

CHAPTER 13

"VOX POPULI"

Sometimes I think it's a shame
When I get feeling better
When I'm feeling no pain.*

Time, and a scrupulous attention to regularity, would some day restore the proper equilibrium, so long as the free institutions survived. And scrupulous they would be. The story of the lone disaffected assassin was to be presented to the nation exactly as it had been planned, in all its apparent absurdity. Time would find that out, and in the meantime, real democratic government would move forward.

So desirous of avoiding doubtful conflict had the survivors been that even any hint of overt retaliation against the killers was avoided.

Greer had been age 54 at the time, and Kellerman, 48. They were allowed to play out the balance of their now-miserable careers. A most difficult charade of normalcy was maintained. That no one was purged may strike an observer as curious. But of course, this uncommon reaction was in defence of democratic government. History has taught that despots respond to dangerous provocation with violence of their own; but actions by democrats to popular government are historically rare.**

With the focused interest of so many doubting citizens upon every aspect of this case, a telling purge by the new administration of those known guilty Secret Service agents would only once again have inflamed passions better left cooled. Even several of the other agents who had slipped out the night before the shooting to avail themselves of some Dallas hospitality, contrary to regulation, went unpunished. According to the Warren Commission:

*Gordon Lightfoot, "Sundown"

**A few days after the formation of the Warren Commission, the chief justice was asked when the facts about the assassination would be made known. Replied Warren, "You may never get the truth in your lifetime, and I mean that seriously . . . we will preserve the record." To most theorists of successful democratic government, the principle of orderly constitutional succession is paramount. The chief justice of the Supreme Court was certainly, if he was nothing else, a student of the Constitution.

Chief Rowley testified that under ordinary circumstances he would have taken disciplinary action against those agents who had been drinking in clear violation of the regulation. However, he felt that any disciplinary action might have given rise to an inference that the violation of the regulation had contributed to the tragic events of November 22. Since he was convinced that this was not the case, he believed that it would be unfair to the agents and their families to take explicit disciplinary measures. (1)

Neither Greer nor Kellerman accompanied their fellow agents that night.

Greer and Kellerman both lied when they said the car was constantly moving 9 to 12 miles an hour, when in fact is almost stopped. Greer lied when he said he followed the police to the hospital, when in fact he got there first, the limousine being filmed taking the lead. He never radioed ahead for help, which he and Kellerman were both equipped and trained to do. He lied when he said he only turned around in the car once, when in fact the Zapruder film shows that he turned three times, each at the exact instance when one of his passengers sustained a wound. Then, he never turned around again. He ducked down in front when the loyal agent Landis shot back, missing through the windshield. Many years later, Greer lied to the HSCA when he told them he had maintained "constant vigilance" of the President's body, when in fact he had earlier stated that he "didn't know" how it got into Bethesda. It had been Greer to whom the President's clothing had been delivered by a Dallas nurse, that later disclosed false holes. Mrs. Kennedy had insisted that he drive, with Kellerman beside him, as they had been earlier, and made to do again, in the ambulance from Andrews Air Force Base to Bethesda hospital. The Presidential chauffeur drove Mrs. Kennedy to her husband's grave. "I want them," she had said earlier, "to see what they have done."

Greer's testimony that the car never slowed was supported only by that of his cohort Kellerman. It was this man who testified that the President reached back over his shoulder, and said "I'm hit . . . get me to a hospital," which is pure fantasy. Kellerman also said that when he turned back to look (which he did) he "observed President Kennedy with his left hand in back of him appearing to be reaching to a point on his right shoulder". This, too, was an outright lie, proffered by Kellerman solely to support the false story of a shot in the back. Kellerman said he radioed the alert to other loyal secret service agents, and Manchester said he was "mistaken." No-one else heard the broadcast. Neither Kellerman nor Greer radioed ahead to Parkland Hospital to

alert them to be ready for the wounded president. Kellerman never left his seat in the front of the car. He made no move to help the wounded president, nor his wife, or Governor Connally, or even fellow-agent Clint Hill, perched perilously on the back of the escaping car. Nor did he react to Mrs. Kennedy, her position for a time equally precarious. He never even looked at her. This was the same Mr. Kellerman described by William Manchester as "particularly active by nature."

It was Kellerman who issued orders at the hospital to guard the car from photographers, to have the vehicle immediately washed, and to have it covered with the black top.

Then, the car escaped the Dallas police, and disappeared into the Secret Service basement garage, never to be properly analyzed.

It had been the Secret Service who retrieved Connally's clothes and had them dry-cleaned, obliterating the real fact of the close shot, and Kellerman who had forced his way at gun point out of the Hospital with the dead president's corpse. It was to Roy Kellerman that were surrendered the troubling autopsy photos and x-rays. One roll of film had been completely destroyed; others disappeared, and some were altered or faked. FBI agents Siebert and O'Neill followed the two of them around the hospital, later interviewed them, and provided the only known physical description of Mr. Greer. The only people continuously with the President's body during the whole of the important time when the corpse was violated were Kellerman and Greer. Kellerman was the only layman to testify about the location of the small puncture-wound in the hairline of the back of the Presidents' head. It wasn't there when the Dallas doctors had seen the real results of the shots fired by William Greer.

