

THE FOURTH DECADE

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Back cover illustration: The Bureau and I.D. Levine

As Isaac Don Levine was in Texas in early 1964 trying to develop an assassination "story" based on interviews with Marina Oswald, the FBI was keeping close tabs on him, as reflected in this Bradigan-to-Sullivan memorandum. Of special interest is the Bureau's use for this purpose of Hede Massing, one of the stable of ex-communist witnesses used by the FBI and various congressional investigating committees in condemning "security risks" in the late 40s and early 50s. For an extended discussion of Levine (and Massing), see "Plain Talk About Isaac Don Levine," this issue.

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THE ARROGANT SUSPECT

by

William Weston

When Lee Harvey Oswald, the protesting suspect, was handcuffed and escorted out of the Texas Theater, he was put in the back seat of an unmarked police car. Two detectives sat on either side of him and three more sat in front. According to the testimonies of three of the detectives, the following conversation occurred between them and the man whom they arrested: [1]

"I don't know why you are treating me like this. The only thing I have done is carry a pistol in a movie."

He was told that he was under arrest, because he was a suspect in the killing of a police officer.

"A police officer had been killed?" No one answered.

"You can only fry for that." [2]

"Maybe you will get a chance to find out."

"Well, I understand it only takes a second to die."

He did not say anything more after that. He did not respond to any questions concerning his name, address, why he was carrying a gun, or what he was doing at the time Officer J.D. Tippit was killed. An examination of the contents of his wallet was only marginally helpful. There were two names in it: Lee Harvey Oswald and A.J. Hidell. There were also two addresses in it: one in Fort Worth and one in Dallas. [3]

Whoever the man was, he kept his mouth shut for the remainder of the ride to the police station. The detectives were impressed by his quiet demeanor. One described him as "calm, extra calm, he wasn't a bit nervous." Another said that he showed "absolutely no emotion...he gave the appearance of being arrogant." They soon learned that Oswald was his real name, when Texas School Book Depository workers being questioned at the station saw him and pointed him out as a fellow worker. He thus became the prime suspect for both the assassination of President Kennedy and the murder of Officer Tippit.

Other law enforcement officials who came in contact with him that weekend were bewildered by his composure. Assistant District Attorney William Alexander told Anthony Summers in 1978: "I was amazed that a person so young would

have had the self-control he had. It was almost as if he had been rehearsed, or programmed, to meet the situation that he found himself in." Former police chief Jesse Curry said to Summers, "One would think Oswald had been trained in interrogation techniques and resisting interrogation techniques." [4] When Capt. Fritz asked Oswald why he was carrying a pistol, Oswald's reply was, "You know how boys do when they have a gun, they just carry it." [5]

From the time the police learned that Tippit had been shot to the time of Oswald's arrest, the duration of the hunt was only 35 minutes. The following chronology—taken from a transcript of Dallas police radio transmissions—is an indication of the frenzied activity of the police as they searched for the killer:

1:16 A citizen using a police car radio notifies the dispatcher that a patrolman had been shot at 404 E. Tenth. Numerous squads respond.

1:19 Dispatcher: "Suspect last seen running west on Jefferson."

1:22 First description of suspect: "White male about 30, 5 ft. 8 in., black hair, slender, wearing a white jacket, white shirt and dark slacks."

1:25 Police find a white jacket in a parking lot behind a service station at 401 E. Jefferson. They believe that it belonged to the suspect.

1:35 Detective C.T. Walker: "He is in the library, Jefferson and Marsalis."

1:36 Sgt. Owens: "We are all at the library."

1:37 Police learn from "an eyeball witness" that the suspect is armed with a .32, dark finish automatic.

1:39 Police find out that the man at the library was the wrong one.

1:40 Detective Gerald Hill: "The shell found out the scene [of the shooting] indicates that the suspect is armed with an automatic .38 rather than a pistol."

1:45 Dispatcher: "A suspect just went in the Texas Theater on west Jefferson."

1:51 Detective Gerald Hill: "Suspect on shooting of police officer is apprehended and en route to the station." [6]

The police had taken from Oswald a .38 Smith & Wesson revolver, fully loaded with six rounds of ammunition. But according to the evidence at the scene and the observation of at least one witness, Tippit was shot by someone using an automatic. There is a great deal of difference between that

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type of gun and a revolver. An automatic is loaded with a magazine of rounds inserted into the stock of the gun, whereas a revolver has a revolving chamber in which each round must be loaded in manually one by one; once the rounds are fired, the empty shells must be unloaded manually. An automatic has extractor and ejector mechanisms that eject empty shells as they are fired. One way to tell whether a shell has been fired from an automatic is by the scratches or markings left on the shell as a result of getting extracted and ejected out. Shells fired from a revolver will not have such markings. Another indication that empty shells were fired from an automatic is the wide scatter pattern on the ground as a result of the ejector mechanism propelling them out. The fact that Oswald was armed with a revolver— combined with the fact that Tippit was killed with an automatic— is an important clue in leading us to doubt that Oswald shot Tippit.

One of the purposes of this article is to present arguments which show that Oswald could not have been the one who shot Tippit. But focusing only on this aspect of the case does not bring us very far in understanding Oswald's movements during this crucial time period. Why did he stop at his rooming house to change his shirt and get his revolver? What was Oswald doing at the time Tippit was killed? What reason did he have to go to the Texas Theater? Was he meeting someone there or did he just want to see a couple of war movies? How did he get there? Did he walk, take a bus or ride in a car driven by an associate? Tippit was shot near the corner of Tenth and Patton some time between 1:05 to 1:15 pm; Oswald was arrested at the Texas Theater at 1:50 pm—a distance of only a half mile and a duration of only 35 to 45 minutes. Both events must be connected in some way; the latter must be dependent on the former. To try to analyze them separately would lead only to confusion.

In order to explore the circumstances connecting the arrest at the theater with the Tippit shooting, I will develop an idea that was first introduced in an earlier article ("The Furniture Mart," Jan. 1994), in which I presented my hypothesis that Oswald had full knowledge of his patsy role prior to the assassination, and that he fully cooperated with the organizers of the plot in making the patsy role a success. Oswald was not an innocent victim of a frame-up trap that was beyond his power to escape; Oswald was a sham patsy, deliberately aiding the conspiracy by making himself the focus of law enforcement investigations. The critical weaknesses in the material evidence and the doubtfulness of eyewitness identi-

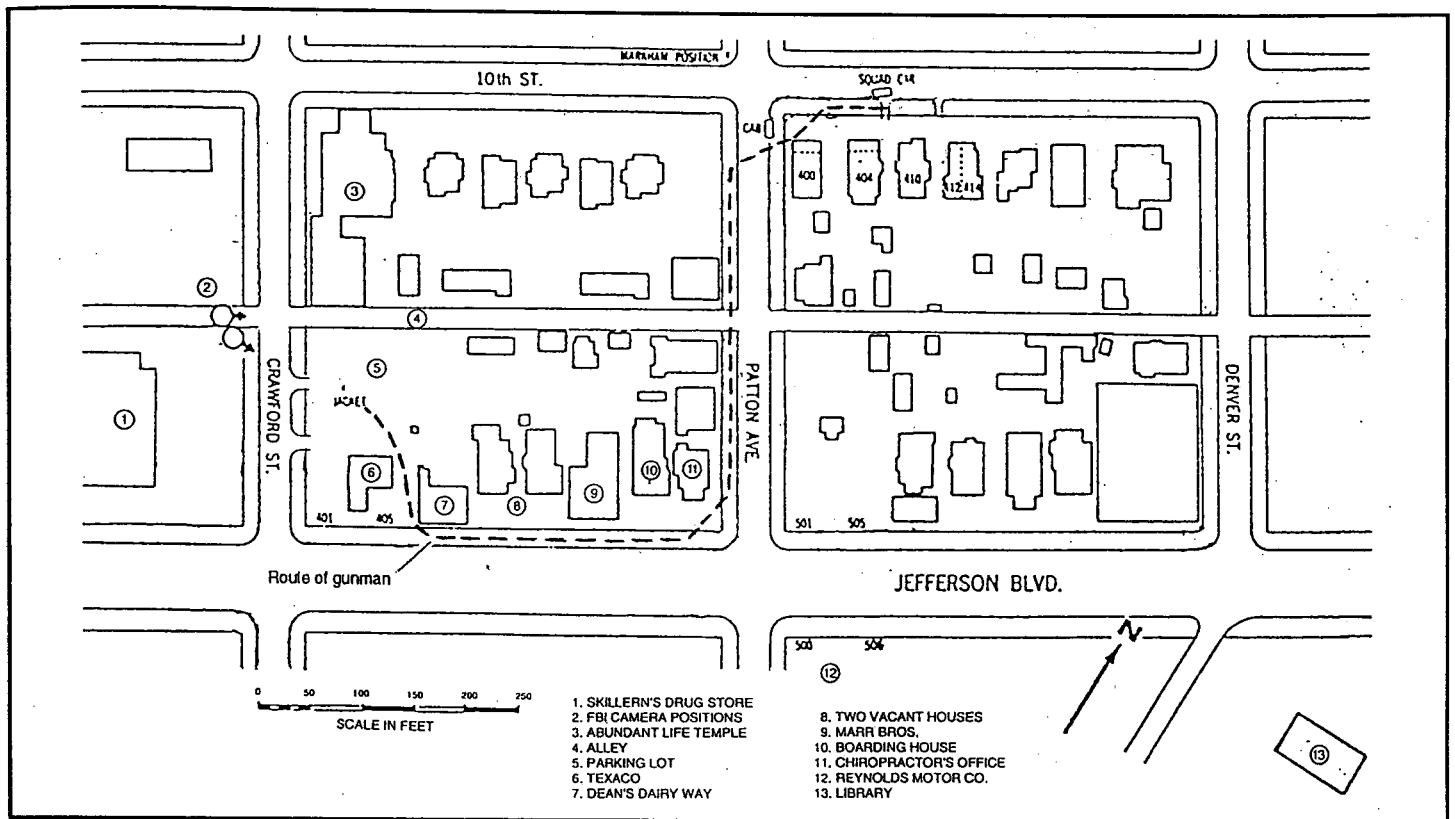
fications of him as the culprit were the tokens of assurance Oswald received from the plotters that he would never be convicted. Tied to these assurances may have been promises of considerable rewards. What he did not count on was a double-cross in the form of a .38 caliber bullet fired from a snub-nose revolver.

Before considering the reasons which demonstrate that Oswald was not the one who shot Tippit, let us first examine the details of the manhunt itself as seen through the eyes of two men who saw it from two critically important perspectives: Warren Reynolds [7] and Johnny Brewer. [8]

On the southeast corner of Patton St. and Jefferson Blvd. is a used car lot owned by Johnny Reynolds. He had a 28-year-old brother named Warren who worked as a handyman on the lot. On the 22nd of November, shortly after one o'clock, the sound of gunfire brought Warren Reynolds out on the balcony of his second-story office. Approaching the car lot was a man running down Patton Street, armed with a pistol in his right hand. He stuck the gun into the waistband of his pants. At the corner diagonally opposite to Reynolds' car lot, he turned west, cutting across the lawn of an old two-story house, which served as an office for a chiropractor. After turning the corner, the man slowed down to a brisk walk. Reynolds and another employee named B.M. Patterson decided to chase after him to keep him in view until the police arrived.

The section of town that they were passing through was part of a long string of business establishments that lined each side of the boulevard. Next to the chiropractor's office was another old building, two-stories high, white in color, which was used as a boarding house. After that was the Marr Brothers gasoline engine shop. Further on was a pair of vacant two-story houses, which were used for the storage of second-hand furniture. Beyond them was Dean's Dairy Way, a drive-in market. At the end of the block was the Texaco service station on the corner of Jefferson and Crawford. Behind the gas station was a private parking lot with about 60 to 75 cars in it. These cars belonged to the employees of the telephone company on the corner catty-corner to the station. The parking spaces were leased on a monthly basis from Texaco. [9]

As the gunman strode westward on the north side of Jefferson Blvd., Reynolds and Patterson were running on the south side. The distance between them was closing rapidly. Soon the pursuers were almost even with the pursued. Aware of the two men following him, the gunman swiftly turned the corner of the drive-in market, disappearing between that



building and the Texaco station. Reynolds and Patterson crossed the boulevard and came up to the gas station. A woman and a service station attendant told them that the man had gone into the parking lot behind the station. [10]

Reynolds and Patterson ran to the back and looked around. The gunman was nowhere to be seen. They figured that he could not have gone very far and that he must be hiding somewhere in the parking lot. He could not have had the time to cross the wide extent of open area all around the Texaco station. Beyond the parking lot on the north side was an alley. On the other side of the alley was a massive, four-story, brick building belonging to a church called the Abundant Life Temple and Bible College. Next to the church on the east side were the apartment buildings that fronted onto Tenth Street near where Tippit was shot. In order to find shelter from his pursuers on the other side of the alley, the man would have had to zigzag his way among the parked cars, cross the alley and scale a chain link fence that ran all along the alley. An alternative route would be to go around to the west side of the church and try to find an entrance somewhere on the Crawford Street side. Whichever way he went, he would have had to cross a distance of about 45 to 50 yards. It would have been impossible for him to increase his speed sufficiently to get across the parking lot during that brief interval of time when he

was out of view of his pursuers.

Neither was it possible for him to escape across Crawford Street. Beyond Crawford Street was still another parking lot. On the other side of this lot was a fairly large building called Skillern's Drug Store. The entrance to the store was about 70 yards from the rear of the Texaco station. The only hope the gunman had of evading his pursuers was among the cars parked immediately behind the Texaco station.

Leaving Patterson at the rear of the station to watch the south end of the lot, Reynolds ran to the alley on the north end. Whether he realized it or not, this position in the alley cut off the only means the gunman had of escaping unseen. It might have been possible to scurry unseen below the level of the car windows. Upon reaching a spot near the alley, the man could have waited for an opportunity to make a quick dash around the corner of the church. But with Reynolds' occupation of the alley, the gunman had nowhere to go without exposing himself. The trap was complete.

Reynolds was not content with just standing around in the alley until the police arrived. He began making his own search, moving from car to car, looking first inside and then underneath. This was of course a very dangerous thing to do and it was only afterwards that Reynolds realized the foolishness of it. However it was not long before the police arrived

on the scene. Reynolds told them what he saw and insisted that the gunman was still in the parking lot. The police immediately squared off the block, posting men at key locations along the four sides of the block: Crawford St. on the west, Jefferson Blvd. on the south, Patton St. on the east and Tenth St. on the north. No one was permitted to enter the block, and anyone who tried to come out would be stopped and questioned.

A preliminary search of the parking lot by two men—Captain Westbrook and a companion whose identity remains unknown [11]—resulted in the discovery of a white jacket believed to have belonged to the suspect. Westbrook's companion saw it underneath a parked car in the third row of cars away from the alley. This discovery was reported to the dispatcher at 1:25 and it confirmed Reynolds' belief that the suspect was still in the parking lot. The arrest of the suspect seemed imminent. It was a momentous occasion and even the news media were on hand to record this memorable exploit of the Dallas Police. With the manhunt going on in the background, Reynolds was interviewed by a camera crew from a television station. He was also interviewed by a news reporter from a local radio station.

In spite of the intensity of the search, the suspect somehow got away. What was supposed to be an easy capture, turned into a major setback. What happened?

The first indication that something was going wrong with the manhunt was the fact that the police did not begin their search in the parking lot. Instead they started with the two vacant buildings that were used to store second-hand furniture. [12] After making sure that no one was in these buildings, some of them moved on to the church. They questioned two women employees of the church who told them that they were there the whole day and that no one had tried to enter the building. Nevertheless, the police were determined to do a full search of this building, beginning with the basement. [13] Other police officers were grouping around the big, white boarding house near the chiropractor's office. [14] To Reynolds, "This was all a bunch of confusion. They didn't know what was going on." Sooner or later, the police would have to begin a complete and thorough search of the parking lot—at least to the satisfaction of their main witness, Warren Reynolds.

Then something happened which sent the police on a mad stampede to a location three blocks away. At 1:35 pm, a detective named C.T. Walker radioed the dispatcher that a person fitting the description of the suspect was seen running

into the Oak Cliff Library. Every police officer engaged in the hunt behind the Texaco station dropped whatever he was doing to respond to this call. No one stayed behind to keep an eye on the parking lot in case the call to the library turned out to be a false alarm. One minute later, Sgt. Owens informed the dispatcher: "We are all at the library." The frantic departure of the police must have been an extraordinary spectacle: numerous police men scrambling from all directions to their cars and roaring off to the library, the red and blue lights of their cars flashing like Christmas trees. Reynolds told the Commission, "And everyone of them left to go there. So when they left, well, I did too." [15]

As it turned out, the suspicious person at the library did not even remotely resemble the description that was broadcast over the police radio. He was just an ordinary teenage employee who ran into the library to give people inside the latest news on the assassination of the President.

A careful examination of the police activities that afternoon cannot shake the suspicion that the manhunt was being manipulated by someone in authority who did not want the suspect in the parking lot to be caught. The failure to search it properly gave the hiding man the opportunity to make his getaway. Reynolds never waived in his belief that the gunman had been in the parking lot. Looking at the situation from Reynolds' point of view, we are faced with two significant implications which cannot be ignored: (1) the suspect was unable to cross Crawford Street until after everyone had left, and (2) the man who was in the parking lot could not have been the same man who was arrested at the Texas Theater.

At about the same time that the police heard the call that the suspect was three blocks to the east of the Texaco station, an entirely new phase of that tumultuous afternoon was about to erupt four blocks to the west. This was the vicinity in which Hardys Shoe Store was located. The 22-year-old manager of the store, Johnny Brewer, had been listening to news bulletins about the critically wounded President on his transistor radio. He also heard a seemingly unrelated report about the shooting of a patrolman somewhere near his store in Oak Cliff. When he heard the siren of an approaching police car, Brewer wondered whether it had something to do with the Oak Cliff shooting. As the siren grew louder, he noticed a man moving quickly into the open air entranceway that led to the front door. The man did not come into the store; neither did he seem to be interested in the shoes visible through the display window. He simply stared into the interior of the store with his

back toward the street. Brewer could see his face clearly through the window, for there was only a distance of ten feet between them. His hair was messed up and he looked like he had been running. Brewer thought he looked scared. He was a man about the same age as Brewer, about 5'9", with brown hair. He wore a brown salt-and-pepper shirt with the shirt tail hanging out. The top two buttons of his shirt were unbuttoned. Underneath the brown shirt was a T-shirt.

The police car did not pass the shoe store. Instead it sounded like it had made a U-turn at a nearby intersection and headed back the other way. As soon as the siren of the police car began to subside, the man quickly looked over his shoulder, turned around, went out to the sidewalk and started walking towards the movie theater. This suspicious behavior prompted Brewer to step outside his store and see where the man was going.

The man was walking at a faster than normal pace. He was near the theater, when another police car with flashing lights and siren came screaming out of the east side of Oak Cliff. At the sound of the approaching police car, the man quickly ducked into the entranceway of the theater. The cashier in the ticket booth, Julia Postal, noticed the man standing with his back to the inside wall of the entranceway, but she was distracted by her employer rushing out to his car parked out front. [16] He told her that he was going to follow the police car, in order to find out what was going on. Postal stepped out of her booth to watch her employer drive off, and perhaps to get an idea of how far away the disturbance seemed to be. While she was staring in that direction, Brewer came up from behind, got her attention, and asked her if she sold a ticket to a man wearing a brown shirt. It was at this point the Postal realized that the man had sneaked into the theater without paying. She remembered that he had a "panicked look on his face." It was obvious that the man was trying to avoid the police.

Not knowing how much Brewer knew, Postal told him that the President had been assassinated. She said "I don't know if this is the man they want in there, but he is running from them for some reason. I am going to call the police and you and Butch (Warren Burroughs, the ticket taker) go get on each of the exit doors and stay there." Brewer went inside and found Burroughs behind the candy counter. Burroughs did not see the man come in, for he had been busy stocking the shelves with more candy. The man could have gone up the stairs to the balcony section without having to pass Burroughs. To go unnoticed from the balcony to the main seating area was not

difficult, for there was another stairway on the opposite side. [17]

While American soldiers were battling the Chinese in a Korean War movie called War Is Hell, Brewer and Burroughs checked the exits. If someone had exited the theater, the double doors would have remained ajar. They saw that the double doors had not been opened. Brewer stood at the exit near the stage, and Burroughs stood at the exit near the lobby. While Brewer was guarding the exit, he heard a noise outside. He opened the door to investigate. The alley was filled with policemen and squad cars. Two of them grabbed Brewer and asked him what he was doing there. Brewer told them about the suspicious man who was inside the theater. The police wanted Brewer to accompany them inside and point the man out.

Entering the theater, Brewer and two police officers walked up onto the stage. The lights had been turned on, but the movie was still running. There were about fifteen people in the audience. Brewer could see the man, seated in the third row from the back, and indicated his location to the police officers. The man of course could see clearly everything that was going on. The police began advancing up the two center aisles. To make sure they did not miss anybody, they moved towards the two men sitting near the front and began frisking them for weapons. One of the officers was Nick MacDonald. As he searched one of the two men in front, he looked over his shoulder at the prime suspect. MacDonald told the Commission, "He remained seated without moving, just looking at me." [18] After satisfying themselves that the two men in front were not armed, MacDonald and other police officers once again moved up the aisles.

