

33 years later, still haunted by images

Assassination: The feelings inspired by pictures from John F. Kennedy's slaying, which happened 33 years ago last Friday, won't go away.

By David Michael Eytlin

EVEN AFTER 33 years, the grainy images replayed on an occasional television special are riveting. The open-top Lincoln, the roses, a kiss on the flag-draped casket, the heart-wrenching salute from a son just turned 3.

Every year, the images come back around Nov. 22 to mark the passage of another year since the innocence of my baby boomer generation was assassinated along with John Kennedy in Dallas.

We were teens entering adulthood, with the bullets in Dealey Plaza marking our passage. I've avoided rewatching the Zapruder film, so vivid in the instant

splatter of red that Hollywood imitates it — and so powerful that it brought a touch of immortality to Abraham Zapruder, the amateur photographer who aimed his camera at so fateful a moment.

But other images are more haunting — one in particular, re-membered in black and white on my television screen in 1963 and which reappears for the inevitable assassination anniversary programming, like David Wolper's old documentary, "Four Days in November."

In it, Kennedy lives again on the stump in Texas for his planned 1964 re-election campaign, but every word carries a dark brush stroke of irony. On this morning, we know the young president is flashing his last smiles, reaching out for his last handshakes, cracking his last jokes.

In Fort Worth, he is a given a Texas-style hat but won't put it on his head. The crowd chants for him to put it on, but Kennedy only teases. I'll put it on Monday at the White House, he says, and you can come down and see it there.

And he is given a beautiful pair of boots on that Friday morning. Come Monday, there will be another pair — a black pair — placed backward in the saddle stirrups of a

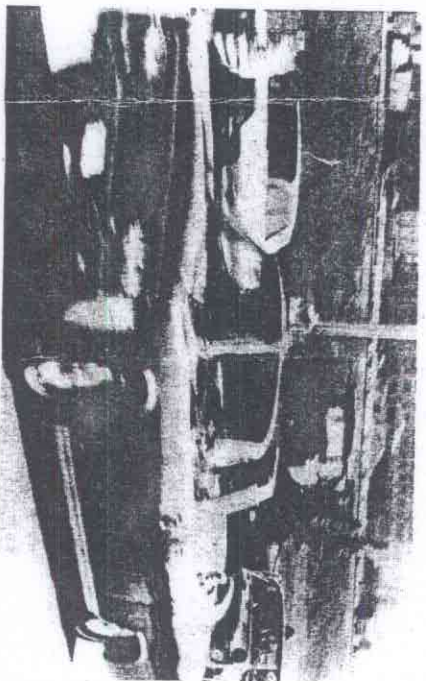
horse high-stepping behind the caisson on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington.

Kennedy and his entourage travel by motorcade to the Fort Worth airport, riding in a convertible and waving to enthusiastic crowds lining the route. And in Dallas, the greeting is just as delightful as the Kennedys ride with Texas Gov. John Connally and his wife, Nellie, in a dark, open-top Lincoln.

Inexorably, the motorcade closes in on downtown Dallas. Kennedy has an appointment there that cannot be changed no matter how badly I want the car to turn in some other direction.

Footage captured by other cameras shows the Kennedys — Jack and Jackie — flashing smiles as the Lincoln hurtles past crowded sidewalks, racing to Dealey Plaza. And again, the shots ring out.

I was at Ballhorne Junior Col-



Death ride: A Lincoln convertible in 1963 rushed mortally wounded President John F. Kennedy to Parkland Hospital in Dallas.

lege back then (the school's name has been changed a few times since), a 17-year-old freshman on the way to an American history class.

Another student — one I viewed as a bit of a political extremist — came running through a passage-

way between the old Park School buildings that had not yet given way to modern brick structures on the Liberty Heights Avenue campus.

"They didn't have to shoot him," he cried, rushing past me. "Shoot who?"

"The president," he shouted

back. "They shot Kennedy."

