

Assassinations, U.S.A.

The Greatest Whodunit Ever Told

Some three dozen assassination researchers converged on the city of Boston during the first weekend in February to demand a national inquiry into the murders of John and Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King and the attempted assassination of George Wallace.

The researchers were armed with scraps of evidence, photographs, diagrams, conspiracy theories and, in some cases, a political philosophy organizing their material. At the moment, they don't appear to have a national constituency, but persistently they invoked the right of John Q. Public to know who killed whom.

The convention was sold out. People were turned away at the door; seminars and lectures were carpeted with an information-hungry audience. The pitch is simple. The last three Presidential elections have been decided by bullets not ballots. The focus was the constellation of shootings that took place in Dallas, Los Angeles, Memphis and Laurel, but the convention also spun off into Chappaquiddick, Watergate and the CIA.

The people who attended the convention can't be catalogued. They weren't uniformly young or old, and some of them are lawyers, some are graduates of the lecture circuit, some are classic studies in paranoia. There was a constant posse of reporters and radio technicians running back and forth. The assassination researchers enjoy the attention.

In a closing plenary session, there was a decision to take some kind of national action. Appeals to Congress, letter writing, organizing people on the local level. Momentum without any particular direction. Except for a petition:

"Whereas the government of the United States has for eleven years either conspired in or acquiesced to a blatant lie, that one man alone murdered President John F. Kennedy; therefore: we petition Congress to investigate the facts of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963 and the continuing cover-up."

Bill Vitka

Harper's Weekly: How did you get started investigating political assassinations?

Brussel: In 1963 on November 24th Jack Ruby shot Lee Harvey Oswald in a Dallas jail. By Sunday night the Chief of Police said the case was closed. He said we have palm prints, fingerprints, and they didn't have anything. Everything was too pat. I started out wanting to know who Oswald was as a person. And his strange wife who said "I looked into his eyes and knew he was guilty." I realized this was a bigger story than the news media would tell us. So, I bought the Warren Commission report in '64.

HW: Where did you get the money to finance your investigation?

Brussel: My husband financed it. Yeah, I had all the time and the money. I put in 10,000 a year for 11 years. I have 400 books on the subject and take eight newspapers a day. Now I'm going broke. I'm making some of it up in lectures,

articles and things. One thousand a lecture and transportation to keep myself going.

My husband got fed up eventually. We got a divorce. As a matter of fact, I'm getting married again. Do you know who my new husband is? Ever hear of Elmer Davis? He has a two million dollar lawsuit against Nixon. He's the man the Beverly Hills Police charged with Dr. Lewis Fielding's (Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist) break-in. He was sent to Folsom Prison for three years. We started corresponding in letters. He was in and out of jail for twenty years for narcotics and petty burglary. When they needed a scapegoat they picked him. He happened to be in jail the weekend of the burglary.

HW: How did assassination research, as an organized activity, begin?

Brussel: It began in 1963. There were eleven of us. We were called the buffs. There was Penn Jones, Shirley Martin, Mark Lane, Bill



VICKI LAWRENCE

"Who Done It?" panel discussion. Left to right: Richard Popkin, Mark Lane, Mae Brussel, Peter Dale Scott, Sherman Skoinik and Penn Jones.

Mae Brussel: "I name names"

Turner, Harold Weisberg. . . . We developed and grew and got to know each other in the course of the years.

Some people were very exclusive with their information because they wanted to write books before somebody else. Mark Lane was one of them. He wouldn't have anything to do with me. I was like dirt. He was Mark Lane and that was it.

HW: If you have the solutions, and since you go around broadcasting who you think killed whom, why hasn't somebody sued you?

Brussel: They never sue me. I said McCord and Hunt were involved in Watergate and Dallas. Paul Krassner (Editor of the Realist) and I get a letter from McCord saying he was going to sue. I said that's beautiful. Let's get the show on. Let me subpoena some material. So later, someone saw him autographing a book and asked if he was going to sue me. He said no, that he just wanted to scare us for the yellow journalism. I was prepared to go to court. I haven't had to.

