

...at refigm. I think it is fair to say that—for what it's worth—he would agree with Buckley's assessment of my father, even if he has managed to—despite extensive research—arrive at nothing more than a five-cent psychoanalysis of his subject. Chate reached the conclusion that my father was a homosexual, and spends his entire book relating everything my father ever did back to that point. My father's trip to South West Africa in 1959 and his involvement in the co-founding of the Dump Johnson movement, to name a couple of examples, were, if Chate is to be believed, excuses to be around young men first and passionate commitments to important issues second. Regardless of whether or not my father ever had homosexual experiences in his life, this thesis is insidious, libelous, and absurd. *Newer Stop Running* is, in order to support this stunningly shallow "insight," a 600-page ode to brackets and ellipses—every quote Chate uses must be mangled, nipped, tucked, and coddled to fit his own voice—of which Joe McGinniss might be proud. The book is as replete with factual errors as it is with psycho-babble.

As far as Ehrenhalt's own opinions, perhaps he should go to Arlington Cemetery, where he will see on a large marble slab part of Robert Kennedy's "Ripple of Hope" speech, which my father helped write. Maybe he could visit the Congress or the Senate, where dozens of the young people my father helped inspire now work. He could talk to any of the hundreds of people across the country who worked with or debated against Al Lowenstein, all of whom would tell him that my father made a difference—in South Africa, in Namibia, in Mississippi, in the drive to end the war in Vietnam and the 68 campaign, and at the United Nations.

TOM LOWENSTEIN  
Evanston, Ill.

*Alan Ehrenhalt responds:*

Alhard K. Lowenstein was a man of principle, compassion and genuine accomplishment. Nothing in William Chate's book challenges that reality, and nothing in my review was intended to. I hope that, in time, the attention devoted to Al Lowenstein's

accepter at Oswald's Dallas rooming house. He states that I did not find her credible when she reported that a police car stopped outside her house at 1 p.m. and honked twice, but that ten pages later I "was happy to use her as a witness who saw Oswald leaving, wearing a jacket." A great pitfall of serious research is to separate the good information from the chaff. Earlene Roberts' testimony about Oswald arriving around 1:00 p.m. and then leaving with his jacket is the same story she told from the day of the assassination until the time of her death in 1966. However, regarding her story about the honking police car, journalist Hugh Aynesworth interviewed Roberts on the day of the assassination, and then three more times during the following few months. Roberts did not tell the story about the police car in the first two interviews with Aynesworth. According to Aynesworth, after Roberts finally told the story, it changed "dramatically" with each retelling. That is why I rejected it. My reason for that decision is explained in a footnote.

(3) Frank asserts that in my discussion of the young Oswald that I cited only Dr. Kenastus Hartog's testimony to the Warren Commission, "but not the psychiatrist's impressions from 1953." Again, this is wrong. I cited both Hartog's testimony to the Warren Commission and his conclusion from his 1953 "Youth House Psychiatrist's Report."

(4) Frank slights my research for the book. He summarizes my discussion about Oswald's use of "544 Camp St." on some of his pro-Castro leaflets by writing "that Oswald simply fancies that address as he strolled by it." Yet *Care Case* details the anti-Castro connections to that address (the Cuban Revolutionary Council), and Oswald's desire to embarrass the anti-Castro activists by using their former address on his pro-Castro leaflets.

(5) When discussing an episode in Clinton, Louisiana, where six witnesses later claimed to have seen Oswald together with adventurer David Ferrie, Frank asserts that I did not dispute the witnesses' honesty, but only found contradictions in their affidavits, "a prosecutor's tactic." Frank does not even give me credit for having unearthed missing documents from New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison's late 1960s' probe into

on Court TV during the mock trial of Lee Harvey Oswald, at the August, 1992, American Bar Association convention. I contacted FAA and expressed interest in utilizing the work they had put together in the prosecution of Oswald. Dr. Robert Pizali agreed, and not only did FAA check the accuracy of my draft chapter on the single bullet, but they later assisted graphic artists who created the book's appendix about ballistics. Although FAA made presentations both for the defense and prosecution sides of the Oswald mock trial, they only broke new ground with the technological work done for the prosecution. What is presented in *Care Case* is a completely accurate view of FAA's technological breakthroughs.

