

The Athens Observer
11-17-83 p. 8A col.

Kennedy killing: who did it?

By DONALD E. WILKES, JR.

On Nov. 22, 1963, while riding in an open limousine in a motorcade, John F. Kennedy, 35th president of the United States, was assassinated in Dealey Plaza in downtown Dallas, Tex. In September 1964 the Warren Commission, a body appointed by President Lyndon Johnson to ascertain circumstances surrounding the assassination and chaired by Chief Justice Earl Warren, delivered its official report. The Warren Commission found that Lee Harvey Oswald, a 24-year-old employee at the Texas School Book Depository, acting alone, killed the president by firing his rifle from a sixth-floor window in the Depository. While in Dallas police custody, Oswald was shot dead by Jack Ruby, a night-club owner and gangster-type, two days after the Kennedy assassination.

Since 1964 much new information concerning the president's assassination has emerged. Moreover, there have been startling revelations about grave abuses and deception committed by the very federal law enforcement and intelligence agencies on which the Warren Commission relied for information. From 1977 until 1979 a House of Representatives Committee on Assassinations conducted a new official investigation of the death of President Kennedy. Thus, on the 20th anniversary of the assassination, it seems appropriate to re-examine important questions that have been raised concerning John Kennedy's death. Part One of this article explores some of the questions that now have been answered to my satisfaction. Part Two, to be published next week, addresses some of the still unanswered questions about President Kennedy's assassination.

Were shots fired at President Kennedy's motorcade from more than one location? Yes. In 1978 the House of Representatives Select Committee on Assassinations commissioned two separate sets of scientific experts to investigate whether there was acoustical evidence indicating that more than one gunman was firing at President Kennedy. Both investigations reached the same conclusion: an examination of a police tape recorded by accident at the time of the assassination provides scientific acoustical evidence establishing a high probability that two gunmen fired at the president.

The Assassinations Committee also found, based on other findings made by the same experts, that (1) probably a total of four shots were fired, (2) probably three shots (the first, second and fourth) were fired from behind and above and from the vicinity of the

Texas School Book Depository, and one shot (the third) was fired from the right front in the vicinity of the wood stockade fence atop the grassy knoll, and (3) probably the fatal headshot which killed the president and which vividly appears on frame 313 of the color film taken by Abraham Zapruder was the fourth shot, fired from the Depository.

There is also plenty of eyewitness testimony indicating that more than one assassin was shooting at President

the President and Governor Connally were reacting to their wounds less than two seconds apart. Thus, as the Warren Commission recognized, if President Kennedy and Governor Connally were not struck by the same bullet, there had to be two assassins, since the rifle could not be fired twice in less than two seconds. The Warren Commission adopted the single bullet theory because it was biased and prejudiced in favor of the view that there was only one gunman.

"There is also plenty of eyewitness testimony [that] more than one assassin was shooting."

Kennedy. It seems incontestable that some of the gunfire came from the Book Depository; several witnesses saw a man armed with some sort of rifle standing behind the window on an upper floor in the Depository, other witnesses actually saw a rifle barrel extending from one of these windows and literally scores of eyewitnesses testified that shots came from the Depository. On the other hand, there is ample testimony to the effect that a shot was fired from the vicinity of the grassy knoll: a railroad employee stationed on an overpass in front of the motorcade was positive that he saw a puff of smoke erupt on the top of the knoll; a Dallas city policeman who (along with many other persons) raced to the knoll moments after the assassination smelled gunpowder there; and another railroad employee stationed on a nearby railroad tower saw suspicious activity on the knoll.

Clearly, therefore, the Warren Commission (which did not know of the existence of the police tape) was wrong when it concluded that all the shots fired at the motorcade came from the sixth floor of the Depository.

