

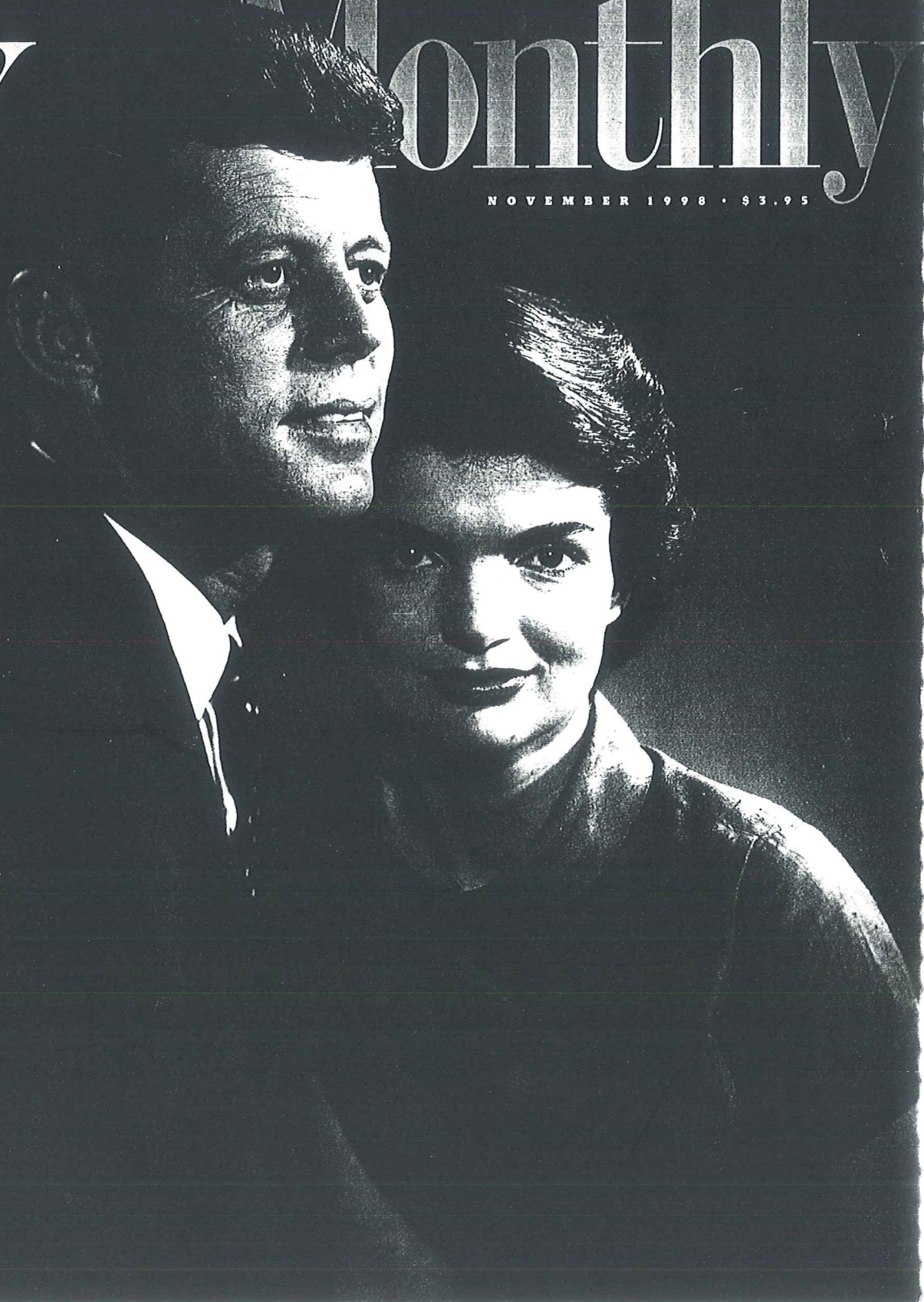
35 YEARS LATER • A SPECIAL REPORT

# THE ASSASSINATION

The Top Conspiracy Theories • The Evidence  
The Witnesses Today • Why We Still Care

# Texas Monthly

NOVEMBER 1998 • \$3.95



copy to: A. WENBERG

[www.texasmonthly.com](http://www.texasmonthly.com)



# THE ASSASSINATION AT

# 35

## Why we still care.

WE THINK THE MILLENNIUM IS CHANGING IN 2000, BUT SINCE eras change by events and not by the calendar, the new millennium actually began 35 years ago, on November 22, 1963. That was when the confidence and the security of the years following World War II were abruptly destroyed and replaced by suspicion and insecurity. Immediately afterward came the unthinkable—the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert Kennedy, a losing war, Watergate, and Iran-Contra. Belief in conspiracy and powerful forces working against us became part of the national consciousness, reaching its apotheosis in the 1991 film *JFK*. One gauge of how much we've changed: In 1964 three fourths of the American people had a great deal of confidence in the government; today that number is one fifth.

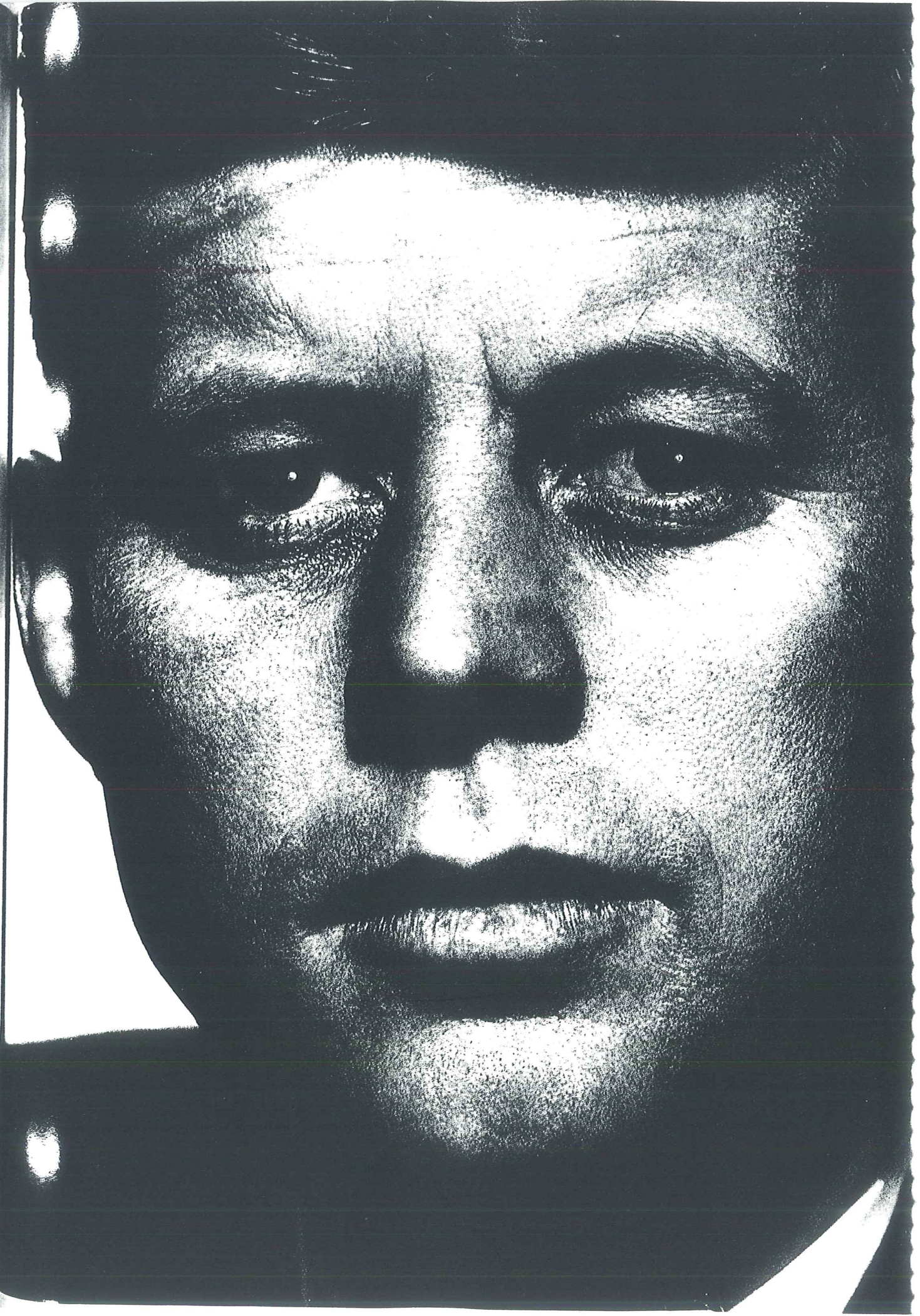
In this issue we look closely at that singular event, the assassination. We explain the strengths and weaknesses of the best-known conspiracy theories. Research along these lines, so often misguided, seems from today's perspective to be a form of grieving. We talk with witnesses to the assassination. They are all certain of what they saw and experienced, yet their stories often conflict. That shows how difficult it is to find the truth. We show evidence of the crime in stark photographs from the National Archives. We try to explain how the loopyest assassination theory of all can have rational adherents. And we make the case that one man alone did the deed and try to show how knowing that can be a kind of solace. But we have not answered—and cannot answer—when or whether that solace will come.

AT

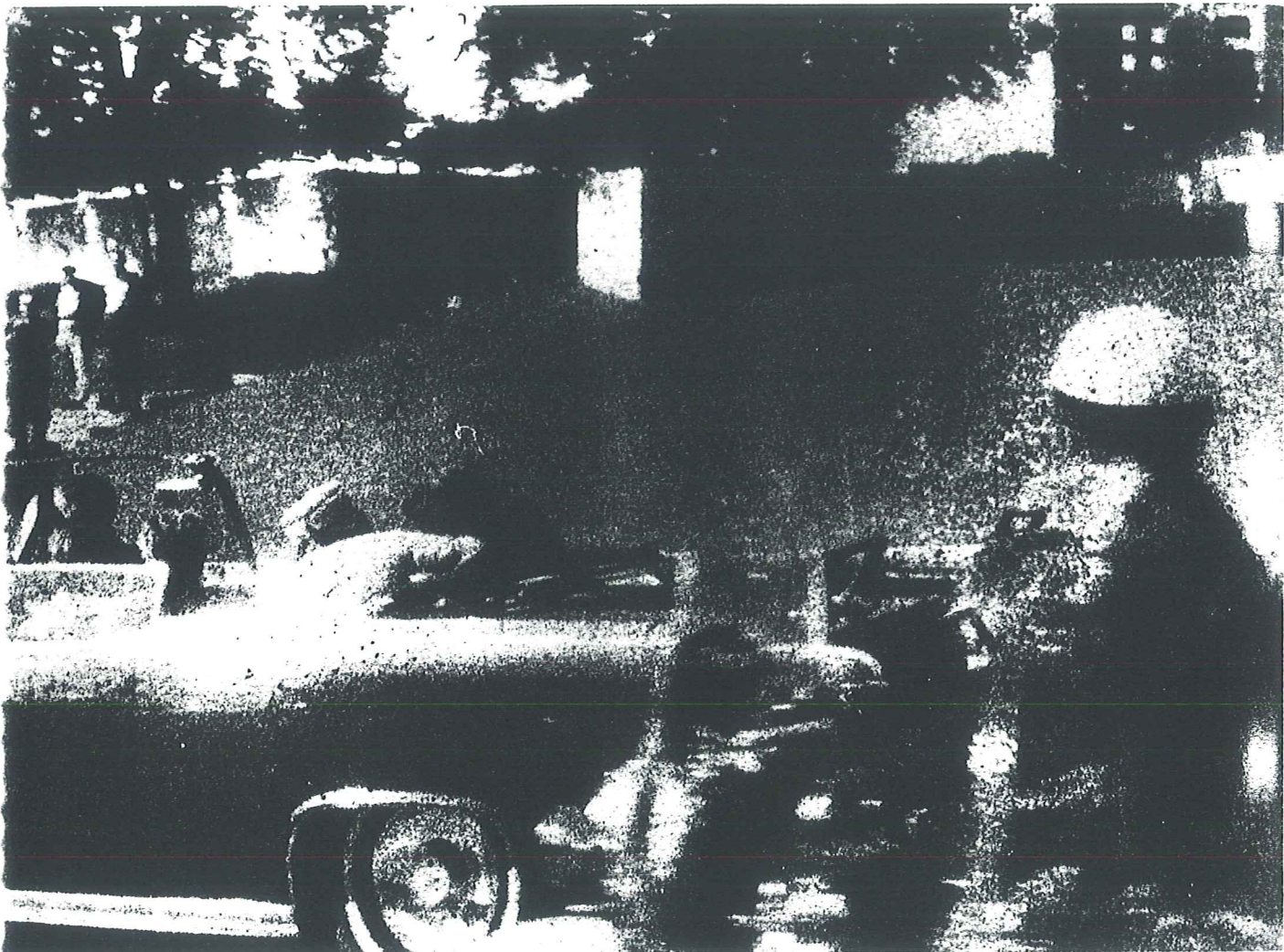
II

he assas-  
the best-  
so often  
of griev-  
y are all  
ries often  
We show  
National  
ation the-  
the case  
knowing  
ed—and

