

too to entertain them as they waited. The chief clown told Patrick Anderson of the Juvenile Delinquency Committee that they weren't going anywhere until they had a smoke. Anderson: "Kennedy returned and spoke to me: 'The clowns should be where the children are.' Our eyes met for a long moment and it seemed, incredibly, as if he wanted my agreement. 'Yes, sir,' I said, 'they should be,' and I herded the reluctant clowns downstairs."<sup>43</sup>

It went on and on. He went skiing with Charles Spalding. "You almost prolong the pain not to lose the person," Spalding thought. "... It just hurts so bad. Then you figure, if it doesn't hurt I'll be further away from what I've lost. So it just seemed that those nights would go on forever."<sup>44</sup>

## VI

He refused to involve himself in the problem of who had murdered his brother. He "never really wanted any investigation," Nicholas Katzenbach thought.<sup>45</sup> Nothing would bring John Kennedy back to life. Investigation would only protract the unbearable pain. Almost better, Robert Kennedy seemed at times to feel, to close the book. He left to Katzenbach all dealings with the Warren Commission, appointed by the new President on November 29 to ascertain the truth about Dallas.

The Chief Justice and his colleagues had perforce to depend greatly on the intelligence agencies. They did not know that the agencies had their own secret reasons to fear a thorough inquiry. If it came out that the putative killer might have had intelligence connections, domestic or foreign, that FBI agents should have had him under close surveillance, that CIA assassins might have provoked him to the terrible deed, the agencies would be in the deepest trouble. But if Lee Harvey Oswald could be portrayed as a crazed loner acting on some solitary impulse of his own, they would be in the clear.

In CIA, James J. Angleton, the counterespionage chief and CIA liaison with the Warren Commission, compiled a dragnet of names and called for information from all branches of the Agency. One name on his list was Rolando Cubela Secades. Desmond Fitzgerald decided to withhold from Angleton the story of CIA's role in Cubela's plot to murder Castro. He even ordered any mention of the poison pen deleted from the report of the November 22 meeting.\* Nor did

\* My source is the informative book by Edward Jay Epstein, *Legend: The Secret World of Lee Harvey Oswald* (New York, 1968), 253-254. Epstein's source was evidently Angleton. I know no reason to doubt this particular story. But, since Angleton in his quest, necessary but maniacal, for Soviet 'moles' (penetration agents burrowing their

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Allen Dulles, a member of the Warren Commission, repair the ignorance of his colleagues. (He may not have known about Cubela, but he certainly knew about the 1960-61 assassination attempts.)

The FBI succumbed equally to the bureaucratic imperative. As Edward Jay Epstein has persuasively argued, the Bureau might well have suspected that Oswald had been involved with the KGB and actually believed he had met with a Soviet intelligence officer in Mexico City two months before Dallas. But Oswald's name was not in the FBI's voluminous Security Index. Hoover at once called for an internal inquiry into the "investigative deficiencies in the Oswald case." After reading the report, he noted despairingly that the findings "have resulted in forever destroying the Bureau as the top level investigative organization." Early in December he secretly censured seventeen FBI officials.<sup>46</sup> Externally he was desperate to avert any suspicion that the Bureau had failed. "The thing I am most concerned about," he told Walter Jenkins of the new White House, "... is having something issued so we can convince the public that Oswald is the real assassin." Katzenbach, no doubt reflecting Hoover, wrote Bill Moyers, another of the new President's special assistants:

1. The public must be satisfied that Oswald was the assassin; that he did not have confederates who are still at large; and that the evidence was such that he would have been convicted at trial.
2. Speculation about Oswald's motivation ought to be cut off, and we should have some basis for rebutting thought that this was a Communist conspiracy or (as the Iron Curtain press is saying) a right-wing conspiracy to blame it on the Communists.<sup>47</sup>

Robert Kennedy, Katzenbach said later, knew nothing about this memorandum.<sup>48</sup>

For reasons of bureaucratic self-preservation, the CIA and the FBI thus found themselves in the ironic position of denying any possibility of Cuban or Soviet implication. Nor did the new administration wish to think about the unthinkable problems that would arise if there were indication of international conspiracy. All the pressures in Washington were toward a quick and uncomplicated verdict. Robert Kennedy, I believe, had his own thoughts. We spent the evening of December 9 together. "I asked him, perhaps tactlessly, about Oswald. He said that there could be no serious doubt that Oswald was guilty, but there was still argument if he had done it by himself or as part of a larger plot, whether organized by Castro or by gangsters.

way in the adversary system) at one time thought I might be a Soviet agent in the White House (after a Soviet official in Caracas came up with the date of the Bay of Pigs landing). I may perhaps be pardoned if I do not regard him with the reverence that pervades the Epstein book.