Has the single-bullet theory been discredited? Yes. The single-bullet theory is the view that a single bullet fired from the Depository struck President Kennedy in the back and then, after traversing his body and exiting in the front of his neck, struck Governor Connally from the back, exited from his right chest, shattered his right wrist, and then embedded itself in his left thigh. The rifle from which the Warren Commission alleged the single bullet had been fired could not be fired twice in less than 2.295 seconds, and this does not take into account aiming time. On the other hand, the Zapruder provides proof that

There are several reasons why the single-bullet hypothesis can no longer be taken seriously. First, the same 1978 scientific acoustical tests that show gunfire from both the Depository and the grassy knoll also show that shots were fired from the vicinity of the Depository 1.6 seconds apart. Second, if the single-bullet theory is correct, then we must assume a most unlikely occurrence, i.e., that Governor Connally continued to hold his hat in his right hand after the wrist of that hand had been shattered by a bullet. It is unarguable that President Kennedy was struck by the bullet in his back no later than Zapruder film frame 225; the President's violent reaction is unmistakable in frame 225, and he could not have been struck later.

On the other hand, Governor Connally still holds his hat in his right hand in frame 231. The Zapruder film moved through the camera at the rate of 18.3 frames per second. If the single-bullet theory is correct, therefore, we must believe that at least a third of a second (six frames) after a bullet completely pierced his chest and shattered his wrist, Governor Connally continued to hold his hat in the hand with the shattered wrist. Actually, the governor's inexplicable delayed reaction might have been longer.

Please turn to page 9

assassination had not been the result of been but a single gunman and that the had made up their minds that there had examined the evidence, the members inpection, and without first having because (1) from the Commission's The Warren Commission failed investigation of the century. agencies bungled the most important in various other ways these three destroyed, overlooked or ignored and Leads were not pursued, evidence was assassination of President Kennedy. with respect to their inquiries into the had all failed to perform adequately read Commission, the FBI and the CIA consideration, concluded that the Warren Commission, the House Assassinations Committee in 1979, after due Senate Select Committee on Intelligence President Kennedy? No. Both the investigating the assassination of FBI and the CIA do an adequate job of Did the Warren Commission, the bullet.

much more serious injury from the same Governor Connally first reacted to his first reacted to his injury until the time frames) from the time the president least one and two-thirds seconds (31 would be an absurdly long interval of at Thus, if the Connallys are wrong, there struck until as late as frames 234-236. his hat in hand) and may not have been prior to frame 231 (where he still had Connally could not have been struck 200. On the other hand, Governor frame 207 or possibly as early as frame that the President probably was hit by The Assassinations Committee found and authoritative assertions. grounds for rejecting their unshakable Warren Commission had no valid president in the back, and I think the bullet than the one that struck the governor was struck by a different (him) are absolutely positive that the Connally and his wife (who was beside holding the hat. Third, both Governor when Governor Connally was still seconds (31 frames) before the time frame 200, that is to say almost two full might have been struck as early as mittee thought that President Kennedy-

The House Assassinations Com-
The Assassinations Committee found
and authoritative assertions.
grounds for rejecting their unshakable
Warren Commission had no valid
president in the back, and I think the
bullet than the one that struck the
governor was struck by a different
(him) are absolutely positive that the
Connally and his wife (who was beside
holding the hat. Third, both Governor
when Governor Connally was still
seconds (31 frames) before the time
frame 200, that is to say almost two full
might have been struck as early as
mittee thought that President Kennedy-

Thursday, November 17, 1983

The Athens Observer Page 9-A

The Warren Report: did they bungle the assassination probe?

rom page 8
inspiration; (2) the Commission had
adequate staff of independent
s;rigators and hence relied princ-
y on the FBI and the Secret Service
ary out investigative duties; (3) the
mission was not given sufficient
e to do an adequate job (the final
ort of the Commission was pub-
ed 11 months after the assas-
tion); and (4) the Commission was
led important needed information
example, it was never told of the
-Mafia plots to kill Castro that
rished throughout the mid-1960s).
oth the FBI and the CIA refrained
a thoroughly investigating the
sination because they desired to
press embarrassing or national
rily information from the public
because they wanted to protect a
e image of incorruptible and
tworthy infallibility to the world.

