

The Swamp Thing Did It

Callahan, Bob. *Who Shot JFK? A Guide to the Major Conspiracy Theories.* Oct. 1993. 154p. illus. Simon & Schuster/Fireside, paper, \$12 (0-671-79494-9). Galley. 364 1'524 Kennedy, John F.—Assassination [BK].

★**Posner, Gerald L.** *Case Closed: Lee Harvey Oswald and the Assassination of JFK.* Sept. 1993. 512p. illus. Random, \$25 (0-679-41825-3). Galley. 364 1'524 Kennedy, John F.—Assassination | Oswald, Lee Harvey [CIP] 93-17821

Scott, Peter Dale. *Deep Politics and the Death of JFK.* Oct. 1993. 333p. Univ. of California, \$25 (0-520-08410-1). Galley.

364 1'524 Kennedy, John F. [CIP] 93-3209

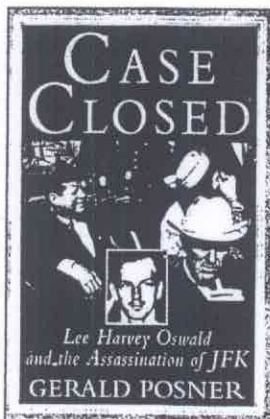
Sloan, Bill. *JFK: Breaking the Silence.* Oct. 1993. 241p. Taylor, \$19.95 (0-87833-833-0). Galley.

364 1'524 Kennedy, John F.—Assassination [CIP] 93-3695

Upwards of 2,000 books purport to unravel the JFK murder mystery, and another—anniversary-timed—paroxysm of publishing begins with these four titles; they will be followed by at least five more before November 22.

Gerald Posner's *Case Closed* is by far the most significant, sanest treatment of the case since the 1979 House investigation, perhaps even since critics first began advancing their careers by questioning the Warren Commission's conclusions regarding a lone gunman and a "magic bullet." One of Posner's chief strengths is that he consistently refutes the "eyewitnesses" of assassination lore—such as Ed Hoffman. (Hoffman says he saw assassins fire from the "grassy knoll." But he didn't tell his story until 15 years after the murder, and even if he stood where he claimed, four railroad cars, a billboard, and shrubbery impeded his vision.)

But Posner's core structure is an exhaustive account of Oswald's short and peculiar life, in which plot buffs see "proof" of his being framed, or even used as a direct agent, by the FBI, CIA, KGB, Castro, and the Dallas police. Using sound evidentiary principles, Posner considers what miracles would have been necessary for the success of any wide plot that involved Oswald. In this manner, Posner dismisses questions of Jack Ruby's Mob connections; the allegedly botched autopsy of JFK's body; and the prosecutorial coercions of New Orleans' Jim Garrison (who induced witnesses to testify with bribes and, in one case, a gun down the throat). A formidably assembled indictment, *Case Closed* narrows the wiggle room for conspiracy buffs to the few documents yet to be released on the case



(Oswald's KGB file, said to be boring reports of routine surveillance, sustains their hopes), so all libraries should be on red alert for Posner's book.

By contrast, Callahan's *Who Shot JFK?* is a harmless bit of camp that seems to support every theory ever thought up to debunk lone-nut partisans. The nuttiest of these—such as the "George Bush Young Republicans" angle—are confined to sidebars accompanied by the starkly funny drawings of Mark Zingarelli. These modify the famed images of the murder's principal scenes and figures, so that Oswald, for example, wears nine hats—including a Russian fur cap for Comrade Lee and mobster fedora and sunglasses to illustrate Big Easy Lee's links to New Orleans. Callahan discusses some 38 controversies, any one of which might snare some novitiates; however, there are dozens of factual mistakes. The most egregious of those might be the acoustic "proof" of a second gunman firing from the grassy knoll, recorded from an open police microphone. But in repeating that claim made by the 1979 House sleuths,

Callahan fails to report that the tape has been shown to have been recorded several minutes after the murder and several miles from the site. Yet if Callahan doesn't always inspire confidence, his book inspires mirth, and its probable bookstore visibility may leverage library consideration.

