THE THIRD DECADE — JANUARY-MARCH, 1992 — VOL 8 — #2,3

REPORT FROM DALLAS: THE ASK SYMPOSIUM, NOVEMBER 14-16, 1991

by

Martin Shackelford*

Though we were 400 rather than 400,000, it was, remarked Larry Harris, "the research equivalent of Woodstock." The first day consisted of scouting around Dealey Plaza and surroundings, registration, bus tours and a Book Fair. Days two and three were packed with panel discussions and presentations, some information familiar, some quite new and remarkable. In gliding over the familiar, the author assumes the reader is familiar with Best Evidence, Crossfire, Mafia Kingfish, Conspiracy of One, and Plausible Denial.

Two blocks from Dealey Plaza, with a model in the Book Fair area of the Plaza on November 22, 1963, surrounded by assassination literature and researchers, and bombarded from time to time by useful slide/video presentations by Robert Groden, we were immersed in the subject.

Gary Shaw welcomed everyone on Day Two, encouraging us all to work together to solve the case. Cyril Wecht followed with a rousing keynote address, in which he noted that "The Men Who Killed Kennedy" aired in 55 countries before a U.S. outlet could be found for it. Then came the panels and research presentations, each followed by a question and answer session.

Attendees included Canadians Ulric Shannon and Peter Whitmey, Detroit's Craig Ciccone, Nathan Sull from Buffalo, N.Y., veterans Wallace Milam and John Judge, journalist Jerry Policoff, and Robert Sam Anson, who badly misreported the conference in the December 2 U.S. News and World Report.

The first panel consisted of eyewitnesses. Malcolm Summers said that, after the first shot, the Secret Service looked at the ground; Summers ran to the railroad yards after the shots, and was stopped by a man in a topcoat with a gun; then he went to the Postal Annex and saw several hispanics speed away from the scene in a maroon Chevrolet. Jean Hill told her familiar story, noting that she was told a bullet had struck at her feet. Supporting testimony was given by Edna and Wayne Hartmann, who had run down Main Street to the Plaza when they heard shots, and saw an 8 or 9 foot furrow in the grass, pointing Southeast (away from the grassy knoll), and were told by a policeman that a bullet had made it. They said the FBI later told them a skull fragment had made the furrow. Ed Hoffman repeated his account of a gunman on the grassy knoll.

Aubrey Rike mentioned 6 or 8 false ambulance calls in the Dealey Plaza area in the 2 or 3 weeks prior to Nov. 22; he said the "epileptic" they picked up at Elm and Houston that day had hit his head, but showed no signs of having had a seizure. When he saw the President's body at Parkland, the tracheotomy cut was jagged and two inches long. When he lifted the head, he felt a jagged wound edge at the back of the head, as well as brain matter. He said that some of the autopsy photos show what he saw, but some don't. He added that he followed the hearse with the casket, which drove straight to Love Field.

Paul O'Connor said that at Bethesda the President's right eye was seen to be pushed out of its socket, the orbit fractured and the volnar crushed, but there was very little facial damage. He said that he saw no hole in the back of the head, and he was working at the head with Boswell. Dr. George Burkley was in charge, giving orders to the doctors, yelling and screaming at people, and generally disrupting procedures. O'Connor said that 60 or 70 people were in the autopsy room and the adjoining amphitheatre.

Also scheduled to participate in the Eyewitness Panel were Dr. Charles Crenshaw, who canceled, Beverly Oliver and Phil Willis, who were ill, and Phil's wife and daughter, who were with him.

The Dealey Plaza Panel began with Jim Moore's endorsement of the Warren Commission findings. Jim Marrs admitted that the grassy knoll was getting crowded, and Larry Harris noted that 13 of the 3 knoll gunmen had been positively identified. Bob Groden said that, through the films, "we have all become witnesses." He quoted Dr. Michael Baden as saying privately that the critics were right. He said that photos show three people on the Book Depository's 6th floor (the uncropped Dillard photo, the Hughes and Bronson films).