OPPE HALSMAN



# THE CONSPIRACY



**KENNEDY IS HIT BY AN ASSASSIN'S BULLET. BUT WHICH ASSASSIN? AND WHICH BULLET? FOR MANY SKEPTICS, THOSE QUESTIONS REMAIN UNANSWERED.**

THERE IS NEVER AN ORDINARY DAY AT DALLAS' DEALEY PLAZA, where personal revelations and quiet mourning are as familiar as the downtown rush-hour traffic. But this August afternoon is stranger than usual: A dark blue 1961 Lincoln Continental convertible limousine is sitting in the center lane of Elm Street, which has been blocked off. Stills of the Zapruder film line the sidewalk, serving as the storyboard for the day's activities: a restaging of the century's most famous murder, the assassination of John F. Kennedy, for a television documentary that will try to determine, with the help of lasers, where the shots came from. Three men in white shirts are huddled around the convertible, bending and shifting the limbs of its foam rubber passengers. A gray dummy sits in the back seat, just as Kennedy did, while another—in John Connally's place—rests on the jump seat in front of him. "His arm has got to come over more," insists one man, pulling the president's left arm farther across his spongy torso. A film crew circles the scene, while tourists, ballistics experts, conspiracy buffs, and reporters watch the goings-on. "But shouldn't his other hand be *over* the chrome line?" asks one observer. The men in the white shirts mull this over, glancing first at the film stills and then at the mannequins, before resuming their work.

The heat is oppressive, but the comparing and tweaking continues late into the day.

Of course, they will never get it right: the precise slant of a wave, the tilt of a head, the trajectory of a bullet. Elm Street has been closed several times for such reenactments, but there is still no consensus on exactly what happened. There are too many shifting perspectives, inexplicable details, and active imaginations, all aching to make sense of a senseless act. Over the past 35 years, countless theories have evolved, but they discount the overwhelming proof, both physical and circumstantial, that Lee Harvey Oswald was the man who shot Kennedy. "I have sent men to the electric chair with less evidence," said Henry W. Houston, Dallas County's district attorney in 1963.

In 1964 the Warren Commission concluded that Oswald was Kennedy's assassin, and that he had acted alone. But the official story had troubling inconsistencies: Conflicting eyewitness accounts, discrepancies in the autopsy reports, and the unlikely paths and precision of Oswald's shots all suggested more than one gunman had been at Dealey Plaza. The first cries of foul play came from across the Atlantic, most notably from English writer Bertrand Russell, but it wasn't until 1966, with the publication of

L  
Mark La  
quest, th  
at home.  
film soon  
of the ca  
Josiah T  
Dallas th  
dent bei

New C  
fray in l  
defected  
had ten  
late that  
part, the  
and the  
more th  
reached  
first sho  
had con-  
sixties.

Assassin  
that whi  
complic  
existenc  
ernmen  
Cuban  
in vogue  
Stone's  
pointed  
telligenc  
ous the  
complic

What  
it is har  
owy fig  
Man—t  
examin  
at Kenn  
Italian  
already  
ensurin  
drumm  
present  
intrigu  
questio  
lying a  
terrible  
there w  
pose—  
narrati  
tive: a

# RACY THEORIES

Let's say Oswald had help—or was set up. Who did it?

by Pamela Colloff and Michael Hall

Mark Lane's *Rush to Judgment* and Edward Jay Epstein's *Inquest*, that the Warren Commission's findings were challenged at home. *Life* magazine, which had purchased the Zapruder film soon after the assassination, launched a new investigation of the case. The magazine's consultant, former Navy lieutenant Josiah Thompson, argued the following year in *Six Seconds in Dallas* that a close examination of the film showed the president being shot from several directions, hence a conspiracy.

New Orleans district attorney Jim Garrison stepped into the fray in 1967, using the loose ends of Oswald's life—he had defected to the Soviet Union and sought asylum in Cuba and had tenuous connections to anti-Castro militants—to speculate that the CIA had somehow been involved. For the most part, the public ignored such cynical talk, but as first Vietnam and then Watergate wore on, its distrust grew. Interest in a more thorough investigation of the Kennedy assassination reached critical mass in 1975, when the Zapruder film was first shown on TV and Senate hearings revealed that the CIA had conspired with the Mafia to kill Fidel Castro in the early sixties. The following year, the House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA) was formed, and in 1979 it concluded that while Oswald was indeed the gunman, he had had an accomplice, who shot, and missed, from the grassy knoll. The existence of a conspiracy was confirmed—by the federal government, no less. The HSCA also hinted at involvement by Cuban exiles or members of the mob, a theory that remained in vogue throughout the eighties. Since 1991, when Oliver Stone's controversial movie *JFK* used Garrison as its hero and pointed fingers at the CIA, the FBI, Cuban exiles, military intelligence, and munitions profiteers, the specifics of the various theories have been lost, replaced by a sense of overall complicity: Everyone was in on it.

What follows is an overview of the conspiracy oeuvre, though it is hardly exhaustive. We haven't included some of the shadowy figures—Umbrella Man, the Babushka Lady, Badge Man—that populate the fringes of conspiracy-think. Nor do we examine the more far-out theories: that Joe DiMaggio, angered at Kennedy's treatment of his ex-wife, Marilyn Monroe, got his Italian friends to knock him off; or that the president, who was already suffering from Addison's disease, staged his own death, ensuring a glorified place in history; or that Frank Sinatra's drummer, Franklin Folley, was somehow involved. Instead, we present the ones that have endured over the years. They are as intriguing as they are implausible, and they raise as many questions as the Warren Commission failed to answer. Underlying all of them are uncanny coincidences, convergences of terrible knowledge, and most important, a desire to believe that there was a grand design—some kind of meaning and purpose—behind Kennedy's murder. Thirty-five years later, these narratives have become more appealing than the banal alternative: a lone nut, a good shot, an utterly vain death.

## The CIA Theory

WHEN KENNEDY ASSUMED the presidency in January 1961, he inherited a federal agency that had spun out of



THE THREE TRAMPS ARRESTED ON NOVEMBER 22 WERE . . . TRAMPS.

control. The CIA had pursued its own objectives during the Eisenhower administration—

instigating coups, inciting rebellions, trying to assassinate foreign leaders—generally without White House supervision. When the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion (which the CIA had orchestrated) proved to be a disaster as well as an enormous political liability for Kennedy, he fired the director and his deputies, threatening to “smash the CIA into a thousand pieces and scatter it to the winds.” Rogue agents, fearful he would do just that, struck first, either by placing CIA sharpshooters at Dealey Plaza or by enlisting former Marine and spy wannabe Lee Harvey Oswald to do the job.

## Believers

Authors Mark Lane (*Plausible Denial*), John Newman (*Oswald and the CIA*), and Anthony Summers (*Conspiracy*).

## Strange Details

CIA director Allen Dulles, whom Kennedy had fired in



LBJ, DULLES (THIRD FROM RIGHT), AND WARREN COMMISSION MEMBERS.



**NIXON HAPPENED TO BE IN DALLAS ON THE DAY THAT JFK WAS ASSASSINATED.**

1961, later served on the Warren Commission. • CIA deputy director Charles Cabell, whom Kennedy had also fired, was the brother of Earle Cabell, Dallas' mayor in 1963. • One of Kennedy's alleged mistresses, Mary Pinchot Meyer, was married to a CIA official and was murdered in 1964. • Richard Nixon—who oversaw the CIA's original plan to take back Cuba from Castro when he was Eisenhower's vice president—was in Dallas on the day of the assassination.

### Reasons to Believe

If anybody could have planned and concealed a plot as intricate as the Kennedy assassination, power-hungry CIA agents could; they had already helped oust heads of state in Guatemala and Iran. • The agency had little congressional oversight in 1963 and was full of furtive cells, subgroups, and enthusiastic spooks who acted with impunity and whose modus operandi was "plausible deniability." Indeed,

as Kennedy's motorcade was making its way through Dallas, a CIA operative in Paris was—unbeknownst to most of his higher-ups—giving a poison fountain pen to Cuban turncoat Rolando Cubela, who had volunteered to hand it to Fidel Castro. • While in the Marines in 1957 and 1958, Oswald was stationed at Atsugi Air Base in Japan, the home of the largest CIA station in the Pacific. •



**GIANCANA HELPED JFK WIN THE 1960 ELECTION THROUGH SKULDUGGERY.**

During the Warren Commission's investigation, the CIA withheld untold amounts of information, notably that the agency and the mob had jointly tried to kill Castro.

### Reasons Not to Believe

There is no evidence that Oswald was ever a CIA operative; at Atsugi he was a low-level officer who was court-martialed twice and displayed erratic behavior, once shooting himself in the arm. • Just because the CIA would lie, cheat, steal, overthrow governments, and try to assassinate other countries' leaders does not mean that it would kill its own.

### Recent Developments

Speculation about the CIA's involvement has always centered on one of the most intriguing assassination riddles: the identity of the three tramps, a trio of men arrested in the rail yard behind Dealey Plaza immediately after the assassination. Photos showed them being led through the downtown streets by Dallas police officers, yet there was no record of their arrest. Conspiracy theorists have long believed that they looked suspiciously like CIA boogymen E. Howard Hunt and Frank Sturgis (as well as Charles Harrelson, the assassin of federal judge John Wood and the father of actor Woody Harrelson). According to the three tramps theory, these CIA operatives killed Kennedy; after they were arrested, they were whisked away by unidentified federal agents who destroyed all records of the incident. But in 1992 Dallas researcher Mary

La Fontaine searched through Dallas Police Department files and found overlooked arrest records from November 22, 1963. The three tramps were, in fact, three tramps: Harold Doyle, Gus Abrams, and John Forrester Gedney.

### The Mafia Theory

THE MOB FELT BETRAYED IN 1963. Chicago godfather Sam Giancana had helped Kennedy win the 1960 election through skulduggery, and Miami mob-



**CASTRO THREATENED TO RETALIATE AFTER THE BAY OF PIGS INVASION.**

ster Santos Trafficante had aided the CIA in its assassination attempts on Castro. But rather than pledging their loyalty, the Kennedys launched an all-out campaign against organized crime. Attorney General Robert Kennedy first went after Teamster boss Jimmy Hoffa and then deported New Orleans syndicate boss Carlos Marcello to Guatemala. Pushed around long enough, and angry at the president for going soft on Castro—who had shut down its lucrative Cuban casinos—the mob made someone an offer he couldn't refuse. Oswald was either its hit man or its patsy. Upon his arrest, the mob dispatched Jack Ruby to silence him.

### Believers

Authors John H. Davis (*The Kennedy Contract*) and David Scheim (*Contract on America*)

EXNER SA  
ENVELOPE

and veto  
Anderson

Str

In 1975  
course of

CIER GO CAMP  
EXHIBITED  
MORE OFFERS

AFTER TH  
gations  
CIA, S  
gunned  
Jimmy  
and Las

through  
ment files  
d arrest  
ber 22,  
ps were,  
Harold  
and John

**ORY**

AYED IN  
her Sam  
Kennedy  
through  
mi mob-



RETALIATE  
NVAISON.  
ite had  
-assina-  
tro. But  
their loy-  
unched  
ainst or-  
ey Gen-  
rst went  
Jimmy  
ported  
ite boss  
atemala-  
nough,  
dent for  
who had  
Cuban  
e some-  
refuse.  
hit man  
arrest,  
k Ruby

is (*The  
David  
merica*)



**EXNER SAYS SHE OFTEN CARRIED ENVELOPES FROM JFK TO GIANCANA.** and veteran journalist Jack Anderson.

**Strange Details**

1975 and 1976, during the course of congressional investi-

Roselli—who had told Jack Anderson that Ruby was ordered to silence Oswald—was dismembered, stuffed into an oil drum, and tossed off the coast of Florida. • Kennedy and Judith Exner, one of Giancana's molls, were introduced in 1960 by Frank Sinatra and carried on an affair for more than two years: Exner says she often carried envelopes from the president to the mobster.

