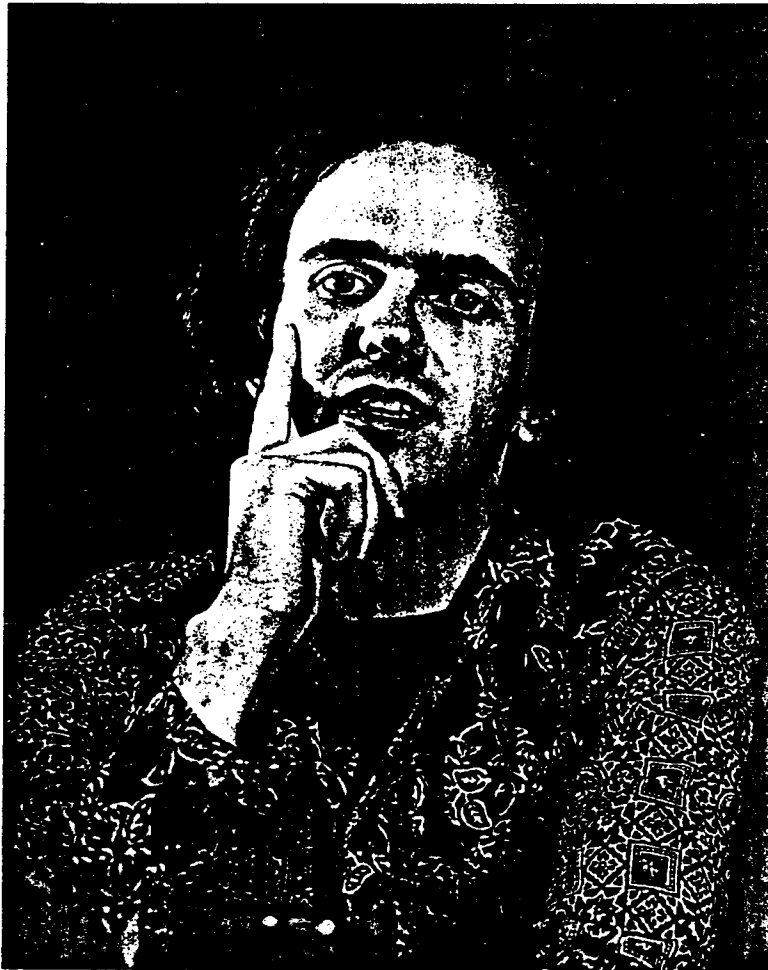


"GO FIGURE"



1952-1992

ROBERT GARDNER RANFTEL
Research

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94707-0892

(415) 526-2820

A collection of writings - and some of Robert's favorite cartoons - compiled by

Paul L. Hoch
1525 Acton Street
Berkeley, CA 94702

FBI

Date: 1/16/76

Transmit the following in _____
(Type in plaintext or code)

Via AIRTEL _____
(Priority)

TO: DIRECTOR, FBI

FROM: SAC, NEW YORK

MURKIN

SUBJECT: DEMONSTRATION BY RESEARCH ACTION GROUP ON ASSASSINATION AT NYO, 1/15/76

ReButel call from Supervisor THOMAS B. CALL, 1/14/76.

At 11:30 AM, 1/15/76, a group of fifteen (15) demonstrators representing ~~Research Action Group on~~ Assassination appeared at the New York Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. ~~ROBERT RANFTLE~~, spokesman for the group, was met by SAC PHILIP A. MC NIFF.

According to RANFTLE, the purpose of the demonstration was to bring to the public's attention the possibility that a conspiracy existed in the killing of Dr. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. and that this should be pursued.

RANFTLE was advised that the Attorney General of the United States is currently reviewing the FBI investigation of Dr. KING's death. They were also advised that the NYO does not have the complete investigative files concerning this matter.

RANFTLE indicated he would communicate with the Attorney General concerning this matter.

The demonstration lasted one hour and was peaceful.

2 - Bureau
1 - New York

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Approved: _____

Special Agent in Charge

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Demonstration of Research Action Group on Assassination of Dr. King*

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NEW FILM SUGGESTS AN OSWALD COHORT

Nation's Military Services Face a S

By BERNARD WEINRAUB
Special to The New York Times

The comments by the two doctors reflect some of the benefits and a key short-

But to Audience's Eye, Film Made Before the Kennedy Killing Is Blurred and Inconclusive

By WENDELL RAWLS Jr.
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Nov. 26—A seven-second film was shown to a crowded room of journalists and assassination buffs here today, purporting to show the presence of more than one person in the windows of the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository building in Dallas minutes before President John F. Kennedy was killed by shots fired from the vicinity of the windows.

The film and individual frames of it, which were copies and enlarged by more than 1,000 times their original size, did not show conclusively to the layman's naked eye the presence of at least two human figures in the windows.

The eight-millimeter film was taken by an amateur photographer, Charles L. Bronson, a metallurgist from Ada, Okla. He had used a wide-angle lens and was standing about one block from the building while he was filming, six to nine minutes before Mr. Kennedy was killed 15 years ago last week.

His film was viewed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation three days after the assassination and was deemed "not sufficiently clear for identification purposes."

Returned to the Photographer

The film was subsequently returned to Mr. Bronson and apparently was never viewed by other organizations investigating the assassination.

The existence of the film was disclosed almost one year ago when the F.B.I. made available to the public some 90,000 pages of previously classified documents relating to President Kennedy's murder.

Members of the Assassination Information Bureau, an organization of critics of the Warren Commission findings in the Kennedy assassination, read of the existence of the film and contacted a reporter for the Dallas Morning News, who in turn located Mr. Bronson and the film.

The Dallas newspaper published several articles about the film and printed nine photographs of the enlarged movie frames in this morning's editions. In what appeared to be a carefully orchestrated presentation, the assassinations information bureau then called a news conference this afternoon and distributed copies of the newspaper and press releases. Also present was Mr. Bronson's attorney, John Sigalos of Dallas.

Photographs of Enlargements Barred

No photographs of the film or of the slide enlargements were permitted so that Mr. Bronson's "best interest could be protected," Mr. Sigalos said. He added later that Mr. Bronson was not claiming that the film disclosed anything new or startling, but that he was simply cooperating with the newspaper and the A.I.B. "because he has no reason not to." Mr. Sigalos said he was retained by Mr. Bronson after arrangements with the newspaper and the information bureau had been completed.

The film was sent to Robert Groden, a photography technician in Hope Lawn, N.J., who had performed "photo-enhancement" work on the famous Abraham Zapruder film of the President being shot. Mr. Groden also had testified before the House Select Committee on Assassinations and had been paid by the committee occasionally as a consultant, although he had not been selected to be on the committee's panel of photographic experts.

Mr. Groden said today that "it is beyond question" that there were two figures moving at the windows from which the Warren Commission and the House committee maintain the fatal shots were fired.

If his interpretation of the photographs is correct, it would disprove contentions that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone in killing Mr. Kennedy.

Frames Grainy and Blurred

However, the film and the enlarged frames are exceedingly grainy and blurred. If they disclose anything to the layman's eye, it is perhaps one figure in one window.

Mr. Groden, who has previously said that he thought there was photographic evidence of shots being fired from other directions, said he was "now certain there is no question" of there being more than one person at the windows. And he said that computer enhancing of the photographs would make the point even more conclusively.

He told the Dallas newspaper, which hired him to analyze the film, that it showed that a "sniper's nest" was being completed just prior to the arrival of President Kennedy's motorcade at Dealy Plaza.

ROBERT
↳



Ranfotel

DID LEE HARVEY OSWALD DROP ACID?

New evidence suggests he was among soldiers given LSD in a CIA test program

IT WAS A HOT SUMMER DAY IN NEW Orleans in 1963. A young man walked into the office of Edward Gillin, an assistant district attorney. Gillin offered the visitor a seat, but the young man chose instead to stand across the desk from him. He had a question about a drug—one that Gillin had never heard of before.

This was no ordinary drug, Gillin was told. This drug would affect the social and economic history of the world for the next 200 years. The young man wanted to try the drug, and that was what had brought him to Gillin. He wanted to know if the drug was legal and if he could bring it into the country from somewhere else. It was important, he insisted, speaking for the better part of an

hour on the wonders of this new chemical.

By Martin A. Lee, Robert Ranftel and Jeff Cohen

Gillin just sat there, somewhat bewildered, trying to assimilate the story. Who was this guy? What was this drug that would transform the world? Any drug that could produce the results this person spoke of, Gillin reasoned, would have to be illegal.

He also concluded that his visitor was probably a bit crazy. Gillin suggested that the young man visit the New Orleans chemist, the police authority on such matters, and strongly urged that he consult his personal physician as well before doing anything further. The visitor left and Gillin never heard from him again.

A few months later—over the weekend of November 22nd, 1963, to be precise—Gillin came to recall that odd encounter. President John F. Kennedy was slain on Friday, a new president was sworn in two hours later, and on Sunday the accused assassin was himself shot down in a Dallas jail. As these incredible events tumbled into one another, Gillin thought of the conversation he had had that summer. As the details and descriptions of the life of the accused assassin became known, Gillin realized that the visitor he had received that afternoon in New Orleans was none other than Lee Harvey Oswald.

MARTIN A. LEE is completing a book, 'The CIA and the Acid Generation: the Secret History of LSD.' ROBERT RANFTEL is an investigator and storyteller in Berkeley, California. JEFF COHEN is a lawyer and writer in Los Angeles. All three authors were associated with the Assassination Information Bureau.

IN JULY 1979, THE FINAL REPORT OF THE House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA), the first full congressional investigation of the murder of President Kennedy, was published. The committee concluded that Kennedy was probably killed as a result of a conspiracy, although it stopped short of identifying the conspirators who may have been behind Oswald. The HSCA contended that Oswald fired the fatal shots at the president, but that he was accompanied by a second gunman. Thus, Oswald, a loser all his life, was finally relieved of sole blame. It had been a long road for Oswald from infancy to infamy, and now, at last, the government admits he may not have traveled it alone.

Since the assassination, the mind of Lee Harvey Oswald has been open turf for historians, psychologists and conspiracy theorists to muck about in, speculating on every conceivable motive and intrigue that might explain what role he may have played in the death of the president. Described as assassin or patsy, lone nut or conspirator, misguided Marxist or CIA operative, Oswald has never been pegged as a doper.

Gillin called the FBI the day Oswald was killed and told them he believed Oswald had been using unusual drugs, but the FBI seemed uninterested and the drug lead was never pursued.

Had the Warren Commission decided to investigate the psychedelic connection, the logical place to begin would have been to ask, did Oswald turn on, and if so, where did he get his drugs? As it turns out, there is good reason to believe that Oswald was taking psychedelics at a time when the CIA was handing them out. The temptation to connect these two facts demands a look at two relationships: that between the CIA and drugs, and between Oswald and the CIA.

THE CIA FIRST BEGAN EXPERIMENTING with LSD during Project Artichoke, an extensive behavior-control effort launched in 1951. Project Artichoke was aimed primarily at developing unorthodox methods of interrogation—including narco-hypnosis and a combination of various chemicals that, when properly administered, would catapult a person into a semiconscious limbo that the agency called "the Twilight Zone."

After several years, however, the CIA had not yet found a method of interrogation that would guarantee a recalcitrant subject would disclose sensitive information. This prompted the agency to step up its search for a truth

drug. It was during this search that CIA scientists first got their hands on LSD. Early reports looked promising. One document indicated that "experimentally, LSD has been used in interrogation and has proved remarkably successful." Another memo stated unequivocally that acid was "better adapted than known drugs to both interrogation of prisoners and use against troops and civilians."