The grotesque desecration of Kennedy's corpse rendered all subsequent analysis without value, and the real wounds he sustained, accurately described only at Dallas. There had been a small wound of entry in the throat from Greer's first shot, and the massive exit wound in the right rear, which had entered "the temple . . . the right temple." The source was neither behind, or from high to the right front on the Grassy Knoll. The real wound ballistics coincide only with Greer's location in the front of the car. When he fired three shots, the smell of the gun powder hung in the street, and its pungent odour was still on the car at Parkland hospital.

Of course, there should have been only one deadly-quick fatal shot, on the empty street of a hostile city: on Houston Street, front to back as the car approached the "sniper's nest" on the sixth floor of the southeast corner

of the TSBD. No pictures, and really no clues, would have been found. There wasn't much to it. Simply the bullet, the useless murder weapon of a nut with a clear shot at the approaching car, an I.D. card and a mail-order coupon. Case closed. And so it would have been, with Oswald's secret finally sent to the grave by the trapped Jack Ruby. Had the two armed men reported behind the Book Building succeeded in confronting Oswald "while escaping", Ruby would not have been needed. But by delay, a lot went wrong with the plan.

For without all the confounding, confusing and fanciful reconstructions that emerged when those simple pieces tried to explain all four real shots, there would remain almost nothing to fuel speculation of dastardly deeds done. That can never be said for any variation of a planned triangulated crossfire.* And as events have since shown, the official rendering, delivered pretty much as the conspiracy constructed it, could not succeed in containing Oswald, whose ghost broke free and spooked people to further investigation and sinister associations. Thus entered the Cubans, the Mafioso gun-runners, and the sometime scurrilous CIA. They were never part of the plan.

And the many strange results in the real evidence - the single-bullet theory, the tragic slaying of Officer Tippit, the apparently botched autopsy, and the consequent confounding and confusing debate on the real meaning of the medical evidence, - ought never to have occurred. The deduced evidence was simple, and had the plan worked, the deductions of the Dallas Police would have been conclusive. There would never even have been a "Presidents Commission of Inquiry." And maybe no camera would have recorded Mrs. Kennedy trying to escape the car.

But Greer delayed and then he almost missed. Kennedy was not dead, and the unplanned and now necessary additional gunfire caused almost all the episodes that led to suspicion, to further investigation, and to many strange destinations. With the multitude of Oswald's operational associations, that was almost inevitable. Thus arose a "vast" conspiracy.

A few knew the real source of the shots; many were able to surmise the motivating force, and if they didn't know the mechanics, it led to the same point. No good could come from disputing the Oswald story if the authors could

*The proof of the pudding, it may here be said, lies in the proliferation of fanciful reconstructions that have since attempted to accommodate the confusing facts, as though they had all been planned.

not be apprehended, and the conclusion was that they couldn't be. Not safely. Not with certainty. Not without risk of real and horrible civil disruption. The killers would have been ready for that, and they were.

In response to orders from the secretary of defense, it was discovered that the whole well-oiled military machine had "inexplicably clanked to a halt." The survivors declined a potentially explosive contest, and instead went on with the business of public government. What else may one ask of the shattered grief-stricken people caught in such circumstances? Kennedy's advisors were urbane, scholarly, civilized people, and the real violence that composes much of American civilization really alien to them. They could play hardball politics with the best, but murdering the opponent was a notion that never occurred to them as an option. Being unable to imagine it themselves as an allowable expedient, the Kennedy team were unprepared, inexperienced, and tragically inactive in response to its use against them.

This cultural issue remains one of significance. In the theory of democratic politics, differing views are hotly contested, and the real intellectual merits of competing policies to be decided by the electorate. "Vox populi; Vox dei".* Since, the threat of extinguishment became a vile and disturbing factor.

But observing the on-going process of American politics in the years since, in spite of the many criminal activities that have infected it, must give some solace to those few knowledgeable that theirs was the wiser decision. You can't kill everybody that stands in opposition, and the electoral process continued. The urge to speak out with the truth was probably stronger initially than it was subsequently, as the limited effect of one man's death could be seen over time. The republic still functioned, notwithstanding this perversity. By silence, it was rendered merely murder, and everything else remained. In so doing, it became only a story of the death of a President. By a failed counter-strike the coup d'etat that some have alleged this to be, may well have occurred.

Criticism of the realists had been strong, and that portion of the public that disbelieved the official verdict outraged that their government would lie to them.

The glib assumption that the truth could have been told in the midst of the drama needs to be examined without such unctuousness. All focus had been in discovering the assassins, as though that alone was the thing of

*"The voice of the people is the voice of god."