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Editors
Rolling Stone
78 East 56 St
NY NY 10022

Dear editors

A rolling stone, it is said, gathers no moss. But it can stir dust. In the April 24th issue of Rolling Stone one sinner cast a small stone and two threw larger rocks. Separately and in sum they made a contribution to the dust storm swirling round the ghosts of the assassination of President Kennedy.

Take Jerry Poliseff's hatchet squib, "The Belin Connection," its obvious aim to discredit the Rockefeller Commission on the CIA by impugning the integrity of its executive director, David Belin, who was formerly an associate counsel of the Warren Commission. To this end Poliseff clumsily rehashed Sylvia Meagher's 1971 carefully documented expose of a contrived mutation in the testimony of Oswald's TSDB coworker, Charles Givens, to incriminate Oswald, when Belin examined Givens; of Belin's awareness of perjury on Givens' part; and of his passive acceptance of it. Poliseff, like Belin, evinced no interest in exploring the Givens episode as the abuse of a black worker by a powerful government agency bent on producing evidence to accredit the framup of his white coworker; or even in defining the importance of Givens' testimony which is of only secondary or tertiary value to the Commission's case and to its demolition.

In his haste to get Belin's scalp, Poliseff had Givens changing his testimony "gradually," which is contrary to Meagher's account, but cited no source for the flat assertion. He misstated Meagher's position by having her accuse Belin himself of suborning perjury; and he overlooked an opportunity to strenghten it when he failed to cite Belin's defense of his conduct because of undisciplined eagerness to heap deserved ridicule on it.

In his evasive and abusive reply to Meagher, "Truth was my only goal," in the Texas Observer of August 13, 1971, in which he pretests his purity of purpose, innocence of wrongdoing, and importance of function in "Areall: the determination of who was the assassin (not assassins!-TS) of President Kennedy," Belin wrote: "I personally took the testimony of the executive officer of Klein's Sporting Goods, which was the company that sold and shipped the rifle to Lee Harvey Oswald's post office box in Dallas under his assumed alias, A. Hidell. I personally saw the copy of the order form that Oswald sent in for the rifle."

About this much may be said. None of it impoves Belin's role in the Kennedy assassination coverup. The testimony he cited was given on May 20, 1964 by William Waldman, vice-president of Klein's in Chicago. The handwriting Belin saw, as the testimony established, was on microfilm and, therefore, as Belin knew or should have known, was of questionable evidentiary value. Even more significant was Belin's glaringly obvious studied failure to explore the gross discrepency between the measurements of that

rifle as advertised by Klein's in the American Rifleman of February 1963 - 'Late issue, only 36" overall, weighs 5 1/2 pounds' - and the rifle allegedly found in the Texas Schoolbook Depository Building after the assassination - "40.2 inches long and weighs 8 pounds" - (Warren Report, p81). The point may eventually prove to be, or prove not to be, significant, for or against the Commission. But Belin's failure to attempt to clarify it, which resulted either from outstanding incompetence, cynical indifference, or culpable cupidity, is of a piece with his ~~testimony~~ ^{testimony} of Givens' testimony. It is a mute testament against Belin, by himself, which Policosoff failed to see. treatment

"Optics technician" Robert Groden, on the other hand, who threw a sizable porous rock and some pebbles, and raised considerable dust, saw too much in ~~the~~ ^{the} New Look at the Zapruder Film. After living with it for "almost nine years" and seeing it "literally thousands of times," and doing "more investigative and optical research on clear copies... than any other private citizen or agency," Groden concluded, as has virtually everyone who has seen the film, except the Warren Commissioners and staff, including possibly Belin, "The Zapruder film provides absolute ungentestable proof of cross fire and conspiracy." Brave Groden!

