

Footnote or insert on Posner's book not persuading people the way he wanted:

By the time of the 30th <sup>assassination</sup> anniversary on November 22, 1993, Posner's book had received unusual if not unprecedented attention in all the media much of which featured him in person. The anniversary commemorations <sup>began</sup> before the anniversary <sup>day</sup>. The TV nets, public and commercial, had specials long in preparation and they, too, <sup>presented</sup> ~~used~~ Posner, in person.

Yet for all the personal attention he got, for all the media extacies over his book, for all the uncritical comment and highest praises, it had the exact opporite of the intended effect! It convinced the people <sup>not to believe Posner!</sup> the opposite way!

CBS News commissioned a special poll. ~~The result is that it~~ showed that more American's ~~than ever, ever,~~ "a record ~~of~~ 90 percent," ~~as~~ as Newsday put it (November 21 issue), <sup>"said they believed that Kennedy had been the victim of a conspiracy, Newsweek said"</sup> ~~or the same thing in different words,~~ "nine out of ten Americans believe JFK's murder involved a conspiracy," ~~as Newsweek's~~ (issue dated December 13 but appearing earlier) ~~said~~.

When the truly remarkable attention he and his book got over and over again in all the major media is considered, that he was so condemned by the people so large a proportion of them signalled <sup>ING</sup> thumbs down, <sup>represents</sup> ~~is~~ more than his abject failure, which it does reflect. It shows the great good sense of the people on this to them a gut issue.

While they can do nothing else about it, the people could and did express their refusal to accept the official assassination mythology in any form, public or private - which is to say also commercial, <sup>with Posner,</sup>

(TIME magazine, <sup>however,</sup> ~~was~~ ~~was~~ ~~dyslectic~~ ~~in~~ ~~reading~~ ~~the~~ ~~same~~ ~~poll~~ ~~results~~. In its year-end "Chronicles" of 1993, under the expectable heading, "J.F.K. CONSPIRACY BUFFS," it intoned, "With the publication of Case Closed, suddenly everyone agrees : Oswald did act alone.")



LES  
PAYNE

## In '63, Kennedy Lit Rights Lamp

IT HAS BEEN 30 years since that bullet rang out from the Texas Book Depository, or wherever, and dramatically began to change America. The 1960s were nasty times, and on Nov. 22, 1963, they got infinitely nastier. It was the first in a long series of assassinations. For years to come, Americans would be able to recall just what they were doing when the slugs hit home.

Feb. 21, 1965, was the second hit. The third and fourth came on April 4 and June 5, 1968.

On that bleak November day 30 years ago, I was a newly minted second lieutenant swaggering to lunch at the Fort Bliss officers' club at the moment the rifle slug in Dallas struck.

Starved and pressed in my tropical worsted uniform, I had defended the human rights of strangers that neither I nor my forebears had ever fully enjoyed in our own country. Such cruel contradictions are the birthright of those born into the oppressed classes of this republic.

After graduating from college in Connecticut, I had sought a job as a reporter, but that possibility for me, in those days, was as remote as the Oval Office. There were two newspapers in Hartford, the Times and the Courant. Neither had ever hired a black reporter and would no sooner have hired me than the Klan would have taken me on as its imperial wizard.

Not many of us, two decades ago, got out of the wretched conditions of the ghetto. Some took refuge in the church, others in the bottle, still others made their stand in the pool hall, on the street corner, behind the switchblade — candidates, as Richard Wright wrote, "for the clinics, morgues, prisons, reformatories and the electric chair of the state's death house."

Those of us who escaped had to find a lever. I took my English degree into the Army to hone my leadership skills and learn how to shoot down enemy bombers with Nike Hercules missiles.

My commander-in-chief was John F. Kennedy. The Irish had never struck me as racially enlightened. But this Irish-Catholic Kennedy, this president, many African-Americans said, seemed different. He spoke eloquently enough, but when pressed, he showed something more. What the downtrodden saw in him was a quality rare in white males and absent in every president since, save Jimmy Carter and perhaps Bill Clinton.

African-Americans gazed upon Kennedy and saw not so much what he was but what, if worked on, he could become.

Coming out of the Eisenhower years, blacks were afforded a new, though exaggerated, sense of the possible humanness of their enemy. As Malcolm X and the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. heightened blacks' sense of dignity, Kennedy, in word at least, hiked their expectations of the federal government.

