

\* Prof. Blakey on access to HSCA files:

I talked with Robert Blakey early in August, mainly about the proposed House resolution to process HSCA files for release under the guidelines used for the Warren Commission files. (See 4 EOC 5 and 5 EOC 2.) Other things we discussed, including the state of the acoustical evidence and Lifton's hypothesis, will be reported in a later issue.

Blakey told me that he could not support House Resolution 160 as it stands, because he thinks it could not be implemented. He doesn't know how it might be modified to meet his objections. He said that former HSCA Chairman Stokes had written a letter (presumably to the Administration Committee) expressing his strong opposition. (Mark Allen and Kevin Walsh of ACCESS reported previously that Rep. Stokes had taken a more neutral position: that he had to follow the advice of counsel on the traditional 50-year withholding period, but that the effort to suspend that embargo should be allowed consideration by the resolution process.)

Blakey said that implementation of the exemptions from release, as specified in the guidelines and the resolution, would be "a major research task," if not impossible. He sees problems with several categories of information which should be protected. Specifically, material which is classified, which comes from informants, or which was provided under a promise of confidentiality is not always identifiable as such. The last two categories are more of a problem on the King side of the investigation than on the Kennedy side; the King investigation was, implicitly, an active one.

Although there is a "fairly complete and detailed" name index, the files are not sourced. "You would not be able to know, for example, whether a particular statement given by a particular individual had been given under promise of confidentiality, because the document itself would not contain that promise." It would not be impossible, of course, to check every reference to a person found in the name index to see if an immunized or informant source was involved. Blakey can't say for sure that all classified or classified-derived material is thus keyed in the files. "It would almost be that both the Agency and the FBI would have to review our files [for such material] before they're released." In connection with promises of confidentiality, there is the additional complication that some such promises, made by the staff, the Committee, or even by Blakey himself, might not necessarily have been properly and completely recorded.

In addition, Blakey noted, there are privacy considerations. They apply to private individuals who were the subject of "wild accusations," many of which "evaporated when people were interrogated under oath." They also apply to the HSCA's personnel files, especially of people who were asked to resign. The reasons for the resignations certainly are relevant to an assessment of the HSCA's performance, but there are "intense privacy interests" on the part of the people involved.

Blakey conceded that none of these considerations apply to some of the Committee's documents. I mentioned, for example, the affidavits from the two FBI agents who attended the autopsy (from which only one sentence was published), and the documents relating to the deletion of the Hosty entry from the FBI's listing of Oswald's notebook (where the HSCA's work was, I suspect, based on information I brought to their attention). The only consolation Blakey offered me is that some of this material which would not be exempt under H. Res. 160 might already be obtainable under the FOIA. He acknowledged that, if the staff had had more time, a lot of additional material would have been processed and published. If Lifton's book had already been published, for example, the release of relevant material would probably have been given a higher priority, Blakey suggested.

On the whole, Blakey seemed satisfied with what the Committee did in terms of

public disclosure. He said that if they had not operated under the assumption of a 50-year withholding procedure, they probably would have had to put much additional effort into organizing and indexing the files in terms of criteria for withholding. Instead, they spent "a good deal of time, with the Agency and with the FBI, in arguing for declassification, and ... an enormous amount of material was, because we put pressure on them, declassified ... and published."

Blakey noted that the HSCA held public hearings, unlike previous investigations of the JFK case. "There is a sense in which I see no reason to treat our Committee different than any of the other committees," including the Church, Kefauver, and McClellan Committees. "Of course history should judge what we do; but in the normal course of events, when it doesn't touch so much on [innocent] individuals." In addition to this question of timing, "do I see any profit in opening our files? ... Sure, but not a lot; certainly not worth the money it would take to do it." Much of what is left is "inconsequential." There are no hidden revelations in the files, Blakey assured me. The risks from releasing material which should not be released are "potentially high," and "the gain would be marginal, marginal to nothing."