In Dallas, events were still unfolding — but in Baltimore, that student was the first I know of to give voice to a conspiracy theory, with a simple pronoun: "They shot Kennedy."

My professor, Wilson Valentine, a former Navy commander, dismissed this class.

"I can't teach American history on a day like this," he said, sending us home to watch history happening in those grainy black-and-white images for the next three days.

Tears were in his eyes.

So we watched Jack Ruby murder Lee Harvey Oswald in our living rooms, and then watched the nation bury its president.

Thousands lined the streets from the Capitol to Arlington National Cemetery to feel the chill of that gray Monday against their faces, the image of the caisson reflecting in their eyes.

I watched it on television, and saw every minute of the procession, heard every drumbeat, and was chilled by the wailing cry of the bagpipes, the crackling voice of the priest.

Every one of those grainy black-and-white images I remember anew but wait for that one previous sight that haunts me still, 33 years down the road from Dealey Plaza:

Simple rays of sunlight suddenly reaching down, between tree branches near the grave, slicing through the gloom of that day and my spirit.

Bridge

By Steve Becker
KNOX PRATT/BERNHARDT

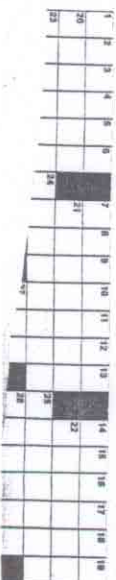
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Neither side vulnerable.

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has only one card higher than the six West led — the seven, 10, queen or king. Presumably it is not the seven, since with this bid...

Sun Crossword

"Al, The Meat Counciler"



JFK's last day lives on in Dallas

By Hugh Aynesworth
The Washington Times

DALLAS — They come from all over — rolling cameras and notebooks, luging books and tabloid newspapers, or carrying the latest digital equipment and semiprofessional lighting.

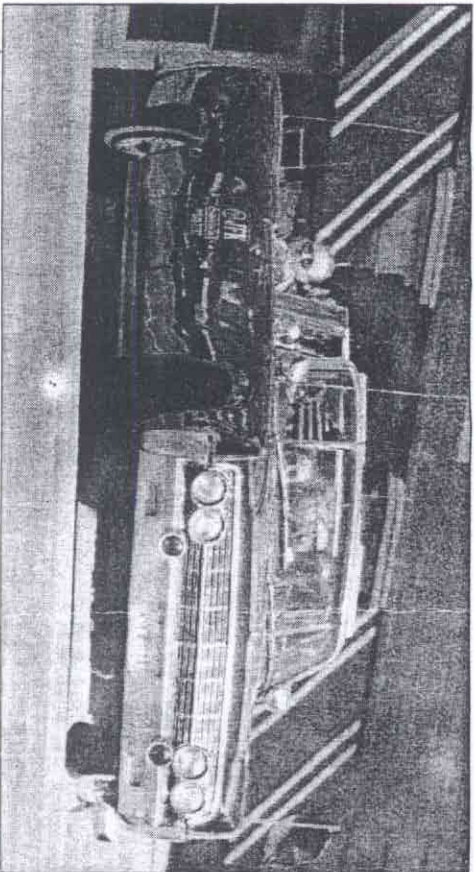
Some obviously have cramped out. Many have interviewed at least 50 people who know nothing specific about the case. But everyone eventually lines up to have his or her picture taken with that window in the background.

One by one or in small groups, they make the annual November trek — the slow, deliberate sweep around Dealey Plaza, eyes checking out each building, mulling the "grassy knoll," their arms eventually pointing toward the window where most believe Lee Harvey Oswald fired the loudest shots heard in our lifetimes.

It's been 33 years today. Many of today's onlookers seem drawn by doubts about the official version of what happened or by a relentless urge to capitalize on the tragedy.

"Oswald Didn't Fire a Shot," shouts out one tabloid hawked in front of the Texas School Book Depository. For \$3 you too can read about this exclusive, which claims the FBI, CIA and Dallas police covered up the real story.

