

View

“Remo Franceschini is an ex-New York cop with an attitude. He also can tell a pretty good story.”

From the review of Remo Franceschini's "A Matter of Honor: One Cop's Lifelong Pursuit of John Gotti and the Mob" on K3.

Sunday, August 29, 1993

BOOKS

R.I.P., conspiracy theories?

Gerald Posner says Oswald alone killed JFK, and "the facts are incontrovertible." He is confident he has closed the case. But, in fact, he has not — and nobody could.



Lee Harvey Oswald posed in April 1963 with the rifle he used to kill Kennedy. The assassin, in Posner's view as in the Warren Commission's, was a maladjusted loner.

CASE CLOSED

Lee Harvey Oswald and the Assassination of JFK
By Gerald Posner
Random House, 607 pp., \$25

Reviewed by Mary Perot Nichols

Gerald Posner, a former Wall Street lawyer, is an author with the most astounding hubris. He contends that his new book, *Case Closed*, will do what its title says: close the case on the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Posner's thesis is that Lee Harvey Oswald did it all by himself.

"Well, good luck, Mr. Posner," I said to myself as I sat down to read *Case Closed*. My own opinion is that neither God nor whatever higher power one might subscribe to could achieve Posner's goal. Kennedy biographer Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. once described the writer of facts, factoids and inconsistencies that make the Kennedy assassination the most fascinating murder mystery of our time as "a quagmire for historians."

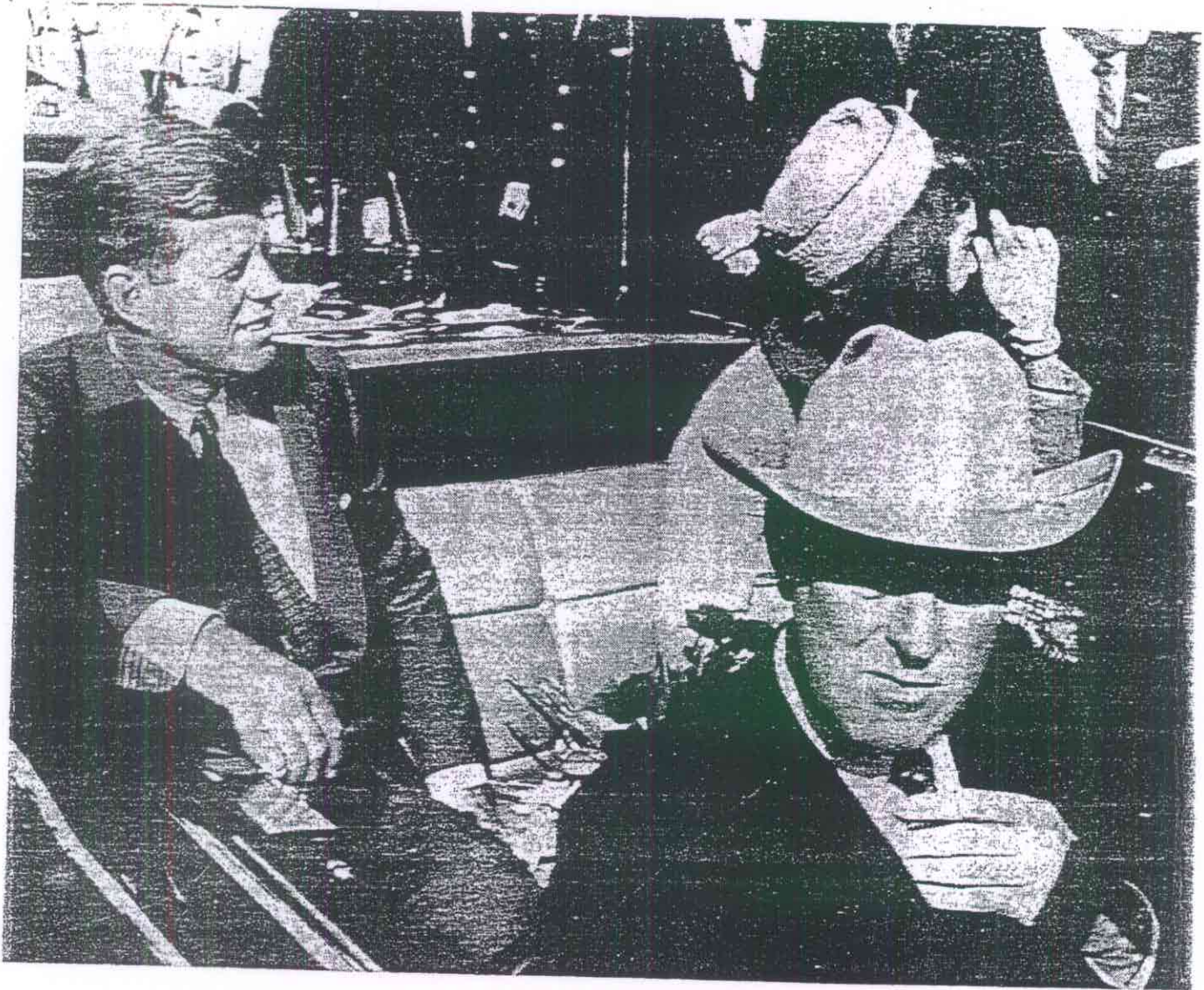
It is, in fact, a quagmire for almost anybody. Let's see if Gerald Posner stinks in it.

