

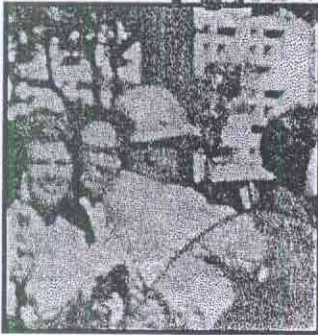
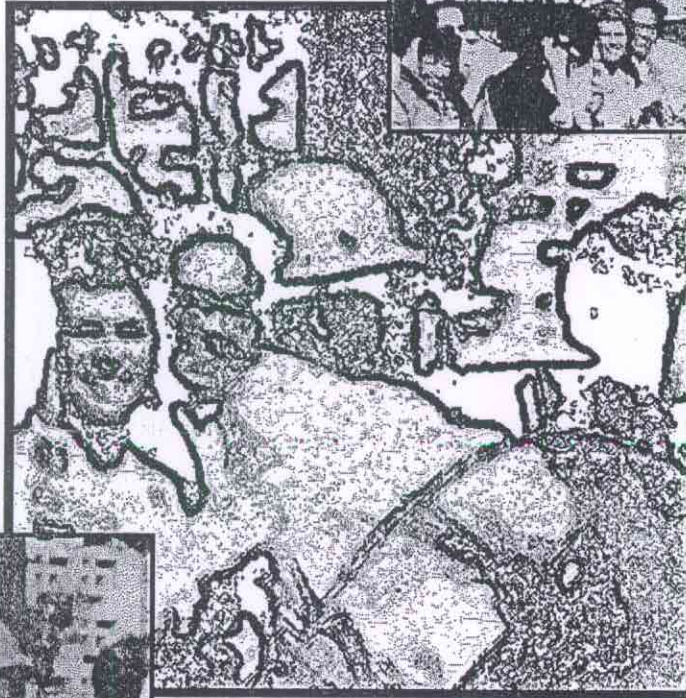
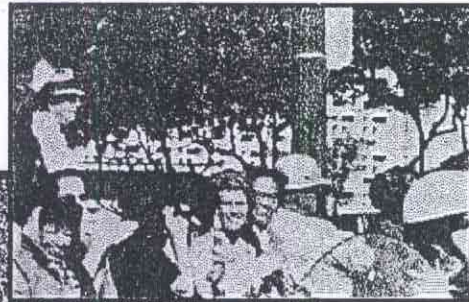
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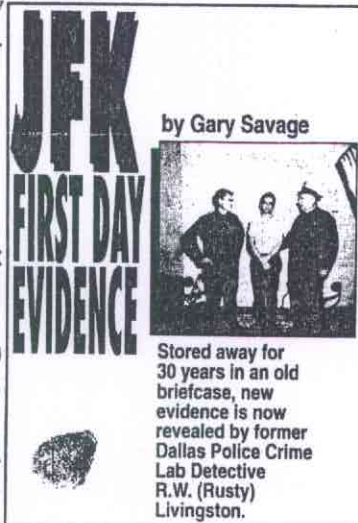
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An Open Letter to the JFK
Assassination Research Community
By Tom DeVries

Before 1987, I had not read a single book on the assassination of John Kennedy. In fact I wasn't interested in the subject until about 1984 when I first saw the documentary "The Plot to Kill the President" based on the book of the same name by Robert Blakey and Richard Billings. That presentation both intrigued and confused me. Eventually it propelled me into an investigation. It convinced me that there was more to the story than what I had been told.

In 1989 I began to study the subject and have finished a book on the subject. I have also examined a wide variety of other source material.

The majority of JFK assassination researchers have been involved in the noble pursuit since day one, or relatively soon thereafter. Perhaps my point of view provides a useful focus for assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the research community. Utho Shannon and Oliver Stone, men who have done important work on the JFK assassination, began studying it around the same time I did.

I have often suspected that some authors and researchers ignore or dismiss certain aspects of the evidence in order to gain greater credibility for their own work in a limited area. For example, David Lifton has dismissed as inconsequential the umbrella man, the mysterious death syndrome, and the many Oswald impersonations. His body alteration theory appears to be bizarre, although I certainly do not dismiss it. But perhaps if he discredits other theories that the establishment and major media consider to be crazy (the reasoning goes), then his idea might be given more credence because of his supposed discernment. His theory did receive wide media coverage soon after publication of his book *Best Evidence* in 1980.