The insinuation that I claimed that the FAA enhancements were commissioned for the book is false. In the book, the citations to FAA's work and Dr. Pizali's testimony refer to the 1992 ABA mock trial, which is a matter of public record.

Frank ends his discussion of the FAA work by saying that the result of the ABA mock trial was a hung jury. I am not sure what significance he implies by that, since the FAA work was only a part of the trial, and did not address the question of conspiracy. I am not surprised at the jury's indecision. According to FAA's Dr. Robert Pizali, all his work proves is that a single shooter had the necessary time to fire three shots from the rear, and that the so-called magic bullet was possible. Beyond that he could not venture a guess as to whether the shooter was Oswald, or if there was a conspiracy in the case.

GERALD POSNER  
New York

Jeffrey A. Frank writes that Posner brings nothing new to "one of the most mysterious episodes of Oswald's short life"—his visit to Mexico City—and dredges up the muddy theory that there was a second Oswald. Since when is novelty relevant to historiography? Frank ignores the recollections of the two Australian tourists who saw Oswald on the bus to Mexico and who clearly remembered him at the time of the assassination; the Cuban Embassy staff who identified Oswald; the picture of Oswald on his

direct path on fire from the grassy knoll. As for the "12 percent," readers should be aware of Posner's arithmetic. According to the House Committee on Assassinations, 171 witnesses were interviewed. Of these, 76 did not pinpoint a direction for the shots; 46 pointed to the "Texas School Book Depository alone; 29 believed they came from another direction; six believed shots came from both the Depository and the knoll, and 20 believed they came from the knoll alone (Posner's 12 percent). One could just as well have written that 27 percent believed shots came from the Depository, and 29 percent believed they came from elsewhere. Such selectivity is typical of his methodology.

Similarly, Posner returns to his explanation of why Oswald may have used the "544 Camp Street" address on Fair Play for Cuba handouts, and his insistence that Oswald and David Ferrie (who worked for mob boss Carlos Marcello) did not know one another. Posner is so determined to keep Oswald and Ferrie apart that he accepts Ferrie's assertion that he never met Oswald in the New Orleans Civil Air Patrol, where they'd both served. Posner had evidently yet to see the photograph on PBS' recent "Frontline," showing Oswald and Ferrie together at a small air patrol function in 1955.

As for Failure Analysis Associates, Posner acknowledges that he wanted only the prosecutor's side of what was meant as a demonstration—utilized by prosecution and defense—of computer technology. The "insinuation" that there was a "fundamental misrepresentation" of FAA's work comes not from me, but from the chief executive officer of FAA. "It's just disappointing for a guy to go around representing this work as though it had been commissioned for him," Roger McCarthy told *The Washington Post's* George Lardner. "I would be embarrassed, but apparently not Mr. Posner."

*Book World welcomes letters from its readers. Letters must be typed. They should be signed and include the writer's address and daytime telephone number. Because of space limitations, those selected for publication may be abridged. Address letters to The Editor, Book World, The Washington Post, Washington, D.C. 20071.*

happy to use her as a witness who saw  
ld leaving, wearing a jacket. In his cu-  
y wooden portrait of the young Oswald  
rayed with far more insight by Priscilla  
on McMillan in *Marina and Lee* and  
in Don DeLillo's fictional *Libra*), the  
r cites Dr. Renatus Hartogs's psychi-  
-testimony to the Warren Commis-  
-but not the psychiatrist's impressions  
1953.

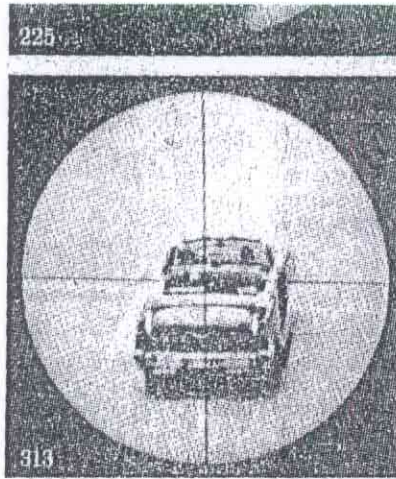
doing this sort of thing, Posner avoids  
liversions and inevitable blind alleys  
ascinate critics, but he also turns away  
the very real mysteries of the case.

