

New allegations by Judith Campbell Exner:

JFK aide Harris Wofford called Judy Campbell's affair with JFK "the most embarrassing personal secret about John Kennedy," linked - through her relationship with Sam Giancana - to perhaps "the worst national [security] secret in the history of the U.S.," the CIA-Mafia plots against Castro. (3 EOC 4.10) The murky evidence has been further complicated by new information from Exner herself.

Kitty Kelley's authorized account of Exner's latest version got "People" magazine's full-cover treatment: "25 years later, his mistress admits [i.e., claims] she was the link between JFK and the Mob. Now gravely ill, Judith Exner lifts the lid on the Mafia's White House connection. 'I lied before to protect myself,' she says. 'If I'd told the truth, I'd have been killed.'" (#1988.1, 29 Feb 88, 9 pp. Samples of the extensive press coverage: #2, 22 Feb, AP in SFC; #3, UPI; #4, 21 Feb, Detroit News)

Exner now says that JFK asked her to arrange about ten meetings with Giancana in 1960-61, that she witnessed one of them, and that she carried sealed envelopes between JFK, Giancana, and Roselli. She says she does not know what was in the envelopes.

The first meetings may have related to the West Virginia primary - JFK allegedly told Exner that he might need Giancana's help. The claim of Mob involvement in the West Virginia primary is not new. John Davis' book said that FBI wiretaps discovered that Giancana had contributed to the campaign.

There are certainly reasons to be skeptical of Exner's account. She and Kelley split about \$100,000 from "People," although her need for money to pay for treatment of apparently terminal cancer is a factor. (#5, AP, 23 Feb) (A skeptical EOC reader wonders how much money it would take to get Exner to "admit" that she did look inside one of those envelopes.)

Liz Smith reported that "my idea of uniting [my old friend] Exner with Kelley was not such a good one. They didn't get along, they disagreed constantly, they didn't really like one another." (#6, 23 Feb 88) Perhaps the disagreements had to do with putting in the naughty bits of Exner's story (which Kelley wanted to do, according to Exner), but I wonder if Kelley (or "People") had doubts about the credibility of her new account. (As published, Kelley's article is not as critical an analysis as the subject needs.) Smith's report of problems is noteworthy, since she had previously said Exner was "an important footnote to the history of our era, and I'm glad she is going to speak freely and fully at last." (#7, 5 Feb 88)

Exner was on the Donahue show, subjected to some hostile questioning, and I found her more credible than expected. In answer to a question, she said that she did not think Oswald alone killed JFK, but that she would not speculate on who did. If she were primarily interested in profitable publicity, she could easily have given a more provocative answer.

Naturally, any major change in Exner's story itself raises suspicions. Apparently she did not tell her full story to the HSCA, when she was presumably interviewed under oath. But as early as 1983, her co-author Ovid Demaris told John Davis that she said that JFK knew she was seeing Giancana. (Kennedys, p. 743-PB) And her fear for her safety is understandable.

Sam Giancana's daughter Antoinette said Exner's story can not be true. "My father had an absolute and utter contempt for the Kennedys. Why would he want to meet with JFK in the White House or anywhere else?" (#8, SFC, 24 Feb)

The big problem with Exner's story, especially for assassination buffs, is the implausibility of JFK asking her to carry information to someone like Giancana. Exner told Kelley that in 1975 "it finally dawned on me that I was probably helping Jack orchestrate" an assassination plot against Castro. Despite the appeal of James Bond stories to JFK, it is hard to believe that information relating to any Cuban matters was exchanged in this fashion. I have not yet seen any plausible scenario.

If anyone comes up with a plausible explanation for JFK-Giancana contacts, it may well involve neither the election nor Cuba. Any such contacts would add weight to the Blakey-Billings scenario of the assassination. Further investigation is certainly appropriate.

"Contract on America," by David Scheim:

A new edition of this book is out, from Shapolsky Publishers in New York (480 pp., \$19.95). There has been a substantial promotion campaign, and the book reached the best-seller list for Doubleday Bookstores. (#1988.9, 13 May 88, Pub Wkly ad)

"Contract on America" is definitely a book every buff should have, and it can safely be the first place to check out Ruby-related allegations and Mafia names. It is in some ways a better prosecutor's brief for the Mafia-did-it case than either the Blakey-Billings book or the HSCA report.

