

O'Neill Blows Lid Off JFK Coverup

EXCLUSIVE TO THE SPOTLIGHT

By Mark Lane

Almost 25 years ago John F. Kennedy, president of the United States, was shot to death in the presence of his wife, his aides and his advisers who rode in various limousines in a Dallas motorcade. "The best, the brightest and the most devoted" saw his head explode upon the impact of a high-velocity bullet.

For almost a quarter of a century those closest to Kennedy have conspired, upon the initiative of the FBI, to conceal from the American people the truth about his death.

In his autobiography "Man of the House: The Life and Political Memoirs of Speaker Tip O'Neill," Tip O'Neill devotes less than one page to the subject. Yet with a few words he devastates any notion that the truth was told by the Warren Commission or that those closest to the late president cared to discover who killed him or why.

So much for loyalty and devotion to the truth. Now for conspiracy.

Kenneth P. O'Donnell had been the special assistant to Kennedy since the inauguration. His duties were to make decisions about the president's appointments and itineraries. David Powers, Kennedy's closest aide, traveled with O'Donnell and the president on "Air Force One" on November 21, 1963 to Houston and Fort Worth, Texas.

Together O'Donnell, Powers, the president and the first lady arrived at Love Field, Dallas at about 11:30 am on November 22. The president, Texas Gov. John Connally and their wives were ushered into an open limousine for the trip through Dallas.

Kennedy's closest aides, O'Donnell and Powers, were seated alongside each other on the jump seats in the Secret Service automobile directly behind the presidential limo. O'Donnell and Powers were but a few feet from Kennedy when he was killed at 12:30 pm in Dealey Plaza, Dallas. They were among the most important witnesses to the murder.

TOLD: 'COMMIT PERJURY'

Neither O'Donnell nor Powers told the Warren Commission (appointed by Lyndon B. Johnson, ostensibly to dis-

cover the truth about the death of the president) the truth. Both were told to commit perjury by agents of the FBI.

Now a quarter of a century after the fact, the inside story has emerged as O'Neill, no longer in office, has decided to reveal some of the details. The revelations make Watergate and the Iran-"contra" scandals appear far less important.

The crime covered up here was no burglary, third rate or professional; it was the assassination of the president of the United States.

In O'Neill's newly published book he writes:

I was never one of those people who had doubts or suspicions about the Warren Commission's report on the president's death. But five years after Jack died, I was having dinner with Kenny O'Donnell and a few other people at Jimmy's Harborside Restaurant in Boston, and we got to talking about the assassination.

I was surprised to hear O'Donnell say that he was sure he had heard two shots that came from behind the fence.

"That's not what you told the Warren Commission," I said.

"You're right," he replied. "I told the FBI what I had heard, but they said it couldn't have happened that way and that I must have been imagining things. So I testified the way they wanted me to.

"I just didn't want to stir up any more pain and trouble for the family."

"I can't believe it," I said. "I wouldn't have done that in a million years. I would have told the truth."

"Tip, you have to understand. The family—everybody—wanted this thing behind them."

Dave Powers was with us at dinner that night, and his recollection of the shots was the same as O'Donnell's. Kenny O'Donnell is no longer alive, but during the writing of this book I checked with Dave Powers. As they say in the news business, he stands by his story.

And so there will always be some skepticism in my mind about the cause of Jack's death.

I used to think that the only people who doubted the conclusions of the Warren Commission were crackpots. Now, however, I'm not so sure. But I'd rather focus on Jack's life.

On May 18, 1964 at 12:05 pm O'Donnell's testimony was taken by the Warren Commission lawyer who journeyed to the White House for the occasion.

O'Donnell was asked where he thought the shots came from. He answered, cryptically, "My reaction in

part is reconstruction—is that they came from the right rear."

The "right rear" fit the FBI-CIA preconceived cover story that Lee Harvey Oswald, stationed to the right and rear of the president on the sixth floor of a Texas School Book Depository, was the lone assassin.

TRUTH KNOWN

The truth, that the fatal shot was fired from behind a wooden fence on the grassy knoll looming in front of the president, was known by O'Donnell.