Thus, incredibly neither FBI Director Hoover nor CIA Deputy Director Helms bothered to tell the Warren Commission of the CIA-sponsored assassination plots against Castro or other foreign leaders.
The FBI investigation of Lee Harvey Oswald was purposely kept narrow in scope. Within three weeks of the assassination the FBI leaked news stories that Oswald was the sole assassin, thus rendering it impossible for the Warren Commission to reach a different conclusion without seeming to criticize the then unarmished FBI and its powerful director. FBI Director Hoover treated the Warren Commission as a hostile nuisance, and even gathered (and presumably disseminated) derogatory information on the Commission and its staff. The CIA assumed a stance of lofty distance and declined to provide, certain, vital information; such information it did provide was furnished only on specific request and all disclosures of information were purposely delayed as long as possible.

Was the Secret Service negligent in protecting President Kennedy on November 22, 1963? Yes. The deficiencies in the job performed by the Secret Service on the day of the assassination were both shocking and out of the ordinary.
First, the Secret Service had failed to adequately check for persons in the Dallas area dangerous to the president. Second, the Secret Service failed to protect the president from the dangers posed by windows in tall buildings, even though it was standard practice to do so when the presidential motorcade was to travel on a frequently used parade route, as the Dallas route was. Third, in violation of regulations, some

of the Secret Service agents assigned to protect the president in Dallas stayed out drinking until dawn on the day of the assassination. This is undoubtedly one of the reasons why at the time of the gunfire many of the agents reacted hardly or sluggishly. Fourth, the agents in the limousine with President Kennedy failed to accelerate or push promptly once the shooting had begun, and also failed to push down or shield the president with their bodies, all in violation of regulations.
By contrast, Vice President Johnson's Secret Service agents responded immediately; one of them had pushed the vice president down and covered him with the agent's body before President Kennedy received his fatal head wound. If the president's guards had acted with the alacrity of the vice president's, the president probably would have not been killed.

never believed that Lee Harvey Oswald assassinated President Kennedy without at least some encouragement from others." (There is also reason to believe that early reservations Senator Russell had about certain of the findings of the Warren Commission were deleted without his knowledge from the final version of the Commission's report.)
Donald E. Wilkes, Jr. is professor of law in the UGA law school.

Did Senator Richard Russell publicly attack some of the findings of the Warren Commission? Yes. Georgia's beloved Richard Russell was a member of the Warren Commission. In 1970, about a year before his death, Senator Russell revealed to the media that "the

the motorcade in which the President was killed was "uniquely insecure" and far inferior to the security provided only the day before when the president was in Houston, a much less dangerous place.
Did Senator Richard Russell publicly attack some of the findings of the Warren Commission? Yes. Georgia's beloved Richard Russell was a member of the Warren Commission. In 1970, about a year before his death, Senator Russell revealed to the media that "the

All criticism of Bush since made publicly. Now, we are far from Mr. Wilkes' words.

Finally, and most alarmingly, the House Assassinations Committee discovered that the specific security precautions arranged for the Dallas motorcade by the Secret Service were so strangely inadequate on Nov. 22 that

Questions on Kennedy killing

*Explanation given
left me as clear
as a blue
in Vietnam*

By DONALD E. WILKES, JR.

At 12:30 p.m. on Nov. 22, 1963, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Tex. In Part One of this article, published last week, I explored some of the questions about the assassination and related events that appear now to have been answered satisfactorily. In this, Part Two of the article, I shall examine a few of the major questions about the assassination and related events (including the murder of Lee Harvey Oswald, alleged by the President's assassin) that I believe remain unanswered.

Who were the members of the conspiracy that planned and carried out the assassination of President Kennedy? That President Kennedy was assassinated as a result of a conspiracy seems indisputable in view of the following: (1) shots were fired at the President's motorcade from more than one location; (2) plenty of eyewitnesses saw suspicious persons in and around Dealey Plaza before, during, and immediately after the assassination; (3) during the months preceding November, 1963, different law enforcement agencies around the country received from different sources information that a plot had been formed to kill the President by shooting him from a building with a high-powered rifle (and indeed, a Presidential visit to Chicago in early November, 1963, was cancelled because of assassination threats); (4) persons, posing as Secret Service agents and carrying false credentials were present at the assassination scene; (5) certain suspicious individuals were actually detained by the Dallas police at the assassination scene. For example, Eugene Hale Brading, aka Jim Braden, an individual with a record of serious criminal convictions and connections with the highest echelons of organized crime. (See the *Final Report* of the House Assassinations Committee.)