**Reasons to Believe**

In 1979 the HSCA concluded that Hoffa, Marcello, and Trafficante all had the "motive, means, and opportunity" to assassinate Kennedy. • Hoffa had told a federal informant that he would like to kill RFK but that his brother was the more desirable victim because "when you cut down the tree, the branches fall with it." • Marcello—according to Las Vegas promoter Edward Becker—once coolly explained why it was better to target JFK than RFK: "If you cut off a dog's tail, the dog will only keep biting. But if you cut off

1992 Frank Ragano, a long-time lawyer for Hoffa and Trafficante, told the *New York Post* that the two mobsters and Marcello had agreed to kill the president. Ragano claimed that Trafficante said on his deathbed: "Carlos f—ed up. We shouldn't have gotten rid of Giovanni [John]. We should have killed Bobby." • Oswald's uncle and surrogate father, Dutz Murret, was a bookie in the Marcello organization, and his mother, Marguerite, dated members of Marcello's gang. • When Ruby was a teenager in Chicago, he ran errands for Al Capone. As an adult, he had ties to members of the Giancana, Hoffa, Marcello, and Trafficante families. In 1959 he visited Trafficante in his Cuban jail cell, where Castro had thrown the mobster after the revolution. • Two days before the assassination, a prostitute and heroin addict named Rose Cheramie told a Louisiana state policeman that she had been en route to Dallas with two men "who were Italians or resembled

underworld" had been that Kennedy was going to take a mob bullet. She also said that Oswald and Ruby "had been



**TRAFFICANTE WAS VISITED IN HIS CUBAN JAIL CELL BY JACK RUBY.** shacking up for years . . . They were bedmates."

**Reasons Not to Believe**

The HSCA was ultimately "unable to establish any direct evidence" of mob complicity. • Chicago FBI agent William Roemer, who spent hours listening to wiretaps of mobsters after the assassination, said they were "gleeful" but did not talk of a conspiracy. • There is no proof that Ruby was anything more than a small-timer on the periphery of the Dallas underworld. • Hoffa, Trafficante, and Marcello were cautious men, yet killing JFK was a rash solution—one that would only have brought on more heat from RFK. And why would a bunch of seasoned killers rely on a loser like Oswald? • Cheramie—who had spent time in mental hospitals and who had a history of providing the FBI with false leads—was in the throes of heroin withdrawal when she told her story. After the assassination, she said that she had once worked as a dancer for Ruby, whom she knew as Pinky, but there is no evidence that she did. Nor is there reliable evidence that Oswald and Ruby ever knew each other.



**THE 1960 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, RFK (L.) WENT AFTER HOFFA (R.) AND OTHER SUSPECTED MOBSTERS.**

its head, the dog will die." • An FBI informant testified before the HSCA that Trafficante told him in 1962 that the president "was going to be hit." • In "Italians" and were planning to kill Kennedy. After the assassination, she told Dr. Victor Weiss at East Louisiana State Hospital that "the word in the

**Recent Developments**

In 1993 Illinois cop killer James Files confessed to Kennedy's murder. Claiming to have been an Army paratrooper in Laos, a trainer of Cuban exiles for the



**AFTER THE ASSASSINATION, LBJ ORDERED THAT JFK'S LIMO BE REFURBISHED RATHER THAN ENTERED INTO EVIDENCE.**

Bay of Pigs invasion, and the personal driver for Chicago mobster Charles Nicoletti. Files said that he fired from the grassy knoll while Nicoletti shot from the Dal-Tex Building. In 1994 the *New York Post* ran a story on Files titled "Call This JFK Tale Knoll and Void."

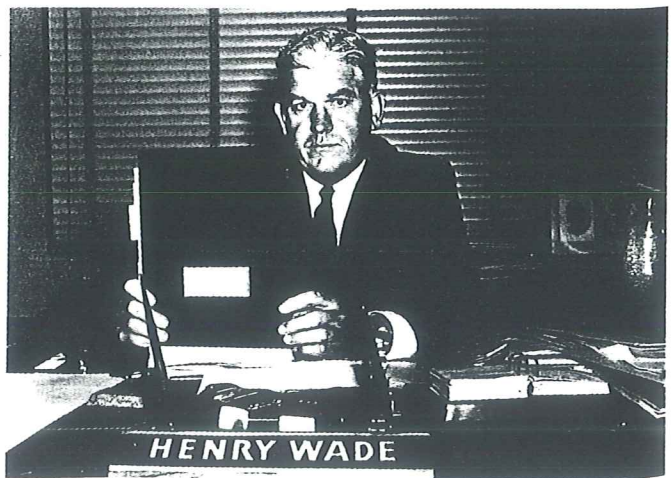
### Lyndon? The LBJ Theory

BY 1963 LYNDON JOHNSON HAD grown weary of the obscurity of his office and was concerned that the scandals surrounding

his cronies Bobby Baker and Billie Sol Estes would ruin his hopes for the presidency. When rumors circulated that JFK was going to drop him from the 1964 ticket, LBJ worked to stage an elaborate coup on home turf, enlisting loyal Texas oilmen who feared losing the oil depletion allowance and warmongers who wanted to step up involvement in Vietnam. One of their foot soldiers was an angry young man named Lee Harvey Oswald.

### Believers

Authors David Lifton (*The Texas Connection*) and Harris-



WADE GROOMED WITH JOHN CONNALLY IN COLLEGE.

son Edward Livingstone (*Killing Kennedy*).

### Strange Details

John Connally, LBJ's longtime friend and colleague, roomed in college with Dallas County district attorney Henry Wade, whose November 24, 1963, press conference made the definitive case against Oswald. • Eugene Locke, the deputy ambassador to Vietnam under LBJ, once served as the attorney for Marie Tippit, the wife of Dallas police officer J. D. Tippit, whom Oswald shot after the assassination.

### Reasons to Believe

Two days after the assassination, deputy attorney general Nicholas Katzenbach pushed for the creation of a federal investigatory commission, partly out of concern that the public might suspect Johnson's involvement: Historically, assassinations of heads of state have been carried out by their successors. • Soon after becoming president, Johnson, a hawk, pressed the House and Senate for passage of the Gulf of Tonkin resolution, initiating a period of increased involvement in Vietnam. • Johnson sealed certain assassination records until 2039, ordered that Kennedy's limousine be refurbished rather than entered into evidence, and handpicked each member of the Warren Commission, which answered ultimately to him.

### Reasons Not to Believe

LBJ was fiercely ambitious but not depraved; to believe that he would order Kennedy's

murder r  
nary lea  
years of  
ning, m  
Barbar  
1967 p  
amplifi  
JFK—th  
of evid  
idea tha  
the assa-

### Receiv

The new  
show th  
means t  
gers: he  
Vietnam



### DID SOV

to the c  
a man  
greater  
detract  
credit  
of a Ju

TH  
HUMIL  
the C  
Soviet  
sheche  
Scenar  
in the  
to 196  
onage  
to mal  
Oswa  
Khrus  
an Os  
opera



one (Kill-

### ails

longtime  
roomed  
County  
ry Wade,  
1, 1963,  
le the de-  
Oswald. •  
deputy  
im under  
the attor-  
the wife  
er J. D.  
shot soon  
on.

### lieve

assassina-  
general  
pushed  
ederal in-  
on, partly  
e public  
son's in-  
assassinate  
ave  
eir suc-  
ecoming  
a hawk,  
d Senate  
of Tonkin  
period of  
in Viet-  
l certain  
ls until  
nnedy's  
ed rather  
nce, and  
er of the  
high an-  
im.

### believe

bitious  
believe  
nnedy's

COLLEGE.

mauder requires an extraordinary leap of logic. • Despite years of speculation—beginning, most memorably, with Barbara Garson's popular 1967 play, *MacBird!*, and amplified in Oliver Stone's *JFK*—there is not one shred of evidence to support the claim that LBJ had a hand in the assassination.

### Recent Developments

The newly released LBJ tapes show that Johnson was by no means the puppet of warmongers; he clearly agonized over Vietnam and sought resolution

shots at Dealey Plaza. Scenario 3: Oswald returned home from the Soviet Union an unwitting assassin, programmed à la *The Manchurian Candidate* to carry out the orders of those behind the Iron Curtain.

### Believers

CIA counterintelligence chief James Angleton and author Michael Eddowes (*Khrushchev Killed Kennedy*).

### Strange Details

Russian baron and suspected spy George de Mohrenschildt—



DID SOVIET PREMIER KHRUSHCHEV (SECOND FROM R.) SET UP OSWALD?

to the conflict. They also reveal a man of more depth, and of greater conscience, than his detractors have ever given him credit for—hardly the portrait of a Judas waiting in the wings.

who helped introduce Oswald to the Russian émigré community in Dallas and was his closest friend before the assassination—fatally shot himself in 1977, before he was set to testify before the HSCA. • The uncle of Marina Nikolayevna Prusakova, Oswald's Russian-born wife, was a ranking officer in the Soviet Ministry of Internal Affairs.

### Reasons to Believe

In January 1960 Oswald was given a rent-free apartment in Minsk, where an espionage training academy was located. Recently declassified files show that up to twenty KGB agents shadowed him and may have manipulated his behavior. ("Maybe they did drop a few tablets in his glass," a high-

### The KGB Theory

HUMILIATED BY KENNEDY IN the Cuban Missile Crisis, Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev decided to punish him. Scenario 1: Oswald, who lived in the Soviet Union from 1959 to '62, was trained in espionage there and then ordered to make the hit. Scenario 2: Oswald was the patsy in Khrushchev's game, set up by an Oswald double and KGB operatives who fired the fatal

# THE BOOK REPOSITORY

Essential assassination reading.  
by Anne Dingus

### The Warren Commission Report

(1964). Huge and hugely fascinating, it firmly asserts that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone. Appendixes include JFK's autopsy report, Ruby's polygraph test, and an analysis of Oswald's strained budget.

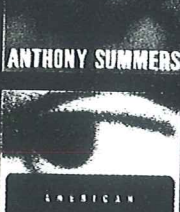


### Six Seconds in Dallas

JOSIAH THOMPSON (1967). A Kierkegaard scholar, Thompson was the first writer to study the Zapruder film frame by frame. His book eschews theories and focuses solely on physical evidence.



**Conspiracy** ANTHONY SUMMERS (1980). A readable, well-reasoned, and persuasive tome, it is the best of its breed (runner-up: *Crossfire*, by Dallasite Jim Marrs) and fingers what have now become the usual suspects: the CIA, the Mafia, and American complacency.



**American Tabloid** JAMES ELLROY (1995). The author of *L.A. Confidential* applies his hard-boiled style to this noir-ish hodgepodge of dicks, molls, thugs, spies, Cubans, Russians, Jimmy Hoffa, and Howard Hughes.



**Libra** DON DELILLO (1988). This intelligent novel interweaves Oswald's fatal ambition, CIA revisionism, and a Castro caper, but the real message is how "theories that gleam like jade idols" helped enshrine JFK.



**Oswald's Tale** NORMAN MAILER (1995). This sympathetic but overlong biography combines facts and minutiae with meaningful musings ("To approach Oswald, we must deal with metaphor as often as with fact").



**On the Trail of the Assassins** JIM GARRISON (1988). The former district attorney in New Orleans was deluded and megalomaniacal, a dangerous combination. His book is interesting as a case study in paranoia but not at all reliable about the assassination.

**Case Closed** GERALD POSNER (1993). Posner refutes conspiracy confabulations and assembles a mountain of evidence to prove that "Lee Harvey Oswald, driven by his own twisted and impenetrable furies, was the only assassin at Dealey Plaza on November 22, 1963."