Or so they thought. Later experiments showed that LSD was not a reliable speech-inducing agent. Accurate information could not always be obtained from a person who was high on acid, because the drug caused marked anxiety and loss of contact with reality.

But this did not faze the CIA, which was fascinated by LSD. If it did not live up to its potential as a truth drug, Artichoke scientists would simply adapt the interrogation procedure to suit the "far-out" possibilities of this unique chemical. LSD led to totally new methods of interrogation.

Often a subject was given a surreptitious dose of acid, and once the effects took hold, he was told that unless he spilled the beans, he would be kept in a tripped-out state indefinitely. This tactic proved successful; LSD interrogations of enemy spies were in full gear by the mid-1950s and continued through the early 1960s.

Acid proved useful for other CIA purposes as well. In order to discredit socialist or left-leaning politicians in foreign countries, the agency would slip a hit to unwitting targets so they would become incoherent and embarrass themselves at public appearances. (The CIA has denied ever using dirty tricks of this sort in domestic politics.)

The CIA's acid experimentation took on more comprehensive and extravagant dimensions under the supersecret MK ULTRA program. Consisting of 149 different projects, MK ULTRA was one of the most sensitive covert operations ever undertaken by U.S. intelligence. In addition to hallucinogenic drugs, MK ULTRA comprised every conceivable mind-control tech-

OSWALD, STATIONED IN JAPAN DURING THE LATE FIFTIES, WAS RECRUITED BY THE CIA FOR ITS SPECIAL OPERATIONS, CONTENDS ONE OFFICIAL.

ILLUSTRATION BY JAMES ALLEN

nique: hypnosis, sensory deprivation, electroshock, ESP, lobotomy, subliminal projection, sleep teaching and thousands of different drugs. The CIA employed hundreds of academics and behavioral experts to help crack the secret code of the human mind in order to control it. A multimillion-dollar effort, this program literally spanned the globe. One location in particular deserves careful observation.

ATSUGI, JAPAN, WAS THE SITE OF THE CIA's headquarters in the Far East, a particularly strategic location in those years that bridged Korea and Vietnam. While the CIA's presence at the Atsugi Naval Air Base has long been known (U-2 spy flights over Russia and China took off from Atsugi), an important facet of its activities has only just recently come to light.

Since the early 1950s, Atsugi served as one of two overseas field stations where the CIA conducted extensive LSD testing. A 1953 memo stated that LSD was being stored at the Manila and Atsugi CIA stations, and that its use in special interrogations in Europe was being considered.

In addition to interrogation sessions, the drug was also employed experimentally on military personnel. These tests continued throughout the Cold War decade and into the early 1960s. One marine-corps veteran who participated in the experiments at Atsugi recounted how two CIA officials gave him a variety of drugs and apparently tried to recruit him for CIA service: "This guy says, 'We just want to see how you'll react. If you're going to be a spy, don't you want to be informed about every mind-altering drug there is?'"

"They wanted to find out how well you could stand up under pressure. Like what if the KGB agent drops a tab of acid in your drink? You've got to be ready for it."

"It was pretty weird," the ex-marine explained. "I'm eighteen and chasing all the whores in town, and these CIA guys are buying my drinks and paying for the whores and giving me a whole lot of drinks with lots of weird drugs in them."

One of the drugs was LSD. "Pretty soon all the shadows are moving around—we're in this bar, see—and Samurais are everywhere, and I started to see skeletons and things. My mind just started boiling over, going about a thousand miles a minute."

In addition to LSD, the Atsugi-based marine was given mescaline, sodium pentothol, downers and speed. "I'm sure there are going to be some little old ladies who're gonna be surprised that illegal drugs like heroin and LSD were freely used by government agents," he continued. "But that's the way it was."

If that's the way it was, it's important to

mention that Atsugi was the home, during those years, of another young marine—Lee Harvey Oswald. In fact, Oswald served in the same marine unit as the source.

PRIVATE LEE HARVEY OSWALD ARRIVED IN Atsugi in September 1957. He was seventeen years old and had spent his childhood bouncing between foster homes and the company of his widowed mother in New York, Louisiana and Texas. A voracious reader who scored above average on aptitude tests, he had nonetheless been habitually truant and dropped out of high school. This led him into the marines and to Japan, ostensibly as a radar operator. According to one CIA official, however, Oswald attracted the attention of the Tokyo CIA station and was recruited for its "special operations."

IF OSWALD WAS SENT TO RUSSIA ON SOME COVERT TASK, THEN IT'S QUITE POSSIBLE THAT HE WAS GIVEN LSD AS PART OF HIS TRAINING.

According to James Wilcott, a CIA finance officer in Japan at the time of the Kennedy assassination, news of the events in Dallas came as no great shock to agency personnel. First, they had expected someone to do something about Kennedy and his "anti-CIA policies." And second, the man who appeared to have taken the task upon himself, Lee Harvey Oswald, was no stranger to the CIA.

The story that circulated among CIA personnel stationed in Tokyo, Wilcott maintains, was that Oswald had been recruited from the marines for a deep-cover operation into the U.S.S.R. With no friends in the marines, fleeing contact with his family and a history of moving about, he would easily have been able to embark upon a secret project without attracting much attention.

The most striking aspect of Wilcott's statement was that he'd heard speculation that the CIA's recruitment of Oswald at Atsugi was facilitated by a special "handle" the agency had on Oswald, after discovering "during a routine lie-detector test that he'd murdered someone or committed some other serious crime." A routine test? Or one assisted by modern chemistry?

The HSCA rejected Wilcott's story of Oswald's CIA recruitment for lack of corroboration from other Tokyo-based agents. Investigating covert matters twenty years after the fact is not easy, due, in part, to faulty memories—some intentionally faulty. As former CIA director Richard Helms stated when asked to explain gaps in his testimony on the JFK assassination, "My memory has been contaminated." Thus, any direct trail from the CIA to Oswald remains, as one might expect, clouded.

Oswald's career as a marine was, in a word, weird. At one point, he shot himself, wounding his arm in what appeared to be a feeble suicide attempt rather than the accident he claimed it was. His fellow marines saw it as a ploy to enable him to remain in Japan when his unit was to be transferred. The official

record says that he was shot with his .45-caliber service revolver, but it was later ruled that he'd been shot with a .22.

On another occasion, while Oswald was on guard duty, gunfire was heard. He was found sitting on the ground, more than a little dazed, babbling about seeing things in the bushes. His colleagues, unfamiliar with what in the Sixties would become known as a bad trip, walked him back to his barracks and put him to bed.

Somehow, between shooting himself and shooting randomly into the bushes, Oswald learned to speak Russian. Wilcott and others contend that these language lessons were courtesy of the CIA. (Private Oswald possessed a high-security clearance.) No one has suggested any other way he could have achieved the proficiency he did, but "Oswaldkovich," as he was dubbed by his befuddled barracks mates, was then prepared for the next step on what turned out to be a rather strange trip.

In September 1959, he requested and received an early discharge from the marines and then traveled (with unexplained money and by unknown means) to the Soviet Union. There, he swiftly appeared at the U.S. embassy to announce he was defecting and giving military secrets to the Russians. The change from marine to Muscovite was sudden and dramatic, leaving almost everyone puzzled. One exception was Oswald's mother, Marguerite, who showed herself to be a woman ahead of the times by contending in 1960 that her son was a spy for the U.S. government. Her argument was so compelling that J. Edgar Hoover sent out a memo two and a half years before the assassination suggesting there was more to Oswald than met the eye.

If Oswald was sent to Russia as a pseudo-defector, performing some covert task for the U.S. (exactly what the Russians suspected from the beginning), then it's quite possible he was given LSD as part of his training. A lengthy CIA memo entitled "Truth Drugs in Interrogation" reveals the agency's predilection for administering LSD to agents who were destined for dangerous overseas missions. The CIA feared that the Russians might use LSD in interrogations or as a brainwashing device.

An adversary intelligence service, in the words of the report, could employ LSD "to produce anxiety or terror in medically unsophisticated subjects unable to distinguish drug-induced psychosis from actual insanity." But as the report states, "an enlightened operative" (that is, someone who had tripped before and was therefore familiar with LSD's effects) would not freak out, "knowing that the effects of these hallucinogenic agents is transient in normal individuals." The question is, was Oswald "enlightened"?

LIFE FOR OSWALD IN RUSSIA WAS ALMOST AS strange as life in the marines. He traveled to obscure places doing mundane tasks; biographers still wonder what he was really up to. When the Russians told Oswald they were returning him to the U.S., he tried to slit his wrists—another unsuccessful suicide. As in the marines, he was allowed to stay.

In Minsk, where he was given work in a radio factory, he met and fell in love with an

attractive nineteen-year-old who, ironically, was a druggist. Her name was Marina Prusakova, and she lived with her uncle, a Soviet intelligence officer. Their courtship lasted but a month, most of it while Oswald was in a hospital and under medication, allegedly recovering from an adenoid operation. They were married, and Oswald inexplicably soon began making arrangements to return with his bride to America.

The Warren Commission briefly considered the possibility that Oswald had been brainwashed by Soviet secret police prior to his return to the U.S. The commission was suspicious about the "suicide" attempt, and hypothesized that Oswald might have been tampered with while hospitalized in Moscow. At one point, the commission asked the CIA for a briefing on the latest developments in mind control. Richard Helms, then head of CIA covert operations, concluded that while the Soviets were studying drugs like LSD for possible clandestine use, there was no evidence Oswald had been brainwashed.

Helms wrote in a June 1964 memo, "Soviet research in pharmacological agents producing behavioral effects has consistently lagged five years behind Western research. . . . There is no present evidence that the Soviets have any singular new potent drugs, or that they are particularly expert in the use of such drugs to force a course of action on an individual." (Later that same year, Helms privately urged that the CIA continue to test LSD and related chemicals on unwitting American citizens in order to keep up "with Soviet advances in this field.")

WHILE OSWALD WAS IN RUSSIA FALLING IN love with a pharmacist, the CIA was bedding down with mobsters in an effort to bump off Fidel Castro. Both longed for a return to the Cuba that had existed before Fidel, a right-wing haven for gamblers, drug runners and the United Fruit Company. The CIA's anti-Cuban alliance with the Mafia was originally supervised by then-CIA director Allen Dulles, who later sat on the Warren Commission but failed to inform the other commissioners of the CIA's assassination plots. Thus, the commission never considered the implications of what Lyndon Johnson called the CIA's "Murder, Inc." in the Caribbean.

The CIA's anti-Castro operations began before Kennedy took office with a series of foiled attempts to undermine Fidel's charismatic appeal. One plan was to spray Castro's broadcasting studio with a powerful hallucinogen similar to LSD, creating an embarrassing scene as the premier babbled in a drug-induced stupor. This plan was scrapped because the drug proved too unpredictable.

Yet another plot involved dusting Castro's shoes with thallium salts, which would cause his beard to fall out. Apparently hatched at the CIA's Bible Desk, "Operation Samson" postulated that Castro would lose his charisma once defrocked of hair.

After a few months of pursuing such dubious schemes, the CIA shifted its focus from bad trips and beard trims to eliminating Castro altogether. In August 1960, Colonel Sheffield Edwards, who had originally coordinated Project Artichoke for the CIA, was asked to organize an assassination

squad to snuff out Castro. Edwards turned to the CIA's Las Vegas contacts, eventually hiring mobsters Johnny Roselli, Sam Giancana and Santos Trafficante for the task.

Colonel Edwards' successor in charge of the Castro project, William Harvey, was another CIA spook who graduated from mind control to murder conspiracies. Harvey was one of a handful of CIA officers kept abreast of behavior-control projects from the beginning, and as CIA chief in West Germany in the 1950s, he employed LSD in special interrogations. He was then promoted to head Operation ZR-Rifle, which developed the CIA's "executive action capability"—a euphemism for the agency's capability to assassinate foreign leaders.

