

# It's a tough month for

• The man who planned the fateful Dallas trip 30 years ago dismisses conspiracy theories.

By GLENN ADAMS  
*Associated Press*

**C**AMDEN — In a corner of his attic, Jerry Bruno picks through cartons of his John F. Kennedy memorabilia, stopping to gaze at a faded photo, brush the dust off an autographed book or pull out a campaign button.

It's a painful job for Bruno, the man who planned Kennedy's fateful political trip to Dallas 30 years ago.

"I very seldom come up here and look... I just try to put it behind me," said the diminutive, white-haired Bruno. "This is a tough month."

With November come phone calls from other former White House aides who want to talk about old times, and requests for interviews, which bring back replays of the Dallas motorcade scene that have already played countless times in Bruno's mind.

For a while, Bruno felt he was to blame for the Nov. 22, 1963 assassination that still grieves many of those who remember.

But Bruno, who lives privately and quietly in this picturesque coastal town, shed his guilt long ago, reasoning that Kennedy's death was a matter of fate, brought about by "a very, very sick man" acting alone.

Bruno was an auto worker in his hometown of Kenosha, Wis., when he got involved in statewide politics and met JFK in 1957.

In 1959, Kennedy asked Bruno to run his Wisconsin presidential primary campaign. After what turned out to be crucial victory for JFK, Bruno began planning Kennedy's political trips around the country.

With the Democrat's 1960 victory over Richard Nixon, Bruno joined the White House staff as advance man.

Bruno's most vivid memory of the president was while he was resting on Bing Crosby's ranch in California after an intensive, 11-state western swing in 1963. Kennedy, sitting in a swimming pool, beamed with anticipation as he talked about his expected 1964 re-election run.

"He was about as excited as I'd ever seen him," said Bruno, who recalls Kennedy as a demanding taskmaster whose boyish looks and easy smile belied his steel-like toughness.

Shortly after that came a five-city Texas political swing aimed at patching up a rift between conservative and liberal wings of the state's Democratic Party.

Never sensing the historical significance of what he was doing, Bruno made the arrangements for stops in Houston, Fort Worth, San Antonio, Austin — and Dallas.

Bruno still has the original schedule — and the revisions offered by Gov. John Connolly, who wanted to control Kennedy's movements and appearances to best suit his own political agenda. In dispute were some of the stops in Dallas.

Bruno wanted the president to speak at a fairground hall that could accommodate a large crowd, while Connolly insisted on a smaller hall where guests would be limited to the more monied, conservative Demo-

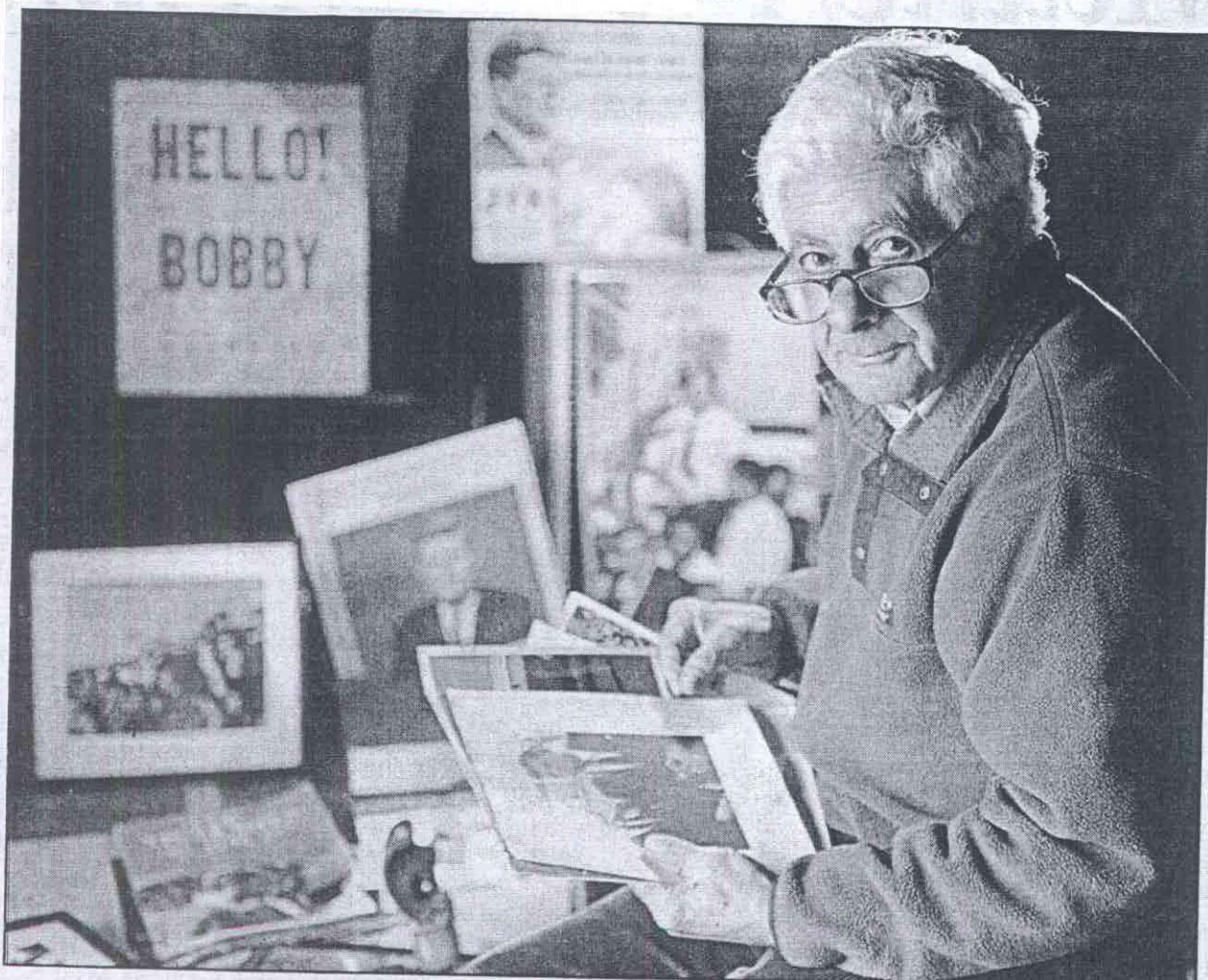
crats who were the governor's allies.

Connolly finally got his way. In his 1971 book "The Advance Man," written with Jeff Greenfield, Bruno notes that if Kennedy had gone to the fairgrounds instead, his motorcade would have traveled two blocks farther from the Texas School Book Depository, and much faster, on Nov. 22.

"At that speed and distance, it would have been almost impossible for a sniper to hit (Kennedy) from the Depository," wrote Bruno.

Bruno dismisses conspiracy theories that crop up regularly, including one advanced in the movie "JFK" that tells of a coup

# JFK aide



Jerry Bruno browses through John F. Kennedy memorabilia in his attic in Camden. Bruno, who worked as Kennedy's advance man, made the arrangements for the five-city Texas political swing that took Kennedy to Dallas.

Associated Press

d'etat.

"They're twisting history and distorting history, and that really upsets me," said Bruno, who is convinced Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone.

Oswald "was a very good marksman" and Kennedy "was a slow target," he said.

While the final Dallas plans only came together at the last minute, Kennedy's itineraries through other Texas cities were arranged a month in advance, giving would-be conspirators much more time to plan, Bruno said.

Since leaving government, Bruno has worked as a political consultant and taught politics at Elon College in North Carolina.