

1/23/78

Dear Walter,

On Jerry's quotes about 22 Files you asked my assessment?

Disinformation by any other name remains disinformation.

When it is by someone who has been a good friend to me it makes me unhappier. More so because this bullshit is supposed to be in a non-fiction format. Like Goebbels issued non-fiction. And this atrocity is in the spirit. The variation in degree may be enormous but in principle there is no difference.

Not one of those quotes is competent ~~to~~ to have an opinion on anything other than the writing.

It is not possible to render this in non-fiction form because it is totally fictitious. Not just the improvisations intended to make a thin disguise. I can go through it and pick up what he is supposedly basing on. In no case is there validity.

Of course if the work were not disinformation Bantam would not have printed it. It has yet to do a good book on the subject. Some were wretched, the closer to the representation of no fiction the more wretched.

It isn't worth spending any more time on. The more you sell the more Bantam again because the handmaiden of errant officialdom.

Jerry may well be persuaded. But then I wonder when we were good friends and he knows I'm a subject expert why he did not ask me anything about this. The answer can't be because I hold a contrary opinion. I'm forever helping reporters who disagree entirely with my beliefs. The answer is he saw what could be a good thing and having sold himself enough not to feel like a whore he did not want to risk confronting his conscience.

Our best. Hope you have a good year,

sincerely,

Already in the 4th printing, after 6 weeks on the market!



JEROME B. AGEL THE PENTHOUSE 75 EAST 55 STREET NEW YORK, N.Y. 10022

Give our best to Lit.

PLAZA 5-2220

What's your assessment?
Best regards,
L.A.H.

DID THE ASSASSIN KILL THE PRESIDENT BY MISTAKE?

Read 22 FIRES, the horrifying psychosexual novel of revenge -- based on suppressed and overlooked facts. A paperback original by Jerome Agel and Eugene Boe. Published by Bantam Books.

MINNEAPOLIS TRIBUNE: The book's greatest distinction is that it explains quite plausibly (and for the first time) why an ultra-liberal nut might have killed the liberal President.

THE VILLAGE VOICE: The prose is high scenario. Names and places have been changed to protect the guilty.

CHICAGO TRIBUNE: The widow of the accused assassin has been telling the truth all these years: her husband wasn't aiming at the President. The sight on the rifle was misaligned...shots flew to the right of the intended target.

NEWSDAY:...intelligent, carefully constructed psychological thriller...authors have presented their case very well.

NEWSWEEK: A startling theory...evidence suggests the killer was a (life-long) woman-hating (failure) bidding for attention (and revenge).

LIZ SMITH, N.Y. Daily News and syndicate:...extremely well written, researched, and full of shocking detail...the dynamic conclusion is a shocker.

DR. HUMPHRY OSMOND, Tuscaloosa, Ala. (Bryce Hospital): The solution is unheard of, and therefore outside the realm of a routine, expected view of possibility. You have shaken the pieces and produced an entirely new and for me much more convincing pattern. All the rest of us have been deceived and bemused by a stereotype, which is false immediately. You have, I believe, solved a detective story elegantly by refusing to be diverted. Once one realizes that the assassin was not aiming at the President, the whole thing falls into place.

DR. JOHN K. LATTIMER, Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons, in the Journal of the American Medical Association: If the telescopic sight had not been incorrectly pointed, so as to cause the bullets to strike to the right of the aiming point, the First Lady might very well have been hit by the fatal bullet that struck her husband in the head. (Repeated careful tests of the rifle, made by the F.B.I., revealed that the telescopic sight was pointed incorrectly, causing the rifle to fire all of its shots about 4 inches to the right of the target point and a little high.)

DR. LAWRENCE ZELIC FREEDMAN, Psychiatric Research Unit, The University of Chicago: Most important acts have a number of determinants. You have made a very good case for one of them..."22 Fires" is very well written.

Review copies: Stuart Applebaum, Bantam, (212) 765-6500.

Chicago Tribune

Tuesday, January 3, 1978

Tempo People



Tower Ticker

By Aaron Gold

WHILE ALI MacGRAW and Michelle Phillips may be up for the role of Jackie Onassis in the film of the highly controversial Bantam paperback "22 Fires" (already in its second printing), the authors, Jerome Agel and Eugene Boe, would like to see Phyllis George as the First Lady.

The thinly cloaked novel springs from the theory that Marina Oswald has been telling the truth all these years: Although her husband, Lee Harvey Oswald, was the lone assassin of President Kennedy, Oswald wasn't aiming at the President. He wanted to shoot the First Lady. Based on suppressed and overlooked Warren Commission documents (and technological information reportedly based on fact), "22 Fires" speculates that the assassin accidentally killed the President. The sight on Oswald's rifle, according to the FBI, had been misaligned; so all shots fired flew to the right of the intended target. According to this theory, when Oswald aimed his gun at the First Lady, the bullets struck the President.

Authors Agel and Boe expect the House Select Committee on Assassinations to examine this view carefully when it reconvenes this month. They think the "Jackie theory" reveals motivation (Marina Oswald "identified" with the First Lady).



Phyllis George

LIZ SMITH



What Can You Read Into a Book?

HE DID NOT CARE whom he killed, as long as he killed someone and got his name in the paper," says Natalya Pusjkin Scott of her husband in the new Bantam paperback thriller "22 Fires."

