

NARRATION: CONSPIRACY THEORIES

September 25, 1978

*Memorandum p. 2, 6, 12*

Over the years, critics of the Warren Commission have disagreed on many specific points, but they have held in common an opinion that has become their credo: President Kennedy was the victim of a conspiracy. Apparently, the arguments for there having been a plot have been persuasive, for it is safe to say this Committee would not be here today, were it not for the concern of the American people that a conspiracy might have been operating in Dallas.

Today, and for the rest of this week, testimony will be taken on conspiracy questions.

A suspicion that has gotten quite a bit of mileage with some, but not all, of the critics is that Oswald was, <sup>IN FACT</sup> two or more persons. The <sup>SO-CALLED</sup> two-Oswald theory is two-pronged: one, the real Lee Harvey Oswald never returned from the Soviet Union, that an imposter was sent on a sinister mission; or, two, others, for equally sinister purposes, used Oswald's name, as has been alleged in testimony before this Committee about the visit to the Cuban Consulate in Mexico City.

One of the first proponents of the two-Oswald theory was a philosophy professor named Richard Popkin who, in 1966, published a book entitled, The Second Oswald. Popkin based much of his case on a series of "mysterious" episodes in Dallas and Irving in November 1963, as well as activities

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ascribed to Oswald that didn't seem to fit his normal pattern of behavior.

Sylvia Meagher in her Accessories After the Fact takes the (MAY'64!) Warren Commission to task for not considering the two-Oswald possibility, "...much less evaluat(ing) the evidence for or against such an explanation."

One way to attempt to resolve the two-Oswald issue is to submit samples of handwriting attributed to Oswald to a panel of experts for evaluation, an effort the Committee has done. The Oswald handwriting samples were taken from numerous documents relating to the major periods of his life, starting with his Marine Corps enlistment papers in 1956. The panel was asked to determine if the handwriting on the documents was consistently that of one man. If so, the Committee reasoned, the two-Oswald concept would be considerably undermined. If not, the concept would be authoritatively established.

This is not the first time handwriting analysis has been applied to an investigation of the Kennedy assassination. The Warren Commission used it, but it did so for an evidentiary purpose, that is, to determine if in fact Oswald purchased the rifle found on the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository, if he indeed used the alias Hidell, and so on. The Commission apparently did not consider seriously the imposter issue, which only first surfaced in 1964.

This investigation has differed from the Warren Commission's in an important respect, a basic one that applies to the handwriting analysis. The Commission accepted certain documents as "known" to have been signed by the alleged assassin, and it

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compared them to "unknowns." The Committee did not assume that any of the handwriting samples were authentic, that is, written by Oswald. The Committee simply asked the experts to say whether they were or were not written by the same person.

The Committee also obtained all fingerprint cards known to exist on which Lee Harvey Oswald might have fixed his signature. Three were located -- one signed upon his induction into the Marine Corps, one signed at the time of his arrest in New Orleans in August 1963, and one Oswald refused to sign at the time of his arrest in Dallas on November 22, 1963.

To assure the authenticity of the fingerprint cards, the committee asked a fingerprint expert to determine if the prints on all three cards matched. The expert, Vincent Scalise, president of Forensic Control Systems, Inc., is a certified latent fingerprint examiner. Mr. Scalise concluded that the fingerprints, as well as the palm prints, on the three cards are "positively identical."

The handwriting panel consists of three men, all members of the American Society of Questioned Document Examiners. They are:

Charles C. Scott of Kansas City, author of what is considered a classic text on questioned document examination.

David J. Purtell, former chief document examiner for the Chicago Police Department.

Joseph McNally, former commanding officer of the New York City Police Laboratory.

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Mr. McNally will represent the panel today. The Committee will recall that Mr. McNally has already testified in these hearings.

It would be appropriate at this time, Mr. Chairman, to call Mr. McNally.

Another way the Committee has tried to shed light on the so-called two-Oswald mystery is by comparing photographs taken over the years of the man identified as Lee Harvey Oswald -- photographs taken when he was in the Marines, after his return from the Soviet Union and during the period he was detained at Dallas Police Headquarters on November 22 to 24, 1963.

To try to determine if the photographs in question show the same person, the Committee asked a panel of anthropologists to study them to see if the shape and structural features of the face match from photo to photo.

