

Watching the Detectives

An Armchair Guide to the Crime of the Century by David Reitzes

In 1979, there were an estimated 600 books written on the subject of John F. Kennedy's assassination, 34 years ago this Nov. 22. The number has probably doubled since then, making it even more difficult to winnow the wheat from the chaff. What follows is a selective listing of the most important and useful texts, plus a number of commonly available duds.

The President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy, Report, a.k.a. *The Report of the Warren Commission* (1964): The world-famous lone assassin theory, in which a warehouse employee with a shady past makes marksmanship history with a defective junk rifle. Commission members Richard Russell and Hale Boggs privately disavowed the single-bullet theory, without which the case for one gunman evaporates.

The President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy, Hearings (1964): These 26 volumes of appendices, containing selected hearings and exhibits before the Commission, have a strange tendency to contradict the Report's conclusions.

The House Select Committee to Study the Assassination of Presi-

dent Kennedy, Report and Hearings (1979): In the mid-'70s, Sen. Richard Schweiker and others began pushing for a Congressional probe into the assassination. Schweiker said, "I think the Warren Commission has collapsed like a house of cards. And I believe the Warren Commission was set up at the time to feed pabulum to the American

people for reasons not yet known, and that one of the biggest cover-ups in the history of our country occurred at that time."

The HSCA Report, while largely supporting the Warren Report, concludes—partially due to fraudulent analysis of a police audio recording which allegedly proves at least two gunmen—that Kennedy was "probably" the victim of a conspiracy. The real issue—the overwhelming pattern of forged

and suppressed evidence in all aspects of the case—was again ignored, and the "acoustics evidence" marts practically every book written on the case since 1979. (See Livingstone, *Killing the Truth*, for the whole story.)

Jim Bishop, *The Day Kennedy Was Shot* (Bantam, 1969): A notoriously inaccurate account of honest investigation, voices his theory about how—*yawn*—the Mob killed Kennedy.

Walt Brown, *The People V. Lee Harvey Oswald* (Carroll & Graf, 1992): Could Oswald have been convicted of the assassination? Brown's fictional trial is definitively researched, and the writing is witty and insightful.

Don DeLillo, *Libra: A Novel* (Viking, 1988): A fictional scenario postulating Oswald as one gunman in a relatively small-scale conspiracy. DeLillo's done his homework, but he makes the

up call to anyone who believes the Commission conducted a serious investigation.

Edward J. Epstein, *Counterplot* (Viking Press, 1969): A scathing look at the Jim Garrison investigation which later became the basis for Oliver Stone's JFK.

Edward J. Epstein, *Legend: The Secret World of Lee Harvey Oswald* (Reader's Digest Press, 1978): Ultimately more revealing about dis-sension within the CIA than about Oswald, who is depicted in typically myopic fashion. *The Assassination Chronicles* (Carroll & Graf, 1992) collects the three Epstein books with new forewords and afterwords.

Gaeton Fonzi, *The Last Investigation* (Thunder's Mouth Press, 1993): An HSCA investigator explains why the Committee failed. Recommended.

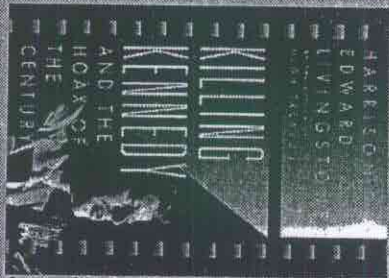
Jim Garrison, *On the Trail of the Assassins* (Sheridan Square Press, 1988): The basis for much of Oliver Stone's JFK. Whoever said hindsight is 20/20 never read this assemblage of warped rationalizations and unproved allegations. Pass.

Robert Groden, *The Killing of a President* (Viking, 1993): A collection of assassination-related photos. The flaws and omissions are legion, and Groden's opinions should be taken with a grain of salt.

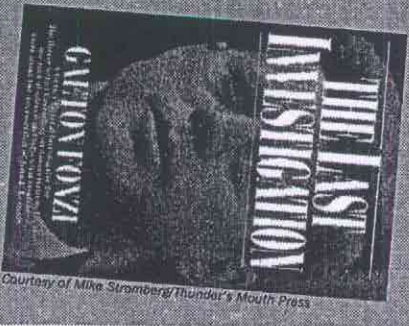
Henry Hurt, *Reasonable Doubt* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1985): A decent refutation of the lone-as-



Courtesy of Marek Antoniak/University of California Press



Courtesy of Neil Stuart/Carroll & Graf



Courtesy of Mike Stramborg/Thunder's Mouth Press

sassin theory based primarily on the government evidence.

