

Books Say Kennedy Death

BY OWEN FINDSEN
Entertainment Reporter

The attempt to assassinate President Reagan this week has brought attention back to the still unresolved controversies surrounding the assassination of President Kennedy. With new theories and new evidence coming to light, many people are hoping Reagan's experience will cause him to reopen the investigation of the Kennedy case.

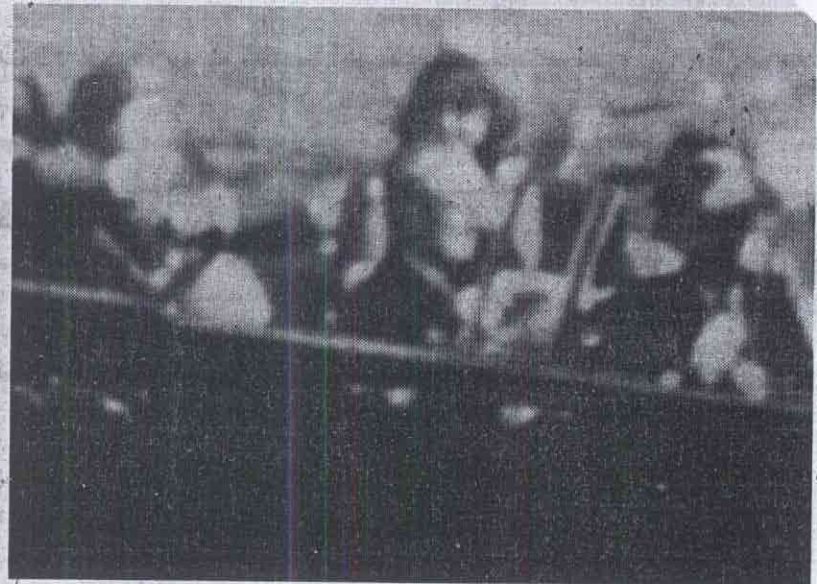
Author David Lifton's astounding suggestion that President Kennedy's body was medically altered before the autopsy was recently published in *Best Evidence* (MacMillan, \$16.95). Next week, another study will present "the definitive story" in *The Plot To Kill The President* (Times Books, \$14.95) written by two government investigators, G. Robert Blakey and Richard N. Billings. Blakey was Chief Counsel and Staff Director of the House Select Committee on Assassinations and Billings was Editorial Director of the same House Committee.

Despite the authors' connections with the official investigation, their book is not an official report. It is, rather, the conclusion of two individuals who were closely connected with the \$5.5 million Congressional investigation which ruled in 1978 that the Warren Commission's report was wrong in stating that there was no conspiracy to assassinate President Kennedy. They present evidence to show, they believe once and for all, that members of organized crime planned and executed the assassination.

DAVID LIFTON'S two casket theory grew out of the same House Committee report. "Before that report was published," Lifton said, "all I had to support my theory was an ambulance chase at Bethesda Naval Hospital," Lifton said.

Lifton had been working on his theory for 14 years. "I had become a burden to my family. I had spent 10 years researching this thing and four years writing the book. There I was about to publish my book and I find smack in the middle of this thing a mystery I didn't even know existed!"

Lifton's book might have been more acceptable if he hadn't pur-



THIS SCENE in Dallas, showing President Kennedy being shot, has been used as the basis for many a book on the assassination.

sued the new information which sprang out at him when he noticed a reference to a body bag in the official report. "As my theory was originally conceived I thought someone had altered the body of the President at Bethesda in Washington." Now there was a curious discrepancy. Kennedy's body was wrapped in a sheet when it left Dallas but was in a military body bag when it arrived in Washington. Retracing his earlier steps, Lifton discovered that Kennedy's body was placed in a bronze ceremonial casket in Washington and arrived in Washington in a plain shipping casket.

LIFTON MADE videotapes of his interviews. If his book seems doubtful, the tapes are conclusive. Discovering that the body arrived at Bethesda without a brain, the X-ray technician who photographed the head folds his hands together. "I could put my hands inside the head," he says on the tape. He also describes carrying the X-rays when he saw the bronze casket arrive with Mrs. Kennedy.

But Lifton is frustrated. He cannot get any network television program to show his film. He cannot get any paperback publisher to buy his book. "They say it is just for hard core assassination

fanatics, but we've got 117,000 copies in print in hardback and we're into the fifth printing.

"We've got to get into paperback to reach a large audience and we need the attention of network television before we can convince someone in Congress to work to reopen the investigation."

Lifton's idea that the body was switched from one casket to another so that it could be altered to eliminate evidence of a second assassination implies a bizarre scenario which was not intended. "I have an idea of what was supposed to happen, but that's not in the book. What happened is a botched scenario. That's why it's so bizarre. The reviewers are criticizing the book despite the evidence I have presented. I don't know what to do with people who ignore evidence in favor of their ideas about how this country works."

IN LIFTON'S view "the body is the way to get to the bottom of the assassination." Blakey and Billings care little about the events of the assassination day, but are concerned with the people who had cause to kill the President. They present the acoustic evidence from recordings of the shooting to demonstrate there was a second rifleman on the

Unresolved

THE DEFINITIVE STORY



THE COVER from Lifton's new examination of the Kennedy assassination.

CINCINNATI ENQUIRER

grassy knoll in Dallas. They believe that his shot missed, but confirm his presence to show that a conspiracy did exist.

The Mafia felt they had bought President Kennedy by delivering the votes that won Illinois for him, Blakey and Billings say. They further compromised him by having Frank Sinatra provide Judith Campbell as a presidential mistress. But Robert Kennedy as Attorney General pursued the mob so diligently that its very existence was threatened. It was for that that both Kennedys died.

Clearly written and carefully researched, the Blakey and Billings book presents a clear-cut case to place the blame on the Mafia but fails to answer the questions of official deception and cover-up that many investigators, including Lifton, have raised.

"We're still at the stage with this case as we were with Watergate when it was considered a third rate burglary," Lifton said. "I used to think that my book would set the whole thing in motion but I've discovered that you can't control history. You can just put the message out like a message in a bottle thrown into the sea . . . and hope somebody reads it."