The next one to be searched was the suspect himself. MacDonald came up to him and ordered him to stand up. When he did so the suspect threw a punch at MacDonald's face, sending him reeling back onto the seats. A scuffle broke out with several uniformed and plain clothes officers piling on the suspect.

Brewer had seen all of this, including the first punch that the suspect delivered to MacDonald. As he watched the police try to subdue him, he saw a hand holding a gun projecting out of the fray. Someone hollered "He's got a gun." Several hands were trying to grab it from him. The click of the hammer was heard, but it had misfired. It was pointing harmlessly towards the screen when the hammer came down. [19] Finally, one of the detectives standing by grabbed it away from the jouncing

hand. Brewer heard one of the policemen exclaim: "Kill the President, will you?" Fists were flying, and they were hitting him. The man still kept fighting back. After an immense effort, the police managed to put handcuffs on him. As the man was led out of the theater, Brewer heard him shouting "I am not resisting arrest." Later that day, Brewer learned that his name was Lee Harvey Oswald.

It was not long after Oswald was brought into police headquarters that law enforcement officials began making statements to the press that they had apprehended the man who shot the President, the Governor and Police Officer Tippit. Although the case seemed to be "clinched," there were still a lot of loose ends. The evidence connecting Oswald to these capital crimes was shot through with too many defects and weaknesses. Here I will dwell on just a few of the salient points pertaining to the Tippit case which demonstrate that Oswald was not the one who did the shooting.

The shells found at the site were originally identified as coming from an automatic. Yet the shells exhibited in the Warren Commission volumes are from a revolver. Since Oswald's weapon was a revolver, it is possible that the police just made a mistake—provided, of course, that the chain of possession from the moment of discovery to the time it became a Commission exhibit is unbroken.

Two of the four Tippit shells were not recovered by the police, but rather they were delivered to the police by Barbara and Virginia Davis, who said they found them in the front yard of their apartment. The other two shells were found by Domingo Benavides, who gave them to Officer J.M. Poe at the scene of the crime. The officer scratched his initials in the shells according to routine police procedures. However the shells exhibited by the Commission do not have Poe's initials. [20] There is no other way of explaining this difficulty than to acknowledge that the chain of possession had been broken by substituted shells, which in turn taints whatever value the two shells recovered by the Davis sisters might have had. The mishandling of important evidence such as this signifies the hollow substance of the case against Oswald.

Another difficulty that would have stumbled the prosecution in a court of law was the discrepancy between the clothing and appearance of the gunman (as perceived by witnesses at the scene) and the actual clothing and appearance of Oswald. According to the first police description, the suspect was a "white male about 30, 5 ft. 8 in., black hair, slender, wearing a white jacket, white shirt and dark slacks."

In the Dallas Morning News, it was reported that "Witnesses to the shooting described a bushy-haired man about 30 as Tippit's slayer. They said he wore a white cotton jacket." [21] This newspaper report was corroborated by Helen Markham, who told Mark Lane that the gunman had bushy-hair. She also said that he was short and stocky. [22] Detective Gerald Hill remembered the description of the suspect as having brown bushy hair. [23] J.M. Poe remembered Mrs. Markham and the Davis sisters telling him that the suspect was 5'7" or 5'8". [24] Thus we have a fairly consistent picture of a gunman who was short, stocky, with bushy hair, around 30 years old, wearing dark slacks, a white shirt and a white jacket.

The same witnesses who were close enough to see what the gunman looked like later identified Oswald as the man, involved in the shooting. These witnesses include Helen Markham, the two Davis women, Domingo Benavides, B.M. Patterson and Warren Reynolds. Yet Oswald was neither short, stocky, nor bushy haired. He was not 30 years old; he was 24. Although he was wearing dark slacks, he was not wearing a white shirt; instead he wore a tan or gray jacket. Such a wide degree of discrepancy in the details of what the witnesses actually reported to have seen and the actual clothing and physical features of the man whom they accused would have made a very confusing issue had Oswald come to trial.

Yet there seems to be more going on with the Tippit witnesses than has publicly come out. From the little that we know of them, it appears that an irresistible campaign of intimidation was used to pressure them to change their stories. For example, Benavides was not taken to view the suspect in a police line-up because he "did not think he could identify the suspect because he did not really see him." [25] A month later his brother was murdered in circumstances indicating that the real target was Domingo. When Benavides came to testify, he clearly identified Oswald as the man who shot Tippit. [26] Another example is Warren Reynolds. In a statement he gave to the FBI on Jan. 21, 1964, [27] he said that the man whom he was chasing might have been Oswald, but he would hesitate to identify him as such. This qualified statement was apparently not definite enough to spare him from the horror of getting shot in the head by an unknown assailant two days later. Miraculously, Reynolds survived, and when it came time for him to testify, all his doubts that the suspect was Oswald had vanished. [28] Given the menacing circumstances which faced the Tippit witnesses, it is no

wonder that they had been making inconsistent statements.

When the sum total of facts and details are considered, it is quite evident that Oswald was not the one who killed Tippit. Having come this far, we still have not explained how Oswald happened to end up at the Texas Theater to be arrested. Especially curious was Oswald's ducking-for-cover behavior whenever a police car went by. Also to be noted is the "scared look" on his face prior to his entrance into the theater. This "scared look" is especially baffling when it is compared to how he appeared immediately after his arrest. The officers accompanying him to the police station described him as calm, unemotional, and even arrogant in his attitude to his captors. Why was he afraid of the police just before his arrest, but was quiet and calm immediately after?

That is the ultimate question. It is the last riddle of Oswald the Sphinx. Whoever can answer that question will go far in understanding Oswald's true role in the assassination, penetrating deep into the heart of the conspiracy itself.

To begin answering that question, we need to determine what was the link between Oswald and the man who shot Tippit. A comparison of both men at the time of these events gives numerous revealing parallels:

1. The bushy-haired man was last seen moving westward on foot on Jefferson Blvd. Oswald was first seen moving westward on foot on Jefferson Blvd.
2. The bushy-haired man discarded a white zipper-type jacket behind the Texaco station. Oswald had discarded a dark colored zipper-type jacket [29] somewhere between his rooming house on Beckley and Jefferson Blvd.
3. The bushy-haired man was armed with a .38 automatic, which he had tucked in his belt. Oswald was armed with a .38 revolver, which he had tucked in his belt.
4. The bushy-haired man was dodging his pursuers in the Texaco parking lot. Oswald was dodging the police at the Texas Theater.
5. The bushy-haired man was last seen at 1:20 pm. Oswald was first seen at 1:35 pm.
6. The bushy-haired man was last seen near the corner of Jefferson and Crawford. Oswald was first seen near the corner of Jefferson and Zangs, a distance of four blocks.

These parallels are too precise and too numerous to be coincidental. What they suggest is a coordination of effort

between Oswald and the bushy-haired man, or rather between the handlers of these two men. To achieve such precision in timing would have required some form of short wave communication. Although Oswald did not in the least resemble the man who killed Tippit, this was of no real concern to the conspirators. Oswald's cooperation in his patsy role was contingent upon the confusion of the eyewitnesses. This would eventually lead to Oswald's release.

There was no specific plan of where Oswald would be captured. It was simple happenstance that he got caught in the theater. If the cashier failed to notice that he had gone inside without paying for his ticket, or if no one sounded the alarm, Oswald would have just moved on, continuing to behave suspiciously until someone noticed him and called the police. His "panicky" appearance was merely a masquerade to attract attention to himself.

The assassination was too big an operation to allow an innocent patsy to say and do things unpredictably and thus expose the plot. It was essential to have a cooperating patsy who could be relied upon in a role that was to be extremely sensitive. Oswald's part in this highly complex operation was immensely indispensable. Not only did he give time to the real assassins to make their getaways, but also he was laying down a trail of false clues indicating that the assassination was a Communist plot. Oswald was an experienced agent provocateur in the field of sabotaging left wing organizations. Throughout the weekend following his capture, he had no hesitation in declaring himself to be a Marxist with ties to pro-Castro and socialist organizations. If the assassination was to be regarded as a conspiracy, let the public think that it was a Communist conspiracy. Oswald was neither frightened nor worried about the future. His arrogance was the demeanor of a man who felt himself to be completely in control. He knew exactly what he was doing. With his Marxist background being blatantly proclaimed, he was about to launch a huge public outcry against Cuba and the Communists. But Oswald's plans never came to fruition. As the crack of a single shot reverberated through the basement of Dallas police headquarters, the legend of the lone assassin was born.

Notes

1. Warren Commission Hearings and Exhibits Vol. 7, p. 22 (Carroll). References to this source cited hereafter in format 7H22; 7H40-41 (Walker), 7H58-61 (Hill).
2. It is not known what Oswald actually said. To Sgt. Hill,

it was something similar to "You can fry for that" or "You only fry for that." Walker thought his words were "I hear they burn for murder."

3. A Dallas Public Library card had the signature Lee H. Oswald at an address at 602 Elsbeth St. in Dallas. A Selective Service card had Oswald's name at 3124 W. Fifth St. in Fort Worth. Another Selective Service card had his picture under the name Alek James Hidell. Warren Report 615, 616. References to this source cited hereafter in format WR615, 616.
4. Anthony Summers, Conspiracy (McGraw-Hill, 1980) p. 128.
5. WR601.
6. Dallas Police Radio Log, 23H857-875.
7. 11H434-437 (Reynolds) and Patterson Exhibit, 21H25.
8. 7H2-8 (Brewer).
9. Details concerning the area were obtained by a comparison of a 1964 Dallas criss-cross directory, an aerial view of the area in the Warren Report (WR164), and a telephone conversation with a former Texaco employee named Harold Manord. The two vacant houses used to store furniture were torn down shortly after the assassination.
10. Brock Exhibits, 19H181-182.
11. 7H117 (Westbrook). Westbrook had considerable difficulty in trying to remember the identity of his companion. In one place in his testimony he said he was with "some officer, I feel sure it was an officer, I still can't be positive." Later, when he was asked if he knew the man's name, Westbrook said "No, I probably knew his name, but we had so many things that were happening so fast."
12. 7H48 (Hill).
13. 7H49 (Hill).
14. 7H116-117 (Westbrook).
15. 11H436 (Reynolds). Not all the police had left. Sgt. Gerald Hill and a few others were still on the other side of the church, questioning the two women employees. Nevertheless, the perimeter surrounding the block had been dissolved.
16. 7H9-14 (Postal).
17. 7H15 (Burroughs).
18. 3H299 (MacDonald).
19. MacDonald said that the gun was pointing at himself and that the gun failed to fire because the fleshy part of his thumb got caught where the hammer came down. But this was contradicted by the others involved in the scuffle (Hutson, 7H32 and Walker, 7H39). As for the gun itself, it is quite probable that it was harmless to begin with. Joachim Joesten heard an unconfirmed report that FBI weapons experts had determined that the firing pin was bent so that it could not strike the shell properly (Oswald: Assassin or Fall Guy, p. 115).
20. 24H415. While doing research for his book, Henry Hurt asked Poe about the Tippit shells. Poe insisted that, even though he could not find his initials, they were indeed the genuine shells. He stated that the reason his marks could not be found was because they were obliterated by other markings. Hurt then went to the National Archives and examined them for himself. There were no obliterated markings. When Hurt confronted Poe with this, Poe said, "I have talked to you all I'm going to talk to you. You already got your mind made up about what you're going to say. I know what the truth is." He then hung up the phone (Reasonable Doubt, p. 153-154).
21. Dallas Morning News, November 23, 1963.
22. Markham Exhibit 20H571-599.
23. 7H47 (Hill).
24. 7H69 (Poe).
25. WR166.
26. 6H452 (Benavides).
27. 25H731.
28. 11H437-442 (Reynolds). In 1983, Hurt contacted Reynolds, in order to ask some questions. Reynolds "simply smiled and refused to discuss any aspect of the matter" (Reasonable Doubt, p. 148).
29. 7H419 (Earlene Roberts affidavit).

REFLECTIONS ON COPA 1994

by

William C. Beck

Three Decades of Doubt, the National Conference of the Coalition on Political Assassinations, was held at the Sheraton Washington Hotel October 7–10, 1994, in Washington, D.C. The conference was attended by approximately 250 assassination researchers from the United States, Canada, Germany, Great Britain and the Netherlands. The conference was organized in a topical format with well over 40 different researchers presenting abstracts. What follows are my impressions and thoughts on some of those papers and the events of the weekend.

First day activities included trips to National Archives II, tours of the Kennedy gravesite and points of interest in D.C. and an afternoon press conference. The conference was officially convened by Dr. Cyril Wecht who welcomed the participants by explaining how COPA came into being. A Review of Political Assassinations: Past, Present and Future Objectives was given by conference co-chairs Daniel S. Alcorn, Esq., and John M. Newman, Ph.D. Dr. Gary Aguilar, Program Chair, then outlined the program schedule and the need to adhere to the time table.

On Saturday morning the Historical Overview Panel convened at 8:30 A.M. with Theresa Seay, M.A. giving an overview of the John F. Kennedy assassination. Her remarks highlighted a five shot sequence in Dealey Plaza. Fletcher Prouty then presented his timeline to the assassination. He briefly touched on Ike's "beware of the military-industrial complex speech," the Bay of Pigs and JFK's desire to withdraw from Vietnam.

This was followed by Michael Morrissey's "The Bay of Pigs Revisited." His argument was "that the CIA leadership sabotaged their own operation. Their series of actions and non-actions only make sense if they were designed to make the operation fail," Morrissey said. The CIA leadership were very surprised when, after the invasion failed, Kennedy refused to send in the marines. Morrissey says that the "guns were waiting for him (JFK) in Dallas" when Kennedy again balked at a full scale commitment to another CIA war, Vietnam!

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Dr. Donald Gibson spoke briefly about his current book, Battling Wall Street, The Kennedy Presidency. He outlined how Kennedy was trying to improve the standard of living of people in the United States and in the nations of the Third World. He pointed out there is now "strong evidence...showing a close relationship between Kennedy's opponents in the media, such as Time-Life-Fortune, and Kennedy's opponents in the financial establishment and the Central Intelligence Agency." Dr. Gibson said that legislation proposed by John Kennedy "would eliminate a host of special privileges enjoyed by wealthy and powerful interests." He concluded that Kennedy "represented something different and...what appeared in the years after 1963 is tragic testimony of what we lost and have not yet regained." I believe, after hearing this paper, that Gibson's Battling Wall Street is a must read.

I found two papers presented Saturday afternoon and evening most interesting and informative. The first of these was by Dr. Carrie Foster, an Associate Professor of History at Miami University at Hamilton. Her thesis was "Teaching The Assassinations: The Historical Context." She said we must view the assassinations of JFK, RFK, and MLK not as "isolated or unique events...but rather, the logical culmination of a pattern of governmental behavior that characterizes all of American history." Even from our earliest beginnings the basic thrust has been toward empire. American ruling elites have set their course toward the creation of an American empire or, as it became known after World War II, global supremacy. She said we have never had a "genuine democracy." Foster further stated that the "imperialistic power structure" would use whatever means necessary to dispose of its enemies if they perceived a threat to their objectives...even to the extent of using assassination to dispose of "recalcitrant leaders."

The second, most informative, because of new research, was presented by James DiEugenio. Entitled "A New Look at the Clinton Incident," Jim laid out what his latest research reveals. First, the Clinton incident wasn't a one-day affair, but in fact, a three-day sojourn. He said Shaw and Ferrie were not aware of CORE's voter registration drive in Clinton. The trio were first spotted in Jackson. Oswald was in McGhee's barber shop and asked if any jobs were available at the Jackson hospital. McGhee referred him to Reeves Morgan, the state representative in Jackson. Morgan suggested Oswald should go to Clinton the next day and register as a voter as that would provide him a better opportunity to get his job at Jackson State. The next day Shaw, Ferrie and Oswald were seen in Clinton

where Oswald attempted to register. The following day (the third day) they were back in Jackson at the state hospital where Oswald applied for work. DiEugenio theorizes it would have been easy to change the employment application to a patient record to show LHO had a history of mental problems...thus making the "lone nut theory" that much more acceptable. Jim did point out how important it is to check out thoroughly one's sources of information, as did many of the other speakers.

In one of several working panels, Dick Russell discussed "the possibility that Lee Harvey Oswald was 'programmed' to take the fall for the assassination" and that Oswald may have been part of the CIA's MK/ULTRA program. Russell's major points were: (1) Oswald's "passive-aggressive" personality type which Navy Intelligence was seeking for potential assassins, (2) release of HSCA documents revealing that David Ferrie was practicing hypnosis on young members of the Civil Air Patrol during Oswald's tenure. Also, that Ferrie sought recruits for "experiments" at Tulane University, an MK/ULTRA site, (3) that Atsugi was one of only two overseas field stations where the MK/ULTRA program was in place during Oswald's tenure there, (4) that the KGB allowed Oswald to remain in the USSR because it wanted to analyze mind-control methods it suspected had been employed on Oswald by the U.S. and (5) that there is new information linking Oswald to an official of the National Institutes of Health, in an MK/ULTRA related department.

The highlight of Sunday was hearing Mark Lane, as I had never before heard him in person. He is a polished speaker, very entertaining and, as I perceive, somewhat conceited. Mr. Lane's abstract was titled, "The American News Media and the Assassination." He began by saying as he lectured in Europe following the death of President Kennedy he "encountered almost no one...who professed belief in the conclusion of the Warren Report. Almost all were puzzled by the unquestioning endorsement of that political document by the American news media." He then made a quantum leap to the present and stated, "the established media in large measure still prefers fantasy to fact in this area." To illustrate his point, he cited a major author and his classic tome, you guessed it, one Gerald Posner and Case Closed. Mr. Lane suggested the book should have been entitled Mind Closed. He also mentioned the tests conducted by Failure Analysis Associates, Inc., which, as we know, Posner implies that he had commissioned. Mr. Lane pointed out how the media went all out to publicize and market and uncritically praised Posner's work. In his closing

remarks Lane said when, "Random House published a defamatory statement about me to market its questionable work I filed a lawsuit, now pending, against the publisher in the United States District Court." He concluded that as part of that suit is "an affidavit from Roger L. McCarthy, Chief Executive Officer of Failure Analysis Associates, Inc." Notable among the facts Mr. McCarthy says, "Posner took credit for tests when he had played absolutely no role in commissioning them." Mr. Lane ended by asking, "Is the media's complicity based upon willful ignorance or something decidedly worse?"

Other topics covered during the conference included critiques of Posner's Case Closed, discussions about the medical evidence with slides, the media's participation in the cover-up and the story of John Thomas Mason, a Dallas gun dealer, who was in possession of 6.5 mm ammo in November, 1963.

For me and many others the high point of the conference occurred Monday morning. We were privileged to meet and hear Mr. John Tonheim, the chairman of the Assassinations Records Review Board (ARRB). He expounded on the history of the ARRB and emphasized that he takes very seriously his job to communicate with the American people. Mr. Tonheim invited the research community's help in identifying where to look for documents and which documents to seek. He stated the ARRB has the power to decide which records are to be released but added the law says all records carry a presumption of complete disclosure. The Board has significant powers; the power to subpoena, to compel testimony, to unseal court records and to compel government agencies to account for the destruction of any records. Exempt from disclosure are the autopsy and X-ray records and any records in the Kennedy family's possession. There was a question and answer session after Mr. Tonheim's address with two significant questions. To the question, "How could any of us (researchers present) be nominated to be part of the field staff?", he replied he would welcome resumes from any researcher. (1) To the question about information former FBI or CIA employees might know of, he stated the Board also had the power to void any secrecy agreements if necessary. I was quite impressed by his sincerity and desire to have COPA's input. If you missed this conference you missed a stimulating and rewarding weekend. (2)

Notes

1. Inquiries to serve on ARRB should be sent to Mr. David Marwell, Executive Director, Assassination Records Review Board, 600 E Street, N.W., Room 208, Washington,

D.C. 20008.

2. COPA may have some abstract packets available. They were selling for \$10.00. Address inquiries to Mr. John Judge, COPA, P.O. Box 772, Washington, D.C. 20004-0772.

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R.I.P.: THE BLACK DOG MAN

by

Martin Shackelford

One of the more persistent myths in Kennedy assassination research is the idea that someone was perched with a gun behind the concrete retaining wall on the grassy knoll in Dealey Plaza. This individual has long been dubbed "The Black Dog Man." It is a misnomer, as we shall see.

Like many myths, this one has been exposed in whole or part by a variety of independent researchers. The author owes a debt of gratitude for the work of Robert Cutler, Richard Trask, Bill O'Neil and Matthew Smith, who provided some of the elements which eventually came together to create this article.

