

need confirmation
records of
phone logs

David R. Wrone

Charles A. Crenshaw with Jens Hansen and J. Gary Shaw, JFK Conspiracy of Silence. Foreword by John H. Davis.
New York: Signet Books, April 1992. Softcovers. Pp. xvi, 205. \$4.99. No notes. No bibliography.

Of the many books on the assassination of President John F. Kennedy that should never have been published this is certainly one. Unfortunately its beguiling brevity, simplicity, and availability will enable many thousands to find, read, and absorb its distortions, conjectures, and errors, lightly peppered with facts, in the illusory belief they are obtaining an inside view of what really happened.

On November 22, 1963, Dr. Charles A. Crenshaw worked in Dallas' Parkland Memorial Hospital, in his second year as a resident in surgery, a role that made him a bit player in the tragic events that followed. In this capacity he assisted the medical team who worked in a futile heroic effort to save President Kennedy's life in Trauma Room No. 1. On November 24 the young doctor was present in Trauma Room No. 2 where another team attempted to save the life of the alleged assassin Lee Harvey Oswald. After 28 years he decided to set down his troubled

memories of those tragic days, in order, he writes, to provide the public and the records of history with his observations that the 35th President died from gunshots fired from the front and thus an act of conspiracy.

What first strikes a candid reader is the peculiar format of this autobiographical fragment, a product of a three man collaboration. Part of the text provides a narrative context for the events of the assassination in the form of chronological sequence segments, another portion describes the medical events plus information on Crenshaw and his experiences given in his first person narrative, and yet another thematic element stitches the two together in an interwoven interpretation of the murder and immediate events. Obviously, Crenshaw supplies in one font, a Dallas JFK theorist Gary Shaw alleged factual details in another font, with a la Mary Shelley, stitching them together.

The whole is 205 pages with few words of the Shaw material, which must be read with much caution - ordinary reader could not possess and thus is doubly pernicious. Richard Nixon, for example, on several occasions has recounted where he was at the time of the shooting; it is not true to say he has not said. He was traveling in a taxi from La Guardia Airport in New York City to his city apartment. At a stoplight in Queens he heard the news.

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The whole is 205 pages with few words on a page. Errors strew the Shaw material, which must be read with much caution an ordinary reader could not possess and thus is doubly pernicious. Richard Nixon, for example, on several occasions has recounted where he was at the time of the shooting; it is not true to say he has not said. He was traveling in a taxi from La Guardia Airport in New York City to his city apartment. At a stoplight in Queens he heard the news.

Crenshaw story is weak and poor, certainly not enough to merit a "book," a brief article would have sufficed. A critical reader will also wonder where are the notes or other contemporary

records he might have made and then referred to in his writing. Conceivably, a person with a panged conscience and a great concern for truth and his minor role in history would have taken the time to set down his contemporary memories or save documents. But he did not.

Several elements must be noted. He remarks that he saw the President with his shirt on (p. 78) and on television appearances (ABC 20/20) has also said the bullet hole in the throat was above the necktie knot. The location above, not through, the knot, renders the necessary trajectory of the single bullet theory impossible and alone converts the assassination into a conspiracy. But did Crenshaw see that? I question it.

He records he entered after Dr. Malcom Perry was at work on the dying President. But Perry testified in 1964 (3H377) he entered the room after the clothes had been cut off by Dr. David Carrico and the nurses, standard procedure in the emergency room. Carrico was the first doctor into the Trauma Room and the only doctor who saw the wound with the tie still in place as he also said (3H361-62).

Crenshaw's observation that the head wound and the throat wound were entrance wounds, both an impossibility if Oswald shot him from behind, is nothing new in the assassination literature. What is of interest is his passing observation that on the 23d Dr. Perry was exhausted having had little sleep because of the telephone calls he had gotten from Bethesda where the autopsy was being performed. The official (corrupt) story has always been that only one phone call was placed to him in the evening of the

22d while the critics have consistently demonstrated that this could not possibly have been true. (See, H. Weisberg, Post Mortem, 37, 72, 77, 150, 199, 233, 259-60, 363, 508, 577.)

His remarks that suited men with pistols were in the emergency rooms does not seem probable and I doubt his account. Why would pistols be exposed? It makes no sense. Perhaps his memory over time embroidered this element.

His recollection of being taken from the dying Oswald on the surgery table to receive a telephone call from President Johnson who asked him to get a death bed confession, does not ring true. In the first place, LBJ was too busy for this detail that was better left to a subordinate with the patience to follow through the bureaucracy to locate the wounded man, find the telephone number, place the call, and so forth. Where in the mass of details of the assassination over a nine month period do we find LBJ ever being interested in points about the murder? And, how would he know Oswald was dying? This was not self evident. If a confession was wanted LBJ would surely have utilized the professionals in the FBI or Secret Service already in Dallas and in the police building when Oswald was shot, rather than rely on an unknown medical student. How could one gain reliable data from this method fraught with possibilities of mishearing, confabulation, or mixed facts? Further, the telephone logs of LBJ, kept in exquisite detail, reveal no phone call placed to the Parkland Memorial Hospital at the time of Oswald's admittance and death. Crenshaw errs.

Crenshaw inserts information he could not possibly know or assess for validity, further muddying his account while revealing he is a victim of influence from irresponsible theorists. It is true President Kennedy's corpse left Dallas in a bronze coffin and wrapped in sheets and plastic as he states. However, it did not arrive in Bethesda in a gray coffin in a body bag, but as it was shipped, the so-called testimony of selected "eyewitnesses" he cites notwithstanding. The corpse was never, not even for ten seconds, out of the physical control of the Secret Service and JFK loyalists; the documentary evidence is unimpeachable. Crenshaw's corruption of the evidence casts doubt on other portions of his account of his Parkland experience.

Finally, Crenshaw is awash in patriotism as he describes the death of President Kennedy, dying while he helped try to save him. Thankfully his type of love of country--28 years later he tells the truth (when it won't cost him any money and adds nothing new and is tainted by errors)--is not characteristic of the American people. Rather theirs is more appropriately captured by a poignant phrase from the eloquent inaugural address of the battle tested 35th President: "Don't ask ^{not} what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country."