The original (1983) edition was reviewed briefly at 5 EOC 2.7. I have not read much of the new version. There is some new material, and there are some obvious differences - e.g., no reference to the "Mafia murder" of RFK in the subtitle. Garrison is still viewed critically, but no longer as one of "Four Suspects." There are now chapters on alleged Mafia links to the Nixon and Reagan administrations.

John Davis has written a brief introduction, and there are favorable jacket comments by Aaron Kohn and Robert Blakey, among others. Liz Smith devoted a column to this "bold new book," in response to the release of the LAPD files on the RFK case. (#1988.10, NY Post, 26 Apr 88) "It is amazing that this book is not already the sensation it demands to be!"

Scheim has effectively presented material from the HSCA and WC, key works on Ruby (such as Seth Kantor's book), and the Texas AG's little-known files on the DPD investigation. He seems not to have included new FBI material, either the main Ruby file (released in 1977) or recent releases of files provided to the HSCA, forced by our Washington station's FOIA actions.

This HSCA material, available at the AARC office, is said to include many organized-crime files with little apparent relevance to the assassination. (The HSCA's side - why they requested certain FBI files, and what the staff thought of the material they did not publish - remains unavailable.) Not much systematic work has been done on these files; even a list of what has been released, with one line describing each volume, could be valuable.

A good project for someone who thinks that the Mafia was behind the assassination, but that more analysis is required, would be to run all the names in Scheim's book through the index to some of the 1977 FBI release, and to review the latest releases with his work in mind. The FBI files might have good allegations which did not reach the WC, and information rebutting some allegations cited by Scheim.

Dan Moldea wonders "how much evidence does it take before two plus two equals four? David Scheim has finally added it up and put it all together...." A reviewer in the S.F. Chronicle found his conclusion "hard to deny" and based on "a compelling assemblage of evidence." (#11, 12 May 88) Despite some temptation to become totally convinced by the Mafia-did-it hypothesis, or some other explanation, and retire from research on the case, I remain far from convinced by Scheim's book.

As far as I know, the book still does not deal systematically with some important questions. Is there a plausible scenario in which the Mafia was brought in either after November 22 (in the person of Ruby, even if there was no pre-assassination conspiracy), or in a secondary role beforehand?

The possible connections between Oswald and the Marcello organization have always seemed to get disproportionate weight, given all of Oswald's other connections. While one may posit a scenario by which Oswald became known to Marcello's people, and subject to their control, before the assassination, that is many steps from the fact that his mother knew Marcello's chauffeur.

Another perspective: perhaps the Mafia picked Oswald, as gunman or patsy, without knowing that his history in government files more or less assured the kind of coverup(s) which might allow the Mafia to escape blame. If this was not a coincidence, where is the evidence that the Mafia had inside access in this case? Oswald's past certainly requires scrutiny of hypotheses in which the Mafia was only one of the players, or even not involved in advance at all.

Much of the Ruby material comes across as "ghost stories," not as allegations requiring critical attention. I am no expert on Ruby, but the way the book handles some familiar areas strengthens my suspicion that some of the alleged Mafia ties are not as clear as the uninformed reader might think. For example, all we learn of Emile Bruneau is that he bailed Oswald out of jail, and that he was an associate of a Marcello aide. It is relevant that Oswald called Joyce Murret O'Brien for help, and that she says that a policeman told her Oswald could be released in lieu of the \$25 bond "upon the request of a politician or elected official." She called Bruneau, who arranged to have Oswald paroled to Jury Commissioner A. Heckman. [CD 6, pp. 104, 223; cf. EOC for 2 Jun 79, p. 2] Has anyone ever established that this was an uncommon procedure?

Schein does not back off from the acoustical evidence, and does not even mention the crosstalk match discovered by Steve Barber. While the Mafia hypothesis does not rest on the existence of two gunmen, treating the acoustics as still solid eliminates too many alternatives.

A one-hypothesis book which does not look at alternatives to its own hypothesis lends itself to too ready acceptance or misinterpretation.