...there are a lot of mysterious or suspicious circumstances regarding the Tippett murder.

Brading was taken into temporary custody shortly after the assassination when he was found in the Dal-Tex building, directly across the street from the School Book Depository; and (6) during the weeks immediately before the assassination, one or more impostors were busy in the Dallas vicinity impersonating Oswald, often carrying a rifle. The question is, what was the membership of the conspiracy? This question is not presently answerable. There were a number of groups or organizations with both the motive and the ability to assassinate the President, and any one or more of these might have been involved in the assassination. To begin with, there was organized crime. The Mafia wanted to kill President Kennedy because, his brother Robert, the Attorney General, was waging a relentless new battle on organized crime; because the Mafia blamed President Kennedy for failing to recapture Cuba where prior to Castro the mob had made huge profits from the Havana casinos and resorts. It should be remembered that in the 1960s the Mafia had engaged with the CIA in several plots to kill Castro; and because of the bitter animosity between Robert F. Kennedy (who would be "just another lawyer" if the President died) and Jimmy Hoffa of the Teamsters Union, which was closely allied with organized crime.

Secondly, the Cuban intelligence and secret police agencies (with or without the assistance of the Soviet Secret police, the KGB) might have carried out the assassination in retaliation for the CIA-Mafia plots against Castro. In fact, in a press interview on Sept. 7,

1963, Castro said: "United States leaders should think that if they are aiding terrorist plans to eliminate Cuban leaders, they themselves will not be safe," and thereafter a secret U.S. government committee responsible for formulating plans for dealing with Cuba prepared a memorandum noting the possibility that the Cubans might carry out attacks on U.S. officials. Third, there were the anti-Castro Cubans who had been involved in the Bay of Pigs' mission and other U.S.-sponsored actions to attack Castro's Cuba, and who regarded President Kennedy as a traitor and a betrayer of the movement to liberate Cuba from Castro. The fierce and violent hatred of the anti-Castro Cubans for the President is notorious and well-documented.

Fourth, there were various members and ex-members of the American intelligence community who shared the politics of (and often had worked with) the anti-Castro Cubans, or who for other or additional reasons regarded President Kennedy as soft on communism, or pro-pacifistic, or unwilling to support America's allies. American intelligence agents, throughout the mid-1960s, had been involved in numerous assassination plots against various foreign leaders. (See *Interim Report* of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. "Alleged Assassination Plots Against Foreign Leaders.") They had teamed up with the Mafia to try to kill Castro. Probably they were involved in the Nov. 1, 1963, Overthrow and assassination of the President of South Vietnam, Diem, and his brother. Of course, it is always possible that the membership of the conspiracy consisted of unknown persons not affiliated with any of the above groups. If this was the case, the conspiracy was probably small in number, and it is doubtful that the identity of the conspirators ever will be learned. In its 1979 *Final Report* the House Assassinations Committee absolved the Soviet government, the Cuban government, the Secret Service, the FBI and the CIA from involvement in the assassination of President Kennedy. The committee concluded, however, that the evidence did not preclude the possibility that individual members of anti-Castro Cuban groups or individual members of organized crime were involved in the assassination. Jim Garstson, the former New Orleans district attorney, who unsuccessfully prosecuted several persons for allegedly being involved in the assassination, concluded that the President was killed by a conspiracy consisting of persons on the periphery of the American intelligence and military community, perhaps assisted by anti-Castro Cubans. Although there is insufficient space here for a factual explanation, my own view is that the conspiracy probably consisted of a small group of American intelligence operatives, anti-Castro Cubans and Mafia members who had worked together in the past to kill others. *Did Lee Harvey Oswald shoot President Kennedy?* Both the Warren Commission in 1964 and the House Assassinations Committee in 1979 concluded that Oswald shot the President with an old, cheap, 6.5 mm. Mannlicher-Carcano Italian rifle allegedly found hidden on the sixth floor of the School Book Depository minutes after the assassination. Since no eyewitness could identify the person or persons firing from the Depository and there was no other direct evidence, the conclusion that Oswald shot the President tested on circumstantial. Please turn to page 9