FROM 1959 TO 1962 OSWALD LIVED IN THE USSR, WHERE HE MET HIS WIFE, MARINA NIKOLAYEVNA PRUSAKOVA.

ranking KGB official told the Russian newspaper *Izvestia*, “but only to make him let down his guard and be a little more talkative.” • The Russians, who had never before captured a U2 spy plane, suddenly managed to do so a scant six and a half months after the defection of Oswald, who had worked as a Marine radar operator in Atsugi, Japan, where the U2 was based. • On a trip to Mexico City on September 27, 1963, Oswald visited the Soviet embassy and spoke to KGB agent Oleg Maximovich Nechiporenko—who was expelled from Mexico in 1970 for conspiring to overthrow the government—and Valeriy Vladimirovich Kostikov, an agent in “wet affairs”: sabotage and assassination.

### Reasons Not to Believe

Secret agents usually keep a lower profile than did Oswald, whose pinko leanings—such as addressing his fellow Marines as “comrades” in the midst of the cold war or reading *Das Kapital* in the barracks—earned him the nickname Oswaldskovich. • It seems unlikely that the KGB would have recruited someone as unstable as Oswald—who

attempted suicide five days after arriving in Moscow—for such a covert operation, since a Soviet-backed plot to kill Kennedy would have resulted in certain nuclear retaliation if uncovered. • At Atsugi, Oswald was a low-level soldier with little exposure to the U2. • A 1981 exhumation of Oswald’s body revealed that it was indeed he who was buried, not his Soviet-trained double, as some conspiracy theorists suspected. • Marina later recanted her testimony and professed her husband’s innocence, saying that she had been threatened with deportation if she did not cooperate. • Why would Khrushchev want to get rid of Kennedy in favor of Johnson, a more zealous anti-communist with closer ties to the military?

### Recent Developments

In 1992 the KGB released dossier #31451: the Oswald file. It contained few revelations other than the KGB’s own suspicions that the American defector was a CIA operative. There was, however, one tantalizing detail: After spying on several of Oswald’s hunting trips, KGB operatives concluded that he was a poor shot.




A WARREN COMMISSION MEMBER SAID THAT HOOVER “LIED HIS EYES OFF

## Hoover's Endgame The FBI Theory

BY THE FALL OF 1963, J. EDGAR Hoover had anticipated that his long tenure as FBI director was coming to an end. Federal law required the 68-year-old to step down on his seventieth birthday, and he knew that Kennedy was eager to be rid of him. But rather than fading quietly into the background, Hoover orchestrated an early transfer of power to his ally LBJ, who, as president, could—and did—exempt him from mandatory retirement, allowing him to lord over the bureau until his death in 1972. Scenario 1: Hoover knew of various plots to kill Kennedy but took no action, failing to inform the Secret Service of threats to the president’s life and taking an uncharacteristically [CONTINUED ON PAGE 161]

FASHION  
around t  
acy the  
else. To  
ting-edg  
Two Os  
vides ce  
ple may  
their hat  
around  
least si  
publish  
1966. E  
been re  
claims  
people v  
lived as  
was the  
who wa  
grew up  
second,  
gary wi  
lar to L  
CIA or  
secret o  
age thin  
lel life  
traction  
neatly  
conspir  
CIA, th  
goes, c  
benefit  
the pre  
left hol  
son of  
existen  
The  
taken a  
It's one  
other t  
could E  
two dar  
18-yea  
the Tw  
spiracy  
ing JF  
ton. He  
Press);  
walds t  
Politica  
assem  
magaz  
Kenne





**Bobby Hargis**  
Was riding his police motorcycle  
at the left rear bumper  
of the presidential limousine.

**Pierce Allman**  
Rushed into the Texas  
School Book Depository after  
the shots were fired.


**Bill and Gayle Newman**

Were standing on the curb  
of Elm Street, their backs to the  
grassy knoll, with their  
children, four-year-old Billy  
and two-year-old Clayton.

**Jan**  
Escorted  
through  
Dallas  
he  
hande  
Jac

**Rosemary Willis Roach**

Ran alongside the presidential  
limo as it drove along Houston  
Street and turned onto Elm.  
Was standing on the opposite side  
of Elm from the grassy knoll  
when the shots were fired.



Red Duke  
Treated Connally's wounds at  
Parkland hospital.

Waggoner Carr  
Ate breakfast with the  
president and state and  
local dignitaries at the  
Texas Hotel in Fort Worth  
on the morning of the  
assassination.

James Leavelle  
Escorted Lee Harvey Oswald  
through the basement of the  
Dallas Police Department's  
headquarters. Was  
handcuffed to Oswald when  
Jack Ruby shot him.

Nellie Connally  
Sat to the left of her  
husband, Governor  
John Connally, in the  
presidential limo.

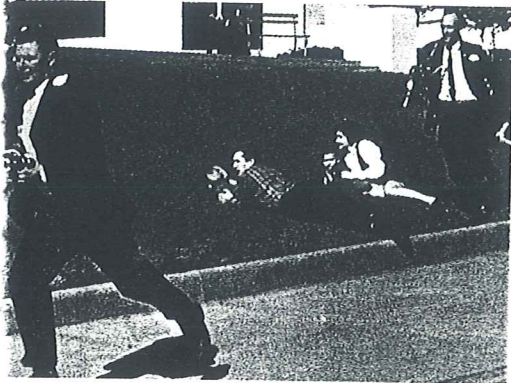
# THE WITNESSES

What they saw then. Who they are now. *Interviews by Joe Nick Patoski*

PHOTOGRAPH BY GREG WALTERMAN

*Both 57, Mesquite*  
**Then** Electrician and housewife  
**Now** Co-own an electrical contracting business

GAYLE: "WE KNEW THE PARADE ROUTE, AND we came on downtown, parked the car, and walked down the street until the crowd thinned out because the children were quite small. You could hear the sounds of the crowd and the car coming. And as the car turned the corner and came toward us, we heard a noise. I thought it was a firecracker. Then, as they got closer to us, directly in front of us, that other shot hit the



**THE NEWMANS ON THE GRASS IN THE AFTERMATH.**

side of his head, and we heard Jackie holler, 'Oh, my God, no. They shot Jack!' And Bill turned to us and said, 'That's it! Hit the ground!' We put the children on the ground and shielded them with our bodies because we thought we were in direct cross fire."

Bill: "My reaction at that moment was that we narrowly missed being shot by that third shot. I thought the shot must have come from behind because of the way President Kennedy reacted to it. My focus was on the car, and I reacted to what I saw in the car. You know, I just hate to see that interview of me on WFAA back then. I sound like I'm straight out of East Texas. But I said [when asked where the shots came from], 'That little knoll, that little knoll back there'—something like that. And I did have a man tell me, you know, you're the first person to use that term. Whether that's true or not, I can't confirm that."

*61, Highland Park*  
**Then** Director of production and programming at WFAA radio  
**Now** President of Allman and Company, Dallas public relations firm

"I REMEMBER THINKING, INSTINCTIVELY, 'I've got to get to a telephone.' I ran into the depository building, asked the guy where the phone was, went inside, got on the phone, called the station, told them what happened. Put the phone down, ran upstairs, then realized, 'Whoops! Need the phone,' went back down, called back and said, 'Just leave the line open, strap on a

tape.' No one ever challenged me. No one ever said, 'Who are you? Who are you calling?' And no one took charge. A lot of uniforms milling around, a lot of plainclothesmen milling around.

"The Secret Service came to see me a couple of days later. They went through the timing, the sequence, where did you go, what did you say, what did you do, and they kept going through that. They wanted to know about hand gestures, the whole thing. And they said, 'Are you familiar with the testimony of Lee Harvey Oswald?'"

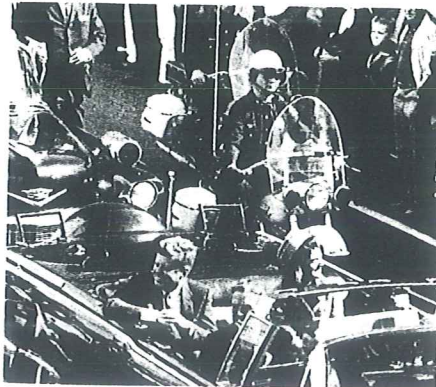


**ALLMAN IN LATE 1962.**

"He said that as he was leaving the depository building, a young man with a crew cut rushed up, identified himself as a newsman, and asked where the phone was. And they said, 'Your sequence, your gestures, everything you've said corroborates exactly what he has said. Can you give us an identification?' I said no. And we went through this time after time. I said, 'Guys, this is going to be power of suggestion. All I can remember is white male with dark hair, and slender, and his gesture toward the phone.' Anyway, I said, 'Are you saying that I asked Oswald where the phone was?' And they said yes, and they wanted an identification. And I couldn't ID him, even after looking at the pictures, you know, later on."

*66, Irving*  
**Then** Motorcycle patrolman, Dallas Police Department  
**Now** Detective, Dallas Police Department (will retire in December)

"I WAS TRYING TO FIND OUT WHERE THOSE shots came from. I saw up on the grassy knoll people falling down—people around me were hitting the ground. I ran up to the grassy knoll to look at the railroad tracks and couldn't see anybody up there. So I ran back down and got on my motorcycle, and I thought, 'Well, maybe he might be on the other side.' So I motored down underneath the underpass and looked on the other side and didn't see anyone over there, so I came back. It struck my mind the

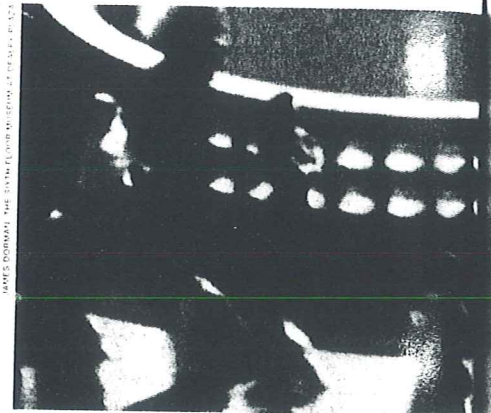


**HARGIS RIDES AT THE LIMO'S LEFT BUMPER.**

president's head went to his left, forward and left, so it meant that anything that hit him in the head had to come over his right shoulder. From that, I was looking up at the school book depository. I rode over there and that was when we all surrounded the school book depository and took our positions."

"When Kennedy was shot in the head, brain matter and blood and stuff had all come over and hit me as I rode through it. Well, I did all the rest of these things that I talked about, then I walked over to the sheriff's office, and while I was walking over to the it, a guy came up to me and offered me \$17,000 for my helmet. I told the guy, 'You're going to have to talk to the City of Dallas,' because it didn't belong to me. I [fellow police officer] Bud Brewer says, 'Dude, you got something on your lip.' And he flicked at it, and it was a piece of Kennedy's brain and a piece of skull bone."

"You know, I coined that word, for any better reason than saying 'grassy bank'—I just said 'grassy knoll.' And it stuck."



**WILLIS, 10, RUNS THROUGH THE DEALLEY CROWD.**

*45, Amarillo*  
**Then** Fifth grader, Lakewood Elementary School  
**Now** Works for an Amarillo telecommunications company

"AS THE MOTORCADE MADE THE TURN FROM Houston to Elm Street, they'd just gone a few feet when the first shot rang out. I didn't know what it was, but I was looking for what I heard. And the pigeons immediately ascended off that roof of the school book depository building—that's what caught my eye. The second shot that I heard came from behind my right shoulder. By that time the limousine had already moved farther down. And the next one, right after that, it came from the right but not from as far back—it was up some, still behind me, but not as far back as the other one. And the next one that came was from the grassy knoll, and I saw the smoke coming through the trees, into the air, and fragments of his head ascended into the air, and from my vision, focal point, the smoke and the fragments, you know, everything met. I mean, there's no question in my mind what I saw or what I heard."

LEAVELL

Then D

"I TOLD body sho as you at And he k being me body's go when he but it too like two do too m on [Oswa close to l his body, bullet hit He never said man rations. I made the

"If Chi tion that told him stops rig him off h Main Str people r swer to : they can it." If he' have got in the co got him have got on him, row with

"PRESIDE 'Waggom we are at just wote



**LEAVELLE (LEFT), HANDCUFFED TO HISTORY.**

**78. Dallas**  
**Then** Detective, Dallas Police Department  
**Now** Retired

...OLD HIM ON THE WAY DOWN. 'LEE, IF ANY-  
 ...shoots at you, I hope they're as good a shot  
 ...you are.' Meaning they'd hit him and not me.  
 ...he kind of laughed, and he said, 'Ah, you're  
 ...melodramatic,' or something like that. 'No-  
 ...s going to shoot me.' I could see Jack [Ruby]  
 ...he came out of the crowd with that pistol,  
 ...took a little less than a second and a half, or  
 ...seconds, for that to take place. You can't  
 ...much in that length of time. I had jerked  
 ...[swald] to pull him behind me, but I was so  
 ...to him, instead of moving him. I just turned  
 ...ly, and instead of hitting dead center, the  
 ...hit about four inches to the left of the navel.  
 ...er said a word all the time. I know it's been  
 ...any times that he made some dying decla-  
 ...but if he made any dying declarations, he  
 ...em after I locked him in the morgue.

