

101 **A Disturbing Refrain**

"Inquest: The Warren Commission and the Establishment of the Truth," Edward J. Epstein, Viking.

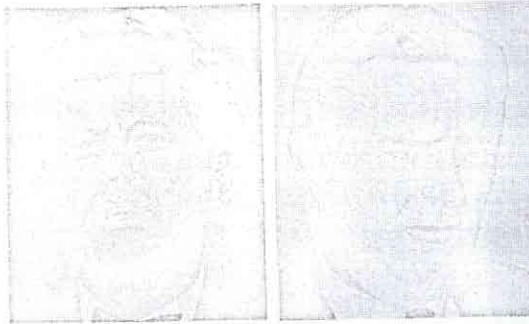
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Beacon Journal/Chicago Daily News

CHICAGO—A rash of irresponsible quick-trigger books hinting darkly at major conspiracies broke out both in this country and abroad immediately after the assassination of John F. Kennedy.

Most of them were obvious phonies, the work of opportunist hack writers and would-be detectives more interested in money and sensation than in arriving at the truth.

Now, however, a second round of more responsible questioning of the accepted and official versions of that horror-filled day of Nov. 22, 1963, in Dallas, Tex., is about to get under way. At least two major book publishing houses have scheduled important books on the Kennedy case for Summer publication.

THE first is Epstein's "Inquest," which was published last week. The second is Mark Lane's "Rush to Judgment" originally scheduled for September publication but now moved up to Au-



PRESIDENT KENNEDY, GOVERNOR CONALLY
... were they hit by the same bullet?

gust by Holt, Rinehart & Winston as a result of Viking Press' having beaten them to the bookstands with "Inquest."

Both books challenge the Warren Commission's finding that Lee Harvey Oswald was the lone assassin of Kennedy. Epstein is a young scholar, now in a doctoral program in American government at Harvard University.

He started his disturbing study of the case as a master's thesis at Cornell University.

LANE IS A lawyer who was for a time engaged as counsel for Lee Oswald's mother.

In a telegram we received from his publishers, it is said "Mark Lane

is the only person to have taped testimony from the principal witnesses who testified before the Warren Commission and (his) is the first book which is based on the complete 26-volume Warren Commission report plus the FBI report." The telegram adds that the book contains "500 plus pages with 5,000 footnotes."

EPSTEIN interviewed five of the seven commission members, but not Chief Justice Earl Warren himself. He interviewed members of the Commission staff, studied the long Warren report and the staff working papers and took a thorough look at both the FBI's "summary report" of Dec. 9, 1963, and its "supplemental report" of Jan. 13, 1964.

His book, in just over 150 pages, plus appendices, does a thorough, and, it seems to me, responsible job of raising very important questions.

The first of these questions is about the "dominant purpose" of the Warren Commission — whether it was to establish the truth about the assassination or to reassure the nation and protect the national interest. He makes an effective argument that the latter was its purpose in "establishing its version of the truth."

IN PASSING he also makes it clear that "rather than being 'exhaustive,' the Commission's investigation was actually an extremely superficial investigation limited in terms of both time and manpower, and consequently limited to the more prominent evidence."

The second big question he raises is whether there were two assassins — and he points out that there was available evidence that might have questioned the Commission's conclusion that Lee Harvey Oswald did all the shooting.

The Warren Commission, it may be recalled, found that only three bullets were fired at the Presidential party, and that one of these followed an eccentric course through the bodies of both President Kennedy and Gov. John Connally of Texas.

EPSTEIN CONTENTS "there was no substantial evidence to support this conclusion, and there was evidence that all but precluded the possibility both men had been hit by the same bullet."

We won't repeat the gruesome details of the



EARL WARREN HEADED THE COMMISSION
...was he really interested in truth?

autopsy finding. It is enough to say Epstein pursues the matter thoroughly. And he points out the commission itself was divided on the single bullet theory and left the matter open in its report.

The author flatly says "either both men were hit by the same bullet or there had to be two assassins." He bases this statement on the film of the assassination which "showed the President and Gov. Connally were hit less than two seconds apart, and that rifle tests showed it was physically impossible for the murder weapon to be accurately fired twice within this period of time.

PERHAPS THE most damaging part of Epstein's hair-raising book is the clear-cut evidence he offers that: (1) The Warren Commission did not make the thoroughgoing inquiry it might have made had it considered all the evidence

offered to it by the FBI (2) The Commission members themselves could not agree on how many shots were fired—surely a critical question—and (3) the Commission's chief concern was to allay the public doubts and suspicion rather than to disclose the full truth about the tragedy and its aftermath.

We have no doubt Epstein's disturbing book will be heatedly discussed for many a month. *en*