For example, the publisher's press release (#12, 2 pp., 1 May 88) says that "Ruby was a significant Mob figure in Dallas... [with a] major role in Dallas narcotics and gambling operations and... close ties with top Mafia figures." Even though Scheim does not give much weight to the likelihood of exaggeration by some post-assassination sources, what he actually said is less sweeping. "During his years in Dallas, Ruby made contact with dozens of underworld figures in the area and across the country.... As reported by three credible witnesses and corroborated by other sources, Ruby operated his own slot machine warehouse and bookmaking establishments and was instrumental in coordinating the 'fix' with police and local authorities. It is this key niche in illicit gambling operations, in conjunction with his Mob ties, that establishes Ruby's position in the upper echelons of the Dallas Mob organization.... [As a non-member associate,] it is thus likely that despite Ruby's importance in Dallas Mob operations, he had virtually no governing power." (P. 119-120) Even if disputable - and I do not know enough about Mafia operations in a typical city to dispute them - those specific statements are much more plausible.

The brief chapter on the Warren Commission coverup focuses on possible mob subversion through Hoover, LBJ, and Walter Craig, the ABA's representative. Years later, Craig allegedly misbehaved in favor of Joe Bonanno while presiding over his trial. Scheim cites no evidence that Craig actually had any influence on the investigation of the Ruby area, and I know of nothing to contradict the impression that whatever minimal effect the ABA had was through Craig's designated representative, Lewis Powell. It is one thing to raise this hypothesis for buffs who appreciate the complexity of the Commission's failure, but for a general audience it is a very narrow focus.

My reaction to Scheim's local radio appearance was that progress in the JFK case does not now require any more prosecutor's briefs. Judging from the people who called in, and the polls, all sorts of conspiracy evidence is believed far too uncritically. Also, the Mafia should be targeted because of the clearly illegal things they certainly are doing; there is no need to bolster that case with something we can not really prove. The Justice Department should try to develop the proof, but the viciousness of the Mafia is no substitute for cautious analysis of the details of the assassination.

David Belin's book:

Random House confirmed to me in March that they are planning to publish a book by Warren Commission counsel David Belin. The publication date and price were not yet determined, but the title is "November 22, 1963." Since Belin's 1973 book had that title, with the subtitle "You Are the Jury," it seems possible that the new book will be much the same as the old one, which consisted primarily of excerpts of Warren Commission testimony.

Still, I expect that Belin will write about his work on the Rockefeller Commission and his representation of Gerald Ford, and complain about the way the HSCA treated both him and the Warren Commission case. I doubt that he can resist the temptation to gloat about the downfall of the acoustical evidence. He may, however, be able to avoid Henry Hurt's account of Tippit's private life and its possible relevance.

After all these years, someone could write a decent book discussing how certain aspects of the Warren Commission's case have gained in plausibility - no thanks to the quality of the Warren Report. But I will be surprised if Belin has written that book.

By the way, Belin's most famous client will be the subject of a conference at Hofstra in April 1989, "Restoring the Presidency." Specific topics in Ford's career to be considered include "Reforming the CIA," but not the Warren Commission. However, "papers on other topics will also be considered." (#13 is the announcement and "call for papers.")

A new book on Carlos Marcello:

Later this year, McGraw-Hill will publish "Mafia Kingfish: The Life and Crimes of Carlos Marcello," by John Davis (author of "The Kennedys"). It seems safe to assume that there will be something about the assassination.

Judge Garrison's book (and its supporters):

I have no more information on its publication. Ted Gandolfo has denounced me for, among other things, naming the Institute for Media Analysis in the last EOC as the expected co-publisher. "C.I.A.'s Disinformation Expert, Paul Hoch, Continues his Untruthful Tirade Against Judge Jim Garrison... Also Reveals Publisher for Garrison's New Book!! (Question): How Did He Know It?" [Emphasis subtracted.] Gandolfo's "considered opinion" is that "Bernard Fensterwald, another of the CIA's 'researchers,' just HAD to be the one who discovered, by CIA assignment, Garrison's publisher, and then passed this info to Hoch." Gandolfo "learned, quite recently," that the board of the IMA includes Ramsey Clark. "Two and two is always four. Therefore, it is a quite likely possibility, if not, as I believe, PROBABLY, that Clark 'leaked' the info to Fensterwald and thence, to Hoch."

Whether or not its board members all realize what their Garrison project involves, the IMA is not keeping it a secret from the public. The IMA (which Gandolfo declined to name) sent me the booklet with the information about Garrison when I wrote them in March (at 145 West Fourth St., NYC 10012). I originally got that booklet from another researcher, as noted in EOC. For the full text of Gandolfo's vigorous critique (5 pp. from the Jan.-Feb. 1988 issue of his newsletter) ask me for #14.