I don't think there is much danger of wholesale disclosure of records which should be withheld, even if H. Res. 160 passes in its present form. Forty-five more years of total withholding of the unpublished files is not without risks either. Of course, the evaluation of the relative gains and risks depends on where you sit, and, I suppose, on how confident you are that the organized-crime evidence sits at the heart of the story. It is not a denial of the real achievements of the HSCA for the critics to emphasize that further analysis and evaluation of its evidence is called for. In a future issue of EOC, I'll report on any response ACCESS makes to Blakey's comments.

The twentieth anniversary (major articles):

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198. October 1983 (Harper's) "The Life of Kennedy's Death," by Christopher Lasch [8 pp.] A provocative article, worth quoting at length. "For a large and influential class of intellectuals, publicists, and administrators, the closely linked mysteries of Kennedy's death and his 'unfulfilled' presidency supported each other and served the same purpose. They helped ... sustain the country's illusions about itself, which had been vested to a remarkable degree in the person of the murdered president.... [L]iberals glorified Kennedy in retrospect as a modern King Arthur, done in by the passions and resentments of lesser mortals. The social mythology of the assassination made Kennedy's death a tragic but entirely fitting end to a life that elevated him above ordinary men.... The origins of the official interpretation of the assassination lay ... in the intellectual climate of the late 1950s. [Even before the 1960 election,] the academic establishment, journalists, and opinion makers [e.g., Schlesinger and Mailer] had decreed that the country needed a hero.... McCarthyism had left liberals with an acute fear of the 'anti-intellectualism' allegedly rampant among the American people.... It was not surprising that Hofstadter's work [on the 'paranoid style'] ... was later cited so often by defenders of the Warren Report, in an attempt both to characterize the 'climate of hate' that led to the murder of President Kennedy and to disparage the people's belief in conspiratorial explanations of how it happened.... A hero defined so largely by his style required an appropriate antithesis, and Kennedy's eulogists found one made to order in the person of Lee Harvey Oswald... [So, in much of the media, the debate was not on whether Oswald did it alone] - a question left for the most part, in the Sixties, to 'cranks' and 'conspiracy-mongers' - but on the seemingly much larger, momentous question of what his action revealed about the national psyche."

However, says Lasch, "What we now know about the assassination suggests that Kennedy was the victim of bungling interventionism - in this case the misguided attempts to get rid of Castro - encouraged by the dream of imperial greatness and unlimited power. John F. Kennedy was killed, in all likelihood, not by a sick

society or by some supposedly archetypal, resentful common man but by a political conspiracy his own actions may have helped set in motion. The mythology of his death can no longer prop up the mythology of his life."

This article will not please the most pro-JFK of the buffs, one of whom has suggested that it fits into a body of writing (from Victor Lasky to Thomas Powers) which allegedly argues that JFK was more Lancelot than King Arthur, and somehow deserved his fate. The alleged implication that we therefore should not be interested in who killed JFK has escaped me. Lasch's bottom line does not hold up as stated if JFK was killed by the Mafia acting alone, but his analysis of the tenacity of the lone-nut thesis remains impressive (even if there really was a lone nut).

I think the political and psychological assessment of the anti-conspiracy phenomenon does apply to the consciousness of the national media and establishment, more effectively than a conspiratorial interpretation. Of course, Lasch's analysis doesn't explain the focus on Oswald in Dallas in the first hours and days, and it doesn't touch on the elements of the environment of covert politics which helped make a lone nut the least distressing answer for the federal government.

Anyhow, it's nice to have this analysis as people continue to question the motives of the buffs, and to dissect our alleged psychological inability to believe that a lone nut had such an impact. I think such analysis works better when it is turned around as Lasch has done than when it is applied to us, but of course I am biased.

Much of Lasch's argument does not depend crucially on his selection and interpretation of the assassination evidence. He pays quite a bit of attention to the 1969 report of the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, which I have never recognized as a serious element in the debate over the assassination. Lasch's three paragraphs on the state of the evidence in the actual shooting are at best vulnerable and at worst quite awful. Lasch, a history professor at the University of Rochester, singles out the recent book by Michael Kurtz, a history professor at Southeastern Louisiana University, for praise as "sober and dispassionate." I haven't compared the details, but my impression is that Lasch's main source on the factual controversy may be Kurtz's dated and seriously inadequate book. Lasch has heard of the DPD tape but not of the Barber rebuttal. Like Kurtz, he is still talking about the timing of the shots without taking sufficient note of the HSCA's work, and about how, allegedly, nobody can explain how Oswald's rifle could have inflicted head wounds "which seem to have been caused by exploding bullets fired from a different type of gun."

