
Read this book: "Best Evidence: Disguise and Deception in the Assassination of John F. Kennedy," by David S. Lifton (Macmillan, \$16.95).

1. 19 Jan 81 (Time) "Now, a 'two-casket' argument: a bizarre new Kennedy assassination conspiracy theory" Two full pages, by Ed Magnuson, in the news section. "Preposterous? Absolutely. Yet there is virtually no factual claim in Lifton's book that is not supported by the public record or his own interviews, many of them with the lowly hospital and military bystanders whom official probes had overlooked. Even the reader who does not accept Best Evidence's sensational conclusions - and there is no logical reason for doing so - is likely to admit that Lifton has turned up intriguing new evidence of some strange doings with Kennedy's body in the twelve hours following the shooting." A basically accurate summary of Lifton's thesis and evidence.

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2. 10 Jan 81 (Earl Golz, DMN) "JFK's body 'altered' after assassination, book says" Summarizes Lifton's case, and the HSC's rebuttal.

3. 11 Jan 81 A UPI report based on the Golz story.

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4. 12 Jan 81 (Edwin McDowell, NYT [book page]) "New book on John Kennedy death quietly issued" Blakey is quoted as calling the Lifton theory "just absurd." The article is mostly about Macmillan's handling of the book. Mentions David's 22-minute film (with interviews of witnesses), which I have on audio and video tape; also the \$10,000 advance, the 75000-copy initial printing, and the publisher's concern about legal problems and factual accuracy.

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5. 12 Jan 81 [3 pp.] Transcript of Lifton on "Good Morning America," plus a couple of sentences about the book on the local NBC news, January 10.

6. Macmillan press release [2 pp.] for press conference of January 13.

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7. Precis/summary, also from the Macmillan press kit [6 pp.]

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8. 14 Jan 81 [2 pp.] Partial transcript of comments by Dr. Baden and Andy Purdy on a CNN broadcast with Lifton. Purdy: "Well, I think there may have been two different caskets; I don't think that the body was altered." Both Purdy and Baden dismiss the Dallas observations as erroneous. Baden's comments raise the question of the extent of the HSC's consideration of Lifton's thesis. As discussed in "Best Evidence," the HSC's published rebuttal, in Vol. 7, relies on non-medical evidence: Sibert said that the head surgery statement was determined "not to be correct following detailed inspection," and SS agents Kellerman and Greer gave statements which formed the basis for the Committee's conclusion that "Secret Service agents maintained constant vigilance over the body." (7 HSC 19, 38) Baden, however, left the impression that Lifton's thesis had been specifically considered and rejected by the forensic pathology panel and the Bethesda doctors. But Baden didn't quite say that: he said that "I think the concept that the wound was altered was looked at by the 9 forensic pathologists when we reviewed all of the material in the Archives, and when we spoke directly to all the physicians present at the autopsy - there were 4 [sic] physicians - we found no evidence that there had been any kind of alteration or change, in the X-rays, in the photographs, in the body." On this CNN broadcast, as in his HSC testimony, I got the impression that Baden was a very skilled witness who was careful to give the impression he wanted. The question remains: were the Bethesda doctors ever asked about surgery? Did the panelists ever specifically look for evidence of surgery? Whatever the answer, I would think that withholding of any of the HSC's medical evidence is unjustified.

9. 21 Jan 81 Review by John Barkham. Basically descriptive; he takes the book seriously (but does not seem to have understood it, claiming that "Lifton hazards no guess as to the reason for the" surgical alterations).

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10. 21-27 Jan 81 (Eliot Fremont-Smith, Village Voice) [2 pp.] A silly, bitchy, and totally negative review, by the same man who managed to sound silly while telling us that the Summers' book turned him into a believer in conspiracy. (#1980.194) Smith doesn't like Bantam's hype for "Princess Daisy;" he is upset that "brunette kumquat Carl Sagan" got \$2 million for the outline for his first novel; and, on the basis of the press kit, he doesn't like Macmillan's hype and David's book. He dismisses the book as a "First Novel," presumably with satirical intent, and suggests that David was just looking for a new and saleable angle.

*** 11. 24 Jan 81 (AP in Chicago Tribune) "Two-casket theory on JFK backed" Donald Rebentisch, then a petty officer, says that he and five other sailors brought JFK's coffin in through the rear entrance. "For 17 years, I've known something that I thought everybody knew," said Rebentisch, who was "surprised" by the Time article on Lifton's book. (I understand that the original story about Rebentisch was AP, but this is a very abbreviated version.)

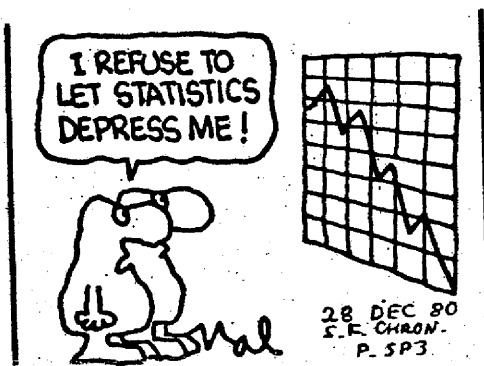
*** 12. 25 Jan 81 (UPI in SFX) A longer version of the Rebentisch story. He knew there were two caskets; he said his commanding officers "told him the secrecy was planned to avoid the media and other onlookers.... Rebentisch said Kennedy's body was brought to the back of the hospital in a black 1958 Chevrolet hearse.... 'It was common knowledge that there were two caskets,' [Rebentisch's former colleague Richard] Muma said."