Jack Anderson to reveal who killed JFK:

There is one addition to the list in the last EOC of probable TV shows this November. Jack Anderson "has signed [with Saban Productions] to do four quarterly live syndicated specials over the next year... under the umbrella title of 'American Expose.'" The first, in November, will be "Who Murdered JFK?" "Each special," says a Saban veep, "plans to unveil new and exclusive information that will make news." (#15, Detroit News, 12 Apr 88)

On this case, Anderson has never seemed to be just another "investigative journalist." (See, for example, the references to him in Scott, Hoch, and

Stetler, "The Assassinations.") It has been frustrating that he has apparently been granted journalistic immunity, possibly keeping us from understanding the manipulation of the assassination controversy by his highly placed sources. His March 1967 column for Drew Pearson, about the possibility that an RFK plot against Castro backfired, looks like a major move by someone. (#16) In Vol. X, the HSCA noted - but omitted critical attention to - his columns which passed on accounts provided by Roselli.

To put it generously, some of Anderson's columns have been hyped up - particularly with references to published documents as "secret" - and far too uncritical of his sources. He has recently taken to praising his own previous work rather shamelessly. After his performance as a commentator on the LWT "trial" in 1986 (8 EOC 4.7), I am not optimistic about his forthcoming exposé.

One possibility is that Anderson will use new information from a defector from Cuban intelligence, whom he wrote about in recent columns. (#17, 3 pp., 21-23-25 Mar 88) The CIA has been keeping long-time DGI veteran Florentino Aspillaga Lombard under wraps, primarily because he "has told the CIA during intensive debriefings that nearly every spy the CIA has recruited in Cuba since the early 1960's [i.e., since the Bay of Pigs] has been a double agent, loyal to dictator Fidel Castro." AM/LASH, for example? This sort of thing fits in with Anderson's old columns, arguing (with Roselli as a named source) that Castro turned one of the CIA's teams of assassins around.

Conspiracy theories in the JFK case: B. Moyers! J. H. Christic!

As the Iran-Contra affair seems to be winding down, one of the major sources of pressure to get the real story out is the work of the Christic Institute, in particular a civil suit by two journalists injured in a bombing in Nicaragua. Apparently audiences have been particularly receptive to an analysis of the JFK assassination publicized by lawyer Daniel Sheehan.

On the positive side, Contragate (like Watergate), even with only limited exposure, has led to more openness to conspiratorial analysis in some circles where it has been lacking. For example, last November PBS broadcast a program on "The Secret Government" as part of a series on the constitution by Bill Moyers, in 1963 an aide to LBJ. "Just imagine that William Casey's dream came true. Suppose the Enterprise grew into a super-secret, self-financing, self-perpetuating organization.... Could a President control them? And what if he became the enterprise's public enemy number one?..." Moyers compared such an operation to Lenin's Cheka. "You say it can't happen here. Well, before deciding for sure, let's look at the history of our secret government." This review included the CIA-Mafia plots, and the Kennedy administration's "covert war" against Cuba. In an old interview, Richard Bissell of the CIA conceded that, in Moyers' words, "it's the involvement with the Mafia that disturbed you, and not the need - or, decision to assassinate a foreign leader."

Moyers analysis: "It's a chilling thought, made more chilling by the assassination of John Kennedy. The accusations linger. In some minds the suspicions persist of a dark, unsolved conspiracy behind his murder. You can dismiss them, as many of us do, but knowing now what our secret government planned for Castro, the possibility remains; once we decide that anything goes, anything can come home to haunt us." (A slightly longer excerpt: #18)

"The Lobster" has reprinted the relevant section of "the central document in their [Christic's] allegations," an affidavit submitted by Sheehan. (#19, 3 pp., from issue #15) Sheehan asserts that Nixon picked Robert Maheu to meet with John Roselli and Sam Giancana, representing Santos Trafficante, in 1960. This led to an agreement to supplement "Operation 40" with a "shooter team" to go after Castro and his associates. Eight members of the team are named - including Rafael Quintero, Felix Rodriguez, and Frank (Fiorini) Sturgis - along with one supervisor, E. Howard Hunt. JFK was not told about the "shooter team." "Operation 40" turned into "Operation Mongoose," under Ted Shackley and Thomas Clines, and continued working with Trafficante. In 1963,

some "Operation 40" people were caught smuggling drugs. "But the program continued - as did the operations of the 'Shooter Team.' In November of 1963, President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas. In 1965, 'Operation Mongoose, and JM/WAVE, were shut down and [Shackley and Clines] were transferred to Laos."

