

COLLEGE COOL: A CAMPUS GUIDE • BEAVIS & BUTT-HEAD • '90210' 101

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# Entertainment

WEEKLY



CAN MICHAEL RICHARDS BREAK FREE OF THE CHARACTER HE PLAYS?

## KRAMER VS. KRAMER

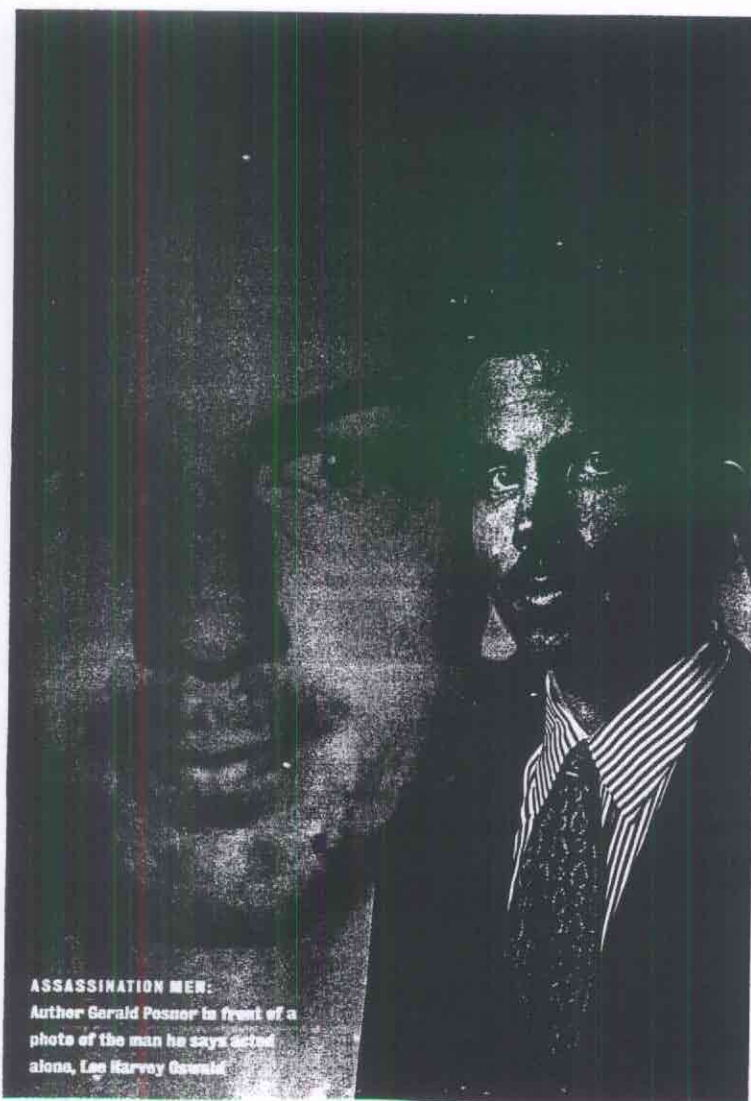
AN ACTOR'S DILEMMA PLUS STRANGE SECRETS OF THE 'SEINFELD' SET

\$2.50 (CAN. \$2.99)



# Conspiracy Killer

*With overwhelming evidence and logic, 'Case Closed' proves that Oswald was JFK's lone assassin.* BY GENE LYONS



**ASSASSINATION MEN:**  
Author Gerald Posner in front of a  
photo of the man he says acted  
alone, Lee Harvey Oswald

**H**ISTORICALLY, Americans have long congratulated themselves for their dedication to plain facts and their commonsense suspicion of abstract theories. The reality, of course, is far less flattering to national self-esteem. We have always been suckers for a good conspiracy theory. Such all-American figures as William Jennings Bryan, Henry Ford, and J. Edgar Hoover rarely failed to find organized subversion wherever they looked, nor lacked for cheering throngs to support them.

Even so, it is still remarkable that it has taken 30 years since the assassination of President John F. Kennedy for a book like Gerald Posner's **CASE CLOSED: LEE HARVEY OSWALD AND THE ASSASSINATION OF JFK** (Random House, \$25) to be written and published. Every conscientious citizen who has ever sat up half the night mauling over the elaborate speculations of conspiracy mavens like Mark Lane, Edward Jay Epstein, David S. Lifton, Robert Sam Anson, Anthony Summers, and Jim Marrs (those are only the most prominent), not to mention the millions who lined up to watch Oliver Stone's brilliant 1991 propaganda film *JFK*, owes it to himself to give Posner's book a careful reading. The result, safe to say, will come as a revelation.