It was not so much what Kennedy did during his short sojourn; it was his style, his boldness, the things he said. On Feb. 28, 1963, in a message to Congress on civil rights, Kennedy diagnosed the effects of racial illness in America:

"Through these long 100 years, while slavery has vanished, progress for the Negro has been too often blocked and delayed. . . Equality before the law has not always meant equal treatment and opportunity. And the harmful, wasteful and wrongful results of racial discrimination and segregation still appear in virtually every aspect of national life, in virtually every part of the nation."

No president, including Abraham Lincoln and Lyndon Johnson, has ever spoken this way. Kennedy went on to lay out a blueprint for making things more equal in the areas of voting education, employment, public accommodation, housing and civil rights overall.

In his introduction, Kennedy cited the Emancipation Proclamation as a "first step." He praised Lincoln but noted that he "unhappily did not live to follow up." Nor, of course, did Kennedy.

For on that November day, as I swaggered into the officers' club, Walter Cronkite told us Kennedy had been shot dead in Dallas. The officers gathered around the TV broke into mild applause and scattered cheering. That afternoon, my first sergeant from Mississippi smiled for the first time since I had met him.

## IDEAS

John Klotz

## Why the Media Want

*The media return to the Kennedy assassination again and again but the story won't stand still. The case will never close.*

FOR THREE decades the major organs of the American media have been as one voice in their support for the report of the Warren commission and its conclusion that Lee Harvey Oswald was the lone, unassisted assassin of President John F. Kennedy. In the face of ever deepening public skepticism toward the official version, The New York Times, CBS News, the Washington Post and other powerful and prestigious news organizations continued to charge reporters who had originally affirmed the soundness of the report with evaluating later challenges to it — the most notorious being Oliver Stone's 1991 movie "JFK."

To the immense frustration of the media elite, the public flocked to "JFK." A new generation of movie patrons was seduced by a dark tale of assassination conspiracy. The empire struck back earlier this fall. Gerald Posner's study of the assassination, "Case Closed," was widely trumpeted as finally proving that Oswald acted alone. In September, Tom Brokaw and the NBC News staff hailed the book for finally resolving the Kennedy mystery. U.S. News and World Report ran a cover story claiming that Posner had made an "unshakable" case against Oswald. Random House, the book's publisher, took the highly unusual step of placing its own credibility behind the book's findings. It also invested heavily in the book's promotion, going so far as to place an advertisement in The Times eerily echoing handbills that dogged Kennedy in Texas: Robert Groden and other critics were "GUILTY" of misleading the American public. And last week Posner's research figured prominently in the PBS Frontline documentary, "Who Was Lee Harvey Oswald?"

Appearing in today's issue of The Times is a review of recent assassination literature, including the Posner book, which it singles out for praise. An unsigned editorial note on the cover of the Book Review characterizes the fact that over 2,000 books have been published on the assassination as "a devastating record of the lengths to which sensationalists have gone to sow suspicion, and editors and publishers have gone to profit from their wares."

The major organs of the media have tried desperately to reconstitute the moral authority of the Warren commission under the guise of "Case Closed." It has been a hopeless task. When CBS News polled the public earlier this month, a record 90 percent said they believed that Kennedy had been the victim of a conspiracy.

Given the maddening ambiguity of the forensic evidence, not to mention the elusiveness of a distant milieu populated by hoodlums, spies and zealots, the proliferation of possible answers to the assassination and the lack of definitive ones should not surprise. What does surprise, in light of all this uncertainty, is the media's haste to foreclose further discussion and the search for firmer proof.

By concentrating on the issue of Oswald's guilt, Warren commission defenders beg profoundly important questions raised by the commission's cover-up. Much more than Oswald's culpability is at stake in the collapse of the Warren report. Swirling around Kennedy and Oswald was a whirlpool of sinister personalities and institutions intent on dominating the course of American policy in the Cold War. It was these forces that the Warren report hid from public view. The struggle between the official myth and the coun-

termyth inevitably leads to the question of governmental legitimacy and media culpability for the horrors that have befallen the nation in the decades since Kennedy's death. By comparison, who killed Kennedy is almost an academic question at this point.

Last week, however, the media's facade of unity began to crumble. Newsweek and its sister publication the Washington Post finally broke with the ranks of Warren commission defenders and grudgingly conceded what critics had claimed for years: The commission conducted not an honest search for the truth but rather a carefully contrived effort to forge a soothing official story of the assassination — covering up, by both inattention and design, damning evidence of governmental misconduct.

