the emotional feeling came within me that someone owed this debt to our beloved President to save her the ordeal of coming back," Ruby said. "I don't know why that came through my mind." 59

As for the possibility that Ruby and Oswald knew each other, the Commission categorically ruled it out.

...[T]here have been numerous specific allegations that Oswald was seen in the company of Ruby prior to November 22, often at Ruby's Carousel Club. All such allegations have been investigated, but the Commission has found none which merits credence.

In all but a few instances where the Commission was able to trace the claim to its source, the person responsible for the report either denied making it or admitted that he had no basis for the original allegation. Frequently those responsible for the allegations have proved to be persons of erratic memory or dubious mental stability.⁶⁰

The Commission also gave little credence to suggestions that Ruby might have had lies to organized crime. A short section in the Warren Report was dedicated to the subject. In it, the Commission stated that any links Ruby may have had with the mob were undoubtedly limited to the professional gamblers who frequented his clubs. Law enforcement agencies, the Commission wrote, had thoroughly investigated the matter and were satisfied that Ruby was in no way affiliated with La Cosa Nostra families then operating in the United States.

As he finished reading the Warren Report, Howard Donahue was no more inclined to believe the Commission's critics than before. The Commission's exhaustive account of the events and people in Dallas seemed more than sufficient in his mind to resolve any doubts that may have existed.

Still, fairness required that he examine both sides of the story. He knew that for his *True* article to be credible, he would have to deal with the arguments made by those who did not believe the government's explanation of the killing.

And so, buying a little more time from his editor, Donahue found every book he could on the assassination and started to read.

THE CRITICS

others like him were fast becoming a minority by the mid-1960s. A survey conducted by *The Washington Post* in October 1966 found that 60 percent of the American people rejected the 'main arguments' of the Warren Commission's findings and had "deep and abiding doubts about the official explanation" of the assassination. This skepticism was driven by, and in turn, driving, a tremendous amount of written material about Kennedy's death. By the time Donahue began his research, dozens of articles and close to twenty books had been written on the murder. Most were sharply critical of the Warren Report.

In tone and content, the books ranged from the sensationalistic to the scholarly, while their titles often reflected competing conspiracy theories that seemed to mushroom monthly in the dark, uncertain aftermath of the shooting: Oswald: Assassin or Fall Guy?. The Marren Second Oswald, Inquest, Whitewash I—The Report on the Warren The Report, Whitewash II—The FBI—Secret Service Cover-Up, Rush to Judgment, The Bastard Bullet.

Alleged conspirators ranged from disgruntled Cubans to the Russians to the Central Intelligence Agency, organized crime, right-wing fanatics, or any combination of the above. Writers sustained these theories with what they claimed were a host of unanswered questions, bizarre coincidences and outright contradictions in the Warren Commission's findings. The red flags emerged after reporters and writers began scrutinizing the Commission's twenty-six volumes of transcripts and evidence and after they started talking to witnesses the Commission chose not to hear.

One of the areas of greatest doubt centered on what quickly and derisively became known as the Commission's "magic bullet" theory: the claim that both Connally and Kennedy were wounded by the same bullet, probably the first Oswald fired. According to the critics,

in commission grand surfly and the conformation of strong and the conformation of strong MORTAL ERROR

brief and but He did point out that in the Altgens picture, taken just after the first was shot was fired, no crack was visible on the limousine windshield. finally came up, Weisberg dismissed it out of hand. But despite his ricocheted, and struck the windshield with a fragment was unsupcarrier claim, he could provide no photographs that refuted the thesis noon with the king of the critics. Through lunch, Weisberg comdrove to Weisberg's farm in western Maryland and spent the afterported by the photographic record. he'd collected over the years. When the subject of Donahue's theory plained bitterly about the University of Maryland's refusal to accept his donation of the thousands of assassination-related documents This vote of no confidence notwithstanding, Howard and Katie

British of the

wearing white was visible through the windshield at exactly the place where the crack was later found. This likely further masked the have made the crack invisible from the front. As well, a bystander Donahue responded by noting that the bright sunlight that day may

renevel.

presence of the broken glass in the Altgens photo.

Jest and John J. Mary Brangari The stand of the stand ments." Donahue smiled wanly to himself. Weisberg's understanding of the fragments was exactly backward. An M-16 bullet—or any the then denosite for then deposits fragments on the side opposite from where it enters.

