

The Kennedy Case

ANNOUNCER: Live from Washington, Crossfire. On the left, Mike Kinsley. On the right, John Sununu. Tonight, The Kennedy Case. In the crossfire, Gerald Posner, author of *Case Closed*; and pathologist Cyril Wecht, Professor at the University of Pittsburgh.

MIKE KINSLEY: Good evening. Welcome to Crossfire. It's 30 years since President John F. Kennedy was shot and killed by someone in Dallas, Texas. Suspects over the years have included the mob, the CIA, the FBI, the KGB, LBJ, or in moviemaker Oliver Stone's operatic scenario, nearly all of them. Now comes a new book to bring the argument full circle. *Case Closed*, by our guest Gerald Posner, argues that the killer was none other than Lee Harvey Oswald acting alone, no conspiracy, just as the Warren Commission said years ago. Posner's most important new evidence is a computerized enhancement of the famous Zapruder film. It confirms, or so he says, the so-called single bullet theory, that one bullet shot from the School Book Depository hit both Kennedy and John Connally, but is the case closed? The government just released 800,000 pages of previously secret documents about the Kennedy assassination, but the CIA withheld some 160,000 pages more. Fortunately for viewers of Crossfire, we're going to settle this thing once and for all right here. John?

JOHN SUNUNU: Gerald Posner, before we give you a chance to lay out how you come to your conclusions, let me ask you. Don't you feel unfashionably out of step writing a book that supports the Warren Commission? Conventional wisdom has it that you've got to have a complicated conspiracy theory to sell a JFK book.

GERALD POSNER, Author, "Case Closed": You're absolutely right, John. As a matter of fact, I remember when I went back to Random House and I said, after about a year and a half of doing this, I think that you can draw definite conclusions in this book, and they said, "Yes, and the answer is?" And I said, the answer is, Oswald alone, and there was this moment, where I could tell from my publisher, they weren't quite sure that they were happy that I'd gone off and done this work and come back with this answer. Once they realized it wasn't a rehash of the Warren Commission, that I disagreed with the commission, and there was new evidence, then they finally got enthusiastic when they saw the manuscript, but you're right. It is out of step. I can't believe 30 years later this is the most controversial position.

SUNUNU: All right, tell us quickly, but tell us exactly what the most important steps and the conclusions you drew were.

Mr. POSNER: The most important step is this overview. Half the book is just a view of Lee Harvey Oswald's life. You have to get a feeling for this social miscast, this almost psychopath to understand why Jack Kennedy died in Dallas in November of '63. I have information from the KGB file, first time ever, the first interview with Yuri

Nosenko, his KGB handler. I talked to people in Russia who added new information about his life. I found lost files from Jim Garrison, the district attorney in New Orleans investigation that exposed the details of the scam perpetrated on the public with some of these conspiracy theories and as mentioned by Mike just a moment ago, maybe one of the most important contributions is this new scientific look, enhancements and computer animation of this so-called home movie of the assassination, the Zapruder film establishing once and for all the precise timing of the shots at Dealy Plaza, shows where the Warren Commission and the House Select Committee were wrong and proving with incontrovertible evidence that the single bullet was, in fact, correct.

The chart you now see on the TV is based upon some of this computer work, which will show, based on the wounds of Kennedy and Connally and the head wound shot of the President, where the assassin has to be in Dealy Plaza for those wounds to take place.

KINSLEY: OK. Mr. Posner, hold on right there. Let's get in Dr. Wecht. Dr. Wecht, as I understand it, the story is this. The Achilles heel of the Warren Commission was always this single bullet theory, that a single bullet hit Kennedy and Connally. Mr. Posner claims that he's now got this computerized enhancement of the Zapruder film. One of the things it shows is Connally's lapel, suit lapel flipping up at exactly the spot where the wound to— Connally's was wounded and at exactly the same time that Kennedy was shot, which would tend to confirm the single bullet theory. Is that wrong?

Dr. CYRIL WECHT, Pathologist, University of Pittsburgh: Yes, that definitely is wrong. The Warren Commission established that the shot occurred some time behind the— when Kennedy was behind the Stemmons Freeway sign. The House Select Committee of Assassinations, and I was a member of the Forensic Pathology Panel, concluded that Kennedy was hit at frame 189. What Mr. Posner has done is to take the work of a few people, a dentist in Mississippi, Michael West and some other and based upon a flapping of the lapel of the Governor's coat, he has concluded that that is the moment that the shot hit the President because, remember, a bullet fired almost 2800 feet per second with the distance of 25 inches between the President and the Governor, you're talking about millisecond in time.

KINSLEY: Right, but he says, as I understand it, and both of you correct me if I'm wrong, we know the time that Kennedy was shot—

Dr. WECHT: No, we don't know the time.

KINSLEY: The question is the time that Connally was shot, and this flip happens at the same time Kennedy was shot, therefore it indicates they were both hit by the same bullet.