Based upon FBI subornation O'Donnell committed apparent perjury. Yet he obviously was concerned enough about potential legal and historical complications to assert that his position was based at least in part upon "reconstruction."

Any lawyer seeking the facts would have been alarmed at the word "reconstruction" and would have probed the ramifications of its application to the crucial testimony. However, the Warren Commission lawyers quickly skipped to another subject.

The lawyer questioning O'Donnell was a young liberal Democrat from the office of the Philadelphia district attorney. His name was Arlen Specter. Specter's role in obfuscating the facts about the assassination of Kennedy earned him sufficient fame so that upon returning to Philadelphia he became a conservative Republican, ran for the office of district attorney, defeated his former boss and subsequently became a member of the U.S. Senate.

Specter, whose rise to prominence was over the body of the president and the truth about his death, now plays a central role in determining whether or not Judge Robert Bork has sufficient integrity to be a member of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Accompanying Specter to the White House to listen to the suborned perjury was Norman Redlich. This young professor achieved sufficient fame in suppressing the facts about the death of the president to secure promotion.

He became dean of the New York University School of Law—again proving the validity of the ancient Texas political maxim that if you wish to get along you had better go along.

FISHY AFFIDAVIT

Powers declined to testify and the Warren Commission declined to call him as a witness. Instead, Powers offered an affidavit in which he tentatively stated only that he had had "a fleeting impression that the noise (gunfire) appeared to come from the front" but that his fleeting impression may have resulted from his "feeling" that he "might have ridden into an ambush."

Powers, less trusting than O'Donnell, apparently feared that any lawyer with a modicum of intelligence or curiosity about the facts might have probed his statement about fleeting impressions and feelings. Therefore he wrote a document which could not be questioned.

His fears proved to be in vain; Specter and Redlich eagerly accepted without question the FBI-suborned perjury.

O'Neill came off better than O'Donnell and Powers in "Man of the House." O'Neill is heard to assert that he never would have covered up the



THOMAS "TIP" O'NEILL

... Reveals important JFK information.

truth "in a million years."

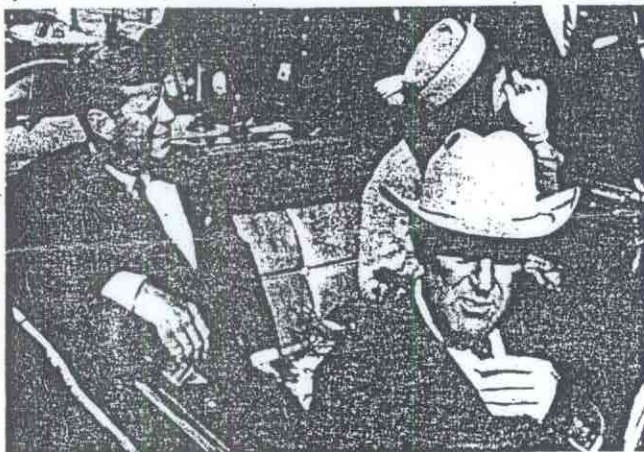
It is natural that O'Neill emerges unscathed. He wrote the book. May I add a footnote?

During 1975 I moved to Washington in an attempt to convince the U.S. Congress to investigate the assassination of Kennedy. After considerable expenditure of energy, in which I personally briefed 100 members of Congress and 1,800 congressional staff employees, and in which our organization, the Citizen's Commission of Inquiry, secured 1 million letters, telegrams and names on petitions, our efforts were successful.

The major obstacle we faced, however, during the long struggle, was the adamant refusal of O'Neill, the leader of the Democratic Party, to permit the House to vote on the resolution establishing the House Select Committee on Assassinations.

Now we learn that O'Neill's opposition to the investigation was not innocently comprised of ignorance. He knew that the Warren Commission investigation was flawed, that his friends and associates had lied to the commission and that the FBI had suborned perjury in the White House.

If FBI agents had sufficient temerity to advise two important White House aides to commit perjury in their appearance before the Warren Commission, one can only imagine how they influenced the testimony of the hundreds of other witnesses, all of whom they interviewed at length before they testified before the Warren Commission.



President John F. Kennedy is pictured with his wife and Texas Gov. John Connally shortly before the assassination in Dallas, Texas on November 21, 1963.