The Oswald Panel began with Jack White's slide presentation. He showed a photo which the government said Oswald took, apparently including Roscoe White and two of his friends. He pointed out a wrist scar on a photo of White which also appeared on the same wrist of the figure in the backyard photos, adding that the figure wore a wristwatch (White did, Oswald didn't). An FBI report said they had four different backyard photos, but only three have turned up so far.

George Michael Evica noted FBI agent James Hosty's ties to the Treasury Department, the CIA, military intelligence and anti-Castroites; added that Jack Revill, of Dallas Police intelligence, had similar ties, including being the representative locally of LEIU (Law Enforcement Intelligence Unit), the possible source of his early information on Oswald. Evica reported Hosty's meeting on the morning of Nov. 22 with Treasury agent Frank Ellsworth (an Oswald lookalike whom Hosty later said was the agent on the knoll) and Army Intelligence agent James Powell, who aided searches of the railroad yards and Book Depository, and was involved in finding the rifle.

Mark Lane discussed the findings in his book, Plausible Denial, and speculated that the CIA used an FBI cover in dealing with Oswald. He noted David Phillips' 1975 admission that Oswald was never in Mexico City. He said that George Bush was involved in an anti-Castro group with Sam Cole and Alexander Haig, which was a part of the Bay of Pigs operation.

Jerry Rose and Jack White discussed fraudulent documents; Jerry focusing on the Mexico City hotel registers, and Jack noting those on which Oswald had trouble recalling the spelling of his mother's name, whether New Orleans was in Texas, and other unlikely errors.

During the Q&A, Charles Musell of Mexico City said that a Mexico City newspaper, about a week after the assassination, had published a photo of the "embassy Oswald" figure along with an article, neither provided by the CIA, with whose agents his soccer team played weekly. He said the background of the published photo wasn't cropped, and it was taken, not from the CIA camera post, but from a location near it.

San Francisco's Hal Verb reported talking with a 1963 employee of The Militant's New York office, who recalled receiving a photo of a man with a rifle in the mail, which he later recalled when the Oswald backyard photos were published. Fearing the consequences if it was found in the Militant office, he had immediately torn it up and threw it away. By the time the Oswald photos were published, he was unable to recall if they were similar to the one he had received. (Note: might not an FBI mail opening operation have seen the photo before he did?).

That evening's "Montage of Conspiracy" was the first major presentation of ongoing research. Tom Wilson was Chief Electrical Engineer for U.S. Steel in Pittsburgh when he was assigned to develop an image processing system able to detect flaws in metal ingots passing on the assembly line. In November 1988, he became curious about the JFK assassination after "Nova" raised questions in his mind about elements of the official story. He decided to try using his image processing system on images of the assassination.

Early in 1989, he met Dr. Cyril Wecht, and working together they successfully resolved an alleged homicide (Wilson proved it wasn't one) and a product liability case. In the latter, Wilson successfully predicted what the autopsy would later

confirm. The system, its uses in the two cases, and other possible applications are described in two articles by Wilson:

"Image Processing by Computer Analysis--Potential Use and Application in Civil and Criminal Litigation" in Legal Medicine 1990 ed. Cyril Wecht.

"Image Processing by Computer Analysis", Chapter 28D in Vol. 2 of Forensic Sciences ed. Cyril Wecht (1991, Matthew Bender/Times Mirror Books).

The system reads images through a charge-coupled device (CCD) video camera which is sensitive to 256 shades of gray (the human eye can discern 30) and 32 light intensity levels. It can thus see details obscured (to the eye) by sunlight, a flash bulb, a deep shadow, or simply the more limited range of perception. This is not "computer enhancement," which involves operator manipulation, but image processing done by the computer, leaving "little room for human error." Wilson noted that "everything in the visible spectrum has a unique fingerprint."

For the purpose of this study, he examined the Mary Moorman photo, the Zapruder, Nix and Muchmore films, two autopsy photographs, and an "Oswald" backyard photograph. He also examined some photographic materials at the request of Oliver Stone, but those results will not be available until after the release of the film "JFK," per their agreement.