**45. Amarillo**  
**Then** Fifth grader, Lakewood  
**Elementary School**  
**Now** Works for an Amarillo  
**telecommunications company**

...film the transfer, and I'm going to keep  
 ...have followed my suggestion, why, we'd  
 ...down there safely, we'd have got him  
 ...jail without any problem, we'd have  
 ...court without any problem, we could  
 ...m convicted and got the death penalty  
 ...he could still be down there on death  
 ...peals pending, thirty-five years later."

**30. Austin**  
**Then** Attorney general of Texas  
**Now** Semi-retired lawyer

KENNEDY CAME UP TO ME AND SAID,  
 ...just wanted to tell you how delighted  
 ...reception we're getting in Texas; it's  
 ...I know, everything met. I more  
 ...in my mind what I saw d.' He added that he heard I was go-

ing to leave them to go speak in Dumas but that I  
 was rejoining the party that night in Austin at the  
 final stop, the big deal of the whole tour. I said,  
 'Yes, sir. I'll see you tonight in Austin.' Then I got  
 into the private plane to fly to Dumas, and of  
 course they left to Dallas. Then, when I landed in  
 Dumas, I was told that the president had been as-  
 sassinated. Which was unbelievable because I'd  
 just shaken his hand and talked with him. And  
 unbelievable also that such a thing could happen  
 in Texas. I flew back to Austin to my office to be  
 ready in case any legal problems came up.

"I spoke with President Johnson on November  
 twenty-fifth. The attorney general of Texas has the  
 power to investigate such crimes, and the presi-  
 dent told me to do what I had to do to uphold the  
 law of the State of Texas. I proposed holding a  
 court of inquiry in Texas, and he agreed and  
 asked me to hold a press conference but not an-  
 swer any questions. I called a conference for the  
 Texas press in Washington. Well, the world press  
 showed up. I read the statement announcing that  
 Texas was convening a court of inquiry and  
 walked out without taking questions. I was fol-  
 lowed by all these hostile



**CARR IN LATE 1963.**

voices. 'Are you really  
 the attorney general of  
 Texas? You son of a bitch  
 from Texas. What are you  
 running for? Why don't  
 you answer our questions,  
 you son of a bitch.'

"Shortly after the  
 president appointed the  
 Warren Commission, he made it clear he  
 needed to centralize the investigation and sug-  
 gested that I cooperate with the commission—  
 the limitation of my investigation would stop at  
 the state line. I decided to follow his wishes.  
 Otherwise, between Texas, the FBI, and the  
 Senate all conducting investigations, it would  
 have been a fourteen-ring circus."

**79. Houston**  
**Then** First lady of Texas  
**Now** Volunteer charity fundraiser

"I LOOKED TOWARD THE SOUND [OF A SHOT],  
 which is where the president was, and I saw his  
 hands fly up to his face, and then I saw him sink  
 down. Shot number one. John Connally was try-



**THE CONNALLYS IN AUSTIN, DECEMBER 5, 1963.**

ing to see him—he looked to his right, and he  
 couldn't see the president. John was afraid they  
 were shooting, and he turned left to see if he  
 could see him, and in the process of turning  
 back John was shot. Second shot. I pulled him  
 down in my lap because I didn't want them to  
 hurt him anymore. I didn't want them to shoot at  
 him anymore. And while I had him in my lap,  
 there was another shot. And my reaction to that  
 was: bloody matter all over the car, it fell all over  
 us. Third shot. John had his hat in his hand. He  
 always had that hat somewhere. He had the hat  
 in his hand when I pulled him over and  
 crouched him down, and he was holding that hat  
 up against him. We closed that wound that  
 would've killed him before we got to the hospi-  
 tal. I didn't know we were saving his life.

"I think that they ought to let the president  
 rest in peace. . . . people still want to argue  
 about a lot of things. John said, 'You know, in  
 this country no one could have kept a secret  
 like this all of these years.' And they couldn't."

**69. Houston**  
**Then** Chief resident surgeon at  
 Parkland hospital, Dallas  
**Now** Professor of surgery at UT-Houston  
 Medical School

"WHEN I SAW MRS. KENNEDY WITH ALL THIS  
 blood and other tissue on her dress, on her suit, I  
 knew we were in trouble. I put on a pair of  
 gloves, walked on around behind the president,



**DR. DUKE, CIRCA 1963.**

and three other fellas  
 were working on this hole  
 in his neck. I saw this  
 huge wound in his head.  
 Somebody said there's a  
 guy across the hall who  
 needs some help, so I  
 went across the hall and  
 there was one intern just  
 standing there—he was  
 as white as his coat. But right quick I knew  
 what the problem was. A large sucking chest  
 wound—there was a big hole in this patient's  
 chest. I don't know when I figured out it was  
 Governor Connally. So I got that stopped up and  
 put a chest tube in him, which would allow him  
 to breathe. Got IV's in him. We took him up-  
 stairs and [Dr. Robert Shaw] operated on him. I  
 stayed with him. We did not have intensive care  
 units in 1963, so we kept him in the recovery  
 room. I never left. I just slept right there. The  
 first time I went upstairs Sunday morning—the  
 first time I ever left the recovery room and went  
 upstairs to make rounds on all the other pa-  
 tients—Oswald got shot, and we went through  
 that same loop again. It was one of those mo-  
 ments when you felt like there was a great pall,  
 a cloud that descended upon where we were. In  
 fact, my three-year-old daughter, whom I didn't  
 see until Sunday night, she prayed a prayer—  
 my wife told me this—she said, 'The world is  
 dark, and we are very sad. Amen.'"

# THE EVIDENCE

Bullets, bloody clothes, a camera, and other assassinalia  
from the National Archives.



## The Jacket Exhibit 393

Worn by John F. Kennedy.  
Cut off his body in the emergency room  
at Parkland Memorial Hospital.



E

**Exhibit 394**

Worn by Kennedy. Note the bullet hole under the collar—the entry point of the second, or “magic,” bullet.



Exhibit 393  
found in  
a room  
at a hospital.

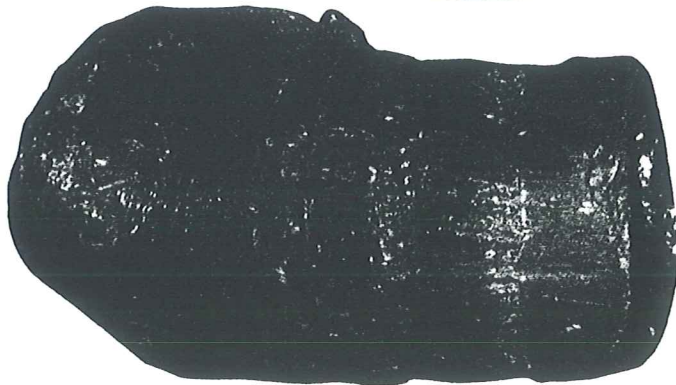


### **The Button Exhibit 602**

From the uniform of Dallas policeman J. D. Tippit, who was shot and killed by Oswald 45 minutes after Kennedy was assassinated.

### **The Magic Bullet Exhibit 399**

Rolled off John Connally's stretcher at Parkland. Later determined to have been fired by Oswald's rifle. Said to be magic because it entered Kennedy's back and exited his throat, then entered Connally's shoulder, exited his chest, entered and exited his wrist, and punctured his thigh and remained relatively undamaged.



### **The Bullet Exhibit 602**

One of four removed from Tippit's body during the autopsy.



**The Mannlicher-Carcano Rifle**  
**Exhibit 139**

Fired the bullets that killed Kennedy. Made in Italy in 1940. Mail-ordered by Oswald, using the name A. Hidell, from a sporting goods store in Chicago. Purchase price: \$12.78.



**The Bullet Fragments**  
**Exhibit 843**

Removed from Kennedy's skull during the autopsy.



**The Smith and Wesson .38 Special Revolver**  
**Exhibit 143**

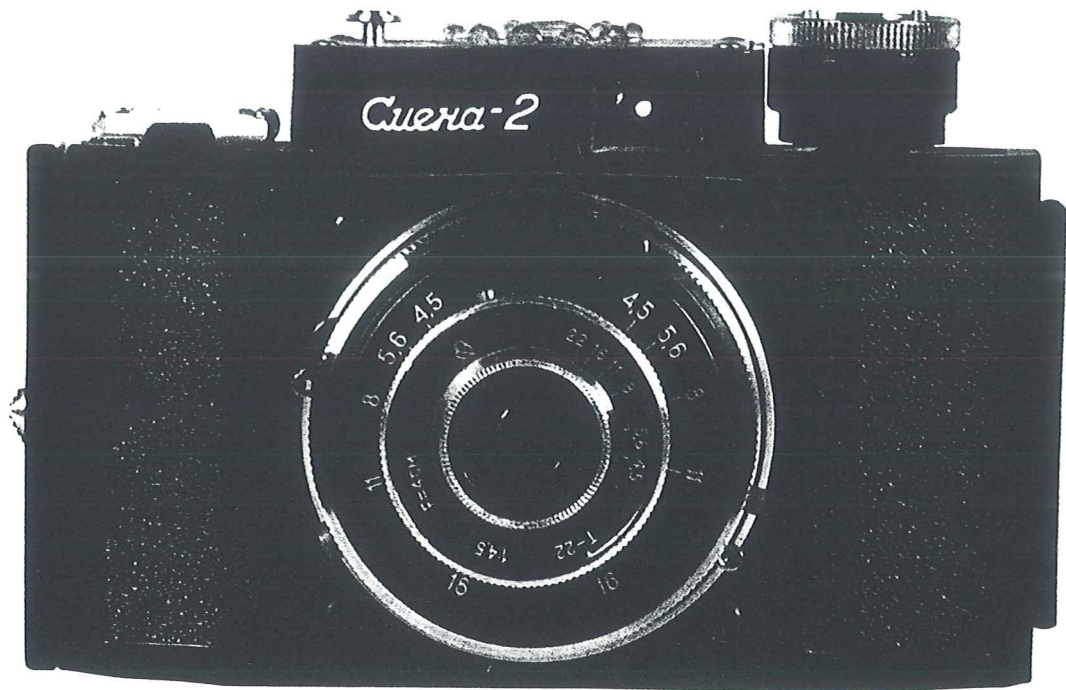
Found on Oswald when he was arrested at the Texas Theater. Mail-ordered by Oswald, using the name A. J. Hidell, from a Los Angeles company. Purchase price: \$29.95.

# The T-Shirt

Worn by Oswald when Jack Ruby shot him in the basement of the Dallas Police Department's headquarters.

4-25-63 2204  
H63-356  
1. T. Shirt in Under Shirts  
of Lee Harvey Oswald  
By [Signature] Date  
#5531

Taken  
to Mex  
con-



### The Cuera-2 Camera Exhibit 136

Brought back from Russia by Oswald in 1962.

### The Bag Exhibit 126

Taken by Oswald on a September 1963 trip to Mexico City, where he visited the Cuban consulate and the Russian embassy.



# THE LONE GUNNMAN

Lee Harvey Oswald killed  
John F. Kennedy. End of Story.

*by Gregory Curtis*

CLICHES CAN BE TRUE. JFK WAS YOUNG AND RICH AND HANDSOME. He articulated inspiring dreams—"ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country"—and he embodied those dreams as well. He had a beautiful, sophisticated wife and lovely children and an immense number of siblings who all seemed golden then too. Now we know his rakish side, but it fades in importance compared with the image of his distraught wife, dressed in pink, crawling on the limousine to gather the fragments of his shattered skull or his tiny son saluting his casket. The country saw the void he left in his wife's life and in his children's lives, and that became the void he left in the country's life as well. His was the death of a president, the death of a husband, and the death of a father. Today, 35 years later, we still wonder who could have been powerful enough to create such a lasting emptiness. If we could understand what happened to him, couldn't we understand what happened to us?

