

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
FOI/PA
DELETED PAGE INFORMATION SHEET
FOI/PA# 1341051-1

Total Deleted Page(s) = 6
Page 21 ~ Referral/Direct;
Page 54 ~ Duplicate;
Page 55 ~ Duplicate;
Page 56 ~ Duplicate;
Page 143 ~ Referral/Direct;
Page 144 ~ Referral/Direct;

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12/11/72

GENERAL INVESTIGATIVE DIVISION

This concerns the 12/7/72, crash of United Airlines (UAL) Flight 553 at Chicago, Illinois.

Attached relates that the Federal Aviation Administration has indicated no possibility of any cause of crash other than pilot error. According to witnesses, UAL Flight 553 stalled and thereafter crashed during maneuver to pull out of final approach because it got too close to a small private aircraft which was preceeding it. Total of 45 dead (including 2 who were on the ground) with 18 survivors.

Liaison being maintained with the National Transportation Safety Board.

No further active FBI investigation being conducted in view of no apparent Destruction of Aircraft or Motor Vehicle violation. FBI Disaster Squad is on scene attempting to identify bodies.

DGF:pdh

Handwritten:
9:37P
12-11-72

Handwritten:
WAL
RJC
AAZ

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
COMMUNICATIONS SECTION

Mr. Felt	_____
Mr. Baker	_____
Mr. Callahan	_____
Mr. Cleveland	_____
Mr. Conrad	_____
Mr. Dalbey	_____
Mr. Gebhardt	_____
Mr. Jenkins	_____
Mr. Marshall	_____
Mr. Miller E.S.	_____
Mr. Purvis	_____
Mr. Soyars	_____
Mr. Walters	_____
Tele. Room	_____
Mr. Kinley	_____
Mr. Armstrong	_____
Ms. Herwig	_____
Mrs. Neenan	_____

NR019 CG PLAIN

826PM URGENT 12-8-72 RWR

DEC 08 1972

TO ACTING DIRECTOR

TELETYPE

ALEXANDRIA

WFO

OMAHA

FROM CHICAGO (149-NEW) 3P

CRASH OF UNITED AIRLINES FLIGHT FIVE FIVE THREE,

A BOEING SEVEN THREE SEVEN, AT CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, DECEMBER
Destruction of Aircraft or Motor Vehicles
EIGHT, SEVENTYTWO. ~~BAMV.~~

b6
b7C
[Handwritten signature]

Reference

~~RE~~ CHICAGO TELEPHONE CALLS TO THE BUREAU AND ALEXANDRIA,
AND WFO, INSTANT.

13

CAPTIONED PLANE, A BOEING SEVEN THREE SEVEN, CRASHED AT
SEVENTIETH AND LAWNDALE AVENUE, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, AT
APPROXIMATELY TWO TWENTYONE PM THIS DATE. THE PLANE
DEPARTED WASHINGTON, D.C., AT TWELVE FORTY PM ~~CST~~ AND WAS
SCHEDULED TO ARRIVE AT MIDWAY AIRPORT, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS,
AT TWO THIRTYONE PM CST. THERE WERE FIFTYTWO PASSENGERS
AND A CREW OF SIX WHICH INCLUDED THREE STEWARDESSES AND THREE
FLIGHT OFFICERS.

ST-111

REC-71

149-
MCT-20

10024-1

22 DEC 11 1972

THIRTEEN PASSENGERS AND TWO STEWARDESSES ARE ALIVE AND
HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED.

END PAGE ONE

259
7 ODEC 19 1972

6-1-1972

PAGE TWO

THE PLANE CRASHED INTO SEVERAL SINGLE FAMILY DWELLINGS. THE NUMBER OF INJURIES AND FATALITIES TO PERSONS IN THE CRASH AREA IS NOT KNOWN AT THIS TIME. THERE WERE SEVERAL FIRES TRIGGERED BY CRASH.