Dr. WECHT: First of all, let me point out something. Kennedy is clearly reacting at frame 224, when he emerges from behind the Stemmons Freeway sign. He's already been hit, his hands are up to his mouth and toward his throat. Secondly, the lapel then, which they're talking about, is seen in frame 225. You can't have the lapel com-

ve walked out of this Texas School Book Depository alive. A crooked cop or a crooked FBI agent or Secret Service agent would have shot the "alleged assassin" as he tried to flee the building, and that man would have been given a medal. There would never have been any talk about Ruby. In addition, let's assume the conspirators planned this great assassination coup and they forgot to cover the front door of the depository, there's where Oswald walked out of three minutes after he shot Kennedy, and they give the contract to Ruby. On Friday night at police headquarters, we have photographs, Oswald walks a couple of feet in front of Ruby. Ruby doesn't shoot him. Now some conspiracy theorists say maybe Ruby forgot his gun. Now, is this the gang that couldn't shoot straight? Jack Ruby's supposed to kill the presidential assassin, he's got a contract from organized crime, he goes there on Friday and he says, "Oh, my God, I forgot my gun."

KINSLEY: OK, but—

Mr. POSNER: On Sunday—

Dr. WECHT: You're taking a point in time when Ruby was supposed to have killed him. You ignored in your book and you're ignoring now, Mr. Posner, how did Jack Ruby get into the Dallas Public Safety Building on Sunday morning? Let's say you, sir, had been visiting Dallas that morning, would you have been able to walk past 200 uniformed and non-uniformed detectives? You would have had your head shot off. How did Jack Ruby—

Mr. POSNER: I'm not—

Dr. WECHT: You've ignored the fact that it is now proven—

Mr. POSNER: Dr. Wecht—

Dr. WECHT: —a matter of record — just a moment — that a high-ranking police official let Jack Ruby into the building.

Mr. POSNER: No, no, no.

Dr. WECHT: OK, yes, and you're ignoring—

Mr. POSNER: That's the conclusion of the House Select Committee, which I disagree with—

Dr. WECHT: —the totally contrived scenario by which Jack Ruby came to be in that area, sending money by Western Union to a former stripper of his on Sunday morning. After he had eaten some bagels and lox at home, he decided to go down there, right?

Mr. POSNER: It's a matter of the record—

Dr. WECHT: Come on. You've ignored so many things—

Mr. POSNER: It's a matter of public record.

Dr. WECHT: —in your book, Mr. Posner. It's a shame, because you are an intelligent, experienced writer. You could have done a job instead of preparing a prosecutor's brief. That's what you have done. Your book is a prosecutor's brief. It is the best such brief thus far presented, but it is not complete, and therefore, sir, it is intellectually dishonest.

SUNUNU: Now that you've been damned with faint praise, Mr. Posner, let me ask you a question. Can you tell us what you found out about Lee Harvey Oswald that you said was probably the most important thing.

Dr. WECHT: Absolutely, the most important thing to me, Governor, was the discovery from the KGB files. The KGB

had surveillance on Oswald around the clock for nearly two years while he was in Minsk. They were afraid he was an American sleeper agent. You know, he had tried to kill himself when he was in Moscow. Then two Soviet psychiatrists interviewed him and their reports are in the KGB file. They conclude he's mentally unstable, but the KGB said, "You know, maybe he's just pretending to be crazy and he's really an agent." So they kept watching him all the time. You know what they conclude in the end? This fellow didn't even know the fundamentals of how to repair his radio when it broke at home. He had no intelligence contacts whatsoever, and they viewed him as so unstable that no intelligence agency in any country would use him. That's—

SUNUNU: Well, how does that—

Dr. WECHT: He got smarter, he got a lot smarter as the years went by.

SUNUNU: Mr. Posner, when—

Dr. WECHT: And he was able to effectuate the assassination of the President, despite the fact that he was in Russia he was a total dunce, and by the way, according to KGB agent Nosenko, one of Mr. Posner's reliable persons, as of last week on another television program, "Lee Harvey Oswald could not hit a rabbit with a shotgun." He became also an expert marksman, Mr. Posner, in that couple of years' time, right?

SUNUNU: But, Mr. Posner, when and why did he decide to kill the President?

Mr. POSNER: He had a mixture of politics, Governor, half communism and half anarchism. He hated authority. He wanted to throw a cog into the machinery of government, and his mark for history was going to be the death of General Edwin Walker, the man who was removed from his NATO command by President Kennedy for distributing right-wing literature to his troops. He had shot—

KINSLEY: OK.

Mr. POSNER: He had shot at him—

Dr. WECHT: Whom he missed, whom he missed as a stationary target in his backyard.

Mr. POSNER: He got President Kennedy as a target of opportunity.

KINSLEY: But, Mr. Posner, the stuff you've been saying for the past few minutes does not carry with it the same kind of scientific, "We've got the fix in, this is definite" authority that you've been positing for your—

Mr. POSNER: Right. No, but, Mike—

KINSLEY: —film analysis.

Mr. POSNER: —I must tell you that I personally believe that the most important part of the book is not the chapter on the single bullet, but is the first half of the book which deals with Oswald's life, because—

KINSLEY: Yeah, but just listening to you, it's not as convincing.

Mr. POSNER: No, no, but it is more convincing in this sense, it incrementally builds over 300 pages, a portrait of Oswald and a psychological portrait—

KINSLEY: All right, if you're going to sell your book, I think we ought to give Dr. Wecht a chance.

Dr. WECHT: And it builds and it builds Lee Harvey Os-