A little after noon on November 22, 1963, secretary Marilyn Sitzman went down into Dealey Plaza with her boss, Abraham Zapruder. As they prepared for the filming of the President's motorcade, Ms. Sitzman saw a young black couple eating their lunch on a bench in front of and below the pedestal on which she and Mr. Zapruder were standing. [1] The location of the bench is indicated in a detail from a chart which appears in Richard Trask's comprehensive study of the photographic evidence. [2] The bench appears in a film frame [3] and in a photo [4] which also shows the paper lunch bags from which the couple had been eating. One was drinking an orange pop, and one a red pop. [5]

When the shots began, the young woman was standing up, looking toward Elm Street. She appears, as the image long identified as "The Black Dog Man," in the Hugh Betzner and Phil Willis photos. An enlargement from the Betzner photo, published by Matthew Smith, definitely looks like a woman

[6]. The House Select Committee on Assassinations photo panel found flesh tones in the image [7]; and it is clear from good color copies of the 5th Willis photo [8] that the flesh tones of the image are darker than those of most of the other people in the picture, including Zapruder and Sitzman, approximately the same distance from the photographer.

When she stood up, she apparently set her orange pop bottle on the concrete wall, where it appears, orange tone visible in a good enlargement, in the third photograph by Jim Towner [9]. Sitzman later recalled seeing the bottle [10]. Barbara Rowland mentioned police inspecting a pop bottle there. [11]

After the last shot was fired, Sitzman heard the crash of breaking glass, which was "much louder than the shots were", and the young couple ran up the steps, last seen heading for the pergola area behind her. [12]

The breaking glass was apparently the red pop bottle, which left a pool of red pop, later mistaken by some spectators for a red snow cone [13] or a pool of blood. [14]

An image often mistakenly cited to bolster the theory of an assassin in this location is frame 413 of the Zapruder film, which shows the back of a man's head and a straight image which somewhat resembles a rifle [15]. Also in the image is a bush located just in front of Zapruder. The image of the "rifle" passes between Zapruder and the leaves of the bush, indicating it (probably a branch) was closer to Zapruder than the leaves (similar images, though not as long, appear elsewhere in the frame, also crossing leaves). On the other hand, leaves appear between Zapruder and the man's head, indicating the man was beyond the bush. Robert Cutler has established that the man is probably one of the three men standing on the knoll steps, visible in the Moorman photograph and Muchmore film, among others.

The preponderance of the witness and photographic evidence, then, indicates that the figure long referred to as "The Black Dog Man" was in fact a young black woman, part of the couple having lunch on the knoll that day. Logic, too, tells us that an assassin is unlikely to have positioned himself in plain view of Zapruder and Sitzman. In addition, Sitzman clearly stated that no shots were fired from any location that close to her. [16] "Black Dog Man," rest in peace.

Notes

1. She reported this to Josiah Thompson, in an 11/29/66 interview; the transcript is cited by Richard Trask, Pictures of the Pain: Photography and the Assassination of Presi-

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- dent Kennedy (1994, Yeoman Press, Danvers, MA), p. 73 (hereafter cited as Trask); full citation is in footnote 4, p. 148.
2. Trask, p. 56.
 3. Trask, p. 76; on p. 74, he identifies the photo as having been taken by Johnny Flynn of the Dallas Morning News.
 4. Trask, p. 75.
 5. Phone conversation 10/16/94 with Bill O'Neil, regarding his 10/25/92 conversation with Marilyn Sitzman in Dealey Plaza during the A.S.K. Conference (hereafter O'Neil phone).
 6. Matthew Smith, JFK: The Second Plot (1992, Mainstream Publishing Company, Edinburgh).
 7. HSCA v. 4, p. 410.
 8. See, for example, p. 24 of Robert J. Groden, The Killing of a President (1993, Viking Studio, New York) (hereafter Groden).
 9. An excellent enlargement appears on p. 194 of Groden.
 10. 10/24/94 letter from Bill O'Neil, summarizing his 10/25/92 conversation with Sitzman (hereafter O'Neil letter).
 11. Warren Commission v. 6, p. 184, cited by Trask, p. 74.
 12. Trask, pp. 73-74; O'Neil phone; O'Neil letter.
 13. O'Neil letter.
 14. This was photographer Malcolm Couch's assumption in his Warren Commission testimony; it is also featured prominently in a chapter in Unsolved Texas Mysteries by Wallace O. Chariton, Charlie Eckhardt and Kevin R. Young (1991, Wordware Publishing, Texas).
 15. For a high resolution color copy, see Groden, p. 195.
 16. O'Neil letter: referring to the Badgeman location, about the same distance, Sitzman stated "the blast of a high-powered rifle would have blown me off that wall." She did allow, however, that a shot could have been fired from "farther down, closer to the overpass...or maybe they were using silencers."

STEPHEN H. LANDESBURG AND THE GREENWICH VILLAGE HOAX

by

Stan C. Weeber

On the night of November 22, 1963, a man who identified himself as Jim Rizzuto called a New York City radio station to report that Lee Harvey Oswald had been seen in Greenwich Village in 1962 in the company of Steve L'Eandes, a Nazi sympathizer and right-wing agitator from Wiggins, Mississippi. [1] The FBI ultimately determined that Rizzuto's story was a hoax and that Rizzuto's real name was Stephen Harris Landesberg. This paper will recite the story Landesberg told to the FBI and will consider the implications of that story, assuming it is true, for research on the assassination of John F. Kennedy. The paper also explores: (1) the similarities in the political careers of Landesberg and Lee Oswald; and (2) the circumstantial resemblance between Stephen H. Landesberg and actor/comedian Steve Landesberg, a Bronx native who played detective Arthur Dietrich in the Barney Miller TV series.

When "Jim Rizzuto" called the radio station on assassination night, he claimed that he served in the Marine Corps with both Lee Oswald and L'Eandes, a man whose pro-segregationist, anti-Semitic rhetoric disrupted Jewish gatherings and liberal rallies in Greenwich Village in 1961 and 1962. [2] Rizzuto stated during his call that he could find L'Eandes and bring him to the station for an interview that weekend. The station was very much interested in talking to Rizzuto, and arranged to speak with him at 3:00 A.M. on November 23. The station called in the FBI to observe the interview. When Rizzuto showed up, he told station officials and the FBI the same story that he had apparently already recited at several radio stations and newspaper offices on November 22. [3] This information is summarized below.

He met Steve L'Eandes and Lee Oswald in the Marine Corps at Camp LeJeune in the summer of 1956. [4] After his Marine service he kept in touch with L'Eandes, who sent postcards from Stockholm, Leningrad and Moscow in 1960. L'Eandes was accompanied in Europe and Russia by Lee Oswald and a man named Earl Perry, who in 1963 was living near El Paso,

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Texas. Rizzuto had heard, apparently from L'Eandes, that Oswald was considering becoming a Russian citizen. However, L'Eandes said in one of his cards that Oswald just liked to travel and wanted to see Europe. [5]

He next saw L'Eandes in Miami, Florida at the Hotel Tamiani in 1961. L'Eandes had been back home in Mississippi for a while, apparently visiting his hometown of Wiggins, as well as relatives who live in Copiah County in the Mississippi Delta southwest of Jackson. Rizzuto said that L'Eandes was looking for hotel work in south Florida. L'Eandes told him that Oswald was back in the states and that he had gone back to Texas. [6]

He and L'Eandes got together in New York around October, 1961. L'Eandes said he was going to be at the "Mark Lane" rally in December of 1961; [7] this was after he had appeared on the Barry Gray radio program. He stated that at the Lane rally a girl who was working with L'Eandes continually tried to disrupt the meeting and eventually the police were called. L'Eandes later told him that this heckling was done for the States Rights Party. [8]

Rizzuto advised that L'Eandes and Earl Perry had attended a rally of the American Jewish Congress at their headquarters in the early part of 1962, and caused such a disturbance that someone struck L'Eandes. He stated that Oswald was also at the meeting taking pictures of the incident. [9] At least one photograph was going to be sent to a pro-fascist publication. It was implied that Oswald, who supposedly roomed with L'Eandes on East Eighth Street, condoned L'Eandes' exploits. [10]

At about this time L'Eandes was staying at the Roosevelt Hotel in New York City with a man from Memphis named Regan (first name unknown), who was described as 35 to 40 years old, 6'4" tall, 250 pounds, with a big stomach, heavy build, and a very gruff voice. Regan was working for an ultra-right wing organization and he had paid L'Eandes to get up at meetings in which civil rights problems were being discussed and cause disturbances. [11]

Rizzuto last saw L'Eandes on Tuesday, November 19, 1963 at a bar on West 10th Street. L'Eandes stated that Oswald and Perry were together in Texas and that Perry was working for an organization that had something to do with anti-Mexican propaganda. He said that Perry would be well known as a member of a number of radical groups. [12]

Rizzuto left the station soon after the interview, leaving the phone number of a restaurant where he could be reached. [13] The FBI, based on Rizzuto's tip, launched a massive manhunt

in New York City for Steve L'Eandes. [14]

The FBI finally determined on December 5, 1963 that Stephen Harris Landesberg of 66 West 10th Street, Rizzuto, and L'Eandes were all the same person. [15] An inadvertent photograph taken at one of the meetings "L'Eandes" disrupted was enough for the FBI to link Landesberg with his two aliases. In an interview with the FBI on December 5, Landesberg said that the activities he had attributed to L'Eandes in New York City were actually his own activities under the name of Stephen Yves L'Eandes. He said that the information he supplied to the bureau on November 22—presumably that pertaining to Oswald and Perry—was furnished to him by someone else. Near the end of the interview he began to stutter and become incoherent. He did not recant his allegations about Oswald or Perry, and it appears that the agents never asked him about Oswald at all. [16] Landesberg was charged with providing false information to the FBI and was committed by Federal Judge John Cannella to 10 days of psychiatric observation at Bellevue Hospital. [17]

Landesberg, who served in the Marine Corps briefly in 1961, [18] impersonated Rizzuto on November 22 and 23 in a New York accent and also very convincingly portrayed the drawling L'Eandes during 1961 and 1962. Reporters at the Village Voice familiar with L'Eandes' exploits in the early 60's could not figure out why Landesberg, whom Voice staffers believed was Jewish, [19] would want to wreak havoc amongst Jews in Manhattan by posing as a bigot from Mississippi. Nor could they explain why Landesberg held to the view that Oswald was a rightist when it was becoming clear, as early as the night of the assassination, that the official line from the government and the establishment press was going to be that Oswald was a Communist.

Landesberg's indication on November 22 that Oswald had a history as a "rightist" is the sort of information only a privileged few would have possessed at that moment. Only Oswald's intelligence handlers, or someone in a tight group close to Oswald, would have been aware of his contacts with the right wing, e.g., his infiltration of Edwin Walker's group, or his spying upon anti-Castro exiles in New Orleans and Dallas. [20] Landesberg appeared to have comparable insider knowledge of Oswald. For example, his story to the FBI showed that he knew that Oswald enjoyed attending political meetings, that Oswald was interested in photography, and that he was apparently anxious for some reason to gain a measure of fame by sending pictures to a political publication. Landesberg

professed this detailed knowledge on assassination night, days before the minutae of Oswald's life began to appear in the papers and months before the so-called backyard photographs of Oswald were shown to the public. [21]

Unfortunately, Landesberg was locked into Bellevue and was not asked what he knew about Oswald. The FBI was upset with him because the search for Steve L'Eandes had tied up its local staff for a week. The bureau made an example of Landesberg: if you provide the FBI with "false" information about the Kennedy assassination, you will land in jail or the mental ward, or both. Landesberg unquestionably committed a hoax in the sense that he impersonated two people. But what about the Oswald story? He had apparent inside information about Oswald's right-wing activities, information that was important because it went against the grain of the official evidence. But by the time Landesberg was arrested it was too late; the FBI report of December 9 was on its way to be typeset. Even at this early date, investigatory doors were being slammed shut instead of opened. The FBI tragically lost an opportunity to interrogate an associate of Oswald who could have supplied information relevant to a conspiracy to kill the President. What Landesberg knew was simply one more important piece of evidence the FBI chose to ignore in the aftermath of the assassination.

There were remarkable similarities between the political careers of Landesberg and Oswald. Both men created phony one-man organizations that fronted for a radical group. Both had taken to the radio air waves to publicize their cause. Both staged hostile, big-city confrontations designed to provoke anger and fear, and to attract attention from the media. Both may have been set up to take blame for the actions of others. Landesberg's methods were so similar to Oswald's that one suspects that Landesberg, like Oswald, was a governmental agent.

Beyond the similarity in names, comedian Steve Landesberg shares certain important characteristics with Stephen H. Landesberg. Both men spent a substantial part of their lives in New York City. Police and media records indicate that Stephen H. Landesberg lived in the East Village and was from Queens, where his family resided in 1963; comic Landesberg was born in the Bronx and grew up there. [22] Both were young. The Stephen H. Landesberg apprehended on December 5, 1963 was 23 years old. [23] Comedian Landesberg, born November 23, 1936, was 27 years old on December 5, 1963. [24] Both play a Southern character well. Stephen H.

Landesberg portrayed a Southern bigot convincingly enough to cause serious alarm among Jews in New York; comic Landesberg portrays a softer, modernized version of the same character in his commercials and in his comedy routines. In one ad that appeared in Texas during the summer of 1993, Landesberg plugged the virtues of a dry cleaning franchise, play-acting the role of a Southern football coach, complete with a very convincing drawl.

Steve Landesberg has consistently kept his full name a secret. His entry in Who's Who in America has changed very little since his first appearance in that publication in 1980. His 1993 entry is therefore representative:

LANDESBERG, STEVE, actor; b. N.Y.C., Nov. 23. Mem. The New York Stickball Team comedy group; regular on TV series Bobby Darin Amusement Company, 1972-73, Paul Sand in Friends and Lovers, 1974-75, Barney Miller, 1976-82; guest appearances on TV shows including the Tonight Show. Office: care Nancy Geller ICM 8899 Beverly Blvd., West Hollywood, CA 90048-2412. [25]

No middle initial is provided and the year of birth is missing. His American Society of Composers, Artists, and Publishers (ASCAP) biography is nearly identical to the one above except that his birthday is excluded. [26] No biographical source on Steve Landesberg checked by this writer has ever provided a middle initial. Only through the diligent efforts of Tulsa researcher John Armstrong can we now speculate that Landesberg's middle initial may be "R," and, if true, this would appear to indicate that the comedian is not the hoaxster. [27] What we do not know is what Mr. Landesberg did between 1954, when he would have graduated from DeWitt Clinton High in the Bronx, and the late 1960s, when he began to appear at New York comedy clubs such as the Bitter End and the Improvisation. [28]

Regardless of whether the man arrested on December 5 is now a famous person or not, the question assassination researchers will want answered has a familiar ring to it: What did Stephen Landesberg know about Lee Harvey Oswald and when did he know it? As we attempt to answer this question, several possibilities for future research are suggested.

First, interviews with some of the men who served in the Marines with Oswald at Biloxi might reveal whether Oswald and Landesberg were in Biloxi at the same time and if the two men associated with one another. According to the FBI's

interview with Stephen H. Landesberg's mother, [29] Landesberg travelled the country by hitchhiking each summer between 1957 and 1960, so it is possible he travelled to Biloxi. [30] Landesberg's "L'Eandes" character could have been developed on a trip to Wiggins, a backwoods town 40 miles northwest of Biloxi. (Wiggins was where L'Eandes claimed to be from.) Daniel Powers told the Warren Commission that Oswald often went out of town on weekend pass from Biloxi, presumably to visit his mother in New Orleans, but he really didn't know for sure where Oswald went. [31] He could have gone somewhere else. Did he go to Wiggins? Another possibility is that Oswald travelled to New Orleans to see Landesberg and not his relatives. Landesberg's use of aliases such as "Yves L'Eandes" and "Frenchie" [32] displays some familiarity with the culture so prominent in New Orleans. Still another scenario is that comedian Landesberg served in the Marine Corps and that his service career overlapped with Oswald's at Biloxi. [33]

Second, aside from the summer of 1957 [34] and the Greenwich Village incident of January, 1962, did the two men's paths cross at any other time? Did Landesberg visit Oswald in Texas or in New Orleans during the period from the summer of 1962 to the fall of 1963? The final appearance of "Steve L'Eandes" in Manhattan before the assassination was March 7, 1962 when he heckled Hubert Humphrey at a Democratic Party rally in the Village. [35] He drops from sight after this incident and his name does not appear in the papers again until he was being sought for questioning in the Oswald investigation. Where did he go and what did he do from March, 1962 until November, 1963?

Third, we have another "second Oswald" to account for and to explain. The "Oswald" who knew Landesberg in Greenwich Village in 1962 must have been an Oswald impersonator if the real Oswald was in Minsk at the time. One could also argue the opposite: the true Oswald returned early from Russia; he was in New York in 1961 and early 1962 just as Landesberg claims; the Russians sent an Oswald imposter to the United States in June, 1962; and the man Jack Ruby shot was not Lee Harvey Oswald.

Fourth, who is Earl Perry? Is he a real individual or a construction of Landesberg's mind? The FBI uncovered an Earl Perry from Monroe, Louisiana who checked into the Roosevelt Hotel in New York City in September of 1961, about four months prior to L'Eandes' meeting with "Regan," [36] but found no relationship between Perry and Oswald. If Perry is

real, he was one of Oswald's closest associates. He travelled to Europe and Russia when Oswald did, and appeared with Oswald at the disruption of the American Jewish Congress meeting in 1962. He returned to Texas at about the same time as Oswald, and according to Landesberg associated with Oswald in Texas in November, 1963. Where was he on November 22?

Fifth, is Stephen Landesberg a missing link in Dick Russell's hypothesis that a Nazi axis is the birthplace of the assassination conspiracy? Missing from Russell's scenario is a direct linkage between Oswald and the fascists. Researchers have long been curious as to why an address for the American Nazi Party appears in Oswald's address book. [37] Because the Nazi Party was headquartered in Queens, New York during the early 60s, Landesberg emerges as a logical conduit between Oswald and the Nazis. It is a grand understatement to say that it is important for investigators in any future probe of the assassination to locate Stephen H. Landesberg and call him to testify.

Notes

1. "Was Oswald in Village?" Village Voice, November 28, 1963, p. 5; "Villagers Report Oswald Was Here," Village Voice, December 5, 1963, p. 3; FBI File Number DL 89-43, 1963, courtesy John Armstrong; "FBI Discovers 3 Are 1, Picks Up L'Eandes in Hoax," Village Voice, December 12, 1963, pp. 1 and 6; "New Yorker Is Held For Tricking FBI," New York Times, December 6, 1963, p. 18.
2. "Fists Fly at Village Rally For Rabbi Attacked by Nazis," Village Voice, January 18, 1962, p. 3; J.R. Goddard, "Lane Wins Student Plaudits As Deep South Demurs," Village Voice, December 21, 1961, pp. 1 and 6.
3. Edith Asbury, "FBI Checks Reported Oswald-Rightist Link," New York Times, November 30, 1963, p. 9.
4. This is one part of Landesberg's story that would appear to some to support the view that Landesberg made up the entire story about Oswald. Oswald was clearly not in the Marines in 1956 and was not stationed at Lejeune. I choose to give Landesberg the benefit of the doubt. See note 34 below.
5. FBI File DL 89-43.
6. Ibid.
7. Lane, then a New York State Assemblyman, appeared at a meeting with New York City college students that L'Eandes disrupted. See Village Voice, December 21,

- 1961, pp. 1 and 6.
8. FBI File DL 89-43. L'Eandes once told the Village Voice that he was a member of a paramilitary rightist group called the Magnolia Rifles, based in Mississippi. See Village Voice, December 12, 1963, p. 6.
 9. FBI File DL 89-43.
 10. Newspapers reported that a picture was going to be sent to a pro-fascist publication and that Oswald was rooming with L'Eandes. However, these facts do not appear in the FBI file. See Village Voice, November 28, 1963, p. 5; FBI File DL 89-43; New York Times, November 30, 1963, p. 9.
 11. FBI File DL 89-43.
 12. Ibid.
 13. Ibid. The FBI file indicates that Rizzuto left the telephone number of a restaurant, while the Village Voice claimed that Rizzuto left the agents a non-existent street address. See Village Voice, December 12, 1963, p. 6.
 14. Village Voice, December 12, 1963, p. 1.
 15. New York Times, December 6, 1963, p. 18.
 16. FBI File DL 89-43.
 17. New York Times, December 6, 1963, p. 18.
 18. According to FBI File DL 89-43, Landesberg entered Parris Island Marine Base in January, 1961 and after five days was transferred to the psychiatric unit because of bizarre and unusual behavior during recruit training.
 19. Stephen H. Landesberg was born in Beth Israel Hospital according to a birth announcement in the Times. See New York Times, September 29, 1940, p. 43.
 20. Jerry D. Rose, "Double Agent Unmasked: A Reconstruction," Third Decade, Volume 3, Number 6, September, 1987, pp. 1-13; Dick Russell, The Man Who Knew Too Much. New York: Carroll and Graf, 1992, pp. 540-542; Peter Dale Scott, Deep Politics and the Death of JFK. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993, pp. 244-253.
 21. Details of Oswald's life started to emerge around November 28th and Oswald's desire to gain fame by mailing photos to a political publication was not widely reported until the famous February, 1964 issue of Life. See Fred Powledge, "Clues To Oswald Traced In Books," New York Times, November 28, 1963, pp. 1 and 23.
 22. New York Times, December 6, 1963, p. 18; Village Voice, December 12, 1963, pp. 1 and 6; Susan L. Stetler (Ed.) Biography Almanac, Third Edition, Volume 2. Detroit, Michigan: Gale Research, 1987, p. 973; Joe Franklin, Joe Franklin's Encyclopedia of Comedians. Secaucus, New Jersey: Citadel Press, 1979, pp. 195-196.
 23. This is per Manhattan birth certificate number 25976, courtesy John Armstrong; see also Village Voice, December 12, 1963, p. 1.
 24. Landesberg did not provide biographers with his age until 1989, and when he did it was false information. Landesberg was born in 1936 per Bronx birth certificate 13894, courtesy of John Armstrong. For an incorrect date of birth, see World Almanac, 1989. New York: Scripps Howard, p. 388.
 25. Who's Who in America, 47th Edition, 1992-1993, Vol. 2. New Providence: Marquis Who's Who, 1992, p. 1958. Landesberg is now represented by the William Morris Agency, care of Nina Neisenholtz. The updated information is courtesy of John Armstrong, personal communication, October 13, 1994.
 26. American Society of Composers, Artists and Performers, Biographical Dictionary. New York: R.R. Bowker Company, 1980, p. 924.
 27. Personal communication, October 13, 1994.
 28. For biographical background on Landesberg see David Brenner, Soft Pretzels With Mustard. New York: Arbor House, 1983; Iris Acker, What Got You To Where You Are Today? Plantation, Florida: Distinctive Publishers, Inc., 1991; and Joe Franklin's Encyclopedia of Comedians, pp. 195-196.
 29. FBI File DL 89-43.
 30. If Landesberg travelled south in the summer of 1957 it would have been in the summer following his graduation from Forest Hills High School in Queens. He entered Rutgers University in the fall of 1957.
 31. Edward Jay Epstein, Legend. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978, p. 65. Powers assumed Oswald's mother was living in New Orleans at the time but it wasn't true; she was living in Fort Worth. Oswald's relatives in New Orleans say Lee visited them only once.
 32. FBI File DL 89-43.
 33. According to this scenario Landesberg would have picked up the southern accent that he uses in his comic routines during this trip (or a similar one) to the south. His on-the-record story has always been that he picked up various accents listening to customers talk at his father's grocery store in the Bronx.