he concedes that finding the address  
Camp Street" on Oswald's Fair Play  
uba handouts in New Orleans is in-  
ing; it was, after all, also the address of  
Bannister, a former FBI agent, who had  
o various right-wing and racist causes.  
er user of 544 Camp was Bannister's  
time associate, David Ferrie, who  
ed with anti-Castro Cubans and for  
boss Carlos Marcello. But while Posner  
ides that Ferrie and Bannister were a  
age and memorable pair of associates,"  
kes Oswald out of their orbit by reject-  
estimony that they knew each other  
supposing that Oswald simply fancied  
address as he strolled by—and had no  
ble ties to it.

imilarly, after Posner recounts that the  
e Select Committee found a link be-  
n Oswald and Ferrie in New Orleans to  
redible and significant," he attacks the  
isinterested witnesses who saw them  
her in a small Louisiana town. He does  
dispute these witnesses' honesty but  
r finds contradictions in their early  
ivits—a prosecutor's tactic.

r does he bring anything new to one of  
ost mysterious episodes in Oswald's  
life: a trip to Mexico City in late Sep-  
er 1963. Posner acknowledges that  
heorists believe that the man who  
repeated visits to the Cuban and So-  
embassies there might have been an  
stor—an indication that a plot was  
."The issue is a fertile one," Posner  
,"because of several factors, including  
nificant CIA blunder that the Agency  
ever completely clarified." The slightly  
23-year-old Oswald was described in a  
ype as "approximately 35 years old,  
an athletic build, about six feet tall,  
a receding hairline." A CIA photograph  
to be of Oswald shows a man who was  
Oswald—but matches that description.  
ernore, reported voice recordings of  
ld made at the time have been lost,  
ugh a staff member of the Warren  
mission heard one as late as 1964.

this, of course, may be a simple accu-  
sation of bureaucratic botches (e.g., mis-  
hing a photo with someone else under  
illiance, as the CIA said), but it makes  
ntinued speculation, particularly if you  
a conspiratorial bent. Posner does not  
that inclination, which is probably a  
thing in a project of this sort. But his  
use to what is most baffling is simply  
little evidence that annoys him and find  
in the messengers who bear it.  
the end, Posner leaves the case not



FBI reconstructions for the Warren  
Commission to approximate the telescopic  
view of the assassin

closed but murky. To seal the argument  
that one bullet struck Kennedy and Gov.  
John Connally—a *sine qua non* of the lone-  
assassin theory—Posner uses computer-  
enhanced material developed by the San Fran-  
cisco firm Failure Analysis Associates. Yet  
Roger McCarthy, the firm's CEO, has since  
expressed outrage over what he calls a "fun-  
damental misrepresentation" of the data—  
including an implication that the work was  
commissioned by Posner. In fact, McCarthy  
told The Washington Post's George Lardner  
that the company's work was developed as a  
demonstration of technology for the Ameri-  
can Bar Association and was used in the  
course of a mock trial of Oswald. The result  
of that mock trial was a hung jury.

One virtue of Posner's book is that it re-  
plies to critics who have had free, and often  
irresponsible, rein with the subject, and in  
the course of it he assails such theorists as  
Gaeton Fonzi.

Fonzi worked as an investigator for the  
House Select Committee, and his particular  
obsession, then and now, is Maurice Bishop,  
a shadowy figure who he believed ran assas-  
sination plots against Fidel Castro. Bishop  
also founded the guerrilla group Alpha 66,  
which continued to conduct raids on Cuba  
after the 1962 missile crisis.

Fonzi, when he worked for the House  
committee, became friendly with Antonio  
Veciana, the leader of Alpha 66, who told  
Fonzi this story: In September 1963, he  
visited Dallas and saw Bishop together with  
Lee Harvey Oswald. ("I did not look up,"  
Fonzi writes in his excitable way. "In my  
mind, I fell off the chair.") Fonzi was par-  
ticularly eager to prove that Maurice Bishop  
was the same person as David Atlee Phil-  
lips, a former chief of CIA operations in  
Latin America and the man who headed the  
CIA unit in Mexico City during the time of  
Oswald's reported visit.

