

Jacqueline Kennedy Huddles Over Mortally Wounded President

JFK's Assassination Gets Inadequate Investigation

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CONSPIRACY, by Anthony Summers; McGraw-Hill, 640 pp., \$17.95.

By LONNIE HUDKINS

News Book Reviewer

LIKE MANY TELEVISION personalities, Anthony Summers is glib and almost believable when he speaks out from the television tube that he is an "investigative reporter."

And then, after reading his book, comes the realization that he is an accomplished glibber but certainly not an investigative reporter in the sense that such reporters are supposed to be factual to the best of their abilities.

The book is about the murder of President John F. Kennedy in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963.

Summers, an Englander, from the start sets out to propagandize his readers rather than inform them. But at least he tries to be sporting about it. In the preface, he states, in part:

"From the plethora of past theories as to who killed Kennedy and why, the key targets of suspicion can now be distilled to three — members of the Mafia, American intelligence personnel, and anti-Castro activists. Elements of all these groups, accomplices in crime that they indubitably were in the Sixties, may have been involved."

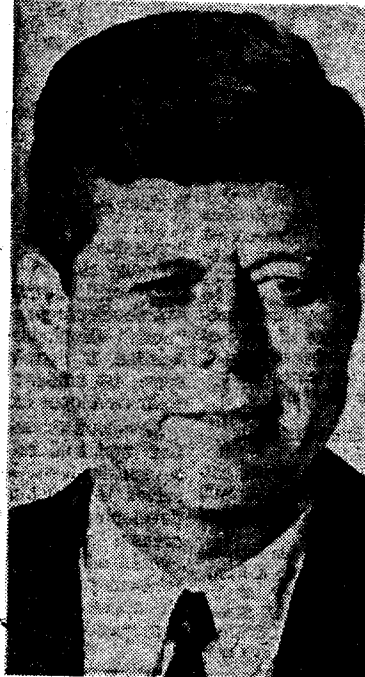
THE AUTHOR carefully downplays and ridicules any theories suggesting that Lee Harvey Oswald might have been working for the Russians or Cubans or both. In fact, he uses the tactic of casting doubt that Oswald fired at President Kennedy and, if he did, suggests that his role was that of a manipulated patsy.

He uses the method of making a statement and then on second reference giving his original thought or projection the illusion of fact.

For example, he refers to the mayor of Dallas at the time of the assassination as "a mayor who had openly sympathized with the city's flourishing and furiously right-wing John Birch Society ..."

Although he didn't name the mayor, I knew whom he was talking about. The reason was not from his description but because the reviewer happened to be a family friend and a worker in his campaign for mayor and later his successful bid to unseat Bruce Alger, the staunch Dallas Republican and darling of the Birch people.

FOR THE RECORD, Mr. Summers, the mayor's name was Earle



JOHN F. KENNEDY
"Plethora of Theories"

Cabell. Had the author wanted to be really investigative, he might have hinted Mayor Cabell was related to a high CIA official. And, for the record, Mayor Cabell later won his congressional seat as a Democrat.

But enough of the author's deliberate stage-setting. By pages 293 and 294, he lets it be known that he knows more about the assassination than President Lyndon B. Johnson.

Summers notes that theories or speculations that Oswald was part of a Communist conspiracy have been "mooted repeatedly, but with poor logic and minimal evidence."

He then notes that President Johnson believed that Fidel Castro — or the Cuban intelligence service gone out of control — learned of CIA efforts to eliminate Castro and decided to hit back.

In referring to President Johnson's belief, which was probably

based on the best available information to be had, Summers writes:

"He came to believe Cuba had retaliated with a sort of pre-emptive strike, but it was a belief based more on inspiration than reason."

IN OTHER WORDS, Summers wants the reader to accept his inference of how could good old Fidel think of such a thing?

Later, Summers plants the thought that "perhaps, much of the time, Oswald was used by U.S. intelligence without his knowledge."

What is even more frustrating to a reviewer who has read most of the books and articles about the Kennedy assassination is the stated promise of breaking new ground while in reality merely "borrowing" from the efforts of Harold Weisberg and other dedicated investigators.

In asserting that his logic should be counted rather than that of a president, a powerful president who had access to whatever information he really needed or wanted, Summers presents a scenario in which the Mafia bad guys join with the CIA and FBI bad guys to kill a president.

HAD HE SPENT a few more days or weeks in research, he would have found out that the Mafia people wanted to knock off Castro, not the president. What is the logic for this other than the testimony of a few Mafia chieftains?

The logic was simple: Castro shut down the casinos and other businesses operated by the Mafia, businessmen, farmers and some just plain land owners. They had reason to strike Castro. They tried, unsuccessfully. They had no logical or practical reason to go after President Kennedy because their casinos and businesses were confiscated.

Other examples of Summers' investigation of something that happened almost 17 years ago would take too much space to explain and then debunk.

And it wouldn't be a worthwhile project to pursue a point based on original error or deliberate assumption.

LONNIE HUDKINS, a reporter for The Buffalo News, covered the assassination of John F. Kennedy in Dallas as a reporter for the Houston Post and later portions of the trial of Jack Ruby. He also will teach a course on Political Assassinations this fall at Buffalo State College.

Dear Lonnie,

8/6/80

Now I know you are getting old. The old (i.e., younger) Lonnie would not have been so kind with Summers.

I've read the book, a borrowed copy. While I'd like on for the archive I leave I'm not going to buy one.

Maybe I can coin a phrase for the many Summerses of the field, the conscienci. Each steals the work of others, theorizes based on nothing at all except commercial acceptability, pretends to give generous credit while presenting the work of others as his own, loads his book with phoney notes (scholarship), creates confusion while undermining all credibility, and winds up with a theory that isn't even his own.

It is a good review and I'm glad you worked in the personal stuff, like he can't even recognize ^{non-} a Bircher in Dallas. And thanks for the plug.

Now on that business of what LBJ believed, oddly I just gave what I regard as a good story to another. If he doesn't go ahead with it and if you think your paper would feed its wire services, I'll give it to you. Authentic. You can even use the document in facsimile. Going along with the document I got under FOIA is a considerable and I think interesting background, which I do have.

Summers is wrong in his invention you quote re LBJ, "He came to believe that Cuba had retaliated with a sort of pre-emptive strike," as he is with what follows, "but it was a belief based more on inspiration than reason."

All of these crooks, beginning with the early Lane, manage to ferret out one of my few mistakes and lift it along with the rest that they steal. Summers did, too.

The moneyed publishers go for conspiracy. McGraw-Hill spent a pot on Summers. MacMillan has one in galley, ^{by} but a guy who I regard as nuts but is an authentic scholar who also is a theoretician. Thanks to the money used in promotions these BS artists reach many people. But I've not known one of the books to be a commercial success.

Hope you are all well and not having our kind of weather with which Dallas has made the news. So hot and so dry there is a water problem and the gardens are ruined. Best to you all from us both,