34. This assumes that Stephen H. Landesberg misspoke during his November 22 interview with the FBI and mistakenly said that he met Oswald in 1956 instead of 1957.
35. Leonard Rubin, "Young Audience Hails Mark Lane," *Village Voice*, March 15, 1962, pp. 1 and 16.
36. FBI File DL 89-43.
37. Hearings Before the President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy. Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1964, Volume 16, p. 57.

20

JFK: FIRST-DAY EVIDENCE: A REVIEW

by

Susan Sloate

Gary Savage, *JFK: First-Day Evidence*, a book purporting to reveal for the first time evidence collected by the Dallas Police on November 23, 1963, in their investigation of the Kennedy assassination, would seem to be important. The book jacket makes the point that the book should be used specifically as a reference tool. We are told that Gary Savage, the author, simply wants to present and explain (presumably without prejudice) the evidence his uncle R.W. (Rusty) Livingston, a Dallas police officer in 1963, kept in a briefcase for 28 years. This would seem to imply that the book is intended as an objective rendering of facts.

So far, so good. However, the reader begins to have his doubts when Savage recounts one of his first conversations with his uncle about the assassination in which he asks, do you think Oswald pulled the trigger? His uncle's answer, quoted on page 13 (in the prologue), is "Yep, I think he really did it." This is on page 13 of a 310-page text—and it clearly sets the tone for what follows.

The first chapter consists of Savage's recounting of the assassination weekend—complete with remarks like "Directly above and in front of the unsuspecting President stared Oswald from the towering sixth-floor Depository window.

The easiest shot of the day was his for the taking, but he waited patiently." [pp. 35,36] I began to suspect this might not be the objective rendering of facts I'd been hoping for.

Guess what? It wasn't. In fact, it quickly becomes clear that any review of the book must, by definition, also be a review of the Dallas police department's performance on the weekend of the assassination, since Savage makes it a point throughout the text to commend Dallas PD's exemplary job that weekend—and says the real botching of the case began when the FBI got involved. More than anything, Savage seems determined to exonerate Dallas' finest from decades of criticism. Watch how far he goes in that regard.

He begins with what he obviously considers a strong point, the fingerprint evidence. He makes a big deal out of his uncle's owning items that never left his hands once he acquired them. (Not that chain of possession isn't important—it's critical—but he raises the point at least six times in the book. It's unbelievably tedious after awhile.) For instance: "[Rusty] owns the fingerprint card which he and J.B. Hicks rolled themselves. How many other researchers have a fingerprint card of Lee Harvey Oswald that they rolled themselves?" [p. 114] Well, does it matter? I don't have a Captain Midnight Decoder ring, either, but I never really felt the loss. The importance of the fingerprint card is the information on it.

Savage explains that often, in the Dallas police crime lab, a detective other than the one doing the fingerprint lifts will examine his colleague's work to corroborate it. In other words, it's standard procedure. So Lt. Carl Day actually lifted fingerprints from the trigger housing and the gun barrel of the Mannlicher-Carcano. (Savage claims the FBI, examining the rifle later, didn't find the palm print Day found that night because "[it] had left too little powder residue on the rifle barrel to be readily identified a second time when the FBI received it in Washington.") [p. 109].

Day's colleague, Crime Lab Detective W.E. (Pete) Barnes, on November 22, also examined the fingerprints taken from the trigger housing, compared them with Oswald's print card, found three points of identity, and told Savage that "there was not a doubt in his mind that it was Oswald's fingerprint." [pp. 105- 106] This is supposed to prove that two competent Dallas police officers had come separately to the same conclusion. Therefore, it's objective and unbiased.

Call me crazy, but I had always been told that a positive legal identification required more than three matching points of identity. And hey, I was right—Savage himself points out (but

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not until page 116, which makes Barnes' bald statement on page 106 look stronger) that most states require a minimum of 7 to 10 points matching for a positive ID. (The fingerprint expert he brought in on his own, Captain Jerry L. Powdrill of the West Monroe Police Department in Louisiana, is quoted on page 118 as saying, "Some agencies may require a minimum amount of six points and others may require as many as twelve.") But in any case, none as few as three.

But Savage still wasn't satisfied. He has a great respect for the truth. He was going to have the truth no matter what—or was he? On page 116, he states, "Before taking Rusty's fingerprint card and trigger-housing photographs to Captain Powdrill [for examination and comparison], in the back of my mind was the slight fear of what it would mean if the prints did not match. Captain Powdrill told me at the outset of his comparison that if he found any contradiction, he would immediately stop his work." [pp. 116, 118]

Stop the work—why? To further consult with Savage? To request more materials from Rusty? Or perhaps not to wander down a path that might lead to a conclusion different from the Dallas Police—that Oswald did it? It is at this moment in reading the book that any respect I had for Mr. Savage's work and alleged objectivity evaporated completely.

However, Captain Powdrill, to his (and Savage's) relief, was able to concur with at least part of Dallas' findings. At least, he didn't find any significant differences in the two fingerprint samples. However, his letter to Savage (reprinted on pages 117–118 of the text) clearly states that he found only three positive points of identity in the two samples and three more points that have 'very similar characteristics, but positive points of identity could not be made.' This was, therefore, not the ringing endorsement that Savage was probably hoping for.

However, Savage apparently fails to realize that just because Oswald's prints were on the rifle (and in the case of the palm print on the underside of the gun barrel, Lt. Carl Day, who lifted it, told Savage "it wasn't put on there recently") [p. 108], this does not lead to the inexorable conclusion that he fired the gun. The fact that Oswald's fresh palm prints were found on the boxes stacked by the sixth-floor window doesn't make him an assassin, either. It does, however, make him a man liable to prosecution for criminally stacking boxes.

Even if he did stack the boxes specifically for the purpose of creating a screen from prying eyes (let's give Savage the benefit of the doubt), does that prove he then crouched in the window himself? Absolutely not. Savage has no evidence to back up

his charge, of course, but still makes huge leaps of logic continually throughout the text, and then wonders why researchers through the years haven't done the same. Sorry, Mr. Savage. I never take leaps like that without a safety net—a safety net containing facts.

One of the most irritating aspects of the book is Savage's elaborate exercises to erase "controversies" that are either unimportant or didn't exist to begin with. The effect, of course, is to obscure the really controversial aspects of the investigation. Like Dan Quayle and his fight for "family values", he's shadow-boxing with enemies who don't really exist.

Example: Savage insists that researchers are suspicious that the fingerprints taken of Lee Harvey Oswald by Dallas PD were somehow switched with someone else's fingerprints. This is an accusation I personally have never heard. (If some researcher does believe this, I'll apologize in advance. I can only speak for the people with whom I've discussed the evidence. No one has ever raised the subject with me.) Savage goes to great lengths to assure us that the fingerprints of Oswald taken in New Orleans in August 1963 after his arrest for street fighting match those of the Oswald fingerprinted in Dallas in November. Well, who doubts that? Who really believes that Oswald switched identities with someone between August and November, 1963? Answer: Few people, if anyone. Why waste our time "proving" such obscure and silly contentions?

Similarly, Savage carefully explains (again to clarify police SOP) that the taking of fingerprints of a deceased suspect is routine, that Dallas officers often visit the morgue and take prints simply to close out a case. He makes a big deal of saying that Dallas officers did take Oswald's fingerprints in the Parkland morgue.

He ignores the real controversy of the case—the fingerprinting of Oswald done not at Parkland but at Miller's Funeral Home, by men from an unspecified agency, in which his hands were so blackened afterward that the mortician had trouble getting rid of the ink. This is the aspect that still troubles us. Why not focus on that, and give us answers (if he can) about why that was done? And by whom? And if he's correct that the police took inkless fingerprints from Oswald in the morgue, why do it again? And on whose orders?

The real significance of the fingerprints goes deeper than Mr. Savage seems willing to pursue. Why weren't there more, if Oswald really handled the gun in firing it? (Or why wouldn't he have wiped off all the prints?) And why insist that an old

palm print on the barrel convincingly linked Oswald to the rifle on November 22? Aren't these important questions to ask?

It is difficult to dispute Savage's chapter on the backyard photographs, since I am still (after three readings) at a loss to figure out what he's driving at. He admits himself that photo researcher Jack White makes some "very convincing arguments" [p. 134] but his emphasis seems to be on the fact that Dallas Police made excellent copies of these photographs—copies so good they fooled researchers into thinking they were originals. He also spends four pages (pp. 137–140) explaining in elaborate detail how Officer Bobby Brown came to appear in the re-enactment photos and why he cut himself out of the picture. Does anyone care? Why does Savage not attack Jack White's claim that, using THE MILITANT newspaper as a guideline, a paper that was eleven inches long, the rest of Oswald's body in the pictures would appear to be only four feet eleven inches high—and yet he stood five nine? Is it possibly because he can find nothing to refute that claim? Or does he really not understand the important issues involved with the photographs?

Savage later discusses the discovery of the rifle on the sixth floor by Dallas police officers and makes a point of impugning the credibility of Roger Craig, then with the Dallas police force. Savage is anxious to eliminate the controversy over the possibility of multiple weapons being discovered at the TSBD that day, and explains that the first officers there thought the gun, lying on the floor between boxes, might be a Mauser, until they picked it up and examined it. Then, he says, they realized their mistake. He quotes Craig's testimony to the Warren Commission, which doesn't mention a Mauser, and then a later statement in a taped interview, in which Craig claims Seymour Weitzman, another officer on the scene, recognized the gun as a Mauser (even to reading a stamp '7.65 Mauser') after it was held up for inspection. Savage insists that his uncle Rusty says Craig is "not to be believed." [p. 160]

Unfortunately, Mr. Savage himself seems to have some credibility problems here. Craig's second statement is from a 1976 interview, says Savage, and he makes a point of reminding the reader several times that Craig made this statement thirteen years after the assassination. Unluckily for him, Roger Craig died in May, 1975. [Jim Marrs, Crossfire: The Plot That Killed Kennedy, p. 332]

And how about this further reference to Roger Craig, on the evening of November 22: Captain Will Fritz's testimony to the

Warren Commission, quoted by Savage on page 291, touches on Craig's eagerness to tell Fritz about a man he believed was Oswald leaving the TSBD in a station wagon, not by bus and cab, as has been claimed. When Craig tried to tell him what he'd seen, Fritz told the Commission, "...he was telling me some things that I knew wouldn't help us and I didn't talk to him, but someone else took an affidavit from him. His story that he was telling didn't fit with what we knew to be true." [Emphasis added.]

So the Dallas police captain had a Dallas Police Officer trying to give him eyewitness testimony (and what better kind of eyewitness could there be?), and Fritz dismissed it, because Craig's story would only throw a glitch into the nice neat package of damning evidence they were assembling against Oswald. Forget that there might be something potentially important here. If "it didn't fit with what [they] knew to be true", it was immediately discounted.

There is another eyebrow-raising episode in the chapter, "More Documents", which shows us photographs of original Dallas police arrest reports filed on November 22. Savage does not tell us how long after Oswald's arrest this report was actually written, but we must assume that it was written on the 22nd, probably shortly after the arrest, if for no other reason than its political importance. What it contains is shocking from the point of view of policemen who are supposedly actively investigating a crime with open minds. The arrest report lists Oswald's name, address, age and other vital statistics. Under a section marked "Other details of the arrest", it states, "This man shot and killed President John F. Kennedy and Police Officer J.D. Tippit. He also shot and wounded Governor John Connally." [p. 244]

Can you imagine this? Here are police, in the middle of an investigation, matter-of-factly writing in an arrest report that the subject they were still actively investigating IS GUILTY OF AT LEAST TWO COUNTS OF HOMICIDE. Oswald wasn't even charged with Tippit's murder until after 7 p.m. It is particularly remembered by Carl Day, who was present, that his arraignment for the murder of JFK took place shortly after Day released to FBI Agent Drain the rifle he'd been checking for fingerprints, at 11:30 p.m. on the 22nd. [p. 76]

To make matters worse, Savage explains the brevity of the arrest report by saying, "[Rusty] said that these were normally released to the press, and so not much in the way of real information was given out with them. The Police Department made out their own internal reports which were not normally

released to reporters." [p. 246]

For heaven's sake! This report was expected by Dallas PD to be released to the press with the damning information that the Dallas police believed Oswald guilty of Kennedy's murder before he was even charged with it, and the press, knowing nothing of their investigation (minor details like supporting evidence were conveniently missing from the report) could feel free to flash the opinion of Dallas' finest around the world. The magnitude of such gross negligence cannot be exaggerated. What kind of police department allows the media access to a document saying, "We know he's guilty", when they haven't finished their investigation? Is this an objective procedure?

(I'll thoughtfully leave out the other violations of Oswald's civil rights by Dallas' finest. Though he repeatedly asked for a lawyer—on television, as well as privately—no lawyer was provided for him. I will assume Savage had no knowledge of this.)

In his chapter, "Lone Nut or Lone Patsy?", Savage claims Oswald's actions on November 22 were so suspicious that logically, he could only have been the assassin. Savage wonders why Oswald would have left the TSBD after the shooting if he wasn't guilty, and why he got his revolver at home, then went to a movie theater. Aren't these the actions of a guilty person? This has been David Belin's argument for thirty-one years, too, and has been proven specious time and again.

I submit that anyone, realizing the President had been shot and that he himself might be blamed for it, would be frightened and insecure. Leaving the scene of the crime at the first opportunity, going home to get a revolver (his only means of protecting himself), and heading off to meet a pre-arranged contact at a movie theater (a well-known meeting place for intelligence operatives) is in character with a low-level intelligence operative following orders. Remember, too, there were witnesses who claimed Oswald was at the theater earlier than previously thought; some saw him there a little after 1 p.m., about 15 minutes before Tippit was shot. (Marrs, Crossfire, p. 353) Naturally, this would have made it impossible for him to be the gunman in that murder. Oswald's actions make imminent sense if he was involved in intelligence, which too much evidence makes quite plain.

Let us also consider his behavior later, in front of newsmen. Here he is, the center of attention all over the world. Ever read accounts of other presidential assassins, Mr. Savage? They

can't wait to proclaim to the world the blow they struck against tyranny. They're proud of what they've done. Oswald was a man who loved attention. He was proud of appearing on TV and radio shows in New Orleans in the summer of 1963. He was proud of his knowledge of the current world situation. Here was his chance to speak to the world of his magnificent deed. But what did he say to newsmen? "I didn't shoot anybody, no, sir. I'm just a patsy." (And subsequent voice-stress tests performed on the tapes of Oswald's TV press conferences have indicated that he was telling the truth.)

In his defense, Savage does at least have the good grace not to claim that the police procedure of questioning Oswald was outstanding and by the book in every respect that weekend. There do not appear to be any defensive postures taken about the lack of documentation, the inability, somehow, of Dallas PD to allow Oswald access to an attorney, or other small details that taken together, might also have led to his exoneration during a trial. Savage does, however, leave a revealing clue about the department's thinking. He mentions that one police officer who dealt with Oswald found him arrogant and a pain. (And it's certainly in keeping with the character of the Oswald we know to complain about the food and facilities he was permitted.) It's always easier to believe the worst of someone if your own interaction with him is unpleasant. Oswald didn't win any friends in the department that weekend, but that doesn't automatically make him a cold-blooded killer.

Finally, there is one indisputable fact on record that obviates any of Savage's praise of Dallas' methodical, professional attitude during that tragic weekend. Lee Harvey Oswald was murdered in front of dozens of live witnesses and hundreds of thousands of television viewers **WHILE IN POLICE CUSTODY**. To make matters even worse, Savage carefully recounts the recollections of a police officer who received the now-famous phone call the night before the transfer, warning him that Oswald would be killed if he were to be transferred as planned the next day. (This information is more than thirty years old, of course, but it bears repeating here, if only as contrast to Savage's blind admiration.)

The fact is, no amount of hysterical praise by Savage can obscure the fact that Dallas PD failed at the most important job they had that weekend: keeping Oswald alive. Because of their ineptitude, or corruption, or both (take your pick), there can never be complete answers to thirty-one-year-old assassination questions. Not securing their prisoner's basic safety

violation of every police code I've ever heard of. Absolutely **nothing** can make up for that. I think history has judged the Dallas police force's work with great objectivity. Savage's demand for greater respect is, in light of this one action alone, absolutely ludicrous.

In conclusion, I find it impossible to regard JFK FIRST DAY EVIDENCE as the "valuable reference tool" that its book jacket aspires to. It claims to be a book simply setting forth the physical evidence for objective analysis. And it's true that a book of that sort would have been extremely valuable. This, however, is a book with an agenda, and Gary Savage, wittingly or not, is the new proponent of the "Dallas PD didn't do it" school of apologists. Savage lets us know that he was once a believer in conspiracy theories, but dispassionate examination of the evidence in his uncle's possession led him to a different (and presumably more rational) conclusion. This is supposed to make us believe he is working from the viewpoint of an unbiased observer.

I'm not impressed. Savage did not have access to the complete and objective evidence, only what was salted away in his uncle's briefcase. His grasp of the issues involved in the case is uncertain, at best. Without an excellent overall working knowledge, his analysis of the evidence his uncle held is almost useless. Yet he's asking us to forego any other conclusions (based on other researchers' more careful, objective, and far-ranging work) and place our faith entirely in the Dallas Police Department.

Sorry, I've got a problem with that. Savage's reasons for writing the book—and for his bullheaded defense of the Dallas police department—are in all likelihood personal, given the relationship with his uncle. One might also infer that he has not written it out of malice or a desire to spread disinformation, but simply from misguided eagerness. However, those who are blinded by the light can be just as dangerous as those shining a bright light in our eyes. In both cases, the wisest course is always to look away.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the editor: The September issue arrived while I was working on a paper for the C.O.P.A. conference entitled "Surgery of the Head Area: Could It Have Happened?", in which I argue that the only way such pre-autopsy surgery could have occurred would seem to be by means of a two-casket deception, as theorized by David S. Lifton in Best Evidence. So I thought I would get in on the exchange between Dennis Ford and Lifton on this subject in the Letters to the Editor section.

Dennis contends that the possibility of body alteration is refuted both by "the seeming impossibility of returning President Kennedy's body from the Dallas casket" and by "the seeming impossibility of returning President Kennedy's body to the Dallas casket, from which it emerged at the start of the autopsy."

As to the removal of the President's body from the Dallas casket, this would have been a risky undertaking but I shouldn't say impossible. I can picture a scene in which, during the few minutes that Jacqueline Kennedy was in the stateroom attending Lyndon Johnson's swearing-in ceremony, the body could have been lifted out of the casket, carried into the aft galley, and passed through the service door to confederates on the outside who would have placed it in one of the cargo holds. I could even name some people aboard the plane who might have participated in this body-snatch.

It is "the seeming impossibility of returning the body to the Dallas casket" that has always presented the more difficult problem. And now there is evidence which, if true, appears to prove it really would have been impossible.