Certainty, even almost ten years after the self-evident proof became available for research in the National Archives in the summer of 1965, is welcome. But certitude was not enough for the optics technician and he brought boomerangs to the barricades. In prophetic anticipation - "There will be many who will loudly disagree with my analysis of the Zapruder film" - Groden postulated five assassins firing six shots from four or five enfilading positions. He emphasized the violent backward and left motion of Kennedy's body when hit in the head from the "right front," after he had been struck fatally by a "glancing blow" to the right temple by a bullet fired from the rear. Crossfire was coordinated by a warning blank shot and by an open umbrella twirling in a counterclockwise direction. Groden traced the departing motion of the "umbrella man," but did not explain the technique he employed to determine the first shot fired was a blank. Nor did he scruple to account for the whereabouts of all six live bullets, two of which, in his fantasy, entered Kennedy and, contrary to the evidence of the autopsy X-rays of Kennedy's torso and ~~upper~~ ^{upper} parts of his limbs, did not depart.

But as Zapruder's camera eye followed the fleeing presidential limousine past the grassy knoll after Kennedy was shot fatally, Groden's sharper eye discovered "the fourth assassin" with rifle and, less clearly he admits frankly, "his back up man," in frames 413-478. Alas, Commission supporters, their eyesight impaired by establishmentarian cataracts, and myopic Commission critics, beating a lonely drum signaling the unanswerable message of conspiracy in the Zapruder film, pondered enlargements of frames of the grassy knoll in 1966 and 1967 and failed to find Groden's men. Like the weeppeople they had vanished.

Suppose, however, improbable as it may seem to commonsensical folk, Groden's "analysis" is not, like Commission Counsel Arlen Specter's single-bullet theory, an inspired rationalization,

engendered on Groden's part by impelling desire to embody the irresistible logic of the photographic evidence in human form. Suppose optical technology, rather than internal or other external impulse or suggestion, endowed Groden with preternatural vision and he saw truly what the evidence shouted should have been there. What then? What boots this superogatory confirmatory evidence? Conspiracy was proved without it. Truth, the editors of Rolling Stone might have told Groden in rejecting his vulnerable confusionist "analysis," does not lurk in bushes awaiting discovery by investigators conjuring up assassins from indistinct photographic film. That's work for the CIA.

Ironically, when Groden plunged recklessly into the quagmire of the medicoballistic evidence, he evoked an assassination activist allowed to dwell in almost total obscurity, his story untold to Commission, critics, or the public at large. In positioning Kennedy's back wound, a crucial matter for the Commission's account of bullet trajectories and firing location, and a subject of never-ending controversy, Groden ascribed to "the many who saw it at Parkland Hospital" (in Dallas) a position below that given by the Commission. The uncontradicted unanimous testimony of the hospital recussitative team was that the back wound was not observed because Kennedy had lain on his back while undergoing emergency treatment and had not been turned over. What Groden had in mind, obviously, was the autopsy situation in Bethesda Naval Hospital in Washington during the night of November 22, 1963. Why didn't the editors of Rolling Stone catch and correct Groden's error?

All the witnesses, Groden wrote, "including Secret Service men, place the wound in JFK's back. None place it in his neck," as the Commission did and its supporters do. "These witnesses include Admiral George Burkley, the president's personal physician, who in his original report placed the wound at the level of the third thoracic vertebra, approximately six inches below the shoulder blades." Although the third thoracic vertebra and six inches below the shoulder blades are widely separated anatomic locations Groden's point about the weight of evidence placing the posterior wound in the back, below the neck, is correct. All the rest is confusion and error.

Rear Admiral George Gordon Burkley was White House physician in Kennedy's and Johnson's administrations. A report he wrote, dated November 27, 1963 at 8:45 a.m., titled "Report of my activities surrounding the assassination of PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY," which has no addressee and was not attested by oath or witness, appears as Commission Exhibit 1126 on pages 93-97 of Volume XXII of the Commission compilation of testimony and exhibits. Burkley's Report is barren of any reference to Kennedy's wounds. The "report" Groden had in mind most likely is a document found in the National Archives, still unpublished, and circulating in indexed copies: a death certificate for Kennedy signed by Burkley on November 23, 1963. Cause of death is given by Burkley as a gunshot wound of the head. No reference is made in Burkley's certificate to Kennedy's neck wound. Location of the back wound is given less precisely than in Groden, as "about the level of the third thoracic vertebra," without measurement from or reference to any other anatomic location. Thus, and thus far inexplicably,

markedly not in Groden's "analysis," the location of Kennedy's back wound in Burkley's death certificate differs significantly from the location - "above the scapula" - given by the Commission in Appendix II of the Warren Report (pp538-543) which purports to be a reproduction of the official autopsy report issued by the office of Dr. G.G. Burkley who collected the assassination medical protocol.