Alas for Fonzi, Veciana would not confirm  
that dual identity. When Fonzi, in his role as  
House investigator, brought Phillips and  
Veciana face to face, Veciana said, "No,

more likely, he appears to be something  
of a one-man angel of death. Early in the  
book, he writes: "On my first official day, I  
sent to Washington a list of witnesses I  
planned to interview . . . William Pawley  
was near the top of that list. Exactly one  
week later, [Pawley], in bed in his mansion  
on Miami Beach with a nervous ailment, put  
a gun to his chest and committed suicide."

Then: "A week before I had scheduled to  
call [exiled Cuban president Carlos] Prio for  
an interview, he went to the side of his Mi-  
ami Beach home, sat in a chaise outside the  
garage and shot himself in the heart."

And, finally: "About four hours after I had  
been there [George de Mohrenschildt's]  
daughter told him of my visit and gave him  
my card . . . shortly afterward he said he  
was going upstairs to rest. What de Moh-  
renschildt then apparently did was take a  
.20-gauge shotgun . . . barrel in his mouth,  
leaned forward and pulled the trigger."

Maybe it's something in Fonzi's manner.

Like many researchers, Fonzi is struck by  
the way things seem to dovetail, the some-  
times startling coincidences. After all, it is  
true enough that Oswald's closest friend in  
Dallas was the enigmatic White Russian de  
Mohrenschildt and that de Mohrenschildt  
had been a friend of the Bouvier family and  
known Jacqueline Bouvier as a little girl. It  
is fascinating, but what can it possibly  
mean?

SUCH LINKAGES (though not  
that particular one) are what propel  
Peter Dale Scott, a professor of  
English at Berkeley and an assassi-  
nation theorist for more than two decades,

Scott seems to know almost everything  
that is publicly known about the murder of  
JFK. He writes with authority and in a  
strangely detached, lucid prose. Perhaps it  
is because he knows almost everything that  
he has an irresistible impulse to connect  
almost everything.

Some of these ties have absorbed other  
students of the case—such as those of Jack  
Ruby to such organized crime figures as  
Lewis McWillie, who managed the Tropi-  
cana nightclub in Havana—connections that  
the House Select Committee found impor-  
tant but that the Warren Commission more  
or less ignored.

But Scott himself becomes, in his book,  
increasingly bizarre, trotting out endless  
linkages—all to support his "deep politics"  
theme, which is that the American century  
is unfashionably corrupt. Ultimately, Scott  
appears to go around the bend. In one pas-  
sage, too long to quote in full, he manages  
to connect Ruby to Candy Barr, the stripper  
and "protégée" of gangster Mickey Cohen.  
Barr in turn is connected to the Bobby Bak-  
er scandal through friends of Baker. They  
are connected by marriage to one Maureen  
Biner, who would later become known as  
(ta-da!) Mo Dean, after marrying John  
Dean, of Watergate fame.

After a while, these connections become  
a source of wonderment, though not per-  
haps as Scott intended. This is the sort of  
thing that gives skepticism a bad name. ■

**CASE  
CLOSED**

**PART II**

# The Magic Bullet

By Gerald Posner

**CONSPIRACY BUFFS HAVE YEARNED FOR 30 YEARS** for a witness able to supply conclusive evidence about what happened in Dealey Plaza. We now have that witness, thanks to technological advances. Computer enhancements of the famous home movie of JFK's motorcade by Abraham Zapruder, as well as scale re-creations using computer animation, have settled key issues with a precision unattainable by the Warren Commission in 1964 or the House Select Committee on Assassinations in 1978. They establish—