Weeks ago this column reported that publication of this Jerome Agel-Eugene Boe novel might cause headlines. Now that I've read it, I know *why* it should cause them. But given the wariness of people bombarded by conspiracy theories concerning the murder of John F. Kennedy, the book may wrongly be termed sensational and exploitive. It isn't. "22 Fires" is extremely well written, researched and full of shocking details. The book is a fictional synthesis of over-looked and suppressed information from the Warren Commission findings. Thus, "22 Fires" is not just a roman a clef cashing in on the death of a President, but a way for Agel and Boe to present their dynamic conclusion. It is a shocker — to wit, that the novel's assassin did intend to kill someone, that he acted alone as a confused psychotic, but that the person he meant to kill was the First Lady, not her husband.

All these facts have been on the record for 14 years, but not many people pay any attention to them. The grass always seems to be greener on the famed Dealey Plaza "grassy knoll" where conspiracy theorists like to gather.

The authors refuse to be quoted because they have to maintain a posture that their book's "President Lancaster,"

a man murdered in New York rather than in Dallas, is not meant to be JFK. However, there is no question that they have simply decided to present the facts as fiction in order to get their point across. There is no way to read "22 Fires" as anything but a real story.

Today's opening quote is something Marina Oswald actually has been saying for 14 years while nobody follows up or pays any attention to her. The title of the book is the expression she used to the Warren Commission, stating the heat of the anger she felt at her husband before the President's assassination. Some of the documents Agel and Boe quote have never been published, and the book bears out their theory of the killer as a psychotic sniper who hated women and saw his own mother and wife in the crosshairs of his rifle. The authors point out that all the FBI tests with Oswald's gun failed to achieve any accuracy; the gun always fired high and to the right of the aiming point. (Mrs. Kennedy was on the President's left.)

It takes courage to try to say what really happened in Dallas or mythical New York — the conspiracy theories are so popular. But Bobby and Teddy Kennedy believed that their brother was killed by Lee Harvey Oswald. "22

DAILY NEWS, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER

Nov. 10, 1977

More Food for Conspiracy Buffs

By Stephanie de Pue

The shots that killed our 35th president, John F. Kennedy, in Dealey Plaza, Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963, seem to exercise a continuing fascination for most Americans.

New scenarios as to what really happened that brilliant late fall afternoon are forever being heard on the late night talk shows, and not just those that cater to little old ladies in tennis shoes either. The most off-the-wall conspiracy theories are chewed over the most meat-and-potatoes dinner tables these days.

Now, with the release of *22 Fires* by Jerome Agel and Eugene Boe (Bantam, \$1.95), an original paperback "novel" about "the accidental murder of an American president," those legions of assassination buffs are in for a fresh taste sensation. This book offers one of the wildest theories yet—that Lee Harvey Oswald actually aimed to kill Jacqueline Kennedy—and its authors have presented their case so well that even the hard news, front-of-the-book boys at Newsweek, normally no readers of novels, have taken note.

Not that *22 Fires* is much of a novel, to dispose of that issue first. The president in question is Arthur J. Lancaster, his wife is Julie Montpensier Lancaster of the Maryland horse country. His assassin is a former defector to Russia, John Henry Scott, who brought a comely Russian, Natalya, home as his wife. The murder takes place in a New York City ballpark in

spring. The deterioration of both the Vietnam war and New York are somewhat further along than they actually were in 1963, and there are enough would-be assassins chasing the president to man an expansion ball club. So much for fiction.

Scott was born to lose on both sides of the Atlantic. His unlucky wife yearns for some American-style success and despises his sexual impotence. Lancaster loves being the nation's charismatic, popular young president: It gives him a chance to do good, and it makes the womanizing so easy. Julie is learning to like being the world's most famous woman, except when it interferes with her taking a cruise on the yacht of the world's most conspicuous rich man. So much for hyperobvious fact.

Beyond this *roman a clef* kernel, there's clearly been a great deal of research done. *22 Fires* (it's a Russian idiom describing volcanic, uncontrollable anger) is a fictional rendering of much suggestive information, some of it previously overlooked or suppressed from the Warren Commission's findings. For example, Marina Oswald told the commission she didn't know that her husband planned to kill the President, but she believed "he did not care whom he killed, as long as he killed someone and got his name in the paper." She says in the recently published *Marina and Lee* that he played the Russian opera "The Queen of Spades" over and over the eve of the assassina-

tion and that she had identified very strongly with the Queen. There are very strong parallels between the lives of the real Lee Harvey Oswald and the Count Hermann of the opera, and between the lives of Jackie Kennedy and the Queen of Spades; yet Marina might well have identified with her, too. All this material is used in *22 Fires*.

Several psychiatrists testified to the commission that they believed Oswald to be a psychotic whose anger was directed at women, his mother and his wife; and that his rifle was inevitably, psychologically speaking, directed at a woman. (This testimony was sealed.) A Russian acquaintance of Oswald's gave evidence that the only people he had ever heard him threaten to kill were his mother and his wife. Oswald's relationship with his wife was, in fact, a violent one.

Perhaps most suggestive is the question of how Oswald hit the President with a cheap rifle which consistently fired high and to the right when tested by the FBI. Agel and Boe point out that the First Lady was sitting on the President's left.

22 Fires is an intelligent, carefully constructed "psychological thriller," less exploitive and sensationalist than might be expected from its cover. Whatever the reason Agel and Boe, two well-known free-lancers, have chosen the fictional format to present their thesis, it's bound to give assassination buffs something new to chew on.

NEWSDAY, SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18, 1977