\*\* 199. November (Texas Monthly) "Still on the Case" [20 pp., including photos] Author Ron Rosenbaum says that "I rather fancy myself El Exigente of conspiracy-theory culture, like the 'Demanding One' in the [Savarin] TV coffee commercial." Rosenbaum starts his guided tour of our subculture "with the vague feeling that the mob-hit theorists probably have come closest to the truth of the case," and ends up "feeling that they have failed to nail it down." El Exigente is rescued from the depths of Kierkegaardian weariness by his old Haverford College philosophy professor, Tink Thompson, who knows "an epistemological conundrum" when he sees one. Thompson dissuades Rosenbaum from yielding to the temptation to accept the Warren Report, so he concludes that "the case is still not closed."

That part is fine. There is a decent summary of the case against the mob, and a lot of other theories are tossed in and kicked around, sometimes quite adequately. By and large, however, El Exigente has not concentrated on picking out and evaluating the most plausible of them. A sidebar gives a few sentences to each of a dozen "surviving" theories (of which only the "JFK is still alive theory" is not to be taken at all seriously). The net effect of such a listing is to suggest not only that "they can't all be right," as the headline says, but that the theories have lives of their own, independent of the evidence.

The overall focus of the article, in fact, is on the theories as they emanate from the buffs, not on what actually happened in 1963. The writing is clever, and Rosenbaum's observations are often perceptive, but ultimately the article is disappointing. Rosenbaum is knowledgeable about the case and about intelligence matters, and I had hoped that he would talk to many non-buff sources and actually advance the state of the art.

Not only did Rosenbaum choose to write about the buffs, but he chose to portray most of us in a rather unflattering way. It is true that many of his negative points about buffdom are accurate, and he includes some self-deprecating comments, in the best tradition of new journalism. But this sort of thing leads to the kind of disparaging summaries which appear on the cover, in the table of contents, and in the magazine's introductory remarks. For example, "Assassination buffs come in all shapes and convictions ... but they are all obsessed with Lee Harvey Oswald and his crime is the focus of their lives." Rosenbaum doesn't say that; his bottom line (that JFK may well have been killed by the mob) gets lost very easily.

Some omissions are certainly irritating. For example, Rosenbaum notes (accurately enough) that "the buff grapevine had been buzzing furiously for days before my departure for Dallas.... My past writings on the subject extricated from files, summoned up on computer screens, and scrutinized suspiciously. Indeed, angrily in some cases.... [In an irate call, Lifton] accused me of plotting to trash his cherished trajectory-reversal theory." I suppose the "computer screens" are metaphorical, thrown in for flavor. (Unless one of you has a data base I don't know about.) But should not the reader perhaps have been given, instead, a few words from Rosenbaum's recent Watergate article, which referred to "the aura of bad taste and futility that is associated with [the assassination buffs'] efforts," and "the taint of ghoulishness that has continued to plague grassy knoll theories, the most recent excrescence of which (David Lifton's Best Evidence) insists on conjuring up a gruesome postmortem surgical alteration ... to fit a favored bullet trajectory theory." (#1982.154)

So, was this supposed to be a hatchet job? That wasn't Rosenbaum's original intent; he told me so himself. Let's just say it's somewhere between candid and catty. But there is a point where this article crosses the line into some potentially serious nastiness: the alleged similarities between assassination buffs and assassins. It strikes El Exigente that "a good description of the mind of the assassination buff as well as of the assassin" is that, given the wrong start, everything that happens is proof of a conspiracy against you. "Look at O. as a pre-assassination assassination buff. Not a lone nut but a lone mastermind, deploying identities the way Penn Jones deploys gunmen." This insight appealed to the author of the introduction to Rosenbaum's article, who reworked it to apply to all the buffs: "Their deep obsessions, their conspiratorial cast, their sightings of ghosts in the alleys of New Orleans and Dallas, make their lives similar in many ways to that of their most elusive prey - Oswald himself."