For any explanation of how the body was returned to the casket to work, it would seem essential for Sibert and O'Neill to have been prevented from entering the autopsy room with the casket. When Lifton asked Admiral Galloway if that had been the case, Galloway replied that that was correct (BE, p. 491). Which seemed to settle the question. But last year I learned that Francis O'Neill had said on a 1992 video presentation that they did accompany the casket into the autopsy room. Subsequently I obtained copies of some of the newly-released HSCA documents and found that both he and Sibert had sworn in affidavits to the committee that they helped transport the casket "into the autopsy room."

David's response to Dennis' assertion that it was seemingly impossible to return the body to the casket was to cite three

documents, two of them implying the casket had been taken into the morgue at 7:14 or 7:17, the other stating that it was brought in at 8:00. He interprets this as meaning that the casket came in twice, the first time with Sibert and O'Neill, the second with the casket team or honor guard. But that, too, is disputed by O'Neill, who says that he, Sibert, Kellerman, Greer and the honor guard all assisted in moving the casket (Livingstone, Killing The Truth, p. 668).

Even without this statement by O'Neill, a reconstruction depending on two entrances by the bronze casket is not feasible. According to Lifton's analysis, when Sibert and O'Neill are eventually allowed into the autopsy room they see Kennedy's body already lying on the autopsy table (BE, p. 624); this contradicts their first-hand report telling about the President's body being removed from the casket and placed on the autopsy table and going on to describe the wrappings, the removal of which was followed by the remark about surgery. Lifton also conjectures that the body was returned to the casket (which was then somehow or other taken outside and put back in the navy ambulance) during the period when most of the witnesses were asked to leave the autopsy room and remain in an adjacent room (pp. 626–627); however, Paul O'Connor told me the same thing that Jim Bishop had said in his book (The Day Kennedy Was Shot, p. 452) and O'Neill corroborates also (1992 video, cited in Killing The Truth, p. 692)—that the activity in the autopsy room was plainly visible from that other room.

The weight of the evidence is that the Dallas casket came in only once, probably sometime between 7:14/17 and approximately 7:35, when Humes said they received the President's body, thus allowing sufficient time for photographs and X-rays to be taken and other procedures performed before the first incision was made at 8:15. That would mean that Lt. Bird's listed time of 2000 hours or 8 p.m. "from the ambulance to the morgue" is incorrect; probably in all the confusion he neglected to note the time and then had to guess at it eighteen days later when he wrote his report.

While rejecting a solution based on two bronze-casket entrances, I had long been a believer in Lifton's original idea: that the casket came in only once, that it was empty, and that therefore all the witnesses not in on the ruse would have to be gotten rid of until the body, already at Bethesda, was put back into the casket. There did appear to be evidence that most of those "innocent" witnesses—including Sibert and O'Neill and the honor guard (Manchester, The Death of a President, p.

399) had been kept out on one pretext or another. But then last year I spoke with hospital corpsman James Metzler, who seemed very certain both he and the honor guard had gone right into the autopsy room with the casket. And now we have the statements of Sibert and O'Neill that they too accompanied the casket into the autopsy room.

So, unless somebody can come up with a good explanation of how the President's body could have been returned to the casket, it looks as if the two-casket theory, including the pre-autopsy surgery and bullet removal, is kaput.

—Joanne Braun, 7 Plymouth Ave., Delmar, NY 12054

To the editor: I viewed the publication of James Folliard's "The Bledsoe Bust" with mixed emotion. I was pleased to see the review in print. However, I feel it unfortunate that your subscribers must come to grips with my "A CTKA Story?" the Jim Marrs/Jack White press release and John Armstrong's investigation without benefit of seeing all these elements. In essence, the reader is placed in the position of forming an opinion based upon Folliard's opinion of my own opinion of the Marrs/White/Armstrong release. I feel this is patently unfair to Jim, Jack and John.

I believe James may have misunderstood some of my comments and received erroneous information. Additionally, because of my writing style he may have misinterpreted some of my conclusions. If my technique caused problems I apologize.

To begin, James feels "A CTKA Story" was partially flawed because I base my conclusions "largely upon an appeal to authority." To reinforce this point he quotes from my paper.

"Perry learned from Mary Ferrell that 'back before the Garrison investigation the report had circulated and everyone considered it (the Bledsoe episode) a hoax."

"Perry falls deeper into this fallacy (of using authoritative guidance or opinions) in the next paragraph: 'Sadly, Jim Marrs by distributing this 'release' to the press, has placed his imprimatur on the story.' (p. 6)

Neither Jim Marrs, nor Mary Ferrell, nor anyone else has an imprimatur to place on anything. Assassination research is history, not theology. Unfortunately, all too many researchers rely on imprimaturs and authorities without asking their own questions or doing their own thinking."

I can't find where I placed as much reliance or importance on Mary Ferrell's statement as James thinks I did. I merely

quote Mary and did in fact place her comment in quotation marks. However, my suggestion that Jim Marrs placed his "seal of approval" on the story presents a wholly different predicament. I am not concerned with Marrs as a voice of authority within the research community but outside of it.

To the public Jim is considered a vocal and competent researcher. He is, after all, the author of Crossfire: The Plot That Killed Kennedy, was a consultant to Oliver Stone's JFK, played the part of an anti-conspiracy spokesperson in the TV movie Marina's Story, teaches a course on the assassination at the University of Texas at Arlington and frequently appears on television, radio and at Kennedy assassination symposia. Additionally, along with Jack White, he is on the Board of Directors of Citizens For Truth About The Kennedy Assassination (CTKA). If James believes the public doesn't consider Jim a highly competent researcher and source of accurate information about the assassination, he is sadly mistaken.

Since James questioned some of my rationale in concluding the Bledsoe document a hoax, I can't understand why he didn't spend more time probing the convoluted reasoning of Marrs, White and Armstrong about their lack of continued investigation. Let me explain.

"White and Marrs, strongly expressed to me (James Folliard) the view that the discovering trio had gone as far as they could with their investigation of the document. They cited the follow-up efforts of Armstrong in Dallas, as well as the professional and job constraints upon all three. They feel that by publishing the story of the document's discovery, they would thereby open the unresolved questions of provenance and authenticity to investigation by other researchers."

Let's look at this closely:

The first thing the trio did was have Jim Marrs dispense a three page Press Release with an additional three pages of commentary by Jack White. Next "The package was issued to about thirty media outlets under the CTKA (Citizens For Truth About The Kennedy Assassination) letterhead." Am I missing something? The information was sent to "media outlets." I can't find where any effort was made to make the materials available to nor does it appear the trio ever attempted contact with any researchers or living principals. I don't know who they approached during their investigation but I can name some of the people they didn't. Mary Ferrell, J. Gary Shaw, Gary Mack, Marina Oswald and Bobby Hargis. All these individuals were a mere phone call away! Bobby Hargis, for

example, still works for the Dallas Police Department and the Bledsoe document names him as one of the arresting officers. I find it ludicrous the three never called him. I would also like to know if the group requested publication in The Fourth Decade before or after the press release? From my correspondence with The Fourth Decade's editor, Jerry Rose, I must assume it was after the distribution to the media.

"It was Mack who received the Bledsoe story from 'an Associated Press regional reporter.' According to White and Marrs, this was Hugh Aynesworth.

[12] Perry to JF, 8/17/94; White to JF, 5/3/94. Marrs also identified Aynesworth: telephone conversation, 9/6/94."

Why is it so important that White and Marrs tell Folliard that Mack obtained the press release from Hugh Aynesworth? What difference does it make that Mack got a copy of the documents in the first place? Wasn't the purpose to publish "the story of the document's discovery" to open unresolved questions to investigation by other researchers? Here Folliard has been used as a vehicle to spread a false story. I for one think this points out Marrs and White's almost obsessive disaffection with anyone not sharing their pro-conspiratorial views. They don't like Hugh Aynesworth because he is markedly anti-conspiracy. I will leave it to Gary Mack to reveal, if he wishes, the source of his copy of the press release. At any rate Aynesworth is not employed by the Associated Press but the Washington Times and he did not provide Mack with the documents.

And in deference to James' opinion of imprimatur, one reason the Associated Press was interested in the article was because it came from Jim Marrs, who was considered a local authority on the subject.

I have difficulty believing Marrs and White couldn't conduct more research because of "professional and job constraints." Somehow they found time to collectively put out six pages on, as well as, a legible interpretation of the Armstrong find. They always seem to appear for presentations at symposiums such as ASK and they are the creators of several assassination related videos. I also note that during The Fourth Decade's short life of seven issues, White has provided six articles or commentaries.

And speaking of Jack White, James doesn't mention many of the unresolved issues presented in his "Additional points and comments about information in the (Bledsoe) document." I will address only one here.

The trio claimed H.H. Grant was an important witness to the Rubenstein/Hidel altercation in part because White believed he was possibly Eva Grant's son. Eva was Jack Ruby's sister. White maintained he "searched all known literature in his collection and could not determine whether Ruby's sister Eva Grant had a son or other relative named H.H. Grant."

Either Jack's library is sparse indeed or he didn't look very hard. Eva Grant's son is listed as Ronald Dennis Magid in the Warren Volumes. His name is mentioned in Eva's testimony at 14H441, there's a five page transcript of a November 29, 1963 FBI interview of Magid at CE 1237 and Alan Edelson cites him as Eva's son on page 102 in The Ruby Oswald Affair.

While I heartily agree with James' comment "Assassination research is history, not theology," he should recognize not all members of the research community or the public share our view. Several years ago at a Jim Marrs seminar John Armstrong, the very discoverer of the Bledsoe document, chided me for being a pessimist and "not taking anything on faith." And what about those candlelight vigils and "inspirational" calls to action?

One final point. For James Folliard to profess I concluded the Bledsoe document a hoax based to quote him "largely upon an appeal to authority" is most inaccurate. I also find it curious that in the very same issue Jack White, an individual who could not continue research on the Bledsoe story due to "professional and job constraints," presents a three page treatise on "The Danger of Reliance On 'Authority' In The Quest For Truth." I wonder—was Mr. Folliard the catalyst for White's article or White the incentive for Folliard's?

It feel it is time for The Fourth Decade to publish both articles. In the interim I will provide my CTKA Story, as well as the Press Release, to interested parties. Please send a self-addressed 9 x 12 envelope with 95 cents in postage affixed to: Dave Perry, 4601 Ainsworth Circle, Grapevine, Texas 76051. Allow four weeks for delivery.

To the editor: Having just read James Folliard's "The Bledsoe Bust" in the November 1994 issue, I found myself intrigued by the string of numbers which appeared on line four of the Bledsoe Document. Mr. Folliard writes that his informant, whom he describes as "highly knowledgeable and reliable" about the procedures of the Dallas Police Department, told him that the numbers "have no meaning" and "would not typically appear" in a police report of this nature. This suggests that they must have been placed there for some

ulterior purpose. Let me suggest one possibility.

One of the oldest and simplest of all codes is the substitution cipher in which the letters of the alphabet are replaced by the numbers from 1 to 26; e.g., A=1, B=2, and so on. It is a trivial but effective way of shielding a message from casual observation while ensuring that it can be recovered with minimal effort by anyone who knows to look for it. Applying this primitive cipher to the numbers in the Bledsoe Document, we get:

21 - 18 - 1 - 6 - 9 - 14 - 11

U - R - A - F - I - N - K

In other words: "You are a fink."

I can think of several possible reasons for such a message to be embedded in a fraudulent document:

The document may have been intended as a snare for assassination researchers—i.e., an apparently authentic document whose obvious fraudulence, once discovered, would tarnish the reputations of those who had declared it genuine.

It may originally have been planted in someone's files as a trap for co-workers or employees suspected of revealing confidential information. The embedded cipher (of which there might have been different flavors in different copies of the document) would serve not only to determine who the culprit was, but also to disprove the authenticity of the document once it came to light.

It may have been meant as a subtle warning to a conspirator, witness, or investigator; "fink", after all, is sometimes used to mean "stool pigeon."

Or, most likely, the whole thing may be somebody's idea of a joke. It's not hard to envision someone composing such a document for the benefit of an "assassination buff", fully expecting the recipient to discover the cipher and (hopefully) appreciate the humor. It's also not hard to envision the recipient falling for the gag and passing the "find" along to others. Once the document was in circulation, the perpetrator might well find it difficult to own up to what he (or she) had done.

Just to make sure I wasn't overreaching, I showed the Bledsoe Document to my thirteen-year-old son and asked him what he made of the mysterious numbers. It took him all of ten seconds to come up with the same solution I did. I'm tempted to say "case closed", but I think somebody used that one already.

—James R. Black, 2006 E. Jackson St. #7,
Colorado Springs, CO 80909

(Editor's note: Another reader applied the same decoding of numbers on the "Bledsoe" document and offers the following comment.)

To the editor:

...The odds of an actual sentence showing up in a series of seven random numbers would be extremely low. And considering that many of us believe that Oswald was an informant of some kind, I think it is safe to say that this sentence is no accident.

(As a test, I used a computer to generate a list of three hundred 7-letter combinations of letters. As far as I could tell, nothing resembling a sentence was produced and there were only a few dozen short words scattered among the 300 sets of letters.)

If we assume that the incident at the rooming house did actually occur, then this report would be much more than a routine police report. If a copy of the report was shown to Oswald, we could conclude that this was some kind of a warning—perhaps a warning to keep his mouth shut.

Let's speculate. A few days after this alleged incident, Oswald applied for work at the Texas School Book Depository. Could it be that Ruby had visited Oswald on October 11 in order to let him know that the plans for the assassination were moving into a new phase and that he was being assigned to the Book Depository along the motorcade route? Perhaps Oswald decided it was time to back out of the plot; perhaps he told Ruby he would go to the police—and a scuffle ensued. In this context, the sentence "you are a fink" would be a chilling warning to Oswald that individuals in the Dallas Police Department were already aware of, and even supported, the plot. Pure speculation, but it is possible.

Of course, the decoding of these seven numbers does not prove that the document is genuine. It also does not prove it is a hoax. But it does add a new dimension to the discussion. Any comments?

—Len Nissenson, 1088 N. Gardner, Orange, CA 92667

To the editor: In regard to Else Weinstein's comments about LHO's lack of a Southern accent, Priscilla McMillan certainly noted his "slight Southern drawl" in her 1959 report (although when her article was published in the NEW HAVEN EVENING REGISTER on Dec. 3, 1959, the reference to Oswald's accent was deleted.) Kerry Thornley stated in a letter to me dated Dec. 26, 1992 that "...Oswald spoke with no southern dialect

whatsoever when I knew him. I wasn't even aware that he was from Texas. If anything, there was perhaps a hint of (a) New York accent in his speech..." In my letter to Kerry, I had made reference to comments by LHO in regard to his background recorded sometime in 1963, which were included in The Men Who Killed Kennedy series. He started out by saying that he was born in "New Orleans" (with the accent on "leans" — rhymes with "beans"), which is not the way southerners pronounce it. In his reply, Kerry stated that "...nobody from New Orleans would have pronounced it to rhyme with beans!"

As discussed by Jim Marrs in Crossfire (p. 547) and cited in my article "Did Oswald Come Back?" (TTD, Jan. 1991), three language experts at SMU concluded that English was not the native tongue of the voice that they studied (which was LHO's voice.) Intriguingly, British actor Gary Oldman, who portrayed LHO so convincingly in JFK, was quoted as wondering if the voice he studied (the main source being the New Orleans radio debate) was even that of an American, describing his accent as "...the strangest cocktail of all kinds of things. He had inconsistency of pronunciation within a single sentence." ("Accent on Accuracy" by Judith Shulevitz, NYT News Service, Feb. 10, 1992). Oldman's accent coach, Timothy Monich, described LHO's accent as a combination of "...American, Russian and Spanish...plus he had a speech impediment."

Coupled with the height discrepancies (including Priscilla McMillan's reference to LHO being a "six-footer" in her 1959 report, which was replaced by "a nice young man" in the post-assassination version) and "New Orleans, Texas, USA" listed by Oswald as his birthplace on his all-important Russian exit visa, it makes you wonder who really died at the hands of Jack Ruby on Nov. 24, 1963.

Does that clear up the matter for you, Else?

—Peter R. Whitmey, A149-1909 Salton Rd.,
Abbotsford, B.C. Canada V2S 5B6

To the editor: Although much vitriol was poured upon me and my paper on the Zapruder film, (September, 1994 issue), no one attempted to address much less answer the fundamental questions that I posed (these are expressed in a rather different form below). All responses were predicated upon the assumptions that all evidence is of equal probative value, contradictory evidence must be dismissed rather than explained and/or reconciled within a new theory, and the CIA can do anything. There is no point in discussing every point

raised, but there are a few that are relevant or worth commenting upon.

Harrison Livingstone added nothing to the debate, he simply claimed even further impossible doctoring of the film (removal of frames showing that the limousine actually came to a halt).

Chuck Marler claimed that S.A. Greer's head jumps 180 degrees at frames 302-3 and 316-7, hence in each case three or four frames must have been excised (also mentioned by Marler in *The Fourth Decade* vol. 1 #4, May 1994, and by Jack White, no. 6; see below). This is empirically false. Look at the film, forwards or backwards, regular speed or slow motion. It takes Greer's head at least five, if not six, frames to swing 180 degrees between 300 and 305 inclusive (my film does not have numbers so these may be off by one). It takes about seven frames between 289 and 296/7. At 316 it is more difficult to tell exactly how long it takes since 318 and 319 are blurred, but it is nowhere near facing straight ahead in 317 and still seems to be turning in 319 (as far as I can tell). Besides, the frames of Greer's head cannot have been edited out without everything else on those frames having been edited out as well, and nothing else in the frame jumps, not the other passengers, not the limo, not the background, not the figures in the background, therefore the head does not jump preternaturally either.

Jack White raises a number of points in what I found to be a self-righteous and often patronizing paper. I refer to his section numbers. Under nos. 1 and 2 he makes a fuss about the lack of stated credentials verifying my expertise. I had not noticed other contributors offering such information, so I felt no need to provide it. For the record, I received my doctorate in ancient history from the University of Oxford in 1989. On its first submission my thesis was awarded the Conington Prize, the highest award in my discipline at the university, and part of it was published in 1993 by the Clarendon Press, the prestigious academic imprint of Oxford University Press. I have won numerous other awards for my work over the years, some amounting to 5 figures. I am now an Associate Professor and have published or am about to have published 16 articles in the top refereed journals in my field, covering topics ranging from history and historiography to textual criticism and numismatics. Messrs. White and Livingstone may feel that I do not know how to handle evidence and draw valid conclusions (given much of what they say, they are on very weak ground here); others obviously disagree.

My knowledge of optical effects in motion pictures comes

from at least fifteen years of study and some practical, though minor, first hand experience. But what does all this matter? Any argument and the conclusions arising from it ought to be judged on their intrinsic merit, not the expertise or education of the person making them. (Having attacked me for omitting my credentials Mr. White then commits the same 'sin' himself: nowhere does he state what experience he has had in motion picture optical effects.) Indeed, his claims that motion picture opticals are achieved in the same manner as the retouching of still photographs (no. 9), that travelling mattes are irrelevant (no. 11), and that the CIA could have had the capability for computer manipulation of motion picture images in 1963 (no. 12) destroy his credibility and cripple his argument.

But why take my word for it? There have been literally hundreds of books written on motion picture special effects. There are bound to be some in your public library. Hand-drawn mattes and rotoscoping will be discussed primarily under silent films and with reference to *2001: A Space Odyssey*. No mention will be found, however, to the methods mentioned by Mr. White.

Here is a suggestion for all readers, pro- and anti-conspiracy alike (I count myself among the former, by the way). Most large cities have optical houses that produce optical effects for films. If you live in LA or New York, so much the better. Get in touch, by phone or in person, with someone who has knowledge of and/or experience with optical processes from the early sixties and who is not involved with assassination research or with anyone who is. Using a single blind (that is, do not tell him that your questions relate to the assassination or the Zapruder film) ask him these questions: in the early 1960's would it have been possible to remove an element from an object moving in three dimensions, such as the top of the Invisible Man's head or his hand, within an already completed shot made by a hand-held moving camera (stress that this is in an already completed camera shot, not a composite or process shot), and to add an element to that same object within that same shot, such as putting glasses or false ears on the Invisible Man, such that no one, even an expert, watching the film over and over and studying it frame by frame would be able to discover the addition? Would either of these have been possible if the actor moved quickly at times and had been filmed with a slow shutter speed (1/30 to 1/60 sec.) with the result that the images on single frames were often seriously blurred? Could any of this have been accomplished on standard 8mm color film where the image was so small that its

details were beyond the limit of the film's resolution?

This latter raises Mr. White's comments on grain (no. 5). In response I simply ask the reader to examine the superb enlargements in Groden's The Killing of a President (New York, 1994), esp. pp. 26, 28, 38, and 143.

Mr. White asks the question that he says I should have addressed, "Did the CIA have the ability and technical expertise to have tampered with the film through secret technical abilities and equipment?" I did address it and the answer was "No". A statement, ten years after the fact, by someone who saw the film (the CIA doctored the film, then let people see the "undoctored" version?) is hardly better evidence than the film itself. The burden of proof is on those who claim forgery, not those who accept the film's authenticity, and simple statements to the contrary are not proof.