In a literal, factual way we do know what happened to him. It is certain that Lee Harvey Oswald shot President Kennedy, but it is impossible to prove that he acted alone and was not part of any conspiracy. We cannot account for every second of Oswald's time during the months before the assassination. During those unknown hours, was he staring at the moon or meeting with conspirators? If there was a conspiracy, the evidence for it must ex-

ist somewhere, and the long list of books and articles, many of them discussed in this issue, attest to how diligent the search for that evidence has been and continues to be. It's a futile search. I believe, because there was no conspiracy and thus no evidence of one. But, since that statement cannot be proved, there is room for all manner of tantalizing suspicion, conjecture, and belief. This uncertainty is aroused and encouraged by conspiracy theory books and television shows and movies that are in error at best and willfully deceitful at worst. They sustain the illusion that the question of who killed Kennedy has not been answered at all, that there must be some terrible hidden truth. And the belief in that hidden truth, the longing for it even, has become part of the national psychology.

As an antidote to this persistent uncertainty, let's look at what is certain about November 22, 1963. Oswald was separated from his wife and living alone in Dallas. On Fridays after work he usually got a ride to Irving, near Dallas, with a fellow employee of the Texas School Book Depository. There Oswald would spend the weekend with his wife and two infant daughters, then ride back to work on Monday mornings with his fellow employee. But on Thursday, November 21, Oswald broke his usual pattern and asked his co-worker for a ride to Irving after work that afternoon. He said he needed to get some curtain rods. That [CONTINUED ON PAGE 160]

E  
V

many of  
search for  
search. I  
evidence  
is room  
d belief.  
racy me-  
error at  
illusion  
answered  
of the be-  
ome part

at what is  
from his  
usually  
he Texas  
weekend  
work on  
-day. No  
of his co-  
said he  
(AGE 160)



# Two Oswalds

[ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 135 ] salesmen who remembered Oswald inquiring about purchasing a fleet of trucks to send to Cuba. • Ray Carney, the former news director at KBOX radio station in Dallas said Oswald tried to obtain from him the names of pilots who had volunteered on airborne missions over Cuba. • Armstrong has even compiled a list of more than twenty people who remembered seeing Oswald driving a car, though he didn't have a driver's license. • Frances Irene Hise said she met "Ozzie" Oswald in the company of her friend Jack Ruby several times at the Carousel Club in Dallas in the summer and fall of 1963. • Mary Lawrence, the head waitress at Lucas B&B Cafe on Oak Lawn, said she saw Ruby and Oswald together at the restaurant the night after the assassination. • Dub Stark, the owner of the Top Ten record shop in Oak Cliff, said Oswald and Officer J. D. Tippit were both in his store on the day of the assassination. • Numerous eyewitnesses placed Oswald at various times in the company of anti-Castro Cuban exile groups and pro-Castro supporters. Robert McKeown, a Houston-area businessman who had provided arms to Fidel Castro during the Cuban revolution and was visited

by Castro in Houston in 1959 after the revolution, testified before the House Select Committee on Assassinations in 1978 that Oswald showed up at his doorstep trying to buy rifles in September 1963.

Most of these pieces of evidence, Armstrong believes, were ignored by investigators or either suppressed or withheld by the FBI. Armstrong has his own reasons for believing these assertions are credible, but it would take a lifetime to double-check them all. That's how Armstrong is spending his life, not how I'm going to spend mine. Still, why would an otherwise reasonable and successful man live like this? Why devote yourself to proving a theory that is ludicrous on its face? I found the answer unexpectedly. There were two items he showed me that flew in under my radar. There is in fact a memo from J. Edgar Hoover written in 1960 saying "there is a possibility that an impostor is using Oswald's birth certificate." But an even more intriguing moment occurred for me when Armstrong began talking about Frank Kudlaty. Kudlaty was the vice principal at Stripling Junior High in Fort Worth, where I was a student on November 22, 1963. Kudlaty told Armstrong of handing over Oswald's school records to two agents from the FBI the day after the assassination. According to the Warren Commission, Lee Harvey Oswald attended junior high schools in New York and New Or-

leans but not in Fort Worth. The FBI denies the existence of the Stripling records.

I tracked down Kudlaty in Waco, where he now lives in retirement after a lengthy career as a school administrator in several Texas cities. He related the incident that turned out to be his brush with infamy. The day after the assassination, Mr. Wylie, Stripling's principal, asked him to pull Oswald's records and hand them over to FBI agents. Kudlaty recalled those events and briefly examined the records before handing them over. "I do recall the grades were not good," he told me. That has bothered him ever since. "A person of that mind could teach himself Russian and pass himself as Russian? I don't think so," Kudlaty said.

The Hoover memo and that short conversation with Kudlaty put more doubt in my mind than the two days I spent with Armstrong and his blizzard of documents. Is there a good explanation for what happened to those records? Was Kudlaty wrong? And what was Hoover talking about in that memo, and what's the story behind it? I don't know the answers and I'm not going to devote my life to finding out. But here was one undeniable, strange, and tantalizing fact in the memo and the personal testimony of a man I knew and respected, and that almost had me going. It was enough to let me understand why a man like Armstrong has fallen under the spell of the Two Oswalds. ♦

# Lone Gunman

[ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 146 ] night he tried to persuade his wife, Marina, to reconcile with him, but she refused. The next morning, she stayed in bed, but he got up and put \$170 and his wedding ring on the dresser. He left with only \$13.87 in his pocket. Oswald took with him a long, thin package wrapped in brown paper and put it in the back seat of his co-worker's car. Oswald said the package held the curtain rods. That afternoon Marina was watching television with a friend when she learned the president had been shot. She knew that seven months before, Lee had shot at the outspoken, far right-wing Major General Edwin A. Walker with a rifle he kept wrapped in a blanket in the garage. She went to check and was relieved to see the blanket lying apparently undisturbed. When the police arrived later, they asked if her husband had any weapons and where he kept them. She took them out to the garage. A policeman lifted the blanket, and it sagged limply in his hands. The rifle was gone.

This rifle, a Mannlicher-Carcano, was not a toy gun. It was more powerful than any rifle ever used by the United States Army, with a muzzle velocity of two thou-

sand feet per second. Oswald bought it under an alias from a mail-order sporting goods store in Chicago. The order is in his handwriting, and the gun was delivered to a post office box Oswald had rented. There are famous photographs of Oswald, dressed entirely in black, holding this rifle in one hand, some radical newspapers in the other, and wearing a pistol in a holster around his waist. Some critics of the Warren Commission, and Oswald himself after his capture, said that the photographs were fake. But Marina testified that she took the pictures. Oswald wrote on the back of one of the prints and gave it to a friend, a strange thing to do if the picture was a fake. The camera and one negative are in the National Archives. In 1978 the House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA), using technology unavailable to the Warren Commission, determined beyond a doubt that Oswald's camera and only that camera could have taken that negative and that neither the negative nor the print from it had been tampered with.

The brown wrapping paper was later found in the sniper's nest of boxes piled up around the corner window on the sixth floor of the school book depository. Oswald's handprint was on the paper. Three spent cartridges lay on the floor nearby. They came from Oswald's rifle to the exclusion of all others. The rifle was later found

hidden among boxes in another part of the depository. Oswald's palm print was on the barrel. Two employees of the depository were watching the presidential motorcade from the fifth-floor window directly under the sniper's nest. They heard the three casings as they hit the floor, and one employee felt tiny debris fall on his head. It had been dislodged from above by the percussion of the shots. Several witnesses saw a man and a gun at the window. One in particular, Howard Brennan, saw a man fire the fatal shot. His description of the killer was the one that went out on the police radio just fifteen minutes after the killing.

Two extensive investigations of the assassination have been conducted by the United States government—the Warren Commission in 1964 and the HSCA in 1978. Both concluded that Lee Harvey Oswald fired three shots from the sixth floor of the depository, one of which wounded both the president and then-Texas governor John Connally, one of which hit the president in the head, and one of which missed entirely. However, the Warren Commission was unable to establish the order of the shots. Setting the record straight about the order of the shots is by far the most important contribution of independent research to the history of the assassination. Jim Moore of Hillsboro was the first to assert that the first shot missed, the second

wounded and the president ways insi- fore the or out he wa proved th found in nally's st Hospital wald's rifl fles. The analysis. not avail. proved th ernor's b and no o string of does not contradic eyewitness fragment- let itself to (4) Os Oswald's that wrap to work Oswald post offic delivered to der form did not h shot the

It's tru was a 95 had con and mis there m the com acoustic motorc sounds nation. body, in convene cil, has from the that the any sho until aft dent ar away. Tent wit from be the bul of peop other s. was wo or hear searche The mistake allowed themse inform. covered to



FBI denies  
ords.  
o, where he  
gthy career  
eral Texas  
hat turned  
The day af-  
Stripling's  
Oswald's  
BI agents.  
I briefly ex-  
ding them  
not good?  
I him ever  
ould teach  
lf as Russ-  
d.

ort conver-  
ubt in my  
with Arm-  
ments. Is  
happened  
rong? And  
ut in that  
I it? I don't  
ing to de-  
re was one  
ing fact in  
mony of a  
hat almost  
me under-  
has fallen

part of the  
was on the  
epository  
motorcade  
tly under  
three cas-  
employee  
had been  
ussion of  
man and  
rticular  
the fatal  
r was the  
radio just

of the as-  
d by the  
Warren  
HSCA in  
urvey Os-  
th floor of  
ded both  
governor  
he presi-  
h missed  
Commis-  
order of  
ght about  
most im-  
dent re-  
sination  
rst to as-  
second

wounded the president and the governor, and the third and final shot struck the president's head. Governor Connally always insisted that he had heard a shot before the one that wounded him, and it turns out he was right. The Warren Commission proved that the so-called magic bullet found in good condition on Governor Connally's stretcher in Parkland Memorial Hospital after the shooting came from Oswald's rifle to the exclusion of all other rifles. The HSCA, using neutron-activation analysis, another technological advance not available to the Warren Commission, proved that bullet fragments from the governor's body came from the magic bullet and no other. Thus there is an unbroken string of *physical* evidence, evidence that does not rely on the sometimes mistaken, contradictory, or changing testimony from eyewitnesses, that goes from (1) bullet fragments in a victim's body to (2) the bullet itself to (3) the rifle that fired the bullet to (4) Oswald's palm print on the rifle to (5) Oswald's handprint on the brown paper that wrapped the "curtain rods" he carried to work that day to (6) the photograph of Oswald holding the rifle to (7) Oswald's post office box where the gun had been delivered to (8) Oswald's original written order form for the gun. Whatever else did or did not happen that November day, Oswald shot the president.

It's true that the HSCA also found there was a 95 percent chance that a fourth shot had come from behind the grassy knoll and missed. If there was a second sniper, there must have been a conspiracy. But the committee based this conclusion on an acoustic analysis of a tape from a police motorcycle that it believed contained sounds of Dealey Plaza during the assassination. Subsequently, no investigative body, including a committee of experts convened by the National Research Council, has been able to duplicate this result from the same data. Instead they proved that the tape did not record evidence of any shots and, in any event, did not begin until after the third shot had hit the president and his limousine was speeding away. This complicated science is consistent with simple logic. If a sniper had shot from behind the grassy knoll and missed, the bullet must have gone into the crowd of people watching the motorcade on the other side of Elm Street. Yet no one there was wounded, nor did anyone feel, see, or hear a bullet. And, despite careful searches, no bullet has ever been found.

The Warren Commission made other mistakes besides the order of the shots. It allowed the CIA and the FBI to investigate themselves, and both agencies withheld information. The commission never discovered that the CIA had repeatedly plotted to murder Castro, including plots with

We take our  
time making  
Gentleman Jack  
at Jack Daniel  
Distillery.



From Jack Daniel Distillery  
in Lynchburg, Tennessee comes  
this gentleman's whiskey.

**Gentleman Jack**  
*Rare Tennessee Whiskey*

Alcohol 40% By Volume. Distilled And Bottled By Jack Daniel  
Distillery, Lem Motlow, Proprietor, Lynchburg (Pop. 361), Tennessee 37352.  
If You'd Like To Give Gentleman Jack As A Gift,

And  
then  
we take  
a little  
more.



Twice mellowed  
through hard maple charcoal  
for a smooth finish.

