

Another Rehash of JFK Death

By CLAYTON FRITCHEY

WASHINGTON—A few weeks hence we are going to be subjected to still another sensational rehash of President Kennedy's assassination, this time by a New York lawyer and politician, Mark Lane, who trumpets that his analysis of the FBI autopsy report "devastates the Warren Commission's conclusions that all of the shots were fired from the rear and that they were fired by a lone assassin."

It is highly improbable that Lane's book will "devastate" the Warren findings any more successfully than two other, and not-unsimilar books that have just been published.

Yet, for the millions in this country and abroad (especially abroad) who are determined to believe that Kennedy was the victim of a malign conspiracy, it really doesn't matter very much whether the new inquests are convincing or not, for they will be seized on and swallowed whole by the conspiracy addicts.

One of the strangest and most fascinating aspects of the case has been the reaction of a large number of people who from the first have refused to accept the official verdict.

It is true that some of the reporters (particularly the European ones) covering the shooting and the trial promoted sensational suspicions about the crime, but they did find a surprisingly eager market for their stories, considering that there was no hard evidence to support any explanation other than the official one.

For those who believe in an ordered universe, where every act has meaning, it apparently is impossible to tolerate the idea that a tragedy of such proportions could be altogether pointless. There just had to be some significance.

For almost three years, the conspiracy fans have said, in effect, "Just wait and see—sooner or later the truth will come out." So naturally they have welcomed "Inquest" by Herbert Epstein, and "Whitewash" by Harold Weisberg,

neither of which are books so much as microscopic examinations of the exhaustive Warren Report, plus all 26 volumes of the hearings and exhibits.

Another reason for public interest is that Epstein's book has the cachet of an introduction by a distinguished journalist, Richard Rovere, and Mark Lane's "Rush to Judgement" also has an imprimatur of an introduction by Oxford Professor Hugh Trevor-Roper. Those are impressive credentials.

The authors do not claim to have uncovered new evidence, but they have discovered discrepancies, errors, omissions, some careless staff work, all of which is intended to cast doubt on the final conclusions of the Warren Commission.

Many readers undoubtedly will find this absorbing; it is regrettable that the Report was not airtight, but it hardly seems possible that an inquiry of this magnitude, which had to be done so quickly, would not be vulnerable in some respects.

The crucial point, however, is that the new probes unsuccessfully concentrate on trying to prove that the Warren Commission erred in finding that Lee Oswald alone committed the crime. The other points the probes raise are not without interest, but in the final analysis they are comparatively irrelevant.

From the first it has been necessary to establish one of more accomplices in order to justify the conspiracy theory. Thus, attention has always centered on how many bullets were fired, for the experts agreed that Oswald could not have fired more than two in the time fixed.

The Commission was satisfied that one of the two bullets which struck Kennedy went through him and wounded Gov. Connally.

Epstein insists there must have been three shots. He rests his case on two hitherto unpublished FBI reports on the autopsy which contradict the Commission autopsy finding that one of the bullets exited from



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the body. Epstein insinuates that the Warren autopsy report must have been changed.

All this sounds suspicious at first, but it now turns out that the FBI readily admits its own reports were inaccurate. Also, a recheck shows conclusively that the Commission autopsy report is identical with the one made at Bethesda hospital by a team of doctors on the night of the assassination. So much for that.

Jean Stafford has also written a book about Lee Oswald's mother who says that "up until this day they have not shown me any proof (that my son was the assassin) and I have things in my possession to disprove many things they say."

And then she said to Miss Stafford: "I understand all the testimony off the cuff is in Washington, and will be locked up for 75 years. Well, I've got news for you. It will not be for 75 years, because if today or tomorrow I am dead or killed, what I have in my possession will be known. And I in my lifetime have got to continue what I have been doing, using my emotional stability and speaking out whenever I can. Would you like a cup of coffee?"

Yes, I would. Black, and very strong.

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