Anthony Summers stated in *Conspiracy* that despite all his cited evidence to the contrary, he believes that the backyard photos of Oswald "are probably genuine."¹² At the 1993 Chicago conference he offered his

opinion that Oswald had poor command of the Russian language (based on his interviews of some Russians) and Gus Russo stated that Oswald was probably an "unstable individual."

I found it curious that at the 1992 and 1993 Chicago symposiums, not a single presenter or panelist brought up the research of Jack White. His analysis of the Oswald exhumation evidence and his compelling argument that the photos of Oswald are actually split face composites seems to me to be very important. If there are problems with White's research, then someone ought to demonstrate what they are.

Toward the end of the 1993 conference, I found myself riding the Bismark Hotel elevator with David Lifton. I knew he was working on a book about Oswald

and I was curious to see what he had to say about the "fact" of Oswald's assassination. I don't recall his opinion on the subject, but I do recall his opinion on the "fact" of Oswald's assassination.

Perhaps the desire of researchers and journalists to establish credibility is so great that many have taken extremely cautious stands on various issues in order to advance a limited agenda. The attitudes that journalist Robert Sam Anson projects in his article on Oliver Stone's *JFK* in the November 1991 issue of *Equinox* stand in apparent contrast to his statements pointing to a high-level conspiracy broadcast on the Ron Reagan Show during the same month.¹³ Sure Garrison and Stone were easy targets. But was Anson gauging how to approach that article by what he knew the editors would allow?

I myself was once guilty of doing just that. When asked to review *Case Closed* for my local newspaper, *The Grand Rapids Press*, I wanted to say only that it was the most deceitful book I had ever read. But I stopped somewhat short of leaving that impression in order to maintain credibility in the public eye and to ensure that the review and future reviews made it to print.

Fearl Gladstone's letter to the editor in the May 1994 issue of *The Fourth Decade* states that Anthony Summers, Gus Russo, and Josiah Thompson all stated during the 1993 Chicago symposium that they now believed Oswald acted alone. I shared their disappointment with the performances delivered by these three individuals. However, although I am not a

disadvantage of having only my memory for source material, I will go on record stating that none of these three men suggested that he now believes Oswald acted alone. Rather, I understood each of them to imply that he did not want to rule out Oswald being involved in the shooting. The ambience created by these presentations was that of hedging and equivocation.

New students of the assassination, on fire with massive evidence that elements of our government framed Oswald and covered it up, have to wonder why there is this strange gasping at an apparent credibility balloon. It seems to emanate less from care for scholastic or intellectual honesty and excellence than from a fear of the reactions they will elicit from others. Perhaps bitter rivalries have fueled fear of criticism leading to over-caution.

I am not arguing that the research community is disappointed or otherwise impoverished. It contains much information that makes many misstatements. The research community needs more careful researchers and writers like Sylvia Meagher, Peter Dale Scott, and Paul Hoch. But I have found that many researchers are anxious to rule out ideas because they contain speculation. It would often be wise to state that although we presently don't know something with certainty because the evidence has been tampered with by its custodians, there are clear patterns in both the evidence and its treatment by those custodians which lead to certain unavoidable conclusions. In short, it comes down to a question of "the weight of the evidence," and what that shows "beyond a reasonable doubt." I believe it shows that Oswald was framed.

A new generation of JFK assassination students is taking root, growing largely through the efforts of teachers, professors, and students in our high schools, colleges, and universities. This fact can be largely attributed to Oliver Stone's JFK (whose primary hypothesis is that Oswald was framed) and the proliferation of new and reprinted books appearing in its wake. This new generation of students will at some point take the mantle from first generation researchers. Of course there will forever be active debate about myriad aspects of the case. But perhaps the new generation can work to rid the research community of its bitter rivalries. Perhaps the "New Guard" will focus

on areas of agreement, and disagreements over minutiae will be discussed professionally.

A true student of the assassination studies all aspects of the case and assimilates evidence into a big picture. If primary research has revealed, or were to reveal, the entire truth about the JFK assassination conspiracy, would it be accepted as such by the media, the public, or the research community? Not likely. More than anything else, the case needs to attract new students through cohesive presentations of the evidence. Researchers have sometimes tended toward myopia by focusing on their own limited bailiwick. They have too often felt threatened by the research of others. In this sometimes hostile environment, dissension has grown as we each grope at a different part of the elephant.