Harvey, along with MK ULTRA's head sorcerer-scientist, Dr. Sidney Gottlieb, studied the feasibility of applying a bizarre array of gadgets and biochemical poisons to "executive actions." This program banded together the most right-wing elements of the CIA with their natural allies: anti-Castro mercenaries and the Mob.

Such an unholy alliance was not officially acknowledged until the 1975 Senate investigation headed by Senator Frank Church, which established that there had been eight attempts on Castro's life. (Castro, in a better position to count, numbered them at closer to eighty.) Senator Church reported that the plots utilized deadly bacterial powders, cigars dipped in lethal poison, exploding seashells, a poison fountain pen rigged with a hypodermic syringe and other devices that strain the imagination. The CIA even considered the possibility of using a hypnotized "Manchurian Candidate" to kill Castro.

In attempting to unravel these murder schemes, Church's Senate Select Committee on Intelligence found itself over a barrel when Johnny Roselli's body turned up inside one, floating in the ocean. He was one of several participants in the CIA-Mafia plots who met an untimely death. Before he was murdered in 1976, Roselli claimed that Oswald had been a mere patsy, and that the real presidential assassins had been a Mafia hit squad originally trained to kill Castro.

And what was the motive? CIA rightists were apparently incensed by JFK, who in his last year had obstructed anti-Castro paramilitary operations while making moves toward détente with Cuba. The House Assassinations Committee also suggested that the JFK conspirators were organized-crime figures, presumably Trafficante and others involved with CIA attempts on Castro.

IT WAS AGAINST THIS BACKDROP OF secret plots and CIA-Mafia connivance that Oswald returned to America in June 1962. During his years abroad, the drug expertise and enthusiasm of the CIA had advanced to the point where various chemicals, including LSD, were routinely used in questioning defectors, suspected double agents and the like. The returning Oswald seemed a prime candidate for special interrogation, given the circumstances of his defection and the suddenness of his return. Yet there is no evidence that the CIA or any other agency met with Oswald upon his arrival. (The State Department even loaned him \$435 for his return to the U.S.)

Oswald's life in America was no less peculiar than it had been in Atsugi or in Minsk. Lee and Marina settled in Texas and soon took up with an odd assortment of friends, none more unusual than George De Mohrenschildt. Born a Russian count before the revolution, De Mohrenschildt thrived in a world of political shadows, appearing at various times to be working for Polish intelligence, the Nazis, the French Resistance, the British, the Americans, the Rockefellers—a man of many masks. By 1962, he was calling himself a geologist and a friend to the Oswalds.

In April 1963, Oswald moved to New Orleans, where his social circle—in view of his alleged Marxist sympathies—was even stranger than in Dallas. There he met Carlos Bringuier, an anti-Castro Cuban exile with CIA connections. Oswald first sought to work for Bringuier, then appeared to be working against him. Eventually, the two engaged in a well-publicized street brawl and then a debate about Cuba on New Orleans radio. Joining Oswald and Bringuier in the debate was Ed Butler, a right-wing propagandist for the Information Council of the Americas (INCA), a group that later sold LPs of the debate as part of its anticommunist crusade. The president of INCA was Dr. Alton Ochsner, described as a consultant to the air force on "the medical side of subversive matters." The directorships of Bringuier's anti-Castro group and Ochsner's INCA included the owners of the Reily Coffee Company, where Oswald, the man being denounced by both organizations as a communist, had recently been on the payroll.

By far the strangest bird to intersect Oswald's orbit was David Ferrie. Eccentric in behavior, belief and appearance, Ferrie had been an Eastern Airlines pilot until he was arrested for a "crime against nature" with a sixteen-year-old boy. He was a priest in the Orthodox Old Catholic Church, a bizarre sect engaging in animal sacrifice and occult rituals. Ferrie had no hair on his body (perhaps someone had poisoned his shoes) and wore ill-fitting wigs and fake eyebrows that fooled no one and made a striking, if not shocking, impression on all who saw him.

Although the Oswald-Ferrie relationship is well-proved, it is unclear when it began. The House Assassinations Committee suggested that the two men may have met as early as 1936 in New Orleans, when young Lee was a cadet in a Civil Air Patrol squadron headed by Ferrie. By the time of the 1963 radio debate, Oswald and Ferrie were well acquainted. A right-winger who hated Kennedy, Ferrie was active in paramilitary operations against Castro and claimed to have flown in the CIA-sponsored Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961.

Ferrie was also a hypnotist and fancied himself a biochemist. He claimed to have created drugs that caused cancer (something the CIA was also secretly developing) or caused heart attacks indistinguishable from natural death (another CIA endeavor), as well as aphrodisiacs and amnesia-inducing drugs. At times, his apartment was overrun by laboratory mice. Many attributed his hairless condition to a chemistry experiment gone awry.

On top of all his strange hobbies, Ferrie worked as a pilot and private investigator for Carlos Marcello, the Mafia boss of New Orleans and Dallas, a sworn enemy of the Kennedys, a cohort of the CIA-Mafia conspirators and, according to his tax returns, one heck of a tomato salesman. Marcello claimed a \$1600 per month income from tomato sales, but somehow had accumulated a net worth of \$40 million (government investigators contend through drugs and racketeering).

Thus David Ferrie represents a nexus in the JFK murder mystery between the Mafia and the CIA, drugs and assassination. In 1967, his ranking as premier oddball in the case was assured when he died of an apparent suicide, soon after having become a key suspect in the assassination probe led by New Orleans district attorney Jim Garrison.

Into this bed of strange felds crawled Lee Harvey Oswald in the summer of 1963. What kept him going through those days is not exactly clear: his jobs were meager and his political efforts halfhearted.

The best explanation for his political schizophrenia is that Oswald was some type of informant posing as a pro-Castroite. His marriage was less than ideal, and Marina was beginning to see him as a bit of a space cadet. "Lee no like Russia," she once said. "Lee no like America. Lee like moon."

WHICH BRINGS US FULL CIRCLE TO WHAT began as a typical day for New Orleans assistant DA Edward Gillin but ended somewhere in the Twilight Zone with a strange visit from a young man preaching the virtues of psychedelic drugs. Gillin's assurance that Oswald had been his visitor was rejected by the FBI on the grounds that Gillin was extremely nearsighted and therefore incapable of eyewitness identification. But due to his poor vision, he had come more and more to rely on voice as a means of identification, and when Oswald's voice was played on the radio (the INCA recording previously mentioned), Gillin recognized it as that of his visitor.

He claimed that his visitor repeatedly referred to an author whose books on drugs described the new world that the visitor, too, had foreseen. The FBI, in a case of literary myopia, recorded the author's name as "Hucksley." "Hucksley" can, of course, be none other than Aldous Huxley, author of *The Doors of Perception*, the manifesto of psychedelic consciousness. Apparently, he was unknown to the FBI, which is not too surprising. (When informed in 1964 that Jean-Paul Sartre had called for a new investigation of the Kennedy assassination, J. Edgar Hoover promptly scribbled on a memo, "Find out who Sartre is.") In a slip almost too Freudian to be believed, the FBI's memos refer to *Brave New World*, Huxley's

pessimistic novel of a drug-induced totalitarian society, as *This Great World*.

Given Gillin's inability to eyeball Oswald and the FBI's blindness as to who "Hucksley" was, it is not surprising that the bureau's probe was inconclusive. However, had the FBI taken the trouble to review its own records, it would have found that during the summer of 1963, Lee Harvey Oswald checked out several books by Aldous Huxley from the New Orleans Public Library.

Edward Gillin, who is now a juvenile-court judge in New Orleans, remembers the conversation as if it had occurred last month. "He was looking for a drug that would open

his vision, you know, mind expansion," recalls Gillin. "I was very curious about any guy who would come into the DA's office asking if a drug is legal and giving me a long spiel about a book by Aldous Huxley."

In September 1963, Oswald applied for a visa to go to Mexico. Like an old familiar ghost, the CIA cast another shadow across his path. The visa immediately preceding Oswald's was issued to a William Gaudet, an

admitted CIA contact. (At this time, Gaudet was employed by Dr. Alton Ochsner, the aforementioned INCA president.) When the Mexican government submitted the names of visa holders preceding and following Oswald's to the Warren Commission, only one name—Gaudet's—was omitted. No explanation for the omission has ever been offered.

Why did Oswald want to go to Mexico? Having received no help from the New Orleans DA's office, perhaps he was heading south of the border in his quest for drugs. George De Mohrenschildt had traveled frequently to Mexico, and his stories may have figured into Oswald's plans. (De Mohrenschildt committed suicide in 1977, shortly before he was to testify before the House Assassinations Committee.) Visa in hand, Oswald went to the library to pick up more books by Huxley and a few by Ian Fleming, and soon he was on the long bus ride to Mexico City.

What Oswald did there the last week in September has never been totally clear. It's alleged he contacted the Soviet or Cuban embassies. It's reported he hung out on college campuses and attended a party with people connected to early LSD experiments. But Oswald's trail is far too cold to determine just what he was thinking. Perhaps the books he was reading are the best clues to what his trip was about: espionage and mind expansion. In any event, he soon returned to the U.S., to Dallas and to his place in history.

On November 22nd, 1963, the Kennedy administration came to an abrupt end. On that very day, a cancer stricken Aldous Huxley lay on his deathbed, took a sizable dose of LSD and passed on...tripping. [Cont. on 34]

ONE COULD ARGUE THAT
OSWALD'S LIFE HAD BEEN
A PSYCHEDELIC MINE
FIELD—ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE
TO PASS THROUGH
WITHOUT TRIPPING.