As Robin Ramsay and Steve Dorril pointed out, only the passing reference to the Kennedy assassination implies that this is an explanation of what led up to Dealey Plaza. I hear that Sheehan's lectures make the same point, in more or less the same way. One cannot tell from the affidavit what kind of primary sources are involved, much less if they have been evaluated critically. Ramsay (or Dorril) noted one "glaring" error of fact in this section and said that the scenario, while interesting, "is, in my view, wrong. At any rate, I have never seen anything resembling this in any other serious look at the assassination."

Sheehan has the potential of being both the Mark Lane and the Jim Garrison of Contragate. That is definitely meant to be a mixed assessment. His scenario corresponds in broad outlines to what many researchers find plausible, and he is reaching many people. But Sheehan's work has been controversial, not the least among other researchers and activists.

For example, an overview of Iran/Contra theories in "The Nation" referred to this "Secret Team" theory as "heady stuff,... for diehard conspiracy theorists. That doesn't mean it can be dismissed out of hand." (#20, 1-8 Aug 88, 5 pp.) At a press conference before the Iowa primary, Sheehan said that the candidates lacked "moral courage" because they would not promise to indict the targets if Sheehan's suit succeeds; the response of Sen. Simon's representative was a complaint about "crazies." (#21, 6 Jan, DM Reg)

If you are interested in Sheehan's work, the Bay Guardian has published a long, generally unskeptical, interview. (#22, 23 Sep 87, 10 pp.) An article by James Traub in "Mother Jones" (#23, Feb-Mar 88, 8 pp.) was gently critical, but not critical enough. A historical analysis of JFK-case research, for comparison, would be helpful. Twenty years ago, there was a tendency to say, about Lane or Garrison, that if only 10% of what he says is true, then it is very important. I am now more inclined to remember that if only 10% of what someone says is true, then 90% of what he says is false. And researchers should not force their uninformed audiences to filter out that 90%.

As noted in 9 EOC 3.2, the IMA is evidently trying to publish Garrison's book despite the anti-assassinology views of its adjectivally prolific board member Alexander Cockburn. The irascible journalist had more to say on the subject when he wrote of the nationwide interest in the Christic project. Some of the quotable gadfly's differences with Sheehan are political. But "I also have my doubts about excessive reliance on the Christic Institute's case as a tool for political organizing. Excellent though some of the work may be, the reverberations aroused in people by the suit have to me an intimation of the assassination buffs, seeing history entirely in terms of who killed John or Robert Kennedy. Assassinology often sends people utterly mad. An otherwise intelligent person announced to me the other day that she agreed with the theory that after JFK was shot surgeons in the Bethesda Hospital altered the nature of his wounds. The Christic people aren't into that sort of thing, but a lot of people attaching enormous importance to what Christic is doing are being urged to full conspiratorial stretch...." (#24, Feb 88, Zeta Magazine, 2 pp.)

I am as skeptical about Lifton's big-picture scenario as most buffs I know, but the evidence for some sort of pre-autopsy surgery is stronger, in its details, than much of what Sheehan and Garrison have. (The alleged hospital in question was more likely Walter Reed than Bethesda, but Cockburn is not fussy about such details; he also refers to mimeographed FPCC leaflets handed out by Oswald in Dallas, rather than New Orleans.)

The Justice Department investigation:

In my earlier comments on the failure of the Justice Department to submit a formal report to the House - presumably, one which would declare the JFK case closed - I noted that one possible explanation was simply that the Department was too busy with other things. At the moment, that seems to be the most likely explanation.

"This place is a joke now," said an unnamed "high-level political appointee." "Department officials interviewed last week describe a situation in which relatively simple decisions remain inexplicably stalled and more controversial questions are caught for months between the department's most conservative faction and more moderate officials." (#25, WP in SFC, 4 Apr 88, 2 pp.)