This analogy is made in its most startling, albeit subtle, form through a photo of Gary Mack. Gary is holding a blowup of the possible grassy knoll gunman, and wearing earphones around his neck; he is standing in front of the famous photo of Oswald, holding his Communist newspapers (his source of facts?) while wearing and carrying his weapons (the tools of his trade?).

Let's not forget that there is at least one distinction between us and the assassins: as far as I know, none of the assassination researchers Rosenbaum talked about has actually taken a shot at any President. But if there is any validity to Rosenbaum's comparison, it is just as true that the mind of the assassination buff is much like the mind of Ron Rosenbaum, who admits to being a "buff buff." There is a difference: if we all do our work well, we learn something about a major historical event, while Rosenbaum just learns about us.

Perhaps he prefers that, since he seems taken by the notion that assassination buffs are dealing with "dangerous knowledge." He means, in part, "knowledge

maddeningly dangerous for its unknowability," the sort of thing that makes people loony. But he also seems to have in mind the chance that we will learn something that exposes us to danger from the conspirators. Rosenbaum was scared by Mark Lane's speech in 1964, when he was 17, and he has my sympathy - but that's not really a good enough reason for a skillful reporter to divert so much of his energy from the difficult facts of the case, in favor of understanding the buffs.

Rosenbaum's favorite explanation of Oswald's mind is the "psychedelic Oswald" theory. This comes from the Rolling Stone article on LHO and LSD, supplemented by a quote from Huxley on the schizophrenia-like effects of mescaline. My local expert says that LSD can induce schizophrenia and paranoia in some people, but that, as Huxley noted, it generally makes you more like what you are when you're not on LSD. I don't think Rosenbaum's analysis correlates very well with the facts. (There are many facts to be considered, remember?) The Oswald on the radio in New Orleans doesn't sound delusional to me. I can't think of anyone who dealt with Oswald in the months before his death who acted, at the time, as if Oswald were a paranoid schizophrenic.

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200. October (Third Coast [Austin]) "The Persistence of Memory," by associate editor Ernest Sharpe, Jr. [14 pp.] Quite impressive - a sympathetic portrayal of Penn Jones and his quest which does not make either the author or the other buffs look like fools. This article is impressionistic and perceptive, like Rosenbaum's, but the tone is different - just plain nicer, I guess.

There is much background on Penn's pre-assassination politics, his career with the Midlothian paper, and his personal life. Sharpe covers the mysterious deaths (of course), the Dan Rather film, and Penn's discovery by Ramparts. He also discusses or quotes Robert Blakey, Steve Barber, David Lifton, Josiah Thompson, Hugh Aynesworth, and Gary Shaw. "To Shaw, the solution to the murder of John Kennedy is ultimately linked with the country's spiritual redemption. Like Penn Jones, he makes himself an easy target for a glib aside, but it is almost inevitable that the enigma of November 22 would take on a metaphysical cast."

"Maybe I shouldn't admit it, but I think I'm the source of some of these quotes: "[Penn] is less a journalist than a journalist-provocateur.... This approach seems to put off some of his fellow critics, who concentrate their praise on Penn's personal qualities ('scrappy,' 'a straight-shooter,' 'brave as hell') and gloss over his contributions to the cause. ('Uh, one of the first. Definitely one of the first.')

Sharpe includes a generally valid status report on the non-Jonesian case for a conspiracy. I disagree with the suggestion that the public attention given to Penn necessarily made the going easier for us "trudgers," but I'm pleased that Sharpe developed a pretty good feel for the dynamics of the critical community and for the underlying implausibility of the Warren Report's case against Oswald. What is ultimately interesting about the buffs is not our peculiarities but the historical effect, or lack of effect, of the assassination controversy. "Most people who leave Dealey Plaza will never come back. Penn Jones has never left. Books on recent American history generally dwell on the assassination as briefly as possible. Unable to draw a moral or political lesson from Dealey Plaza, historians note it and move on to the Vietnam War, which provides an abundance of both. Dealey Plaza is a shoal in the river of events, not part of it. History has passed it by. And those who stop here run the risk of being marooned."