• Kennedy probe

...from page 8

even if genuine are suspicious. I will also note that circumstantial evidence surrounding the finding of the stretcher at the hospital are suspicious and contradictory, and the bullet may have been planted. That Oswald's prints were found on boxes on the sixth floor found on the rifle and his fingerprints moving boxes as part of his job. There are still other reasons for doubting that Oswald was the assassin. For example, Oswald was not a sufficiently good marksman to have shot the President with this rifle from the sixth floor. I also observe that after the assassination he did not behave the way we would expect a Presidential assassin to act. Unlike virtually all previous persons who have shot and killed American presidents, Oswald did not glory in the deed; he firmly and repeatedly denied that he had shot the President. I conclude that it is not established one way or another whether Oswald shot President Kennedy. *Did Lee Harvey Oswald shoot Oswald or Ruby?* Thus, I conclude that there is not sufficient evidence one way or another to answer whether Oswald shot Tippett. *Was Lee Harvey Oswald killed as a result of a conspiracy to silence him?* Jack Ruby shot and killed Oswald, a police prisoner, in the basement of the Dallas City Jail at 11:21 a.m. on Nov. 24, 1963, less than 48 hours after the assassination of President Kennedy. Speculation immediately arose that Oswald had been killed as a result of a conspiracy to prevent Oswald from talking. The Warren Commission found Oswald had acted alone when he shot Oswald and accepted Ruby's assertion that he acted out of grief, anger, and sympathy for the dead President's family. The commission found no prior connection between Oswald and Ruby; it also found that Ruby had no significant affiliations with organized crime, although it did acknowledge that the Chicago-born Ruby had been involved in criminal activities with

bullet shells found at the site of Tippett's death, two were Western .38s and two were Remington-Peters .38s; of the four bullets removed from Tippett's body, three were Westerns and one was a Remington-Peters. I note further that there are a lot of mysterious or suspicious circumstances surrounding the Tippett murder. First, there has never been added a satisfactory explanation of why Tippett was where he was at the time he was killed, and the police log transcripts produced to explain this matter are internally contradictory, incomplete and bear signs of having been altered or tampered with. (See Sylvia A. Meagher, *Accessories After the Fact*, 1967.)

Second, it has not been satisfactorily explained why Oswald (if indeed he was Tippett's killer) was at the place where Tippett was killed when the killing occurred. Third, there has not been an adequate investigation of Tippett's prior life or his possible previous connections with Oswald. Jack Ruby, or persons connected with Oswald or Ruby. Thus, I conclude that there is not sufficient evidence one way or another to answer whether Oswald shot Tippett. *Did Lee Harvey Oswald kill Oswald as a result of a conspiracy to silence him?* Jack Ruby shot and killed Oswald, a police prisoner, in the basement of the Dallas City Jail at 11:21 a.m. on Nov. 24, 1963, less than 48 hours after the assassination of President Kennedy. Speculation immediately arose that Oswald had been killed as a result of a conspiracy to prevent Oswald from talking. The Warren Commission found Oswald had acted alone when he shot Oswald and accepted Ruby's assertion that he acted out of grief, anger, and sympathy for the dead President's family. The commission found no prior connection between Oswald and Ruby; it also found that Ruby had no significant affiliations with organized crime, although it did acknowledge that the Chicago-born Ruby had been involved in criminal activities with

bullet shells found at the site of Tippett's death, two were Western .38s and two were Remington-Peters .38s; of the four bullets removed from Tippett's body, three were Westerns and one was a Remington-Peters. I note further that there are a lot of mysterious or suspicious circumstances surrounding the Tippett murder. First, there has never been added a satisfactory explanation of why Tippett was where he was at the time he was killed, and the police log transcripts produced to explain this matter are internally contradictory, incomplete and bear signs of having been altered or tampered with. (See Sylvia A. Meagher, *Accessories After the Fact*, 1967.)

