

Theories abound at convention of JFK slaying buffs

By **JULIA M. KLEIN**

Knight-Ridder Newspapers

PITTSBURGH — A blurry home movie filmed by a man named Abraham Zapruder is their Holy Bible. They watch it over and over again, with blow-ups and freeze frames, counting the gun shots, calculating the bullet trajectories.

Their demons are many. They include the Warren Commission report, its "single bullet" and "lone assassin" theories and a cast of characters ranging from U.S. Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., to Lyndon B. Johnson.

They speculate about plots within plots, government coverups, doctored photographs, forged identities and a missing brain.

And now, a quarter of a century later, a former Haverford College professor told assassination buffs at a University of Pittsburgh conference during the weekend that they still are no closer to piecing together the facts behind John F. Kennedy's murder.

Onetime certainties have dissolved, and "the evidence itself has become more confused and confusing," said Josiah Thompson, who wrote "Six Seconds in Dallas."

"Don't you see now how surreal this is?" he said. "Here we are 25 years later, we're trying to find out who killed John Kennedy (and) we're talking about melons, skulls, muscles."

Many contradictions

In fact, said Thompson, a philosopher turned private investigator, "the contradictions in the evidence are so many and so profound that any attempt to offer a single, convincing account of what happened must fail."

Nevertheless, the search for cer-

tainly continued at the three-day conference, which was sponsored by two student groups and attended by about 600 people, many of them deeply steeped in assassination lore.

Titled "The Kennedy Assassination: A Critical Review," the conference featured only critics of the Warren Commission report, reprised the arguments for conspiracy and included calls for another investigation of the case.

Dr. Cyril H. Wecht, a conference organizer and forensic pathologist from Pittsburgh, said that the idea of inviting Warren Commission defenders — whom he characterized as "self-appointed camp followers and sycophants" — was discarded.

Instead, the conference drew its drama from the presentation of previously unreleased photographic evidence by Robert Groden of Boothwyn, Pa., who was a consultant to the U.S. House Select Committee on Assassinations.

The most startling photograph, which elicited gasps from the audience, showed the dim outline of a figure in a window on the western side of the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository — the opposite side of the one-room floor from which Lee Harvey Oswald allegedly shot Kennedy.

Taken 15 seconds after the assassination, the photograph, according to Groden, suggested that a second person was present as a possible accomplice in the shooting. Groden said he made the image by lightening a familiar black-and-white negative taken by a news photographer at the scene.

But other theories abounded.

John H. Davis, author of "Mafia Kingfish: Carlos Marcello and the Assassination of John F. Kennedy," and David E. Scheim, author of "Contract on America: The Mafia Murder of President John F. Kennedy," discussed their theories of mob involvement.

The conference's closing speaker, Bernard Fensterwald Jr., president of the Assassination Archives and Research Center, told his audience, "There's a possibility, even a probability, that we're talking about two separate conspiracies — one to murder the President, the other to cover up the murder," said Fensterwald, who said that the two conspiracies might have involved different people with different motives.

Book: Oswald bore grudge vs. Connally

NEW YORK (AP) — Lee Harvey Oswald bore a grudge against Texas Gov. John Connally and may have intended to kill him instead of President John F. Kennedy, according to a new book.

Oswald was angry because Connally had done nothing to help restore his honorable discharge from the Marine Corps, according to the book, "The Great Expectations of John Connally," by James Reston Jr., son of The New York Times columnist. Excerpts of the book were published in this week's Time magazine.

Oswald's discharge was downgraded to undesirable after he tried to sell military secrets to the Soviet Union, Reston wrote.