This article was prompted by the resignations of the Deputy AG and William Weld, the head of the Criminal Division. (#26, 30 Mar, LAT in SFC, 2 pp.) Weld's name appeared on the letter I received in December 1986 about the status of the JD review (over the signature of his deputy). (9 EOC 1.1)

A few months ago, Rep. Charles Stenholm notified a constituent (and EOC reader) about staff inquiries on his behalf. An "official at the Justice Department seemed certain that the report in question is forthcoming in the near future. It is my understanding that the Justice Department report will be available in approximately a month from the date of this letter."

The letter was undated, but it reached me on February 1, 1988. (#27)

It's 1988 - how does one attract attention in Washington?

Perhaps someone is just waiting for an auspicious date to release the JD report. Or perhaps we need something dramatic. Is it time for someone to take Eddowes' hypothesis one step further, and serve as a channel for Lee Harvey Oswald? It's all the rage - Rev. Moon's late son has allegedly been reincarnated "in the body of a visiting church member from Zimbabwe," causing consternation even within the Unification Church. (#28, 30 Mar 88, WP in SFC, 2 pp.) But seriously, can we expect to deal with the subtle illogic so common in connection with the JFK case, when even now the blatant silliness of astrology is ignored in most of the press coverage?

The assassination of Martin Luther King:

Phil Melanson's book, "The Murkin Conspiracy," is to be published by Praeger in the late summer. According to a news release from Southeastern Massachusetts University, Melanson concluded that there was a conspiracy, but not the one suggested by the HSCA. "Melanson calls the committee's work 'incomplete and incompetent.' The political science professor has spoken with persons whom the committee neglected to interview." (#29, 8 Mar 88)

"Melanson said he does not know the identity of Ray's [co]-conspirators. But he is convinced that others helped him obtain sophisticated false identifications because Ray, who had bungled earlier attempts at crime, was incapable of it. Melanson talked to two men - who were never interviewed by the committee - whose identities Ray took while he fled police, including a Toronto man with a remarkable resemblance to Ray. Blakey said his investigators were limited by Canadian law and could not interview as many people as they wished, but he defended the investigation as thorough." (#30, 31 Mar 88, Boston Herald)

Melanson studied FOIA releases and interviewed 60 people, including Ray. "In the year before the assassination, 'his criminal behavior changed radically,' Dr. Melanson said. He had mysterious help in a successful prison break and began using new and unusual aliases." Eric Galt "would have been the perfect red herring. Born in South Africa, he was a crack shot, had been in Birmingham,... fit the physical description of the assassin, and the abandoned getaway vehicle was registered in his name.... Dr. Melanson speculates that Mr. Galt's profile had been lifted from a file at Union

Carbide, where Mr. Galt once worked on a secret military project." (#31, 4 Apr 88, New Bedford Standard Times, 2 pp.)

Melanson also talked with the "Fat Man," who gave an envelope to Ray in Toronto - allegedly after finding it in a phone booth. Melanson thinks Ray's behavior showed that he was expecting someone. The "Fat Man," still fearing for his own safety, told Melanson that there were "gangsters" and "big money" behind Ray. (#32, 14 Apr 88, 2 pp., SMU Torch; and #31)

An AP anniversary summary noted the views of Ray (who sticks to the Raoul story), some of his lawyers (Foreman and Hanes), and Ralph Abernathy (who claims no proof but suspects federal government involvement). (#33, 3 Apr 88)

Ray's book, "Tennessee Waltz: The Making of a Political Prisoner," was published last year by St. Andrews Press. (Liberty Library ad with ordering information: #34. The book is, of course, also available from Tom Davis Books, P.O. Box 1107, Aptos, CA 95001) There was a review in the Grassy Knoll Gazette for August 1987. Ray went to court to cancel his book contract, claiming that editor F. Tupper Saussy "had put untruths in the text and abused his power of attorney." (#35, 18 Sep 87, SFC) Also, Tennessee prison officials were investigating Ray's claim that prolonged solitary confinement was causing his high blood pressure. (#36, 17 Oct 87, AP in SFC, "Dr. King's killer says prison is bad for him")

I haven't read Ray's book, so my suspicion is totally speculative and uninformed. By hanging around lawyers too long, maybe Ray has picked up a common misinterpretation of the maxim: that one "is innocent until proven guilty." In fact, one is "presumed innocent until..." but real innocence or guilt is determined at the moment of the crime. I wonder how common it is for criminals to decide that they are really innocent because they were mistreated by the legal system and thus were not properly convicted.

