

Charleston, W. Va. Daily Mail, 11/22/71

UNCOMMON CONVERSATIONS

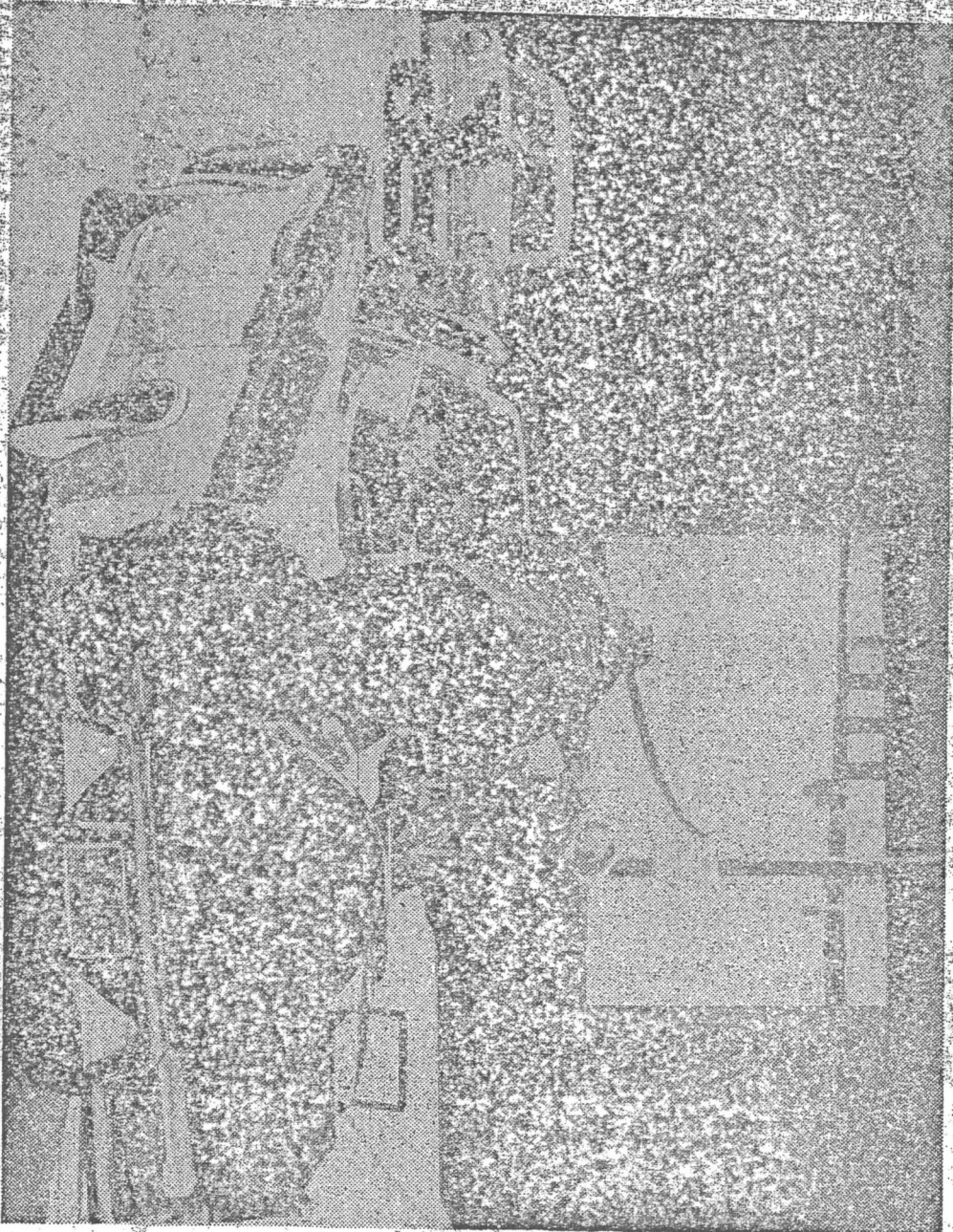
Thought you might have missed this. pb

An Expert On JFK Assassination

By PHILIP NOBLE

Shiriz Meagher (pronounced Merr), a member in good standing of the diminishing tribe of experts on JFK's assassination. On the eighth anniversary of the attack, it would be fitting as well as instructive to talk with someone who has kept up with developments in this fascinating field of detective work. Even though the assassination is no longer front-page news, there are apparently thousands of questions left unanswered by the Warren Commission. So people like Shiriz Meagher keep up their private detective work, hoping that their search will someday solve the case to be revealed.

Shiriz Meagher's sensitive post in a large international organization prevents her picture from accompanying this review. I vouch for her existence, though, as the author of the sensitive Subject to the Press Report and the Rings and Exhibits I an assassination entitled Accessories



DEATH CAR—A Secret Service agent leans on the back of the presidential limousine an instant after President John F. Kennedy was shot in Dallas, Tex., Nov. 22, 1963. Standing in the rear of the car is the President's wife, Jacqueline. Kennedy is slumped on the back seat of the vehicle.—AP Wirephoto

er the fact she is ly not the Jim Garri- or Mark Lane-type of publicist but a seri- woman devoted to other serious subject.

is now 8 years since John edy's assassination and 7 since the Warren Report filed. Do you suppose the ery of the JFK murder ever be unravelled to your faction?

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For example?

The report of the FBI's spectographic examination of bullet fragments, bullet smears and the whole bullet found on JFK's stretcher. The results of this report are of the utmost importance in checking out the Warren Commission contention that all the shots fired on Dealy Plaza came from a single rifle.