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201. November (Playboy) "My Dinners with Andrey: A True Story of the Cold War," by Carl Oglesby [13 pp; accompanying drawing: 2 pp., #201B] Early in 1978, during the HSCA investigation, Oglesby was approached for information on Nosenko by Andrey Suvorov. Carl was a co-director of the Assassination Information Bureau, and Suvorov was a humble third secretary at the Soviet Embassy - and, presumably, a KGB agent. After a couple of dinner meetings, Carl

went to the FBI, which asked him to maintain the contact. Nothing very big or very sinister appears to have developed from these meetings.

This memoir is a fascinating account of Carl's contacts with both sides - full of tension, little confrontations, and espionage tradecraft (sometimes mysteriously ignored). The setting is the great mole hunt, of which Nosenko's story of KGB disinterest in Oswald is just a part. A ripping yarn, well worth reading.

Playboy's summary suggests that there was "a startling conclusion," and that "U.S. intelligence paid the steepest tab." I don't quite understand that, or Carl's concluding remarks: "My little improvised gesture of patriotism, by sheerest coincidence, might thus have had a small, practical effect on the much larger story of the search for the putative mole... - if the FBI had been able to take seriously a word I said. That it could not is, to me, a great, rich, irony - the irony that the Cold War has come to be about." Earlier, Carl noted the significance of the Nosenko issue, and observed that "at first, neither Andy [Suvorov] nor Stass [Jim Stassinis, an agent in FBI Counterintelligence] would listen to me when I blathered about it. Why not? Because both accepted the shared consensus of their institutions that the Kennedy assassination, politically speaking, was insignificant. They both believed that addicts of Dallas conspiracy theories were mere eccentrics." (Could it be that they just understood how to keep Carl interested in them?) As one would expect from any such safari into the "wilderness of mirrors," it is unclear how accurately what one sees reflects the big picture.

So what's all this, then? An AIB honcho playing footsie with the FBI!? Carl's memoir goes into some of the doubts he and Jeff Goldberg shared about what to do. But there are subtleties which would be over the head of the kind of man who reads Playboy, and they are not explored in this article. Perhaps the game was no more complicated than it seemed on the surface: the KGB wanted to know what the U.S. government knew about Nosenko or the JFK assassination, and thought the AIB could help; the FBI just wanted to keep an eye on the KGB's man. But there is another possible target: the HSCA.

First, Carl fed Andrey some already released government documents on Nosenko from the AIB files - no big deal, anybody could get released documents. Ultimately, when Andrey wanted more, the FBI gave Carl some documents which, apparently, had not been released. When Carl passed them on, he said they had come from his HSCA sources. What if the whole game had been exposed at this point by the FBI? (This might have happened whether or not Andrey was playing both sides, which is something to think about.) Then the HSCA would apparently have been caught passing classified documents to the AIB, which was giving them to the KGB. Heap bad publicity for AIB and HSCA (as LeCarre's Jerry Westerby would say). The fact that Oglesby actually got the documents from the FBI wouldn't help that much, if it came out that some HSCA staffers were talking too much to the critics. Remember that the HSCA had survived only by a narrow margin, and some of the intelligence agencies probably didn't consider it friendly.

Much of the relevant HSCA chronology is not in this memoir, even though some of it makes Carl look better. The last time Stass called Carl was July 18, 1979 - which just happens to be the day after the HSCA report was released to the press. Later, Carl called to tell the FBI that he had just heard from an HSCA source that "Nosenko had given way and was now admitting that he was a mole, that he had been lying for all these years about the KGB and Oswald. The KGB had talked extensively with Oswald." Carl says he told Stass, "I thought you should be among the first to know this." "Stass seemed bored but thanked me." Here's Carl apparently giving away, unsolicited, a real HSCA secret. But it's not quite what it seems to be. First, it was at best a garbled version; the closest I've heard is that Nosenko did break down emotionally and said, in effect, if you want to believe that I'm a plant, go ahead and believe it. (I haven't found confirmation for this.) Second, it probably wasn't a secret to the FBI. Carl's call was in

early August; the HSCA's Nosenko volume was made public by July 20, 1979, after being cleared by the FBI and CIA. It's safe to assume that the FBI knew even more about the HSCA's Nosenko investigation than Oglesby did.