In the Moorman photo, Wilson found a man in the "Badgeman" position, with a badge-shaped piece of metal (bearing an eagle design facing left) on his chest. Near the badge was a rectangular I.D. badge. The man had brown eyes and sideburns, parted his hair on the left, and had a mole below his left eye. The right eye was obscured by the telescopic sight of the gun he was firing. Smoke from a second gun fired near him was visible, though not the second shooter himself. Behind them were a man with binoculars, and another with a "camera-like device". In front of them was Gordon Arnold with his home-movie camera. When the Moorman photo was taken, the limousine was 6.7 feet beyond its position in Z-313. The "helmet man" and the anomalous shape eight feet west of the corner of the knoll fence (House Committee acoustic position) are daylight and foliage effects.

Processing of the assassination films revealed an entrance wound in Kennedy's neck, blood streaming down, near the President's necktie knot. Wilson identified it as being fired by the "primary shooter" on the knoll. He also found an exit wound in the back of the neck, above the entrance wound in the back which he traced to the West end window of the Book Depository's 6th floor. Also visible was a large exit wound in the back of the head. Wilson said a bullet from the primary knoll shooter entered the right side of the President's head, passed through his brain, and exited the rear of his head. He hasn't studied Connally's wounds. Finally, an area in the grassy area above the limousine in the Zapruder film was altered as it moved from right to left in a series of frames (Wilson isn't familiar yet with Zapruder frame numbers).

In the frontal autopsy photo, Wilson located the front entry wound about one-third from the (President's) left within the tracheotomy wound. He also said that the area above the right eye didn't read as flesh, and had apparently been retouched or painted over. In the rear view autopsy photos, he said, the exit wound in the back of the neck was concealed within a fold of skim by a simple expedient of bending the head back instead of forward (the usual procedure) when taking the photos. He found alterations of the rear head photo, concealing the large rear exit wound. The alterations were apparent from the difference in gray level around the margins of the altered areas.

Wilson joined Jack White in declaring the Oswald backyard photo a composite using Oswald's face, noting that enough light had penetrated the overlay and reflected back to allow viewing of a fuzzy image of the original face, which had a bad right eye. The right wrist had a pronounced blemish not visible on photos of

Oswald. The shoes have a military "spit shine." He said the newspapers were layered in last. Light angles indicate the photo was taken about 9:12 a.m., not in the afternoon.

Wilson also traced the "Harper" skull fragment from near the President's head to its landing place in the grass south of Elm St. His presentation was illustrated with a video of the processed images being discussed, and he handled questions quite well. All in all, I found Wilson's process impressive and his presentation convincing. Working with Dr. Wecht, and following further study, he plans to confront the government with a "visual deposition," demanding that the case be reopened on the basis of this new scientific evidence. Considering the government's feeble rebuttals to the acoustics evidence, they might find this stuff a real challenge.

Day Three began with the Ruby Panel. Jerry Rose provided a useful summary of Ruby's activities on November 16-17 and 21-22. Mary Ferrell discussed Ruby's role as an FBI informant, noting that it began just after Oswald applied to attend Albert Schweitzer College and ended when Oswald arrived in Russia, though the FBI said he was still providing them with useful information then. He reported his informant fees to the IRS as "miscellaneous income." In 1963, this category of his income doubled or tripled, she noted. When Ruby was arrested in 1939 during investigation of Chicago's Leon Cooke murder case, the city's Special Agent in Charge of the FBI office was Guy Banister. She got a standing ovation for her work.

John Davis summarized Ruby's Mafia ties, from Chicago to Dallas to New Orleans to Miami and beyond. George Michael Evica discussed Ruby's 1959 meeting at Love Field and its implications (from his book-in-progress). Responding to a question, Mary Ferrell noted that Henry Wade, John Connally, and Walter Cronkite were Law School classmates at the University of Texas in Austin.

Responding to a reference by Joanne Braun, Bob Groden mentioned a recently-discovered videotape filmed the day Ruby was granted a new trial. Ruby tells reporters: "Gentlemen, if Adlai Stevenson had been Vice President, we wouldn't be here today." Asked to explain, he said: "The answer is the man in office now."