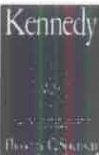
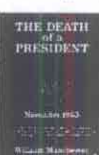




And, yes, as something of a relief. As thorough and incisive a job of reporting and critical thinking as you will ever read, *Case Closed* does more than buttress the much beleaguered Warren Commission's conclusion that Lee Harvey Oswald—pitiful, grandiose lone defector—bore full and solitary responsibility for the murder of President Kennedy. It also indicts and pretty much convicts the entire JFK-conspiracy industry of sloppy research, shoddy thinking, special pleading, hysterical speculation, and downright dishonesty. More than that, Posner's book is written in a penetrating, lucid style that makes it a joy to read. Even the footnotes, often briskly debunking one or another fanciful or imaginary scenario put forth by the conspiracy theorists, rarely fail to enthrall.

How and why the Kennedy assassination has become such a happy hunting

PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFF WE'NER

# ALL KENNEDYS, ALL THE TIME

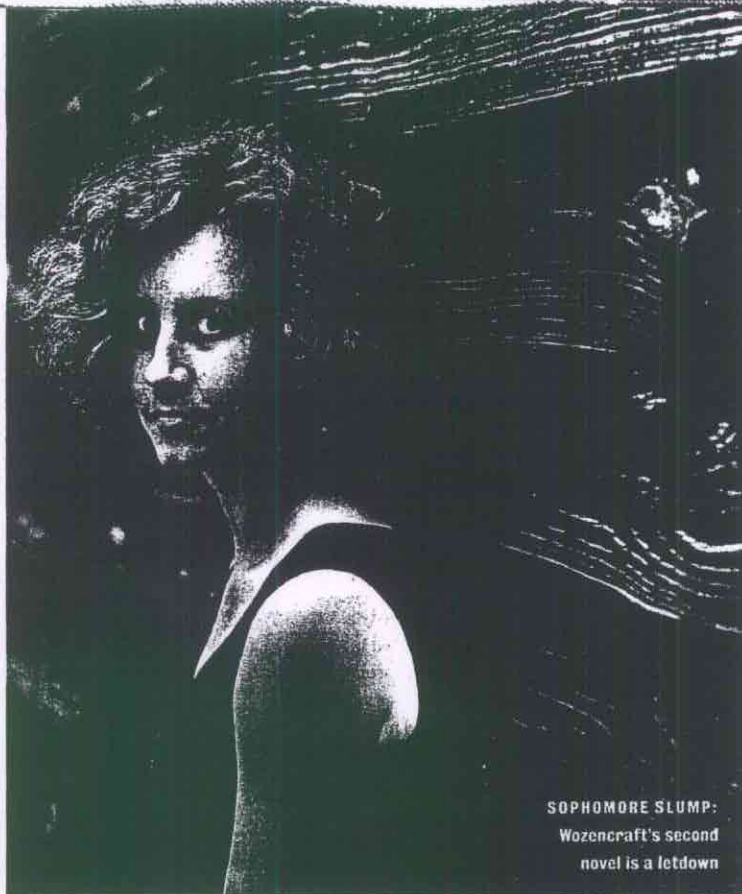
THE KENNEDY MOMENT in American history survives in myth and magic—and in a long shelf of books, serious and sleazy, about the epic time. There are semiofficial histories by administration admirers, critical works by historians and journalists, and the inevitable gossip glut by camp followers. Here's our guide to the most notable titles. —*Andrew Kopkind*

TITLE	CLAIM TO FAME	AGENDA	PROBLEM	JUDGMENT OF POSTERITY
 <p><b>A THOUSAND DAYS</b> Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr.</p>	<p>Liberal academic star gets to play inside the White House</p>	<p>First out of the starting gate to establish the basic elements of the Kennedy myth: courage, brilliance, vision, culture</p>	<p>Author confuses Kennedy's virtues with those he would like to be his own</p>	<p>Blinded by the light of Camelot</p>
 <p><b>KENNEDY</b> Theodore C. Sorensen</p>	<p>Kennedy alter ego devised the classy but essentially meaningless antitheses and inversions of JFK's speeches</p>	<p>Set in stone description of JFK as "pragmatic liberal," kill idea that Democratic Presidents were soft on communism</p>	<p>Author created one straw man, destroyed another</p>	<p>Too close for comfort, or objectivity</p>
 <p><b>THE DEATH OF A PRESIDENT</b> William Manchester</p>	<p>Jackie suggested the author write this work, turned against him when the finished product offended her finer sensibilities</p>	<p>Mythologizing the assassination as a tragic act in the tradition of the great English regicides and Greek tyrannicides</p>	<p>Author is no Shakespeare or Sophocles</p>	<p>More than we wanted to know about Nov. 22, 1963</p>
 <p><b>THE KENNEDYS: AN AMERICAN DRAMA</b> Peter Collier and David Horowitz</p>	<p>Authors are famous political changelings, switching from red-hot radicals in the '60s to glare-ice conservatives in the '90s</p>	<p>The Family, warts and all</p>	<p>Despite their tough love, the authors treat the Kennedy saga like an epic romance novel. <i>Omnia vincit amor.</i></p>	<p>All unhappy families are the same</p>
 <p><b>THE KENNEDY IMPRISONMENT: A MEDITATION ON POWER</b> Garry Wills</p>	<p>Author mixes classics, American culture, public policy, and history; sounds like liberal and conservative at the same time</p>	<p>Create an existentialist, Aesopian, vaguely poststructuralist, Catholic moralist context for JFK (wow!)</p>	<p>Gets a bit stuck on the Kennedy libido</p>	<p>The best existentialist, Aesopian, vaguely poststructuralist...</p>
 <p><b>A QUESTION OF CHARACTER: A LIFE OF JOHN F. KENNEDY</b> Thomas C. Reeves</p>	<p>Author is a leading American scholar of the life of Chester A. Arthur (Chester who?)</p>	<p>John F. Kennedy as dirty bird</p>	<p>No follow-up—e.g., the author states that JFK was circumcised at the age of 21, but he doesn't say why, or how</p>	<p>Shallow clip job; the first cut is the deepest</p>
 <p><b>A WOMAN NAMED JACKIE</b> C. David Heymann</p>	<p>Author dedicates this book to two lawyers</p>	<p>A buck</p>	<p>No problem</p>	<p>Worth a buck</p>