More on "Best Evidence" below, page 8.

I would particularly appreciate being sent copies of any stories relevant to the Lifton hypothesis, especially comments from WC and HSC members or staff, medical experts (including the HSC panel), the Dallas and Bethesda doctors, and new witnesses.

13. 18 Jan 81 (DMN) "Oswald's mother dies at 73"
 14. 18 Jan 81 (FWST) "Mother of Oswald dies in Fort Worth hospital"
 15. 19 Jan 81 (AP in SFC) "Lee Harvey Oswald's mother dies in Texas"
 16. 18 Jan 81 (AP in Cleburne Times-Review) "Marguerite Oswald succumbs"
 "Mrs Oswald said she was very proud to be 'a mother in history,' the title of a magazine article and book about her, but seemed bitter about the way her family was treated by the media. 'I've experienced and survived this trauma'."

The acoustical evidence:



17. 11 Dec 80 [6 pp.] The 24-page FBI report of 19 Nov (#1980.514), reprinted in the Congressional Record. Included on the last page:
- ** 18. 4 Dec 80 BBN press release; "we disagree completely with the conclusions of the FBI report.... Many out-of-context quotations ... and the omission of any scientific data ... indicate that the FBI has not fully understood ... our analysis.... We are also disturbed to find that ... they made no attempt to discuss our work with us...." (Weiss & Aschkenasy concur.)
19. 5 Dec 80 (Boston Globe) "Sound specialists dispute FBI views of JFK study" (Based mainly on the BBN press release.)

*** 20. 29 Dec 80 (Jack Anderson in the SF Chronicle)

"FBI Blinders?... The FBI's critique overlooked some crucial evidence [in] the public report [sic].... The FBI claims the House committee's evidence did not prove that the recorded sounds actually came from the assassination scene. Yet a transcript of the Dallas police dispatcher's radio transmissions makes it clear the sounds were from the Dealey Plaza area. The FBI's insistence that no conspiracy was involved seems to have stemmed from" a Hoover-to-LBJ memo of 11/24 about convincing the public that Oswald is the real assassin.

This is an argument of Belinesque stupidity. This section of the column (just 4 paragraphs) did not run in the Washington Post on 12/29. (Did the Post run it at all?) I suppose that someone made a rare application of normal editorial standards to Anderson. With friends like this....

* The NAS panel: I understand that the Ramsey panel has now gotten around to formal sessions with the HSC experts and with the FBI. Watch for possible leaks. One Washington insider expects the report in April, or possibly late March; Roger Cabbage of the Justice Department told Robert Ranftel (in mid-January) that the acoustics report was likely to come out in late April or early May.

COMMITTEE HEARS
ACOUSTICS EXPERT

It figures.

-- Iowa City Daily Iowan.

[Speaking of the JD, can anyone confirm a rumor that Wesley Liebler will head the antitrust section?]

← from the New Yorker, of course!

Clippings: (directly relevant to the assassination)