Peter Scott, with his third book on the assassination, feels that the murder was a systemic adjustment, the likes of which are periodically undertaken by American entities such as the Mafia, the CIA, and—in this instance—fruit companies worried about Communist influence in their banana republics. Scott's opinions aren't based on consideration of witness credibility (à la Posner) but upon two decades of research and a peculiar mental construct, the "negative template." It means that if something is absent, such as a name from a list, it was once actually present—thus negatively indicating nefarious doings. If readers accept this circular logic, they can revel in the original claim of *Deep Politics and the Death of JFK*, that army intelligence was in on the murder.

In *JFK: Breaking the Silence*, Bill Sloan offers a dozen eyewitness tales. One is from a CIA hit man—code name Chameleon—who claims to have secretly investigated the murder at RFK's behest. Result: a conspiracy, the knowledge of which confines Chameleon to fearful retirement. With the 11 remaining confidantes, Sloan takes a forgiving attitude that Gerald Posner, notably, does not. —Gilbert Taylor

362.1'0973 Medical policy—U.S. || Medical care, Cost of—U.S. [CIP] 92-44875

Annis, who was elected president of the American Medical Association because of his opposition to Medicare, applies the debate skills he says won him that job to discuss old arguments as well as Clinton's new health care plan. He blames Fabian socialism, by way of the Americans for Democratic Action, for initiating our current health care troubles. In fact, he labels most government action in the social arena as socialism. After berating the health insurance industry and lawyers, he smartly pummels British and Canadian health care systems. When focusing on medicine itself, he gives a knowledgeable analysis of technology cost, medical service conditions, and the low-birth weight issue. His review of AIDS, a mix of moral judgment and medical data, may provoke a firestorm. This book demands more reference checking than most readers will do, but it delivers the ultraconservative position loud and clear. —Virginia Dwyer

Brundage, W. Fitzhugh. *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880-1930.* 1993. 400p. index. Univ. of Illinois, \$39.95 (0-252-01987-3); paper, \$14.95 (0-252-06345-7). Galley. 364 1'74 Lynching—Georgia—History | Lynching—Virginia—History | Georgia—Race relations | Virginia—Race relations [CIP] 92-26034

Considered a particularly American, preponderately racial form of lawlessness, lynching—mob-based, vigilante murder—was rampant in former Confederate states around the turn of this century. Brundage focuses this academic study on the two states with the most (Georgia) and least (Virginia) lynchings to determine specific societal causes of these crimes. To this end, Brundage analyzes the types of mobs, their locational variation in style and number, and the opposition that eventually brought about a decline. The result is a readable account that focuses less on the sensationalistic details of lynchings than on the patterns and factors. Unfortunately, this sizable book will most likely be approached only by those with a solid interest in this rather shameful passage of America's history. —Angus Trimnell

Burton, James G. *The Pentagon Wars.* Sept. 1993. 352p. index. illus. Naval Institute, \$23.95 (1-55750-081-9). Galley. 355'00973 U.S.—Armed Forces—Reorganization || U.S.—Military policy [OCLC]

Written by a former high-ranking Defense Department civilian, this history of the last decade of Pentagon procurement scandals focuses on the acquisition of Navy fighter planes but also covers various abortive reform efforts, including the Goldwater Act, and the reasons for

their comparative failure, so far, to make the Pentagon a worthwhile locus of efficient strategic decision making. Burton argues strongly, too, for a number of reforms of his own, particularly independent outsider review of major programs. A concerned insider's view, the book requires of the reader some background in military matters. For the serious student of defense decision making, it's invaluable. —Roland Green

Carroll, Paul. *Big Blues: The Unmaking of IBM.* Sept. 1993. 352p. Crown, \$24 (0-517-59197-9). Galley. 338.761004 International Business Machines Corporation—History || Computer industry—U.S.—History [OCLC] 93-5421

Wall Street Journal reporter Carroll's chronicle of IBM, which reads almost like a family saga, with a myriad of names to remember and ever-changing relationships, has no happy ending. It starts—once upon a time—with the 1980s and Big Blue's forays into personal computers and an on-again, off-again business marriage with Microsoft. It ends, sadly, with guesses about new chairman Gerstner's future directions for the company and the incredible toll on both employees and stockholders. In between, there's plenty to "tsk, tsk" about: the phenomenal bureaucracy and isolation of the giant; competitors that seized the day even before IBM realized it was dawn; and political