

JFK's Assassination

THE MYTHS THAT WILL



Like eternal flame that burns over late President's grave in Arlington Cemetery, doubts of many about official version of assassination won't be extinguished.

Though not ashred of proof has been presented to refute the Warren Commission's findings, theories ranging from the implausible to the preposterous have left lingering doubts in the minds of millions

Probably no other government document has generated more controversy than the Warren Commission's report on the assassination of John F. Kennedy. It has been attacked as hasty, biased and a whitewash. But have its critics unearthed any evidence to bolster their charges? To answer that question, the Associated Press made an in-depth study of the case offered by the report's detractors. What follows is an excerpt from the AP's findings on the basic theory of many critics—*that Kennedy was the victim of a conspiracy.*

By BERNARD GAVZER and SID WOODY AP News Features Writers

THE WARREN COMMISSION never said that Lee Harvey Oswald, alone, murdered John F. Kennedy, period. It actually said: "The commission has found no evidence that Oswald was involved with any person or group in a conspiracy . . . if there is any such evidence, it has been beyond the reach of all the investigative agencies and resources of the United States and has not come to the attention of the commission."

The matter has not rested there. In New Orleans, District Attorney Jim Garrison has claimed to have found what the commission did not: conspiracy. On the bookshelves of the nation are volumes asserting Oswald was innocent, that he was a fall guy that he was involved with Jack Ruby or Bernard Weissman, or the FBI or Communists, or Texas oil interests, or racists.

A court will decide in New Orleans. The other charges of conspiracy are not before a judge and jury. But they are before the jury of public opinion, and will be for some time.

The Warren Commission, unfortunately, did not answer all the questions.

Some are probably unanswerable. But some are not questions at all. They are innuendoes that confuse the search for truth.

What other construction can one put, for instance, on Mark Lane's innuendo in his book "Run to Judgment" that there might have been a connection between Ruby and the right wing in Dallas?

Ruby Checked

The commission made an hour-by-hour probe of Ruby's activities from Nov. 21 to Nov. 24, 1963, to determine if he was involved in a plot.

"The commission found that Ruby's activities and associations were innocent," Lane writes. "An objective analysis of the record might yield a somewhat different evaluation."

Lane mentions an instance on Nov. 21, when the commission had said that Ruby "visited with a young lady who was job hunting in Dallas."

"Contrary to the commission's unsumming summation," says Lane, "Ruby did not merely visit with a young lady who was job hunting. . . . Commission ex-

hibit 2270, an FBI report of an interview with Connie Trammel, the young lady in question, divulges the fact that Ruby drove with her to the office of Lamar Hunt, the son of H. I. Hunt."

Lane then leaves Ruby at the office of Lamar Hunt, whose rich father is a strong supporter of ultra-right causes. Lane's reader is left to wonder what he may of this suggested link between Ruby and the Dallas right wing.

But exhibit 2291 gives a different story. It is also a statement by Miss Trammel, now Mrs. Penny, to the FBI. In it she tells of a talk with Ruby when she and classmates from the University of Texas visited his Dallas strip club. Ruby asked if she wanted to work for him. She didn't. But he kept asking, the last time on Nov. 21, 1963.

In that phone conversation, Miss Trammel said she was seeking a public relations job at a bowling alley she had read was owned by Lamar Hunt. She had an appointment to see him. Ruby offered to drive her to the bank building where Hunt had his office, since he had business at the bank. She told the FBI that Ruby had mentioned that he knew most of the prominent people in Dallas, but did not know Lamar Hunt. Ruby left her on the elevator at the ground floor. He never did go up and meet Hunt.

SUCH HANDLING of commission evidence by the critics happens too often to look like mere oversight.

Take the alleged meeting in Ruby's Carousel Club Nov. 14, 1963, of Ruby, J. D. Tippitt, the officer the commission

said was shot by Oswald, and Bernard Weissman, the young Easterner who had helped place an ad critical of Kennedy in the Dallas Morning News the day of the assassination.

Weissman had arrived in Dallas Nov. 4 to try to set up a new conservative party by infiltrating right-wing groups. Lane himself had told the commission about the meeting. He declined to reveal his source because the source had not given him permission.

Raps Probe

"But," he wrote in his book, "if the commission had wanted his name, it need only have asked one of its witnesses, Thayer Waldo, a reputable journalist. Counsel, however, did not ask Waldo about the meeting."

But at the end of Waldo's interrogation about other matters, counsel did ask if he could add any information about anything else. Waldo said no.

The commission did inquire into the Carousel meeting with other witnesses. One was Larry Crawford, a carnival worker hired to do odd jobs around the club. The commission volumes have a statement by Crawford to the FBI that he recognized a picture of Weissman as a man he had seen at the club "on a number of occasions."

