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122

# People

weekly

The Osmonds  
Mom & Pop

At home  
with Mailer

Sleuths who  
won't accept  
the JFK verdict

## BOB DYLAN

'I don't consider  
myself reclusive  
exclusive maybe'





Norman Mailer



Evonne Goolagong



Dick Gregory

# People weekly

November 10, 1975

Vol. 4 No. 19

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# UP FRONT

## DID ONE MAN WITH ONE GUN KILL JOHN F. KENNEDY? EIGHT SKEPTICS WHO SAY NO



### >Dick Gregory sees conspiracy everywhere

"At first, it never dawned on me that the assassination was a conspiracy," admits comedian-cum-social critic Dick Gregory. "Then I got to thinking." What troubled him especially was his memory of a White House reception during which he had reached out to touch President Kennedy. "One minute everybody's talkin' and havin' fun," he says. "The next minute they're cops. Cocktail glasses fell out of their hands and they grabbed me. If they can give the President this much protection at home, they ought to be able to protect him in the streets."

Starting from such trifling conclusions, Gregory, now 43 and one of the stellar attractions on the lucrative college lecture circuit, has tailored conspiracy theories of monstrous proportions. He believes the U.S. is threatened by a cabal which may be responsible not only for the murders of President Kennedy and his brother Robert, but for the shootings of George Wallace, Malcolm X and the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Gregory even suspects that President Ford's recent encounters with would-be assassins Moore and Fromme in California—and, as farfetched as it sounds, his auto accident in Hartford, Conn. ("It can't be that easy to hit a President's car")—are part of the same sinister sequence. "I believe we're in the midst of a clandestine overthrow," he says. "I think it's by a select group of rich, rich aristocrats on the East Coast, and everything the CIA is doing is under their orders." As for the Kennedy family's distaste for reopening the assassination investigation, Gregory says, "I



think they're being held under black-mail."

A tireless traveler, Gregory delivers his message to some 300 college campuses a year, charging from \$1,000 to \$1,500 a lecture. "I could get \$5,000," he says, "but if you keep the price where everybody can get you, you can work lots more schools." Gregory is obviously well off. He moved from Chicago in 1972, and now lives with his

wife, Lillian, and their 10 children—aged 2 to 16—on the family's 400-acre estate in Plymouth, Mass. Yet he shows no sign of slowing down. A vegetarian, Gregory recently began a fast that will end, he says, only when the Senate votes to look into the assassination. "If they reopen it," he says, "they will get the documents that have been hidden. Then it's a whole new ball game." □

On the afternoon of Nov. 22, 1963, John F. Kennedy, 35th president of the United States, was shot and killed in the motorcade through the streets of Dallas. Ten months later, a presidential commission, appointed by Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy and headed by Chief Justice Earl Warren, delivered its report on the assassination. The Warren Commission's verdict: One man, Lee Harvey Oswald, had shot and killed Kennedy.

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## vAn expert dissects the Zapruder film

Once Robert Groden was just another quirky collector of records, home movies and comic books. Then in 1965 someone—he won't say who—brought the young specialist in optical effects a copy of the most devastating home movie of all: a bootlegged print of the shocking Zapruder footage of President Kennedy's assassination. Groden

looked at it once, then put it in a bank vault. "My reaction to the film was shock and horror," he explains. "I was afraid to look at it again."

Three years later Groden's fascination won out, and he retrieved the film to watch it again. After that, as it has for so many students of Dallas 1963, JFK's murder became his obsession.

Poring over the film with an expert's eye, Groden, now 29, sank much of his earnings into costly enlargements and slides and a personal collection of some 2,000 photographs of the events surrounding the assassination. (He is seen at left with a projected blow-up of Lee Harvey Oswald.) Last March, in an effort to rekindle interest in the Kennedy killing, he allowed his technically improved version of the film to be shown on national TV. He also distributed 24 copies of the film at no charge to Warren Commission critics. A disbeliever in the Warren Report ("It has more holes than Carter's got pills"), he deduces that Kennedy was fired on by at least four gunmen—none of them Lee Oswald.