One thin, grim man too young to have been born when President



Almoushine remodeled to look like John F. Kennedy's staves tourists along the route he took Nov. 22, 1963, in Dallas.

Kennedy was killed sells CDs featuring the true assassin, a character named Bob Debusse, who tells how he was hired by a Russian agent to hire Oswald but was so disappointed in Oswald's demeanor and rifle skills that he handled the job himself.

Another however, this one a longtime conspiracy theorist who for years has been engaged in selling JFK-related materials, offers a videotape of Illinois prison inmate Jim Files explaining how he fired the fatal shots that Nov. 22. That video goes along with a self-published book about how the JFK assassination is linked to the bombing in Oklahoma City.

Not too many are selling: The video-book package costs \$27. At least six other authors es-

posing six different conspiracy theories — including a couple who have backed more than one horse in the race — peddle their tomes.

Sons and daughters of some who were eyewitnesses here 33 years ago offer to sell "exclusive" photos. Two who reek of alcohol and likely were not present when the tragedy occurred peddle autographs while claiming they were among the few hundred on hand that day.

Looking at a woman claiming she has been here every Nov. 22 since 1963, Doris Comstock of St. Louis said: "I was was here in 1963, she must've been in diapers."

"This place really does have that certain aura," the vacationing Missouri woman added. "It's as though little voices are calling out to you

as you walk around the plaza."

Some facetiously suggest that those voices might be emanating from nearby hotels, where two different conspiracy conventions are set up to debate and promote yet another handful of theories about what really happened.

For \$100 a participant can hear several self-styled experts tell how Kennedy's body was switched between Dallas and Washington, how Oswald didn't shoot a gun that day, and what a hero filmmaker Oliver Stone is for fighting "government lies."

And down the street one can hear an in-depth discussion of the Zaprtuder film, the 8mm movie footage that best chronicled the assassination, or pick from several other would-be assassins, living and dead.

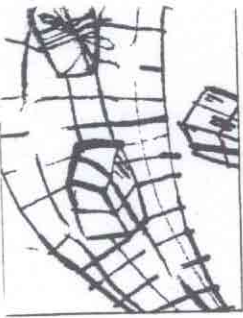
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ING THE S SAFER

**IN THE WAKE OF THE TWA
 800 CRASH, A WHITE HOUSE
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 SWEEPING CHANGES IN
 AIRLINE SECURITY. HERE
 ARE TWO VIEWS OF THE
 COMMISSION'S WORK.**



November 22, 1963 Why We Need the Real History of the Kennedy Assassination

By Jefferson Morley

AFTER 33 years the discussion of the Kennedy assassination is struck between the myth of the "one nut" and the myth of conspiracy. The huge accumulation of facts about Nov. 22, 1963 amounts to something more than trivia but less than historical truth. Consensus, after a third of a century, remains elusive. Indeed, since the bitter debate around Oliver Stone's conspiratorial 1991 film "JFK," the very idea of a consensus history of the Kennedy assassination has sounded quaint. In general, the notion that one version of history can suit all parties concerned has become embattled since the cultural convulsions of the 1960s. In the particular case of the murdered president, what possible telling could possibly satisfy all? A majority of

Jefferson Morley is an editor in the Outlook section of The Washington Post. This article first appeared in the AIRC Quarterly, published by the Assassination Archives and Research Center in Washington, D.C.

Americans, according to polls, are convinced or strongly suspect there was a conspiracy. Many leading opinion makers at news media organizations and some historians assure us that there is no credible evidence of such. And never the twain shall meet.

Yet we are closer than ever to having a firm factual basis for an assassination consensus. The JFK Assassination Records Act, passed unanimously by Congress in 1992, has resulted in the release of hundreds of thousands of pages of assassination-related documents since 1993. A five-member civilian review board, under the capable leadership of a federal judge, John Tunheim, has ordered the disclosure of another 2,000 documents. The board continues to take depositions and to pursue records that the FBI, the CIA, the National Security Agency and other federal entities want to keep secret.