Mark Lane, *Rush to Judgment* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1966; Thunder's Mouth, 1992): A defense brief for Oswald (useful, but weak in comparison to Weisberg's and Meagher's books) and Lane occasionally misrepresents the evidence in his "client's" favor.

Mark Lane, *Plausible Denial* (Thunder's Mouth, 1991): A lame attempt to implicate Watergate conspirator E. Howard Hunt in the assassination. Lane's star witness is former Castro mistress Maria Lorenz (see Fonzi, *The Last Investigation*, for a firsthand demonstration of her credibility).

David Lifton, *Best Evidence* (Macmillan, 1980; Carroll & Graf, 1988): The dreaded body alteration theory, the notion that Kennedy's corpse was somehow "altered" to fool the coroners. There are easier ways to explain a botched autopsy (see Livingstone, *High Treason 2*, for a thorough demolition of Lifton's theory — and some real answers).

Harrison Livingstone and Robert Groden, *High Treason* (Conservatory Press, 1989; Berkeley, 1990): Intended as a follow-up of sorts to Summers' *Conspiracy*, this is a fair summary of the evidence as it appeared a decade ago.

Harrison Livingstone, *High Treason 2* (Carroll & Graf, 1991): Hands down, one of the most important books ever written on the

case. Drawing upon extensive interviews with key medical eyewitnesses, Livingstone clears up much of the confusion surrounding the physical evidence, and presents dramatic new evidence of the cover-up.

Harrison Livingstone, *Killing the Truth* (Carroll & Graf, 1993): The truth about the acoustics evidence, further important revelations concerning the physical evidence, some provocative — though as yet unsubstantiated — testimony regarding the origins of the assassination plot, and a whole lot more. Highly recommended.

Harrison Livingstone, *Killing Kennedy, and the Hoax of the Century* (Carroll & Graf, 1995): More major findings concerning suppressed evidence (and worse), a detailed refutation of Posner's *Case Closed*, and a new look at the home movie of the century.

Norman Mailer, *Oswald's Tale* (Random House, 1993): What a bore. Mailer tries in vain to bolster the lone assassin theory with a flimsily selective and misleading representation of the evidence — strange considering the glowing endorsements he's given to such conspiracy-oriented books as Meagher's and Summers'.

William Manchester, *The Death of a President* (Popular Library, 1968): The semi-authorized account in which, as the old joke goes, Manchester is guilty of committing not a single accuracy.

Jim Marrs, *Crossfire* (Carroll & Graf, 1989): A comprehensive compendium of assassination-related facts and lore, with useful and concise background information on the relevant parties and events, but also an unfortunate amount of misinformation and speculation. Proceed with caution.

Sylvia Meagher, *Accessories After the Fact* (Bobs-Merrill, 1967; Vintage, 1976): A landmark — the most devastating, meticulously documented refutation of the Warren Report ever compiled. Out of print, but well worth looking for. Bonar Menninger with Howard Donahue, *Mortal Error* (St. Martin's Press, 1992): Donahue's theory: A Secret Service agent accidentally fired the fatal shot from the car behind Kennedy. Preposterous, but no more or less so than the Warren Report.

Editors of *The New York Times*, *The Warren Commission: The Writesses* (1965): The good little sol-diers at the *Times* selectively edited this testimony from the *Hearings* volumes, with troublesome evidence (i.e. anything that throws doubt on the Report) omitted or censored. A disgrace.

Gerald Posner, *Case Closed* (Random House, 1993): A shameful would-be defense of the lone-assassin theory. Manson prosecutor Vincent Bugliosi said, "I agree with all of Posner's conclusions — that Oswald killed Kennedy and acted alone — but I disagree with

his methodology. There's a credibility problem. When he is confronted with a situation antithetical to the view he's taking, he ignores or distorts it."

L. Fletcher Prouty, *JFK* (Birch Lane, 1993): Prouty, a former Pentagon liaison to the CIA and the basis for Donald Sutherland's "X" character in Oliver Stone's *JFK*, has a great deal of firsthand knowledge of U.S. covert operations, and many of his allegations deserve serious investigation.

Peter Dale Scott, *Deep Politics and the Death of JFK* (University of California Press, 1993): An enormously important work, one of the most insightful and scholarly examinations yet of why Kennedy was killed, why it was covered up, and why Americans are still afraid to face up to it.