Now living in a modest home (two cemeteries are on his block) in Hopelawn, N.J. with his wife, Christine, and their 2-year-old son, Groden quit his job as a photographer last March to devote full time to his work on the assassination. But if the case is not officially reopened within a year, he will abandon his efforts. "Almost all major Warren Commission critics wind up in the poorhouse sooner or later," he observes. "The bank is empty, and we have another baby on the way." □



CONTINUED



## ▲A reporter skewers the liberal press

**R**obert Sam Anson was only 18, a freshman at Notre Dame, when President Kennedy was killed. Two days later, he and friends cheered when they saw Kennedy's presumed assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, shot down on TV. It wasn't until last March, however, as Anson was watching a rerun of the famous Zapruder assassination film, that he began entertaining serious doubts about the Warren Commission Report.

Crucial to his reasoning, he says, was the film's evidence that the President was hit by gunfire as much as a full second before Texas Gov. John Connally. (Connally was sitting on a jump seat in the back of the presidential limousine.) This, Anson believes, discredits the commission's view that both men were struck by a single round. "There had to be at least two people firing," he maintains.

Anson, who got a \$25,000 advance for a Bantam paperback, *They've Killed the President!*, due in bookstores this month, says he tries "not to see conspiracies behind every bush." He speculates, however, that the assass-

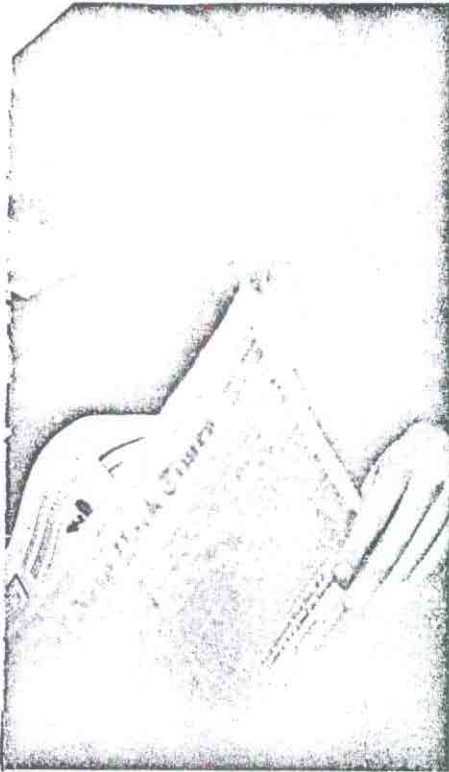
## ▲A woman who indexed all the evidence

**S**ome Warren Commission critics came late to their skepticism; Sylvia Meagher was there at the beginning. An omnivorous reader of assassination literature from the day President Kennedy was shot, the plump 54-year-old divorcée greeted the commission's report with disdain. "I was shocked by the discrepancies and omissions that could only be considered deliberate," she says. "I had to do something."

So she did. Converting the liquor closet of her Greenwich Village apartment into a library of assassination minutiae, Meagher spent five years working nights, weekends and vacations, puzzling over a mystery she still has not solved. "I became obsessive," she admits. "Between 1965 and 1970 any kind of normal living became impossible. I even gave up Scrabble!" In the process, she published *Accesso-*

*ries After the Fact*, a biting analysis of the Warren Commission Report, and a comprehensive index to the report and the evidence. Other assassino- logists use them both as basic references.