This was clearly demonstrated by the melatic kit. Weisberg nonetheless remained adamant in his belief that the head shot came from the front, from the grassy knoll. At one point he leaned forward conspiratorially and told Howard, "I have proof the

This was clearly demonstrated by the gelatin block tests the House Select Committee had conducted in 1977-78. Photos showed the M-16 round fired by committee marksmen shattered and tumbled before spraying multiple, minute fragments forward, to the front of the block, opposite from the side the bullet entered on. (See illustraafter striking the gelatin and caused enormous "tissue" damage

Mary Mary Xtion 26.) replicated exactly the one Kennedy suffered, although this was never weapon capable of inflicting a frontal wound as massive as Kennedy's acknowledged by the committee. Moreover, Donahue knew the only seen with a shotgun along Elm Street. would have been a shotgun fired from a few feet away. No shotgun pellets were found in Kennedy's brain and, obviously, no one was In fact, the shattering, fragmenting "wound" in the gelatin nearly

Tank.

Donahue did point out that in his opinion, the bullet's trajectory technicalities to Weisberg as the old man held court that afternoon. explosive disintegration and the size of the entrance wound proved Hickey had fired the last shot. He did not, however, belabor the arms and ballistics. And it was equally obvious the critic had point. It was obvious Weisberg knew absolutely nothing about firedesire to begin learning now Of course, the gunsmith mentioned none of these troublesome

> Horn has a land with while by the grant of the HOPE DIES, HARD

sity couldn't care less about his painstakingly amassed collection of assassination documents and, to top it off, his conclusions, about how critic good-bye. More than anything else, the Donahues felt sorry for seventy years old who'd given a good part of his life to studying the Weisberg as they drove home that evening. Here was a man over Kennedy assassination. Now his health was failing, the state univer-Kennedy died were Aat wrong. De This mean he want NM TO And so the day faded and Howard and Katie bid the venerable he

have to finish the investigation on his own. He knew there was an important subject that needed to be reexamined in greater detail: the Secret Service in general and, in particular, their actions in Dallas. Following the encounter with Weisberg, Howard realized he would

What more could he learn?

Like many twentieth-century American institutions, the Secret Service was forged in the caldron of the Civil War. Originally, the Service was conceived as part of the Treasury Department and charged with investigating and combating currency counterfeiting, picked up the additional duty of protecting the President.2 assassination of President William McKinley in 1901 that the agency which was endemic in the war years. It was not until after the

sophisticated research division that today undertakes the daunting children and visiting heads of state.3 The agency also developed a Service continues to retain authority in cases involving counterfeit task of identifying and monitoring potential assassins. As well, the president, the President-elect, major presidential candidates, former Presidents and their wives, widows of former Presidents, presidential In time the Service would also be responsible for shielding the vice

dangerous, difficult and relentlessly stressful. Even in earlier, less a free and open society. This image is not exaggerated, for the job is dominate the public's perception of the famous organization. The American hero in recent decades: strong, courageous, and willing to lay down his or her life in the blink of an eye to defend the leader of Secret Service agent has emerged as something of an archetypal But it remains the President's stoic, steadfast bodyguards who

violent times, the lot of an agent was a hard one.

Kentuckian Edmund Starling worked on the White House protecatmosphere of grinding pressure agents face as they wrestle with the by Thomas Sugrue in 1946, provides one of the most detailed the American people a degree of access to their leader. nearly incompatible goals of protecting the President and allowing glimpses of the day-to-day life of an agent. The book captures the tion detail for thirty years, from 1914 to 1944. His biography, written

enervating journey-accompanying President Wilson to Philadelphia for the second game of the World Series in 1915: In one of his many letters home, Starling recounts a typically

Monday, September 14, 1987 anan S. The Jerusalem Post

by The Washington Post. The cable address on his business cards reads: "SLEUTH." Nicholas "the dean of American private eyes" inch an ex-cop, heads "Beltrante & Beltrante, saxtyish, Investigations" and has been called Associates, Worldwide Professiona days Sun

tor of police in Washington, DC, charging \$1,000 a day "plus ex-penses." He charges \$50 an hour sionally, he takes on a case himself -: spends most of his time overseeing of his associates, who keep \$20 an (plus expenses) for the work of each the work of 22 associates. Occa-Beltrante, a former chief inspec-