SUPERINTENDENT JAMES CONLISK, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, ^{Police Department} ~~FD~~ AND CAPTAIN ^{United Airlines} EXECUTIVE, ~~UAL~~, ELK GROVE VILLAGE, ILLINOIS, HAVE REQUESTED THE SERVICE OF THE FBI DISASTER UNIT.

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b7c

A PLAYBACK OF THE RECORDING TAPE AT MIDWAY AIRPORT INDICATES POSSIBLE PILOT ERROR. ACCORDING TO THE TAPE AS FLIGHT FIVE FIVE THREE APPROACHED RUNWAY, A SMALL AIRCRAFT WAS ALREADY ON THE RUNWAY, THE PILOT OF FLIGHT FIVE FIVE THREE WAS INSTRUCTED TO MAKE A LEFT TURN AND COME TO A HEADING OF ONE EIGHTY DEGREES. THE PILOT ACKNOWLEDGED THE TRANSMISSION AND THE PLANE DISAPPEARED FROM RADAR. THE TAPE THEN INDICATES A FLUTTERING SOUND WHICH MIGHT HAVE COME FROM THE STALL SPEED INDICATOR, INDICATING THE PILOT HAD LOST HIS SPEED AND CRASHED.

TWO STEWARDESSES AND A FEDERAL NARCOTICS AGENT WHO WERE ABOARD THIS PLANE HAVE BEEN INTERVIEWED BY ^{Bureau Agents} ~~BUAGENTS~~ AND THEY

END PAGE TWO

PAGE THREE

STATE NOTHING UNUSUAL HAPPENED PRIOR TO CRASH.

COMPLETE PASSENGER MANIFEST OBTAIN FROM UAL WITH
CONTACT POINTS FOR ALL PASSENGERS.

CLOSE LIAISON BEING MAINTAINED WITH ~~CPD~~ AND
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD.

U. S. CONGRESSMAN GEORGE COLLINS, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS,
HAS BEEN MANIFESTED ABOARD THIS FLIGHT ACCORDING TO UAL RECORDS.
NO OTHER INFORMATION CONCERNING COLLINS AT THIS TIME.

ASAC, CHICAGO, ON SCENE AND HANDLING INVESTIGATION
PERSONALLY.

INFORMATION COPY TO OMAHA AS FLIGHT FIVE FIVE THREE
WAS TO TERMINATE OMAHA.

END

HOLD

cc: Room 5634

cc-



FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
COMMUNICATIONS SECTION

DEC 09 1972

TELETYPE

Mr. Felt	_____
Mr. Baker	_____
Mr. Callahan	_____
Mr. Cleveland	_____
Mr. Conrad	_____
Mr. Dalbey	_____
Mr. Gebhardt	_____
Mr. Jenkins	_____
Mr. Marshall	_____
Mr. Miller, E.S.	_____
Mr. Purvis	_____
Mr. Soyars	_____
Mr. Walters	_____
Tele. Room	_____
Mr. Kinley	_____
Mr. Armstrong	_____
Ms. Herwig	_____
Mr. Neenan	_____

NR001 CG PLAIN

320 AM URGENT 12-9-72 MFM

TO ACTING DIRECTOR

FROM CHICAGO (149-NEW) 1P

CRASH OF UNITED AIRLINES FLIGHT FIVE FIVE THREE,
A BOEING SEVEN THREE SEVEN, AT CHICAGO, ILLINOIS,
DECEMBER EIGHT, SEVENTYTWO. DAMV.

RE BUCALL TWELVE EIGHT LAST AND CG TEL TO BUREAU
TWELVE EIGHT LAST.

ON SCENE INVESTIGATION INDICATES PILOT ERROR AS
CAUSE OF CRASH.

NO INFORMATION RECEIVED OR DEVELOPED BY CHICAGO
TO INDICATE CAUSE OF CRASH DUE TO SABOTAGE.

THREE VICTIMS, ON BOARD AIRCRAFT, INTERVIEWED. NO
INDICATION OF SABOTAGE OR SKYJACKING.