A deputy director of the New York office of the World Health Organization, Meagher lives alone with her calico cat, Mimi, and seems oblivious to either money or fame. She didn't even vote for Kennedy in 1960. ("I thought he was a glamour boy.") Meagher says, "I see myself as a student. I'm just an ordinary middle-class person who reads politics and detective stories and goes to the ballet." She is convinced that Lee Oswald was a scapegoat for the actual murderers. "He was a pawn, a patsy," she fumes. "Who is to say this couldn't happen to any individual without friends or money?" □



sination could have been the work of maverick CIA operatives, or the CIA's friends in the Mafia. "I'm taking it on faith that the CIA itself did *not* do it," he says. "But we know that agency employees have gotten out of hand in the past and disobeyed not only the CIA director but the President." As for the mob, Anson observes: "We know that John and Robert Kennedy did real damage to organized crime. The Mafia had the motive, means and opportunity for murder."

Anson, 30, lives in Brooklyn Heights with his law student wife, Maggie, and two children by a previous marriage. While covering the war in Cambodia for *TIME*, he was captured and spent 21 days as a POW. He wrote a McGovern biography in 1972 and is now an executive producer for a New York public TV station. Characterizing himself as "apolitical," Anson expresses disappointment that "liberals of the press" haven't undertaken their own investigation of the JFK murder. "The people you'd expect to be the best on this issue have been the worst," he says. "To them, Earl Warren was a credible guy. The assassination is a complicated story, and they don't like the smell of it." □

## ▼A professor thinks three gunmen fired

Josiah Thompson has never got over the shooting of President Kennedy. Nor, he believes, has the country. "The assassination was our loss of innocence, a turning point in our history," explains Thompson, 40, author of *Six Seconds in Dallas*. "From that time on, things started going wrong."

Thompson's first involvement in the Kennedy case came as a Yale graduate student, when he wandered into the New Haven, Conn. FBI office to point out discrepancies in the published accounts of the shooting. "I thought if I could see the contradictions, so could the FBI," he recalls. "They were very attentive and polite, and I guess they threw my report in the wastebasket."

Later, Thompson began digging on his own. "I was still at Yale," he says, "and the library had the Warren Commission's 26 volumes of evidence. When I got tired of working on my thesis, I would go upstairs and read about the assassination." Eventually, Thompson decided there were three essential

questions: What happened? Who did it? And why?

He made a painstaking study of the Zapruder film and other photographs of the assassination scene and spoke with witnesses. His conclusion: there were three gunmen who fired four shots—the first hit Kennedy in the back, the second hit Texas Gov. John Connally, the third and fourth hit Kennedy's head. Thompson does not claim to know who participated in the killing but suspects its origins lie in New Orleans, perhaps in an alliance between the Mafia, CIA and anti-Castro exiles.

Now an assistant professor of philosophy at Haverford College in Pennsylvania, Thompson lives amid a comfortable clutter of books and antiques with his wife, Nancy, (Sarah Lawrence '58, and a recent graduate of a bartenders' school), two children, Lisa, 11, and Everson, 9, and Metaphysics, a huge calico cat. He looks forward to a Congressional investigation of the assassination. "It is terribly important to know our real history and to solve the Kennedy mystery," he maintains. "It is the way to get our government out in the open again." □



NEIL BENSON

CONTINUED



### ^An SRO show on 'Who Killed JFK?'

A professional radical with the presidency of SDS in his past, Carl Oglesby regards Kennedy's murder less as a mystery to be solved than as a lever to break the grip of the powerful. "I'm a veteran of the teach-ins," he explains, "and for my money, Kennedy was killed because he offended the military and the mobsters. The crucial issues were Vietnam and Cuba."