The FBI thought he had done it by himself, but McCone thought there were two people involved in the shooting."<sup>49</sup>

At about the same time, Kennedy asked Walter Sheridan how Jimmy Hoffa had taken the news. "I didn't want to tell him," Sheridan said later, "but he made me tell him." Hoffa in Miami, hearing that Harold Gibbons and top Teamsters in Washington had lowered the flag over the marble palace to half-mast, "flew into a rage." He yelled at his secretary for crying. A reporter asked him about the Attorney General. Hoffa spat out: "Bobby Kennedy is just another lawyer now." A Teamster leader in Puerto Rico soon wrote Robert Kennedy that he planned to solicit donations from union brothers to "clean, beautify and supply with flowers the grave of Lee Harvey Oswald. You can rest assured contributions will be unanimous."<sup>50</sup>

Robert Kennedy perceived so much hatred about, so many enemies: the Teamsters; the gangsters; the pro-Castro Cubans; the anti-Castro Cubans; the racists; the right-wing fanatics; the lonely deluded nuts mumbling to themselves in the night. I do not know whether he suspected how much vital information both the FBI and the CIA deliberately denied the Warren Commission or whether he ever read its report. But on October 30, 1966, as we talked till two-thirty in the morning in P. J. Clarke's saloon in New York City, "RFK wondered how long he could continue to avoid comment on the report. It is evident that he believes that it was a poor job and will not endorse it, but that he is unwilling to criticize it and thereby reopen the whole tragic business."<sup>51</sup>

The next year Jim Garrison, the New Orleans district attorney, started making sensational charges about a conspiracy. I asked Kennedy what he made of them. He thought Garrison might be onto something; NBC, he added, had sent Walter Sheridan to New Orleans to find out what Garrison had. Garrison's villain turned out to be the CIA. Kennedy said to Sheridan something like: "You know, at the time I asked McCone . . . if they had killed my brother, and I asked him in a way that he couldn't lie to me, and they hadn't." Kennedy asked Frank Mankiewicz of his Senate staff whether he thought Garrison had anything. "And I started to tell him, and he said, 'Well, I don't think I want to know.'"<sup>52</sup> Kennedy told me later: "Walter Sheridan is satisfied that Garrison is a fraud."

I cannot say what his essential feeling was. He came to believe the Warren Commission had done an inadequate job; but he had no

\* Walter Sheridan, in recorded interview by Roberta Greene, June 12, 1970. 19. RFK Oral History Program. In 1967 Marvin Watson of Lyndon Johnson's White House staff told Cartha DeLoach of the FBI that Johnson "was now convinced there was a plot in connection with the assassination. Watson stated the President felt that CIA had had something to do with this plot" (*Washington Post*, December 13, 1977).

### *Corridors of Grief*

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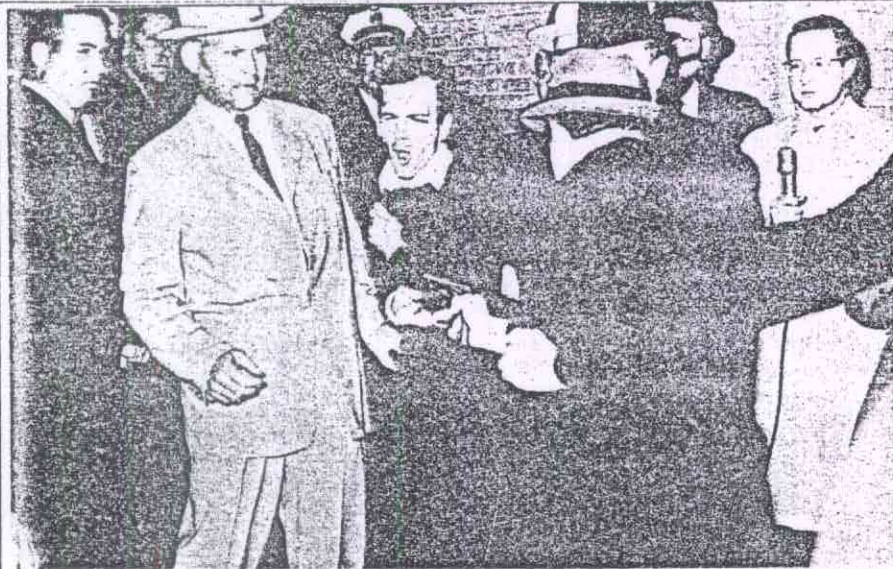
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Dallas Times-Herald

Jack Ruby shooting Oswald: Was there more to his motive than Oswald's smirk?

