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Bryan Woolley / *Who's buried in*

UNTIL ROBERT Oswald got his temporary restraining-order Thursday, medical examiners and funeral directors were gearing up to answer the question that has intrigued us all for so long. Who the heck is buried in Lee Harvey Oswald's grave?

Almost 17 years ago, when a casket was buried there, everybody assumed Lee Harvey Oswald was in it. But we assumed a lot of things in 1963. We assumed that Oswald shot John Kennedy, and that Jack Ruby shot Oswald, and that Kennedy was buried in Arlington National Cemetery, and that Oswald was buried in the Rose Hill Cemetery in Fort Worth.

We assumed these things because the FBI said so, the Secret Service said so, the Dallas Police Department said so, the doctors who performed the autopsies said so, the Warren Commission said so. We even saw Jack Ruby shoot Lee Harvey Oswald on TV. We believed that's what we were seeing, anyway, because the networks said that's what it was. And a jury in Dallas decided that Ruby shot Oswald and sentenced him to the electric chair, but his conviction was reversed and he reportedly died of cancer while awaiting a new trial. We assumed the man shot by Oswald was really Kennedy,



and that the man who was said to be Oswald was really Oswald, and that the man who shot him was really Ruby, and that all these people were really buried. We assumed the man said to be J. D. Tippitt, who was said to be a Dallas policeman, also was shot by the man said to be Oswald, and that he also was buried.

How naive we were.

WE'VE LEARNED since then that some people in government tell lies. Therefore, isn't it reasonable to assume that all people in government tell lies? And if they tell lies sometimes, isn't it reasonable to assume they lie all the time? Therefore, isn't it reasonable to assume that everything we were told about Kennedy and Oswald and Ruby and Tippitt was a lie?

We've read enough spy novels to know things as big as presidential assassinations aren't done by warehouse laborers and nightclub proprietors, anyway. They're done by the Big Boys. And who are the Big Boys? They're the Russians. They're the Cubans. They're the Mafia. They're the Teamsters. They're the wealthy Dallas right-wing lunatics. They're the CIA and the FBI. Hell, maybe they're Lyndon Johnson.

All these possibilities and other possibilities and various combinations of the possibilities have sold a lot of books and magazines since 1963. The U. S. House of Representatives was persuaded to appoint a special committee to investigate all the possibilities, but the

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committee did only half the job. It reported the assassination may well have been a conspiracy, but it didn't tell us who the conspirators might have been. Or maybe it was lying.

But for a while Thursday, we were about to get down to the nitty-gritty. We were going to dig up Oswald. Or whomever, if anyone, is in his grave.

The exhumation was the idea of Michael Eddowes, a British lawyer and writer who is said to have devoted 16 years to his investigation of the alleged Kennedy assassination. He has noticed some discrepancies in the Oswald statistics. While Oswald's Marine Corps record states his height as 5-foot-11, the autopsy report lists it as 5-foot-9. The report also doesn't mention a scar that Oswald is said to have had behind his ear from a childhood mastoid operation.

Could this mean that the Marine Corps or the medical examiner measured Oswald wrong? Does it mean the scar was overlooked by the medical examiner?

That's a very uninteresting possibility. Eddowes thinks it more plausible that the body in Oswald's grave — assuming there is one — is that of a Soviet intelligence agent who switched identities with the real Oswald in Russia and came to this country and killed Kennedy. Meanwhile, the real Oswald — assuming there was one — "disappeared" in Russia. Maybe he's buried in the grave of some Russian spy.

OKAY. SUPPOSE Robert Oswald loses his case when it comes up for a hearing next week and the restraining order is removed and the body — assuming there is one — is exhumed, and Oswald's dental records match its teeth, and the evidence of the mastoid operation is there, and the body is as long as Oswald was supposed to be. Will we have to admit that the man in Oswald's grave is Oswald?

Not necessarily. Wouldn't it make more sense to conclude that the FBI or the CIA or the Marines swiped the real Oswald's medical records and substituted those of whoever the guy in the grave is? And why would they do that? Because they were in on the conspiracy, of course.

On the other hand, if it turns out that the guy in the grave doesn't match the records, why assume that he's some lowly Russian spy? Maybe it's Leon Trotsky. Nobody has seen him lately. Or Amelia Earhart. Or Judge Crater. Or Jimmy Hoffa.

And if Oswald isn't buried in Oswald's grave, where the heck is he? Why should we believe he simply "disappeared" in Russia? It's more likely he's impersonating a KGB agent for the FBI? Or playing baseball in Cuba? Or running a string of hookers for the Mafia in New Orleans? Hey, maybe he's buried in Jack Ruby's grave.

That's the neat thing about conspiracies. Give them a little push and they'll go on forever.