The investigation of the assassination of Robert Kennedy:

Thanks to EOC readers, I have some material which may have been overlooked in the coverage you saw of recent developments. I would like to pass it on, even though I have no expertise or special interest in the case.

The release of the Los Angeles PD files received considerable press attention. I attended the April 19 press conference in Sacramento, since I hadn't been to a good media event for years. Our Secretary of State, March Fong Eu, put on quite a presentation, only stopping short of modeling a polka-dot dress herself. (But her Archive staff seems to have done a good job of getting the files processed and making them available in a convenient fashion.) The things I noticed, as a disinterested observer, about how the press grapples with complex problems justified the trip.

The headlines tended to focus on missing material (e.g., "LAPD destroyed much evidence from killing," #37, LA Herald-Examiner, 20 Apr 88, 2 pp). This was in part because Archivist John Burns mentioned it in his remarks, although he "declined to weigh the importance of the missing photos and refused to draw conclusions based on the voluminous police file." (#38, 20 Apr, 4 pp., LAT) "Those questions may never be answered because more than 2,400 photographs were unaccountably destroyed by the [LAPD] a few months after the shooting." (#39, 20 Apr, SFC, which quotes Greg Stone and David Mendelsohn) Door jambs and ceiling tiles are also missing.

A spokesman for the LAPD said that a retired officer recalled the destruction of "superfluous duplicates." (#40, 23 Apr, AP in SFC) While this probably explains the bulk of the 2,400 photos, Burns had indicated that some inventoried photos had not been located. However, as far as I know we are not talking about anything comparable to photos of Oswald in Mexico City, but at worst police photos - of reconstructions, for example.

A surprisingly strong editorial entitled "Who killed Robert Kennedy?" in the Oakland Tribune offered this evaluation: "Few events have eroded the public's trust in government more than the official mis-investigations of the

assassinations of John and Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King." (#41, 22 Apr) Paul Schrade thought the release of the files, which he had pushed for, involved "monstrous bad timing." He organized a conference, "RFK Remembered," intending to shift attention from his death to his life. (#42, 24 Apr, AP in SFX, 2 pp.; conference brochure: #43, 2 pp.)

More allegations of missing evidence surfaced soon. "Melanson said the records contain no taped interviews of 51 key witnesses, including 29 whose testimony would have been expected to shed light on" the conspiracy questions. "Melanson said he was told in 1985 by Theodore Taylor, co-author with Houghton of... 'Special Unit Senator,' that 'every single interview was taped,' and Taylor later said he had access to 3,000 hours of audio tapes in police department files." Melanson said 400 hours was a "generous estimate" of what has been disclosed. (#44, 12 May, AP in LA HE; more details in #45, 12 May, 2 pp.; NB ST) The LAPD declined to comment on "what somebody else calls a discrepancy." (#46, 12 May, AP)

Melanson was quoted in his capacity as head of the RFK Assassination Archives at Southeastern Massachusetts University. That unit was formally opened one day after the LAPD release. (See, for example, #47, 16 Apr, NB ST, 2 pp.) The academic respectability provided by Prof. Melanson seems reflected in generally sympathetic coverage, even in the major Boston papers. "The fact that there are irresponsible people raising these questions doesn't mean all the questions should be ignored," he said of his probe" (probably in response to a hostile question). (#48, 8 May, Boston Globe.)

Some SMU and high-school students have started to use the Archives; "Access to primary sources has been an eye-opening experience, they said." (#49, 21 Apr, NB ST) One project in the JFK case which I think would be valuable even without providing new information on who killed JFK would be a compilation and correlation of primary sources (e.g. from FBI and WC files) and secondary sources. From this, students could learn how challenging it sometimes is to put two and two together. Much can be learned about history and government operations, if not about the JFK assassination, from such sources. I would be glad to help anyone who takes on such a project.

Unfortunately, the JFK files are not all as easily accessible as the LAPD RFK files, which can be purchased on 22 microfilm rolls at \$12.50 each, or \$275 in all. I can provide the California Archives' guide to these records. (#50, 55 pp.) If you need them, I can also provide the news release (#51, 3 pp.), and Eu's prepared remarks (#52, 4 pp.) I have a few other items, some of which relate to the campaign to get the LAPD files released, but in general people should contact Phil Melanson or Greg Stone. Stone is associated with the Foundation for Truth and Accountability in Los Angeles; its statement of purpose (3 pp.) is #53.