21. Publisher's blurb for the Guth-Wrone bibliography
22. 29 Jul 80 (Truby, The Globe) [2 pp.] "JFK stunned by CIA dart just before fatal shots" Cutler on the umbrella man.
23. 15 Sep 80 (Jim Bishop column) "Write and wrong on JFK" Praises the Aynesworth-Bedell attack on the critics. On the critical literature: "Never in the history of literature has so much shoddy writing paid such handsome royalties." (How did your book do, Jim?)
- * 24. 21 Oct 80 (Bob Boring, The Globe) "Oswald is alive: he has been seen working on a Russian farm - says ex-CIA agent" Source is Hugh Ainslie, formerly a reporter for Reuters and the Houston Post, who claims he was a "CIA agent." (Comments by Eddowes, of course.) [Remember Lonnie Hudkins' strange claims of working with the CIA?]
- * 25. 16 Nov 80 (UPI in St. Louis PD) "TV producer [Harry Alan Towers] faces charges from 1961" Towers surrendered in NY; he was the "roommate" (and alleged pimp, I gather) of Maria Novotny and skipped after their 1961 arrest. [See #1980.583, and the following item.]
- ** 26. (1977) Partial transcript of comments by Eddowes on a Chicago talk show with Elmer Gertz, concerning his pre-assassination investigation. Eddowes recounts in some detail his role in the Ward-Ivanov-Profumo case. He came to NY to check some things out for the Journal-American, and claims that John Malone of the FBI asked to see him. There were three 2-hour meetings, as a "result" of which Eddowes learned "that the group in London who'd destroyed Profumo had sent a young woman to New York, Maria Novotny, to destroy the character of President Kennedy." It is not really clear who was informing whom of what at these Eddowes-Malone meetings, but it is interesting either way, if Novotny came up at all. Eddowes claims that when JFK was shot, he figured that those who had tried to "assassinate his character" would be the prime suspects. I find this rather provocative: were elements of the US intelligence community the prime movers behind Eddowes' theory? (Bluntly, was Eddowes a less sophisticated precursor of Epstein in the "KGB did it" game?) Or, forgetting Eddowes for the moment, just what did people like Malone and Angleton know about JFK and Novotny, what did they think of it, and did that affair cause them to suspect the KGB in the assassination? I would like to see someone follow this up. (Item 1980.583 alleges that the CIA and FBI had lots of material on Novotny.) (Special thanks to Jeff Meek for coming up with this 1977 Eddowes tape.)
27. (1977) Handwritten fragmentary notes on this Eddowes-Gertz tape.
28. 16 Nov 80 (Detroit FP) "Dallas still remembers JFK" The 6th floor may be turned into a museum.
29. 20 Nov 80 "Re-examining JFK's assassination" (column by Maxwell Glen and Cody Shearer, Field Enterprises) If the acoustics holds up, "another federal investigation may be in order.... Rehashing the painful evidence is not easy. But ours is a strong country, so let the chips fall where they may so these nightmares can end." An analysis remarkable only for its rarity in the press.
- * 30. 22 Nov 80 (Biloxi Sun) "From Bay of Pigs to Dallas," by Bill Gaudet. Gaudet claims that he "unknowingly helped set up alternate air bases" in Central America for the Bay of Pigs; denies having called the FBI about Ruby in New Orleans; says he testified to Congress; and remains convinced "the beginnings of the plot to assassinate [JFK] were born in the aftermath to that disgraceful Bay of Pigs tragedy."
31. 22 Nov 80 [2 pp.] Handwritten fragmentary notes on more of Fonzi on the Larry King show (cf. #1980.528)
32. 23 Nov 80 (Wilson, Newhouse) Descriptive review of Lattimer's book
33. 4 Dec 80 Typically fuzzy editorial (paper unknown): "More controversy certain on JFK assassination"
34. 14 Dec 80 (WP) [2 pp.] Full-page Waldenbooks ad for Lattimer's book.
35. 22 Dec 80 (New York) "A fund to finance spook suits" (Intelligencer item on David Phillips' new group, "Challenge" - "an intelligence officers' legal action fund." Don Freed looks forward to being sued.)

36. Dec. '80 (CAIB) "David Atlee Phillips and Lee Harvey Oswald"
More on "Challenge"
- * 37. [2 pp.] Letter from Phillips to AFIO members, announcing the formation of "Challenge." Contributions will be tax deductible, he says. Mentions the Summers book and the Freed-Landis charges in the Letelier case. This letter evidently was written before the Fonzi article came out.
- * 38. 30 Dec 80 (Golz, DMN) "Hoover's vendetta targeted Dallas police, memos reveal" [2 pp.] After the assassination, Hoover cut the DPD off from FBI training programs; in 1966, he apparently got Mayor Jonsson to lean on Curry, who soon resigned, and forced discipline of Revill for leaking organized crime information to the LAPD.
39. 30 Dec 80 AP version (in the Oakland Tribune) of the previous item.
- * 40. 4 Jan 81 (Field News Service) [2 pp.] "Questions about JFK assassination haunt [Leonard] Bernstein" Discusses his 11/22 remarks (see #1980.568). Bernstein claims to have read all the books on the case; no specific basis for his belief in a high-level plot is given.
- ** 41. 4 Jan 81 (Travis Brown, DTH) "Detective [Gus Rose] noted for unraveling tragedies" [2 pp.] Rose is leaving the DPD for the Sheriff's office. Describes Oswald as wild-eyed, belligerent and arrogant; he didn't admit killing Tippit even though when he was brought in, Rose was told he had done it.
42. 7 Jan 81 (Jerry Carroll, SFC) "The odd terrain of conspiracy theorists" [2 pp.] Silly introductory material, plus profile of Mae Brussell.
43. 7 Jan 81 [2 pp.] Accompanying profiles of an anti-IRS buff and someone who thinks the moon landings were faked.
- ** 44. 7 Jan 81 (Chicago Tribune) "Castro 'assassination' con fatal to Mafioso" [Roselli] [2 pp.] Excerpts from the Demaris-Fratianno book. Fratianno claims to believe that Trafficante was engaged in a "scam," and didn't try to kill Castro. An interesting and important perspective on the information coming from the Mafia participants in the Castro plots.
45. 11 Jan 81 (Golz, DMN) "[Slawson] Memo cites JFK autopsy doctor" Slawson suggested that if the WC was to exhume Oswald, they talk to Humes, who Specter said was "competent and trustworthy." Slawson didn't recall this and didn't want to talk; Humes knew nothing about it. The article mentions the Lifton book, and his assessment of Humes.
- * 46. 1 Feb 81 (SFC) In a column on Iran (arguing against investigating the recent past instead of looking to the future), James Reston notes: "There are many well-intentioned people here and elsewhere who are determined to dwell on the past. They are convinced, even now, that there was a conspiracy in the murder of President Kennedy, that Nixon and Agnew were hounded out of Washington by a hostile press, and that it is their duty to expose the crimes of the past. There are, of course, lessons to be learned from careful investigation of the tragedies of our history ... but there are also some dangers." That must be true, or Reston wouldn't be saying it.
- * 47. 2 Feb 81 (LAT in SFC) "Tass returns US charges on terrorism" Responding to President Reagan [there - I said it!], Tass says 'you guys are worse.' "The ruling circles of the United States are making wide use of it [terrorism] not only for the physical elimination of undesirable politicians but also for the suppression of dissidents.' As examples, Tass cited the assassinations of John and Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King." I don't think this is quite what the AIB had in mind when they were working for the politicization of the assassination as an issue! This sort of thing won't help.
- * 48. March 1981 (Gallery) "The man who had a contract to kill Lee Harvey Oswald before the assassination...." Dick Russell (with Dave Navard) on Richard Nagell. Nagell's background is interesting, and some of his stories may check out, but I found nothing in this article to persuade me that there is any reason to believe any of his stories having to do with Oswald. [10 pp.]