Let us start by agreeing on the basic elements of the case: the evidence (including the assassination of Oswald) is credible and the structure of the conspiracy is supported by evidence, records, and witness testimony.

1. The U.S. Government never intended to investigate this crime honestly and the major media has grown complicit with the deceit.
2. Lee Harvey Oswald was manipulated by people connected with U.S. Intelligence. There is a mountain of evidence proving that he was impersonated and framed for the assassination in such a way as to falsely implicate pro-Castro communists and others. Our government was complicit with the crime and has attempted to cover it up by falsifying evidence. They are therefore responsible for the apparent impossibility of knowing "the whole truth."³

If the CIA had set out to create weakness by division and dissension within the research community, they could not have succeeded more than we have at that dubious goal. It cannot be overstated that the fault for the failure to solve the case lies not with the researchers, but rather with the custodians of the evidence.

Yet researchers continue to cast stones because of different interpretations of evidence. Certainly there has been much purposeful disinformation (for example: Blakey, Epstein, Jack Anderson, MacDonald's Appointment in Dallas, and virtually all major media assassination coverage). But hopefully, as new students read up to a dozen books representing a good

cross-section of the literature, it becomes apparent that these disinformation theories simply don't make sense. Likewise, as a student reads more and more, I believe he or she should be able to sort much of the good information from the bad. But "sorting it out," which has become an obsession with some researchers, has often yielded little fruit primarily because the web of deceit has been too tightly tangled.

Which brings me to James Folliard's letter regarding COFA and AAR and Harrison Livingstone's response, both published in the July 1994 issue of *The Investigator*. The attitudes of Mr. Livingstone, in his "Manifesto" (*The Investigator*, May 1994), in his books, are characterized by "run and hide" and "horror."⁶ The "run and hide" is a dedicated reluctance to face the facts of the assassination clearly and honestly. The "horror" is a lack of proper writing syntax. Additionally, he has an apparent chip on his shoulder and ego on his sleeve, a smack of paranoia and a Christ complex. His comments regarding Dr. Cyril Wecht, John Newman, Mary Ferrell, Robert Creden, Harold Weisberg and others are simply out of bounds.⁷ He goes beyond professional criticism in stating that these researchers have immoral personal motives which supersede establishing truth regarding the JFK assassination.

In most fields of research such writing would probably be censured. Having just finished several books on the JFK assassination which focus on the probable hypno-programming of Sirhan Sirhan, I found myself wondering if Livingstone has perhaps been hypno-programmed to keep the research community self-destructive. It is indeed ironic that he believes he is attempting to save us from self-destruction.

To comment on more than several of Livingstone's accusations would take too much space. I found one example from his letter somewhat amusing. He states that "if these people plan to hold press conferences... while closing me and many others out, then they have to be fought..." A vivid image came to mind of Harrison Livingstone, official press correspondent for the AAR, charming the press with his eloquence, level-headedness, and complete command of all aspects of the evidence. Right.

Another accusation by Livingstone deserves comment because it demonstrates that he would rather

pick a fight than find common ground. He states critically that he has never heard John Newman state that there was a conspiracy in the JFK assassination. But I have. At the 1993 symposium in Sudbury, Ontario, as part of a panel responding to the question "was there a conspiracy...," Newman stated, "Hell yes!" and spent five minutes explaining why.

Livingstone's implication that that question should have been dealt with in Newman's JFK and Vietnam is ridiculous. It shows that he either has no idea of scholastic precedents or is grasping at straws in doing exactly what he has accused Harold Weisberg of doing, criticizing for the sake of criticizing.⁸

It seems to me that the man who most needs to be investigated (Livingstone) is the JFK assassination investigator who has written, since the assassination, a book on "run and hide" and "horror" and "self-righteousness" and "conspiracy" and "evidence" or "we can claim leadership." Researchers tend to be independent thinkers. I certainly have nothing against joining an organization or against anyone else involved with AAR. But how many readers could imagine joining an organization organized by Livingstone? Regardless of whether they are based in truth (I believe most of them are not) Livingstone's accusations alienate people because of the way they are stated.

The attitudes that he projects do a disservice to the assassination research community. The medical evidence is very important. But Livingstone focuses on it to the apparent exclusion of many other extremely important aspects of the case. There is far more to this case than his confusing paragraphs about allegedly forged autopsy X-rays and photographs which do not agree with each other.