I have a radio show called "Dialogue Conspiracy." I name names. I have 1,800 letters of the Warren Commission writing to each other saying they didn't know what was going on. People call in and say, "What's your proof?" I give the evi-

dence to them. It exists. And as long as there is evidence, the people involved will run for safety and we'll get one more document. I don't need UPI. I don't need AP. I have the facts. I call those committees every day. If they fold one shop, another one opens. I don't need the mass media. You go past them. Give it to the committees. If they don't use it, they're part of the coverup.

HW: You said you're in contact with one of the men who killed John Kennedy. He's up in Canada?

Brussel: Someone who knew my brother and who went to Beverly High. He's a prominent attorney and he respects me. The attorney works with a man who owns an aircraft company in California. He (the aircraft company president) called and said there is this man. When I want to see him I can. All I have to do is make the appointment.

HW: Does he fear for his life?

Brussel: Why do you think he's in Canada? They're going to kill anyone who knows something.

HW: You also said there would be

an attempt to assassinate Rockefeller and that this would be used as an excuse to declare martial law.

Brussel: They don't call it martial law. You're in martial law right now. You haven't had an election since 1960. You have 96 billion in Vietnam. Widespread unemployment. Famine. They're breaking up the country into regions. They are doing massive mind control. It'll be a concentration camp, but without barbed wire.

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"You're a department of mis-information"

Mae Brussel to A.J. Weberman (garbage can researcher, former Yippie, organizer of the "Who Stole Kennedy's Brain?" demonstration in Washington, Thanksgiving weekend, 1973)

Weberman: Have you seen the pictures (referring to a photograph of police escorting two bums away, taken in Dallas the day Kennedy was shot)? That's Hunt and Sturgis! (Howard Hunt is currently suing the *National Tattler* for drawing the same conclusion.)

Brussel: I've seen the pictures. It's not Hunt and it's not Sturgis.

Weberman: How can you say?! Here look!

Brussel: Listen, you're just a department of mis-information. Hunt

was involved in Dallas, but that's not him in the photograph!

Weberman: It's them! I believe what I see in the *Chicago Tribune*.
Brussel: The only reason it got in the paper was because you got (Dick) Gregory to do it. You haven't got the facts. That's not Hunt. You're putting out the wrong information and you're going to blow it for the rest of us.

Carl Olgesby: "A lot of us are damaged people"

HW: You just compared this convention of assassination researchers to the first days of the anti-war movement in the early sixties. Why?
Olgesby: It's just my feeling about the emotional quality of this conference. It's not like an ordinary conference, you know. People haven't been trying to pose the possibility that we are trying to pose now. That possibility is popular, mass-based movement. That's what makes me remember SDS, the sense of excitement, the quality of emotion.

HW: Earlier you said something off the record that I want to put on the record. You said you had to be a little crazy to get involved in something like assassination research.

Olgesby: I wouldn't put it like that. I think that a lot of us are damaged people. What has damaged us is *this* country. Out of the damage comes a variety of responses, sometimes showing the level of damage done to trust, to faith, to belief in the institutions of this country.

This is all doubletalk. The thing is that there are a lot of people around here who say some crazy things that the people on the Assassination Bureau don't agree with. About the reconstruction of the crimes of Dallas, Memphis, L.A., Laurel and so on. We could have taken the position that we didn't want people like that to come to this conference.

They would say flawed, graceless things that they couldn't prove and people would use it to put the con-

ference down. What the Hell! These people have been out there working a long time, even if they are wrong on several points. They've been the pioneers. And they've been alone so long that you can't really blame them if they have some eccentric points of view, and if they don't tend to think of this issue from a political point of view.

HW: So, you think of this as a tool for organizing people across the country?

Olgesby: Sure, and for changing people too. For taking people who were once crazy because they saw the truth and were alone and making it possible for them to keep on seeing the truth and be sane. Now there are other people defining a new sanity, defining a new community with a new perspective on this. It's no longer necessary for someone to feel like a paranoid, a freak, a crazy just because they are willing to look at the evidence of Dallas.

In a certain respect, I think the Powers That Be have been damaged like the rest of us. The damage is deep enough for the media to open up to what we have to say. I think we'll get something like the beginnings of national ventilation on this issue this year.

Dick Gregory: "They're tapping my phone"

Gregory: I have the CIA and the FBI tapping my phone. I don't know why they're tapping my phone. I don't know that much. Matter of fact, I pick up the phone and ask them what's happening. My lawyer said let's go to the federal court and get an injunction to get the tap off your phone. I said it was the federal government who gave them permission in the first place.

