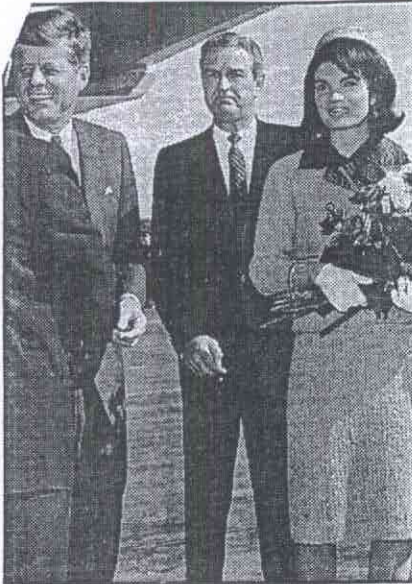


S.F. HARRINGTON - 11/18/92

BOOKS
Tricia Holt



John Connally met JFK and Jackie at the Dallas airport

Theories On JFK Won't Die

Tragedy has turned
into entertainment

First it was an assassination, then an investigation, then a conspiracy, then a cover-up (then *not* a cover-up, then *more* cover-ups) and throughout it all, in the constant replaying of the death of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, what began as the nation's worst calamity has turned, some say, into an entertainment.

"Look at it this way, Lieutenant," says a character in "**COLUMBO: THE GRASSY KNOLL**" by William Harrington (Tor/St. Martin's; 288 pages; \$18.95). "The assassination has become a multimillion-dollar industry. Books. Movies. Television series. Suppose [a person] was in possession of absolute evidence, proving who *did* kill

COPY
TO
WELLS

Kennedy? The millions would dry up. *NOBODY* wants to know who killed John F. Kennedy anymore. If we ever find out for sure, it destroys the industry."

Of course, Lieutenant Columbo is a product of that industry — a TV character turned loose in a novel about a TV talk show host who thinks he knows who killed Kennedy and gets killed himself. It might have been unthinkable 10 or 20 years ago to exploit the JFK assassination as a vehicle for Columbo (who's a bit too corny in print: "Well, thank ya awful much. I really appreciate it").

But today it's a treat — and not even a shameful one — to watch Columbo pull little-known items from the Warren Commission (remember the abandoned revolver, "absolutely clean of all fingerprints," found on the Grassy Knoll?) and explain how computer photo enhancement works — "it's got to do with the laws of probability," Columbo observes, demonstrating a connect-the-dots approach that's easy to grasp.

But Columbo only whets our appetite for the best new primer on the subject, "**THE KILLING OF A PRESIDENT**" by Robert J. Groden (Viking; 223 pages; \$30), a large (9½x11¼) volume subtitled "The Complete Photographic Record of the JFK Assassination, the Conspiracy, and the Cover-Up."

Groden was the first photography expert to create an "optically enhanced" copy of Abraham Zapruder's now-famous home movie of the assassination. Here, using key Zapruder frames, newspaper photos, snapshots, charts, street maps, and the government's own re-enactment, Groden provides a fascinating visual guide.

He shows us the suspiciously canyon-
HOLT: Page E6 Col. 1

HOLT: Theories on Kennedy Ass

From Page E1

like Dealey Plaza, the so-called "sniper's view" in the Texas School Book Depository window, the faces of many witnesses turning not toward the Depository but toward the Grassy Knoll, blurry figures that could be shooters, the exact positions of JFK and John Connolly when the "magic bullet" was supposed to have entered and exited both bodies yet come out almost intact.

Groden was a consultant to Oliver Stone on the film, "JFK," so it's not surprising he reasons that Oswald was "framed," that photos of Kennedy's skull and wounds were faked, that the bullets to both head and throat came from the front (Grassy Knoll) and not the back (Depository), that the government re-enactment changed seating positions of JFK and Connolly to prove the "magic bullet" theory,

that Kennedy's brain was stolen to conceal the true direction of the lethal bullet, and that the Warren Commission was only the first in a series of cover-ups to keep Americans from learning that a conspiracy existed, perhaps involving the FBI, CIA, Secret Service, Joint Chiefs of Staff, anti-Castro Cubans and organized crime.

But Groden also skims the surface. The Zapruder frames, for example, are still too fuzzy to convince us that "Connally was hit before the President sustained a wound to his back," and it's not at all clear in one photograph that Lyndon Johnson smugly exchanges winks with a Texas congressman after the assassination.

Alarming Book

If most JFK critics think the Warren Commission botched its investigation, they'll be further in-

trigued by Gaeton Fonzi, former field investigator for the House Select Committee on Assassinations and author of one of the most readable and alarming books on the subject, "THE LAST INVESTIGATION" (Thunder's Mouth; 448 pages; \$24.95). Fonzi writes of signing on for three weeks and spending three years with the HSCA, during which, he says, government politics sabotaged HSCA from within and ignored new information he and other investigators uncovered.

His most important lead takes him from Antonio Veciana, a former Cuban banker and founder of Alpha 66, one of Miami's most active anti-Castro exile groups, to a man Veciana identifies as "Maurice Bishop," whose funds and support of anti-Castro terrorism leads Fonzi to believe Bishop was a CIA agent. When Veciana's story checks out that he saw Bishop with

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 1993

Assassination Keep On Coming

Lee Harvey Oswald in Dallas prior to the assassination; and when "Maurice Bishop" turns out to be an alias for David Atlee Phillips, eventually the CIA's chief of the Western Hemisphere Division, Fonzi rightly expects the HSCA to investigate, but nothing is done.

The result, Fonzi says, is that "in 30 years there has not been a full and complete government investigation of the assassination. I think that's an outrage."

How deep that outrage might go is the subject of the most challenging book of the year, "DEEP POLITICS AND THE DEATH OF JFK" by University of California at Berkeley professor Peter Dale Scott (University of California Press; 413 pages; \$25). Quit treating the assassination as a whodunit or an entertainment, he says. "What none of us (myself included) wish to accept is that the unsolved assassination is a symptom of some-

thing wrong today, not just in 1963, in the heart of the society in which we live."

There is, says Scott, a "violent milieu underlying American politics" that is so ingrained in agencies such as the CIA, the military, the Secret Service and the FBI that we aren't aware of it — or that these agencies work daily with organized crime and international drug cartels — until something becomes visible, such as Watergate, Vietnam, the Iran-Contra scandal, or the JFK assassination.

'Procedures Repressed'

By then, "the fact that certain procedures are repressed from public consciousness becomes itself suppressed." Thus it's almost impossible to understand how "connections between underworld and underworld impact radically upon the public realm" — how, for example, U.S. intelligence opera-

tives routinely protect drug traffickers, or how the mafia might cooperate with the CIA to kill a head of state like Fidel Castro.

It's no news to the 1993 reader, Scott indicates, that "dishonesty, manipulation and even self-deception are widespread," but this was certainly news to Americans in 1963. As Scott takes us through the JFK assassination to show how conspiracies within many branches of the government and underworld already existed and were ready for exploitation in 1963, the connections suggested by the "JFK" movie from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to Jack Ruby and his underworld friends seem not so improbable after all. In fact, Scott suggests, they are only the beginning.

Patricia Holt is book editor for The Chronicle.