Mystery surrounds Burkley's death certificate executed in Washington twenty four hours after he had requested and received from Parkland Hospital Dr. Kemp Clark a "Record of Death" or death certificate, as attested by Dr. Clark (Hearings, Vol. VI, p20); Parkland Emergency Room Nursing Supervisor Doris Nelson (declassified "Top Secret" affidavit of November 25, 1963; Price Exhibit No. 4 in Hearings, Vol. XII, p155); and by Dr. Burkley's own Report. Neither Burkley's nor Clark's certificate was included in the Warren Report or the 26 volumes of testimony and exhibits. No reference was made to Burkley's certificate by Commission counsel even when examining Dr. Clark in March 1964.

Why two death certificates? Do they differ? Why were they not published? Did Groden ignore the problem out of ignorance or calculation? Why are those who are aware of the problem averse to discussion of it?

There is much more to the Burkley story which awaits telling. The foregoing should be sufficient to demonstrate that Groden's pursuit of mirages obscured his vision of far more important evidence. And to justify a demand he explain why he misrepresented the Burkley death certificate as an "original report;" tell what he knows about it; and about Burkley's "activities surrounding the assassination" of president Kennedy.

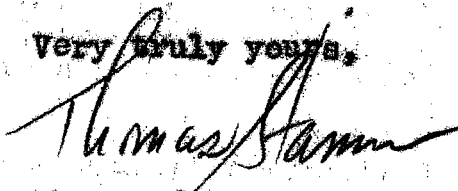
In sharp and valuable contrast to Groden's embarrassing and phantasmal photographic discovery was Robert Kaiser's sober disposition of the photographs of "tramps" accompanied by police in Dealey Plaza on November 22, 1963, two of whom have been said for years to resemble former CIA assassins Strugis and Hunt; in "The Mystery Tramps in Disguise?" Less satisfactory is his treatment of Gerald Ford - "Gerald Ford's Little White Lie" - who, Kaiser, proved lied to the Senate Judiciary Committee considering his designation by Nixon as vice-president, when he denied using classified information in writing his "Portrait of the Assassin" which purported to be Oswald's life story.

Lying by a public official, even a president, is not news. Truth and government, it has become clear, exist in an adversary relationship. More significant than exposure of a white lie by the former Warren Commissioner would have been sharp condemnation of his collaboration in preparing and voting for the Commission's Report which falsified history by misrepresenting the assassination of the head of the most powerful state in history as the motiveless random act of a malecontented nobody; which put the seal of authority on the frameup of the murdered scapegoat as the alienated solo assassin; and which, consequently, shielded the murderers and their confederates and employers from exposure and punishment. Also and especially pertinent to contemporary problems would have been the observation that Ford's book comported well with the ancient practice of justifying injustice by defaming its victims.

Analysis of other aspects of Kaiser's article - a factual error about the Commission executive session transcripts; lack of reference, in citing the transcript of January 27, 1964, to the planting of evidence on Alger Hiss; the preassassination FBI service of Dallas District Attorney Henry Wade in South America, including the bribery of the police and president of Ecuador; and the underworld and police connections of Oswald's murderer, Jack Ruby; the plea for support of the resolution introduced in the House by Henry Gonzalez to reopen the investigation of the Kennedy assassination which in view of his reported inclination to attribute the assassination to Castro brings to mind the never-abandoned hope of the American political right to extend Oswald's identification as a revolutionist into a communist conspiracy - the original intent of the plotters against Kennedy's life and policies --all this would double and triple, if not quadruple, the length of this already long letter.

Perhaps, if you are interested, we can pursue it further. I apologize for the bad typing.

Very truly yours,



Thomas Starna

2705 Bainbridge Ave

Bronx, NY 10458