REVIEW OF TAPED CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN PILOT AND
TOWER DETERMINED STALL INDICATOR ACTIVATED JUST PRIOR
TO CRASH, DENOTING FLIGHT SPEED INSUFFICIENT AT TIME
PILOT RECEIVED LANDING WAVE OFF.

SI-111

REC-71 149-

10024 - 2

INVESTIGATION CONTINUING. BUREAU WILL BE KEPT
ADVISED.

22 DEC 11 1972

END

TMT FBI SOG CLR

259
R O DEC 9 1972

[Redacted area with handwritten initials and numbers]

b6
b7c

13

6-14#

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
COMMUNICATIONS SECTION

DEC 09 1972

TELETYPE

Mr. FBI	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Baker	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Callahan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Cleveland	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Conrad	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Dalbey	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mr. DeLoach	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Jenkins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Marshall	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Miller, E.S.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Purvis	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Soyars	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Walters	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Tele. Room	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Kinley	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Armstrong	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Ms. Farwig	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Neenan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

10

WST

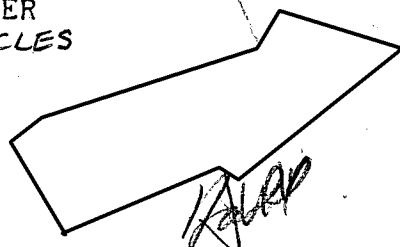
NR002 CG PLAIN

2:34PM 12/9-72 URGENT KMD

TO ACTING DIRECTOR

FROM CHICAGO (149-NEW) 3P

(UAL) 5 5 3
 CRASH OF UNITED AIR LINES FLIGHT FIVE FIVE THREE,
 BOEING SEVEN THREE SEVEN, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, DECEMBER
 EIGHT LAST, ~~DESTRUCTION OF AIRCRAFT OR MOTOR VEHICLES~~
 DAMV.



b6
b7C

REFERENCE

TELETYPE

RE CHICAGO TEL DECEMBER EIGHT LAST.

NEIGHBORHOOD INVESTIGATION IN VICINITY OF AREA OF
 CRASH OF UAL FLIGHT FIVE FIVE THREE REFLECTS INFORMATION
 FROM WITNESSES TO EFFECT THAT AIRPLANE WAS UNDER OBSERVATION
 UNTIL IT DISAPPEARED AND CRASHED. WITNESSES
 STATED THERE WAS NO EXPLOSION OR APPARENT DAMAGE TO AIRCRAFT
 BEFORE CRASH AND IT APPEARED TO BE MUSHROOMING INTO THE
 HOUSES. THE TAIL WAS DOWN, NOSE ELEVATED ABOUT FORTY-FIVE DEGREES
 AND UNABLE TO GAIN ALTITUDE.

CT
L

EX-117

REC-2 149-10024-3

FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

INFORMATION FROM FAA REFLECTS NO POSSIBILITY OF ANY

20 DEC 14 1972

CAUSE OF CRASH OTHER THAN PILOT ERROR. ACCORDING TO CONSENSUS

OF INFORMATION FROM WITNESSES AND TOWER AT MIDWAY AIRPORT,

END PAGE ONE

DEC 11 1972

STAMP

70 DEC 20 1972

397

PAGE TWO

THE FOLLOWING IS WHAT OCCURRED LEADING UP TO CRASH OF UAL
FLIGHT FIVE FIVE THREE:

UAL FLIGHT FIVE FIVE THREE WAS ON FINAL APPROACH FOR
LANDING AT MIDWAY AIRPORT FOLLOWING A SMALL PRIVATE
AIRCRAFT. TOWER OBSERVED THAT DISTANCE BETWEEN FIVE FIVE
THREE AND PRIVATE AIRCRAFT WAS BECOMING MARGINAL. FIVE
FIVE THREE WAS ORDERED TO PULL OFF FROM APPROACH TURNING
LEFT TO A HEADING OF ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY DEGREES. THE PILOT
APPARENTLY THREW FULL THROTTLE TO THE ENGINES AND STARTED
TO TURN TO THE LEFT AT THE SAME TIME, PULLING UP THE NOSE OF
THE AIRCRAFT. THIS MANEUVER APPARENTLY CAUSED THE AIRCRAFT TO STALL
AND MUSHROOM INTO THE GROUND.