**Gentleman Jack**  
*Rare Tennessee Whiskey*

Call Liquor By Wire, 1-888-SPIRITED (1-888-774-7483).  
Visit Us At <http://www.jackdaniels.com>.  
Your Friends At Jack Daniel's Remind You To Drink Responsibly.

## A Grand Hotel In The French Quarter.



Hans Wandfluh, Swiss General Manager at the four-star Royal Sonesta Hotel, has an uncanny ability to anticipate the needs of his guests. Just one of the reasons this celebrated French Quarter hotel has become a New Orleans favorite for business or pleasure. Exciting vacation packages available.



Royal Sonesta Hotel New Orleans

Call your travel agent, 1-800-SONESTA or (504) 586-0300.

THE UTMOST IN

"ASCENDING  
ANGEL"

2727 EXPOSITION BLVD.  
CASIS VILLAGE SHOPPING CENTER  
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78703  
TOLL FREE: (877) 877-YAYA

**Neena's**  
GIFTS + INTERIORS



GETCHA YAYAS ON THE WEB!

[WWW.GETCHAYAYAS.COM](http://WWW.GETCHAYAYAS.COM)

SPECIALTY CARDS

gangsters, which could have given both Castro and the mob a motive to murder the president. The FBI kept secret the extent of the agency's contact with Oswald. Jack Ruby had more extensive mob contacts than the commission believed. But its errors were minor compared with all it got right. In particular, realizing that the same bullet had wounded both Kennedy and Connally, which seems implausible at first glance, was a great intellectual achievement that has since been borne out by scientific techniques unavailable to the commission in 1964. The worst libel about the commission is that it was a rubber stamp to prop up the theory that Oswald alone had murdered the president so that the real killers could escape. Think what you want about commission members such as Gerald Ford or Allen Dulles or even Earl Warren himself, the staff of the commission who did the actual investigations were energetic, determined, and talented young men who had distinguished careers afterward. Several had been fervent supporters of Kennedy and worked on his campaign. David Slawson, who was an assistant counsel for the commission and who is now a professor of law at the University of Southern California, told me, "We were all hoping like hell to find a plot, to find something that would lead us to the real killers. It would have made us heroes. We would have been the ones to solve the crime of the century." But they found nothing to prove that anyone but Oswald was involved.

Which does not mean there was nothing to find, that somewhere in the bowels of the FBI or the CIA or the KGB, which all spawned secret plots in those days, was evidence of the most evil secret plot of all. And it's easy to believe there must have been such a plot, that it would take a trained army of evil, not just one little evil squirt, to obliterate the golden president, husband, and father. And here is where the assassination still divides the country. Those who believe in a conspiracy are refusing to accept the word of what to them is a corrupt government and a corrupt society where a shadowy "they" are in control. To search for the conspiracy is to root out the truth and expose the guilty, whose ruthless power and greed, threatened by Kennedy, is the reason for all the country's problems.

To believe Oswald was the lone assassin is to believe the clear evidence, however mundane it might be. It is to believe that those who insist on conspiracy are adding to the general confusion, leading innocent people astray, unjustly undermining confidence in the structure of the country, and that unwarranted confusion is the reason for all our problems. For me, until ghosts are proved to be real, it is far better to accept the clear and certain evidence and move on. ♣

# The Conspiracy Theories

[ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 134 ] hands-off approach to investigating possible conspirators. Scenario 2: Oswald was an FBI informant who killed Kennedy on orders from the bureau. Scenario 3: Oswald warned the FBI of plots to kill Kennedy, only to find himself framed and then silenced by fellow informant Jack Ruby.

**Believers** Authors Mark North (*Act of Treason*) and George O'Toole (*The Assassination Tapes*).

**Strange Details** Ruby briefly worked as an FBI informant in 1959. • The FBI's number three man, William Sullivan, who had overseen the "internal security aspects" of the assassination investigation, was fatally shot in 1977 on a hunting expedition before testifying before the HSCA. • When Oswald was a child, his favorite television show was *I Led Three Lives*, the story of an FBI counterspy.

**Reasons to Believe** The FBI had been keeping tabs on Oswald since at least 1960 but did not inform the Secret Service that he worked in a building along the motorcade route. • Ten days before the assassination, Oswald dropped off a handwritten note at the FBI's Dallas field office for James Hosty, a special agent who had been trailing him for several months. Hosty destroyed the note on orders from his superior the day Oswald was shot but never acknowledged its existence until 1975, when he explained that it had merely warned him to "stop harassing" Oswald's wife, Marina. (He had questioned her twice in early November.) Some speculate that the note really contained violent threats; others think it was a warning from Oswald that someone in Dallas was going to kill the president. • Texas attorney general Waggoner Carr told the Warren Commission he had information that Oswald was an undercover FBI agent, prompting a top-secret emergency meeting of the commission in January 1964. • Eyewitness accounts of varying reliability placed Oswald in New Orleans fraternizing with, and even receiving envelopes from, FBI agents. • The sole investigatory body for the Warren Commission was the FBI, which intimidated witnesses, suppressed and destroyed evidence that cast an unflattering light on the bureau, and conducted a shoddy investigation, even declining to take Abraham Zapruder's super-8 footage when he offered it after the assassination. • According to Hale Boggs, a Warren Commission member: "Hoover lied his eyes out to the commission—on

Oswald, on Ruby, on their friends, the bullets, the gun, you name it."

**Reasons Not to Believe** The HSCA could never establish that Oswald had worked as an FBI informant. • Carr's speculations were partly based on a 1964 *Houston Post* article whose source, Dallas County assistant district attorney Bill Alexander, later admitted to having concocted the story because he distrusted the feds. • Why would Hoover—whose personal files on politicians' indiscretions filled four rooms of FBI headquarters—have preferred murder to blackmail as a means of furthering his own ambitions?

**Recent Developments** In his 1996 memoir, *Assignment: Oswald*, Hosty said he found notes he took during Oswald's twelve-hour interrogation at Dallas police headquarters—notes that he told the Warren Commission he had destroyed. Although they shed little new light on Oswald, their sudden appearance raises questions about what else the FBI has withheld over the years.

## THE CUBAN CONNECTION: THE CASTRO THEORY

FIDEL CASTRO HAD SURVIVED DOZENS OF attempts on his life by agents of the U.S. government (some involving poisoned cigars, lethal powders, and exploding seashells) as well as the botched Bay of Pigs invasion and other CIA-orchestrated raids. After one too many bazooka attacks, the dictator said, "*Basta!*" in the fall of 1963 and struck back. He found a willing assassin in Oswald, a known communist sympathizer.

**Believers** Lyndon Johnson (eventually) and anti-Castro activist Carlos Bringuier.

**Strange Details** Oswald admired Castro, often referring to him as Uncle Fidel. • In the summer of 1963 Oswald was planning to relocate his family to Havana.

**Reasons to Believe** In a September 1963 interview with the Associated Press, Castro called Kennedy a "cretin" and threatened to retaliate against him: "U.S. leaders should think that if they are aiding terrorist plans to eliminate Cuban leaders . . . they themselves will not be safe." • On September 27, 1963, Oswald visited the Cuban consulate in Mexico City, ostensibly to obtain a visa. Eager to ingratiate himself with Cuban bureaucrats, he presented himself as "a friend of the Cuban revolution" and, some speculate, offered his services as an assassin. • Autulio Ramírez Ortiz, a hijacker who claimed to have infiltrated Cuban intelligence in the early sixties, testified before the HSCA that he saw a file labeled "Osvaldo-Kennedy" at a

Cuban intelligence facility. The file, Ortiz said, contained a photo of Oswald, a KGB recommendation, and this conclusion: "Oswald is an adventurer. Our embassy in Mexico has orders to get in contact with him. Be very careful."

**Reasons Not to Believe** Castro had to have known that the U.S. would strike back if his plot were discovered. • Oswald's visa request at the Cuban consulate was turned down.

**Recent Developments** According to National Security Agency documents released last year, the usually unflappable Castro was terrified the U.S. would retaliate against Cuba in the first hours after the assassination. The NSA intercepted messages going in and out of Cuba, including one from a foreign agent who saw Castro's televised speech on the evening of November 23: "Fidel, emotional and uneasy, tried . . . to refute the accusations which were then appearing and to twist them so that the assassination would appear as the work of the Ultra Reaction, of the extreme racists of the Pentagon, who are fanatical supporters of war against Cuba and the Soviet Union. Although it was only the third time I had witnessed a speech by Fidel, I got the immediate impression that on this occasion he was frightened, if not terrified."

## CUBA LIBRE: THE CUBAN EXILES THEORY

IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE KENNEDY administration, Cuban exiles reserved their contempt for Castro, who had taken away their homeland. But after the Bay of Pigs invasion, they felt equally betrayed by Kennedy, who had withheld air support during the operation, leaving 1,500 Cuban soldiers stranded and at the mercy of Castro's army. After Kennedy thwarted subsequent plans to invade, enraged exiles orchestrated the president's murder with help from their CIA associates, either in retaliation for the deaths of their brothers-in-arms or to frame Castro for Kennedy's murder, thereby forcing a full-scale U.S. invasion. Oswald, who had tried to infiltrate the anti-Castro movement in New Orleans, was either the exiles' agent or their patsy.

**Believers** HSCA investigator Gaetano Fonzi, authors Bernard Fensterwald (*Coincidence or Conspiracy?*) and Sylvia Meagher (*Accessories After the Fact*), and CBS newsman Peter Noyes.

**Strange Details** In August 1963 Oswald approached Carlos Bringuier, a New Orleans shopkeeper active in the anti-Castro movement, and asked to join his organization. Four days later Oswald was arrested for disturbing the peace

while pas  
an elabor  
attention  
anti-Castr  
**Reasons**  
Odio told  
ber 1963  
Dallas ap  
her sister  
cause. Tw  
"Angelo,"  
"Leon Os  
scribed li  
who thoug  
nated bec  
shot, and  
later Odi  
when they  
sassin: L  
The HSC  
ble" with  
Bay of Pig  
able treat  
end of 1  
when he  
(a CIA  
Cuban pi  
vasion) i  
dismantl  
island. B  
tion was  
raiding th  
in Louisi  
**Reasons**  
Mexico C  
ited her.  
munists t  
**Recent**  
rence Ma  
mers that  
1963, her  
activist—  
him. The  
gets to Te  
bunch of  
know wh  
phone, o  
John Ma  
Santos T  
by Castr  
wrote a b  
ter his re  
files and  
framed O  
90  
**FRI**  
**SECRET**  
SECRET S  
a grand  
Working  
FBI or th  
vided lax  
shooters  
(b) hijack  
rate sch  
the autop

while passing out pro-Castro leaflets—an elaborate scheme, some say, to deflect attention from his involvement in the anti-Castro conspiracy.

**Reasons to Believe** Cuban exile Sylvia Odio told the HSCA that in late September 1963, three men showed up at her Dallas apartment and convinced her and her sister that they were members of the cause. Two of the men, “Leopoldo” and “Angelo,” were Cubans, while the third, “Leon Oswald,” was an American, described later as a former Marine, a man who thought Kennedy should be assassinated because of the Bay of Pigs, a good shot, and “kind of nuts.” Two months later Odio and her sister were shocked when they recognized the president’s assassin: Leon was Lee Harvey Oswald. The HSCA later termed Odio a “credible” witness. • Cuban exiles viewed the Bay of Pigs as nothing less than unforgivable treachery on Kennedy’s part. At the end of 1962 he added fuel to the fire when he shut down Operation Mongoose (a CIA program that was preparing Cuban pilots and soldiers for another invasion) in exchange for Khrushchev’s dismantling of Russian missiles on the island. By 1963 the Kennedy administration was cracking down on Cuban exiles, raiding their paramilitary training camps in Louisiana and Florida.

**Reasons Not to Believe** Oswald was in Mexico City on the day Odio says he visited her. • Why would virulent anti-communists trust Oswald, a known Red?

**Recent Developments** In 1994 Florence Martino told writer Anthony Summers that on the morning of November 22, 1963, her husband, John—an anti-Castro activist—said, “Flo, they’re going to kill him. They’re going to kill him when he gets to Texas.” Then, she said, John got a bunch of phone calls from Texas. “I don’t know who called him, but he was on the phone, on the phone, on the phone . . .” John Martino, who had once worked for Santos Trafficante, had been imprisoned by Castro from 1959 to 1962. (He later wrote a book, *I Was Castro’s Prisoner*.) After his release he threw in with Cuban exiles and later claimed that they had framed Oswald. He died in 1975.