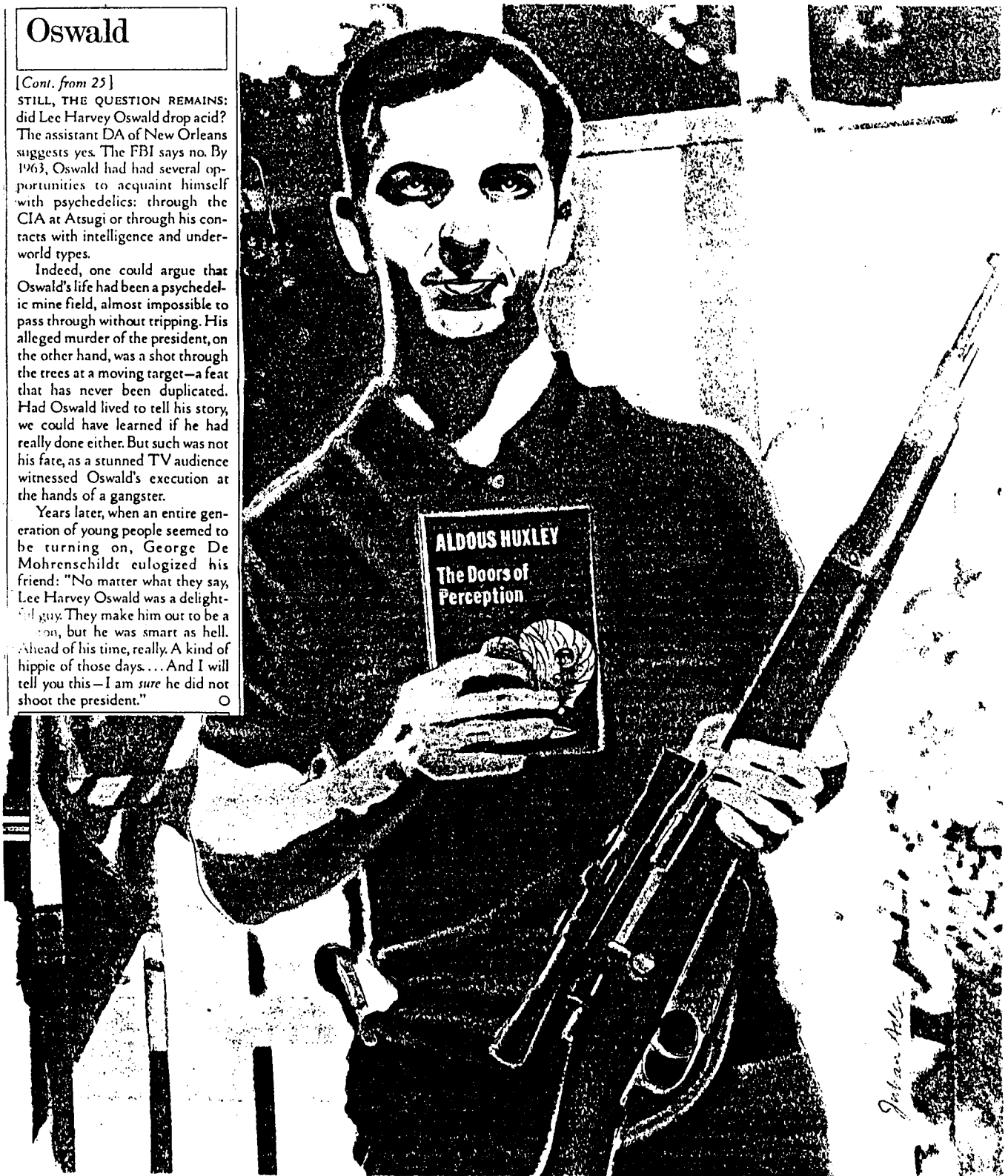
Oswald

[Cont. from 25]

STILL, THE QUESTION REMAINS: did Lee Harvey Oswald drop acid? The assistant DA of New Orleans suggests yes. The FBI says no. By 1963, Oswald had had several opportunities to acquaint himself with psychedelics: through the CIA at Atsugi or through his contacts with intelligence and underworld types.

Indeed, one could argue that Oswald's life had been a psychedelic mine field, almost impossible to pass through without tripping. His alleged murder of the president, on the other hand, was a shot through the trees at a moving target—a feat that has never been duplicated. Had Oswald lived to tell his story, we could have learned if he had really done either. But such was not his fate, as a stunned TV audience witnessed Oswald's execution at the hands of a gangster.

Years later, when an entire generation of young people seemed to be turning on, George De Mohrenschildt eulogized his friend: "No matter what they say, Lee Harvey Oswald was a delightful guy. They make him out to be a madman, but he was smart as hell. Ahead of his time, really. A kind of hippie of those days. . . . And I will tell you this—I am sure he did not shoot the president." ○



John Arden

or three separate forms of illicit activities and underworld operations." That was relevant enough to get quoted in a HSC staff report (9 HSC 93).

I recommend that you read and enjoy this article. You might not learn anything about the assassination, but it does say something about the methodology of historical analysis. When many of us think we know most of the answers, it's good to be reminded that we may not even know all of the questions.

FROM 'ECHOES OF CONSPIRACY'
(PAUL HOCH'S NEWSLETTER)
MARCH 28, 1983

Exclusive! EOC interviews Robert Ranftel:

EOC: First of all, let me start with the question that is on everyone's lips (as the HSC pathologist said to Dr. Humes [7 HSC 243]): are you guys serious?

RR: I'm afraid that we are. Everything in the article is true, and we tried to include every item of evidence that suggested LHO might have taken LSD. Naturally, we left out evidence that he might not have. In a way, I think that what we did is very similar to what Earl Warren did in his much longer piece, "Did LHO kill JFK?" One of the things we wanted to do with this article, which we saw more as a literary effort than an investigative one, was to show that what you find in an investigation depends a lot on what you set out to look for. If you want to show that Oswald, acting alone, killed Kennedy, there's a lot of evidence you can point to that shows just that. When the HSCA found itself with acoustical proof of a conspiracy, they went back to the evidence, and - what do you know - it suddenly turned out that there were earwitnesses whose testimony had been on the books for years and who suddenly became credible.

EOC: Okay, seriously, then: what's the bottom line? If Oswald did drop acid, does that have anything to do with November 22? Was he high in the TSBD when Kennedy was shot?

RR: The bottom line is - here's some new information about Oswald's life. I don't know what that has to do with November 22. I don't necessarily think that the reason he wasn't watching the parade with everyone else was that he was off somewhere getting stoned. But before the bottom line is drawn, you've got to add the possibility that he took drugs to the equation.

EOC: How did you come across this story?

RR: I was reading FBI files for David Lifton, who was working on "Best Evidence," and Marty Lee was reading CIA files on LSD and mind control. We would hang around together at Marty's house and talk to each other about what we found, and one day it occurred to us that with his new information about acid at Atsugi and my reading of Gillin's allegations from the New Orleans field office file, we had a new hypothesis: the Oswald-acid connection. We thought it an interesting story, albeit "National Enquirer" kind of stuff.

EOC: Can Gillin be taken seriously as a witness? I remember seeing his story in some CD many years ago, and I just assumed it was a typical crazy Oswald sighting.

RR: Jeff Cohen found and talked to Gillin. While he might easily have said, yeah, I thought it was Oswald once, but who knows?, instead he said, absolutely, I remember it as if it happened last month. Gillin also took issue with FBI allegations of his blindness. I haven't gone to N.O. and stood in front of Gillin, asking "How many fingers am I holding up?"

We're not convinced that it was Oswald who visited Gillin, but we are convinced that Gillin is convinced. Granted the N.O. DA's office has never

seemed to have too high a standard for employment, but with Gillin's story of the encounter and the various records that show that indeed, Oswald was at that time reading Huxley, and had been at one of the CIA's LSD-connected stations, the idea seems believable.

EOC: It seems really bizarre that anyone would ask a DA about LSD.

RR: Oswald seemed to enjoy doing bizarre things. It's bizarre to shoot at General Walker, or to create incidents with Bringuier in N.O. or at the Cuban Embassy in Mexico City. It's bizarre to pose with a rifle and "The Militant" or to leave a threatening note at the FBI. When you consider all the things that Oswald or Oswald impostors are reported to have done, this seems right in character(s).

EOC: One trouble with seeing Oswald as a doper, I would think, is that people who took LSD talked about it - often wouldn't stop talking about it, in fact. Priscilla McMillan's book tells us a lot about Oswald - e.g., that he disliked fat women - but there is no reference to drugs in the index. Isn't it hard to believe that nobody knew of and talked about LHO's interest in drugs, if it really existed?

RR: Yes. However, there are a lot of facets to Oswald's life that he never talked about but that reasonable people suspect existed nonetheless. An organized crime connection, for instance, or a CIA one. He kept himself pretty busy jabbering about Cuba and Marxism, and who among us believes that? Tim Leary's incessant acid-babble at that time was the exception and not the rule. One didn't really hear Henry Luce or Cary Grant or the wife of a prominent Senator talk about acid, but they all took it. One of JFK's mistresses supposedly was "experienced." (Hint: she was married to a CIA official, although that's not how she is reported to have gotten the stuff.)

EOC: What's all this about a possible LSD connection to explain Oswald's visit to Mexico?

RR: That's not the strongest of allegations. Elena Garro de Paz claimed that she attended a "twist party" in Mexico City where Oswald was present. Her husband, Octavio Paz, has written about his involvement in LSD experimentation. Except for the proven LSD connection of her husband and how that added to our thesis, I wouldn't be interested in her story. The HSC did seem to take her pretty seriously, however.

EOC: Could Oswald have been on Mafia LSD, rather than CIA LSD? It's hard to believe that Marcello's people recruited Oswald by taking care of his \$25 bail, but if they were supplying him with controlled substances....

RR: I have to depend on the acid historian, Mr. Lee, for this information; he contends that acid did not fall into the hands of the mob for some years. In 1963 it was still available only from the CIA and some of the centers of higher learning in this country. (Tulane? I don't know.)

EOC: Did anything good get left out of the "Rolling Stone" article?

RR: The best evidence is there, but there is a lot more. For instance, just before Oswald's Mexico trip, Leary was quoted in newspapers as saying he was going to Mexico to form a community based on Huxley's writings. If one can postulate that LHO read Dr. Castro's pronouncements, why not Dr. Leary's as well? Tito Harper's parents contend that George DeMohrenschildt led their son into a life of drugs in Mexico. I wonder what drugs.

EOC: What do you think writing this article will do to your reputation? What will plugging it do to mine?

RR: One of the things the article shows, I hope, is that there is still a great deal that the independent researcher can do. There are still interesting people out there and interesting questions to ask them. You don't need 25 FBI agents and \$2 million to find things out. And there is still an audience for your discoveries. I don't really want to be known as the man who invented the LSD connection (or the Bronson film, for that matter), but I don't mind at all being known as someone who, 20 years after the fact, is still digging away.

I was impressed by how many people noticed the article. At this stage of

the game, I don't think there's such a thing as bad publicity for the case, as long as the information is documented and the investigation responsibly done. Publishers and readers will still pay attention to new information; that means that we should continue. Okay, the LHO-LSD connection seems somehow silly, but the investigation of those facts and the facts themselves are serious. Until we've compiled all the facts, the picture is not complete. Earl Warren didn't have it, the HSCA didn't have it, and chances are we still don't have it.



"Then we've agreed that all the evidence isn't in, and that even if all the evidence were in, it still wouldn't be definitive."

LEAH GARCHIK

COMMUNITY

on Top of the Heap

Independent Television News

popularity poll with 19 percent of

nt, got more votes than her hus-

cent.

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improved fifth-place showing,

sister-in-law, the Duchess of

which is 4 percent less than his

ould have stayed in the mili-

arincess Margaret.

the young royals should hold

nt preferring that they stick to

Idle Gossip

■ Madonna, who recently

withdrew her petition for di-

orce from Sean Penn, was seen

tepping out in New York the

ther night with actor Matt Dil-

on. Her hair was brown.

■ Diane Sawyer has broken

with her boyfriend, Shear-

man executive Richard

oke, and is going around

with director Mike Nichols.

Nixon Wanted Information on Gay Reporters

By Rick DeVecchio

The Nixon administration asked the FBI in 1970 for information on "known and suspected" homosexuals in the Washington press corps, according to a memo obtained by a Berkeley researcher.

The one-page memo, signed by J. Edgar Hoover and dated Nov. 25, 1970, said that Nixon chief of staff H. R. Haldeman called and "stated the president wanted to ask... for a rundown on the homosexuals known and suspected in the Washington press corps."

"I thought we have some of the material," the memo went on. "Mr. Haldeman mentioned (name or names deleted) and some of the others rumored generally to be and also whether we had any other stuff; that he, the president, has an interest in what, if anything else, we know."

"I told Mr. Haldeman I would get after that right away, and we ought to be able to send it over certainly not later than Friday," concluded the memo, which was addressed to five of the FBI director's assistants.

Robert Ranftel, a researcher who obtained the memo under the Freedom of Information Act, said he was told by the FBI that the White House at one time possessed a list of the names of suspected gay journalists but that the information has been destroyed.

Ranftel, who is investigating old FBI files for the newsletter Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting, has made a new request to confirm that the file no longer exists.

Ranftel, who has worked on exposes of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and the death of Marilyn Monroe, said Haldeman told him last week that he knew nothing of the memo. "He very sincerely said eight different ways, 'I don't remember.'"

The Washington Post quoted Haldeman as saying the Hoover note "rings no bells at all."

