

FBI's top agent in assassination inquiry retiring

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The man who probably knows more about the investigation of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy than any person alive will retire from the FBI in two weeks and launch a nationwide lecture tour to provide what he terms "a common sense, non-political analysis" of the probe.

Robert P. Gemberling, a veteran of 33 years with the FBI (26 as a special agent), sees Lee Harvey Oswald as the assassin, operating alone — with no conspiracy involved. He realizes this goes against what most Americans believe, but he says he now has an obligation to speak out. To this point, his capacity as the coordinator of the Dallas investigation has forced him to remain silent.

Gemberling was the man chosen by now-retired special agent-in-charge Gordon Shanklin to direct and coordinate the investigation, write the reports to the bureau headquarters and the Warren Commission and trouble-shoot during all the mini-investigations since the Warren Commission closed down in late 1964.

He has written 31 different reports, some of them as long as 500 pages, and hundreds of memos about different aspects of the case.

Gemberling has some qualms about the House Select Committee on Assassinations, which has asked for \$6.5 million to re-investigate the murders of Kennedy in 1963 and the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968.

He thinks such an investigation — at least in the instance of the Kennedy

death — is a waste of money and time.

"I'm just convinced," Gemberling said in an interview. "I'm so convinced and I feel that any other person, anybody with average intelligence, if he's seen as much of the investigation as I have, there's no way he can reach any other conclusion."

Gemberling said he feels there are further pitfalls for the FBI in the current investigation.

"If there's got to be an investigation," he went on, "I hope they do it completely independently."

"I hope they don't come to the bureau and say, 'What do you have on this?' or, 'Will you furnish all the information on this?' because somebody searching the files may miss something."

"And when it comes out later, they may say, 'We asked you for everything and you didn't give us everything. You withheld some things from us.'"

"Then that would put the FBI right back in the middle," Gemberling said.

He suggested that the FBI, which handled about 95 per cent of the Kennedy assassination investigation, should simply turn over its complete files to the new probers and let them pick and choose whatever they deem important.

The long-time agent — a certified public accountant who, according to fellow employees, was chosen for the Kennedy coordination assignment because of his management ability and tenacity — said there were few FBI agents who were really well-versed on the massive file of the Kennedy case.

He said several had retired from Washington headquarters and nobody in



Gemberling searches through one of the Kennedy assassination files he has compiled

the Dallas bureau office had followed the case nearly as thoroughly as he had. He said this would likely prove to be a problem if and when certain materials were needed, and requested, by the new House group.

Gemberling, though the brunt of the work came in 1963, 1964, 1967 and 1968 (when New Orleans Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison began his conspiracy investigation), still works on aspects of the case.

Just days ago he interviewed a man who claimed he had found the missing slug. (The Warren Commission concluded that Oswald fired three shots, but only two slugs were ever found.) The Dallas man said he found the slug after years of searching with a metal detector

in the Dealey Plaza area.

The slug, if indeed the metal was a spent slug, was sent to the FBI laboratory for investigation.

Gemberling also fields many calls from the media. Most of the calls concern investigative material printed in the 26 volumes the Warren Commission released in September 1964, and many of the calls stem from conspiracy theories that begin with false facts or premises. Gemberling can usually point out where the material is mentioned, who did what to whom, who claimed this or that, within seconds.

Since headquarters in Washington has nobody left who worked the case so closely, Gemberling has been called on

numerous occasions to help with bureau presentations to various committees and groups.

Several of his associates have told him he is wasting his time lecturing; that nobody will believe an ex-FBI man when many Americans think the FBI may have been involved in some sort of coverup of the assassination.

"I'm aware of that," Gemberling said. "I don't think anybody will believe it because I was an FBI agent — the way our society reacts to the FBI today — but I'll be open and frank with the people. I can't believe that anybody could sit with me for very long without me being able to refute an awful lot of

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