Students have learned and will learn much from the research of Livingstone and from the research and writing of other veteran researchers. But someone needs to restate and assimilate a variety of ideas in clear and concise ways in order to enhance and increase the interest of new students. Perhaps as the 40th anniversary of the assassination approaches, new students will help to present a collective alternative to both the disinformation the major media continue to offer the public, and the prevalence of dissension and animosity in the research. (see OPEN p. 29)

Author Of High Treason Speaks Out

COPA and the JFK Assassination Records Review Board

By Harrison E. Livingstone

After the Coalition On Political Assassinations played to the crowds in Washington at their October meeting, the real action began the next day, when nearly all the tourists and other participants at the COPA show meeting had left town. The JFK Assassination Records Review Board met at the National Archives. This was the meeting that really mattered, and it was too late for the visitors to rebook their flights.

What we ended up with was a "packed" meeting where the witnesses at the hearing were nearly all representatives of COPA with no alternative views. This stacked deck presented a program of action to the Board that would run them ragged between Tel Aviv, Havana, Moscow, and South America attempting to get foreign records that might throw some light on the assassination. There was no indication that perhaps the case had been broken and their work was right under their noses, if they could but see it.

The other half of the co-option a misdirection of this Presidentially appointed board was the attempt best typified by John Newman's constant mention of the CIA, Lee Harvey Oswald, and his attempt to track down records there. We have been hearing about this problem for decades. Never do we hear from Newman and the others -- and Newman just retired from a lifetime career in Army Intelligence --

about Military or ONI records of Oswald. After all, that is who Oswald really worked for. But attention was directed the other way, away from Bethesda Naval Hospital and all records that might relate to those at the autopsy.

It became apparent that COPA was monopolizing the Board with many false trails intended to absorb the money and time of the Board -- an old ploy in Washington of which the most famous recent example is the HSCA, which had dumped on it countless false leads leading nowhere, by the "critics." Newman's testimony triggered a mass exodus from the hearing of the depressed and disillusioned audience, led by Anna Marie Kuhns-Walko and Deanie Richards, who are accustomed to telling it like it is.

"This is a farce," Anna Marie said loud enough for everyone to hear as she stormed from the meeting. Mark Zaid and Charles Sanders, both fresh out of law school and intent on making their mark, tied up the place in a legal show that led nowhere but sucked up a lot of time. It could have been printed and inserted in the record instead.

John Judge set the tone when he loudly announced that "I believe that the Joint Chiefs killed President Kennedy!" That wild statement along with the equally damaging statements secreted in the presentations of the other COPA

hierarchy insured the permanent ruin of their credibility in the public record. Just as no news coverage was made public of COPA's extravaganza, there was none for the ARRB. Why should there be?

These people are so inexperienced in Washington's ways that they shot themselves in the foot once again. Or are they so inexperienced? I felt that we were looking at a sophisticated intelligence operation intended to pull the wool over the eyes of the innocent history professors charged with the collection of assassination records, who might even be able to accomplish some actual investigation, since they have the subpoena power.

When the COPA participants had finished speaking, they left, as though it was over. They were too busy to hear anyone but themselves, as we all know. Little did they imagine what was to come that nearly erased their efforts on the spot.

But just what powers does the Board have? And when are they scheduled to expire? The Board was originally planned to be two years in length, which has almost expired, and this was only their *first* public hearing. "The two prime responsibilities of the Board are to identify and secure all records relating to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, and to review the decisions of Federal agencies to (see COPA on p. 20)

So we are left with a suspicious, but inconclusive possibility, that one or more pro-Castro Cubans might have been involved in the assassination of JFK, with or without Lee Harvey Oswald's knowledge and participation. Even though the CIA had informed the FBI about the observation of a Cuban scientist at the Havana Airport described earlier, on a routing sheet that accompanied the document, someone at the CIA had scrawled the following comment: "I'd let this die its natural death as the FBI is doing." The CIA's own source in Cuba had, in fact, died by then.⁷

As for Casas, no attempt had apparently been made to determine why he had travelled to the U.S., why he happened to be in Dallas on November 22, 1963, why he had abruptly returned to Cuba with apparent assistance that day, why he had more money than ever before, what had happened to him. Presumably the CIA was aware of the CIA documents cited by Henri Zibel, but the information was made to Casas by the CIA informant at the Warren Commission, who was informed by the CIA about this Cuban mission.