49. March 1981 (Gallery) To accompany the previous item: cover blurb (rated PG), publisher's note (listing previous Gallery articles), and drawing [3 pp.]

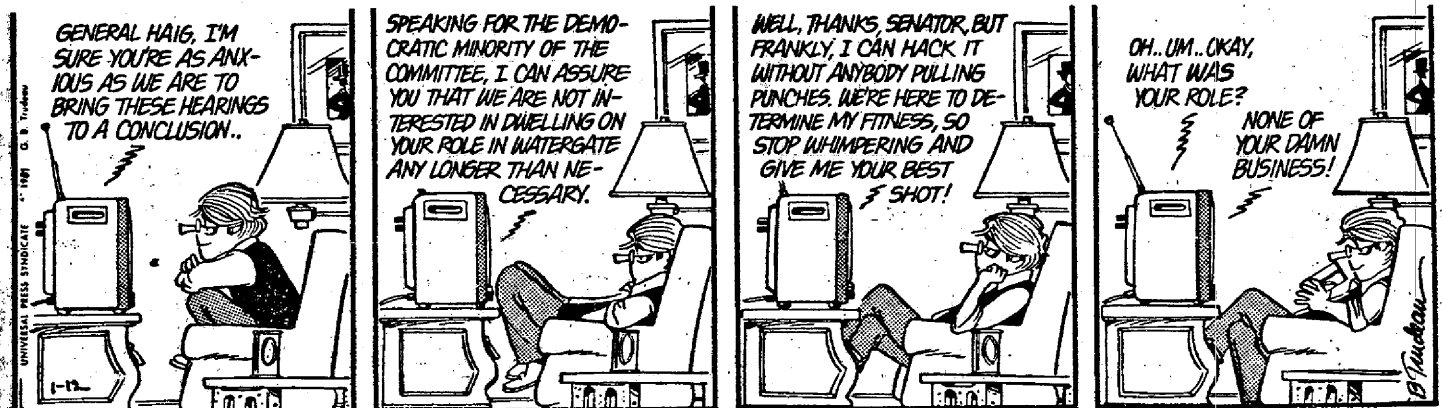
Highlights of "The Continuing Inquiry":

- * 50. "Matching the police tape to the Zapruder film," by Gary Mack [2 pp.]
- * 51. Gary Mack on the forthcoming (February?) Taft International film [2 pp.]
- * 52. 2 Nov 80 (Nashville Tennessean) [2 pp.] "Ray names four others in scheme to murder King" (Carlos Miguel Hernandez, David Graiver, Randolph Erwin Rosenson, and of course "Raoul." Uh-huh.)
- * 53. TCI's new policy on subscriptions. New subscribers, libraries, teachers, and buffs who can't afford \$24 per year can get lower rates. All of us should subscribe, I think. [I will re-list only the most important TCI articles here.]
54. May '78 (Take One) "Kennedy Death Films" [4 pp.] A film buff's view. Includes a rebuttal from CBS on the outtakes-destruction issue.
55. "Come on, Dan [Rather] ... Did you run, or did you take a cab?" Contradictory accounts quoted at length, and with inexplicable enthusiasm.
56. "An Earl Golz story that didn't make the DMN - Mamantov says Oswald KGB" The editors thought it was "based on opinion, not proof" - and so it is! Interesting anyhow.
57. Four pages of Cutler's latest reconstruction.
58. Jane Diaz on Mort Sahl's alleged endorsement of Reagan. [3 pp.] Sahl allegedly got Sen. McCarthy to endorse Reagan.
- [#50-53 are from the 12/22/80 issue; #54-58 are from the 1/22/81 issue.]

Clippings (general): [For organized crime items, see the next section.]