Based on what I know so far, it's possible that the game was really about the HSCA or even Oglesby himself, not Nosenko. I don't know what this all adds up to, and it may not matter very much, but I'm curious; I'm interested in your comments, as always, and will pass on any further information I get.

- \* November (Life) "Four Days that Stopped America" [Now on newsstands, \$2.50. This cover story and related material total 24 pages, with many photos; a photo-feature on JFK adds 8 pages. If you can't locate this issue, I can copy 2 pages of selected text; ask for #202. Non-U.S. readers: if you need this entire issue, or all of the November Texas Monthly, let me know promptly and I'll see what I can do.] There are bits and pieces of substantive information - e.g., on the purchase of the Z film and the sequestering of Marina. New to me: when he disarmed Oswald, Officer McDonald stuck the gun "into Oswald's stomach and almost pulled the trigger himself." The who-did-it controversy is represented by photos of Marion Johnson of the National Archives and some of his "artifacts of infamy."
- \* 203. November (Texas Monthly) "Why Do They Hate Us So Much?" [16 pp.] Lawrence Wright, formerly of Dallas, argues that it is time for the city to lay its burden down. Interesting observations on the political spectrum in Dallas and New Orleans, Oswald, Ruby, Garrison, Hinckley, the Dallas visits of LBJ and Stevenson, and the blame placed on Dallas around the world.
204. November (San Diego magazine) "The Scars of Dallas," by Louis Kartsonis [10 pp.] A summary of the controversy (mostly okay, mostly conventional) by an ophthalmologist who examined the autopsy photos in 1979. A "where were you?" sidebar contains the recollections of assorted San Diegans.
205. Material accompanying #200: drawings and photos of Penn, and musings by the editor. [6 pp.]

Forthcoming printed material:

- \* A. Jonathan Marshall has prepared a conspiracy-oriented and substantive article for the Sunday magazine of the San Jose Mercury News. He plans to give me some reprints, which I'll send at no charge (except postage) if you ask for it.
- B. In the issue available the week before the 22nd, the National Enquirer will probably cover the Souetre story, the Moorman photo, and more.
- C. "D" has an article in the current issue by Earl Golz. This is a Dallas magazine which I haven't seen yet; there will probably be a reprint in Coverups.
- D. Larry Flynt Publications is reprinting the 1978 special issue of the L.A. Free Press (worth \$1.50 for the photos alone), and plans to have the first issue of "The Rebel" out on November 22, with some JFK-case stories. The magazine has a reputable editor and plans serious investigative journalism, with no photos of women of the naked persuasion.
- E. Life (#202) says a Justice Department report is "expected at year's end." An earlier rumor suggested November 22. I have no reason to believe it will do anything other than close the case officially. (But why the delay?)
- Also rumored or possible: "Boston" and "California" magazines; AP; the DMN; "The Reader" (San Diego). The Hurt book has been delayed; watch for something from it in the Digest within months. No sequel from Lifton this year.
- Please continue to send, or tell me about, just about any article you see on the JFK case. (Extra copies usually find good homes.)

Radio and TV coverage:

- \* Recommended: "Ambiguous Legacy," which will be aired on November 22 on the Pacifica radio stations (Berkeley, NY, LA, DC, Houston) and on various NPR stations throughout November (check local listings). (I might be able to get a tape for distribution.) Co-producer Larry Schlossman knows a lot about the case and has talked with many buffs. The first three hours, already recorded,

are a documentary on the Kennedy presidency, with a brief overview of the assassination controversy. A live panel discussion on the assassination (two and a half hours) will follow. The present lineup is Jean Davison, Phil Melanson, Thomas Powers, Peter Dale Scott, and possibly another leading conspiracy buff.

The Larry Kelly Show (Manhattan Cable Channel J) will present at least 30 minutes on the JFK case at 10 p.m. on the 22nd (possibly with repeats, and possibly on cable in L.A. also). My prerecorded comments are included.

