

Monday
November 21, 1988

Final news

Herald

JFK

25 YEARS LATER

- ▶ New book suggests Oswald had targeted John Connally. **A-9**
- ▶ A look at where a few artifacts of assassination wound up. **A-9**

Searching for the Called martyr and manipulator,

By **Michael T. Kaufman**
New York Times News Service

For much of the 25 years since John F. Kennedy was killed, his death has tended to overwhelm his life, casting his presidency as a virtuous road to martyrdom.

But in recent years both that life and that presidency have been weighed from critical per-

spectives that either did not exist during his thousand days or only matured later — influences like feminism, the Vietnam peace movement, the New Left and neoconservatism.

Indeed, even in regard to the civil rights movement, which was in full sway during Kennedy's presidency, historians are diverging from a consensus that had assigned him a leading role.

Examiner

Weather

Slightly warmer/A2

25 cents

True Kennedy his place in history still debated

Several writers, most recently Taylor Branch, have contended that the era should more rightfully be identified with the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

Interest in Kennedy is surging, and not only because the anniversary of his death is tomorrow. For many now in middle age, including those ascending to positions of power, basic political reflexes were established in the

early 1960s.

Then it seemed that an attractive, sophisticated and witty man had displaced the small-town Rotarians who exemplified the Eisenhower years. Guy Lombardo gave way to Pablo Casals; Robert Frost read at the inaugural. The Ugly American was going to yield to the Peace Corps.



John F. Kennedy

JFK, A-9 ▶ A legacy filled with questions

JFK

► From A-1

Another John Kennedy emerged later, from the accounts of historians and biographers, most notably Garry Wills, and from investigators delving into old gossip. Collectively, they portrayed a man who could conduct an affair in the White House with a gangster's moll, who was fascinated with clandestine operations, who built his own image with the cunning of a press agent and whose panache approached swagger, both in his private life and in his national and foreign policies.

But even now, memories of a thrilling sense of movement can obscure that negative version of the man.

Both blatantly and subliminally, Kennedy's spirit was routinely invoked in the 1988 presidential campaign. Gov. Michael Dukakis stressed the Massachusetts origins, the social visions and the underdog combativeness that he said he shared with Kennedy, while Republicans from Jack Kemp to Dan Quayle sought to project the youth, vigor and spontaneity of the Kennedy image.

"While much of the recent historical work on Kennedy has involved negative and unflattering disclosures, all the references in the campaign were positive," said Gary Reichart, a historian at the University of Maryland. "What remains constant has been Kennedy's brilliance in using the presidency to exhort the nation."

Professor Herbert Parmet of the City University of New York, whose two-volume study of Kennedy almost a decade ago is credited as one of the first to depart from the early hagiographic or self-consciously iconoclastic Kennedy books, agrees.

"There is no doubt that Kennedy still sets the standard for the presidency in a television age."

There is virtual unanimity about Kennedy's wit and charm and style, and about the positive ends they served. But many historical questions remain as to who Jack Kennedy was, and these continue to be studied and debated.

For example, new questions about Kennedy's relations with Martin Luther King and his commitment to the black leader's vision are raised in Taylor Branch's new book, "Parting the Waters: America in the King Years."

It was mostly in the afterglow of Kennedy's thousand days, and not during them, that he became known as a champion of civil rights; most of the legislative accomplishments of the era were the work of Lyndon Johnson. On this score, Branch's picture is distinctly less flattering than some earlier accounts.

The book describes how, during the 1960 campaign, Kennedy exploited a phone call he made to Coretta Scott King while her husband was in jail, later exaggerating his friendship with Mrs. King to gain black votes.

Another section describes Kennedy, fearful of what J. Edgar Hoover knew of his erotic encounters, succumbing to the FBI director's pleas to approve wiretaps of King's phones.

As to Kennedy's sexual liaisons, the last decade has brought reports of involvement with women including Marilyn Monroe and Mafia moll Judith Exner and, when he was an intelligence officer in World War II, with a suspected Nazi sympathizer. The reports, while varying greatly in reliability, have established a promiscuous, reckless image that few dispute any longer.

Professor Henry Graff of Columbia University, an historian who specializes in the American presidency, said such revelations contrast with the laudatory books and reminiscences that appeared in the decade and a half after the assassination.

Indeed, many reassessments came from the New Left, which argued that old Cold War assumptions and loyalty to expansive capitalist interests shaped Kennedy's policies. This was the contention of Bruce Miroff's "Pragmatic Illusions," published in 1976, before the bulk of Kennedy's papers were made available to scholars.

In 1974, Nancy Gager Clinch, a feminist writer, wrote "The Kennedy Neurosis," which she called a "psychohistorical" study. Though she was widely attacked at the time for the speculative analysis, her theory relating what she termed the "hyperactive" sexuality of Kennedy and his father, Joseph P. Kennedy, to a "macho" view of leadership has surfaced in other books, notably Garry Wills's "The Kennedy Imprisonment."