The memo does not shed light on any unexplained cases of harassment of individual journalists during the pre-Watergate Nixon years but serves as a reminder of the former president's bitterness toward the press at a time when the nation was split by Vietnam, Ranftel said.

The researcher said there is also a lesson in the memo for journalists.

"That's not a new game," he said, referring to press investigations into the private lives of Democratic presidential candidate Gary Hart and other public figures. "It's just that the sides have changed."

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Nixon White House Sought FBI Data on Gay Journalists

Hoover Memo of Talk With Haldeman Found

By Eleanor Randolph
Washington Post Staff Writer

In November 1970, President Nixon's chief of staff H.R. Haldeman asked then-FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover to pass on any information the agency had collected about homosexuals "known and suspected in the Washington press corps," according to a newly discovered memo of the conversation that was made by Hoover at the time.

Hoover, who addressed the memo to his five assistants, said that Haldeman had called and "stated the president wanted him to ask, and he would imagine I would have it pretty much at hand so there would be no specific investigation, for a rundown on the homosexuals known and suspected in the Washington press corps."

The memo went on to say, "I thought we have some of that material. Mr. Haldeman mentioned [name or names deleted] and some of the others rumored generally to be and also whether we had any other stuff: that he, the president, has an interest in what, if anything else, we know.

"I told Mr. Haldeman I would get

after that right away, and we ought to be able to send it over certainly not later than Friday," the memo said. It concludes, "Very truly yours, John Edgar Hoover, director."

The document, which was found by a California researcher, Robert Ranftel, among the files now available to the public in the FBI's Freedom of Information and Privacy Act reading room in Washington, is a telephone memo from Hoover dated Nov. 25, 1970, at 4:32 p.m.

A media-watch group in New York called FAIR (Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting) plans to reprint the document in its newsletter, EXTRA!, to be published this week.

Ranftel said that he and another researcher in New York, Peter Krass, had requested information that might have been passed to the White House on Nov. 27, 1970, two days after Hoover's memo. He said the FBI told them Hoover's copy of whatever material went to the White House had been destroyed. The researchers are asking for descriptions of the documents that were destroyed and for documents from other FBI officials' files that could relate to the memo, he said.

Haldeman, contacted in California where he is now running several small businesses, said he does not remember making the telephone call to Hoover or receiving any response.

"It rings no bells at all," Haldeman said.

Charles D. Brennan, one of the assistant FBI directors to whom the memo was addressed, said he had no recollection of the memo. "That was 17 years ago," he said.

Experts on Hoover said that it was the former FBI director's practice to make a record of every phone conversation or contact with the White House.

"I have no doubt that it's a dependable rendition of what happened," said David Garrow, who won a Pulitzer prize this year for his nonfiction book on the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. "As a regular matter, whenever he would have a phone request from the White House, he dictated one of these memos. It was Hoover's way of maintaining a . . . paper record."

"It's well known Hoover was obsessed by the issue of homosexuals. Many people think it was because he was not certain about his own sexual [identity]," said Sanford Ungar, dean of the school of communication at American University and author of a 1976 book, "FBI: An Uncensored Look Behind the Walls."

"But in many ways this memo tells more about Haldeman than it does about Hoover," Ungar added.

Farewell to the Annenbergs

by Robert Ranftel

Rupert Murdoch's purchase of *TV Guide* is a milestone in the news business. Not only does it add to the Australian's media empire, it also marks the end of an old and equally important dynasty in publishing—that of the Annenberg family.

Before there was *TV Guide* and television, there were newspapers. And before Murdoch, there was William Randolph Hearst. Chicago was an early battleground for control of news media, with 8 dailies and fierce competition for circulation. Street-corner newsboys sold only one paper and fought for favored sites to hawk their ware. "Circulation wars" erupted with fights and strongarm tactics deciding which papers would sell most.

When Hearst moved into Chicago, he hired an immigrant named Moe Annenberg as one of his circulation managers. Annenberg, in turn, hired street gangs to see that news dealers bought the Hearst product. Trucks were wrecked, papers dumped into the river and newsboys were murdered, though no one employed by Hearst was ever arrested.

Annenberg was subsequently promoted to Hearst's *New York Daily Mirror*, whereupon he turned to two up-and-coming gangsters, Lucky Luciano and Meyer Lansky, for help in honing that competitive edge. They employed the same goon squad tactics that put Annenberg on top in Chicago. Said Luciano: "I used to think

of the *Mirror* as my kind of paper. I always thought of Annenberg as my kind of guy."

In 1922 Annenberg purchased the *Daily Racing Form* and supplied betting information to the nation's bookies. Men like Johnny Roselli, a gangster-graduate of the circulation wars later hired by the CIA to kill Castro, organized a nationwide gambling syndicate from Annenberg's base. And with this wealth Annenberg expanded his news empire to include bawdy magazines with names like *Baltimore Brevities*, as well as the more respectable *Philadelphia Inquirer*, creating what *Fortune* called the largest annual income in the US.

Lots of money and a shady past prompted an IRS probe and Annenberg was indicted for tax evasion. His son, Walter, was also indicted for aiding and abetting his father's crimes. In return for having the charges against Walter dropped, Moe plead guilty and went to prison. Walter became head of the empire.

For the next thirty years Walter ran the rightwing *Inquirer*, establishing a reputation once described by Philadelphia attorney Harry Sawyer as "the greatest institutional force for evil" in that city. He maintained a blacklist of people and organizations that were never to be mentioned in *Inquirer* news stories (Ralph Nader and the ACLU, among others). He used his newspaper to attack a gubernatorial candidate who opposed plans that would have profited the Pennsylvania Railroad, but Annenberg didn't tell his readers that he was the railroad's largest stockholder. Annenberg was also said to have given Philadelphia Mayor Frank Rizzo veto power over certain news stories.

But time and tremendous wealth seem to cleanse reputations: President Richard Nixon appointed Annenberg to the diplomatic corps. ("Walter Annenberg, of all people, to be ambassador to London, of all places?" wailed James Reston.) But serve he did, with *TV Guide* and *The Racing Form* continuing to fill the family coffers. According to a White House document (8-9-72) recently unearthed by *Extra!* from the National Archives, Annenberg offered to make the pages of *TV Guide*—with its circulation of 18 million—available to Nixon to promote his Vietnam policy.

Now the former ambassador of checkered past has sold out to the tabloid monger of checkered present. As Linda Ellerbee would say, "And so it goes."

Robert Ranftel is a FAIR research associate

George Bush's Affirmative Action for Servants

Most American voters may never find out about George Bush's Caucasian-only covenants in Texas. On February 4, 1981, after he took his vice-presidential oath, Bush bought a lot in West Oaks, Texas, where he hopes to build a retirement home. The neighborhood is all white; Bush was a member of the exclusive all-white Ramada club when he bought the property. Bush's contract contained a clause that the land could not "be sold, leased or rented to any person other than of the Caucasian race, except in the case of servant's quarters."

Information about this racially restrictive deed—and several others signed by Bush since the 1950s—has been available since *The Nation* (11-28-87) exposed the story last year. But the mass media have been virtually silent. Did Bush know of the racist clause in the 1981 deed? If not, has he admonished his attorney who drew up the contract? Will he appoint an attorney general as racist, or as sloppy, as the lawyer who represented him in Texas? —Paul Rockwell

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Anderson's Fairy Tale

by Robert Ranftel

A deluge of stories commemorated the 25th anniversary of President Kennedy's death—from *Time* to the *National Enquirer*, from *Geraldo Rivera* to *MacNeil/Lehrer*—including over 30 hours of primetime programming. The media took a second look at the possibility of a second gunman in reports ranging from the serious (*PBS Nova's* probe of the scientific evidence) to the ludicrous (*Time's* theory that Oswald was aiming at Connally not Kennedy).

Perhaps worst of all was Jack Anderson's *American Exposé—Who Murdered JFK?*, a two-hour syndicated special which claimed—with flashy graphics and flimsy proof—that Fidel Castro masterminded Kennedy's death in retaliation for CIA plots against the Cuban leader. Anderson's tale has Castro and the Mafia—bitter enemies since Castro ran the Mob out of Havana in 1959—working together to kill JFK. How Castro (or the Mafia, for that matter) orchestrated a US government cover-up of the evidence is not satisfactorily explained. Nor why Castro, then secretly negotiating with Kennedy to normalize relations, would have preferred the hawkish Lyndon Johnson as president. "Anderson seemed to listen to all the evidence presented," one of his associates told *Extra!*, "but he was like a wild man insisting that the show must ultimately point to Castro."

While Anderson's mentor, Drew Pearson, often antagonized J. Edgar Hoover, Anderson earned high marks from the FBI chief. Hoover once described Anderson as "a good boy," "a nice looking fellow," and a "smooth talker" (J. Edgar Hoover, Personal Files, 7-1-69). Hoover's fondness for Anderson may have had something to do with the fact that for years Anderson tipped

off the FBI about his and Pearson's column before it appeared. Anderson also sought Hoover's help when writing about mutual adversaries.

Among Anderson's adversaries were the Kennedys. *Extra!* has obtained an FBI document, dated May 21, 1968, indicating that Anderson proposed to the Bureau that he write a column accusing Robert Kennedy—not J. Edgar Hoover—of instigating the wiretap on Martin Luther King. "Kennedy should receive a death blow prior to the Oregon primary," the document quotes Anderson as telling the FBI. Kennedy lost that primary shortly before he was murdered in June 1988.

During the previous year Anderson had a 6 hour conversation with New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison, who was then investigating the JFK assassination. Anderson proceeded to brief the FBI on Garrison's case. According to an FBI memo (4-4-67), Anderson felt that Garrison had made a convincing case that the CIA was behind JFK's death.

But the CIA got off clean in Anderson's recent TV special, which featured the tale of gangster Johnny Roselli, one of the mobsters hired by the Agency to kill Castro in 1960. Although the death plots failed, Roselli figured he'd done well, for, in his words, he "now had the government by the ass." Roselli thought he could avoid prosecution by threatening to expose the CIA-Mafia alliance.

In 1967, while facing racketeering charges, Roselli leaked a story to Jack Anderson, whose columns began to refer to a Mafia skeleton in the CIA's closet. Roselli added a new twist—the theory that Castro retaliated and killed JFK. A 1978 probe of Anderson's columns by the House Select Committee on Assassinations concluded: "The public dissemination of the details of the plots correspond remarkably with the efforts of John Roselli to prevent his deportation [and] prosecution... These coincidences plus other evidence indicate that John Roselli manipulated the facts of the plot into a retaliation theory in efforts to force the CIA to intervene favorably in his legal affairs."

In other words, Roselli manipulated Anderson for his own purposes. According to former Mafioso James ("Jimmy the Weasel") Frattiano, Roselli said of the 'Castro killed Kennedy' theory: "The whole thing has been a scam... all bullshit" (*The Last Mafioso*, Ovid DeMaris). Roselli was murdered in 1976, but Anderson has kept his discredited tale alive.

—Robert Ranftel is a FAIR research associate.

JFK Dies Again

If one were to list the greatest media blunders in the JFK case (there have been many), near the top would be Dan Rather's description of the Zapruder film, the famous home movie of the assassination. The film, not shown on TV until 12 years after the fact, shows the fatal shot driving Kennedy's head sharply and indisputably backwards—suggesting a bullet fired from the front, and therefore a second gunman. But Rather, then a cub reporter for CBS and the first TV correspondent to view the film, told the nation that Kennedy's head was propelled forward.

In his 1977 book, *The Camera Never Sleeps*, Rather explained that his error resulted from a rushed report, delivered without notes, after viewing the film only once. But Rather's gaffe may have more to do with how easily reporters are swayed by official stories. Authorities claimed that all shots were fired by a lone gunman from the rear, and that's how Rather saw it—even though the film footage he saw contradicted the official line.