Robert Groden began the Single Bullet Theory Panel by noting JFK's rapid left-to-right head turn in the late Z-150s. Gary Shaw ridiculed the SBT, and Larry Harris dismissed it as a matter of faith, not evidence, noting that Bill Alexander had compared it to the Immaculate Conception: either you believe in it or you don't. Cyril Wecht summarized the reasons why SBT was untenable: weight, condition and trajectory. Jim Moore defended the SBT, timing the shot at Z-236/237. He said the first shot hit the curb, injuring James Tague.

The Medical Evidence Panel began with David Lifton's outline of his theory, citing chapters in Best Evidence. He also related how he had obtained his set of autopsy photos "from behind a loaf of bread" in James Fox's country story. Bob Groden and Cyril Wecht also spoke briefly. During the Q&A, Lifton said that when he interviewed Dr. Marion Jenkins, the doctor began by strongly criticizing Kennedy's handling of the Bay of Pigs; that Jenkins later said he agreed with whatever the autopsy photos showed, while Dr. McClelland criticized the X-rays.

Then came the panel of Motive, Means and Opportunity. Mark Lane fingered the CIA. David Lifton discussed the shift in policy relating to the Viet Nam War, noting John Newman's soon-to-be-released book JFK in Vietnam. He said the Pentagon was giving deceptive briefings to the White House, but accurate ones to Lyndon Johnson.

Jim Marrs played the traditional fictional detective, and gathered all of the suspects together in the drawing room: Castro, the Russians, Texas oilmen, the Far Right, the CIA,. the FBI, the military and the defense industry, Lyndon Johnson, and the Mafia. He noted that these were not distinct entities: Texas oilmen may have aided a conspiracy, as may the Far Right; the CIA includes anti-Castro groups. He

pointed out that Hoover had ordered the FBI into the case before anyone invited or ordered the Bureau to participate. He also mentioned reports that LBJ had his own personal hit man.

John Davis fingered the Mafia, with allies in U.S. intelligence and anti-Castro groups. Bob Dorff underlined the military. Dorff, along with Jim Oliver, Joe Nick Patoski, Robin Marra, Dave Tucker and Gary Shaw performed the important role of moderators during the sessions.

"Research Investigation," the evening presentation and final event of the conference (except for some discussion of how to conduct the next one, scheduled for October 21-25, 1992; call 512-467-7979 for information), presented the work of legal investigator John Craig, writer Phillip Rogers, and forensic artist Lois Gibson.

Craig supplies undercover operatives to police agencies, worked as an investigator for Charles Harrelson's defense team, and once employed Harrelson's brother. Rogers is working with Craig on a book about Houston's most notorious unsolved murder case, from Father's Day 1965. Gibson is the nation's leading forensic artist, has worked on cases in 30 states, and made 2000 sketches (composites from witness descriptions and facial reconstructions from skulls to identify victims), with a success rate of 40%, the highest in her field. As their focus was on the Houston case, the assassination information they discovered was incidental, and they decided to present it for JFK researchers to pursue (as Houston's Jerry Hogan and others are already doing).

Craig and Rogers' book will focus on the murder of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Rogers by their son Charles. When police were sent to the home by a suspicious cousin three days later, Charles slipped out a back window and disappeared. His parents' dismembered bodies were found in the kitchen refrigerator. A week after Rogers vanished, the active police investigation of the case was halted by Houston's police chief.

When the National Crime Information Computer (NCIC) went on line in 1967, Houston submitted a "wanted fugitive" form to seek assistance in locating and capturing Rogers, but the FBI failed to enter the data. Learning of this only in 1991 from Craig and Rogers, they twice re-submitted the information, assuming an error had been made, but the Justice Department blocked entry, flatly refusing to cooperate. This baffled Sgt. Jim Binsford, the Houston Police investigator. Houston Police forensic artist Lois Gibson began to work with Craig and Rogers on the case.

The team had learned some surprising things about Charles Rogers. His mother had told family members that Charles was in Dallas on November 22, 1963, then went into hiding in Central America for five months. The murder occurred shortly after she talked about confronting Charles about his involvement in the assassination.