## Hints of the Mob

**D**id the Mafia have a hand in the murder of John F. Kennedy? The very question sounds farfetched, but assassination buffs have bandied it about for years: Mob leaders, after all, were known to dislike Kennedy because of his Administration's pursuit of organized crime and prosecution of Teamsters boss Jimmy Hoffa. And the Mafia played an active role in a CIA plot to murder another Head of State: Cuba's Fidel Castro. Last week, the issue came up again, in tantalizing detail, before the House assassination committee. Though there was no conclusive evidence, several new leads provoked committee counsel G. Robert Blakey to say that organized crime "had the motive, opportunity and means to kill Kennedy. From the testimony thus far, the possibility cannot be dismissed, although it can hardly be said to have been established."

**On the Fringes:** No witnesses produced any evidence linking Lee Harvey Oswald to the Mafia. But the committee did hear a lot of talk about mobsters, the Cuban exile community and a strange cast of characters on the fringes of both groups. José Alemán, a prominent Cuban exile, spent a morning recalling one of several conversations he had with Santos Trafficante, who controlled much of the gambling in Havana before Castro's rise to power—and a man with links to Castro and the CIA. Alemán said that in June or July of 1963, Trafficante complained to him about Kennedy's pursuit of Hoffa. "This man, he's not going to be re-elected, no doubt about it," Alemán remembered Trafficante saying. Alemán countered that Kennedy appeared to have a lot of support, and he said Trafficante replied, "You don't understand. He's going to be hit."

In interviews with committee staffers last year, Alemán said it was clear that Trafficante meant Kennedy would be

killed. Last week, however, expressing fears for his life, Alemán backed off his interpretation, and suggested that maybe Trafficante meant Kennedy was going to be hit with Republican votes.

**Patriotism:** Trafficante took the stand the next day. Now retired and living in Florida, he testified under a grant of immunity and said he "never made the statement that 'Kennedy's gonna get hit.'" But he did admit to some anti-Castro activities, which began in 1960 or 1961, after his release from a Cuban detention camp. Trafficante said he had met fellow mobster Johnny Rosselli at the Fontainebleau Hotel in Miami. "He told me the CIA and U.S. Government was involved in eliminating Castro and asked if I would help him," Trafficante recalled. Rosselli introduced Trafficante to his boss, Sam Giancana, and Trafficante said he joined the plot out of patriotism. Rosselli and Giancana both turned out to be friends of Judith Exner,

## NATIONAL AFFAIRS

a woman who has been linked romantically to Kennedy.\*

The committee also delved into Jack Ruby's possible connections to the mob, and disclosed a computer analysis of his phone calls in the fall of 1963—an investigation not made by the Warren Commission, despite the recommendations of staff lawyers. Investigators discovered calls to associates of New Orleans crime boss Carlos Marcello; to Irwin Weiner, a Chicago bondsman who, according to Blakey, knew Hoffa, Trafficante and Giancana, and to other organized crime leaders as well. Ruby was having union problems at his striptease clubs, and may have been seeking help from the bosses. But Blakey said "the ultimate meaning of these facts ... remains as yet indeterminate."

Another curious point came up during the testimony of Lewis McWillie, a friend of Ruby's who managed the Tropicana Club in Havana. Ruby visited McWillie in 1959, about the time Trafficante had been detained by Castro. Trafficante insisted Ruby never stopped to see him, and McWillie said last week that Ruby only stayed with him six days. But Ruby's tourist cards show that he entered Cuba Aug. 8, flew to Miami Sept. 11, back to Havana Sept. 12, then left the next day for New Orleans. All this prompted conjecture that Ruby was acting as a courier for someone; though McWillie, himself a courier for the Tropicana Club's owners, discounted the theory. He described Ruby as a "leech ... a hard fellow to get rid of," and said he was simply a strange character. Ruby's brother, Earl, who also testified last week, agreed. He said Jack had told him he shot Oswald only because "when I saw him ... with that smirk on his face as though he were happy he killed the President, I just lost control of myself."

The Cuba tie appeared again—this time with an Oswald twist—in the story of Antonio Veciana Blanch, the founder

\*Giancana was murdered in June 1975. Rosselli was murdered a year later, shortly after he had testified to the Senate intelligence committee about plots against Castro.



AP photo

Trafficante with lawyer, Earl Ruby (above): Tales of Cuba and the Mafia

## JARVIS GOES NATIONAL

Howard Jarvis, the rumbly 76-year-old godfather of California's Proposition 13, went on national TV last week to spread his tax-cut gospel. In a slick half-hour broadcast, aired by 137 independent stations, Jarvis urged 6 million viewers to join his new crusade against Federal spending. "We want to force politicians to cut the fat at the top and not the muscle at the bottom," he thundered.