Posner is confident that he is on solid ground.

"Lee Harvey Oswald, driven by his own twisted and impenetrable furies, was the only assassin at Dealey Plaza on November 22, 1963," he writes. "To say otherwise, in light of the overwhelming evidence, is to absolve a man with blood on his hands, and to mock the President he killed."

Posner works very hard to show that Oswald killed Kennedy alone.

The book includes a chapter and an appendix on the Warren Commission's conclusion that the first bullet to hit Kennedy struck him high in the back, went through his throat and struck Texas Gov. John Connally. Conspiracy theorists have scoffed at the single-bullet theory; they have claimed that Connally was hit by another bullet, fired by another shooter. Posner, citing evidence developed in recent years by new technology, argues that the Warren Com-



United Press International

mission was right. (The subsequent shot that killed Kennedy hit the back of his head.)

Posner attempts to debunk the work of the various conspiracy researchers — a mixed bag of serious people who care about history; obsessed people, who aren't necessarily wrong, and crazies — and even devotes a chapter to the psychological underpinnings of an apparent national need to believe in a conspiracy.

"The search for a darker truth than the lone assassin seems unquenchable," Posner writes. But, he adds, "... for those seeking the truth, the facts are incontrovertible. ... Chasing shadows on the grassy knoll

will never substitute for real history."

In fact, Posner does not close the case and, indeed, nobody could. Questions remain to be answered about who Oswald really was. The most important question is whether he was trained as an agent by some branch of U.S. intelligence. Posner doesn't satisfactorily answer that question.

Posner rests his case largely on who he thinks Oswald really was.

"Understanding [Oswald]," Posner writes, and I agree, "is the key to finding out what happened in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963." Posner views Oswald as pretty much the maladjusted loner portrayed by the Warren Com-

mission.

Posner writes extremely well. His narrative about Oswald's life is worth the price of the book for those who are new to the subject. For those, like me, who have read the 26 volumes of the Warren Commission

See OSWALD on K4

Mary Perot Nichols, an adjunct professor of social sciences at New York University, teaches a course called "Who Killed JFK?" She is a former journalism professor and former president of WNYC, a communications group made up of New York City's three public broadcasting stations. She is working on a novel about the Cold War.

The President and Jacqueline Kennedy with Gov. John Connally in Dallas motorcade on Nov. 22, 1963. "Lee Harvey Oswald," writes Posner, "... was the only assassin at Dealey Plaza" that day.