

The JFK killing: Questions

Best Evidence: Disguise And Deception In The Assassination Of John F. Kennedy, by David S. Lifton.

Collier Macmillan, 747 pages, \$18.95

By Henry Mietkiewicz Toronto Star

It sometimes seems that the American national pastime is not baseball, but concocting wild theories about the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

In the 17½ years since Kennedy was shot in Dallas, dozens of books have blamed the murder on the Russians, the Cubans, the Chinese, the neo-Nazis — just about everyone except the Martians, and even they may not be above suspicion.

Into this mess of hype and delusion comes *Best Evidence*, a remarkably level-headed examination by New York physicist David S. Lifton, 41, who has spent over 15 years assembling data to support his views.

Unfortunately, his hypothesis, when reduced from over 700 pages to a few lines, makes Lifton sound as bad as all the crackpots. He believes that Kennedy was actually shot twice from the front by a mysterious marksman hiding behind a grassy knoll ahead of the motorcade.

Lifton claims that when the body arrived at Andrews Air Force Base, it was secretly taken to Walter Reed Army Hospital, where unknown conspirators altered the corpse to make it seem as though Lee Harvey Oswald had shot the President from behind.

The body was then cleverly smuggled into Bethesda Naval Hospital for the autopsy, where well-intentioned doctors arrived at incorrect conclusions based on misleading information. As a result, the Warren Commission and subsequent inquiries were founded on lies.

What separates Lifton from the nuts is his exhaustive documentation and a cool, academic approach that never slips into sensationalism. By tracing the evolution of his theory in autobiographical form, Lifton also

makes a highly detailed subject easy to understand and he turns his book into a suspenseful murder mystery.

Over and over, he finds discrepancies between medical information at Dallas and Bethesda, unearths suspicious references in obscure government records and interviews bit players whose part in the drama had never been properly explored.

Lifton never flatly blames anyone for the assassination, although the complicity of the Secret Service is strongly implied. For the moment, he'd just be happy to see an official admission that we've all been dupes in a colossal ruse.

It's unlikely Lifton will get his wish, but *Best Evidence* remains a frightening and thoroughly believable alternative to the accepted version of Kennedy's death.



David Lifton suggests that the Secret Service was involved in JFK's assassination.