Beltrante personally takes only cases "with very large fees" or of "great interest." He is currently inassassination of President John Kenexpert Howard Donahue, the 1963 vestigating, together with ballistics hour for themselves. initially very sceptical. "I took it up years ago and said: 'I have only \$500. But read my report.'" Beltrante was nedy. "Howard came to me four fetched. But the report convinced very reluctantly. It seemed farpersonally takes only

ments - the bullet that struck Kenfired from Lee Harvey Oswald's nifle. The wrong calibre." nedy in the back of the head and analysis of remaining metal frag-"showed" that - on the basis of killed him "could not have been The 40-page Donahue report

Service agents who was in the car behind the president's. "What haplet in fact came from a "special weapon" held by one of the Secret pened was that after the first-shot or Donahue determined that the bul-

'The bullet that killed JFK was fired by a Secret Service agent'

rivate eve

halt. off a shot, the shot that killed the shots the president's car jerked to a to protect the president." came to an abrupt stop - and the president. Secret Service agent accidentally let refused to admit this as it would have discredited the agency whose job it is The Secret Service car then But the administration

further back. I don't want to be a victim of a Secret Service agent." for a fact" - that several weeks after men in the car following: his car and told the Secret Servicethe assassination, while driving in Texas, President Johnson stopped Beltrante relates - "we know this "Keep

actions." the telephone. We have him under surveillance." He declines to give the name because of "possible libel the breakdown to the assassination breakdown." Beltrante attributes half later. He suffered an emotional retired from the service a year and a backup car was responsible. He was mined which agent in the Kennedy like a recluse. He refuses to answer "He hasn't worked since. He lives Beltrante says: "We have deter-We have him under

makes the profession look ridicu-lous." vision is far-fetched, exaggerated. It ly in the U.S., misrepresent the Their life-style as portrayed on teleprofession of private investigator. He says that the "media, especial-

> BENNY MORRIS ¥



Nicholas Beltrante

good portrayal of the trade. Raymond Chandler? "Good, de-He names Sam Spade in Dashiell Hammett's The Maltese Falcon as a tives in literature is more realistic." that the "treatment of private detecfinitely." But Beltrante isn't up on name means "brave warrior"), says Beltrante, of Italian stock (his

generally don't ask clients, 'Why do tions of people or businesses. year, mostly "background investiga-His firm handles 750-1,000 cases a

sion. But only about 100 of them are In Israel there are four or five. each country. We know each other. good, capable, worldwide. "It is a growing profes-100,000 private investigators working in the U.S., and perhaps 150,000 you want this done?" Beltrante says there are around serious, a handful

the profession generally is steadily gaining recognition and respectabilused by the Federal Trade Commisvate investigators on a contract basis." Beltrante himself has been so ity. "The CIA and the Justice Department now occasionally use pri-Nonetheless, Beltrante believes

hire him for illegal purposes? Is there a danger that a client will

and usually illegally businesses. which people or companies covertly vestigate. I don't normally go into the 'whys.' " He himself usually handles "short trading" cases -"Look, the law allows us to inbuy out

burglary was on June 17, my birthgate the Watergate burglary. "The McGovern for President to investi-Committee to Elect Senator George In 1972 Beltrante was hired by the

> day. A few days later, I was hired. I was asked to determine who was responsible and why."

Page Four inou

Lean

were tapped [by the authorities] -and they were. That's why I was asked by Congresswomen Bella time, politicians didn't trust the hired." Abzug to see if her office phones and the police. For example, federal law enforcement agencies federal investigations. federal investigations. "At Beltrante's investigation ran con I was

to get hold of their records. Yes, we Watergate - had rented rooms near the offices of the Committee to Elect later found were implicated After a four-month investigation, Beltrante "discovered that Gordon filtrated [by Liddy men] who wanted McGovern committee had been in-McGovern. We also discovered Liddy's men - some of whom it was had the names." the

copy of All the President's Men."
Beltrante "firmly believes that changed information, though I know during the investigation. "We exthing. They sent me the first signed had, just as I didn't give them everythey didn't give me everything they Bob Woodward worked with him Post reporters Carl Bernstein Beltrante recalls that Washington

stein and Woodward called sources and contacts whom Bernor source; "it was a combination of Deep Throat was no specific person Throat."

which has a ceiling of 300 investiga-City, is president-elect of the Coun-cil of International Investigators, Beltrante, who hails from Atlantic