Peter R. Whitson, 1949-1909 Saiton Road, Abbotsford, BC V2S 5K6

NOTES

1. *Coincidence or Conspiracy?* (Zebra Books: N.Y.), Bernard Fensterwald (and Michael Weiner), 1977, pp. 494-5. It should be noted that the authors describe the man as being a twenty-three-year-old "Cuban-American", with connections to the Tampa, Florida, Fair Play For Cuba Committee, who might have been involved in the assassination, according to a CIA source. However, this description clearly applies to Gilberto Policarpo Lopez, whose suspicious movements are described in detail in *The Final Assassination Report* (Bantam Books: N.Y.), pp. 136-141.
2. *The Final Assassination Report* (Bantam Books: N.Y.), 1979, p. 136. Note: the Cubana Airline flight is incorrectly stated as having taken place on November 23, 1963, but the report referred to in the footnotes on p. 695 gives the correct date of November 22, 1963.
3. *Reasonable Doubt* (Henry Holt and Co.: N.Y.), Henry Hunt, 1985, pp. 421-3.
4. I had contacted Edmunds in the course of trying to locate another MACLEAN'S writer named Jon Ruddy related to my Richard Giesbrecht research, and through Edmunds was successful. Ruddy died earlier this year in Mexico, as a result of an accident.
5. "The Great Cuban Spy Caper" (Part One) by William Milne as told to Barbara Moon, MACLEAN'S, February 22, 1964, pp. 7-8, 35-42 and "The Great Cuban Spy Caper" (Part Two), MACLEAN'S, March 7, 1964, pp. 24-25, 39-45. Also, *New York Times*, November 24, 1963, p. 25, and *NYT*, December 11, 1963, p. 11.
6. "Airlines to Avoid: Cubana" by Alan Edmunds, sent to me on January 22, 1990; it was to be published in a Canadian travel magazine, although I don't know if it ever was.
7. *Reasonable Doubt*, p. 423.

(OPEN continued from p. 14)
research field.

The research community needs unity. If AAR and COPA are going to divide the field, what have we gained? But if these two organizations must exist as two and not as one, then it should be as sister organizations which at least extend the protocol of professional courtesy.

Tom DeVries, 805 Keadalwood N.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49505

NOTES

1. Tape of KEX radio with Lifton and "Ed", Portland, Oregon, 1981.
2. Anthony Summers, *Conspiracy*, (Paragon House, 1989), p. 207.
3. This presentation was a joy to watch for the simple reason that the participants, Ansch, David Lifton, Carl Oglesby, and Robert Groden all presented what appeared to be a "united front" in their discussion of the evidence. At the very least, they refrained from arguing.
4. Zibel is careful to point out that he is not a "researcher." His work attempts to link LBJ to the orchestration of the assassination, but it succeeds only in providing circumstantial evidence that LBJ had foreknowledge and was complicit with the plot.
5. This point is grounded in the fact that the falsification of evidence is in itself evidence.
6. ... To quote a phrase from a letter by a researcher to me before Livingstone's letter appeared.
7. See Livingstone's *Killing The Truth*, (Carroll & Gost, 1992), Chapter 13.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 376-7.

(COPA continued from p. 15)

postpone the release of assassination records. The statement was handed out by their Executive Director, Dave Marwell.

This was their first public hearing and they were still trying to define the meaning of an "assassination record," the stated purpose of the hearing. Telling us that the Joint Chiefs killed the President does not address their purpose, and in fact totally discredits the COPA board. Har-DiEugenio (who did not testify) is one who screams that the CIA killed JFK, a line parroted by numerous others at COPA looking for an easy scapegoat, or at least implying this, directing everyone at the CIA, who eat these people for breakfast. In case you didn't hear or don't read *Compuserve*, Gus Russo was in fact present at a meeting of Colby and other CIA types discussing the best ways to handle COPA and their slanders. Enormous power lined up against this ship of fools the moment they left the dock. They were sinking before they got under way.

The transcript of their meeting should be studied by those who are interested in the (see COPA p. 12)

HARRISON
EDWARD
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HIGH TREASON 2

KILLING
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KILLING KENNEDY
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HARRISON EDWARD LIVINGSTONE is the author of *High Treason*, *High Treason 2*, and *Killing the Truth*. He has long led the investigation into the murder of JFK. He lives in Baltimore.

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