Lane does not mention that Crawford also told the FBI he had a "very vague recollection" of hearing Ruby mention the name Weissman, that he believed Weissman was a Dallas detective and that he "could have Mr. Weissman mixed up with someone else" or that Crawford thought Weissman was 38 to 43 years

NOT DIE



One fringe of plot-conspirators insists that when Jack Ruby shot Lee Harvey Oswald in basement of Dallas police station, it was to keep him from killing



Oswald



Kennedy



Ruby

Despite doubt cast by critics, no plot has been proven.

old. (Weissman was 26 in 1965 and had been in Dallas only 10 days).

Lane reports that several witnesses said Ruby knew Tippitt. One whom he cites, Police Lt. George C. Arnett, actually told the FBI that he did not recall to what extent Ruby may have known police officer J. D. Tippitt. Arnett, in other words, did not say positively if Ruby did or did not know Tippitt.

Lane says Crafard and Andrew Armstrong, Ruby's bartender and handyman, both heard Ruby say he knew Tippitt when he learned the officer had been shot. Lane does not say that Armstrong also told the FBI: "Ruby's sister told me it was a different Tippitt that he knew. In other words, there was two officers that had the name of Tippitt."

Actually, there were three, and Ruby knew one, he said, a detective Gayle Tippitt in special services. Lane's book has this. It mentions that Gayle Tippitt said his "contacts in recent years with Ruby have been infrequent."

An Omission

That is from committee exhibit 1620, in which Gayle Tippitt also said that in the 1950s he "became very well acquainted with Jack Ruby." Lane does not quote that.

Lane writes that the commission might also have interrogated Harold Richard Williams, who told Lane he had seen Ruby and an officer he identified as J. D. Tippitt in a patrol car when he was arrested in November, 1963. Lane warns readers to assess Williams' testimony with caution, since he was not a witness and under oath. He didn't tell his readers that Tippitt was stationed in the Oak Cliff section of Dallas, across town from where Williams said he was.

And two witnesses said that on Nov. 14, the night of the meeting, Weissman was in their home, trying to sell them carpeting, until 9:30 or 10 P. M.

Weissman was asked by commission counsel: "Did you at any time while you were in Dallas ever have a meeting with or sit in the Carousel Club with Officer Tippitt?"

"No," he answered. He said he had never been in Ruby's club and didn't know him.

Mrs. Tippitt said she had never heard her husband mention being in Ruby's place.

The point is not so much whether such a meeting could have taken place,

but that Lane, who presented the rumor to the commission, did not give all the evidence to his readers. Neither Mrs. Tippitt's nor Weissman's denial or lack of knowledge of the meeting is presented in his book.

But if such a meeting did take place, what was its purpose? Lane doesn't suggest one. Neither does any evidence in the report.

Nor is there evidence in the volumes to indicate a conspiracy in New Orleans. The commission and the FBI investigated several of the people that have figured in Garrison's case. They found no conspiracy.

Garrison has said he has evidence that Oswald was working for the Central Intelligence Agency. Others have said Oswald was working for the FBI after his return from the Soviet Union for a fee of \$200 a month.

THAT RUMOR apparently came from a Houston reporter, Alonzo Hudkins. Hudkins has since told Charles Roberts of Newsweek that he believes J. Edgar Hoover's denials that Oswald was an FBI informant. But Edward Jay Epstein asks, in "Inquest," why didn't the commission on its own interrogate Hudkins and his reported source for the story, Dallas Deputy Sheriff Allan Sweatt? It is a legitimate question.

But it is also legitimate to ask how Epstein can state "No efforts were made by the commission or its staff to investigate the rumor itself." That simply isn't true.

The commission did investigate reports of money orders Oswald received in Dallas. They proved baseless. The commission did inquire why FBI Agent James Hosty's name was in Oswald's address book (Oswald told his wife to take it down after Hosty had visited her at Ruth Paine's, where she was living.)

The commission did not take at face value the denials of the FBI. Epstein did not mention the foregoing facts when he said the commission "relied entirely on the FBI to disprove the rumor" of Oswald's FBI connection.

Another conspiracy rumor says Ruby entered the Dallas police headquarters to shoot Oswald not on the spur of the moment, but by design. In accord with some superplot, the assassin had to be assassinated. One incontestable fact, however, must be considered:

Oswald's transfer was made when police were through questioning him. When

that was decided, Ruby was driving downtown to send a money order. A time clock showed the time he handed the money order across the Western Union sounter at 11:17 A.M. Oswald was shot at 11:21 A.M. It takes several minutes to walk from Western Union to the police basement where Oswald was slain. A commuter catching a train would hardly cut it so fine. Would a man engaged in a superplot do so? Particularly if he knew in some unexplained way that his only chance would come at 11:21?

