

THE FRONT

Nine In the Morning host **Doug Llewelyn**. A program guest who claimed famous dead people spoke through his body summoned **John F. Kennedy** while Llewelyn was interviewing him. At the end of the segment, Llewelyn managed a somber "Thank you, Mr. Kennedy." In case your newspaper missed the story, Kennedy—through the cooperative body

of Llewelyn's guest — fingered **J. Edgar Hoover** as the mastermind of his assassination.

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By Rudy Maxa
with Myra MacPherson

CITYSKETCH: HONESTLY, WHO SHOT ABE?

Who really killed **Lincoln** remains of burning importance to Lincolnphiles, a goodly number of whom are in and around this city of conspiracy.

The Library of Congress has recently uncovered new evidence certain to be enthusiastically seized by assassination conspiracy buffs who believe that Lincoln's Secretary of War, **Edwin Stanton**, was among the dastardly.

The Library possesses the first uncovered document providing direct evidence that Stanton was involved in the conspiracy trial. In Stanton's handwriting, the document is a sweeping draft of charges against the conspirators. "It made no distinction between those involved in the kidnaping plot and those involved in the actual assassination," points out **Charles Cooney**, manuscript reference librarian. "Therefore the government was able to include in the trial those who had nothing to do with the actual assassination."

This all-inclusive draft of charges, the speed with which the trial was held, the fact it was a military tribunal and that the conspirators were kept incommunicado suggest to anti-Stantonites that he was trying to keep all involved from revealing his role as chief conspirator. His motive? To set up a military

junta banana republic after knocking off Lincoln, Johnson and Seward.

Cooney, who specializes in Lincoln's assassination as a hobby, ran across the document while going through the papers of Joseph Holt, a judge advocate at the trial. Sifting through one volume, "Material Relating to the Lincoln Conspiracy," Cooney found "mostly just garbage, transcripts of depositions and the like," until he reached the Stanton draft.

But Cooney, who doesn't think Stanton had any

thing to do with the conspiracy, sighs and says he has been "sitting on" his findings because he doesn't want to add fuel to the Stanton conspiracy theory. (The information will "perhaps" be published this year).

"Drafting those charges certainly was not within the purview of his official responsibilities as Secretary of War—but he often did exceed the boundaries of his office," says Cooney.

And that, says another assassination buff, "doesn't make him a murderer—just a stinker. Stanton was a bully and a man easy to hate," says **James O. Hall** of Alexandria.

Hall is still working on what he terms the first in-depth manuscript of the assassination. He's been at it for 25 years. Working title: "Murder at Ford's Theater." Hall supports the general view that the villains were Southern sympathizers. He feels a lot of them got away. "There were lots of missing persons. Booth was never out of the hands of the Confederate underground all the way from Washington to Virginia where he was captured. And people were all along the line, waiting to transport Lincoln from Washington to Richmond in the kidnaping plot."

Another character in the conspiracy trial will surface this fall when Alfred Knopf publishes *A True History of the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln and the Conspiracy of 1865*. The material itself, some 100 years old, was written by one of the government witnesses at the trial, **Louis Weichmann**. A boarder in Mary Surratt's rooming house, Weichmann gets hisses and boos from Mary Surratt supporters for zapping her.

You can still find assassination freaks who insist John Wilkes Booth never was shot but escaped to Europe. And in some circles it is said the Pope conspired to do in Lincoln because he didn't like America's separation of church and state.

A miscellaneous P.S. comes from a Front Royal, Va., man who insists Booth was an innocent victim and that **Major Rathbone**, the presidential aide who sat in Ford's theatre's Presidential box, shot Lincoln. Just what was Booth, then, up to when he jumped on stage, shouted "Sic semper tyrannis" and fled?

"Booth didn't sneak into that box," **Louis Robert** theorizes. "He went in with a pass. He was in there and just got scared and left. Wouldn't you?" Well, what about the bold shout? "Naaaw, naaaw, he didn't say anything except 'get me out,' maybe. He didn't know any Latin. That was something made up by the Secretary of War."

Robert thinks Rathbone and Stanton were in cahoots, but that's all for now, folks. Robert is saving the details for the book he's been working on for 15 years.

"If I told you why Booth was there," Robert says archly, "it would blow the whole story." —M.M. ■