—R.W. Burgess, Dept. of Classical Studies,
University of Ottawa, 30 Stewart St.,
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1N 6N5



PICTURES OF THE PAIN: ANOTHER APPRAISAL

by

Christopher Sharrett, Ph.D

It strikes me that Jan Stevens (issue of November, 1994) is rather generous to Richard Trask's book Pictures of the Pain: Photography and the Assassination of President Kennedy. While this book seemed to me at first handsome and industrious, it is hardly the neutral presentation of the photographic data that the author pretends it is. On the contrary, the author goes out of his way in his detailing of the various single-bullet theories, the work of Lattimer, Alvarez, et al., as he veers far off into areas in which he has no apparent expertise. More important, Trask, like so many researchers, cares not a whit for a simple point: It doesn't matter what latter-day science can or cannot prove about the assassination. What is most germane here is the scrapping of the Constitution on the day

of the crime. The imputed assassin was studiously denied the rights guaranteed under our system of law, and of course the denial of adversarial process became especially easy after the suspect's murder while in police custody. These basic facts, along with the ignoring of chain of custody and chain of evidence rules, should obviate discussion of Thorburn responses and sexy new computer programs, but of course they don't, and researchers continue the morbid business of rehashing data (nowadays under the not-so-thinly-veiled project of relegitimizing state power) when the nature of this case has stood before them from its initial moments. But there are specific problems with Trask's book associated with his remarks on material about which he does seem to have some expertise.

I am especially concerned that Trask makes considerable reference to my dear friend Richard E. Sprague. Although Trask acknowledges Dick's pioneering and painstaking research into the photographic evidence, this citation is largely by way of traducing and misrepresenting him. I will note a few examples.

The Sniper's Lair. Dick Sprague has long asserted that the piles of boxes at the southeastern corner sixth floor window were changed in their configuration before they were photographed by Robert Studebaker in what became the official Warren Commission representation of the "sniper's lair." Sprague based his argument on his examination of photos taken by Ira Jack Beers about two hours after the assassination (the Warren Report version of the lair was obviously taken at night). Trask states that the boxes were not rearranged, and that Sprague "did not take into account" the Tom Alyea footage and its correct timing relative to the discovery of the lair by the Dallas Police. A snippet of the Alyea footage, like the Studebaker/Warren Commission photos, shows two boxes against the window, with a third box resting on the windowsill. Trask suggests that the Studebaker photos correspond with the Alyea footage, in other words, they represent the sniper's "lair" as it was initially seen. There are three problems with Trask's analysis. First, Sprague did indeed take into account the Alyea footage and its timing. The Alyea sequences are listed on p. 55 of Dick's historic May, 1970 Computers and Automation article, to which Trask refers several times. I viewed this footage at Dick's Hartsdale, NY home in 1975 and discussed the box image with him. Second, Dick conducted an interview with Jack Beers in 1966. Beers said that the police assured him the boxes were as the police initially found them.

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[1] With this assurance Beers snapped his photos (showing three boxes, one on top of the other, pressed between the window and a large pile of boxes, the window half-open). Third, the Alyea image does not correspond with the Warren version. The Warren version shows the window wide open, and the boxes (particularly the sill box) toward the right of the window's center mullion, rather than to the left as in Alyea. It is also worth noting that the configuration of the lair in the Dillard, Hughes, Weaver, Powell and other exterior photos of the TSBD, all of which show a box to the right (as we look at the photos) of the corner window's center mullion. The HSCA determined that the Powell photo, taken about a half-minute after the fatal head shot(s), shows a configuration of boxes different from that represented in the exterior photos taken before the shooting started. Still further, the Alyea footage, like the Beers photos, shows large piles of boxes pressed against the "gunrest" boxes. In one of Jack Beers' photos, we see three newsmen wedged in among these boxes, craning their necks to get a look at what Lt. J.C. Day (whose bald head is just visible in the image) is doing at the window of the "lair." This image goes a long way in showing the cramped space at the sixth floor, southeastern corner window the afternoon of the assassination. [2] Clearly the Studebaker images, especially the high-angle views, show plenty of empty space behind the gunrest boxes. (I have referred to these images as the "Danish Modern" or "modular" sniper's lair, with a convenient "seat box" that could slide back and forth unobstructed.) It seems to me that the "original" configuration of the lair becomes highly problematical.

The DCA/Mentesana Footage. Trask debunks the idea that the Ernest Mentesana footage, showing a policeman holding a weapon aloft as a group of police congregate around him, shows evidence of "the assassin's rifle," notwithstanding the fact that the sequence is so captioned by the DCA filmmakers. Since the sequence was taken at about 1:00 p.m., with the Oswald rifle brought outside a half-hour later, the film raises problems for the official version. Trask asserts that the officer is holding merely his own shotgun; his evidence is his visual examination of the sequence. Trask says that the gun has an "end nub," as found on a police shotgun. I presume Trask refers to the cap at the top of a shotgun's action, which can be removed to extract the gun's wooden plug (included in most shotguns of the time to prevent overloading the magazine). Such an "end nub" appears on a wide variety of pump action and semi-automatic rifles and shotguns, and is of little use in

identifying a weapon. The metal strap that often fastens the wooden stock to the weapon's barrel can easily be mistaken for such a "nub." I could go on about my own analysis of what this footage does and doesn't show (it clearly looks like the cops are interested in what the uniformed officer is holding as they press in for a closer view—the officer's own weapon of issue would hardly provoke such curiosity). What is most relevant is, again, Dick Sprague's 1967 interview with Mentesana, wherein the photographer told Dick that a policeman brought a weapon down the fire escape of the TSBD and presented it to his fellow officers. [3] This is precisely the moment Mentesana captured on film.

The Black Dog Man. Trask suggests that the dark-clad figure at the corner of the stone wall who appears in Willis 5, Betzner, Moorman, and other photos is one of the two young black people who were supposedly seated on a bench about seven feet from the corner of the wall. This assertion is based largely on Josiah Thompson's rather fragmentary interview with Marilyn Sitzman, who stated that as the shooting happened, the couple threw down their Coke bottles, smashing them, as they fled the area. It takes something of a pitching arm to smash a Coke bottle, particularly on soft turf (of course they may have quite deliberately aimed at the nearby sidewalk), and there is no evidence of broken glass at the top of the grassy knoll, although there is evidence of an intact bottle atop the stone wall in one of the Towner photos. There is no evidence of a black couple, fleeing or otherwise, anywhere in the official or non-official records, aside from Mrs. Sitzman's statement. On the other hand, in 1965 AP photographer James Altgens told David Lifton "that just before the motorcade came by, a number of people suddenly appeared behind the wall on the knoll." Altgens added that he felt this "an odd place to watch the parade from." When asked by Lifton if any police were among the people he remembered, Altgens replied: "I seem to remember that there were." [4] Still further, a variety of investigations determined that the so-called "Black Dog Man," as seen on Willis 5, shows pink flesh tones on his hands and face, hardly consistent with the African-American(s) suggested by Trask to be seated near the wall enjoying lunch.

There are other things that bother me about Trask, not the least of which is his citation of my 1975 review (Trask dates it 1971) of Itek Corporation's various JFK photo studies. Trask mentions only my observation that Itek enjoyed business affiliations with the CIA and the military; my more substantive critique of Itek's methods and conclusions are ignored. While

Trask may feel that I had my own ideological axe, he is certainly grinding his. His rather gratuitous swipes at the ethics, politics, and motivations of various assassination researchers underscore the point. What is most bewildering to me about his use of my Itek review is how he came upon it. Although I drafted several versions of this review, I published none, nor did I, to my best recollection, circulate the review to the journals and newsletters of the day. I did not, therefore, intend for the review to be a source within the critical literature, but Trask makes use of it as a representation of hysteria within the critical community.

As I began writing these remarks, I felt a vague sense of biliousness overcoming me, not because I am particularly upset with Trask or The Fourth Decade's review of his book, but because I found myself partaking of a line of thinking from which I parted company in 1980 after a decade of JFK assassinations study. The perspective to which I refer is represented not merely by Trask but by much that appears in The Fourth Decade and, for that matter, a huge sector of the critical community. Most assassination study is, in my judgment, terribly burdened by an excessive empiricism that revels in nit-picking data and churning the case with little or no political/historical focus. Empiricism is in fact an ideology. It looks at all experience as fragments of disconnected sense-data and refuses the role of theory in organizing these data. It also pretends that it is not determined by any theoretical or ideological context; this case is a good proof of empiricism's disingenuousness.

Various contributors the The Fourth Decade and similar journals frequently admonish fellow critics to stick with empiricism and to remain "skeptical." Such writers often affect the pose of being repositories of scholarly values, although their skepticism inevitably and necessarily falls on the side of state power, which is bewildering given the state's consistent lying and obfuscation on this and related matters. Many of us who became active in the JFK investigation in the early seventies saw the relevance of the assassination to the bankruptcy of the political system itself under current economic relations. For many of us, the Dallas-Vietnam-Watergate connection was about more than discussing "clandestine America" (clandestinism becomes an essential to the state as its amorality and illegitimacy become manifest to an informed, cynical—although not necessarily critical—population). Many of us felt the need to discuss the Kennedy assassination in a political and structural context to show how

this very dramatic historical moment was merely representative of the extent to which the postwar state, determined by military-industrial-intelligence interests, would go in preserving the economic relations that have devastated our society and become the embodiment of injustice. Since that time, however, JFK research has become a miasma of theory and counter-theory, an eternal ransacking of data with few people willing to say "This is a state crime protected by the state." There are even fewer prepared to mobilize our people in a meaningful way around this issue. When I say "meaningful" I mean to suggest the need not for fan clubs designed to make the government somehow 'fess up to its past sins that we might again believe in it (state power obviously has little interest in admitting to anything, except by way of acknowledging the critical faculties of the public in order to bolster our acquiescence), but for real coalitions capable of building a united front with various progressive groups representing the real needs of our people. As long as researchers keep saying, "The case is unsolved, let's keep digging," the Kennedy assassination will be divorced from the realm of the political. As far as I can tell, Gaeton Fonzi is the only researcher who spotlights this predicament by taking the good advice of our friends Vince Salandria and Marty Schotz to say, after so many years of confronting so much data (much of it provided by the self-assured arrogance of state power) that he knows rather than thinks a conspiracy killed Kennedy. This is at least getting us off on the right foot, which is one of many reasons why The Last Investigation is an historic accomplishment.

While Trask's book is a cut above the deluge of junk literature that circulates around the Kennedy assassination, it should remind us of the need to focus on the political dynamics of the murder, rather than on further (mis)information regarding assassination minutiae that can only make us fetishize this matter into murder-mystery oblivion. Let us use the assassination and the manifestly guilty behavior of the government that protects this crime to illuminate the illegitimacy of this government, and to remind us also of our need to confront the social, economic, and political injustice that flows from its vicious rule.

Notes

1. Letter from Richard E. Sprague to the author, July 13, 1974. Conversation between the author and Sprague, Nov. 16, 1994.
2. See Richard E. Sprague, "The Framing of Lee Harvey

- Oswald," Computers and Animation, Oct. 1973, p. 33.
Letter from Sprague to the author, Sept. 5, 1975.
3. See Richard E. Sprague's letter to the editor, The Third Decade, Vol. 2, No. 1, Nov., 1985. Letter from Sprague to the author, Sept. 5, 1975.
 4. David Lifton, Best Evidence: Disguise and Deception in the Assassination of John F. Kennedy (New York: Macmillan, 1980), p. 29.

KILLING THE TRUTH: A REVIEW

by

Gary Mack

Just over one year ago, Warren Commission critic Harry Livingstone's latest work, Killing The Truth: Deceit and Deception in the JFK Case, appeared in book stores. In this researcher's opinion, it is nothing less than a bizarre collection of false and misleading information that has no basis in fact. His central premise is that several prominent and respected researchers have misled the research community all these years. Let's take a look at some of his charges and see what the facts really are.

"(Dallas researcher Mary) Ferrell was quoted on network television as supporting the Warren Commission at the time Jim Garrison died, during the second ASK conference, in October 1992. It took thirty years to find her out." This astounding claim appears on page 386 of Killing The Truth without any source or corroboration. Why? Because there is none—it never happened.

Garrison died late Wednesday, October 21, 1992 and his passing became a big news story in Dallas the next day. The newsroom at NBC affiliate KXAS-TV, my employer at the time, asked if anyone in the area knew Garrison personally and would talk about him on camera. I suggested Mary because she worked with him throughout his "investigation." She kindly consented to a taped interview with reporter Clif Caldwell, which aired during the Garrison obituary on our late news at 10pm. Afterward, during a live "Q&A" with Caldwell,

news anchor Mike Snyder said "Even though she now believes in the Warren Commission's version of the assassination, she still has a special place in her heart for him." Caldwell quickly responded "That she does, but she also has some doubts on that, and she holds some reservations for what he says (emphasis added)."

That's all there was to it. Mary never said anything about her Warren Commission beliefs at any time and Snyder's remark, based solely on bad memory, was only heard locally, not on the network. While Caldwell's response cleared up Snyder's misstatement, Livingstone has yet to publish an apology.

Livingstone attacks me, too, in Killing The Truth and, in fact, has been angry with me for nearly ten years since I declined assistance with his High Treason acoustics chapter. We have had little contact since 1987, and repeated efforts to get him to stop writing and calling have been mostly fruitless.

With the publication of High Treason 2 I wrote to his publisher, Carroll & Graf, to insist on corrections in future editions because Livingstone misrepresented information in my old newsletter Coverups! I concluded, in that May 29, 1992 letter, "...I would very much appreciate, in writing, your intent to correct these errors. And I do not wish to hear from, or speak with, Harry Livingstone." Carroll & Graf neither replied nor made corrections, but in an unrelated letter dated November 18, 1992, Livingstone wrote "I do note that you wrote my publisher, and at this point, I will try to legally destroy anyone who tortiously interferes with my contractual relations." Imagine that – he made errors of fact, I asked for corrections, and he threatened me with a lawsuit!

Throughout the acoustics chapter in Killing The Truth, Livingstone suggests there is something suspicious about my early acoustics analyses, especially those published in the August 1977 issue of The Continuing Inquiry. He claims on page 355 that "Mack has never explained how he heard such loud and clear shots...when nobody else on this earth can duplicate his work and hear them."

Livingstone dedicated Killing The Truth to only one Kennedy assassination researcher, Texan Penn Jones, publisher of the newsletter The Continuing Inquiry. I wrote in his March 1980 issue, in an attempt to explain the difficult subject of acoustics, that the noises I thought were shots were actually in an earlier part of the recording. I have admitted that mistake elsewhere, both verbally and in print, and can only take solace in the knowledge that HSCA scientists James Barger, Mark Weiss and Ernest Aschkenasy stand by their 1978 conclusions,

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confirming my theory that the Dallas Police had inadvertently recorded the shooting. (That article, published only a few months after receiving the HSCA acoustics report, also has confusing information about automatic gain control (AGC) that I now know applies only to AM police radios, not FM like those of the Dallas Police in 1963.)

Livingstone's careless research shows how out-of-date much of his "evidence" really is, and how inconsistent his writing can be. On page 48 he mentions the sidewalk on the north side of Elm with "a long bullet scar," yet sixteen pages later it becomes "a long apparent bullet scar...which I traced years ago before Earl Golz had the section removed from the sidewalk (emphasis added)." Is it, or is it not, a bullet scar and why did Golz remove it?

Livingstone believes the "scar" pointed to the storm drain at the south end of the Triple Underpass, where another gunman fired at JFK and missed. What Livingstone doesn't mention is that reporter Golz, in a Dallas Morning News investigation, had the sidewalk "scar" excavated and studied eighteen years ago! Penn Jones reported the results in his January 1977 The Continuing Inquiry saying "(it) has been analyzed and has come up completely negative. Fibers in the mark seem to be from some materials mixed in with the cement at the time the sidewalk was poured." The sidewalk core sits in my closet to this day, a gift from Earl when he left Dallas years ago.

A much more serious misrepresentation appears in Livingstone's chapter concerning the films of Charles Bronson and others. On page 312 he states "I think that there are two versions of the Bronson film" and then notes minor discrepancies in 1978 Dallas Morning News accounts, FBI and HSCA reports and his own re-enactment of what Bronson thinks he filmed. He even suggests that one version seen on television may be a "composite film with portions from some other film." Missing from his "study," though, is any reference to my extensive analysis of both the film and slides, as printed in the February 1980 issue of The Continuing Inquiry.

Part of Livingstone's problem was his inability, in 1992, to view the best copies of the complete film. He somehow obtained Bronson's unlisted phone number in south Texas, called and got an interview. He then wrote a letter to Bronson's attorney, John Sigalos, and followed that up with a phone call. Sigalos, who has been a good friend since 1978, then asked for my opinion on allowing Livingstone access to the film. Based on my knowledge of him, his disruptions during at least one symposium, his antics at the JAMA news conference (covered

live by NBC News for its affiliates) and his rude outbursts interrupting the speakers at the Dallas Council On World Affairs autopsy forum, I suggested Sigalos just say "no." My main objection centered on Livingstone's apparent lack of ability to comprehend and report his observations accurately. I have never refused to show the Bronson film to anyone, and told Sigalos if he or Bronson wanted Livingstone to see it, I would certainly show it. I heard nothing further about Livingstone's request.

Weeks later I received a phone call from Marco Miranda, representing himself to be a student of the assassination, in Dallas for a few days with fellow student Joe Butka to do research and see the sites. Thanks to a tip from another researcher, I knew Miranda was an off-duty Baltimore cop, Butka was a Kmart security guard, and both were employed by Livingstone. Without revealing what I knew, I asked if he was acquainted with Harry Livingstone. Miranda said no, he had never heard of him. I then asked if he had read High Treason or had heard of it and he again said no. Some researcher! Sure enough, Miranda soon asked about seeing the Bronson film. When I responded that he could, Miranda was surprised.

I'm not certain if we immediately set an appointment at the TV station or agreed to do so later; unfortunately, I caught a cold and was out of the office several days, but Miranda phoned me at home. He said they were leaving town the following Friday and hoped to see the film before then. On Thursday I returned to work and called Miranda's hotel, the Holiday Inn in downtown Dallas. The front desk said he and his roommate, Butka, had already checked out and so had Harry Livingstone, who paid for both rooms.

The Bronson film has been shown many times on the Dallas and Boston NBC affiliates in the fall of 1991 and again in February and March 1992. Livingstone finally found a tape of it, for included with his November 18 letter to me was a photocopy of a Bronson frame showing JFK on Elm (the head shot is the frame in which the limousine's front bumper first seems to touch a tree branch in the foreground.) It's unfortunate that the brilliant new copy of the entire Bronson film, prepared for the 1993 Frontline special "Who Was Lee Harvey Oswald?," was dropped for time when the original show ran several minutes too long.

Is there anything worthwhile in Killing The Truth? The answer is a very qualified "yes." There's an interesting quote on page 506 that "Viking also had Gary Shaw and Jens Hansen tone down their book with Dr. Charles Crenshaw, which had

Johnson ordering the Parkland emergency room team to kill Oswald." Livingstone's source, he admits in a footnote, was none other than Crenshaw, thereby implying that Shaw and Hansen were responsible for the LBJ death-order story.

But in 1991, during the filming of JFK, technical advisor Gus Russo met with Crenshaw and Shaw at a restaurant across from the Stoneleigh Hotel, Oliver Stone's base of operations in Dallas. While discussing his upcoming book, still nearly a year from publication, they told Russo the order Crenshaw heard was "Make sure the son-of-a-bitch dies. You can drown him in his own blood." Russo repeated the quote to researcher Dave Perry and myself later that afternoon. Subsequent to that conversation, we learned that an employee of Crenshaw's publisher also knew about the original quote, as did a reviewer who was asked about it.

Crenshaw's Conspiracy of Silence publisher was actually Signet, not Viking, a division of Penguin Books USA. As published in April 1992, Crenshaw's story had, in fact, been toned down, on page 187, to "Why would the President of the United States personally call the operating room at Parkland Hospital and ask for a deathbed confession?" But if the original version was true, why change it? If it was fabricated, why believe anything in the Crenshaw book? Livingstone didn't ask those questions.

Livingstone has also proven to be a questionable judge of character, as best exemplified by admitted LBJ mistress Madeleine Brown. On page 499 Livingstone writes "I liked Madeleine. My assessment of her was that she was about 65 percent accurate." But he doesn't explain how to know which 35% is inaccurate. Livingstone doesn't mention that Brown is a convicted forger, found guilty by a Dallas jury in October 1992 of faking the signatures of her aunt and uncle on a will to become executrix of an estate valued up to \$300,000 and receiving \$69,000 before the real will surfaced. Judge Pat McDowell sentenced her to 10 years probation and ordered her to pay a \$500 fine and reimburse the real beneficiaries, according to a report in the February 1993 D magazine.