59. ? (P. Good, from NY Daily News) "He spied on Martin Luther King" [2 pp.] Interview with an unnamed FBI informant in SCLC.
60. 18 May 80 (London Observer) "[Katangese] Mercenaries accused of killing Hammarskjold" by dropping a bomb on his plane. (Article not complete.)
- * 61. 10 Oct 80 Review (by R. Hassenger) of the Wofford book on the Sixties. [2 pp.] Suggests that JFK's "fatalism may have been influenced by his knowledge, according to the recent biography of his early years by H. S. Parmet, that a blood disease might kill him before fifty." Anyone know about this?
62. 18 Nov 80 (Miami Herald) "Nicaraguans seek access to Reagan" through Alton Ochsner, who called for U.S. noninterference in exile activity.
63. 20 Nov 80 (MH) "Reagan aides hired gambler's [M. McLaney's] plane"
64. Dec. '80 (CAIB) "The National Security Agency: the biggest eavesdropper of them all" [9 pp.]
- * 65. 2 Dec 80 (Nat. Examiner) "Truth about Nixon's erased Watergate tape" Using new equipment, Dick Tuck is said to have found references to "the Bay of Pigs thing" in the 18-minute erased section.
- * 66. 3 Dec 80 (AP in SJM) "Brazen burglar [of Marcello's office in August 1977] 'signed' his work" by leaving a card; stolen log books found their way to a U.S. attorney's office, but the government doesn't know who the burglar was.
- * 67. 6 Dec 80 (Neier, Nation) "Rightist parajournalism: The I.P.S. and its enemies" [4 pp.] A good critique of "The Spike."
68. 14 Dec 80 (Lardner, WP) "Sen. Bayh urges keeping intelligence agency curbs"
69. 14 Dec 80 (WP) Review, "Soda pops that shook the world" (Sympathetic)
- * 70. 15 Dec 80 (McCombs, WP) "CIA 'traitor' - former spy Victor Marchetti: 11 years of truth and fantasy" [2 pp.] Just about calls Marchetti an alcoholic. Relevant to the issue of the credibility of his JFK stuff.
71. 15 Dec 80 (WP) Editorial, "The FBI Defendants" (Felt and Miller have been punished enough.)
72. 16 Dec 80 (WP) (Anderson) "Mystery Kissinger-Dobrynin meeting" (Trigon)
73. 21 Dec 80 (SFC) Review, "Those meaningful colas" (Bemused)
74. 21 Dec 80 (London Sunday Times) "The Dirty Duo" (Terpil & Wilson) [3 pp.] Looks like a pretty thorough summary of the story, and the CIA links.
75. 26 Dec 80 (AP in SFC) "FBI, CIA promise to halt illegal spying in Chicago"

76. 29 Dec 80 (Inquiry) "The new inquisition" (Editorial on the revival of the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee.)
- * 77. 29 Dec 80 (Fred Landis, Inquiry) "The best-selling lies of 1980, or, how a jet-set journalist teamed up with a CIA flack to push the new Cold War" [7 pp.] On "The Spike" and related propaganda efforts. Lots of factual background on co-author Robert Moss. Again, this makes me wonder where the Angelton-Epstein effort to pin the JFK assassination on the KGB fits in the great scheme of things.
- 29 Dec 80 (Included with the above article) "Old Spies and Cold Peas," by Jeff Stein. A good report on a meeting of Phillips' AFIO.
78. 30 Dec 80 (WP) "Homosexual to keep high-security [NSA] job"
79. Jan '81 (Wash. Monthly) Reply by Colby, and rebuttal by Nocera, to #1980.604, on the French version of Colby's book.
80. 1 Jan 80 (Yoder, WS) "Richardson Preyer and the pursuit of excellence" Some kind words for the ex-Rep. from a friend.
81. 1 Jan 81 (MH) "Omega 7 time bomb [at travel agency] designed to kill, FBI says"
82. 4 Jan 81 (McColm & Maier, NYT Mag.) "Fighting Castro from Exile" [5 pp.] A rather sympathetic article on the recent activities of Omega 7 & Alpha 66.
83. 5 Jan 81 (WS) "Controversial ex-CIA aide [David Sullivan] helping [Reagan] transition team; analyst allegedly leaked SALT data"
84. 6 Jan 81 (AP in SFC) Photo of Reagan presenting a hunting rifle to Pres. Lopez Portillo of Mexico. RR/RIFLE? (A nice big gun, unlike Nancy's.)
85. 8 Jan 81 (WP) "[NSF-funded] Panel recommends security screening [by NSA] of [scientific] papers on codes"
86. 8 Jan 81 (JA in WP) "FBI nabs intruder - one of its own" An FBI black-bag man caught in the employee's credit union. What's all this, then? And whatever became of the Blahut story?
87. 9 Jan 81 (JA in WP) "Pentagon invades Buck Rogers' turf" (ESP weapons)
88. 10 Jan 81 (Lardner & DeYoung, WP) "Militant exile group [Alpha 66] claims three recent sabotage raids into Cuba" with one Cuban officer killed.
89. 12 Jan 81 (JA in WP) "CIA's recruiting methods sour many" (The Agency prefers the "Externalizer-Regulated-Adaptive personality.")