I was on nationwide TV once and I said my phone is tapped. The interviewer said that's not good enough. You need evidence on nationwide TV. What's your concrete evidence? I said anytime a nigger in America can owe Bell Telephone twelve grand and they don't cut off the phone, it's tapped. You ought to see the letters I get from the phone company. "Dear Mr. Gregory, you all care to pay anything on the bill

this year?"

Unidentified speaker: "There are people being murdered"

Speaker: For six months, I sent my Congressmen everything that I've heard here and all I got was some thank you letters. My congressman sent me a letter to say "You should know that I forwarded your letter to the Justice Department. Now the Justice Department is *not* Henry Gonzalez (D-Texas, promoting a re-opening of the Warren Commission).

I wrote the Ervin Committee. I wrote about many of the links connecting Dallas to Watergate. I got a form letter back and I got my income tax audited two weeks later.

You're not playing around with something small. I hear emotional speeches about getting people together. You're not going to. I heard a woman ask a question up here, about why the Zapruder film has never been shown on TV. Are you kidding?! Mr. Skolnik is trying to scare you. He's right. There are people being murdered. These are

tremendous things. The media is controlled. Politics are controlled. You're not dealing with something small.

Sherman Skolnik: "CIA agents have toilet training hang-ups"

HW: You just handed out that flyer, urging people to arm themselves with guns and stock up with food, because martial law would be declared. You think that's the scenario, right?

Skolnik: True, I believe that. I believe that Rockefeller is not for a constitutional form of government. He and his brother have been active with the Council on Foreign Relations and advocate a council form of government as a replacement for constitutional government.

HW: About martial law. You believe that the recent bombing of the State Department Building was a fraud, that the Weather Underground didn't bomb it, didn't bomb

the Pentagon, and didn't bomb the Capitol. These were all carefully designed parts of a plot to make us think that we are on the brink of anarchy and need facism to put things in order.

Skolnik: You said it better than I could. I believe the CIA and the FBI are well aware of these provocateurs. So some of the violence, not all of it, but a great portion of it, particularly where they bomb toilets, which indicates that some of the CIA agents have toilet training hangups, that indicates there is a scenario of planned and instigated violence.

Martial law is part of the game we are trying to alert people to it, now, because I don't know how much free speech the government is going to allow.

HW: What about the mass media. What about television?

Skolnik: Well, we have spent some of our time identifying some of the major broadcasters who have a background in espionage. In other words, there is a key person at every radio-TV station that we have examined who is either with the CIA or has links. That explains, at least in part, the supression of some of the material that we have dug up. Purposeful distortion, yes.

Ron Bane: "John Kennedy was not killed"

A member of the audience takes the microphone during the Sunday plenary session.

Bane: I have something to tell you. You're all operating, I think, under a misconception. John Kennedy was not killed. He is alive. His assassination was faked. He was deposed from power, not assassinated. That truth, however, may kill us.

Bob Cutler (one of the speakers): Look! Look at the news media! Writing down everything he says. Look how they're going after this guy! That's how they're going to write this up.

John Newhall (Zodiac News Service): There had to be one of these guys. Donald Freed (one of the speakers, sitting in the audience); You have to cut this guy off if you want the Assassination Information Bureau to have respect. You have to cut him off now!

Bane was cut off.



Assassination researcher Sherman Skolnik with his bodyguard.

Who Killed the Story?

I travel the college lecture circuit with a slide show and narration on the conspiracy behind the John Kennedy assassination. The presentation includes what I believe to be photographic proof of the conspiracy, the bootleg Zapruder film and slides from the scene in Dallas. I often lecture in distant places like Akron and Altoona and Tuscaloosa, far from the eye of the media vortex. I get interviewed by earnest young reporters from W something something or K something something, radio and TV, and what they ask is, "If everything you say is true, Mr. Katz, and we're not saying it isn't, why hasn't the media done something about it?"

Now this is a tough one for me to answer because these reporters, freshly graduated from journalism school and inspired by the awesome deeds of Woodward and Bernstein, do not share my cynicism about the media's ability to grasp large-scale conspiracies. I carefully explain that there was no independent media investigation of Dallas like the one of Watergate, that conspiracies are often expressly designed to deceive the media and investigators (were it not for the judicial process, which was neatly sidestepped in the Oswald case, the Watergate coverup might have succeeded), and I add that in many instances the media willfully ignored the factual evidence.