The Warren report now resembles the legendary Vietnamese village that was destroyed so that it could be saved. According to the calculations of its long-standing defenders, the Warren commission report must die so that the lone-gunner theory and the phantoms it still masks can live.

When the Warren report was issued in September, 1964, the media greeted it with universal praise. Its most popular edition was published by The New York Times. The introduction, written by Assistant Managing Editor Harrison Salisbury, pronounced, "No material question now remains unresolved, as far as the death of President Kennedy is concerned." To critics of the Warren commission, Salisbury flashed a contemptuous warning: Those who spread irresponsible rumors about the assassination were either seeking to sow distrust and confusion among the public or intent on conveying to foreign countries the "image of a violent America, helpless in the face of dangerous forces."

It didn't work. The Warren report, the public decided, was a coverup.

Oswald was the first critic of the lone-gunner theory. "I am a patzy," he responded when asked if he had murdered the president. After his death, other critics emerged. Mark Lane sought to represent Oswald's interest at the Warren commission hearings. After the report was issued, he published "Rush to Judgment," a best-selling critique of the report and its lone-gunner conclusion. Lane paid a price for his effrontery — "ghoul" was among the kinder epithets.

In 1967, CBS News sought to answer the questions again with a four-part study of the Warren report. The last program of the series ended with the normally sober Eric Sevareid comparing Warren commission critics to advocates of the "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion," a vicious anti-Semitic plot.

The '70s more than vindicated the critics. Several Watergate participants were linked to both the CIA and an amalgam of organized-crime figures and anti-Castro Cubans that swirled around the events of Dealey Plaza. Successive government investigations stunningly confirmed some of the worst suspicions of the independent investigators concerning the government's potential for duplicity and violence.

Barely noted by the media establishment were equally important revelations by reporter Carl Bernstein of Watergate fame. Writing in the Oct. 20, 1977, edition of Rolling Stone, Bernstein documented the CIA's use of major media organizations to provide information and cover for wide-ranging espionage.

In 1991, months before the release of "JFK," a disgruntled Warren commission critic who disagreed with Stone's approach gave a copy of the script to George Lardner, a Washington Post reporter who covered the Kennedy assassination. Pouncing on Stone even as he was directing the filming of "JFK," Lardner launched a scathing critique challenging Stone's right to produce a movie memorializing New Orleans' District Attorney Jim Garrison's version of the countermyth. By the time of the movie's release, it had



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## JFK Redux

AFTER READING YOUR COVER STORY ON the "new" cover-up in the Kennedy assassination [top officials' scrambling to conceal their own mistakes during the investigation], I must compliment NEWSWEEK ("How We Ended Up With 30 Years of JFK Conspiracy Theories," SPECIAL REPORT, Nov. 22). You presented a fairly unbiased account of the extreme views (Oliver Stone's "JFK") as well as the Warren Commission's hastily arrived-at conclusions. The truth probably lies somewhere in the middle. Hopefully someday it will emerge and allow us cynics to rest more comfortably.

THOMAS J. MOONY  
CARY, ILL.


ONCE AGAIN THE MEDIA HAS MOVED TO silence dissent by dismissing conspiracy theorists as fantasists and cottage industrialists. Aside from being a love letter to "Case Closed" author Gerald Posner—the only independent researcher you cite—your special report was an insult to the many Americans who have spent years doing the job the government and the Warren Commission failed to do.

BRADLEY BANNON  
MYRTLE BEACH, S.C.

I WISH TO CONGRATULATE EVAN THOMAS for his well-reasoned approach in explaining many of the actions of officials after the assassination ("The Real Cover-Up"). However, the "benign conspiracy" he reports of a cover-up of information by governmental agencies such as the FBI and CIA does not necessarily preclude a murder conspiracy. While uncertainty reigns concerning the details of organized-crime or intelligence involvement, a critical element that remained unmentioned in Thomas's piece—the demonstrable shortcomings of the single-bullet theory—must be addressed first. Unfortunately, Thomas failed to rebut this theory, but concluded, nevertheless, that the "Warren Commission was probably right."

CARL ALESSI  
YORBA LINDA, CALIF.

