

# Experts Analyze a

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By John Mathews  
Star-News Staff Writer

The experts and buffs dutifully extend their hands to an aide at the registration desk who brands them with an inked stamp reading: "Committee to Investigate Assassinations."

Then, they move to seats in cavernous Gaston Hall at Georgetown University to hear the lawyers, researchers and writers dispute the official versions of the killings of John F. Kennedy, Robert F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr., George Lincoln Rockwell and the attempt on the life of Gov. George C. Wallace.

Yesterday, the proceedings at the Conference on a Decade of Assassinations were low-key. Lawyers spoke of new attempts to reopen the cases of Sirhan Sirhan and James Earl Ray. A forensic pathologist and medical examiner disputed the autopsy report on John Kennedy. And, a former CIA agent described how the Psychological Stress Evaluator can give some indication whether a recorded voice is telling the truth.

**TODAY**, the final sessions of the conference should perk up as the talk goes beyond disputing the findings of the Warren Commission and past trials and delves into the scores of conspiracy theories for the political assassinations of the last decade.

In a keynote talk, author Norman Mailer gave a philosophical rationale for holding the conference deliberately timed to coincide with the 10th anniversary of the Dallas assassination of President Kennedy.



Author Norman Mailer talks about assassinations.

Assassinations have "made our history obsessive," Mailer said, leading people to either spend years disputing the official accounts or to blot from their minds the possibility that they could be wrong. "When a nation decides to alienate itself from its history, what we have got is a condition of apathy . . . known as those years before totalitarianism," he said.

Lawyers now representing Sirhan and Ray both maintained that earlier courtroom defenses were inadequate and that ballistics evidence indicated they were not the killers of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King.

Robert Hanson contended

that Sirhan was physically not in a position to shoot Kennedy, although he did shoot bystanders. Someone else killed Kennedy, he said.

**JAMES LESAR**, who now represents Ray, the convicted killer of Dr. King, said he was "framed" and that unknown conspirators responsible for the actual slaying are still at large. The 6th U.S. Court of Appeals is expected to rule soon on whether Ray is entitled to a new hearing on evidence which was not introduced previously, Lesar added.

The convicted killer of George Lincoln Rockwell, the American Nazi Party leader, was defended by a

non-lawyer, Meredith Rode, an art professor at Federal City College here. Former Nazi John Patler, who was sentenced to 20 years for the Aug. 25, 1967 killing by Arlington Circuit Court, should be given a new trial, Rode said, because of nu-

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merous contradictions in the evidence.

Rode, who taught a class in which Patler was enrolled while free on bail and became convinced of his innocence, said his case attracts virtually no interest.

Ronald Van Doren, a journalist, acknowledged that the evidence was "fairly clear" that Arthur Bremer had shot Gov. Wallace at a Laurel shopping center on May 15, 1972. "The larger question is who pulled the trigger on Arthur Bremer," Van Doren said.

The chief witness against Bremer, he added, was his own diary, which appears to be more a fabricated work than an actual record of his activities. Van Doren indicated that Bremer was probably manipulated by others. He questioned why the Watergate investigations have not disclosed any evidence of "dirty tricks" against Wallace, who appeared to be the leading candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination at the time of the shooting.

**VAN DOREN** provided one of the few moments of comic relief at the conference when he said Bremer had a "spook mentality,"

then added, "I apologize to any spooks who may be here."

Much of the talk at the opening session dealt with disputing the "single-bullet theory" of the assassination of President Kennedy: the official Warren Report version that the same bullet struck both Kennedy and then Texas Gov. John Connally. Dr. Cyril H. Wecht, the coroner of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County, Pa., said the scientific evidence supports the critics who dispute the theory.

In August 1972, Wecht was allowed to view medical evidence at the National Archives, but did not see the preserved brain of Kennedy, microscopic slides of tissue removed from bullet wounds and some photos. Wecht said he does not know whether the Kennedy family has withheld the evidence but thinks it is in the Archives.

The bullet recovered at Parkland Hospital in Dallas and purported to have passed through both Kennedy and Connally could not have hit both victims since it is virtually intact, Wecht said. The bullet was fired with the rifle Lee Harvey Oswald allegedly used, but Wecht said he considers it a

"plant." He would not speculate on its origin.

**AS HE** has in the past, Wecht severely criticized the official autopsy performed by military doctors at Bethesda Naval Hospital. The military pathologists "did what their superior officers told them to do," he said, including failing to track the path of the other bullets through Kennedy's brain.

Conference sponsors, including Bernard Fensterwald Jr., the lawyer for Watergate conspirator

James McCord (Fensterwald heads the committee To Investigate Assassinations) dissociated themselves from a demonstrator at the Archives to demand release of all evidence, including the late President's brain.

"The demonstration has nothing to do with us; we stick to scientific and legal evidence," Fensterwald said. Only a handful gathered to demonstrate. They left after the announced speakers did not appear.