

JFK conspiracy theorists bring little



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From England, Germany, Japan, Australia and all over the United States they met recently at Dallas' Hyatt Regency Hotel to analyze the most infamous murder this century in the United States: the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

Every November since 1963 has brought some kind of remembrance of the terrible events at Dealey Plaza on Nov. 22. This November's symposium coincided with the interest being generated in Oliver Stone's *JFK* movie. Articles and opinion pieces critical of the movie have already been published in *Esquire*, the *Washington Post* and *Time*.

Longtime conspiracy theorist Mark Lane made note of the upcoming movie in urging symposium participants to force a reopening of the assassination.

"We know there was a conspiracy. . . . We've known that for a long time. What are we going to do about it? We have an opportunity which we have never had before. That (Oliver) Stone film, good or bad, it makes no difference, will place on the agenda for America a question about the assassination. This whole country has to see that film," Mr. Lane told the symposium as he pushed for a

nationwide "political action organization" to spur the appointment of a special prosecutor to reopen the investigation. Other speakers sought similar new inquiries.

But does the *JFK* movie or what was revealed at the symposium warrant a reopening of the Kennedy assassination?

The movie has as its protagonist the discredited Jim Garrison, who failed in 1969 to convict alleged assassination conspirator Clay Shaw. If the November issue of *Esquire* piece on *JFK* is accurate, then Mr. Stone's movie will likely earn a place only as an example of vindictive propaganda.

Not so easy to disregard are the arguments, ideas and suggestions touted at the Kennedy symposium. After all, conspiracy proponents are quick to point to public opinion polls showing a large majority of the public agreeing that there was a conspiracy to kill Mr. Kennedy.

"I am delighted to stand with the 83 percent of Americans who reject the Warren Commission report," observed keynote speaker Cyril H. Wecht.

It's understandable that many Americans doubt the Warren Commission's conclusion that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone in shooting Mr. Kennedy.

Waco author Jim Moore (the only panelist at the symposium to argue a single gunman theory) offered a less-than-convincing argument for his case.

"My basis is this: I trust the experts. They're on my side," Mr. Moore told the assembly, which appeared predisposed to disbelieve him.

The symposium was loaded with pro-conspiracy information: witnesses testifying to a gunman firing from near the grassy knoll, detailed analysis of the famous Zapruder film pointing to a shot from the right front (not from the Texas School Book Depository where Mr. Oswald allegedly fired his rifle), allegations by photo analyst Jack White that a backyard photo of Mr. Oswald holding the assassination rifle was a fake photo, strong arguments against the single-bullet theory and allegations that Mr. Oswald's killer, Jack Ruby, had ties to Mafia figures with a motive to kill the president. Researcher John Davis summed up Mr. Oswald's slaying as a "classic Mafia rub-out of a crucial witness."

Researcher Jim Marrs offered the overall conclusion that the Central Intelligence Agency, members of the U.S. armed forces, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover and Vice President Lyndon Johnson and elements of organized crime all are prime suspects in killing Mr. Kennedy or facilitating a cover-up.

"What individual most profited from the death of President Kennedy? LBJ," Mr. Marrs asked. His motive? "Richard Nixon was quoted the morning of the

that's new to symposium

assassination in *The Dallas Morning News* on the front page as saying, 'LBJ will be dropped from the '64 ticket.' So LBJ is facing the end of his career," Mr. Marrs continued.

Much of the pro-conspiracy talk covered areas of research that have been around for years and even decades.

Researcher Tom Wilson presented what was likely the highlight of the symposium with respect to new evidence. He gave a video presentation of the results of his computer image-processing study of the Zapruder film and other photographic evidence purporting to show a gunman firing from the grassy knoll.

But listening to and viewing all that was said and shown at the symposium was much like hearing only the prosecution or plaintiff's attorney in a trial. There was much more to the truth than what the pro-conspiracy advocates put forth at the Hyatt Regency.

Jean Hill, a darling of conspiracy theorists, told the symposium of being at Dealey Plaza when the shots were fired and "from across the street I saw someone shooting from the knoll."

But in a WBAP-TV interview just hours after the assassination she denied seeing anyone firing. When questioned about the discrepancy, she replied: "It was a very traumatic time. These things did happen. . . . I was threatened and pushed in front of a TV camera and by

that time, I was not sure I needed to say anything."

Jack White presented his case for the faked backyard photo, but the House Select Committee on Assassinations heard many more photographic experts contend the photo of Mr. Oswald holding the assassination rifle is most likely genuine. What's more, Marina Oswald took the photo and has never disputed its authenticity. At the symposium, Mr. White called Marina a liar.

Cyril Wecht made a strong case that the single-bullet theory was grossly false. But eight medical experts — led by the chief medical examiner for New York City — support that theory in evidence presented to the House assassination committee.

And while Tom Wilson garnered a standing ovation for his revelations of the computer photographic study, the images he presented were often blurry and his conclusions very much open to doubt. He at least is willing to challenge the government to prove him wrong.

Except perhaps for Mr. Wilson's findings, there was nothing to emerge from the symposium that impressed this observer as warranting an official reopening of the investigation of the assassination.

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