Theodore Sorensen, *Kennedy* (Harper & Row, 1965): Why should the death of a president over three decades ago matter anyway? Recommended to anyone who's forgotten — or is too young to know first-hand — why JFK mattered, and why he still does.

Oliver Stone and Zachary Sklar, notes by Jane Rusconi, *JFK: The Book of the Film* (Applause, 1992): While there are major problems with the film, it succeeds in its primary objective: to thoroughly and dramatically discredit the official story. This is the screenplay, well-annotated and supplemented with reviews and miscellaneous out-

rage responses.

Anthony Summers, *Conspiracy* (McGraw Hill, 1980; Paragon House, 1989): An excellent book based upon the HSCA evidence as well as Summers' own fieldwork — a solid summary of the case as it appeared 20 years ago. The paperback has some material added.

A.J. Weberman and Michael Canfield, *Coup d'Etat in America* (Third Press, 1975, 1992): Endless speculation about the famous "three tramps" photographed in Dealey Plaza. Avoid.

Harold Weisberg, *Whitewash I, IV, Post Mortem*, and others (mostly self-published — for information, write to Route 12, Old Receiver Rd., Frederick, MD 21701): *Whitewash* was the first book to expose the pattern of falsification in the Warren Report. Since then, Weisberg has been responsible for prying literally thousands of documents from government archives under Freedom of Information Act lawsuits. *Whitewash II-IV* report on some of his more important findings regarding evidence of the cover-up. *Post Mortem* is a microanalysis of the autopsy evidence.

Craig Zirbel, *The Texas Connection* (Scottsdale, 1991): A speculative but disturbing case for LBJ's involvement. Worth a look. Coming in the next decade or so: Vincent Bugliosi explains once and for all how Oswald, and Oswald alone, did it. ■

21-24 30 Drive, Apt. 5-B

Astoria, NY 11102

November 21, 1997

Mr. and Mrs. Harold Weisberg

Route 12

Old Receiver Road

Frederick, MD 21701

This is a piece that ran in *The Resident*, a New York City weekly to which I normally contribute music reviews. The paper has four editions in Manhattan; the piece ran on the Upper East Side, while an abbreviated version ran on the Upper West Side, with a combined circulation around 100,000–125,000. Despite my suspicion that no one actually reads this rather innocuous publication, I asked that your address be included on the odd chance it might generate a few inquiries.

I wish to offer my thanks to you both for your tremendous efforts over the years. Though we are likely to disagree on certain points (cf. Harry Livingstone), words cannot adequately express the gratitude you are due.

Best,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David Reitzes". The signature is fluid and extends to the right.

David Reitzes

RESIDENT

books

Watching the Detectives

An Armchair Guide to the Crime of the Century by David Reitzes

In 1979, there were an estimated 600 books written on the subject of John F. Kennedy's assassination, 34 years ago this Nov. 22. The number has probably doubled since then, making it even more difficult to winnow the wheat from the chaff. What follows is a selective listing of the most important and useful texts, plus a number of commonly available duds.

The President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy, Report, a.k.a. *The Report of the Warren Commission* (1964): The world-famous lone assassin theory, in which a warehouse employee with a shady past makes marksmanship history with a defective junk rifle. Commission members Richard Russell and Hale Boggs privately disavowed the single-bullet theory, without which the case for one gunman evaporates.

The President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy, Hearings (1964): These 26 volumes of appendices, containing selected hearings and exhibits before the Commission, have a strange tendency to contradict the Report's conclusions.

The House Select Committee to Study the Assassination of Presi-

dent Kennedy, Report and Hearings (1979): In the mid-'70s, Sen. Richard Schweiker and others began pushing for a Congressional probe into the assassination. Schweiker said, "I think the Warren Commission has collapsed like a house of cards. And, I believe the Warren Commission was set up at the time to feed pabulum to the American people for reasons not yet known, and that one of the biggest cover-ups in the history of our country occurred at that time."

The HSCA Report, while largely supporting the Warren Report, concludes — partially due to fraudulent analysis of a police audio recording which allegedly proves at least two gunmen — that Kennedy was "probably" the victim of a conspiracy. The real issue — the overwhelming pattern of forged

and suppressed evidence in all aspects of the case — was again ignored, and the "acoustics evidence" mars practically every book written on the case since 1979. (See Livingsstone, *Killing the Truth*, for the whole story.)