## FRIENDLY FIRE: THE SECRET SERVICE THEORY

SECRET SERVICE AGENTS WERE PAWNS IN a grand scheme to kill the president. Working on orders from higher-ups—the FBI or the vice president—they (a) provided lax security in Dallas so that sharpshooters would have a clear shot and/or (b) hijacked the body as part of an elaborate scheme to alter the corpse, scuttle the autopsy, and cover up the whole affair.

**Believers** Authors David Lifton (*Best Evidence*) and Bonar Menninger (*Mortal Error*).

**Strange Details** Into the wee hours on the morning of the assassination, Secret Service agents drank Everclear at the Cellar, a rowdy beatnik club in Fort Worth whose owner, Pat Kirkwood, was an acquaintance of Jack Ruby’s. • Secret Service agents Winston Lawson and Forrest Sorrells, who chose the motorcade route, rode in a covered sedan in front of the president’s convertible.

**Reasons to Believe** Although plans for a presidential motorcade in Miami four days before the assassination were scrapped when a right-wing extremist told a police informant that Kennedy would be shot “from an office building with a high-powered rifle,” few precautions were taken in Dallas: Buildings along the motorcade route were not secured, lookouts were not posted, and the presidential limousine’s “bubble top” was removed. • Against regulations, the Secret Service chose a motorcade route that required a 120-degree turn, an angle that forced Kennedy’s limousine to slow to a crawl as it passed the book depository building and turned onto Elm Street. • Rather than having four motorcycles stationed on each side of the president’s limo, as Dallas police chief Jesse Curry had suggested, Agent Lawson ordered that only two motorcycles be on each side and that they remain by the rear bumper. • After the first two shots were fired, Agent William Greer, Kennedy’s driver, briefly applied the brake rather than the accelerator, allowing the presidential limousine to come to a near standstill right before the third and fatal shot was fired. • At Parkland Hospital on the afternoon of the assassination, agents forced their way past Dallas medical examiner Earl Rose with the president’s coffin in hand, insisting that the autopsy would be performed not in Dallas, as required by state law, but in Washington, D.C.

**Reasons Not to Believe** Could all of the seventy Secret Service agents assigned to protect the president in Dallas have turned against him—and kept silent about such a conspiracy for 35 years? • Since the president’s coffin was never left unattended on *Air Force One*, the corpse could not have been tampered with.

**Recent Developments** Interest in the Secret Service’s possible connection to the assassination was revived by Menninger’s 1992 book, *Mortal Error*, which claims that Agent George Hickey fired the third and fatal shot while riding in the presidential follow-up car. According to Menninger’s thesis, when Hickey reached for his AR-15 upon hearing shots, he slipped off the safety, lost his balance, and accidentally pulled the trigger.

## SAIGON SURPRISE: THE VIETNAM THEORY

ON NOVEMBER 2, 1963, AFTER SOUTH Vietnamese president Ngo Dinh Diem began negotiations with North Vietnamese communists, he was shot at point-blank range, along with his brother and political adviser, Ngo Dinh Nhu, during a U.S.-backed coup. Seeking revenge, the wealthy and powerful Diem family—perhaps led by the widowed Madame Nhu, Saigon’s “Dragon Lady”—settled the score three weeks later in Dallas.

**Believers** Lyndon Johnson (initially).

**Strange Details** In 1950, when Diem was forced into exile by Ho Chi Minh, he fled to a Catholic seminary in New York, where he became friendly with then-senator John Kennedy. • Kennedy had approved the coup but was assured that an attempt would be made to evacuate Diem and Nhu from Saigon; he was appalled to learn that they had been murdered. Eight years later, CIA operative Howard Hunt doctored State Department files so that researchers of the Pentagon Papers might “discover” that Kennedy had arranged Diem’s murder. • Allen Dulles, who created the Saigon Military Mission and staffed it with men who would later help orchestrate the Saigon coup, was a member of the Warren Commission.

**Reasons to Believe** The Diem regime showed no mercy to its foes. Immediately after her husband’s murder, Madame Nhu told American reporters, “Such a cruel injustice against a faithful ally cannot go unnoticed, and those who indulge in it will have to pay for it.”

**Reasons Not to Believe** If the South Vietnamese were wily enough to pull this off, why didn’t they kill Ho Chi Minh first?

**Recent Developments** In 1997 Seymour Hersh’s *The Dark Side of Camelot* alleged that Kennedy not only knew Diem would be murdered but also personally asked Air Force general Edward Lansdale, a CIA man, to do the job himself.

## 10. CONSPIRACY A-GO-GO: THE SHADOW GOVERNMENT THEORY

THERE IS A SECRET GOVERNMENT WITHIN our government, a cabal that in 1963 ordered the murder of a popular president, set up a patsy, installed its own puppet, and orchestrated an elaborate cover-up that included tampering with the corpse, destroying and suppressing evidence, and killing witnesses. Heading the cabal were some of the world’s most powerful men: rich and corrupt industrialists, generals, and right-wing politicians. Down below was an eclectic group of mobsters,

spooks, lowlifes, and anti-Castro extremists, many of whom were headquartered at 544 Camp Street in New Orleans, including Oswald, former FBI agent Guy Banister, soldier of fortune David Ferrie, and suspected CIA informant Clay Shaw. Together, in the summer of 1963, they plotted Kennedy's demise.

**Believers** New Orleans district attorney Jim Garrison, filmmaker Oliver Stone, and former chief of special operations for the Joint Chiefs of Staff Fletcher Prouty.

**Strange Details** Theorists enjoy playing an elaborate parlor game of Six Degrees of Assassination. One version goes like this: As a teenager, Oswald had been in the Civil Air Patrol with Ferrie, who had done private investigative work for mobster Carlos Marcello, whose close associate Santos Trafficante had been the main mob boss in prerevolution Cuba, where in 1959 he was imprisoned by Castro, visited by Ruby, and then bailed out by Cuban turncoat Rolando Cubela, who, on November 22, 1963, was being briefed in Paris on killing Castro by an agent of the CIA, whose former director (and future Warren Commission member), Allen Dulles, had been forced out by Kennedy following the Bay of Pigs invasion, as had his deputy, Charles Cabell, whose brother Earle was the mayor of Dallas, which had been pa-

pered on November 22 with "Wanted for Treason" leaflets published by Robert Surrey, an aide to Major General Edwin A. Walker, who had been the target of an assassination attempt in April 1963, the chief suspect of which, according to the Warren Commission, was Oswald. Surrey also played bridge with James Hosty, the FBI agent who had been shadowing Oswald, whose wife, Marina, often mocked her husband's lovemaking and told him how attracted she was to Kennedy, who had had an affair with Judith Exner, girlfriend of mafioso Sam Giancana, who had helped steal the 1960 election for Kennedy by stuffing ballot boxes in Chicago, where Ruby had run errands for Al Capone as a teenager and Banister had helped ambush John Dillinger.

**Reasons to Believe** Pressed for time, obsessed with secrecy, and embarrassed by their awareness of Oswald's existence, both the FBI and the CIA withheld critical information and did little to investigate possible links between their own organizations and Oswald, between the CIA and Cuban paramilitary organizations, between the Mafia and various assassination players, and between Ruby and the mob, Cubans, and the Dallas police force.

**Reasons Not to Believe** How could such a labyrinthine plan with so many

participants never be exposed? How could a bunch of inefficient, bungling bureaucracies work so well and with such determination and unanimity? • Notwithstanding Kevin Costner's noble portrayal of him in *JFK*, Garrison—the chief proponent of this theory—was a lying, attention-grabbing megalomaniac with McCarthyite tendencies who had been dismissed from the National Guard for mental problems. He tried to prove his theory by taking businessman Clay Shaw to court in 1969 for conspiring to kill the president. The resulting trial was nothing less than a circus. Garrison sought to prove his case with an array of peculiar characters, including a man in a toga identifying himself as Julius Caesar, a heroin addict, and a New York accountant who said he often fingerprinted his daughter to make sure she was not an impostor. The prosecution mischaracterized evidence and bribed, intimidated, and even had witnesses hypnotized. He ultimately said that there were sixteen assassins at Dealey Plaza, including the three tramps and a man who popped out of a sewer. Though he presented plenty of intriguing suspicions, he had few facts, and it took the jury only 45 minutes to find Shaw innocent of all charges. The *New York Times* later called Garrison's crusade against Shaw "one of the most disgraceful chapters in the history of American jurisprudence."

**Recent Developments** *JFK's* release forever changed the way Americans view the assassination. Oliver Stone provided the seamless—albeit wildly inventive and historically inaccurate—story line that lawyer Garrison had always coveted. If we vaguely believed in a conspiracy before, by late 1991, 73 percent of Americans were sure of it, while 35 percent thought the CIA was directly involved. In response, Congress created the Assassination Records Review Board, whose mandate was to obtain assassination-related files from often-reluctant agencies like the FBI and the CIA, declassify them, and make them available to the public. The upshot was the release of thousands of important items, including the personal papers of Warren Commission members, a presidential aide's amateur film of the motorcade, and notes from Oswald's interrogation at Dallas police headquarters, as well as an archive of more than four million pages of secret records. Nothing earth-shattering was ever discovered (the board was shut down in September), though many documents still remain hidden from view. According to the act that created the board, all relevant documents must be released to the public by 2017—except for ones deemed worthy for further postponement by any sitting president. ♣


*The New  
Encyclopedia of the  
American  
West*

"A monumental achievement in the historiography of the American West. Howard Lamar has rendered our nation a great service by compiling this magisterial and indispensable reference volume."—Stephen E. Ambrose

"As useful to the layperson as to the academic and a ready authoritative source of precise information on a variety of topics, this encyclopedia is a delight to browse and is easy to use."—Vine Deloria, Jr.

A selection of the History Book Club  
1324 pp. 640 illus. \$60.00

Edited by *Howard R. Lamar*

 Yale University Press  
P.O. Box 209040, New Haven, CT 06520  
www.yale.edu/yup/ 1-800-YUP-READ

# Abraham Zapruder

**A** Dallas clothing manufacturer made the most important movie of all time. Abraham Zapruder set out to record a visit from John F. Kennedy and ended up chronicling a national catastrophe. For 35 years his 18-second color film—jerky, soundless, devastating—has fueled, refuted, or confirmed a hundred assassination theories. Zapruder (below right, in a live TV interview the day of the assassination) was deeply shaken by his role as an eyewitness to the tragedy. Says his son, Henry Zapruder, of Washington, D.C.: "He felt the loss of the president foremost, but the black mark on Dallas hurt him very deeply too." Adds his daughter, Myrna Ries, of Dallas: "In spite of that horrible event, he loved Dallas till the day he died."



He was born in 1905 in Kovel, Russia. His only education was four years of Hebrew school.

In 1920 he immigrated to Brooklyn and went to work as a pattern-maker. He married Lillian Shapovnick in 1933. Eight years later, he moved to Texas to work for Nardis of Dallas and later established two labels of his own, Chalet and Jennifer, Jr.'s.

On November 22, 1963, Zapruder was at work, awaiting the presidential procession. His employees persuaded him to return home and fetch his 8-mm Bell and Howell movie camera. His secretary, Marilyn Sitzman, accompanied him down to Elm Street, where they climbed atop a concrete structure to get a better view.

Zapruder later testified before the Warren Commission: "I heard the first shot, and I saw the president lean over and grab himself . . . For a moment I thought it was, you know, like you say, 'Oh, he got me,' when you hear a shot . . . but before I had a chance to organize my mind, I heard a second shot, and then I saw his head opened up and the blood and everything came out . . . then I started yelling, 'They killed him, they killed him . . .'"

He sold the rights to his film to *Life* magazine for \$150,000. After his death on August 30, 1970, *Life* sold them back to his family for \$1. Since 1978, the original has been stored at the National Archives. The Zapruder family allows scholars to use it for free but charges for commercial use; Oliver Stone, for example, paid \$40,000 to include snippets of it in *JFK*.

Last year the federal government declared the original film the property of the American people. Zapruder's survivors requested \$18.5 million in compensation. Although private appraisals place its value as high as \$70 million, the Justice Department's first offer was only \$750,000. Negotiations are still under way. ♣