This is blasphemous, heretical. I can see that I am starting to sound crazy to them. But how do I explain the full implications of a Sept. 11, 1966, *New York Times* article entitled, "No Conspiracy, But—Two Assassins Perhaps"?

It seems to me that the tenets of journalism prevent an understanding of the assassination question. The old who-what-when-where does not apply. Those were the pertinent questions in November, 1963. That was a bygone era of journalism when the "facts" of the assassination were spoon-fed to the media by the Dallas district attorney and J. Edgar Hoover. Now it is the Warren Commission critics who are supposed to dish out the answers.

The local radio and TV want me for a quickie interview prior to my lecture. They shove the mike in front of my mouth and want to know what new evidence I have to

offer. I try to explain that the old evidence, the research of Lane and Garrison and Weisberg, is sufficiently convincing. They smirk as if that was just a warm-up question anyway. Then they inquire, on behalf of their listeners, who was behind the murder. I give a rough outline of what is known, but stress that we don't have all the answers. Before the cameras and tapes are clicked off, I quickly interject that it matters that we don't know, that the lingering existence of this haunting question—Who killed JFK?—is radical and powerful and that my ignorance of the true assassins is all our ignorance and all our loss. But the machines have clicked. They do not hear.

Zapruder Film Evidence Distorted

Most assassination researchers agree that the Zapruder home movie of the motorcade is the best evidence of conspiracy. The film was purchased from Zapruder by Time, Inc., and they have refused to release the original. The media treatment of this basic piece of photographic evidence illustrates many of my complaints about assassination coverage. The complaints range from false reporting to journalistic squeamishness to obtuse thinking.

Though the film was never shown on television, Dan Rather did recount a description of the movie for CBS viewers in 1966, and he told of the President's violent forward motion after the impact of the head shot. Now the film is such important evidence precisely because the President jolts violently backward after the head shot, a reaction inconsistent with Oswald's alleged location to the rear. I have seen bootleg copies of the film where Rather's voice is dubbed in, and it is shocking to hear him saying "violently forward" at the exact moment the film reveals the President lurching backward.

At the New Orleans Clay Shaw trial in 1969, district attorney Jim Garrison subpoenaed the film from Time, Inc. It was shown a dozen times to the jury and the courtroom audience, which included representatives of the national media. It had a devastating effect. Reporters scrambled over to the spectators, asking for quotes on what they had just viewed. Apparently these crack jour-

nalists lacked the confidence to convey firsthand the horror of the film. The constraints of journalism precluded a statement, without attribution, that would least doubt on the lone assassin theory. The burden was too heavy. The drama of the first public showing of the Zapruder film escaped unreported.

At the Politics of Conspiracy Conference, held recently at Boston University, a very clear print of the film was presented. The Boston *Globe*, which for 11 years gave scant attention to critics of the Warren Commission lone gunman conclusion, reported of the film "... seconds later, another shot hits Kennedy from the front ... Enlargements of the Zapruder film seem to show a second gunman on the grassy knoll in front of the President."

This is quite an admission for the *Globe*, or for any major newspaper. To say the President was hit from the front is to say that Oswald could not have done it alone, is to admit that we do not know who killed Kennedy, is to admit that the *Globe* has been wrong all these years. The effect, however, was not that pronounced, for the above quotes appeared in the seventeenth paragraph of an article on the conference. This page one article of February 3 began instead with a desultory rundown on one of the conference participants.

But the *Globe* article, and a more sensitive piece in *The New York Times* on the conspiracy conference, suggests that major media may now be grudgingly considering the massive doubts about Dallas. I remember the snickers which greeted Jim Garrison's 1966 statement that the JFK assassination was carried out by a cabal of anti-Castro Cubans, the CIA, and high government officials. Walter Cronkite pontificated on the absurdity of thinking such disparate groups could work together in a clandestine action. Certainly Watergate has bestowed some credibility on the conspiracy analysis of politics, and perhaps that corrected vision can now be focused on murky events of the recent past, specifically the assassinations.

Bob Katz

Bob Katz is a member of the Assassination Information Bureau in Cambridge, Mass.