There was also the *New York Times* editorial (1-7-79) shortly after the House Select Committee on Assassinations rejected the Warren Commission verdict of no conspiracy in the JFK case. Pondering the newly disclosed audio evidence of more than one gunman in Dallas, the *Times* suggested that perhaps two lone nuts had fired at Kennedy: "The word [conspiracy] is freighted with dark connotations of malevolence perpetrated by enemies, foreign or political. Yet two maniacs instead of one might be more like it."

—B. Lovelady.

FAIR Alumni Association Forms

Andrew Breslau, FAIR's founding associate director and the person responsible for putting FAIR on firm financial footing, has resigned to pursue other endeavors. In addition to guiding FAIR from a volunteer operation to a well-staffed organization, Breslau often represented FAIR on TV, radio and in other public forums. He played a key role in the educational campaign around ABC's *Cold War miniseries, "Amerika."* His presence is missed. FAIR's fundraising is now being overseen by development director Hollie Ainsbinder and grantwriter Bruce Cronin.

Some dare call it obsession

Amateurs hunt the last word on JFK slaying

By Jeff Gottlieb
Mercury News Staff Writer

Like Talmudic scholars searching for new meaning in holy books, assassination buffs have spent years digging through the 26 volumes of Warren Commission documents, hundreds of thousands of pages of government documents and assorted films and photographs.

The Bay Area is a sort of Assassination Central for the search for clues to prove Lee Harvey Oswald did not act alone, if he acted at all, when he killed John F. Kennedy 25 years ago today.

Says Tom Miller, who has written extensively about the assassination buffs and the less scholarly enthusiasts: "The Bay Area has more of both than any other place in the United States."

Miller, who paid \$1 at an auction for Jack Ruby's can opener, puts himself in neither camp. But, like the other assassination critics, he speaks the shorthand: phrases like minimal mechanical firing time, CE 399, 544 Camp St., the stockade fence, the babushka lady.

The critics are armed, not with Oswald's Mannlicher-Carcano rifle, but with copies of the Zapruder film, the horrible record of the president's murder that fall day in Dallas.

"Most people can tell you what they were doing when Kennedy was killed," says Robert Ranftel, a 35-year-old Berkeley resident and assassination buff. "We can tell you what we've been doing ever since."

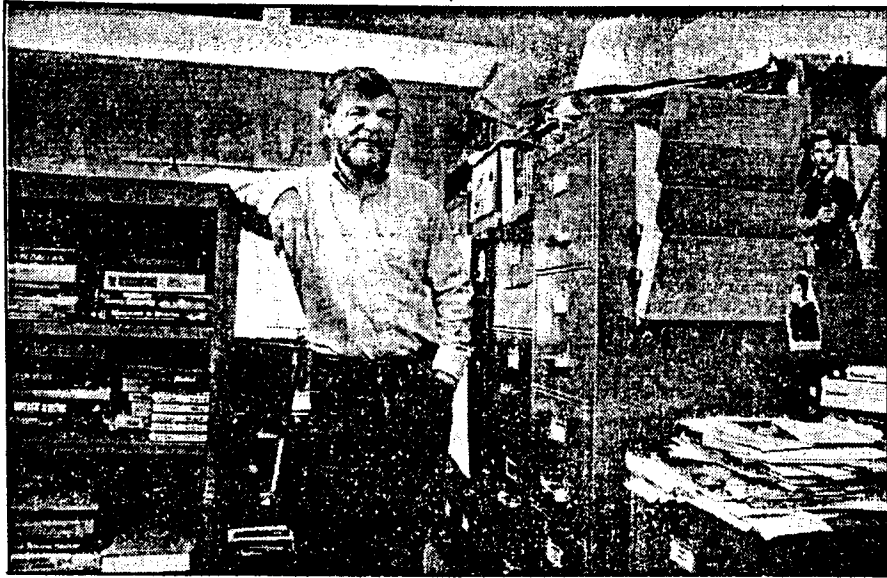
A public mystery

Some people say the critics' interest in the Kennedy assassination is an obsession. Not all the critics disagree.

"What does society expect?" says Josiah Thompson, a Haverford College professor turned San Francisco private eye who wrote the book "Six Seconds in Dallas."

"The president was murdered in a public square with 400 people looking on with 38 taking photos. And 25 years later, not only don't we know who did it and why, but we don't even know what happened."

Obsession, however, is a word that rankles Paul Hoch, who holds a doctorate in physics from the



David Hornbeck — Mercury News

Paul Hoch has devoted many years and several filing cabinets to the quest

Most people can tell you what they were doing when Kennedy was killed. We can tell you what we've been doing ever since.

— Robert Ranftel

University of California, Berkeley. Hoch, 46, with red hair and a full beard, works two half-time jobs.

He gets paid for his position as a programmer and analyst at Berkeley. The rest of the week, he spends on Kennedy assassination research, buried in his small, cluttered office off the kitchen of the Berkeley home he shares with his wife and two young daughters.

The four metal filing cabinets and 20 boxes of files threaten to advance on the rest of the house, but Hoch's wife is manning the barricades against them.

"If I had spent the last 25 years

studying elementary particle physics, no one would ask about obsession," Hoch bristles. "The only reason people say that is because we aren't affiliated with universities or research institutions."

Three or four times a year, Hoch sends 230 researchers a 10-page newsletter, "Echoes of Conspiracy," which he began 10 years ago.

Asked why he continues, Hoch's 11-year-old daughter pipes in, "Because nobody knows who did it yet." Her father has taught her well.

Critics say they keep going because new bits of information continue to be discovered. "There is the frustration of not knowing who did it but the fascination of always finding new facts," Ranftel says.

Thompson, 51, has dropped in and out of the Kennedy assassination controversy. When he started studying the killing in 1965, he was a professor whose specialties were Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, not Oswald and Ruby, who killed Oswald on live TV.

In the mid-1960s, Thompson headed to Dallas with a \$78 Abney level and set about measuring bul-

let angles. "It was not what academics did," he says. "It was a little bit more respectable than UFOs, but not a lot more."

Critics win credibility

With the 25th anniversary of the killing, he has come out of retirement, and, like Hoch and Ranftel, has been interviewed on several television shows. Last weekend, Thompson flew to Pittsburgh to give the keynote address at a conference on the assassination.

The conspiracy theorists are now being taken seriously. The latest official version of the slaying, from the House Select Committee on Assassinations in 1978, said there probably was a conspiracy, led by organized crime figures.

Several experts tell a story about a Los Angeles researcher who had been studying photographs of Dealey Plaza, looking for assassins on the grassy knoll. If he were successful, it would be proof of conspiracy.

His work consumed him. He would look at unrelated photographs and spot hidden gunmen. When he noticed snipers hiding in the trees outside his apartment, he knew something wasn't right.

EXTRA! EXCLUSIVE:

CIA Chief Bush Suppresses the News

By Robert Gardner

Documents obtained by FAIR, released through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), show that George Bush, as head of the CIA in 1976, tried to bottle up a news story that exposed the apparent duplicity of another former CIA chief, Richard Helms.

The story, broken on Oct. 1, 1976, by David Martin (now CBS Pentagon correspondent, then with Associated Press), revealed that Helms had given misleading testimony to the Warren Commission investigating the assassination of John Kennedy. Helms testified that the CIA had not "even contemplated" making contact with Lee Harvey Oswald, the accused assassin. Through the FOIA, Martin obtained CIA memos showing that in 1960 the agency "showed intelligence interest" in Oswald and "discussed...the laying on of interviews" with him.

When Bush saw the AP story in the Washington Star, he asked for an internal CIA review to see if the story was true (it was) and if it would "cause problems for Helms." (Helms had lied to a Senate committee about the CIA's

role in subverting Chilean democracy and would later be convicted of contempt of Congress.)

After investigating, Bush assistant Seymour Bolten reported back that the exposure of Helms' false testimony to the Warren Commission would probably cause Helms "some anxious moments," though not "any additional legal problems." But Bush was assured that a "slightly better" story had resulted from an Agency phone call to AP protesting that Martin's story was "sloppy." Additionally, Bush was told that an unnamed journalist had "advised his editors...not to run the AP story."

Bolten complained to Bush: "This is another example where material provided to the press and public in response to an FOIA request is exploited mischievously and in distorted form to make the headlines." One might more accurately describe it as an occasion where George Bush's CIA pressured one news outlet to back away from an accurate story while using an asset in the press corps to suppress it in another. □

CIA Guidelines on Contacts with Journalists

Stung by revelations in the 70s about the CIA's hiring of journalists as spies, the Agency drafted regulations supposedly designed to prevent such practices. Researcher Robert Gardner obtained a copy of the CIA policy—"Relations With Journalists and Staff of US News Media Organizations"—and found that it contains loopholes big enough to drive truckloads of contra aid through.

The rules prohibit "relationships" with journalists accredited by U.S. media outlets, or the use of these outlets names for intelligence purposes. The policy does not prohibit the hiring of freelance journalists, and it allows the CIA to recruit "nonjournalist staff employees" (librarians? sound technicians and camerapersons?) of media outlets if authorization is given by senior media management.

The policy also asserts that "no person, including full-time or part-time accredited journalists and stringers, will be denied the opportunity to furnish information which may be useful to the U.S. Government. Therefore, unpaid relationships with journalists...who voluntarily maintain contact for the purpose of providing information" are kosher. What better way for a reporter to sweeten a foreign beat than by cozying up to the local CIA officer and swapping stories?

The final paragraph of the guidelines, titled "Exceptions," seems to swallow up the policy's few limits: "No exceptions to the policies and prohibitions stated above may be made except with the specific approval of the Director." In approving exceptions, future CIA chiefs might apply this rule of thumb: What would William Casey have done in my shoes?

ROBERT'S TITLE - "CIA SECRETS HIDDEN UNDER BUSH"

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gests the Central Intelligence Agency was involved in some of this fraud—with a cost to the taxpayer in the billions. When will the rest of the media pick up the story?

Reporter Pete Brewton's investigation implicated the CIA and organized crime in the failure of 22 S&Ls. Sources told the Houston Post that "the CIA may have used part of the proceeds from S&L fraud to help pay for covert operations," including possible support for the Nicaraguan contras. The collapse of looted S&Ls with mob and CIA ties will cost the government an estimated \$13 billion (2/4/90).

The ongoing series has documented CIA interference in fraud prosecutions (2/8/90), and the involvement of President Bush's son Neil with a mob-linked thrift (3/11/90). The Post's research has led the House Intelligence Committee to launch an investigation of its own.

But national media have done little to bring this story to the public. "I can't think of a single investigative breaking story that they've done on what caused the S & L crisis," Brewton told FAIR. "The papers that have the resources to really dig into this haven't been there. It's very disappointing."

FAIR's representatives brought up the S&L/CIA story in separate meetings with Washington Post foreign editors (2/21/90) and the New York Times publisher (3/14/90); they had not yet heard about it.

WARREN HINKLE

JFK assassination: Wherein lies truth?



"HOW COME Senator Ted Kennedy does not tell who killed his brother? The Warren Report was the coverup, not Watergate."

— Michael E. Desmond,
Parkmerced

DURING THE '60s, when I was editing Ramparts magazine, I discovered a sure way to goose newsstand sales: put a Kennedy on the cover. The dead ones sold better than the live ones.