As I partially reported in the November 1982 Coverups!, Brown held a news conference at the Press Club of Dallas on November 5, 1982 where she announced, among other things, that LBJ and Speaker of The House Sam Rayburn knew of the conspiracy to kill JFK before it happened, according to KXAS-TV reporter Bob Leder (who happened to live in Brown's neighborhood and knew her reputation). She must not have remembered that Rayburn and Kennedy were close personal

friends, that he was JFK's mentor when he first entered Congress, and that Kennedy visited Rayburn at Baylor Hospital in Dallas when he lay dying of cancer. Five weeks later, Kennedy flew back to Texas for Rayburn's funeral on November 18, 1961, two years before the assassination!

Livingstone seems to delight in printing my legal name, along with my professional name, acquired 23 years ago in my Phoenix, Arizona disc jockey days, but he couldn't figure out which of three spellings is correct. Thorough research would have found the answer from mutual acquaintances, the Fort Worth telephone books or city directories, and even in my own newsletter.

Sometimes it's hard to tell what Livingstone really thinks. On preface page xv he lists me with others who supposedly have "misled us all these years...have nothing new to add to this case but have obstructed new research, new discoveries, and new evidence, obstructed anything at all that threatens their control." But on page 684 I'm portrayed as being "a fellow researcher." On page 395 he says "I never denied being nuts." In closing his November 18 letter to me, Livingstone wrote "Being crazy is a great cover."

Wrong. Livingstone's cover is blown, as is his credibility, by his own words.

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PLAIN TALK ABOUT ISAAC DON LEVINE

by

Jerry D. Rose

On January 27, 1964, as Marina Oswald was still trying to deal with ongoing "protection" from the likes of the Secret Service, James Herbert Martin and Declan and Katherine Ford, a new and unlikely player arrived on the Texas scene. This was the journalist/cold warrior extraordinaire Isaac Don Levine. Capping a long career of books and articles on the menace of the Soviet Union, Levine after World War II turned his attention to China and became intimately associated with a group of propagandists for Nationalist China known as the China Lobby. In fact, the wealthy manufacturer who spearheaded the Lobby, Alfred Kohlberg, had turned in 1946 to Levine to edit a magazine reflecting the Lobby's perspective and called Plain Talk. (1) For the next four years, Levine and a group of like-minded contributors published a regular stream of alarmist analyses of the "dangers" to the USA of the Soviet Union and of China after its "fall" to the Reds in the late 1940s. (2) Also during the Plain Talk years, Levine saw come to fruition a project started back in 1939. At his urging, Whittaker Chambers had gone to Assistant Secretary of State Adolf A. Berle with a dramatic story of a cadre of Soviet espionage agents in the State Department, with the expectation that this news would be conveyed to President Roosevelt. (3) Since Russia was our anti-Nazi ally at that time, Berle and/or Roosevelt understandably dismissed this as Levine/Chambers paranoia. In the Cold War atmosphere of the late 1940s, with a House Committee on Un-American Activities (especially its junior member, California congressman Richard Nixon) thirsting for some anti-communist action, Chambers' time had come and the allegations against Alger Hiss as a linchpin of that espionage "ring" were launched. In this second round of anti-Hiss action, Levine was abetted by his Plain Talk colleague, Kohlberg. Hiss left the State Department in 1946 to assume the Presidency of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. One of the Endowment's trustees, the future Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, received two letters from Kohlberg in December 1946 and March 1947 renewing the

Chambers/Levine charges against Hiss. (4) For his part, Levine pitched in with a December 1947 article in Plain Talk (5) in which he alerted readers to a crisis in national security centering around the Hiss case which was not to "break" until eight months later. Shortly before Hiss' interrogation by HCUA, Levine had a "private" conference with Nixon and later testified to HCUA to verify that Chambers had, indeed, told Berle in 1939 about the treachery of Hiss and others. (6)

Not content with his role in the undoing of Alger Hiss, Levine in late 1948 told staff members of HCUA that Chambers had told him that another former State Department employee, Laurence Duggan, was "one member of a six-man Communist apparatus which had been passing documents." (7) After this information was leaked to the press and forwarded to the FBI, Duggan jumped to his death from a midtown Manhattan office building. In the aftermath, all the HCUA principals involved—Nixon, Mundt, even Chambers—admitted that Duggan had been mistakenly accused...all that is but Isaac Don Levine. When Duggan's former employer, Undersecretary of States Sumner Welles, came to Duggan's defense, Levine's response was: "Let Sumner Welles explain away Mr. Alger Hiss and how documents and microfilm were filched from the State Department when for all practical purposes Sumner Welles was Secretary of State." (8)

Also in 1948, Levine was to become a charter member of a group under Kohlberg's inspiration called the American Jewish League Against Communism (AJLAC), a group which included the right wing writers Eugene Lyons and George Sokolsky. (9) Later, Senator Joseph McCarthy's chief communist-hunter, Roy Cohn, was recruited by his close friend Sokolsky and became the leader of the organization. (10)

The circumstances of Levine's arrival in Texas on that January day and the nature of his following activities are matters of intense interest but some uncertainty. Levine never testified before the Warren Commission nor were any interviews with him published in the Commission volumes. To deal with these uncertainties, we are left with a few passing observations about Levine made by those he encountered in the Dallas area; some FBI documents and a transcript of a "conference" with Allen Dulles, W. David Slawson and J. Lee Rankin of the Warren Commission on May 28, 1964, recently released by the National Archives (11) and a chapter from Levine's memoirs in a book, Eyewitness to History, published in 1973. (12)

Why did Levine come to Dallas at all? Since he was a writer,

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the obvious answer would be that he expected to write a book or some articles about the assassination. Peter Dale Scott offers this explanation along with a suspicious version of his sponsorship:

In an arrangement covered up by Warren Commission testimony, [C.D.] Jackson and Life arranged, at the urging of [Allen] Dulles to have Marina's story ghost-written by Isaac Don Levine, a veteran CIA publicist. (13)

Scott goes on to note that Levine's association with Jackson and Dulles went back at least to 1953, when the trio collaborated on preparing a U.S. psychological warfare response to the death of Stalin. (14)

There is certainly nothing wrong with Scott's deduction of the Levine/Dulles/Jackson "arrangement" concerning Marina Oswald from the known facts of Levine's association with Life and the CIA: Life publisher Henry Luce's association with the China Lobby (15); the mutual intimacy of Levine and Luce with Whittaker Chambers (16); and the magazine's role, along with CIA elements, both in the provocative "Operation Red Cross" operation in June 1963 (17) and in the acquisition and later suppression of the Zapruder film. (18). Yet, apart from such "deduction," I know of no empirical evidence that this "arrangement" did in fact occur.

Levine has his own explanation of how he came to seek out Marina Oswald, though there are subtle but telling differences between what he told Allen Dulles in 1964 and what he wrote in his autobiography in 1973. In both versions, the beginning of his contact arose from a chance encounter at a holiday party in late 1963 with Joseph B. Ford, a sociology professor at a California university. (19) On learning of Levine's interest in the assassination, Ford informed him that he had a brother, Declan Ford, living in the Dallas area who, along with his wife Katherine, were close friends of the Oswalds. Levine asked for an introduction through Declan Ford and, after some exchange of correspondence, he agreed to come to Texas if and only if Marina herself approved the visit. From here the 1964/1973 discrepancies start. He told Dulles in 1964 that he spoke to Marina by phone on January 13 or 14 and, when she agreed to his visit, set an appointment for January 27. (20) In Eyewitness he told a far less credible story: that he had contacted Marina for permission to visit on the very night preceding his January 27 flight and he and Mrs. Levine took off the next day. (21)

Another small discrepancy concerns his description of their

arrival. The Levines were met at the airport by Marina and her manager, James Herbert Martin. This being the day that CBS TV was to air a Walter Cronkite interview with Marina, the party made a mad dash to Marina's residence to try to see the program. In 1964 Levine said they got "caught in traffic" and missed the show; (22) in 1973 it was that they got there just as the program started. (23) A small detail, but strange that there would be such confusion about it.

James Herbert Martin did not, in any case, support Levine's version of how he came to be involved with Marina Oswald. As Marina's manager, Martin told the Warren Commission that he was looking to market various literary rights and was told by Meredith Press that Levine was probably the best man for the job. (24) Whether Martin contacted Meredith before or after Levine's January 27 arrival, the book company did finally bid \$25,000 for a book to be written by Levine.

Marina Oswald never did sign a contract with Levine and, so far as I can tell, no article or book by Levine on the subject was ever published...except the aforementioned chapter in his 1973 memoirs. (25) In fact, as I now want to show, it really seems that Levine's presence with Marina Oswald simply used the pretext of a supposed commercial story when his motives and perhaps his sponsorship were something different. There are a couple of alternative interpretations of what Levine was "up to" that I want now to explore.

One possibility is that Levine was doing what James Martin thought he was doing, "trying to tie in Oswald, I guess with the Communist Party or some attachment there some place." (26) (and, I would add, to "tie in" Marina as well). Before Levine ever talked to Allen Dulles, he had typed on his letterhead a list of "33 fresh clues" to the assassination and his May 1964 interview mostly focussed on these "clues." While most of them were anything but "fresh," at least two of them were fresh enough to suggest that they may have originated or at least been embellished by the principals under the influence of Isaac Don Levine.

1. Levine made a huge deal of the claim that Marina and Marguerite Oswald willfully destroyed evidence that would have clinched the case against Oswald as the assassin. I refer to a copy of the "backyard photo" that, according to Levine's interviews with Marina, Lee had inscribed "to my daughter June, with love." Since this inscription was allegedly in Lee's handwriting, its discovery would conclusively have invalidated Lee's claim that someone else forged the photo. Between Levine and Marina there emerged the ludicrous story

that Marina had found the picture, concealed it in her shoe while visiting Lee at the jail and, later that night, destroyed it at Marguerite's insistence. (27) Lee's supposed statement to his mother at the jail, that he wanted Marina to get "new shoes for Junie," was supposedly an oblique reference to the possibility that Marina may have told Lee, in Russian, of her hiding of the incriminating photo. Psychologically implausible as this tale may be, it may have been the last resort of investigators who could not otherwise disprove Oswald's claim of fakery in the photograph.

2. Another hole in the "prosecution" case against Oswald was the seeming disparity in the political orientations of Oswald's supposed intended victims: the "liberal" JFK, the John Bircher General Edwin A. Walker and—a later—appearing claim of Marina—Oswald's announced intention in the Spring of 1963 of killing Richard Nixon. (28) Levine may have played a key role in Marina's late recalling of the "Nixon incident." Levine even added his own touch to the burlesque routines about how Marina was able to lock him in the bathroom to prevent his carrying out of the assault on Nixon. When J. Lee Rankin asked Levine, "how did she lock him in the bath?" Levine responded "You take a broomstick and put it through a handle and lock the door. Russians know how to lock somebody in better than anybody else." (29)

More important than the details of the "Nixon incident," however, was Levine's creativity in constructing a profile of Oswald's political motivation that would accommodate attacks on these victims...as well as his plan to go to Russia and assassinate Nikita Khrushchev. (30) Levine seems to have arrived at the conclusion that this was the real reason for Oswald's trip to Cuba in the summer of 1963; his "goodbye" to Marina when he left on the trip made it clear that he never expected to come back from what he must have seen as a suicide mission. In his memoirs, Levine constructs a chronology of Oswald's political thinking—from his attempts on right-wingers Walker and Nixon in the Spring of 1963, to his frustrated attempt to get to Russia to assassinate Khrushchev during the summer, to his successful hit on JFK in November. (31) Much emphasis is placed on Oswald as a supposed "Trotskyite" or "Maoist" and the writings over this period in The Militant, to which Oswald subscribed. The détente between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., symbolized by the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, and the increasing level of Sino-Soviet hostility, might well convince a disillusioned Soviet defector that the world was ganging up on China and its Cuban ally.

The assassination of Kennedy and/or Khrushchev made perfect sense from this perspective. At this point I am reminded of that apocryphal document referring to a "Bernard Weisman" of the U.S. Information Agency, who detailed many of the supposed Chinese communist connections of Oswald and the FPCC. (32) If this was the disinformation document I think it was, I have to wonder how far in the background of its propagation Isaac Don Levine may have been.

In insinuating that the above two "clues" may in fact have been fabrications to which Levine contributed, I am no doubt influenced by Levine's track record in the area of disinformation. In fact his performance in another incident landed him a spot in Morris Kominsky's rogues gallery of notorious anti-communist "hoaxers." (33) The occasion was an article in Life, later expanded into a book, in which Levine claimed that Josef Stalin, the Soviet dictator, was actually a spy for the Russian czar. Kominski demolishes this Levine fabrication with expert testimony concerning a typewriter on which a letter to Stalin was supposedly written, and by finding that a witness to Stalin's supposed treachery was a person who was totally unknown to the people who should have known him. If Levine did enter the picture as a disinformation agent, by "arrangement" with Life/Jackson or on his own or however, he seemed a man with the appropriate qualifications to do the job.

Levine, along with his co-editors at Plain Talk was to add yet another star to his crown of disinformational excellence. The presenter of this award was no less an authority than a subcommittee of the U.S. Senate's Committee on Foreign Relations, popularly called the Tydings Committee. This subcommittee had been charged to study the issue of loyalty of State Department employees in the aftermath of Senator McCarthy's sensational claims in 1953 of widespread communism in the Department. (34) A major charge of the campaign against State was the claim that State Department traitors had delivered government documents to the editors of Amerasia, a magazine notable for its role in criticizing American policy favorable to Chiang Kai-shek. The China Lobbyists at Plain Talk hopped on this issue of course, publishing, among much else, an article by one of the accused former employees at State, E.S. Larsen, that there had in fact been much disloyal activity. When the Tydings Committee questioned Larsen, he claimed that the editors at Plain Talk had so altered the manuscript he sent them as to give the article conclusions the opposite of those he intended. This led the

Committee to this harsh assessment of the performance of editors at *Plain Talk*: "one of the most despicable instances of a deliberate effort to deceive and hoodwink the American people in our history." (35)

The second possible interpretation of Levine's role—not necessarily contradictory of the first—is that he was on the scene primarily for the purpose of gaining information...for the benefit of whom we can only speculate. This at least was the impression of some of the FBI agents who questioned him.

Even before Levine's "conference" with Dulles, Slawson and Rankin for the Warren Commission on May 28, he had met with Allen Dulles for a private conversation. (36) He then proceeded to make a call from his Waldorf Maryland home on May 8 to William Sullivan, head of the FBI's Domestic Operations Division, offering him information based on his interviews with Marina Oswald. (37) On May 11, with "approval" by the Bureau, Sullivan interviewed Levine in his office, at which time, referring to his private conversation with Dulles, Levine said he was "unimpressed by Dulles, who appeared during the interview to be sleepy and not really interested in what Levine was saying." (38) If this was Levine's way of ingratiating himself with Sullivan in view of longstanding FBI/CIA rivalry, the strategem seems not to have worked with Sullivan who, in his turn, appeared to be "unimpressed" by Levine, about whose interview he said: "On calling to arrange an interview with me, he said his purpose was to give us information which he believed the FBI should have. Despite this, he began to ask me questions as to whether the FBI was in possession of such and such a piece of information et cetera." On the next day, Levine was passed along to agents Lenihan and Morrissey who made a house call to Levine and his wife in Waldorf. (39) These agents, like Sullivan, "got the impression...that the Levines were more interested in obtaining data that might substantiate some of their speculations concerning the assassination and Lee Harvey Oswald."

On the scenario we are discussing, one is reminded of some of the tactics of staff of the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee (SISS)—Sourwine, Tarabochia—who promoted with the same W. David Slawson who met with Levine in May 1964 the tantalizing story of a Mexico City "informant" who could explain Oswald's "true motives" in going to Cuban and Soviet government offices in Mexico City. (40) Finding that nothing resulted from the Warren Commission's efforts to secure information from this source, Slawson and Rankin concluded that the story had been propagated to gain inside information

about the Commission's investigation for the "political purposes" of Sourwine and his boss, SISS chairman James Eastland. It would be interesting, indeed, to see what Slawson and Rankin may have concluded about Levine after their Dulles-sponsored encounter with him—especially whether they shared Sullivan's assessment of Levine as a man seeking information about the ongoing investigation. (41)

In the end, we find more questions than conclusions about the shadowy role of Isaac Don Levine in the months following the assassination. But the strong impression is left that Levine was hanging around Marina Oswald and talking to the Warren Commission and FBI officials for some reason—and that reason did not seem to have been in anticipation of the book or article Levine never wrote. Whether that reason was to spread disinformation about Oswald, especially his "Chinese communist" connections—or whether it was to use his supposedly inside information gained from Marina Oswald to find out what information was in the possession of official investigators—this is a question on which we seem to be left with as much uncertainty as we had when we started.

Notes

1. Stanley D. Bachrack, *The Committee of One Million* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), p. 32; Ross Y. Koen, *The China Lobby in American Politics* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1974).
2. Isaac Don Levine (ed.), *Plain Talk; An Anthology From the Leading Anti-Communist Magazine of the 40s* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1976).
3. Levine, *Plain Talk*, pp. 204–206.
4. The Earl Jowitt, *The Strange Case of Alger Hiss* (London: Hodder & Stoughton 1953), pp. 188–292.
5. Levine, *Plain Talk*, pp. 197–216. One writer wonders how Levine had such premature "information" about Hiss-related "espionage" long before Chambers ever accused Hiss of stealing secrets—as opposed to being part of a Communist underground. Theoharis, a close student of the FBI, suggests that Levine may have had extraordinarily cooperative sources of information within the Bureau. Athan G. Theoharis, *Beyond the Hiss Case: Chambers, Nixon and the Cold War* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982), pp. 280–282
6. Morton Levitt and Michael Levitt, *A Tissue of Lies: Nixon v. Hiss* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1979), p. 88.
7. Walter Goodman, *The Committee* (New York: Farrar, Straus

- & Giroux, 1968, pp. 267–269.
8. Goodman, The Committee, p. 268.
 9. New York Times, March 15, 1948, p. 7
 10. Nicholas von Hoffman, Citizen Cohn (New York: Doubleday, 1988), p. 106. Scott reports that AJLAC was the source of Joseph McCarthy's notorious list of 205 communists in the State Department, this list having originated with the FBI and leaked via a U.S. Army G-2 officer to AJLAC. Peter Dale Scott, Deep Politics and the Death of JFK (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 211, 212. Scott's source for this is Hank Messick, John Edgar Hoover (New York: David McKay, 1972), pp. 115–118. Messick paints a lurid picture of a 3-man "committee" of AJLAC surveying Senators who might "buy the package" of anti-communism, settling on McCarthy after three other senators had rejected the package. Messick's source in turn is Roy Cohn, McCarthy (New York: New American Library, 1968), pp. 8–10. Cohn refers only to a dinner meeting with "three men," identity and organizational affiliation unspecified. Rovere does identify the three men, all Catholic and only one of whom, Father Walsh, Vice-President of Georgetown University, actually advocated that McCarthy take up the anti-communism issue. Richard Rovere, Senator Joe McCarthy (New York: Harper and Row, 1959), pp. 122–124. So AJLAC may have been involved in this sordid affair, but the proof is not yet there.
- Whether or not AJLAC was the source of the "205" list, it (or at least its leader) was certainly involved with McCarthy's investigations. Kohlberg himself claimed to have provided "documentary material" to McCarthy and, at one point, "Joe (McCarthy) and Alfred Kohlberg spent eighteen uninterrupted hours together discussing (Owen) Lattimore." Thomas C. Reeves, The Life and Times of Joe McCarthy (New York: Stein and Day, 1982), pp. 248, 262. The fruits of that marathon discussion may have been reflected in an exhibit prepared by Lattimore for a Senate investigating committee: a point by point comparison of charges made by McCarthy and by Kohlberg in another of his publications, China Monthly. Koen, China Lobby in American Politics, pp. 221–229.
11. HSCA Record #9410402, Agency File #000883, released by National Archives under P.L. 102–526. References cited hereafter as WC interview.
 12. Isaac Don Levine, Eyewitness to History (New York: Hawthorne Books, 1973), chapter 10, "Inquest in Dallas." References cited hereafter as Eyewitness.
 13. Scott, Deep Politics, p. 55. The nearest thing to an admission by Levine of such an "arrangement" is his WC interview statement (pp. 2,3) that after his first meeting with Marina, he contacted C.V. Jackson (sic) and Ed Thompson and that he made a second trip to Dallas in February largely under "the pressure from New York from the publishers of Life."
 14. Scott, Deep Politics, p. 55.
 15. Bachrack, Committee of One Million, p. 17.
 16. It is too-seldom remembered that Chambers had been, since 1939, a Senior Editor for Time magazine of the Time-Life-Fortune publishing empire of Luce. Nor was Chambers an obscure Luce employee. A recent excellent biography of Luce devotes a full chapter to Luce's active promotion of Chambers' career at Time. The elevation of Chambers to the head of the Foreign News section produced a notable revolt from Time writers such as Soviet correspondent John Hersey, who had the "double burden" that "he had to submit to Soviet censors, then undergo surgery at the hands of Foreign News." Robert E. Herzstein, Henry R. Luce (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1994), pp. 346–358. In his own memoirs, Chambers describes how he ruined his health from overwork while he headed Foreign News, overwhelming himself by "writing or re-writing" 1/4 to 1/3 of all the stories printed in Foreign News. He also describes his gratitude to Luce for having stood by him during the trying time of the correspondents' "revolt." Whittaker Chambers, Witness (New York: Random House, 1952), pp. 491–504, 617.
 17. Warren Hinckle and William W. Turner, The Fish is Red (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), pp. 168–173.
 18. Richard Trask, Pictures of the Pain: Photography and Assassination of President Kennedy (Danvers MA: Yeoman Press, 1994), pp. 81–97.
 19. WC interview, p. 3; Eyewitness, pp. 216, 217.
 20. WC interview, p. 1.
 21. Eyewitness, p. 218.
 22. WC interview, p. 1.
 23. Eyewitness, p. 218.
 24. Warren Commission Hearings and Exhibits, vol. 2, p. 26.
 25. A "work in progress" for Levine was still being listed in 1975 as "research in the political motivations of Oswald's assassination of President Kennedy," based on "repeated"

