGraw-Hill, Inc. Check No. 110190, drawn on the Chase Manhattan Bank, dated 12 March 1971, payable to Clifford Irving in the amount of \$2500, and bearing questioned endorsement "For deposit only to Checking Account #242-0-010 775-5, Chase Manhattan Bank for Clifford Irving."
- Q-22a Original handwritten letter on yellow ruled paper beginning "The facts placed before me, I find astonishing" and ending "of the manuscript," and Q-22i signed "Howard R. Hughes."
- Q-23 Air Mail Special Delivery envelope pastmarked 18 Nov. 1971, Nassau, Bahamas, B.W.I., addressed to Mr. Harold McGraw, McGraw-Hill Publishers, 330 West 42nd St., New York, N.Y.
- Q-24 The "H. R. Hughes" signature on the preface of the autobiography.
- Q-25 The "H. R. Hughes" signature on p. 6 of the "Letter of Addendum" witnessed on 11 Sept. 1971.
- Q-26 The "H. R. Hughes" signature on p. 7 of the agreement, dated 4 March 1971.
- Q-27 A photocopy of a registration card at the Hotel St. Gotthard, Zurich, Switzerland, bearing arrival date of 27 May 1971, in the name of Hanne Rosenkranz.
- Q.28 A photocopy of a registration card at the Hotel Royale, Zurich, bearing arrival date of 28 Sept. 1971, in the name of Hanne Rosenkranz.
- Q-29 A photocopy of hotel registration at the Simplon Hotel, bearing arrival date of 19 Oct. 1971, in the name of Hanne Rosenkranz.

- Q-30 A photocopy of hotel registration at the Savoy Bauer en Ville, bearing arrival date of 28 Dec. 1971, in the name of Hanne Rosenkranz.
- Q-31 A photocopy of a Swiss Banking Corp. form opening an Account No. 312,627 on 27 May 1971, in the name of Hanne E. Rosenkranz with a deposit of 5000 Sfr, and bearing questioned signature "Hanne Rosenkranz."
- Q-32 A photocopy of instructions to Swiss Banking Corp. relating to purchase of securities with funds in Account No. 312,627 of Hanne Rosenkranz, and bearing questioned signature "Hanne Rosenkranz."
- Q-33 A photocopy of instructions to Swiss Banking Corp. relating to purchase of securities with funds in Account No. 312,627 of Hanne Rosenkranz, and bearing questioned signature "Hanne Rosenkranz."
- Q-34 A photocopy of instructions to Swiss Banking Corp. relating to purchase of securities with funds in Account No. 312,627 of Hanne Rosenkranz, and bearing questioned signature "Hanne Rosenkranz."
- Q-35 A photocopy of hotel registration at the Glarnischhoff Hotel bearing arrival date of 12 May 1971, in the name of Helga Hughes.
- K-1 Known handwriting specimens of Clifford Irving on 18 sheets of unlined paper.
- K-2 Known handwriting specimens of Edith Irving on 14 sheets of unlined paper.
- K-3 Known handwriting of Howard R. Hughes on 12 documents written in the normal course of business.

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