CBS radio in L.A. (KNX) has taped interviews with some interesting people; snippets will probably be used throughout the 22nd. (Please tape what you can.)

Also strong possibilities: CBS Morning News, CBS radio in New York, and the Gannett TV stations.

On November 20, NBC TV will show the first part of the Reg Gadney mini-series, plus (in the morning) a three-hour documentary. Gadney's book is out; lots of pictures for lots of money (\$16.95, Holt), and surprisingly light on facts about the assassination and Kennedy's women, despite prior accounts of the TV version.

On the 22nd: Mark Allen and Kevin Walsh on WCVT-FM in Baltimore at 8; Gary Owens and Jerry Policoff on a TV talk show in Hamilton, Ontario.

On the CBS evening news, the assassination was covered in the first of three short segments on JFK's life and legacy (November 7-9). Itek has studied the Bronson film; the apparent movement "was caused by jumping of film in the camera and not by shadowy figures behind the window panes." Prominently featured: Penn Jones in the manhole used by one of his nine gunmen, sticking his hand through the drain opening. (Dan Rather's revenge?) A fairly sympathetic final conclusion: maybe we are torturing ourselves, but "doubt ... is the shadow of truth, and ... perhaps it is more healthy for the nation to remember than to forget."

On November 11, ABC's "Nightline" devoted nearly an hour to the assassination controversy. A film report by Peter Lance ran through many of the familiar elements of the case, from the single bullet theory and the tramp photos to the plots against Castro and the acoustics. Ted Koppel's live guests were David Belin, Mark Lane, Louis Stokes, and Ron Rosenbaum. Lane and Belin were at their lawyerly worst - the Leary-Liddy show of the JFK case. Very deja vu. (Belin did get to ask Lane who shot Tippit; Lane didn't mention Ruby's mother's dental charts.) A new poll shows the majority who believe in a conspiracy at 80%. (In 1976, it was 81%.) For a transcript, send \$2 to Nightline, Box 234, Ansonia Station, New York, NY 10023.

This program was preceded by a remarkably good documentary on the Kennedy campaign and presidency, anchored by Peter Jennings. Recommended for you youngsters out there, to help explain the strong feelings (pro and con) about Kennedy, and the shock produced by the assassination. While quite critical, the program emphasized JFK's capacity for change. He eventually saw civil rights as a basic moral issue, and started to move towards a corresponding position on nuclear weapons. In the words of Anthony Lewis (SFC, 11/15; #206): "What makes the memories so hard to bear is not just the human loss. It is the realization that what Kennedy learned has been unlearned. We have a president now who shows no sensitivity to the nuclear danger, who seeks to provoke paranoia about communism - who in his third year of office has learned nothing. What is gone is the sense of possibility. In John F. Kennedy that was not myth but reality." (The visuals carried much of the effect, but you can get a transcript for \$3 from Journal Graphics, Box 770, Ansonia Station, NY NY 10023.)

Please let me know if you tape any interesting programs, but I suggest not sending me any tape unless I request it or it contains significant new evidence.

Credits: Thanks to Prof. Blakey, the authors of #199-201, G. Hollingsworth (#204), Jeff Goldberg (#207), and Gary Owens (#199, 203).



\* Ozzie Rabbit Redux:

"Oswald's Game," by Jean Davison, is now available. (343 pp., \$17.95, Norton) It might become very popular, so I guess we should all read it.

Tom Wicker likes the book, much better than he liked the HSCA report: despite the deficiencies of the Warren Report, he has always believed LHO did it alone and has never found any of the conspiracy theories persuasive; "'Oswald's Game' comes as near proving it and providing the long-sought motive as perhaps any investigation ever will." In fact, Davison deals almost entirely with motive and seems to add little or nothing of substance to the case that Oswald was the lone assassin. If you convince yourself that Oswald did it, this book does indeed probably explain why he did it.

Dan Schorr also likes the book: "a blow for sanity after two decades of self-torture over conspiracy theories." On the political aspects of Oswald's motive, Davison's position is very similar to Schorr's: Oswald was set off by Castro's September 1963 warning against U.S. leaders, which was in turn probably triggered by the U.S. plots to kill Castro. Oswald thought he was doing it for Fidel, but Castro's responsibility is only indirect and to some degree mitigated by the fact that he was a target of the Kennedy administration.