PERSONS INTERVIEWED INCLUDING FOUR SURVIVORS OF THE
CRASH AND FAA INVESTIGATORS, IN ADDITION TO NEIGHBORHOOD
WITNESSES, DEVELOPED NOTHING WHICH WOULD INDICATE ANY
REASON TO BELIEVE THAT A VIOLATION OF THE DAMV STATUTE EXISTS.
END PAGE TWO

PAGE THREE

DISASTER SQUAD HAS ARRIVED IN CHICAGO AND IT IS PRESENTLY
AT COUNTY MORGUE IDENTIFYING⁴¹ DEAD PASSENGERS. POSITIVELY
IDENTIFIED ARE EIGHT BODIES. THERE ARE ONLY TWELVE BODIES
WITH WHICH THE DISASTER SQUAD CAN WORK. THERE ARE FORTY
FIVE BODIES AT THE MORGUE, THIS WOULD INCLUDE TWO PERSONS
WHO WERE ON THE GROUND, WHO RESIDED IN NEIGHBORHOOD OF CRASH.
THERE IS A TOTAL OF EIGHTEEN SURVIVORS.

FOR INFORMATION OF THE BUREAU, NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION
SAFETY BOARD (NTSB) SURVEYING CRASH^H SCENE. ENTIRE AREA EXTENSEVILY
PHOTOGRAPHED BY FBI AND SCENE DIAGRAMED. LIASION BEING
MAINTAINED WITH NTSB.

UACB, NO FURTHER INVESTIGATION BEING CONDUCTED OTHER
THAN TO ASSIST DISASTER SQUAD IN IDENTIFYING BODIES.
END

DKS FBI WASHDC CLR

December 9, 1972

GENERAL INVESTIGATIVE DIVISION

This is new Destruction of Aircraft or Motor Vehicles case wherein on 12/8/72, United Airlines Flight 553, en route to Chicago, Illinois, from Washington, D.C., crashed in Chicago at approximately 2:21 p.m. Aboard were 52 passengers and crew of six which included three stewardesses and three flight officers.

Thirteen passengers and two stewardesses alive and identified; number of injuries and fatalities in crash area not known at this time; playback of recording tape indicates possible pilot error.

Chicago Police Department (CGPD) and United Airlines have requested service of FBI Disaster Squad; same being afforded.

According to United Airlines, Congressman George Collins (Democrat - Illinois) has been manifested aboard this flight; no other information concerning Collins known at this time.

ASAC, Chicago on scene and handling investigation personally; close liaison with CGPD and National Transportation Safety Board being maintained.

felt advised 12/9/72

11:AM

11:15

RJP:erg

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20535

DATE: December 26, 1972

Re: UNKNOWN SUBJECT;
UNITED AIRLINES BOEING 737;
ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

TO: Mr. C. O. Miller
Director
Bureau of Aviation Safety
National Transportation Safety Board
Department of Transportation
Washing, D. C. 20591

Invoice of Contents

Q1

K1

- Crypt.-Trans.
- Document
- P & C
- Radio Engineering
- LFPS

PA
1/31/73

Picked up by
Date

[Redacted signature area]
1/31/73

b6
b7c

Special Instructions:

Mail Room: Show shipment date and registry number.
Shipping Room: Show shipment date; bill of lading number;
initial invoice; return to Section checked in block; after
initialing in block, invoice to be placed in administrative file.

FBI File No. 149-10024

PC-J3624 MK

36755

REPORT of the



FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION WASHINGTON, D. C. 20535

To: Mr. C. O. Miller Director Bureau of Aviation Safety National Transportation Safety Board Department of Transportation Washington, D. C. 20591

December 29, 1972

Re: UNKNOWN SUBJECT; UNITED AIRLINES BOEING 737; ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

L. Patrick Gray, III Acting Director

YOUR NO.