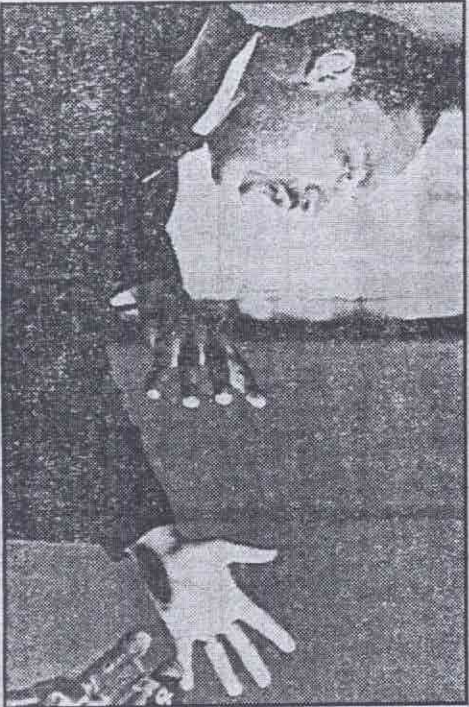
Wills, a professor of American culture and public policy at Northwestern University, subtitled his 1982 book "A Meditation on Power," and depicted Kennedy as a man ensnared by his own myth. The book gave wide

exposure to such findings by more recondite historians that Kennedy's Pulitzer prize-winning biography, "Profiles in Courage," had been ghost-written and that the Pulitzer it won had been engineered by Arthur Krock, the late columnist and Washington Bureau Chief for the New York Times.

The Wills portrait of Kennedy showed a compulsive risk-taker in both private and public life, a man who viewed episodes like the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba "as a James Bond exploit, the very definition of the New Frontier." Along with several other historians, including Parmet, Wills sees the seeds of the Vietnam debacle in the Cuban invasion that failed.

As for Kennedy's direct responsibility for Vietnam, the issue is still unclear; by the time of his death, 16,000 American soldiers were there with an uncertain mission. Kennedy's advisers and defenders, men like Kenneth O'Donnell and Arthur Schlesinger Jr., insisted that had he lived he would have extricated the United States.

Such assumptions were most prominently challenged by David Halberstam's "The Best and the Brightest" in 1972. The book concentrated its criticism on the technocrats and Cabinet members who waged and planned the war, but these were all men



Several historians have contended that Martin Luther King Jr., not Kennedy, should get the bulk of the credit for the civil rights era.

drawn to Washington by Kennedy. Furthermore, Halberstam wrote that whatever doubts the president might have had about the American presence in Vietnam or the futility of the counter-insurgency program, "he had never shown those doubts in public."

Younger historians say that the skirmishing between the loyalists and the revisionists has waned.

"The New Left critiques have subsided and the personally involved defenders also are increasingly leaving the field to younger historians who are looking at the Kennedy years with greater detachment and disinterest," said Reichart, the Maryland professor. "We've probably learned the worst about Kennedy and the best about him, and now what historians face is the task of putting it into context."

Kennedy may not have been Oswald's target, book says

NEW YORK (AP) — Lee Harvey Oswald, who assassinated President Kennedy, instead may have intended to kill John Connally, then governor of Texas, according to a book excerpted in Time magazine this week.

Connally, who was riding in a limousine with Kennedy, was seriously wounded in the rifle attack that killed Kennedy Nov. 22, 1963, in Dallas.

Oswald was angry because Connally had done nothing to help restore his honorable discharge from the Marine Corps, according to the book, "The Great Expectations of John Connally," by James Reston Jr., the author and son of the famous columnist. Oswald lived in the Soviet Union for a time and attempted to renounce his U.S. citizenship and

sell the Soviets military secrets he had acquired as a U.S. Marine Corps radar operator. As a result, Reston wrote, the Marine Corps downgraded Oswald's discharge from honorable to undesirable.

Oswald was crushed at the news, and wrote from the Soviet Union seeking help from Connally, unaware Connally had resigned as secretary of the Navy.

Alexandra De Mohrenschildt, a member of the small Russian emigre community in Fort Worth, told the Warren Commission, which investigated the assassination of JFK, that Oswald had never mentioned Kennedy.

"It was the governor of Texas (Connally) who was mentioned mostly," De Mohrenschildt said. "For some reason Lee just didn't like him."

PIECES OF HISTORY

The artifacts connected with John F. Kennedy's assassination, the obvious and the obscure, aren't just curios, they're chunks of an emotional history that have scattered around the country. Here are but three:

JFK'S PARADE LIMO — The customized 1961 Lincoln four-door convertible had a detachable bubble top and a gadget to raise a seated JFK to greater visibility. The top was removed, at JFK's request, for the motorcade through Dallas. Dubbed "X-100" by the Secret Service, it is on exhibit at the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Mich.

THE ZAPRUDER FILM — The home movie for which Life magazine paid \$150,000 is with the family of Abraham Zapruder, the Dallas dress manufacturer and amateur photographer who shot it. One-time commercial viewings go for \$30,000, and snippets of up to five frames can be had for \$750.

JFK'S TELEPHONE — A black job emblazoned with its title of importance, "White House," it has disappeared. Originally in Suite 850 of Fort Worth's Hotel Texas, it and the room's other furnishings were lost when the hotel was gutted and reopened as a Hyatt Regency in 1981.