

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 ties 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 Casa 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.

3

THE CRITICS

FOR ALL OF DONAHUE'S CONFIDENCE IN THE Warren Report, he and 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.¹ 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.² 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 Warren Report, Whitewash I—The Report on the Warren Report*, *Whitewash II—The FBI—Secret Service Cover-Up, Rush to Judgment, The Bastard Bullet*. *Not a 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,

Dear Times, I just got home from a pilgrimage to the grave of Lord. Before my departure I thought of writing this article about JFK's assassination. All glory is all yours! Monday, September 14, 1987 The Jerusalem Post Page Four

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

Occupation: Private eye

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

Beltrante, a former chief inspector of police in Washington, DC, spends most of his time overseeing the work of 22 associates. Occasionally, he takes on a case himself, charging \$1,000 a day, plus expenses. He charges \$50 an hour (plus expenses) for the work of each of his associates, who keep \$20 an hour for themselves.

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

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

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

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

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

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

He says that the "media, especially in the U.S., misrepresent the profession of private investigator. Their life-style as portrayed on television is far-fetched, exaggerated. It makes the profession look ridiculous."



contemporary detective fiction. His firm handles 750-1,000 cases a year, mostly "background investigations of people or businesses. I generally don't ask clients, 'Why do you want this done?'"

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

Nonetheless, Beltrante believes the profession generally is steadily gaining recognition and respectability. "The CIA and the Justice Department now occasionally use private investigators on a contract basis." Beltrante himself has been so used by the Federal Trade Commission.

Is there a danger that a client will hire him for illegal purposes? "Look, the law allows us to investigate. I don't normally go into the 'whys.' He himself usually handles "short trading" cases - in which people or companies covertly and usually illegally buy out businesses."

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

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

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

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

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

Beltrante "firmly believes that *Deep Throat* was no specific person or source: "It was a combination of sources and contacts whom Bernstein and Woodward called Deep Throat."

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



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