90. 12-17 Jan 81 (Item 90 is the rest of this series.) As expected, Trudeau has said all that has to be said about the Haig confirmation hearings.
- * 91. 14 Jan 81 (WP) "'Get me Carlucci' is the summons for the quintessential survivor" [2 pp.] Details Carlucci's "Foreign Service" work in Africa, notably in the Congo in 1960. This was at about the time the CIA was planning to kill Lumumba. (See the Church Committee report for details.) Does anyone know if Carlucci was witting?
92. 15 Jan 81 (McGrory, WS) "Mr. Casey's testimony and the rise of the CIA" Suggests that the Senators were abjectly pro-CIA. "The CIA won the election, too, apparently," she says - metaphorically, of course. Certainly the former intelligence officers who learned how to manipulate foreign elections would never try the same sort of thing here, right?
- ** 93. 19 Jan 81 (Spotlight) "Reds, sympathizers unsettled by successful anti-Castro group [Junta of Patriotic Cubans]" [4 pp.] Alpha 66 is one of the major component groups. The "undisputed leader and president" of

the JPC is our old friend Tony ["Mr. Y"] Varona, here described as a "victim of the treacherous Kennedy White House and the factions within the CIA." Castro has allegedly sent assassins to the US to kill JPC leaders, who threaten to kill Raul Castro in retaliation - but not Fidel; they expect his "communist brothers" to kill him after he has outlived his usefulness. Very heavy stuff!!

94. 22 Jan 81 (AP in SFC) Cyril Wecht for the defense: "Pathologist grilled in diet doctor murder trial" [What an unappetizing diet - grilled pathologist! What's next, forensic cannibalistics?]
95. 29 Jan 81 (G. Will, WP) "The youngest old-timer in politics" (On EMK) "He is just 48, but has lived longer than any of his three brothers did."
96. Feb 81 (Discover) [2 pp.] Uncritically favorable review of Lattimer's book.
97. 2 Feb 81 (AP in SFC) "3 hostages were CIA, [Time & Observer] reports say"

Organized crime & disorganized corruption:

- * 98. 30 Oct 80 (Salcraig, DMN) "Quality, quantity of Dallas Mafia ties largely unknown" (Comments by Fratianno, Demaris, and government sources.)
- * 99. 17 Nov 80 (Deener, DMN) "Mafia's hand seen in Texas; 4 families linked to gambling, porno activities" [2 pp.] Comments by Aaron Kohn et al.
100. Dec. '80 "Organized Crime Digest" [10 pp.] Fairly interesting articles on RICO and crime in Houston, but not the sort of thing I would pay \$75 per year for.
101. - Subscription blank for Item 100.
102. 17 Dec 80 (Cheshire, WP) "Frank Sinatra's eclectic guest list"
103. 25 Dec 80 (NYT) "Admitted Mafia killer asserts in book that Reagan aide [Presser] is tied to syndicate"
104. 31 Dec 80 (Wills) "Questions about the Mafia" (and Sinatra)
105. 5 Jan 81 (Safire, WS) "Reagan's Justice designee should shun Sinatra song"
106. 7 Jan 81 (WS) "Denial from [Desi] Arnaz" that he was marked for a hit
107. 8 Jan 81 (WP) "Attorney General-designate rips 'scurrilous' news stories" [2 pp.]
108. 9 Jan 81 (Safire, WS) "French Smith: cheese puffs and pique"
109. 13 Jan 81 (JA, WP) "Civiletti and the Vesco probe"
110. 13 Jan 81 (WP) "Donovan firm bought peace with Teamsters" [2 pp.]
111. Relevant testimony [6 pp.] on Harry Gross, Donovan's ghost employee, from 1958 Kennedy hearings (with testimony by Sheridan).
- * 112. 14 Jan 81 (Bay Guardian) "Tales of Joe Alioto revisited: Fratianno book contradicts former mayor's courtroom testimony"
113. 14 Jan 81 Justice Dept. report, "Unauthorized disclosures regarding ABSCAM, PENDORF, and BRILAB" [i+21 pp.] Quite readable, for an official report.
114. 28 Jan 81 (Lardner, WP) "Nominee for Labor Dept. [Donovan] calls his chief accuser 'murdering slime'" [2 pp.]
- * 115. 23 Jan 81 (AP in CT) "Mafioso ouster OK'd" (A federal appeals court in N.O. upheld a Marcello deportation order. Few details in this item.)
116. 25 Jan 81 (George Higgins, CT) "Jimmy the Weasel's confession: too gaudy to be true" (I'm inclined to feel that Demaris is obligated to be very critical of a source like Fratianno.)
117. 25 Jan 81 (CT) "Exclusive photo! Chicago mob chiefs" (Accardo et al.) "Mob's gathering in cafe [in 1978] gives insight into hierarchy" [3 pp.]

[Thanks to Ewing (#34, 63, 68-72, 78, 80, 83, 85-89, 91-92, 95, 100-2, 104-111, 113-4), Ferrell (2, 45), Harris (2, 38, 41, 45, 99), Marshall (60, 62-3, 81, 103), Meek (11, 26-7, 115-7), Owens (82), Ranftel (6-7, 39), Rubinstein (3-4, 19, 22-5, 28-9, 32-3, 35, 40, 44, 59, 61, 64-6, 79, 93, 98-9), Shaw (2, 13-4, 16, 38, 45), Summers (74), Weisberg (30), and Wrone (21). Keep the goodies coming!]

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New in paperback: Powers on Helms, Liddy on Liddy, and (I am told) Kantor on Ruby.