REC-128 FBI FILE NO. 149-10024-4 ST 100 LAB. NO. PC-J3624 MK

Examination requested by: Addressee

Reference: Letter 12/12/72

Examination requested: Chemical Analyses

Specimens: Personally delivered by Investigator [] on 12/12/72

b6 b7C

Q1 Cockpit voice recorder magazine

Antifreeze

MAILED 25K1 DEC 29 1972 FBI

Result of examination:

The quantity of material in the small spots inside the Q1 magazine was too limited for identification; however, these spots did not come from the same source as the K1 anti-freeze nor the sealing wax found on the exterior of the magazine.

Specimens Q1 and K1 are being retained by the Laboratory until called for by your representative.

- Felt Baker Bates Bishop Callahan Cleveland Conrad Dalbey Jenkins Marshall Miller, E.S. Ponder Soyars Walters Tele. Room Mr. Kinley Mr. Armstrong Ms. Herwig Mrs. Neenan

MAIL ROOM [] TELETYPE UNIT []

10 JAN 5 1973

Handwritten signatures and initials

RECORDED
12/13/72
cac

CF

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Laboratory Work Sheet

Re: UNKNOWN SUBJECT;
UNITED AIRLINES BOEING 737;
ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

File # 149-10024-4
Lab.# PC-J3624 MK

Mr. C. O. Miller
Director
Bureau of Aviation Safety
National Transportation Safety Board
Department of Transportation
Washington, D. C. 20591

Let. 12/12

Examination requested by:

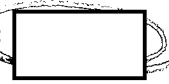
Examination requested:

Result of Examination:


Chem Anal (Gen Chem)

Date received: 12/12 perdel

Examination by:



b6
b7c

Per del by Investigator  on 12/12/72

Q1 Cockpit voice recorder magazine

K1 Antifreeze

*Lab rpt.
12-26-72
RWA: RMB*

PC- J3624 MK

K ~ 100ml total sealed with marking tape
K₁ evaporated 25 ml K on hot plate (wouldn't
on steam) - left ~ 1-2 grams of set
jelly consistency material with
some ("merthiolate") color as
original soln

I.R. of this jelly and K as in
shows to be ("ethylene") glycol.

gives bright yellow fluorescence
under u.v. light long short
smallest spot of the visible orange
material even when dry still
gives yellow fluorescence.

u.v. in MeOH - none

Dries to leave definite colored spot
1-2 days

The specks seem to follow the
"tape path"

observation under u.v. of Q
along with the test spot of K ,
shows the spec not to be from
the K , since there is no yellow at
all from Q specks. (also looked in ^{inches} it shows)
In addition no evidence to eye
at 60x of the ~~sun~~ ^{none} that color.

The spots are not the same as
the sealing wax seen of Q ,
diagram since the wax is
strongly colored and is hard.

Most of the specks on Q , are
dry and without substance
However some have a heavy liquid
nature - but the quantity is too
limited (and maybe thick) to pick up
directly even with microcups
used for TLC.

Single's spot test for glycols
have limit of 5 μ - in addition
complicated requests for spot tests

This appears to be one or two spots
of the same substance on the tape (could
have come from laying over on the
spots on the backboard. Since spots
seem to follow tape line looked under
20x + u.v. in electronic area no
pools of liquid found.

Tried to pick up spots collectively with
minimum quantity of CHCl_3 for I.R.
- No hint of spectrum w beam
condenser.

Spectra

278
210

149-10034-4

ENCLOSURE

PC-J3624 MK

also in box with evidence
was a small
white box with
a few feet of tape
on its reel.