Jim Bishop, *The Day Kennedy Was Shot* (Bantam, 1969): A notoriously inaccurate account of

honest investigation, voices his theory about how — *yawn* — the Mob killed Kennedy.

Walt Brown, *The People V. Lee Harvey Oswald* (Carroll & Graf, 1992): Could Oswald have been convicted of the assassination? Brown's fictional trial is definitively researched, and the writing is witty and insightful.

Don DeLillo, *Libra: A Novel* (Viking, 1988): A fictional scenario postulating Oswald as one gunman in a relatively small-scale conspiracy. DeLillo's done his homework, but he makes the

up call to anyone who believes the Commission conducted a serious investigation.

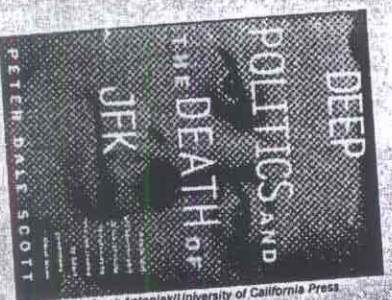
Edward J. Epstein, *Counterplot* (Viking Press, 1969): A scathing look at the Jim Garrison investigation which later became the basis for Oliver Stone's *JFK*.

Edward J. Epstein, *Legend: The Secret World of Lee Harvey Oswald* (Reader's Digest Press, 1978): Ultimately more revealing about dissen- sion within the CIA than about Oswald, who is depicted in typically myopic fashion. *The Assassination Chronicles* (Carroll & Graf, 1992) collects the three Epstein books with new forewords and afterwords.

Gaeton Fonzi, *The Last Investigation* (Thunder's Mouth Press, 1993): An HSCA investigator explains why the Committee failed. Recommended.

Jim Garrison, *On the Trail of the Assassins* (Sheridan Square Press, 1988): The basis for much of Oliver Stone's *JFK*. Whoever said hindsight is 20/20 never read this assemblage of warped rationalizations and unproved allegations. Pass.

Robert Groden, *The Killing of a President* (Viking, 1993): A collection of assassination-related photos. The flaws and omissions are legion, and Groden's opinions should be taken with a grain of salt. Henry Hurt, *Reasonable Doubt* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1985): A decent refutation of the lone-as-



Courtesy of Marek Antoniak/University of California Press



Courtesy of Neil Stuart/Carroll & Graf



Courtesy of Mika Stromberg/Thunder's Mouth Press

DAVID REITZES 21-24 20 07 # 5-B (718) 267-0083
ASTORIA, OR 97102
PAGE 1 OF 2

RESIDUAL

books

sassin theory based primarily on the government evidence.

Mark Lane, *Rush to Judgment* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1966); Thunder's Mouth, 1992): A defense brief for Oswald (useful, but weak in comparison to Weisberg's and Meagher's books) and Lane occasionally misrepresents the evidence in his "clients'" favor.

Mark Lane, *Plausible Denial* (Thunder's Mouth, 1991): A lame attempt to implicate Watergate conspirator E. Howard Hunt in the assassination. Lane's star witness is former Castro mistress Maria Lorenz (see Fonzi, *The Last Investigation*, for a firsthand demonstration of her credibility).

David Lifton, *Beit Evidence* (Macmillan, 1980; Carroll & Graf, 1988): The dreaded body alteration theory, the notion that Kennedy's corpse was somehow "altered" to fool the coroners. There are easier ways to explain a botched autopsy (see Livingstone, *High Treason 2*, for a thorough demolition of Lifton's theory — and some real answers).

Harrison Livingstone and Robert Groden, *High Treason* (Conservatory Press, 1989; Berkeley, 1990): Intended as a follow-up of sorts to Summers' *Conspiracy*, this is a fair summary of the evidence as it appeared a decade ago.

Harrison Livingstone, *High Treason 2* (Carroll & Graf, 1991): Hands down, one of the most important books ever written on the

case. Drawing upon extensive interviews with key medical eyewitnesses, Livingstone clears up much of the confusion surrounding the physical evidence, and presents dramatic new evidence of the cover-up.

Harrison Livingstone, *Killing the Truth* (Carroll & Graf, 1993): The truth about the acoustics evidence, further important revelations concerning the physical evidence, some provocative — though as yet unsubstantiated — testimony regarding the origins of the assassination plot, and a whole lot more. Highly recommended.

Harrison Livingstone, *Killing Kennedy, and the Hoax of the Century* (Carroll & Graf, 1995): More major findings concerning suppressed evidence (and worse), a detailed refutation of Posner's *Case Closed*, and a new look at the home movie of the century.