Still, many tough-minded partisans who have dominated both sides of the JFK debate for years say that seeking assassination consensus is a fool's errand. The conspiracy theorists (or the

See KENNEDY, C2, Col. 1

BY SAM WHEATLEY FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Mary McGarry is on vacation. Her column will resume when she returns.

BACK TALK

The latest in an occasional series of reader responses to current topics.

IT'S YOUR TURN

Question: Liquor companies have dropped their voluntary policy of not advertising on TV. So far, the major broadcast and cable networks have declined such ads and the chairman of the Federal Communications Commission is urging independent TV stations to do the same. But some advertising industry observers predict that TV stations won't say no to the liquor companies' money forever. Does liquor advertising belong on television? Should the government impose a ban on all alcohol advertising, including beer and wine, as it has with tobacco products? Or is it none of the government's business?

Tell us your views in 200 words or less. We'll publish a sample of the most thoughtful or interesting responses on December 8. Submissions are due December 2. Be sure to include your name, address and phone number.

Send e-mail to Outlook@Washingtonpost.com or send regular mail to Outlook/Backtalk, The Washington Post, 1150 15th Street, NW, Washington DC 20071-5530.

D.C. Post

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killed is not the only nor the most important reason for this decline. But it surely has played a role. Reaching a common understanding about the causal chain of events leading to Kennedy's murder would be an important symbolic step toward restoring faith in American democracy.

We should *not* bother to reach a consensus out of fear that hypothetical persons complicit in President Kennedy's murder are a menace to democracy today. This is the paranoid position. It might have been a highly plausible feeling in the tumult of the '60s and '70s and a useful corrective to the patriotic excesses of the '80's. But, with the end of the Cold War, assassination paranoia, like assassination secrecy, is hard to justify. With the Cold War over, we should be confident enough as a country to face our once-secret history—without prejudice, denial or paranoia.

We need to take stock of what the nation's confusion and doubt about Kennedy's murder means. When CBS News pollsters found that 49 percent of people surveyed in 1993 said they believed the CIA was involved in the Kennedy assassination, they are not weighing in with finely-tuned assessment of the evidence about what happened in Dallas that day. Rather, the people are using the Kennedy assassination to dramatize their suspicions of the most secretive components of the national security bureaucracy. These suspicions continue to resonate today; witness how willing some people are to believe allegations that the CIA foisted the crack cocaine epidemic on America in the 1980s. Dismissal of such fears is a sure-fire recipe for deepening popular contempt for the already much-abused democratic process.

The view of many national media commentators is that the American people are slightly paranoid, irrationally suspicious of their government, misled by demagogues. This view is particularly evident in the comments of leading East Coast journalists over the years. From retired Washington Post editor Ben Bradlee to CBS anchorman Dan Rather; from conservative columnist George Will to liberal scribe Anthony Lewis; from the late leftist muckraker LF. Stone to the right-wing philosopher William F.



A civilian review board continues to take depositions and to pursue records that the FBI, CIA and other federal entities want to keep secret.

be a "lone nut" but Eastwood angrily realizes that the agency bears institutional responsibility for him. This rumination on the legacy of Nov. 22, 1963 in the guise of a multiplex action thriller was a huge hit.

When serious journalists have ventured into this tricky territory to present and analyze new evidence made public since 1993, they have gotten comparatively little attention. For example, "Oswald Talked," a provocative book by journalists Ray and Mary LaFontaine of Dallas, was published earlier this year and went unreviewed anywhere in the national media. Maybe I am biased because I edited an article the LaFontaines wrote for Outlook about their findings. But the judicious findings of Evan Thomas, the Washington bureau chief of Newsweek and no conspiracy theorist, also attracted little comment.

In his recent book about the CIA, "The Very Best Men," Thomas laid out the sometimes curious actions of top CIA officials before and after

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