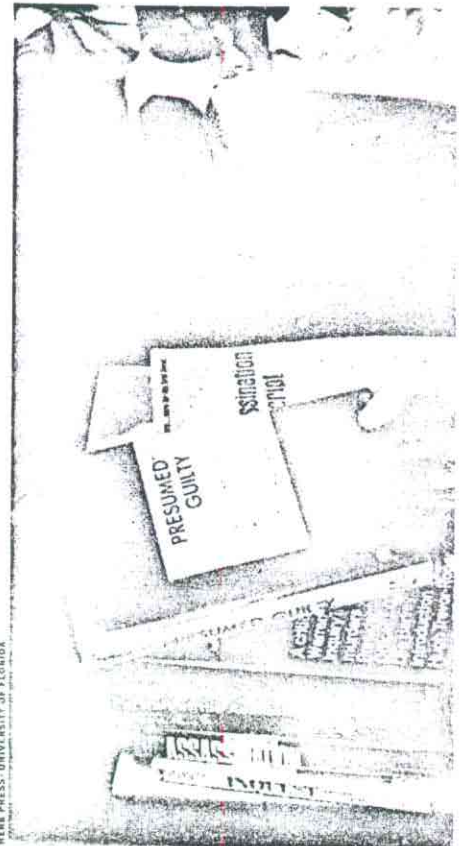
To reach the public with his ominous message, Oglesby became one of the prime movers in 1973 behind the Assassination Information Bureau in Cambridge, Mass. At first, the AIB, which presented the Zapruder film, a touring slide show and lecture, was a shaky operation. But, as interest in the assassination revived, the bureau's "Who Killed JFK?" put on by a five-man team, became an SRO road show. (Among other things, it appears to absolve Oswald.) "People were hanging from the rafters," says Oglesby. Though the AIB now commands \$850 per lecture, it still operates out of a

noisy one-room office not far from Oglesby's own modest Cambridge apartment. "We're all living right on the edge of nothing," snaps Oglesby, bristling over reports that the AIB has been turning big profits. "Some people feel if you are sincere, you shouldn't want any money at all."

A sometime playwright, Oglesby was living the straight life in 1962. He edited publications for an aerospace company (with security clearance) and lived in Ann Arbor, Mich. with his wife and three children. Radicalized in the turbulent '60s, he became one of the leaders of Students for a Democratic Society. He broke with SDS in 1969, rejecting the violence of the Weathermen faction. He taught briefly at Antioch College and lived in a Vermont commune. He is now separated from his wife. Oglesby, 40, is leery of trusting Congress to reopen the Kennedy case. "We are carrying out an investigation by educating the public," he says. "If those cookies in Congress want to come along for the ride, it's alright, but the demand first has to come from the people." □

### vIt all began in a junior high class

For Harold Roffman, it all began in 1967 with a junior high school English assignment. Instructed to read three books on the same subject, the 14-year-old drapery salesman's son chose Richard Popkin's *The Second Oswald*, Edward J. Epstein's *Inquest*, and *Whitewash*, by Harold Weisberg. All are sledgeham-



mer attacks on the Warren Report.

His appetite whetted, Roffman began to scour up everything he could on the subject. He bought the 26 volumes of the Warren Report (\$76), studied evidence at the National Archives (after presenting a letter of certification from the principal of his Philadelphia high school) and made several trips to talk to Weisberg, a Maryland journalist. By 11th grade, Harold had decided to write his own book. His proposed thesis: that the case against Lee Oswald was hopelessly flimsy, but that the Warren Commission had stuck with it because politically it was the most acceptable.

Spurred by his suspicions, Roffman began plugging away at his manuscript.

His friends considered his interest eccentric—"They had a problem getting me to shut up about it," Roffman says—but his parents were solidly behind him. "They decided what I was doing was worthwhile and productive," he says, "and they thought there was no need to force me to go out and find summer jobs. Instead, I would get up early and go to work in my bedroom office." This fall their patience was



rewarded with the publication of *Presumed Guilty*, a slimmed-down version of their son's original doorstep first draft.

Although Roffman believes there was probably more than one gunman, he says little evidence exists which might help identify the killers. Most disturbing to him, he says, was his conclusion that the falseness of the Warren Report was too extensive to be accidental. "I'm a strong believer in the principle of government accountability," says Roffman, now 22 and a University of Pennsylvania graduate studying law at the University of Florida. "I can't think of anything more threatening than when the government lies about the murder of its leader." □

## vA senator prods a 'house of cards'

Unlike other skeptics, U.S. Sen. Richard Schweiker of Pennsylvania has the power to dig out answers to some of his questions about the assassination. Recently appointed (with Colorado Democrat Gary Hart) to serve on a subcommittee investigating the role of the FBI and CIA in preparing the original Warren Report, Schweiker can subpoena both witnesses and classified documents. Already he has reached some conclusions.

