

Expert says Oswald TV show will be waste of time

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Although millions of Americans will sit down tonight to watch ABC's fact-and-fiction account of what might have happened had Lee Harvey Oswald gone to trial, the man who probably knows more about the John Kennedy assassination than anyone else says he would "rather save what time I have for other purposes."

It is not that Harold Weisberg considers Oswald unworthy of scrutiny—Oswald, in fact, was the subject of one of the more than half-dozen books Weisberg has written on recent U.S. political assassinations.

The reason for Weisberg's disinterest is that he feels none of the major television networks has yet done a "major, responsible show" on political

assassinations and thinks it highly unlikely that tonight's two-part alleged blockbuster will be the first.

For openers, the show was produced by Lawrence Schiller, a man Weisberg describes as "utterly unscrupulous." Before his latest attempt to cash in on the Kennedy assassination, Schiller served as an agent for Oswald's killer, Jack Ruby. "Through that enterprise, says Weisberg, Schiller sucked up more than 50 per cent of all earnings, leaving his client dying in a Dallas jail without enough to even pay for his attorney fees. More recently, Schiller tried to negotiate rights to the life story of Gary Gilmore just prior to his execution in Utah.

In Schiller's version of the assassination aftermath, Oswald, as in reality, ends up dead, but not before he

has stood trial. He is shot while the jury is out, and it is left to the viewing public to decide his guilt or innocence and to ponder the question of whether he acted alone or in conspiracy with others.

Reality, according to Weisberg, leaves less doubt than ABC. A thorough examination of the facts, he says, leads to the unavoidable conclusion that Lee Harvey Oswald was involved in a crime which was "beyond the capacity of any one man."

Weisberg's assertion is supported by more than a dozen years of intensive investigation. A 64-year-old former ace reporter and Senate investigator who chucked it all in the 1950's for the "peace, quiet and integrity" of being a Maryland chicken farmer, Weisberg was lured back into public affairs after the Kennedy killing when he

"realized that nobody was talking about anything but what the officials were saying."

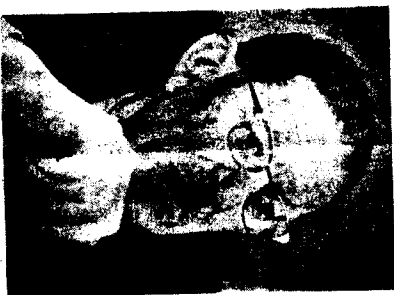
What the officials were saying, of course, and what many of them are still saying, was that the assassination was the act of a lone screwball named Oswald. But an examination of the facts, insists Weisberg, exposes that account as not only implausible but impossible.

Even at his best moment, Oswald was a "duffer," says Weisberg, who was in Madison today prior to a speaking engagement at Milton College. In addition, Oswald was a lousy shot, scoring only one point above minimum standards while in the Marine Corps.

Nonetheless, the Warren Commission had him delivering three devastatingly accurate rounds in five seconds from a World War II vintage Italian bolt-action rifle which Weisberg says has been described as "Missoulin's contribution to humanitarian warfare" because it was so flawed in design and construction as to be nearly harmless.

The issue of the rifle is just one of a number of troubling aspects of the assassination which cast a shadow of suspicion on the Warren Commission findings. Not least among the others, adds Weisberg, is the question: "Why would Oswald, charged with killing a cop and the president of the United States, feel his wife not to be worthy that help would come at the right time?"

Within 24 hours of making that remark, Oswald was dead. And within a brief time, the man who killed him



Harold Weisberg

was also dead. Weisberg is convinced that to their graves they look with them a terrible secret.

After more than a decade of nearly fulltime research, he still does not know that secret. Almost alone among conspiracy buffs, he has no exotic theories—at least any that he's willing to share—about who killed John Kennedy.

He is also nearly alone among conspiracy theorists in his belief that the murders of John Kennedy, Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King were unrelated, unconnected, at least in that no two of the three murders could have been committed by the same parties.

Weisberg does believe, however, that in a less specific but even more

fundamental way, the killings were very much related. He asserts that each of the assassinations was conceived in the same dark ideological quarters, that each was a product of the same right-wing view of the world. And each killing, he adds ominously, was successful. Each murder helped turn U.S. policy further to the right. It is that effect on policy, that bypassing of the democratic process, which frightens Weisberg.

"Assassination is the most subversive of crimes in a representative society," he said. And when confronted with that most serious of crimes, he added, "every institution of our society has failed."

Weisberg does not view the blunders and "cover-ups" of the various agencies and commissions which have investigated the assassinations as the work of the same conspirators who were responsible for the murders themselves. Rather, he attributes the investigative bungling to a number of other factors, including the "self-preservation mechanisms of bureaucracies."

Those mechanisms are still much in fact, according to Weisberg, who claims that the current official effort at investigating J.F.K.'s murder will come no closer to the truth than the Warren Commission.

The House committee now studying the assassination is "utterly irresponsible," he is charged. "They don't know what they're doing and they don't know how to do it." The committee's investigation, he predicted, will end with simply "another great disstatement."