Norman Mailer, *Oswald's Tale* (Random House, 1993): What a bore. Mailer tries in vain to bolster the lone assassin theory with a flimsily selective and misleading representation of the evidence — strange considering the glowing endorsements he's given to such conspiracy-oriented books as Meagher's and Summers'.

William Manchester, *The Death of a President* (Popular Library, 1968): The semi-authorized account in which, as the old joke goes, Manchester is guilty of committing not a single accuracy.

Jim Marrs, *Crossfire* (Carroll & Graf, 1989): A comprehensive compendium of assassination-related facts and lore, with useful and concise background information on the relevant parties and events, but also an unfortunate amount of misinformation and speculation. Proceed with caution.

Sylvia Meagher, *Accessories After the Fact* (Bobbs-Merrill, 1967; Vintage, 1976): A landmark — the most devastating, meticulously documented refutation of the Warren Report ever compiled. Out of print, but well worth looking for.

Bonar Menninger with Howard Donahue, *Mortal Error* (St. Martin's Press, 1992): Donahue's theory: A Secret Service agent accidentally fired the fatal shot from the car behind Kennedy. Preposterous, but no more or less so than the Warren Report.

Editors of *The New York Times*, *The Warren Commission: The Writings* (1965): The good little soldiers at the *Times* selectively edited this testimony from the *Hearings* volumes, with troublesome omissions (i.e. anything that throws doubt on the Report) omitted or censored. A disgrace.

Gerald Posner, *Case Closed* (Random House, 1993): A shameful would-be defense of the lone assassin theory. Manson prosecutor Vincent Bugliosi said, "I agree with all of Posner's conclusions — that Oswald killed Kennedy and acted alone — but I disagree with

his methodology. There's a credibility problem. When he is confronted with a situation antithetical to the view he's taking, he ignores or distorts it."

L. Fletcher Prouty, *JFK* (Birch Lane, 1993): Prouty, a former Pentagon liaison to the CIA and the basis for Donald Sutherland's "X" character in Oliver Stone's *JFK*, has a great deal of firsthand knowledge of U.S. covert operations, and many of his allegations deserve serious investigation.

Peter Dale Scott, *Deep Politics and the Death of JFK* (University of California Press, 1993): An enormously important work, one of the most insightful and scholarly examinations yet of why Kennedy was killed, why it was covered up, and why Americans are still afraid to face up to it.

Theodore Sorensen, *Kennedy* (Harper & Row, 1965): Why should the death of a president over three decades ago matter anyway? Recommended to anyone who's forgotten — or is too young to know first-hand — why JFK mattered, and why he still does.

Oliver Stone and Zachary Sklar, *Notes by Jane Rusconi, JFK: The Book of the Film* (Applause, 1992): While there are major problems with the film, it succeeds in its primary objective: to thoroughly and dramatically discredit the official story. This is the screenplay, well-annotated and supplemented with reviews and miscellaneous out-

rage responses.

Anthony Summers, *Conspiracy* (McGraw Hill, 1980; Paragon House, 1989): An excellent book based upon the HSCA evidence as well as Summers' own fieldwork — a solid summary of the case as it appeared 20 years ago. The paperback has some material added.

A.J. Weberman and Michael Canfield, *Coup d'Etat in America* (Third Press, 1975, 1992): Endless speculation about the famous "three tramps" photographed in Daley Plaza. Avoid.

Harold Weisberg, *Whitewash I, IV, Post Mortem*, and others (mostly self-published — for information, write to Route 12, Old Receiver Rd., Frederick, MD 21701): *Whitewash* was the first book to expose the pattern of falsification in the Warren Report. Since then, Weisberg has been responsible for prying literally thousands of documents from government archives under Freedom of Information Act lawsuits.

Whitewash II-IV report on some of his more important findings regarding evidence of the cover-up. *Post Mortem* is a microanalysis of the autopsy evidence.

Graig Zirbel, *The Texas Connection* (Scottsdale, 1991): A speculative but disturbing case for LBJ's involvement. Worth a look. Coming in the next decade or so: Vincent Bugliosi explains once and for all how Oswald, and Oswald alone, did it. ■

DAVID RECEIPTS, 714 E 150th
Plenum Publishing Corporation
233 Spring Street
New York, N.Y. 10013-1578

MR + MRS HAROLD WEISSBERG
ROUTE 12, OLD RECEIVER RD
FREDERICK, MD 21701



21701/9999

