

Apathy clouds underworld

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By ROGERS WORTHINGTON
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CHICAGO — The voice on the other end of the phone is that of Robert Keuch, special counsel to U.S. Attorney-General Benjamin Civiletti. He is not optimistic.

"I'll be honest with you. I didn't expect after all these years to get much from the investigation. Everything I went into the bureau (FBI). I got back what I expected. They went absolute-ly nowhere."

It is a year since the Select Committee on Assassinations of the U.S. House of Representatives sent its conclusions of probable conspiracy in the killing of John Kennedy to the justice department for further investigation. Keuch, the man in charge, had the report examined "in great detail" by the criminal and civil rights divisions, and then passed many of its leads on to the Federal Bureau of Investigation for further investigation.

The FBI has now completed most of its work, and the results thus far have fueled Keuch's pessimism as to whether the case will ever be clearly resolved.

"We could unleash 3,000 FBI agents tomorrow, and the unfortunate and sad thing is that I don't think we will ever convince all the people, no matter what we do."

Keuch said his investigators are following new leads as they come in. And

still to come are the results of examining the committee's single strongest piece of evidence of conspiracy: the acoustical tests that indicate a second rifleman fired at Kennedy.

Both the FBI and the National Science Foundation labs are reviewing the tests. But if they are confirmed and, as Keuch implies, the human evidence leads nowhere, the result could be more frustration.

If the House committee's conclusions of probable conspiracy by lower-echelon organized crime in Kennedy's murder is right, and if the trail is too thin and too cold to yield indictments, it will mean the conspirators got away with it. Considering the open wound the Kennedy assassination has inflicted on the American psyche for 17 years, rage rather than frustration would be a more appropriate response to such a stalemate. But rage is unlikely.

"There's no sense of rage about anything anymore," says Anthony Summers, a veteran British journalist (*London Sunday Observer*, BBC) who has written the first analysis of the committee's 700-page report and its 12 supporting volumes.

Summers' book is titled, fittingly enough, *Conspiracy*. It is a tough-minded, comprehensive look at the committee's work, and a few steps beyond. It has been favorably received by such persons as historians Arthur

Schlesinger and Hugh Trevor-Roper, journalist Robert MacNeil, and *Newsday* publisher William Atwood.

Despite such endorsements, Summers said he was depressed to find that initially there was no interest in his book. But while he can understand the public's fatigue with the case, he can't comprehend what he sees as apathy toward the House committee's

involvement in Kennedy killing

American journalists have long regarded as a quagmire of irresolvable minutiae that could just as well taint a career as boost it. The book's source list reflects this. Newspaper articles by American investigative reporters are strikingly absent — not because Summers couldn't use them, but because, he said, he couldn't find any.

"I went into it thinking that time after time I would find myself talking to people who I thought would yawn hugely and say, 'You're the umpteenth reporter who has come to talk to me since 1963.'

"But time after time I found I was the first one there, and they hadn't been talked to. In a couple of cases I was there before law enforcement.

"The case has never been investigated by the press at any stage. There had never been a reporter assigned to the story by his editor — you know, a Woodward and Bernstein equivalent back then, the 'Go, you're on the story until I tell you you're off it' sort of thing."

But for Summers, the moment the American press was truly delinquent was during coverage of the committee's hearings, and last July when its 700-page report finally came out (plus 12 volumes of published testimony and research).

"There were 8,000 pages of published evidence, and the best the press

could do was to mock it and talk about the acoustics evidence from a position of total ignorance. There's no indication that any reporter in this nation has read it."

At least some of his ire is reserved for the justice department, which he — and others — have accused of dragging its heels in beginning the investigation.

"They are afraid to admit they were wrong in 1964, and afraid it is too late to investigate for purposes of prosecution. That's what has happened to the justice department. They just haven't responded; I think that is really the story."

Special counsel Keuch refuses to respond to such charges, claiming he began his investigation a year ago and has left no stone unturned.

"I guess I'm just discouraged," Keuch said. "After the amount of investigation done, the end result is that the whole thing will still be unsettled. Maybe we'll have to have a permanent committee on assassinations and 17 more books."

That sentiment may have been part of the inspiration behind the original working title for *Conspiracy*: scrapped because it was too negative. The title?

Not in Your Lifetime.

conclusions by the press and the Department of Justice.

"It doesn't really matter whether the American people are tired of the Kennedy assassination or not," Summers said. "We (journalists) are here to inform, not guess at what the public thinks."

When he decided to write *Conspiracy*, Summers jumped into what many



Was there a second rifle involved in JFK assassination?