Inside the Rogers house, police found a sophisticated shortwave radio system, and a Colt pistol manufactured without a serial number, from a lot made for the U.S. government. Rogers had no apparent job after 1957, but never lacked for money. He wouldn't talk about what he did for a living and allowed no photos of himself. He maintained several post office boxes, and used several aliases, including Richard Montoya, and Rojas.

Rogers was 41 in 1963. His father (like Lee Oswald's uncle) had been a bookie in the (Maceo branch) Mafia family of Carlos Marcello. His uncle's best friend was the father of professional hit man Charles Harrelson, now in federal prison for the assassination of federal Judge John Wood. Rogers tested at the genius level, and during World War Two was a cryptographer in the Office of Naval Intelligence, reportedly also an excellent shot. A linguist, he became a graduate student in nuclear physics after the war.

Also a pilot, he joined the Civil Air Patrol in the 1950s, while a seismologist for Shell Oil. Through joint exercises with the New Orleans CAP, he met David

Ferrie, with whom he later flew anti-Castro missions over Cuba, and others in Central America.

Recruited in 1956 by the CIA, he remained with Shell Oil until 1957. For a time he was a pilot for Air America, the CIA proprietary in Southeast Asia. A film frame published in Henry Hurt's Reasonable Doubt, which shows Oswald distributing pro-Castro leaflets in New Orleans, may show Rogers at the far left edge, his jacket slung over his shoulder; allegedly also in the photo are CIA operatives Frank Belcher and Leroy Young, as well as a fourth man discussed below, Chauncey Holt.

Shown the "three tramps" photos from Dealey Plaza, friends of Rogers in Houston readily identified "Frenchy" as Rogers. After he "vanished" in 1965, he was involved in the Phoenix (assassination) Program in Viet Nam, and the 1967 search for guerillla leader Che Guevara in Bolivia. While in Houston, he had used Winterland Skating Rink as a "communications drop," the rink that David Ferrie drove to after the assassination.

In 1975, Rogers was declared legally dead for the purposes of probating his parents' will, but he was reported in Guatemala in 1986, working on Iran-contra support activities. Intelligence sources have told Craig that Rogers is still alive, but decline to say where.

Lois Gibson studied the points of identification on existing photos of Rogers (from high school and World War Two), and agreed that he was identical with "Frenchy." She identified the "tall tramp" as Charles Voyde Harrelson, the hit man mentioned above.

By the age of 25, Harrelson had been an award-winning California encyclopedia salesman, but became involved in crime, and by 1963 was on probation for armed robbery, while part owner of a Dallas gun shop. He knew Charles Rogers since childhood, and an anti-Castro activist (another Oswald lookalike) named John Mason. By 1968, Harrelson had been charged several times with murder-for-hire, finally being convicted and sent to prison for Judge Wood's 1979 assassination. When arrested, he told police he had been involved in the Kennedy assassination, a claim he had also made to the man who hired him. Shown the tramps photo, said Penn Jones Jr., he told one researcher "Yeah, that's me," but denied doing any shooting. Since then, he has denied being the man in the photos.

After reading about the renewed Rogers investigation, a man named Chauncy Marvin Holt, a self-described "career criminal," came forward and identified himself as the "old tramp." The same age as Rogers, Holt also tests at the genius level, and is a talented artist. As a pilot in World War Two, he was court-martialed several times. Following the war, he said, he was recruited by hit man Bob Zwick into the Licavoli crime family (tied to the Bonnanno family) in Detroit. He became acquainted with Peter Licavoli, the Mafia boss who later retired to Grace Ranch in Arizona. Holt said he was sent to Havana as an accountant for Meyer Lansky, and there met Santos Trafficante.

Lansky, he said, then got him a job with a CIA front, the International Rescue Committee (discussed in Robert Scheer and Warren Hinkle's July 1965 Ramparts article "The 'Vietnam Lobby'", reprinted in Ramparts Vietnam Primer in 1966). During this period, Holt worked as a master forger (he showed the investigators a boxful of impressive forgeries), producing fake stock certificates for Lansky and Licavoli. He obtained a job at the nation's leading badge company in California, which made the badges for all Federal agencies, as well as many state and local ones. This made it easier for him to provide fraudulent I.D.