ground for opportunists and crackpots is not so hard to figure. Almost regardless of their political orientation, millions share the perception that American life has grown infinitely more difficult and confusing since that awful November afternoon in 1963. Also, as Posner writes, "strong psychological reasons prompted the public's early embrace of conspiracy theories. The notion that a misguided sociopath had wreaked such havoc made the crime seem senseless and devoid of political significance. By concluding that JFK was killed as the result of an elaborate plot, there is the belief he died for a purpose."

But piece by fascinating piece, Posner—a former Wall Street lawyer whose previous works include *Warlords of Crime*, a book about Chinese heroin smugglers, and a widely praised biography of Nazi death-camp doctor Joseph Mengele that he coauthored—takes the evidence in the Kennedy assassination apart and puts it back together. As the author himself points out, no mere mortal could tie up every last loose end. Even in an ordinary mugging in broad daylight, eyewitness accounts are apt to vary sharply. But will it come as news to readers persuaded otherwise by countless books, TV and radio documentaries, and films to learn that fully 88 percent of witnesses in Dealey Plaza on Nov. 22, 1963, testified to hearing exactly three shots? That computerized enhancement of the famous Zapruder film and sophisticated ballistics tests now prove that the renowned "single bullet" that wounded both JFK and Texas governor John Connally is an incontrovertible fact? That many "eyewitnesses" who supposedly saw all manner of strange goings-on that day either weren't actually there, told very different (and more consistent) stories under oath before the media spotlight found them, or resided in psychiatric hospitals? The chapter on New Orleans district attorney Jim Garrison, the heroic lone-wolf prosecutor of Oliver Stone's *JFK*—who before his mad quest ended had placed 16 assassins at five locations in Dealey Plaza—is by itself a masterpiece of expository journalism.

*Case Closed* is a work of genuine patriotism and a monument to the astringent power of reason. **A**



SOPHOMORE SLUMP:  
Wozencraft's second  
novel is a letdown

## The Accused

*Judging the sanity of a husband killer*

IT'S NOT EVERY NOVEL that comes with a dust-jacket blurb from a convicted murderer—in this case, Jean Harris, the prep school headmistress who shot her cheating lover, Scarsdale Diet doctor Herman Tarnower. In the case of Kim Wozencraft's **NOTES FROM THE COUNTRY CLUB** (Houghton Mifflin, \$19.95), however, Harris' is an appropriate endorsement. The "country club" in question is the Veritas unit of the Fort Worth Federal Correctional Institution, where a government psychiatrist must determine whether heroine Cynthia Mitchell is sane enough to stand trial for the stabbing death of her abusive husband, Daniel.

The gist of Jean Harris' defense, readers may recall, was that she'd taken a gun to Tarnower's house intending to

commit suicide, but plugged the womanizing rat by accident. No such halfhearted measures for Wozencraft's luxuriantly embittered protagonist, a freelance public relations expert lured from her successful Manhattan career back to her native Texas by a smooth-talking airline pilot who not only commences to beat her like a yard dog but also seduces her sister, Alice. Few one-dimensional cardboard villains in the history of pseudo-feminist fiction have so badly needed killing, but the abundantly talented writer didn't need to stack the deck so blatantly. This is what makes Wozencraft's second outing (after 1990's much-hyped *Rush*—loosely based on her life as a former undercover narc) so disappointing. The novel's minor characters, fellow Veritas inmates for the most part, have a vivid individuality unaccountably lacking in Cynthia and her brute of a husband. There's more psychologically evocative detail in Garth Brooks' country song "The Thunder Rolls," about a battered wife's revenge, than in all 200-plus pages of *Notes From the Country Club*. **C** —GL