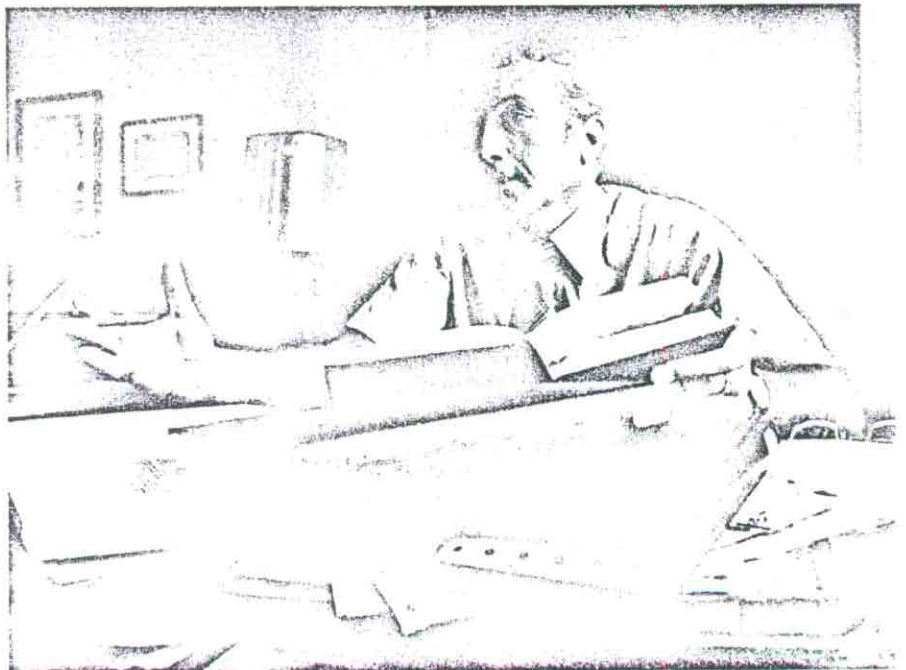
Characterizing the Warren Report as a "house of cards," the 49-year-old Republican maintains that "recent disclosures have devastated its credibility. We now have evidence that the FBI destroyed and suppressed evidence. And we have evidence that the FBI may have influenced witnesses to mislead the commission."

A liberal and onetime dove on Vietnam, Schweiker served four terms in the House of Representatives before his election to the Senate in 1968. With his wife, a former "Miss Claire" of television's *Romper Room*, and his three daughters and two sons, Schweiker barnstormed his state in an old school bus last year. He survived Watergate and won reelection. Now when he goes back home he wants to discuss the economy, "but all my con-

stituents want to talk about is this investigation."

Schweiker, a member of Sen. Frank Church's Select Committee on Intelligence Activities, had his interest kindled in the Kennedy assassination only six months ago. "When I sat there and heard the CIA admit they had made a deal with the Mafia to shoot Castro, it put everything into a new frame of reference," Schweiker says. He does not espouse any of the current assassination theories. "I don't want to fall into that trap," he explains. "There may be elements of truth in all of them." But he is intrigued by Lee Oswald's ill-defined link with the government. "I don't know if it's conspiracy or not," he says, "but there was something going on between Oswald and the U.S. intelligence community. When he was thrown in jail in New Orleans [while picketing], he was allowed one phone call. Did he call his wife? No. He called the FBI."

Why was Kennedy killed? "It might have been a Communist plot originating in Cuba or the USSR," says Schweiker. "Maybe it was a right-wing conspiracy here in the U.S. Or perhaps it was anti-Castro Cubans. I don't know the answers." Schweiker shrugs. "It just gets stranger and stranger." □



CHARLES PHILLIPS