- conferences with Marina Oswald in 1964. Contemporary Authors vol. 13-16 (Detroit: Gail Research Company, 1975), p 491. Levine died in 1981.
26. Warren Commission Hearings and Exhibits, vol. 1, p. 487.
 27. WC interview, pp. 6-8; Eyewitness p. 222-231.
 28. See Scott, Deep Politics, pp. 289, 290.
 29. WC interview, p. 18.
 30. WC interview, pp. 24, 25; Eyewitness, p. 245.
 31. Eyewitness, pp. 246-249.
 32. Jerry D. Rose, "The Loyal American Underground," The Fourth Decade 1#5, July 1994, pp. 28-31.
 33. Morris Kominsky, The Hoaxers: Plain Liars, Fancy Liars and Damned Liars (Boston: Braden Press, 1970), pp. 525-53.
 34. U.S. Senate. 81st Congress, 2nd Session, "State Department Employee Loyalty Investigation: Report," (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1950), pp. 146-148.
 35. This incident is cited in Koen, China Lobby in American Politics, pp. 236, 237. Levine, for his part, acknowledged Larsen's attempt to repudiate the Plain Talk article, but claimed that he had in his possession the original Larsen manuscript, "signed and initialed in duplicate every page." Levine, Plain Talk, p. 103. Of course we have only Levine's word for this and, in the larger context of his reliability, we might be justified in questioning the value of this evidence.
 36. Eyewitness, p. 245.
 37. HSCA record #1801004810108, Agency File #105-82555, Sullivan to Belmont, 5/8/64. Released by National Archives under P.L. 102-526.
 38. FBI record #124-10135-10052, Agency File #105-126032-9th NR 92, Sullivan to Belmont, 5/11/64. Released by National Archives under P.L. 102-526.
 39. FBI record #124-10135-10052, Agency File #105-126032-10th NR 92, Bradigan to Sullivan, 5/13/94. Released by National Archives under P.L. 102-526. For what the information is worth, Scott (Deep Politics, pp. 65,66) charges that Alan Belmont and William Bradigan, two of the FBI principals in these Levine memoranda, were co-conspirators in a 1953 act of "judicial murder." They were the two senior FBI officials present at Sing Sing prison at the time of Ethel Rosenberg's execution when the Bureau, knowing that it had only the flimsiest evidence against her, was attempting to extract her "confession" by way of "clinching" their case against Julius Rosenberg.
 40. Jerry D. Rose, "Disinformation Please: J.G. Sourwine in Action," The Fourth Decade vol. 2 #1 November 1994, pp. 1-5.
 41. One piece of "bait" that Levine may have used to attract FBI and Warren Commission attention was a report that he had been privy to some Oswald correspondence possessed by Ruth Paine before the Warren Commission ever saw the material. This report was discussed in an FBI memo from Branigan to Sullivan, 3/31/64, FBI record #124-10129-10137, Agency File #105-126128-1st NR 102, released by National Archives under P.L. 102-526 (See back cover illustration, this issue) In the earliest version of this report, it was said that these were letters to Paine from Lee Oswald, a matter of obviously great investigative interest. Levine reportedly urged Ruth Paine to turn over this material to the Warren Commission. Although she did so, there was considerably less to them than met the eye, comprising some "personal" correspondence with Marina Oswald. Still, they were seemingly tantalizing enough to draw some official attention to Levine.
- A tangent to this story of some possible significance was that the "source" of this information, as conveyed through a CIA informant, was one Hedda Massing, "who is known to the Bureau." I guess she was known, being one of that stable of professional anti-communist accusers, in the company of better known peers like Chambers, Louis Budenz, Elizabeth Bentley, Bella Dodd and Harvey Matusow, who made lethal careers of "naming names" of supposed communists. On such identification of Massing, see David Caute, The Great Fear (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), p. 316; and Fred J. Cook, The Nightmare Decade (New York: Random House, 1971), p. 412. She received her greatest notoriety at the time of the second Hiss trial in 1949. Her testimony having been excluded from the first trial because of its supposed irrelevancy, it was admitted at the second trial, and both Hiss and his detractors give her testimony much credit for having convicted him, since she was the only witness, besides Chambers, who would claim actual conspiratorial association with Hiss. She claimed that, in 1935, she had had an argument with Hiss whether her spy "apparatus" or that of Hiss would have the services of one Noel Field. Among many sources on this, see Alger Hiss, In the Court of Public Opinion (New York: Alfred A. Knopf,

1957) pp. 307–311; and Jowitt, The Strange Case of Alger Hiss, pp. 196–199. Massing made one other notable Cold War appearance, in 1953, as Roy Cohn and G. David Schine were making their notorious overseas junket for Senator McCarthy to discover “communist” influences in our overseas libraries. As detailed in an earlier article (“The Loyal American Underground,”) the junketeers questioned various members an an “underground” of employees of the U.S. Information Agency to report on communist influences in their agencies. When they visited Vienna, according to Cohn himself (McCarthy, p. 87) they encountered Massing, a native of that city, who was unable to find employment with the State Department there, despite her valuable background as a renegade Communist. Brief though it was, they employed Massing to give them the low-down on local communists. Rovere (Senator Joe McCarthy, p. 202) embellishes on this incident a bit, saying that Massing saw them off at the Vienna airport, Cohn shouting to her from the plane ramp, “So long, Hede. If anything goes wrong, get in touch with Joe!”

The basis of Massing’s “information” about Levine’s activities and plans in 1964 is a little unclear. This may have resulted from her own association with Meredith Press, which offered an advance to Marina Oswald via Levine. Her memoirs, called This Deception, were published in 1951 by Duell, Sloane and Pearce. Meredith Press, the long-time publisher of Better Homes and Gardens, had acquired ownership of Duell, Sloane and Pearce in 1961. See Charles A. Madison, Book Publishing in America (New York: McGraw Hill, 1966), p. 412. So it is entirely possible that she was working in New York for Meredith in 1964 and may even have been instrumental in arranging the “offer” to Marina. (The New York Times committed an amusing gaffe in printing Massing’s obituary in 1981. Above the story about her, it carried a picture of Massing with Gerhardt Eisler who, according to the caption, was her husband at the time of the picture (1949). In fact Massing had divorced the notorious Communist Eisler in 1926, and had married Paul Massing many years earlier. Four days later the Times issued a “correction” in that the woman pictured with Eisler was not Massing but his second wife. New York Times, March 9, 1981, II, p. 9 and March 13, 1981, II, p. 1).

THE CUBANA AIRLINES FLIGHT OF NOVEMBER 22, 1963

by

Peter R. Whitmey

In June of 1976 the Senate Select Committee described in Book V of its report the mysterious delay of a Cubana Airlines flight, not long after the assassination of President Kennedy, originating in Mexico City and destined for Cuba. The reason given for the five-hour delay (from 6:00 to 11:00 pm EST), according to information received by the CIA on Dec. 1, 1963, was for the purpose of transporting an “unidentified passenger (who) had arrived at the Mexico City airport in a twin-engine aircraft at 10:30 pm.” [1] The man had apparently boarded the Cubana flight without going through customs, and travelled to Cuba in the cockpit.

During the HSCA’s investigation, the Cubana Airlines flight incident was reviewed. The committee ascertained that the Cubana flight had been delayed, but for four hours and ten minutes, not five hours as previously reported. It was also learned that the Cubana flight left Mexico City at 8:30 pm, an hour before the twin-engine private aircraft arrived, so a transfer of a passenger was not possible. Had such a transfer occurred, the committee felt that it was highly unlikely that it would have gone unnoticed, given the extensive records maintained at the airport. However, for some reason, the committee failed to divulge the name of the mystery passenger who had landed in Mexico City in their report. [2]

The likely identity of the individual first referred to by the Senate Select Committee as an “unidentified passenger” was revealed in two CIA reports dated Jan. 25 and Jan. 27, 1964, released under the Freedom of Information Act in November, 1983. A detailed summary was provided by Henry Hurt in his 1985 book Reasonable Doubt. [3] According to CIA sources, the man’s name was Miguel Casas Saez. He was born in Cuba, and at the time of the assassination was either twenty-one or twenty-seven, 5' 5" in height, weighing 155 lbs. Saez was an ardent admirer of Raul Castro, Fidel Castro’s brother, and was possibly a member of the Cuban intelligence service; he even spoke Russian.

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Much of the information about Saez was provided to the CIA before the assassination, on November 5 and 15, 1963. He had entered the U.S. in Miami in early November using the name "Angel Dominiguez Martinez" on a "sabotage and espionage mission", according to one CIA source, and had been in Dallas on November 22 with two friends (confirmed by CIA sources inside Cuba), returning to Cuba later that day. Saez apparently had experience with weapons while in the militia and was described as being "capable of doing anything" by the same source. Further investigation by two men working under the Cuban source determined that Saez had gone from being poorly dressed to well dressed with lots of money, after having disappeared for several weeks.

Another CIA source, considered reliable, provided further details from Saez's aunt, who knew him as "Miguelito." She also confirmed that he had been in Dallas on November 22, had left the U.S. at Laredo for Mexico City and then onto Cuba. The aunt described her nephew as one of "Raul's men" and "very brave, very brave."

Hurt also points out that in late 1964, the CIA informed the FBI that an "untested" source had provided information from a Cuban scientist, who had been at the Havana airport late on Nov. 22, 1963. He had noticed a plane with Mexican markings land at the far end of the air field, with two men, whom he recognized as Cuban "gangsters", emerging from the aircraft. Instead of going through customs, they went into the back door of the administration building. The scientist learned that the flight had originated in Dallas. Were they possibly friends of Saez and co-conspirators in the assassination?

An intriguing footnote to the Cubana Airlines incident came to my attention in the fall of 1988 during a telephone conversation with Alan Edmunds, a former MACLEAN'S journalist. [4] He mentioned to me that a small contingent of Canadian and British journalists, including himself, had been granted visas by the Cuban government to cover the trial of two Canadian pilots, who had been caught smuggling explosives into Cuba, hidden in cans of papaya juice. [5] The trial was to begin on November 23, 1963, and the reporters arranged to meet "at noon in the bar of Mexico City Airport on November 22." Their flight to Cuba on Cubana Airlines was scheduled to leave at 2:00 pm CST, but they had been warned that "the plane would be held until the last of the refugee passengers had been cleared by U.S. Immigration." [6]

While at the bar, Edmunds and his eight colleagues learned

that President Kennedy had been shot in Dallas, and immediately ran for the phones, with seats available on an Eastern Airlines flight to Dallas. However, Edmunds was told to continue on to Cuba, despite the feeling that Castro was behind the assassination, which could likely have resulted in a nuclear attack on Cuba.

Edmunds recalled that their flight was not called until 9:00 pm—a delay of seven hours—and that they were the only passengers allowed on board. It was pitch black as they were escorted by "a small man with a nervous smile and impeccable New York English...across several hundred yards of tarmac." They were led up the front steps and seated in what had been "the first class compartment in pre-egalitarian days."

After the seat-belt light went out, Edmunds got up and began walking to the rear of the plane in search of the washroom, which he assumed was in the economy section, separated by a curtain. As he opened the curtain, the Cuban escort, who doubled as the steward, grabbed his arm and abruptly directed him to a washroom in the first class section. However, Edmunds had been able to take note of four to six people in that area of the plane, including two men to his left, and a woman to his right.

Edmunds recalled that years later, possibly in 1978, (more likely 1975, unless he meant the HSCA) a "U.S. Senate Inquiry into the Kennedy assassination had been presented with the theory that Lee Harvey Oswald had been a patsy, and it was a Cuban hit squad that had got Kennedy from the grassy knoll near the book warehouse. They'd driven Hell for Leather to Dallas airport and boarded a scheduled flight to Mexico City. The Inquiry had been told that the Cubana Airlines flight to Havana that day had been deliberately delayed so it could fly them back to Cuba before anyone caught on." Edmunds indicated that someone had suggested the possibility that one of the Canadian journalists aboard that flight might have seen the hit squad, and therefore should be questioned. Although Edmunds states in his manuscript that neither he nor his colleagues were contacted, he did recall having been phoned during our conversation, with the expectation of a follow-up interview, which never materialized.

In his manuscript, Edmunds suggested that, had he taken the theory at all seriously, he "should, in all conscience, have at least phoned Washington." But then, he would have been forced to publicly admit that further investigation on his part might have been expected. In retrospect, Edmunds wondered

whether the other passengers were merely rejected refugees being sent back to Cuba, or maybe cabin crew from the previous flight returning home. If not, he facetiously suggested the possibility of having "missed the story of the century" in his "eagerness to get to the washroom."

Edmunds' description of the Cubana flight makes no reference to having observed an incoming private plane or the boarding of a passenger who went directly to the cockpit, although it is conceivable that these events took place prior to the journalists being escorted to the plane. In addition, Edmunds' recollection of the scheduled and actual time of departure is not consistent with the Senate Committee's report, nor with the HSCA's, but there is no indication that Cubana Airlines had more than one flight to Cuba that day. (In fact, Edmunds stated that Cubana Airlines had only one flight per week from Mexico City to Cuba).

So we are left with a suspicious, but inconclusive possibility, that one or more pro-Castro Cubans might have been involved in the assassination of JFK, with or without Lee Harvey Oswald's knowledge and participation. Even though the CIA had informed the FBI about the observation of a Cuban scientist at the Havana Airport described earlier, on a routing sheet that accompanied the document, someone at the CIA had scrawled the following comment: "I'd let this die its natural death, as the FBI is doing." The CIA's own source in Cuba had, in fact, died by then. [7]

As for Saez, no attempt had apparently been made to determine why he had travelled to the U.S., why he happened to be in Dallas on November 22, 1963, why he had abruptly returned to Cuba with apparent assistance that day, why he suddenly came into more money than ever before, and whatever happened to him. Presumably the HSCA was aware of the CIA documents cited by Henry Hurt, but no specific reference was made to Saez in its report. It is also apparent that the Warren Commission was never informed by the CIA about

this Cuban connection.

Notes

1. Bernard Fensterwald with Michael Ewing, Coincidence Or Conspiracy? (New York: Zebra Books, 1977), pp. 494-5. It should be noted that the authors describe the man as being a twenty-three-year-old "Cuban-American", with connections to the Tampa, Florida Fair Play For Cuba Committee, who might have been involved in the assassination, according to a CIA source. However, this description clearly applies to Gilberto Policarpo Lopez, whose suspicious movements are described in detail in The Final Assassinations Report (Bantam Books: N.Y.), pp. 136-141.
2. The Final Assassinations Report (Bantam Books: N.Y.), 1979, p. 136. Note: the Cubana Airline flight is incorrectly stated as having taken place on Nov. 23, 1963, but the report referred to in the footnotes on p. 695 gives the correct date of Nov. 22, 1963.
3. Henry Hurt, Reasonable Doubt (Henry Holt and Co.: N.Y., 1985), pp. 421-3.
4. I had contacted Edmunds in the course of trying to locate another former MACLEAN'S writer named Jon Ruddy related to my Richard Giesbrecht research, and through Edmunds was successful. Ruddy died earlier this year in Mexico, as a result of an accident.
5. "The Great Cuban Spy Caper" (part one) by William Milne as told to Barbara Moon, MACLEAN'S, February 22, 1964, pp. 7-8, March 7, 1964, pp. 24-25, 39-45. Also, New York Times, Nov. 24, 1963, p. 25, and New York Times, Dec. 11, 1963, p. 11.
6. Alan Edmunds, "Airlines to Avoid: Cubana," sent to me on January 22, 1990; it was to be published in a Canadian travel magazine, although I don't know if it ever was.
7. Hurt, Reasonable Doubt, p. 423.

Memorandum

TO : MR. SULLIVAN
FROM : MR. BRANNIGAN
SUBJECT: LEE HARVEY OSWALD
INTERNAL SECURITY - RUSSIA - CUBA

DATE: 3-31-64

1 - Mr. Belmont
1 - Mr. Mohr
1 - Mr. DeLoach

Isaac Don Levine has been collecting material for a book concerning the subject. This book is scheduled to be published in April 1964. Levine allegedly has spent considerable time with the widow of the subject.

Hunt explained that CIA's source for this information was Hede Massing, who is known to the Bureau. The above, Levine allegedly told Massing. In addition to the above, Levine allegedly told Massing that Mrs. Ruth Paine had given Levine five letters written by the subject. The existence of these letters allegedly has never been made known to any U.S. Government authorities.

On 3-30-64 the Dallas Office was furnished the above information and was instructed to immediately interview Mrs. Ruth Paine as to whether she had given any letters to Levine. (X)(u)

On 3-31-64 SAC Shanklin, Dallas, advised that Mrs. Paine denied giving any letters to Isaac Don Levine. It will be noted, according to SAC Shanklin that on 3-6-64 Mrs. Paine was contacted concerning her effects as they might relate to the Oswald investigation. At that time she advised she had six letters - four personal - written to her from Marina at New Orleans and two short notes written by Marina while Marina and Lee Harvey were living at 1214 West Neely, Dallas. She also had a note which she intended to deliver to Marina but never did. All of these were in the Russian language. She stated that she had given

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DECLASSIFICATION AND/OR
RELEASE OF CIA INFORMATION
IN THIS DOCUMENT
TBH 3/24/93
4/19/93
ENCLOSURE # 98-64
11-20-93 (DFG)
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for CIA with date 9/2/80
3/2/80 2145V

DECLASSIFIED BY: 60322/ST
DATE: 11-13-80
CLASSIFIED BY: 60322/ST
DATE: 11-13-80

reviewed them and that they contained nothing of any significance regarding the investigation of Lee Harvey Oswald. One letter, written about June 5 at New Orleans by Marina, indicates that Lee Oswald wanted to send Marina back to Russia. She said she recalled someone in the latter part of March, 1963, Marina told her Lee wanted to send her back to Russia. She said the tone of conversation and the letter indicated to her that Lee did not intend to return to Russia himself. At that time she declined to make these letters available because they contained a great deal of personal talk regarding personal difficulties both in the marriage of Mr. and Mrs. Paine and in the marriage of Lee Harvey and Marina Oswald. She stated that she did not desire that the contents of these letters be made public and if she furnishes them to the Commission, it will be with the understanding that they are not to be made public. (X)(u)

On 3-31-64 when she was contacted, Mrs. Paine advised that when she appeared before the President's Commission, she was required to turn the letters over to the Commission in whose possession they now remain. In addition, the letters were read into evidence as part of her testimony. Mrs. Paine recalled that prior to her appearance before the President's Commission she had exhibited these letters to Isaac Don Levine who she understood could read the Russian language. (X)(u)

According to SAC Shanklin, Marina Oswald was contacted 3-31-64 and she advised that she has not signed any contract with Levine to write a book nor has she authorized him to write about her. Marina stated that she has talked to Levine on several occasions about her own background and the background of Lee Harvey Oswald but she has entered into no agreement with Levine to write any articles. (X)(u)

On 3-31-64 Mrs. Hede Massing was contacted by Agents of the New York Office and she advised that the letters referred to by her were, according to her understanding, presently in the possession of the President's Commission but these letters had been exhibited to Isaac Don Levine by Mrs. Paine. According to Hede Massing, it is her understanding that Levine is preparing an article for "Readers Digest." (X)(u)

It will be noted that Isaac Don Levine appears in "Who's Who in America." He is a writer, born in Russia in 1892. He collaborated with General Walter Krivitsky, a Soviet defector, who was later found mysteriously dead in a hotel room in Washington in the late 30's. Levine's most recent book "The Mind of an Assassin," was published in 1959 and dealt with the murder of Leon Trotsky. We have had previous contact with Levine and he maintains a residence in Waldorf, Maryland. (X)(u)

ACTION:

In view of the above, it is recommended that we advise the President's Commission of the circumstances of our interview with Mrs. Paine on 3-6 and that she had turned the letters over to the President's Commission. The Commission should also be advised that Mrs. Paine has admitted showing these letters to Isaac Don Levine and of the fact that we have an allegation on Levine, who is writing a book concerning Lee Harvey Oswald, allegedly had access to letters, the existence of which had never been made known to any U.S. Government authorities. (X)(u)

The letter should then point out that if the Commission has been furnished these letters as stated by Mrs. Paine, we would appreciate receiving copies of them if they contain data of interest to our investigation.

Attached is a suitable letter to the Commission in line with the above.