More on "Best Evidence":

- *** 118. 25 Jan 81 (UPI in the LA News and the Ventura Star) Longer versions of #12, the Rebutisch story. He specifies that at around 4:30, a chief petty officer told him and several others to go to the back of the hospital and await the body. "The chief said we got all the ... ghouls and reporters and the TV and everybody at the front of the hospital. He said there would be an empty casket in the ambulance. He said the president's body would really come in the back. This made sense to me. I felt there was nothing wrong with this. I just bought it, as did the rest of us."
119. 25 Jan 81 (LAT Book Notes) Photo, short profile of Lifton and description of the book. (By Dick Lochte)
- * 120. 26 Jan 81 (LA Herald-Examiner) A fairly long descriptive article by Mitchell Fink, "A hard look at the JFK autopsy"
121. 8 Feb 81 (LAT Book Review) A marginally coherent review by John Atchity, a literature professor. "If ... Lifton's blood-stirring research ... proves anything to me, it's the wisdom of Aristotle's remark about poetry being 'more scientific or philosophical' than history." (This is presumably not a reference to Aristotle Onassis. I expect Dr. Kostman and Dr. Thompson could explain it to me.) "[Lifton] has amassed a mind-rattling arsenal of loose ends.... But I still wonder what difference it all makes.... These are the hair-raising emotions of myth, and Lifton's book has that spellbinding effect even on the skeptical reader.... I vividly recall my own confusion [on 11/22].... This was a political-religious event. Someone in Dallas that afternoon may have made a covert decision that the police aspects were insignificant compared to the national - and international - momentousness of the President's murder. A decision may have been made to simplify the record for the sake of the community...."
- *** 122. 9 Feb 81 (Time) Three letters: Dr. Lattimer says that Dr. Jenkins did observe the hole in the back of the neck in Dallas. (What?? Source??) Dr. Spitz says that the forensic pathologists say the shots hit from the rear, and someone notes that Manchester says the casket was damaged in Dallas (as if Manchester were a good source).
123. 10 Feb 81 (Globe) "JFK Bodysnatch Plot Revealed - as Another Victim [Marguerite Oswald] Dies" (By Craig Peterson) A summary with no big words. Gary Shaw calls Lifton's evidence "another damaging blow" to the official version.
124. 10 Feb 81 (Globe) The accompanying story: "The secret Oswald's mother took to her grave" ("I know who did it and he knows I know ... mercy killing.")

Promotional material:

125. Book-of-the-Month Club pamphlet (3 pp.); it's a featured alternate.
- * 126. 25 Jan 81 (NYT Book Review) Full-page ad (2 pp.), "The coffin was empty."
127. 25 Jan 81 (LAT Book Review) The same copy, in a Waldenbooks ad.
128. 25 Jan 81 (NYT Book Review) Book-of-the-Month Club ad (3 pp.), offering 4 books for \$1. Sagan's "Cosmos" and "Best Evidence" are more prominently displayed than the other 54 books.
129. 2 Feb 81 (SFC) Fairly large, cautiously worded Macy's ad.

[Thanks to Lambert (#118-20, 127) and Ranftel (125-6, 128). Will someone send me the (reportedly favorable) Washington Star review, please?]

Enough of what the press says; what do the experts (i.e., us) think? I would like to circulate your observations. Please let me know if you have a paragraph or two for the newsletter, or a longer critique which I could summarize and send to anyone who asks for it. (If you have already written me, please tell me if it is okay to use your comments; otherwise I will assume that they were private.)

I have already had interesting conversations with several of you, often focusing on what we are not persuaded by in David's analysis. There seems to be a consensus, for example, that one can not implicate the Secret Service in a pre-assassination plot solely on the basis of the evidence presented in this book. (Still, the HSC's analysis of the reaction of the SS agents in the motor-case is not persuasive, as Pat Lambert has noted. [Newsletter of 8 Sep 79.]) The possibility has been raised that a conspiracy killed Kennedy and made the evidence point towards Oswald and beyond him, and that a basically distinct post-assassination effort was made to control the medical evidence, and to head off allegations of a major conspiracy. Such a possibility is not really dealt with in the book.

In the absence of a detailed explanation of Connally's wounds, it is certainly hard to believe that Kennedy was hit only from the front. While the "trajectory reversal" construct is certainly a useful way for David to describe his approach to the evidence in 1966, it is not essential to the hypothesis of deception by surgery. Specifically, if Kennedy was hit from both directions, there may have been surgery to remove evidence of a frontal head hit. Furthermore, if there was no hit from the front, that does not preclude surgery to see if there had been one.

The peculiar CIA-NPIC documents notwithstanding, David's suggestion that the Zapruder film has been doctored looks like a major weak point in his case for no hits from the rear. I feel that a professional examination of the film is called for. After all, the HSC put lots of effort into checking the authenticity of the autopsy photos and X-rays, and even checked out the idea that the body was not JFK. NPIC told the Rockefeller Commission that it had nothing more on the Zapruder film; a thorough re-check seems appropriate.

By pursuing the logical implications of his evidence so vigorously, David has given us much to debate. I don't know of any other theory which would survive unscathed if its proponents were to put that much effort into spelling out the implications. For example, I think it is really hard to fit Oswald into an organized-crime scenario, Dutz Murret notwithstanding. (Maybe the Blakey-Billings book will change my mind.) Also, as you know, I think that Fonzi's inferences about Blakey and Phillips go far beyond what the evidence supports. I hope, therefore, that we can put much of our effort into identifying and pursuing those parts of Lifton's analysis with which we do agree.