The commercial, which cost \$590,000 to produce, promote and broadcast, had something for everyone: it started with a cartoon tracing man's battle with taxes back to dinosaur days, showed Jarvis fielding questions and carried endorsements by economist Milton Friedman, former Treasury Secretary William Simon and angry taxpayers in the streets. "It

fortified the troops," said Jarvis after watching the taped show. "This thing is getting so big I can't even comprehend it."

**Congress:** Jarvis's proposal, The American Tax Reduction Plan of 1979, would cut Federal income taxes \$50 billion and government spending \$100 billion over the next four years. The details can be left to Congress,

Jarvis on TV: A \$25 pitch



of a militant anti-Castro group called Alpha 66. Veciana told committee investigators that an American named Maurice Bishop directed all of his activities, including two plots to kill Castro. He recalled one meeting with Bishop and another man in the lobby of a Dallas office building in August 1963. After the assassination, Veciana identified the other man as Oswald. Bishop has yet to be located. But the committee says it has independent evidence that someone was using that name, and Blakey says Veciana's allegations "remain undiscredited."

**Blackout:** Oswald has also been associated with a second anti-Castro exile in Dallas, Sylvia Odio. She told the Warren Commission that in late September 1963, three men—one introduced as Leon Oswald—asked her to finance some anti-Castro activities. Odio's sister, Annie, recognized Oswald in the post-assassination pictures as one of the men who had come to their apartment. But Sylvia Odio has a history of blackouts under stress, and partly because her story conflicted with the Warren Commission's own reports that Oswald was on his way to Mexico when the Odio visit was supposed to have occurred, the commission played it down—even though the staff argued that it was credible. Blakey said his committee is going "much beyond" the Warren Commission in its own probe of Odio.

The missing link in last week's conspiracy tales is the lack of any contact—direct or indirect—between Oswald and organized crime. The overwhelming amount of evidence amassed by the House assassination committee in its month-long public probe supports the Warren Commission's basic finding that Oswald alone shot Kennedy. Still, the latest testimony gives new life to old doubts. Before it goes public with its

conclusions in December, the committee is considering one or two more days of hearings next month. Even then, loose ends seem certain to keep the controversy thriving. "Frankly, life itself contains loose ends," says committee chairman Louis Stokes. "Not every question that can be asked can be answered."

—SUSAN FRAKER with ELAINE SHANNON in Washington

## ALABAMA: After Wallace

Fob James hardly seemed a credible candidate for governor in Alabama's Democratic primary. He was a political novice in a field of pros, his campaign style was low-key in a state famous for hot-eyed emotion, and he had once been a Nixon Republican. But apparently he was just what the voters of Alabama were looking for to break sixteen years of political domination by Gov. George C. Wallace. Last week, James, 44, won the nomination, easily defeating Attorney General William Baxley, 37, who had been Wallace's quiet choice.

Wallace will retire from politics when his term expires in January because he cannot succeed himself as governor and he passed up a run at the Senate. One of his long-time foes, Howell Heflin, a former state Supreme Court justice, easily won the nomination for the

Senate seat of the retiring John Sparkman—a seat Wallace had considered trying to get for himself. Even when Wallace was not involved, voters seemed to want a fresh start. In the other Senate race, an unknown state senator, Donald Stewart, upset Maryon Allen, widow of Sen. James Allen, who died last summer. "It was a throw-the-rascals-out vote," said one Alabama editor, "which threw out some who weren't rascals."

Late last week, Jarvis had more than money thrown at him. While making a speech to newspaper editors in Portland, Ore., he was hit with a lemon meringue pie. After wiping his hair and glasses, he said: "Don't worry, folks. It doesn't bother me a bit."

**Voter Mood:** James started out barely visible in a big field. The "three B's"—Baxley, former Gov. Albert Brewer and Lt. Gov. Jere Beasley—all had been jockeying for years to succeed Wallace and were in the lead. But James, with his slogan, "It's time for a new beginning," had a better fix on the mood of the voters. While the B's savaged each other, James, an All-America halfback at Auburn in the 1950s and millionaire developer of plastic barbells, toured the state in a yellow school bus. Ignoring his opponents, he quietly stressed the need for more businesslike methods in state government and what he called a "war on illiteracy" in Alabama.

During his eighteen-month campaign, James was careful not to criticize Wallace directly. Instead, he talked vaguely about opening up the government to the people. But in the final stage, James was a good deal more direct. It was time, he told a group of supporters, "to put behind forever the negative prejudices of the past." With fresh faces in all the state's top offices, Alabama has firmly closed out the Wallace era.

James: Barbell millionaire