The FBI, the National Archives and the government have refused to release this information despite the fact that under no conceivable law or statute governing the clas- sification of documents could such information be legiti- mately withheld.

Are you implying then that the reason the spectographic tests are kept secret is be- cause they would clash with the Warren Report's single weapon-single assassin con- clusion?

I'm absolutely convinced of that because I can think of absolutely no other reason why the test results should not have been released or why, for that matter, the Warren Commission took no direct testimony from the FBI ex-

pert who conducted the tests.

If you are correct in sug- gesting these tests would prove that more than one weapon was involved, then there are men in government who know that Oswald did not act alone.

Let's say there are people who should know. I don't want to speculate on whether they have confronted these facts and are deliberately conceal- ing material or whether they just pursue a general policy of not wishing to be bothered by critics. I can't enter into their minds. I can only judge from their actions.

Say we grant the theory that Kennedy was shot at by more than one weapon, what advantage is there to the War- ren Commission and the gov- ernment to insist on one gun and one assassin?

The advantage is that they retain on the books of history the false, fraudulent and cyni- cal conclusion that there was no conspiracy, that the Presi- dent was tragically killed in a random unavoidable crime. But this is not so.

How many people are still actively engaged in research- ing the assassination?

In terms of professional, qualified researchers, I'd say probably a dozen. Not all of them are known or published. I can mention a very brilliant young man in the Philadelphia area who has written a most impressive book in which he completely destroys the autopsy findings. With considerable new information he has proved to my satisfaction at least that none of the shots fired at the President and the governor came from the rifle found on the sixth floor of the Book Depository.

There is an architect from the Boston area, a Mr. Robert Cutler, who has recently pub- lished a very interesting and technical monograph which postulates shots coming from several different locations.

What is the government's response to this sort of ama- teur sleuthing? Officials don't pay any attention to you and your colleagues, do they?

I can't speak for anyone else, but my book was ignored by the government and none of my articles, with one ex- ception, has ever caused any official comment.

What was the article all about?

In my book I had questioned testimony contained in the Warren Report by a Depository worker, a Mrs. Gibbons, who claimed he forgot his cig- arettes, went back up to the sixth floor and saw Oswald near the window. The Warren

Commission, of course, leaned very heavily on this man's testimony which I felt smacked of perjury and collu- sion.

Now several years later when I began buying declassi- fied Warren Commission docu- ments from the National Archives and read them care- fully for new information, to my amazement and excite- ment, I discovered considera- ble new material that not only supported my initial suspi- cions about Gibbons' testimo- ny, but, far from incriminat- ing Oswald by placing him on the sixth floor, his original story given to the FBI on the very day of the assassination was that he had seen Oswald at 10 minutes before noon on the first floor and that he had left the building at that time to spend his lunch hour with a friend at a nearby parking lot.

When Mr. Gibbons was called to testify before the Warren Commission the next April, he then told for the very first time the story of going back for the cigarettes. Now the lawyer who ques- tioned him was fully aware of Gibbons' earlier testimony be- cause he asked him if he ever told anyone that he saw Os- wald at 10 of noon on the first floor. The witness said mere- ly, "No sir," and the lawyer simply accepted that.

In any case, I wrote an article about this inconsisten- cy in August for The Texas Observer. The editor was so upset at the seriousness of the charges I was making that she sent my article in ad- vance to the two Commission lawyers involved. One lawyer declined to comment. The other insisted that what Gibbons said to him in April was more authoritative than anything

said previously to the police, FBI or secret service. In private correspondence with me, this second lawyer has only been abusive, angry and hysterical.

If Oswald didn't shoot Kennedy as you believe, he must have been framed. So who framed Oswald, and why?

I only wish I knew. It's our only possible road back to the conspirators if they can be found at all. Now, there's no other link to these people except through persons who knew Oswald and were in position to manipulate him. For he was obviously framed in advance.

People had to make sure he was alone at the time of the shooting and not out there in the crowd being photographed. They had to make sure he carried something into the Depository that morning.

Therefore, I can only postulate

that the persons who designed and executed this assassination were persons who had extensive knowledge of Oswald and to a degree were able to influence his movements and activities.

Did Oswald know beforehand that Kennedy was going to be killed that day and that he somehow was implicated?

In my opinion he knew perhaps he had been entrapped into something. This is why he left the Depository and showed some hesitation about where he would go. Subsequently, when Oswald was under arrest in the Dallas Police Department, he shouted to reporters that he was a patsy, that he was being framed.

Did Oswald have any last words as he was dying with Ruby's bullets in his stomach?

This involves another deplorable omission from the Warren Report. A police officer said to Oswald as he lay dying, "This is your last chance. Do you want to tell me anything now?" Oswald was aware of the question and indicated he had nothing to say. This may or may not mean anything because guilty men can die refusing to confess. But why was this exchange omitted from the Report?

How do you account for the utter success of JFK's assassination? If Oswald and Ruby were framed, then the rest of the conspirators got off scot free. It was a perfect crime.

I account for it by the terrible lethargy of the legal profession, the press and even the public. It's very interesting that one poll showed that three quarters of the American people did not believe the Warren Report, yet almost the same percentage were opposed to a new investigation.

One might wonder why a crime of the magnitude of JFK's assassination hasn't sprung a leak before now—somehow, some place by someone. But nobody has spilled.

I don't know if anyone has leaked. Maybe somebody did, but leaked to the wrong person and was disposed of. I suppose that in an assassination of a head of state, the men who pulled the trigger aren't left around. In the classic cloak and dagger operation, things are arranged so that no one person knows more than his immediate contact.

—Pitcairn is administered as a British crown colony from the Fiji Islands more than 3,000 miles away.