Public interest in the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and distrust of the official explanation remains a vital sign of the national curiosity. Since the Warren Commission presented its lone-assassin thesis in 1964, public opinion polls have registered an unflagging disbelief in that verdict. Most people think Kennedy was killed by a conspiracy. The sentiments expressed by Michael E. Desmond of Parkmerced Towers were typical of the letters and telephone calls following a report in this space last Sunday regarding the latest Kennedy conspiracy news: a claim by the son of a Dallas policeman that his dad had been one of three men shooting at President Kennedy in Dealey Plaza on Nov. 22, 1963.

The column registered less-than-blind enthusiasm from Bay Area Kennedy assassination experts on the Dallas claim staked by Ricky Don White, an unemployed salesman of oil equipment, on the murderous marksmanship of his late cop father, Roscoe, whose diary is said to contain proof of conspiracy. Examiner readers had their own theories of the assassination: One suggested it had to do with JFK's views on the silver standard.

An often-heard refrain about the assassination is that the truth will never be known until the files of the Warren Commission are unsealed at a date sufficiently far into the future as to qualify for science fiction, circa A.D. 2039. Robert Gardner Raftel, a JFK assassination researcher in Berkeley, put a match and powder to that shibboleth.

Raftel said that more than 90 percent of the Warren Commission files have already been made public through Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) lawsuits filed by assassination researchers.

He then laid out the following scenario: that the government has done all it can toward resolving the nettlesome questions about the Kennedy assassination, and that the question should be mercifully put to rest on the basis of the best evidence available.

Raftel said that after all these years the government now has vastly more information about the assassination locked up than it did at the time of the 1964 Warren Commission Report.

The irony is that the researchers' lawsuits disclosed sufficient information from the files of the Warren Commission to intensify the questioning of its arbitrary conclusions and to prompt congressional probes, culminating in a reopening of the case by the House Assassination committee in 1976. This was propelled by the findings of a subcommittee of the famous Church Committee — which investigated the domestic doings and Mafia-related assassination plots of the CIA that the CIA had withheld key files from the Warren Commission, impeding its investigation. Hearings by Bay Area Congressman Don Edwards also established that the FBI had destroyed evidence related to the investigation.

During the House Assassination Committee probe in 1977-1978, the FBI released some 100,000 pages of its Kennedy assassination files and researcher Raftel trudged through them all.

"But the House Assassination Committee got 300,000 pages of CIA files and an additional 300,000 pages of FBI files on the assassination — and those files are now sealed for 50 years," Raftel said.

Raftel said freedom of information lawsuits cannot penetrate these core assassination files because the records of Congressional investigations, like some papal writ, are immune from FOIA suits.

The bureaucratic rationale for keeping these files off-limits to the very researchers who forced the reopening of the assassination case is to protect intelligence agency "assets" and methods.

Raftel is no conspiracy monger. He recently shot down a press report that George Bush was a CIA agent in 1963 and was involved in the assassination investigation. Raftel showed that what Bush did do was telephone the FBI and suggest that a right-wing Houston Republican who was a political enemy should be considered as suspect in the Kennedy killing. If Oswald was the lone assassin or, as the House Committee concluded, the mob did it, why is every agency of government with a need to know about the Kennedy assassination straining to suppress the facts that would support such elementary conclusions?

Uncle Sam Pusher Man

DRUG WARS

BY JONATHAN MARSHALL
COHAN & COHEN

90 PAGES: \$16.95

COCAINE POLITICS:

DRUGS, ARMIES AND THE
CIA IN CENTRAL AMERICA
BY PETER DALE SCOTT
AND JONATHAN MARSHALL
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

279 PAGES: \$24.95

Reviewed by Robert Gardner

THE LARGEST drug bust in history—one ton of narcotics—took place recently in Hayward, California. One might view it as a victory in America's war on drugs, until one realizes it represented only a month's supply for all users. Despite decades of declarations of war on drugs, from several presidents, it is clear we are nowhere near winning one. *Drug Wars* by Jonathan Marshall and *Cocaine Politics* by Marshall and Peter Dale Scott are fascinating and frightening views into these wars, and show why drug enforcement is remarkably ineffectual.

In the 1960s, in one of the most celebrated drug busts in history, the French Connection, dozens of pounds of narcotics were seized (a large amount then) and a network that brought drugs through France to the United States was destroyed. But as the French Connection closed, the Golden Crescent Connection opened and drugs continued to flow, now through Hong Kong instead of Marseilles. Both *Drug Wars* and *Cocaine Politics* are world tours of doors opening and closing, one cartel replacing another, and an incredible spread of corruption sabotaging the war from within.

The pages of *Drug Wars* read like the closing argument to a jury, sorting through names and histories country by country, strat-

egy by strategy, telling the story so it can be understood. The longer *Cocaine Politics* is the indictment, detailed and footnoted, showing how the CIA became intertwined with corrupt governments involved in the trade it was assigned to fight. Characters and connections are set forth, making for a readable reference work and a staggering story.

Described is the awful ebb and flow of drugs and guns: planes taking guns to an army (sometimes the military, sometimes the rebels) in one country, and then, rather than flying back to America empty-handed, loading up with drugs for the return trip—perhaps as payment for the munitions, perhaps just for criminal efficiency.

But as *Drug Wars* points out, it is more than an exchange of goods. It has been imbued with politics, with drug users and some suppliers painted as enemies of the United States, while friendly governments were showered with arms and aid—to fight against suppliers, or against insurgent movements in their own countries. Where cartels competed, some were targeted, some ignored. So many political factors entered in that the war on drugs became no more about drugs than the Hundred Years' War was about calendars. Drugs were a commodity, drug enforcement a tool of counterinsurgency and control.

Deals were made and corruption flourished. Incompetent drug dealers were caught, while canny ones corrupted the police, army, or governments with which they had to deal. (All the drugs seized in the French Connection disappeared from the evidence locker and were no doubt sold on the street).

Both books point out that if the US is sincere about halting the destruction wrought by drug dealing, it must look at the corruption that has touched the CIA. This argument comes not only from the countries that grow the substances, but also from allies in finance and politics. White-collar prosecutions for white-powder crime will have to take place.

One of *Cocaine Politics'* startling tales is about an Eastern Airlines pilot who testified to Congress that commercial flights regularly brought in cocaine from Colombia, hidden in a compartment in the front of the plane. It was a standard joke, he said, for pilots to

notice that cockpit instruments indicated the plane weighed many pounds more than were entered on the manifest. But the joke wasn't funny. Those drugs helped ruin our cities, and Eastern Airlines, even with all that money under its noses, went bankrupt, losing millions of dollars and costing thousands of jobs.

Cocaine Politics also describes how, when a bank in the Bahamas which laundered monies for drug deals and held funds for American intelligence agents collapsed, a new bank, the Nugan Hand of Australia, emerged to perform the same function. Involved in Nugan Hand was Richard Secord, who worked with Colonel Oliver North and was deeply involved in Iran-Contra. There was a chain of contact from drugs to money-laundering to rogue intelligence agents to government officials. If we were talking about a disease all these men would be infected. But the daisy chain of drugs and enforcement doesn't make everyone indictable—yet.

Someday, though, the chain must be followed or broken. *Drug Wars* concludes that our law-enforcement officials must sooner or later see that shoring up corrupt governments, pouring funds into corrupt militaries, making deals with criminal elements, is not the way to win the war on drugs. And sooner or later, the US must hear what countries like Colombia and Peru are saying: that as long as demand for drugs exists on our streets, the supply will be there to meet it.

Perhaps the chain-of-contagion metaphor holds an answer. If addiction were viewed as a behavioral problem and not just a criminal one, if treatment and prevention raised the same fervor as ineffectual attempts to lock up pushers for too-short terms in too-crowded prisons, then maybe some drug battles could be won.

In the 1980s, the spread of AIDS was as threatening to human life as the drug epidemic. Programs to stop AIDS emphasized abstinence and safe practice, rather than outlawing sex and imprisoning homosexuals. Today, AIDS still spreads, but more notably now through IV drug use than unsafe sex alone. Did not Surgeon General Koop do better in his war than Drug Czar Bennett?

Robert Gardner is a Bay Area writer.

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Robert Gardner Ranftel
Box 7892
Berkeley, CA 94707-0892
510- 525-1980 (msg)

[JAN. '92]

Les Gripkey
Box 8024
Santa Cruz, CA 95061

Dear Les:

Nice to meet you the other night.

Here's a brief summary of some of my views and labors on the Kennedy case:

In the 1970s I was active with the Assassination Information Bureau, a grassroots lobbying and lecture group that pushed (successfully) for a new Congressional investigation of the crime.

When, in 1977, through a series of Freedom of Information lawsuits, the FBI opened its files on the assassination, I moved to Washington D.C. to read them. While the mainstream media (NBC, UPI, et al) were quick to announce that there was no new evidence to be found in the more than one hundred thousand pages of memos, I spent two years, going to the Bureau every day. While no smoking gun was found, much new evidence was uncovered.

Perhaps the most newsworthy discovery was the existence of an hitherto unknown film of the assassination by a witness named Charles Bronson (no relation to the awful movie star). In its concluding report, the Congressional committee urged further study of this film. Several frames of the film focused on the sixth floor window where Oswald was supposedly lurking alone. Several people think the figures of two people can be seen on the sixth floor, suggesting conspiracy.

"Discoverer of the Bronson Film" was for some years my investigative claim to fame.

Concurrently, I served as researcher for David Lifton's Best Evidence, a very successful book about the medical evidence. I am no longer

enamored with Lifton's thesis.

I worked as a researcher/interviewer with Anthony Summers, author of Conspiracy, one of the better books about the assassination.

I served as a consultant to Thames Television, Channel Four (a British network), NOVA, and to the series produced by Sylvia Chase and Stanhope Gould for KRON in San Francisco.

I was researcher for John Davis on his book Mafia Kingfish: Carlos Marcello and the Assassination of President Kennedy.

But by far my richest experience in the study of the crime was my time spent as Executive Director of the Assassination Archives and Research Center [pronounced "Ark" for short]. AARC is privately funded and the largest collection of research material concerning political assassination. It is a repository for most of the available government files released under the FOIA, as well as the private papers of independent citizens who have investigated or written about the case.

I am also the author of the Rolling Stone article "Did Lee Harvey Oswald Drop Acid?"

I consider Jim Garrison a disturbed and dangerous man, and Oliver Stone a scoundrel for making a hero out of him.

I describe myself as an "assassination buff" (in contrast to "conspiracy buff"), consider myself a conservative amongst the critics, but will vigorously agree that the government has lied to us, destroyed evidence, and that the question of "Who killed JFK?" remains unanswered in any satisfactory way.

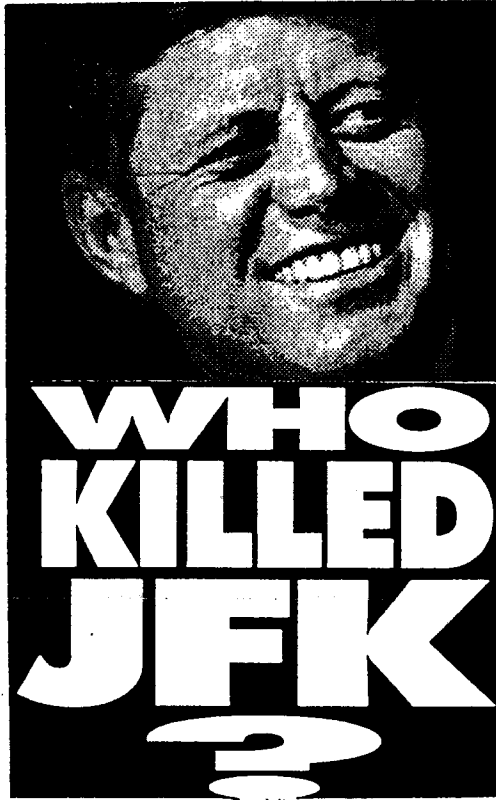
As I said, I will try to send you an outline of what I'd like to cover in my brief talk, and — if you haven't seen it — for your entertainment I'll send along a copy of "Did LHO Drop Acid?"