Norman Mailer, who wrote the foreword, sort of likes the book, but he still belongs to the Tony Summers school of conspiracy. Still, he "welcomes" this book, which he suggested that Davison write after she approached him with criticisms of Summers' work. Mailer can read this book "as a most legitimate attempt to perceive the terrain on that other side of the moon where people's lives are always less interesting than they ought to be, and less sinister, less manipulated."

207. 30 Oct 83 (WP) A review by George Lardner, who emphatically does not like this book. [3 pp.] "Davison tells a good story. And she aims some well-deserved arrows at the distortions of [certain] conspiracy theorists.... But she uses the straw-man technique." Lardner cites a couple of evidentiary lapses and summarizes the thesis of this "psychohistory," which is "flawed by her failure to give sufficient attention to the crime itself - as though it did not matter." (I agree - if Carolyn Arnold or James Angleton or Antonio Veciana, for example, is right, then Davison's analysis, no matter how plausible, is wrong.)

I have had time for only a quick first reading. Not many facts were new to me; as Mailer and Lardner agree, it is "the Warren Report revisited." There are also major contributions from Albert Newman and Priscilla McMillan. Davison's work is largely synthesis, with few signs of original research in the unpublished documents or through interviews. The book does not convey a feeling for the political, historical, and evidentiary context of the Warren Commission's exploration of Oswald's mind - the context which made it look to many of us in 1964 like just a diversion.

Davison's major insight is Oswald as master, not pawn, in the games he was playing. She does make a serious case that his self-image fitted him for that role. However, she doesn't seem to deal with the possibility that such a person could be manipulated anyhow, perhaps in ways he did not fully perceive. That is, she certainly has not convinced me that Oswald's personality precluded a role in a conspiracy, either as participant or patsy, with someone else as mastermind.

Castro's warning and Oswald's alleged subsequent remarks at the Cuban Embassy in Mexico City play an important role, but Davison's analysis is not particularly extensive. (For example, readers of EOC already know more about Comer Clarke and his National Enquirer article than you will find in this book. See 4 EOC 5, p. 2, and 4 EOC 3, p. 5. Any reporters or investigators who want to pursue the possibility that Clarke got his version of Castro's alleged remarks to Solo not from Fidel but from a governmental source in Latin America - please contact me; I'll try to write this up soon.) For background, refer to Chapter 8 of Schorr's book, "Clearing the Air." (For the key pages, ask for #208, 4 pp.) I can also send:

209. 31 Oct 77 [7 pp.] My response to Schorr's chapter, as originally published in the New York Review of Books. Focuses on Castro's alleged statement

in 1964 about what Oswald had said (made to Morris Childs, a.k.a. Solo, an FBI source in the Communist Party, and believed to have been passed on to the Warren Commission in CD 1359; see 4 EOC 3, pp. 5-6). I speculated about the possible interpretation of this material if there had been a conspiracy.

Please send me published reviews and your own comments on the Davison book. I'm not particularly curious about her background and other writings, but some people are, so please pass along this kind of information also.

Editorial comment:



*"Miss Egan, bring me everything we have on cats."*

This analysis of the socio-political/psychological/ecological role of research on conspiracies and parapolitics, by Charles Addams, was found in an old New Yorker by Robert Ranftel.

About EOC (for new readers): I put an issue out when I have enough to write about, and the time and inclination to write about it - currently, more or less quarterly. The typical issue contains less commentary than this one; it may have annotated lists of clippings on the JFK case, the buffs, etc.; news and gossip; and information and queries from readers. If I've never asked for money, you have a complimentary subscription; otherwise, the minimum rate is 5¢/page plus postage. For \$5 or \$10 per year, consider yourself a sustaining subscriber. As time permits, I'll copy listed items at 8¢/page (a new rate), especially for people who send me material. Back issues are now 7¢/page plus postage (specify if first class). Vol. 1-4 (1979-82) are 23, 56, 73, and 49 pp.; Vol. 5, #1-3, 28 pp.