AMERICA'S FAILURE TO BUY INTO THE CONCLUSION that Lee Harvey Oswald was the lone gunman stems not, as Michael Beschloss states, from our intolerance for the idea that a "surly little egotist" brought about a "historical transformation," but from our sense that the logistics of the kill were beyond any one man ("The Day That Changed America"). Moreover, the overabundance of incriminating evidence against Oswald,

 Denotes letters received via telephone mail, 1-900-990-MAIL.

## Mail Call Whodunit?

With recent polls showing that nine out of 10 Americans believe JFK's murder involved a conspiracy, it's not surprising that some readers of our Nov. 22 anniversary cover disputed its case-closed premise.

The theories some readers posed, though, were surprising. "Look closely at the driver [of JFK's limo as seen in the Zapruder film]," wrote one. "See the gun in his left hand pointed at Kennedy?" Another suggested Oswald's "real target was Jackie." The most baroque theory cast JFK himself as the chief conspirator. The scenario: Kennedy, fearing disgrace if the story of his involvement with the mistress of a Mafia boss hit the papers, engineered "the one event that would end his problems and give his public image a boost."



his silencing by Jack Ruby in the midst of a Dallas police escort and the incomplete Bethesda Naval Hospital autopsy all add to our belief that the assassination was, at the least, government sanctioned.

DANIEL J. KUHN  
JACKSON, MICH.

LET'S LOOK AGAIN AT NEWSWEEK'S GRAPHIC illustration of the route of the JFK motorcade through Dealey Plaza and the direction of the bullets. If Oswald was the sole assassin, why did he hold his fire while the motorcade was approaching his perch and turning left directly beneath him? Instead of taking that easy shot, he waited until the limousine was well past and moving away, making for a far more difficult shot. In addition, by the time Oswald shot his vision was partially obscured by trees (and, as your illustration shows, a tree deflected the first shot). The explanation could be that Oswald had to coordinate his shots with an accomplice farther along the route.

MICHAEL HORTON  
BRUNSWICK, MAINE

IN HER PORTRAIT OF OSWALD, MELINDA Beck remarks, "Even those who are convinced that Oswald was the sole assassin remain puzzled about his motive" ("The Mind of the Assassin"). While no one will ever know what caused this troubled mind to commit the crime of the century, consid-

er this: had Oswald not been apprehended, who would have been blamed? The right wing, of course—as indeed they were at the outset. It is entirely plausible, therefore, that Oswald, who had previously attempted to shoot a right-wing military officer, was determined in one blow to permanently harm his ideological opponents while getting even with his wife for her (in Beck's words) "attraction to JFK."

LEONARD GREENBERG  
HERNDON, VA.

YOUR DESCRIPTION OF THE CIA-LBJ-PENTAGON plot as being "the wackiest conspiracy theory of all" rings hollow. This theory was not, as you say, "cooked up" by Oliver Stone but was the result of a painstaking investigation conducted by New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison. Your omission of him and his book "On The Trail of the Assassins" forces this somewhat informed bystander to conclude that you've raised more questions than you answered.

MICHAEL F. RELLEY  
ENOSBURG FALLS, VT.

ASK NOT HOW MANY MORE ARTICLES about JFK we need to be exposed to—ask, Why? JFK has been dead for 30 years and will remain so. Leave the poor man alone.

ANDREA WRIGHT  
ABERDEEN, N.C.

## 'Extensive Credentials'

IT IS ALARMING TO SEE NEWSWEEK'S CONTINUED prejudicial coverage of the resignation of Clifton Wharton Jr. as deputy secretary of state ("Filling Some Gaps," PERISCOPE, Nov. 22) after you earlier published the rumor of Wharton's ouster ("State Shake-Up?" PERISCOPE, Nov. 1). Instead of exercising your reportorial talents to learn the full story, you appear to accept as gospel this one-sided leak. I do not know why the administration chose, through these underhanded means, to signal that Dr. Wharton should resign. I do know that allegations that he "lacked foreign-affairs experience" cannot be accepted by any fair-minded observer. Dr. Wharton, the son of America's first black career ambassador, was born into a diplomatic environment. As early as 1948 he worked on Latin American projects with Nelson A. Rockefeller, and his Ph.D. dissertation was about Brazil. During the late 1950s and '60s, his full-time assignment was economic and agricultural development in Southeast Asia, where he trained many of today's leading economists and government officials in that region. Upon Wharton's return from Asia, President Johnson appointed him to serve on the State Department Advisory Panel on East Asia. As president of Michigan State University and then as head of the State



