

Getting Kennedy story straight

I was quite disappointed at the commentary in both the print and broadcast media concerning the 25th anniversary of John F. Kennedy's assassination. That terrible day was perhaps the most decisive in our country's recent political history, yet media analysis and interpretation bordered on the lethargic.

It would appear that the burden of proof is on the critics of the Warren Commission, almost as though the fact that shots were fired from behind is sufficient indication of Lee Harvey Oswald's guilt. But who was representing Oswald's interests when the evidence was being marshalled, and possibly distorted, against him? It is not inconceivable that Oswald had something to do with the crime, but it is similarly possible that the dyslexic young man was, as he maintained, "a patsy."

The media's willingness to be perfunctory with the explanation of the assassination, as if Kennedy's memory is best served by apathy towards the sinister forces that wanted him dead, is truly irritating. There is less of a halo to that memory than there was in the years immediately following the events at Dealey Plaza — it is only proper that his adversaries be accorded the same critical treatment.

Eventually, all the facts are going to be disclosed. Do we want future generations of Americans to say that we always suspected that we weren't getting the full story, or do we

want them to say that we smelled a rat and flushed it out? My own feeling is that we need a special prosecutor, with complete access to all relevant evidence and information surrounding the case. I think that we should let the chips fall where they may and deal with it now, on the chance that some of the perpetrators might be brought to justice.

And in any case, notwithstanding the spate of media commentary to the contrary, there is nothing trivial, irresponsible, or neurotic about the efforts of critics to wring the truth from that grim day. Let's not forget: The murder of John F. Kennedy was no simple homicide, it was treason.

PAUL RYAN
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I am glad you published the letters Dec. 1 from readers responding to Patrick J. Buchanan's column on John F. Kennedy. History is a funny thing and myths and heroes play a major role in framing historical perspective. The events and facts disputed by those whose letters you published raise this point quite graphically. Modern historians, as an example, have rewritten American history

so that the genocide of Native Americans by heroes of the Wild West, like General Custer, have been recounted more accurately.

So too should the presidency of John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson and George Bush be recorded, factually and accurately. I resent the notion that the accounts surrounding Kennedy's involvement with the Mafia are Republican lies or that his open and notorious extra-marital affairs are the fanciful rantings of the right.

No one disputes the man's hero status or his right to that status. The anniversary of Kennedy's untimely death is the most appropriate time to reassess the elements of his presidency, with all its life and vitality as well as its dark and seamy side. Surely historians will record that Richard Nixon was found to be a liar when he said "I am not a crook," and most Americans would reluctantly agree. In re-examining Kennedy we must use the same measuring stick because we the people elected them both and we the people have the right to a true account.

I applaud Buchanan for raising the curtain of denial and cover up that which has surrounded John Kennedy for the past twenty-five years.

SEAN MCCARTHY
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I cannot understand the euphoria created by the public's perception of John F. Kennedy as a national hero. During the Kennedy-Nixon debates in 1960, Kennedy said that Quemoy and Matsu islands were undefendable. This breach of security revealed a lack of skill in a person who would be commander-in-chief of U.S. armed forces. Later, as president, Kennedy told a huge outdoor rally of Cuban freedom fighters that "the free flag of Cuba would soon fly over Havana." The Bay of Pigs invasion turned into a colossal military disaster because at the last moment the commander-in-chief lost his nerve by barring

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Herald Examiner

promised air support to the freedom fighters, and the entire expeditionary force was sacrificed to the Castro communists. Krushchev then boldly introduced ICBMs into Cuba, aimed at U.S. targets. In order to force the missiles back to the Soviet Union, the president had to cave in to demands never to invade Cuba. As a result Cuba and Nicaragua today are impregnable fortresses standing as monuments to the unchallenged supremacy of Soviet military power in Central America.

Unfortunately the collapse of the Monroe Doctrine inadvertently became linked to the recent televised vice-presidential debate when Dan Quayle was calmly explaining the similarity in ages and experience in Congress between himself and Kennedy. Sen. Lloyd Bentsen, however, pounced on him with the ugly sneer: "Senator, you're no Jack Kennedy," falsely implying that Quayle was assuming the role of Kennedy.

Millions of concerned Americans should be grateful that indeed Quayle is no Kennedy, otherwise we could all end up with another defeat at the next Bay of Pigs!

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