**Bullet that hit JFK and Connally: true size**

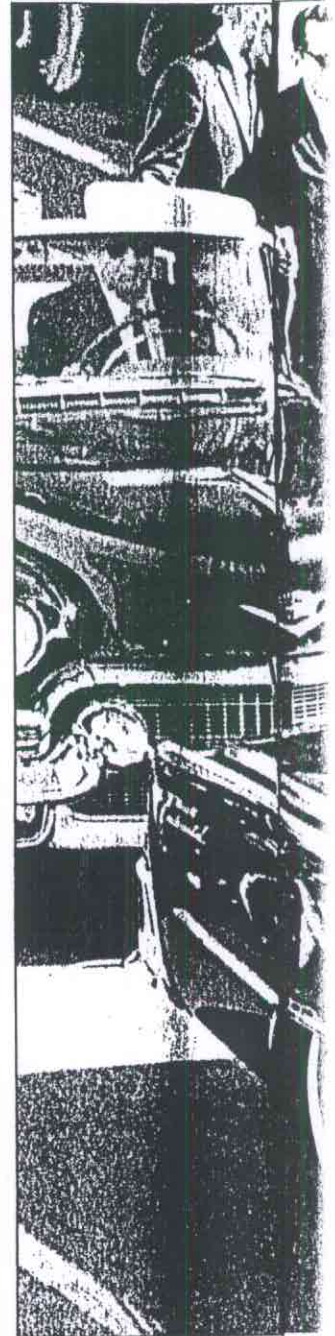
- That Oswald had ample time to fire three shots.
- That one of the shots—dubbed the “magic bullet” by skeptics—did indeed pass through both John Kennedy and John Connally.
- That no second gunman, on the grassy knoll or anywhere else, fired any shots into Kennedy or Connally.

The first issue is timing. In 1964, the FBI's test firing of Oswald's Mannlicher-Carcano rifle determined that a minimum of 2.25 to 2.3 seconds was necessary between shots to operate the bolt and re-aim. Since the first bullet was already in the rifle's chamber and ready to fire, that meant Oswald had to operate the bolt action twice. According to the Warren Commission, the fastest he could have fired all three shots was 4.5 seconds. The House select committee, in its 1977 reconstruction tests, reduced the time necessary for three effective shots to 3.3 seconds.

The home movie made by Zapruder, a Dallas dressmaker, serves as a time clock for the assassination. By figuring when the first and last shots took place, it is possible to know how much total time the shooter had. The third shot is the easiest to pinpoint. On the Zapruder film, the president is hit in the head at frame 313. No matter what number of shots they heard, the witnesses were almost unanimous that the head shot was the final one.

Determining the time of the first shot—the start of the assassination clock—is hard-

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**N O V E M B E R**

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January 4, 1994

Mr. Harold Weisberg  
7627 Old Receiver Road  
Frederick, MD 21701

Dear Harold,

I appeared on Fox Morning News with Gerald Posner sometime in November. After the show he took me aside and told me, "look, I know the case isn't closed." He said, in essence, that the title was intended to be provocative. Also that he had had some conversation with George Lardner in which he asked Lardner whether he would be bothered if the title had been "Case for the Prosecution" instead of "Case Closed," and Lardner said no.

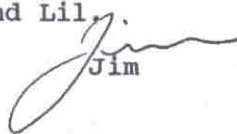
He also told me that his goal was simply to get Oswald back into the picture, saying "he hasn't been there for the past 30 years." As I understood it, he would be satisfied if he succeeded only in getting the question of Oswald's guilt back into the debate. You may want to check with Paul Hoch on this, as he told me he had explained this position to Hoch.

After the Fox show, I appeared with Posner on an Irish talk show by telephone. This was probably a week or two after the Fox show. During the course of this show I noted that Posner had told me that he knew that the case is not closed. Posner did not dispute my statement.

Enclosed is a copy of the memo in which the FBI proposes to give the HSCA a copy of the Dallas field office files on JFK being made available to you--if all else fails. I think this is one of the documents you recently asked me for.

Very hastily.

Best regards to you and Lil.

  
Jim

# COMMENTARY

By Nicholas von Hoffman

*The New York Observer* 12/20/93  
p4 C-3-6

Now that the nation's throat has gulped on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of John Kennedy's murder, please excuse a few impolite noises emanating not from the heart but the bowel. If truth be told, the slain Kennedy owes as much to his killer as he did to his father and his father's money. Without Lee Harvey Oswald, J.F.K. would just be another nondescript, one-term President, standing in that palatial row of ancient former Chief Executives behind Bill Clinton on those occasions of state when political shades from the past are summoned to get a bill through Congress or manifest a mindless solidarity on behalf of free trade, the cocaine wars or another panacea du jour.