More conspiracy: Ruby was somehow involved in Castroite activity. Lane quotes the testimony of Nancy Perrin Rich that in 1962 she and her late husband had met several times in Dallas with others including an Army colonel whose name she did not recall and some-

one named Dave C.—"I think it was Cole, but I couldn't be sure."

Mrs. Rich's husband had asked \$25,000 to take a boat carrying guns into Cuba and take refugees out. Negotiations stalled.

Mrs. Rich, who had been a bartender at the Carousel, said there was a knock on the door and that Ruby entered with "a bulge in his pocket." He went into another room and returned minus the bulge, Mrs. Rich said. She assumed the bulge was payoff money, although she never saw money changed.

Negotiations improved, but Mrs. Rich finally "grabbed my old man and cleared out" when she later thought she recognized a new participant as Vito Genovese's son. She based this on his resemblance to a photograph she had seen.

Commission Counsel Leon Hubert then asked Mrs. Rich if Dave C., who she said had been a bartender at the Dallas University Club, could be one Dave Cherry. "That's it," she replied.

LANE WONDERS why this potential corroborating witness was not called, although "the FBI's summary of an interview with Cherry was in the commission's possession."

The FBI "summary," which Lane does not quote, might explain. In it, Cherry denies knowing any colonel "who was supposed to have been running guns into Cuba." He did know Nancy Perrin Rich. He said she had been barred from the club and he thought she was "mentally deranged."

The commission record quotes Dallas detective Paul Rayburn who thought Mrs. Rich "a psychopathic liar who got great delight out of telling wild tales."

And in an interview, attorney Cy Victorson, who represented Mrs. Rich on a vagrancy charge, said she told stories "so ridiculous that no one could possibly believe them."

Lane does not ask why Rayburn or Victorson were not called. He did not use their statements, either.

Lane relies for corroboration on



Lane Epstein
Their criticism of Warren report has generated more heat than light.

Robert McKeown, arrested in 1958 for conspiracy to smuggle guns to Castro.

McKeown told the FBI that in 1959 a man who identified himself as Rubenstein (Ruby's original name) had phoned him offering \$15,000 to get Castro to release three prisoners. Three weeks later, McKeown said, a man asked him to write a letter of introduction to Castro because he had some Jeeps to sell Cuba. The deals were not made.

McKeown told the FBI he felt "strongly that this individual was in fact Jack Ruby . . ." Lane quotes this, but not another part of the statement in which McKeown "remarked he is not certain that the above-described telephone caller from Dallas or the man who personally appeared . . . was identical with the Jack Ruby who killed Lee Harvey Oswald."

Ruby said he once was interested in a Jeep deal, but he thought the intermediary's name was Davis. His sister, Eva Grant, told the FBI she believed her brother had an option on eight war surplus Jeeps some time around 1960.

Where does it all tie Ruby into an assassination superplot? Do surplus Jeeps in 1959, and an unverified meeting in 1962 add up to assassination in 1963? Lane doesn't answer the question.

Weird Twist

Another conspiracy: Oswald, the admitted Marxist who wanted fair play for Cuba, was actually in the anti-Castro underground.

The source of this, Sylvia Odio, an anti-Castro Cuban, said that on Sept. 26 or 27, two Cubans or Mexicans called at her apartment in Dallas with a third person introduced as Leon Oswald. She said the men told her they had recently come from New Orleans and were friends of her father, a prisoner of Castro.

Next day one of the men, who said his name was Leopoldo, phoned Mrs. Odio and said he wanted to introduce Oswald into the Cuban underground. He said Oswald had been in the Marines, was an excellent shot and felt "the Cubans didn't have any guts . . . because President Kennedy should have been assassinated after the Bay of Pigs and some Cubans should have done that."

After the assassination, a stunned Mrs. Odio recognized pictures of Lee Harvey Oswald as the man who came to her home.

The commission maintained that Oswald could not have been in Dallas Sept. 26 or 27, as he was in Mexico.

" . . . The issue was never resolved," wrote Epstein.

But records show that Oswald crossed into Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, between 6 A.M. and 2 P.M. Sept. 26. The commission said there was strong evidence that Oswald had left Houston on a bus for Laredo at 2:35 A.M. that morning.

Epstein does not mention a commission statement from E. P. Hammett, a Houston bus ticket agent, who told the FBI that in late September a man "strongly resembling" a photograph of Oswald asked him about bus travel to Laredo and Mexico City. Epstein does not mention that the man eventually bought a ticket to Laredo, the only such ticket sold that night to Laredo and the only one of its kind sold from Sept. 24 through Sept. 26.

It was the commission that presented all the evidence about Lamar Hunt and Ruby, about Nancy Perrin Rich, about Jeeps, about McKeown. The critics did not.

One may interpret what the commission found, and the critics have, abundantly. But although, as of this date, there may be doubters, books and speculation, the critics have yet to produce one essential of proof—evidence.