Mr. Chairman, before proceeding with an analysis of the photographs, it is necessary that we note and take testimony on an issue that has been raised about one of them, the photograph of Oswald when he was in the Marines. In it, the head, appearing before a height chart, appears to be disproportionate in length, leading some critics to claim it has been doctored.

Sergeant Cecil Kirk, director of the Mobile Crime Lab of the Metropolitan Police Department in Washington, is here to discuss that aspect of the photograph in question. Sergeant Kirk also will

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address alleged differences in Oswald's height, as he appeared in different photographs.

The Committee will recall that Sergeant Kirk has already testified in these hearings.

It would be appropriate at this time, Mr. Chairman, to call Sergeant Kirk.

Mr. Chairman, the anthropology panel was asked to address two additional issues that involved photo identification.

Early in its existence, the Warren Commission was presented with a problem by an Associated Press photograph, taken head-on of the presidential limousine in Dealey Plaza at about the very instant of the first shot. Standing in the doorway of the Texas School Book Depository was a man whose facial characteristics were markedly similar to those of Lee Harvey Oswald, so much so that at least one major metropolitan newspaper captioned the photo with the question: Is it Oswald? Obviously, if Oswald had been in the doorway at that moment, he could not have been the assassin.

The Warren Commission determined that the man in the doorway was one Billy Nolan Lovelady, another Book Depository employee. Lovelady himself, the Commission reported, confirmed it.

But many critics refused to accept the explanation.

Mark Lane, in Rush to Judgment:

There was insufficient basis for the Commission's statement. Lovelady did not appear before the Commissioners and no evidence suggests that his picture was ever shown to them.

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Sylvia Meagher, in Accessories After the Fact:

...the Commission presents no supporting visual evidence by which one can apprise the resemblance between Lovelady and the man in the doorway...although nothing less hangs on the accurate identification of the doorway man than Oswald's innocence in the assassination.

The Committee asked the anthropology panel to compare the AP photo with pictures of Lovelady and pictures of Oswald, and to try to come to a decision as to which one it is.

Now, on to two other photograph issues. Shortly after the assassination, an arrest was made by Dallas police of three shabbily-dressed men who had been discovered in a railroad car not far from the "grassy knoll" that was to become famous for the fact that many witnesses thought they heard shots coming from its vicinity. Press photos were taken of the "tramps," as they came to be called, and publication of the photos caused considerable controversy, especially since the tramps had been released without being booked or otherwise identified.

For years the tramps photos were little more than conversation pieces, but in 1975, in a book called Coup d'etat in America, Michael Cranfield and Alan J. Webermann proposed that two of the three tramps were none other than E. Howard Hunt and Frank Sturgis of Watergate fame.

An identification of the third tramp, one who has earned the nickname "Frenchy," due to the European-looking cut of his clothing, has also been suggested by critics, connecting him to individuals whose names have come up in private investigations.

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Critics have dug up another AP photo taken on the day of the assassination and found an elderly, white-haired man they allege to be a well-known right-winger named Joseph Milteer. In a tape recording of a conversation with a police undercover agent in Miami on November 9, 1963, Milteer was heard explaining how an assassination of President Kennedy could be accomplished:

Milteer: From an office building with a high-powered rifle.

Informant: They are really going to try to kill him?

Milteer: Oh, yeah. It is in the working.

Milteer, who is now deceased, was questioned by the FBI but was never known to be an actual suspect in the Kennedy assassination.

The implications of the charges are enormous -- that a Watergate burglar and a former longtime CIA officer who directed the 1972 breakin might have been involved in the assassination, or that a militant conservative who had talked of killing President Kennedy was standing along the motorcade route. The implications are, of course, of a conspiracy.

The Committee, therefore, asked its panel of anthropologists to compare the photos in questions with known photos of the men they allege to show.

The members of the anthropology panel are:

Ellis Kerley, professor of anthropology, University of Maryland.

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Stephen Rosen, associate professor of anthropology, University of Maryland.

Clyde Collins Snow, chief of physical anthropology research, Civil Aeromedical Institute, Federal Aviation Administration Aeronautical Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Dr. Snow received a B. S. in zoology from Eastern New Mexico University in 1950, an M.S. in zoology from Texas Tech University in 1955 and a PH.D. in physical anthropology from the University of Arizona in 1967. He has served in various capacities as a research anthropologist with the Federal Aviation Administration for 18 years.

Dr. Snow is a fellow and vice-president of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, a fellow of the American Anthropological Association, a member of the American Association of Physical Anthropology and a diplomat and vice-president of the American Board of Forensic Anthropology.