Holt stated that he met Richard Montoya (Charles Rogers) in 1959. In 1963, he went to New Orleans, providing Oswald with his phony "Hidell" I.D. and anti-Castro leaflets for some staged incidents (in which he described Oswald as a reluctant participant, sure nobody would buy it). Boxes of the leaflets were later found among

Banister's possessions. In the film frame of Oswald leafletting (above), Holt identified himself as the man at the far right edge, and Lois Gibson confirmed this.

In late November 1963, said Holt, he drove an Oldsmobile station wagon from Grace Ranch to Dallas, accompanied by Mob hit man Charles Nicoletti (named by Johnny Rosselli as one of Kennedy's assassins; Holt is suspected of having later killed Nicoletti in an unrelated matter) and Leo Maceri, and a pilot. He was told they were going to stage an incident (as in New Orleans) that would be blamed on pro-Castroites, and met with anti-Castro militants Orlando Bosch, Homer Echeverria and Antonio Veciana, who supplied them with guns.

The area behind the grassy knoll fence was a parking lot for railroad employees. Holt said he was supplied with a key to the entrance gate (Lee Bowers saw an Oldsmobile station wagon prior to the assassination). Behind the fence on the knoll, Holt said, he met Montoya (Roberts) and Harrelson (whom he knew by reputation). He provided them with handguns and both Secret Service (9 sets) and Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (2 sets) I.D., keeping one ATF I.D. for himself.

When the shots were fired, Holt said he was behind the pergola, but declined to identify the shooters. Craig noted that Holt becomes vague about anything on which there is no statute of limitations. Holt ran to the railroad yards, as arranged, and joined Rogers and Harrelson in the ninth boxcar behind an engine that was about to depart. Seeing them, Lee Bowers ordered the train not to leave and contacted police. The Channel 2 police radio dispatcher broadcast (1:43 p.m.): "they're holding up a north-bound freight train there in the yard, but they want to shake it down first before they let it go."

Police found the three in the boxcar. They identified themselves, said Holt, as ATF undercover agents. Shortly after their arrival at the Sheriff's Department, their release was ordered by FBI SAIC Gordon Shanklin. Holt said they separated, to meet later at the Campisi-owned Cabana Motel, but he missed the other two by minutes. The pilot had gone to Red Bird Airport before the assassination, the others were headed there, so Holt got a ride with Mob courier Eugene Brading, and the three flew back to Grace Ranch. Craig said FBI documents indicate that agents combed small airstrips on the Southwest looking for any record of a "Chuck Rogers."

Holt said he continued working as a forger, as well as doing jobs for the CIA until the Agency dropped him in 1975. Suddenly, he began developing a criminal record again (he had been kept off NCIC until that point), and felt bitter and betrayed. He said he also got tired of being identified as E. Howard Hunt in the tramp photos, and felt that Oswald's daughters should know the truth, that their father was indeed "a patsy."

Holt's reliability is not certain. Lois Gibson felt that his identification of the three tramps is verified by all points of identification. Holt has given eight hours of videotaped deposition, which have been given to the Assassination Information Center in Dallas. Craig said the Houston Police have verified Holt's ties to the CIA.

Clearly, neither the Tom Wilson presentation nor the Craig/Rogers/Gibson presentation can simply be taken at face value, but both appear solid enough to deserve further study. If the data from both can be confirmed, the ASK conference may have seen a turning point in this case.

SOURCES: The two Tom Wilson articles cited above; the author's 33 typed pages of notes from the ASK conference sessions; a press release issued by Craig and Rogers in connection with their presentation; the Critics Transcript of the Dallas Police Radio Tapes; Ramparts Vietnam Primer pp. 26-31; Anthony Summers, Conspiracy (1981, McGraw-Hill) p. 321.

*216 N. Webster Apt 2, Saginaw, MI 48602