Second, it has not been satisfactorily explained why Oswald (if indeed he was Tippett's killer) was at the place where Tippett was killed when the killing occurred. Third, there has not been an adequate investigation of Tippett's prior life or his possible previous connections with Oswald. Jack Ruby, or persons connected with Oswald or Ruby. Thus, I conclude that there is not sufficient evidence one way or another to answer whether Oswald shot Tippett. *Did Lee Harvey Oswald kill Oswald as a result of a conspiracy to silence him?* Jack Ruby shot and killed Oswald, a police prisoner, in the basement of the Dallas City Jail at 11:21 a.m. on Nov. 24, 1963, less than 48 hours after the assassination of President Kennedy. Speculation immediately arose that Oswald had been killed as a result of a conspiracy to prevent Oswald from talking. The Warren Commission found Oswald had acted alone when he shot Oswald and accepted Ruby's assertion that he acted out of grief, anger, and sympathy for the dead President's family. The commission found no prior connection between Oswald and Ruby; it also found that Ruby had no significant affiliations with organized crime, although it did acknowledge that the Chicago-born Ruby had been involved in criminal activities with

bullet shells found at the site of Tippett's death, two were Western .38s and two were Remington-Peters .38s; of the four bullets removed from Tippett's body, three were Westerns and one was a Remington-Peters. I note further that there are a lot of mysterious or suspicious circumstances surrounding the Tippett murder. First, there has never been added a satisfactory explanation of why Tippett was where he was at the time he was killed, and the police log transcripts produced to explain this matter are internally contradictory, incomplete and bear signs of having been altered or tampered with. (See Sylvia A. Meagher, *Accessories After the Fact*, 1967.)

bullet shells found at the site of Tippett's death, two were Western .38s and two were Remington-Peters .38s; of the four bullets removed from Tippett's body, three were Westerns and one was a Remington-Peters. I note further that there are a lot of mysterious or suspicious circumstances surrounding the Tippett murder. First, there has never been added a satisfactory explanation of why Tippett was where he was at the time he was killed, and the police log transcripts produced to explain this matter are internally contradictory, incomplete and bear signs of having been altered or tampered with. (See Sylvia A. Meagher, *Accessories After the Fact*, 1967.)

criminal elements.

The House Assassinations Committee recognized that the Warren Commission's investigation of Ruby's background had been incomplete. The committee found larger and more sinister ties between Ruby and the Mafia than the Warren Commission had. Hence it concluded that "Ruby's shooting of Oswald was not a spontaneous act, in that it involved at least some premeditation"; and the Committee also thought it more likely that Ruby had entered the basement with the assistance or the connivance of the Dallas police.

I consider it likely but not proven that Ruby conspired with organized crime to murder Oswald. Here are some of the reasons. First, Ruby's involvement in organized crime was quite deep and stretched back over many years. He had visited Cuba in the 1950s and early 1960s, apparently in behalf of the mob, and once had visited Santos Trafficante, the notorious Mafia don, there. Second, Ruby's contacts (both in person and by telephone) with Mafia hitmen and other violent gangsters increased suspiciously and dramatically during the period immediately preceding Nov. 22 and continued up to the shooting of Oswald. Third, shortly before killing Oswald Ruby, usually short of cash and plagued by debts, acquired large sums of money. A complete statement of the facts now known about Ruby's ties to the Mafia may be found in Seth Kantor's book *Who Was Jack Ruby?*, published in 1978, and in G. Robert Blakey's book *The Plot to Kill the President*, published in 1981. (Blakey was general counsel to the House Assassinations Committee and is a recognized expert on organized crime.)

Assuming that Ruby's actions were the result of a conspiracy, it is still unclear whether the conspiracy to silence Oswald was the same conspiracy that plotted to kill President Kennedy. It is certainly conceivable that the two conspiracies were separate but related.