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# WINNERS & LOSERS



SYGMA

**STEVEN SPIELBERG**  
In the summer, a billion-dollar popular hit: *Jurassic Park*. In the winter, an Oscar-contending critical coup: *Schindler's List*

**MOHAMMED FARRAH AIDID**  
From fugitive to victor over the U.S., the Somali clan leader returns from hiding more powerful than ever



KATY WILLIAMS-AP

**AL GORE**  
Slow and steady tortoise to Clinton's hare, he becomes the most consequential V.P. in modern history

**EVANDER HOLYFIELD**  
Regains heavyweight crown from the man who had vanquished him in first such restoration since Ali



PAM FRANCIS—GAMMA LIAISON

**LYLE LOVETT**  
Marries Julia Roberts

**BENAZIR BHUTTO**  
The Pakistani PM regains power in spectacular comeback



ROBERT NICKELBERG

**ROBERT JAMES WALLER**  
*Bridges of Madison County* lives on the best-seller list all year, only to be displaced at No. 1 by his new novel

**TCI CEO JOHN MALONE**  
With TCI-Bell Atlantic merger, the prophet of the information highway pockets shares worth \$1.1 billion



MICHAEL GRECCO—SYGMA

**TONY KUSHNER**  
His Pulitzer- and Tony-winning *Angels in America* is the first American play in years that really matters

**THE REPUBLICAN PARTY**  
Texas, New Jersey, Virginia, N.Y.C. and L.A.

**ROSS PEROT**  
Still whiny, cranky and short, he becomes ever more irrelevant as his polls fall, his TV infomercial ratings fade and he flops in the NAFTA debate

**MICHAEL JACKSON**  
The world's biggest celebrity is accused of sex with boys, and the odds against career revival are very long

**THE ATF**  
Few had even heard of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms until the Waco assault

**PHILLY MITCH WILLIAMS**  
Pitches in three losing World Series games, giving up deciding homer in last

**BABY JESSICA**  
Torn from the only family she knew

**ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER**  
His too cute, too expensive *Last Action Hero* flames out

**J.F.K. CONSPIRACY BUFFS**  
With the publication of *Case Closed*, suddenly everyone agrees: Oswald did act alone

**CHEVY CHASE**  
How desperate was his show? He resorted to pre-*SNL* shtick

**KIM CAMPBELL**  
In a year, the Progressive Conservative emerges on the world stage as Canada's first woman Prime Minister, then sees her party lose 152 of its 154 seats—including hers

**BOB PACKWOOD**  
Dear Diary: Why didn't I simply resign?



SHELLY KATZ—BLACK STAR



MICHAEL L. ARBAKOFF FOR TIME



STEVE SHAPIRO—FOX



JIM MERRITT/NEW



DON EVAN

Security taxes for his housekeeper. He made the \$6,000 payment covering seven years of delinquency after being offered the Cabinet post.

**And As for Rosty's Scandal ...**  
House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dan Rostenkowski was beset with new questions about alleged improper financial dealings. The *Chicago Sun-Times* reported that the Democrat's payroll included ghost employees who either did not work for him or had not done so in years. The wife of a Chicago alderman, for instance, reportedly received a salary for five years after quitting her job in 1987. Rostenkowski is already under investigation by a federal grand jury for allegedly trading free stamps for cash at the House Post Office and allegedly using campaign funds and his office account for cars and to rent space in a building owned by his family.

**New Rules for Military Gays**  
The guidelines that officially put into place the Pentagon's "Don't ask, don't tell, don't pursue" policy pertaining to gays in the military were announced. The rules will allow gay or lesbian soldiers to serve in the armed forces but only if they are not engaging in homosexual sex. Under the policy, a soldier seen at a gay bar, for example, would not be subject to investigation, but a soldier seen holding hands with a person of the same sex might be. Gay-rights activists argued that the regulations are so vague that officers will be able to enforce them in whatever way they see fit. The constitutionality of the policy is also in question, and outgoing Defense Secretary Les Aspin has said, "We fully expect lawsuits on this."

**Pentagon Christmas Bonus**  
Stepping in to defuse a high-level budget dispute, President Clinton decided to grant the Pentagon an extra \$10 billion over the next five years. The funds will cover