

Why the search

EDITOR'S NOTE: Robert J. Groden was a special photo-optical consultant with the House Select Committee on Assassinations and is considered to possess the world's largest private archive of photographic evidence relating to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. His third book on Kennedy, "High Treason," was recently published privately through Conservatory Press, 212 Emily Lane, Boothwyn 19061.

By Robert J. Groden

So why did I write another book on the assassination of President John F. Kennedy?

After all, it has been more than 25 years since the murder in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1962. No prominent anniversary looms. Literally thousands of books and magazine articles have already explored the topic. Dozens of film documentaries and docu-dramas abound on the subject. Could we possibly have missed something?

But if opinion polls matter, the issue — despite numerous harangues from segments of the media to let it rest — is very much alive with the public. More than 80 percent of the American people believe that the president was killed as result of a conspiracy.

Try an experiment. Bring up the subject with friends and listen to the results; if you think no one cared about the assassination, you'll probably be amazed. The Kennedy assassination is one sure-fire way to jump start a conversation.

The assassination conspiracy and cover-up are so multi-faceted that it would take several volumes to do justice to it all. So many theories need to be explained, and unfortunately there is a great deal of disinformation to confuse the public and send investigators off on false leads. I know, I've chased down quite a few myself.

The strength of the cover-up has been just that. In addition, the forces behind the cover-up have set up a climate that makes anyone who questions the official fiction of the Warren Report (the government's first version of the murder) look like an agent of insurrection.

And just who were these forces?

In 1976, an official investigation reopened the case of the assassination of President Kennedy to address that very question. The panel, called the House Select Committee on Assassinations, was headed by a man of great integrity and conscience, U.S. Rep. Thomas Downing (D-Va.). The committee's Chief Counsel was Richard Sprague of Philadelphia, who wanted to investigate the case as an open homicide.

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From the start, the House Committee was doing too good a job, stepping on too many feet and butchering too many sacred cows. Infighting was rampant and Downing and Sprague became two of the victims. The investigation was controlled and almost stopped before it learned and revealed too much. (To digress a moment, in 1975, I testified before the Rockefeller Commission for a day and a half about some photographic evidence I had depicting a second assassin. The commission literally changed every word I said in its report; if I said "white," they wrote "black." Then it dropped the inquiry.)

I recall a conversation I had with HSCA Deputy Chief Counsel Gary Cornwell on a ride to the airport. Cornwell said, "Well, we know Oswald did it." If that were true, I asked him, how could Oswald possibly stash his gun behind some boxes on the sixth floor of the Depository, run down to the second floor past Victoria Adams on the stairs without being seen and dash into the lunchroom — all in less than 90 seconds — and still not be out of breath?

"It doesn't matter how," said Cornwell. "He did it." That is the mentality private investigators have been dealing with.

In the end, the Assassination Committee's investigation uncovered so much evidence of conspiracy that, in spite of itself, it was forced to admit the existence of one and that President Kennedy had died at the hands of those involved.

However, to make the report palatable, the committee had to suppress the conspiracy's true nature: a plot that involved some high-level officials of our own government. Privately, one key commission member was far more forthcoming to me on the subject but he permitted that scenario to be co-opted for the final report.

After wrapping up its report in 1979, the committee gave its recommenda-

killers continues

tions for further investigation to the Department of Justice. In those 10 years, the department did not lift a finger to follow up on a single one of numerous leads. Last year, the Justice Department thumbed its collective nose at us and issued the statement that it had completed its investigation, found no evidence of a conspiracy and was closing the case. You can't find evidence if you don't look for it, and the Justice Department never, ever tried.

So why another book?

When John F. Kennedy was killed, the conspirators took our government from us, not by ballots but by bullets. We were lied to, and the whole nature of our country was greatly changed. The Vietnam War escalated, and virtually anyone in this nation who lost a relative or friend over there did so after John Kennedy was killed.

We lost other leaders, such as Dr. Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy. Soon there were no great voices left to challenge the blatant corruption from the likes of Nixon and Agnew, or the arrogance of the Reagan Administration.

Going into the future with an unsolved murder of a president is like building a skyscraper on a cracked foundation. When they killed the president, in simplest terms, they robbed him of his civil rights, just as they robbed Lee Harvey Oswald of his civil rights by killing him. And if they can take away the president's civil rights by killing him, what does that do to the rest of us?

The government investigations did not make mistakes; they were handicapped by errors of purpose, orchestrated by career officials who didn't wish to rock the boat for fear of jeopardizing their own sinecures.

The Warren Commission, for instance, never looked at the autopsy photos of the president which would have revealed the existence of a conspiracy. It ignored 95 percent of the photographic evidence from Dealey Plaza that day. These omissions meant that the commission did not have to include this evidence in its final report which was presented to the public.

The result is that the investigation is left to private individuals who give up massive parts of lives to pursue this, mostly for the reward of slowly reworking the public record into its true form.

Still, we are left to wonder how different history might have been but for a special prosecutor with subpoena power and no political favors to pay.

So the question is not why am I doing this; the real question is why aren't the authorities?

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