These tag
3m 8998

A
-

Brought in 12/15 Pm

149-10024-4

no antipress

12/15/22

149-10024-4

— piece of tape (magnetic?)
• apply position + number of questioned sparks

Q

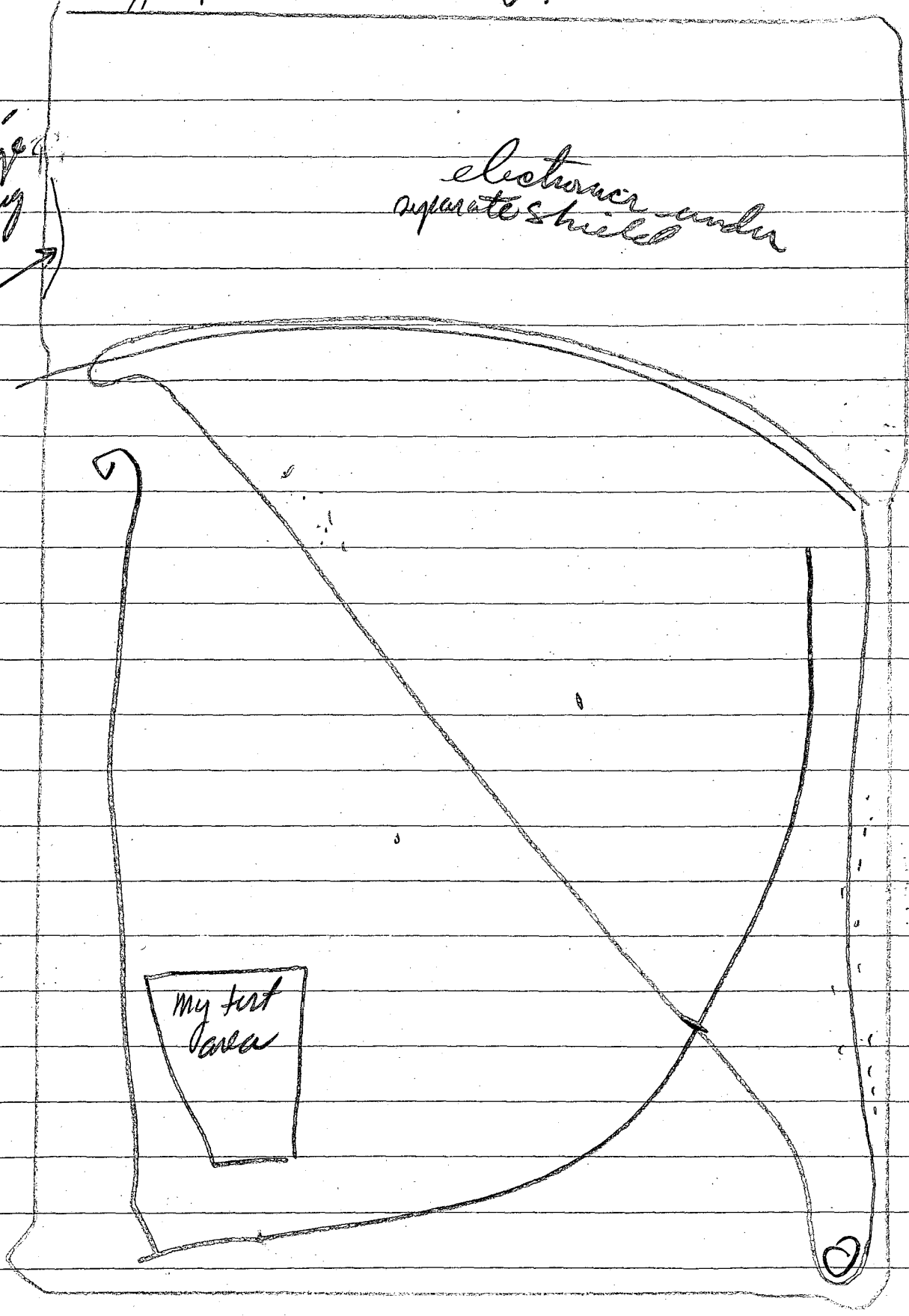
arrange
wax
sealing
→

electronic under
separate shield

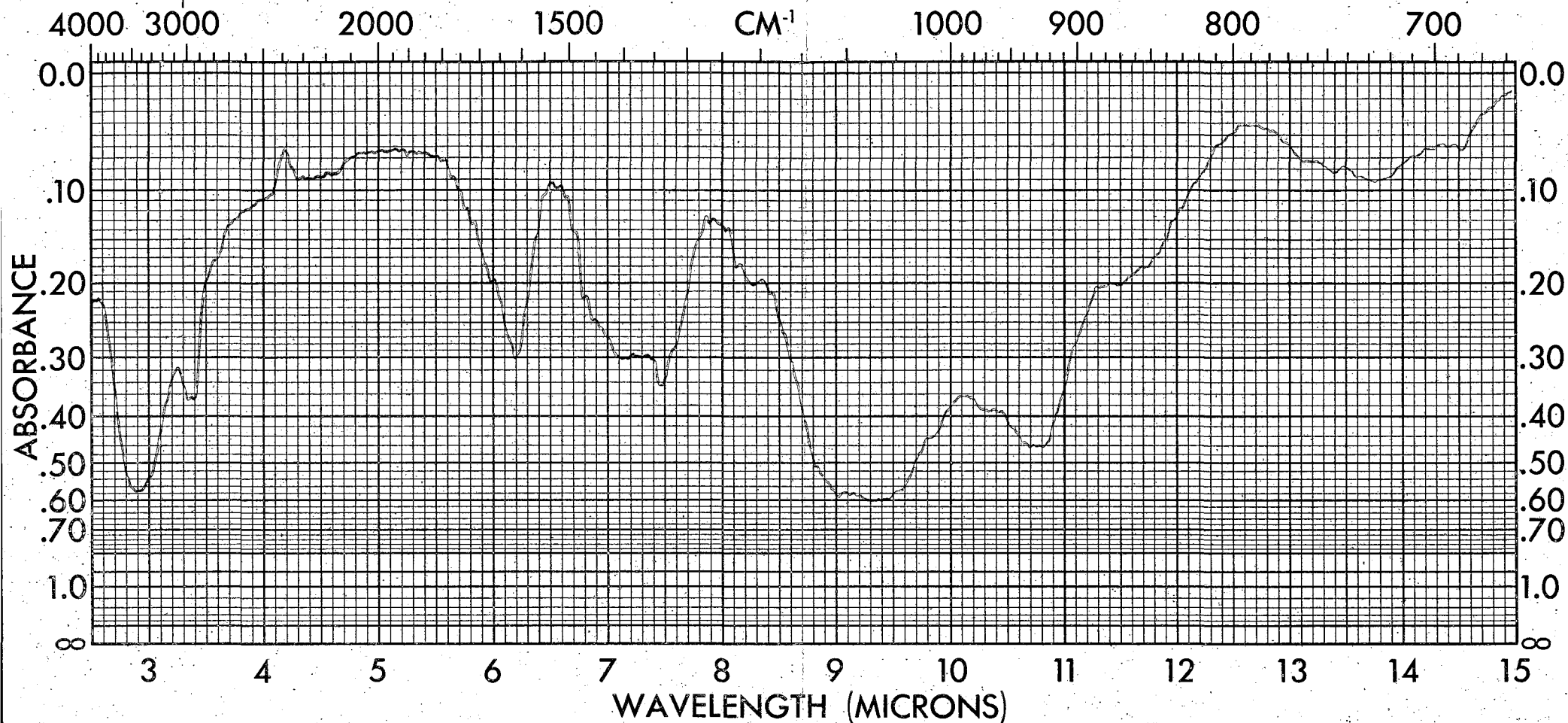
→ separate arm

← corner

my test
area



149-10024-4



SPECTRUM NO. _____	ORIGIN _____	LEGEND _____	REMARKS _____
SAMPLE _____		1. _____	
<i>Residue of K</i>	PURITY _____	2. _____	
<i>after drying</i>	PHASE <i>KBR</i>	DATE _____	
	THICKNESS _____	OPERATOR _____	

SPECTRUM NO. _____
SAMPLE _____