From my work on the JFK case, some gut feelings: Don't lose sight of the fact that Sirhan was caught on the scene, literally with a smoking gun, and with a perfectly plausible motive. I have no grasp on the Cesar question, which certainly deserves to be put to rest one way or the other (or the third way - that he fired accidentally). Keep in mind the surprising number of evidentiary arguments in the JFK case which have lost strength upon scrutiny - arguments which were much stronger than reported bullet holes in a door jamb. Also, one can not deduce the nature of the crime from the existence or nature of the coverup - there can be a coverup if there was no conspiracy at all.

The emphasis on investigative irregularities and on the uncertainties in the forensic and eyewitness evidence has seemed to distract from questions of Sirhan's associates, which could be just as important. The argument that bad police work should be exposed, even or especially if it happens all the time, is a serious one, but a different matter.

On the other hand, Greg Stone and Phil Melanson sound more reasonable than most of the people who present themselves as experts the JFK case.

Ed Berkeley:

Dick Sprague has informed me of the death in March of Edmund C. Berkeley at age 78. Sprague writes: "His contribution to the truth about our conspiracy and assassination problems and potential future assassinations by the intelligence community and Power Control Groups, has been immeasurable." Berkeley had a distinguished career in computer-related fields, and is best known to us for more than 50 political articles in "Computers & Automation," "Computers & People," and "People and the Pursuit of Truth," starting in 1970 with Sprague's long and important piece on the photographic evidence. (I can provide the full text of Sprague's tribute, #54, and the Boston Globe obituary on aspects of his career other than the JFK case, #55.)

A historical exhibit in the TSBD:

Last fall, the Dallas Landmark Commission approved an outside elevator for the TSBD, to provide access to a museum on the sixth floor. Some of the press coverage did not make it clear that the elevator tower will be on the rear (north) side, away from Dealey Plaza. (#56, 12 Aug 87, DMN, 2 pp.)

The Dallas County Historical Society has solicited the comments of some researchers in connection with the exhibit, scheduled to open in November or December 1988. There will be sections on "the [official] investigations" and "the search for a motive." "Who the possible conspirators could have been, as well as their motives, will be discussed in this section. Some of the conclusions of the various investigations... have been harshly criticized over the years. The nature of the criticisms will be explained historically, and this section will contain the results of recent national polls." This is from the official synopsis of the proposed exhibit contents (#57, 2 pp.); also available: a map of the sixth floor (#58), a list of some of the consultants and architects (#59), and a letter from project director Conover Hunt (#60).

The approval of the tower prompted a range of commentary:

- #61. 18 Aug 88 (NYT) "Dallas Treads Painfully Toward Opening... Exhibit" County Commissioner L. Jackson "acknowledged some feeling in Dallas that any exhibit would be construed as exploitive. Indeed, the project has limped along for 10 years amid widespread ambivalence about reopening scars."
- #62. 4 Sep 87 (Ft. Worth Star-Telegram) "Debasing memory of a tragic morning." Columnist Cecil Johnson does not look forward to tourists passing through the TSBD to learn that the shot was so easy they could have made it.
- #63. 31 Aug 87 (FWST) "Debate... reflects a city's confusion" [3 pp.]
- #64. 17 Apr 88 (Sac. Bee, travel section) [2 pp.] "Some visitors [to the TSBD] even suggest that keeping the sixth floor closed is all part of the alleged assassination conspiracy."
- #65. 20 Aug 87 (SFC) An editorial favorable to the "sensitive and tasteful... educational display." This prompted a letter:
- #66. 26 Aug 87 (SFC) "The location where shots were fired [the grassy knoll] has been open to the public for years.... Dallas would gain much credibility in seeing that [the guilty parties] are brought to justice."

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Credits: Thanks to J. Davis (#10), D. Effle (38), M. Ewing (21), P. Franklin (61), even T. Gandolfo (14), L. Harris (56, 61), G. Hollingsworth (5, 9, 34, 63), L. Keene (27), P. McCarthy (61), P. Melanson (29-33, 44-9), J. Mierzejewski (1, 4, 15), R. Ranftel (23, 37-8, 41), D. Scheim (10, 12), P. Scott (18), G. Shaw (62-3), R. Sprague (54-5), G. Stone (53), and E. Tatro (3).