Whatever lasting celebrity Kennedy has been accorded, he can thank Oswald for it. Had he died a natural death from any of the things we've subsequently learned ailed him, he would be as profoundly unknown as William McKinley, who also was called the "martyred President" until the country forgot he'd ever existed. In historical importance, however, McKinley ranks a few notches higher than Kennedy: The former, after all, guided the United States to victory in a war that committed the nation to a course of internationalism it has scarcely deviated from since.

As an historic figure, Kennedy deserves to be ranked about on a par with James A. Garfield, who, in 1881, was also shot down by a madman. Neither President lived to accomplish much that was memorable and both men had motled escutcheons. Garfield's reputation for financial probity was not the same after he was compromised by his role in the Crédit Mobilier railroad bond scandals. On the other hand, Garfield at least was a model husband and father, something not said of Kennedy.

Yet 30 years after Garfield's death, not even historians were paying him much mind. McKinley, who also met his death at the hands of a gun-wielding left-wing crackpot, was

all but unknown by 1931, three decades after his murder. So why is Kennedy still hanging around to bother us?

The continuing intrusion of J.F.K.'s ghost into the world of the living is partially accounted for by the near-religious conviction held by many that his real killer has never been named or apprehended. The fact that no person with any plausible connection to the foul deed other than Oswald has ever surfaced has done nothing to discourage the belief that it was gunman (or gunman) X, not Oswald, who pulled the trigger. People haven't been able to swallow the idea that life is so crazy and so unpredictable that a psychotic jerk could buy himself a cheap gun and get off a couple of lucky shots, thereby ending the life of a handsome, glamorous young President. At least John Wilkes Booth, if not all his confederates in the conspiracy to murder Abraham Lincoln, was driven by emotions and motives on behalf of a cause we can understand if not approve. To this day, the mishmash inside Oswald's *cabeza* remains as incomprehensible as what impelled that other homicidal loony to murder John Lennon.

Lincoln truly was a martyred President, criminally slain by real political enemies in a real conspiracy. No matter how much of a tragedy, his death made sense and had meaning. Kennedy's death didn't. It was as random an extinction of life as that of a bug getting zapped by the hummingbird while other bugs get away. So the search for a rational killer, a murderer with a political motive, no matter how vile, is a way of refusing to accept that we human beings, even the greatest of us, die with the same predictability and for the same reasons as cockroaches. The thought that our comings and goings are so meaningless is too much to bear.

For the same reasons, perhaps, the deadly event itself has been invested with an overreaching importance. The days after the assassination are called the time that television came of age, but that's certainly a modest observation. More grandiose ones are frequently mentioned. Over the last few weeks we've been told again and again that it was in No-

vember of 1963 that "America lost its innocence," although the metaphor seems absurd in our sexually licentious times. The murder and its aftermath are made equivalent to the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden. By this crime, we are asked to infer, a once-pure America was henceforth fated to wander and labor in pain, mystification and sin. It is said that the day Kennedy was murdered, America fell apart, morally at least, and we went to hell in a hand basket, as a rising generation of young idealists dropped into a state of cynicism and disbelief. The death of Kennedy is repeatedly described to us as the passage across a time line, an abrupt transition from a golden age to an epoch of dross.

Maybe so, but American social commentators have spent most of this century marking time lines and remarking on our lost innocence. It was said of the Great War, that disillustrious crusade of 1917-18, it was said again in the shock of the Depression and yet again after Pearl Harbor. In fact, it has been said so often that America figures to be a girl with an ever regenerating hymen who, ever revirginized, starts up again pure and unsullied, so that she may once more be violated by the tragedy of history.

Though we have had four murdered Presidents, only the day of Kennedy's assassination is recognized. After the deaths of the first three, a trade in memorial memorabilia sprang up, but it certainly didn't last for 30 years. Garfield and McKinley soon dropped out of memory because they didn't bulk large enough. Lincoln was a different story, remembered not for how and when he died but for who he was and what he did. For the author of the Emancipation Proclamation and the Gettysburg Address, his life, not his violent and untimely death, is what we fix on. For President John F. Kennedy, now chiefly remembered for the whores, tarts, strumpets, bimboes, actresses, casual office workers, trolls, bobbysoxers, hookers and rich society ladies he bedded, what else is there to fix on other than the time and manner of his demise?