I expect that the reaction of the general public and the press will focus on the most solid parts of Lifton's analysis, as much of the publicity material has done (e.g., #126). At the urging of some of Fonzi's friends, I did try to accentuate the positive when reacting to his article; I would like to do the same with "Best Evidence" - focus on the areas of undoubted significance. For me, the bottom line is that much of David's analysis is indeed persuasive.

For starters, the claim that the body did not make an uninterrupted journey to Bethesda in the ceremonial casket is supported by remarkably strong evidence. The credibility of the witnesses is enhanced by the fact that they generally did not consider what they saw sinister. They are not telling us another story of Oswald meeting with Jack Ruby and Allen Dulles, or with David Ferrie "if not Clay Shaw." Certainly their recollections may be faulty in some details. But I don't see how anyone who is willing to even consider taking the Clinton witnesses seriously can simply dismiss these new witnesses. I am impressed by the demeanor of those filmed by David, and by the fact that three new witnesses to the entry of the shipping casket have emerged since the Time article. It is quite likely that people in Washington have heard an "innocent" explanation for the handling of the body. It seems incumbent upon those who insist that nothing sinister happened to bring this explanation out in the open, so that it can be tested. And, of course, a search for Walter Reed witnesses is called for.

At a slightly lower level of certainty, I am very impressed by the evidence of a perception of surgery at the Bethesda autopsy. David tells me that one of the FBI agents recently told a reporter that he wrote down "surgery" because a doctor said it; there is not much doubt that some doctor did. The evidence that

Sibert and O'Neill thought something strange was going on - based on a close reading of their reports - is persuasive. I expect that there is relevant further information in the FBI's files (if not in the minds of the agents) - a reason for their visit to Washington to interview Behn; perhaps a lead sheet indicating why they asked a question which elicited information about Air Force Two passing Air Force One in flight; a paper trail indicating why the Sibert-O'Neill report reached the Warren Commission only buried in a Dallas CD. A thorough search of files in Baltimore, Dallas, WFO, and HQ (including the personnel files of Sibert and O'Neill) might be required; relevant material might not be obvious. Certainly the Bureau should be asked to do this, and to release all relevant records.

Moving along David's analytical path, I consider the first area of major substantive uncertainty to be the question of whether there was surgery in fact, not just in the perception of some nominally competent observer. On the one hand, one cannot conclude, on the basis of the available evidence, that all the Dallas-Bethesda differences are due to surgery. On the other hand, the evidence does not justify dismissing all the differences as observational error. Whatever all the forensic pathologists in the world may say will not change my gut feeling that there is certainly something funny in the medical area. (I think that most of you believe that more strongly than I do.) When Humes insisted to the HSC that the entrance wound in the head was in the wrong place, it was possible - barely - for some people to dismiss him as a fallible and quirky doctor who did not want to admit an error. In the context of David's work, I don't think that kind of dismissal is acceptable.

I don't want to get into the details of the evidence here; I would rather focus on the fact that more evidence will ultimately be required before we can all make a decision on the surgery issue, and that quite a bit of unpublished evidence already exists. I don't see how whoever controls the records of the House Committee could now justify the continued withholding of anything in the medical area. All the deliberations of the forensic pathology panel should be released, as well as the testimony of all the doctors (especially Burkley, and Finck - including the session which he later feared may have been misunderstood [7 HSC 77; Lifton, p. 529]), Finck's 1965 letter to Blumberg, the fourth Dox drawing (showing the head wound), the affidavits of the FBI and SS agents, and much more. (As indicated on page 1, I would not be surprised if full disclosure were to reveal that the pathology panel did not explicitly run the surgery hypothesis past all the doctors.) Anyone who agrees that this material has to be released should write his favorite Congressman.

The duty of all us critics is to make criticism (as Ché would have said), so I don't think we should hesitate to look for holes in David's arguments. On the other hand, most of us believe that Kennedy was killed as the result of a conspiracy. The kind of evidence we are persuaded by varies widely among us - the acoustics, Ruby, the Warren Commission, Oswald's background, the CIA-Mafia plots against Castro, the magic bullet, and more. Can anyone who is sure that there was a conspiracy also be sure that the events at Bethesda had no relevance? Even if I were convinced, for example, that it is a historical truth that the Mafia was behind the plot, I would not be able to stop worrying about the medical evidence while the questions Lifton raises remain unanswered.

FOIA news: The flow of information on the JFK case from the CIA has slowed dramatically since they got Bud out of court (the last big release was in 1977, and the oft-promised last batch is still being worked on), but it hasn't stopped completely: Mark Allen reports that the Agency has released one more word in the text of CD 347. The word is "City," in the phrase "Mexico City station." You thought maybe it was in Acapulco? Mark is still actively pursuing his suit for the rest of CD 347, and I will pass on any additional words which he gets. He has also sent me some information about the Rockefeller Commission files at the Archives, and three CD's released by the FBI but still unavailable at the Archives (CD 910, 1098, and 1353; details in the next newsletter).