Dr. Snow is the author of numerous professional publications, and he has lectured extensively on forensic anthropology at the University of Oklahoma.

It would be appropriate at this time, Mr. Chairman, to call Dr. Snow.



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There are other photographs, both still and motion picture, that were taken at the scene of the assassination that suggest to critics a conspiracy. These don't show alleged accomplices or masterminds who possibly could be identified. Rather, they show shapes or blurred images that critics have contended are gunmen. Most of these "gunmen" are in the vicinity of the "grassy knoll."

In the years since the assassination, significant progress has been made in the field of photographic enhancement. New chemical processes have been developed that record and improve picture quality.

The Select Committee assembled a group of photographic consultants to conduct a thorough analysis of photographic materials to see if there is, in fact, visual evidence of gunmen in Dealey Plaza. The members of this panel are scientists from leading educational institutions and private corporations whose field of specialization is photographic enhancement.

Representing the panel today is Dr. Bob R. Hunt of the University of Arizona. Dr. Hunt received a B.S., cum laude, in aeronautical engineering from Wichita State University, an M.S. in electrical engineering from Oklahoma State University and a Ph.D. in systems engineering from Oklahoma

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State University and a Ph.D. in systems engineering from the University of Arizona. He has been an adjunct professor of electrical engineering and computer science at the University of New Mexico and an alternate group leader at the University of California's Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory. Currently, he is an associate professor of systems and industrial engineering and optical sciences at the University of Arizona.

Dr. Hunt is a member of the Optical Society of America and the American Society of Photogrammetry. He was the recipient of the NEDA Fellowship in 1964 and a NASA Traineeship in 1966.

Dr. Hunt is the author of numerous publications.

It would be appropriate at this time, Mr. Chairman, to call Dr. Hunt.

When the Zapruder film of the Kennedy assassination was made public, critics and people generally were fascinated by the sight of a man with a black umbrella standing just a few feet from the presidential limousine. It was a sunshiny day, so what purpose could anyone have for an umbrella?

The theories about the "umbrella man," for the most part, attributed to him some sinister intent. At the very least, he was a signalman for the actual gunmen, although one critic proposed the idea that a firing device concealed in the umbrella was the weapon used to assassinate the President.

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It also appeared curious that the "umbrella man" was one of the few spectators in Dealey Plaza who was not later identified. In fact, his identity has remained a secret to this day.

When it studied all of the photographs taken in Dealey Plaza on November 22, 1963, the Committee discovered one, taken by a Life photographer, in which the "umbrella man" can be seen from the front. It is moments after the President has been shot, and the man is sitting on the curb, his umbrella by this time lying at his feet. The only problem was that he is off to the corner of the picture, and the image is tiny, unrecognizable in fact.

However, through photographic enhancement techniques, the committee was able to obtain a blowup of the photo in which the "umbrella man" appeared clearly enough to be identified.

The Committee released the picture to the press, asking anyone who recognized the "umbrella man" to contact the Committee. the Committee was contacted, and, as a result, the "umbrella man" was located by the Committee.

It would be appropriate at this time, Mr. Chairman, to call Louie Steven Witt.

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A widely held belief that has been fostered by some of the critics is that the death rate of individuals connected in some way to the assassination has been improbably high.

The editor of a weekly newspaper in Midlothian, Texas, Penn Jones, started it all by publishing his "mysterious death" theory in a book, Forgive My Grief, in 1966. Jones assembled details of the deaths and of the connections of the deceased to the assassination -- an attorney for Jack Ruby, Oswald's landlady, newsmen who had covered the assassination, a noted columnist who had interviewed Ruby, and so on.

Other critics picked up on Jones' thesis. In Accessories After the Fact, Sylvia Meagher writes:

Viewed subjectively, the witnesses appear to be dying like flies. But an authoritative opinion on the mortality rate of those involved directly or marginally in the assassination and attendant events remains to be rendered by some actuarial expert. It may be that the deaths are within the normal rates, despite the appearance of an epidemic, or it may be that they are radically out of line.

Mr. Chairman, Jacqueline Hess, the Committee's chief of research for the Kennedy assassination investigation, has been in charge of <sup>WHAT THE STAFF HAS COME TO CALL</sup> the "mysterious deaths" project. Her report, on which she is prepared to testify today, contains the findings of the project.

It would be appropriate at this time, Mr. Chairman, to call Ms. Hess.