Sincerely,

Robert.

What Do We "Know" About the J.F.K. Assassination?

(and what can we do about it?)



WHAT DO WE KNOW?
WHAT CAN WE DO?

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12

7:30 p.m .

(1992)

LOUDEN NELSON CENTER

Rm. 3
(301 Center St.)

PANEL DISCUSSION with:

Robert Ranftel - former director of the Assassination Archives and Research Center (largest private depository of released assassination files); researcher for the books, *Godless*, *Conspiracy* by Anthony Summers, *Best Evidence* by David Lifton, and *Mafta Kingfish: Carlos Marcello and the Assassination of President Kennedy*.

Dave Ratcliffe - long-time local researcher has conducted extensive interviews with Col. L. Fletcher Prouty (consultant to Oliver Stone for *JFK* and basis for the "Mr. X" character in that movie.)

Questioners to the panelists:

Mark Zepezauer - author of *The Nixon Saga* and co-editor of the *Comic News*.

Les Gripkey - recently returned from the J.F.K. Assassination Symposium in Dallas.

JFK panel is dealt fatal blow

By GREG BEERE
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — A panel discussion on the JFK assassination was abruptly canceled because of the death of a key participant.

The event, titled "What Do We 'Know' About the JFK Assassination (and What Can We Do About It?)" was scheduled for Wednesday night at the Loudon Nelson Center.

It was scrapped late last week when organizers were informed that one of the event's two speakers — prominent JFK assassination researcher Robert Ranftel, 39, *Please see JFK PANEL — A6*

JFK panel dealt a fatal blow

Continued from Page A1

of Berkeley — was found dead on a Berkeley street in the early morning hours Jan. 29. Ranftel was discovered slumped against a curb near his Berkeley home, a bicycle by his side.

The cause of Ranftel's death is unknown pending completion of a toxicology report, said a spokesman for the Alameda County Coroner's Office.

David Rancliffe, a Santa Cruz researcher who has conducted extensive interviews with Col. L. Fletcher Prouty — inspiration for the Mr. X character in Oliver Stone's controversial film "JFK" — was slated to join Ranftel on the panel.

Ranftel is the former director of the Assassination Archives and Research Center in Washington D.C., the nation's largest private collection of material on political assassinations. He worked as an adviser and researcher on such JFK assassination books as "Conspiracy" by Anthony Summers and "Best Evidence" by David Lifton.

Ranftel also was among the researchers who urged the Senate

Select Committee on Assassinations to reopen the investigation into JFK's death in 1974. He released to the media in 1987 a Nixon administration document seeking information on suspected homosexuals in Capitol press corps.

Many conspiracy theorists contend that since 1963, various researchers and key witnesses in the JFK assassination have been systematically killed because of what they knew about the slaying. And some local conspiracy buffs couldn't help but question the circumstances of Ranftel's death.

"You gotta wonder," said Mark Zepezauer, a local author and editor who was scheduled to be a questioner at the forum.

"Suspicious, I guess, is a subjective term, but if you have any inclination in that direction one just has to wonder," said Zepezauer, author of "The Nixon Saga" and co-editor of the Comic News.

"It's not unreasonable to assume that heart attacks can be induced and certainly the CIA has been doing that sort of thing since the early '60s," he said. "There is certain-

ly no evidence of foul play, but 'suspect' would not be an unreasonable term to use. ... It's not out of bounds to question it."

Ranftel's obituary in a San Francisco newspaper Feb. 6 said he was receiving medical treatments for depression, but Grant Wilson, local coordinator for event co-sponsors the Christie Action Group, said Ranftel's untimely death seemed "strange. ..."

"It is rather disturbing. It's hard to know what (caused his death). ... Maybe he took an overdose of pills. What's strange is that we had got a

IF ROBERT WERE ALIVE
TO READ THIS,
HE WOULD TELL IN
HIS GRAVE!
NO, YOU DON'T
GOTTA WONDER.
PLH

Santa Cruz Sentinel — Thursday, Feb. 13, 1992

letter from him saying that he was looking forward to doing this event in Santa Cruz," said Wilson.

"It didn't appear to us that he was depressed. He was looking forward to coming down. It sounded like he was pretty motivated," Wilson said. "It's definitely caused us some concern."

Les Gripkey, a local activist who recently returned from a JFK assassination symposium in Dallas, was not as hasty to question Ranftel's death.

"I don't think he was in that great of health," said Gripkey, who

also was to ask questions at the event. A close friend of Ranftel's did not sound suspicious when he passed the word by telephone that Ranftel had died, said Gripkey.

Gripkey said Ranftel had recently turned his attention to other pursuits, including the plight of the homeless. "If there was ever going to be a time (for Ranftel to die suspiciously) it was when he was going through hundreds of thousands of pages of documents in the National Archives," researching JFK's death.

Attorney Jim Lesar, president of

the Assassination Archives and Research Center in Washington, D.C., said, "I know no basis for any suspicion, but I don't know a great deal at this point. ... I've been getting conflicting reports on his age. Was he 39 or 46?"

"I don't know of anything that Bob was working on that put him in jeopardy. I heard that he was investigating the murder of a former girlfriend. That would probably be more likely a cause of any foul play," said Lesar, whose brother, Keith, is a lawyer in Aptos.

Robert Gardner Ranftel

Robert Gardner Ranftel, an expert on the assassination of John F. Kennedy who pressured Congress in the 1970s to reopen its inquiry into the president's death, collapsed and died January 29 near his home in Berkeley. He was 39.

In 1984, Mr. Ranftel worked for the Assassination Information Bureau in Washington, D.C., and later as executive director of the Washington-based Assassination Archives and Research Center, the largest private collection of material on political assassinations.

At the time of his death, Mr. Ranftel was receiving medical treatment for depression. Autopsy results are awaiting the completion of a toxicology report.

Mr. Ranftel was one of several researchers who in 1974 pushed the ~~Senate~~ Select Committee on Assassination to reopen an investigation of Kennedy's shooting. He also contributed to several books on the Kennedy assassination.

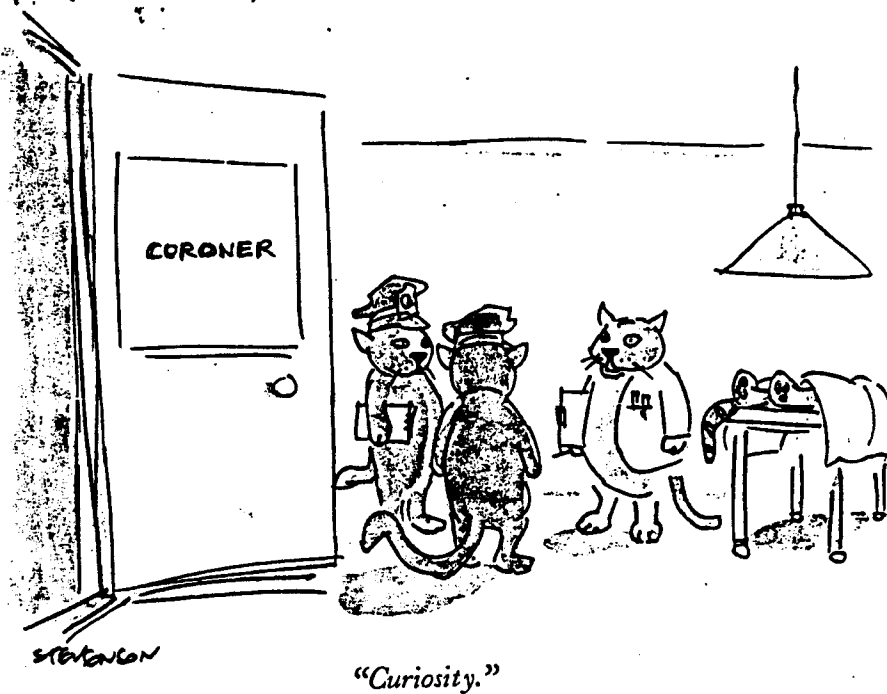
In 1987, Mr. Ranftel obtained and released to the media a Nixon administration memorandum that contained evidence that Nixon had sought FBI information on known and suspected homosexuals in the Washington press corps.

Friends described Mr. Ranftel as a highly respected free-lance researcher who had recently redirected his efforts to the plight of the homeless and mental health advocacy.

"He felt he wanted to begin working on something that had more to do with life than death," said Julia Gilden, a friend from San Francisco. "His death is a real loss to the investigative community."

Mr. Gardner was born in Syracuse, N.Y. Information on surviving family members was not available. His body was flown to Syracuse, and burial services were held there Tuesday.

Friends ask that donations be made to the Assassination Archives and Research Center in Washington, D.C.

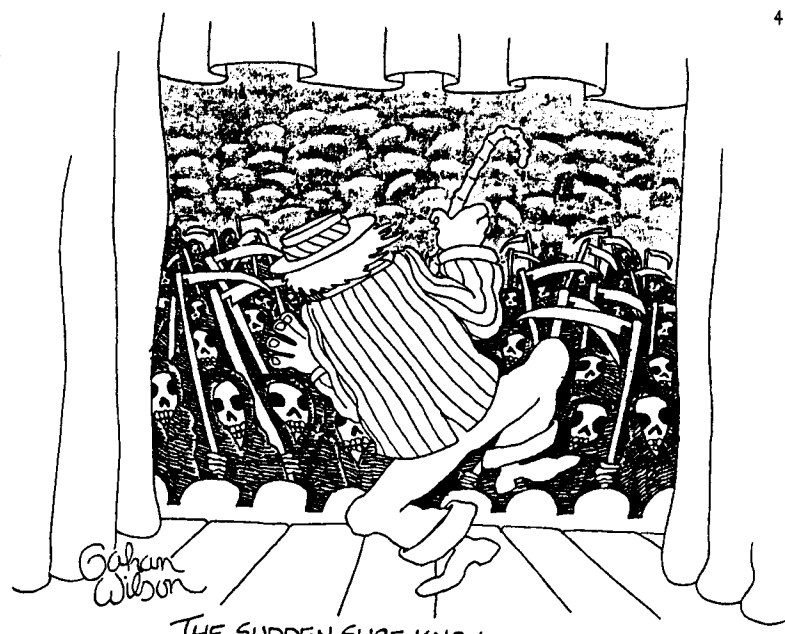


OBITUARY
FROM
THE THIRD DECADE
JAN-MAR '92

A JOURNAL OF RESEARCH
ON THE JFK ASSASSINATION

Death. From Les Gripkey in California comes the sad news of the death of Robert Ranftel, one of the "quiet men" of assassination research. Robert died in Berkeley, CA on January 29, 1992 while bicycling, an apparent heart attack victim. A native of Syracuse, NY, he was an advisor or consultant on such research projects as Lifton's Best Evidence and Summers' Conspiracy as well as numerous TV documentaries. At one time he was Executive Director of AARC. His work was largely responsible for the discovery of the important Charles Bronson film. He will be missed.

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THE SUDDEN, SURE KNOWLEDGE THAT
ONE'S BEST EFFORTS HAVE COME TO NAUGHT

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ROBERT LIKED THIS CARTOON, AND DISTRIBUTED IT
TO FRIENDS WITH HIS REVIEW OF THE SCOTT-MARSHALL BOOKS.



Some look for scapegoats, others look for conspiracies,
but this much is clear;
violence breeds violence, repression brings retaliation,
and only a cleaning of our whole society
can remove this sickness from our soul.

R.I.P.