

# The day the

**I**T WASN'T just the assassinated, John F Kennedy, and the assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, who died within two days of each other in Dallas in November, 1963.

So did the truth.

Even by the end of that November, a Gallup poll showed that only 29 per cent believed that Oswald was alone responsible for Kennedy's death; the majority then and since have convinced themselves that Oswald had to have had an accomplice or, in some extreme cases, that Oswald had no role at all.

Posner is a lawyer turned author whose previous books have ranged from a profile of the Angel of Death, Josef Mengele, to an analysis of the international heroin trade.

He argues that there was no conspiracy, there could not have been, and there is no credible or plausible evidence to point to any killer other than Oswald; and that Oswald's killer, Jack Ruby, also acted alone and on the spur of the moment.

Groden takes an altogether different line. A longtime conspiracy theorist, his stature was enhanced in 1991 when Oliver Stone hired him as a consultant on his well-executed but flawed film, *JFK*, which, according to one recent American poll, Americans accept as just about a true record of events.

Groden's book leans heavily on the film for photos and graphics — it's almost the book of the film — and one is as flawed as the other.

Millions of words have been written about the events that occurred within 8.4 seconds — the time it took Oswald to fire three shots, the first missing, the second hitting both Kennedy and Texas Governor John Connally, and the

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**CASE CLOSED**  
by Gerald Posner  
Warner Books, \$21.95

**THE KILLING OF A PRESIDENT**  
by Robert J Groden  
Bloomsbury, \$69.95

reviewed by Ron Palenski

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third and fatal shot, hitting Kennedy in the back of the head.

That was what the Warren Commission concluded in 1964 and no one, despite all the theories, has been able to produce believable evidence — evidence that stands up to modern, high-technology analysis — that it happened any differently.

Posner takes an academic, tolerant approach to many of the theories and examines some of them step by step, demolishing arguments as he goes, sometimes by reason and sometimes, in the more bizarre cases, by ridicule.

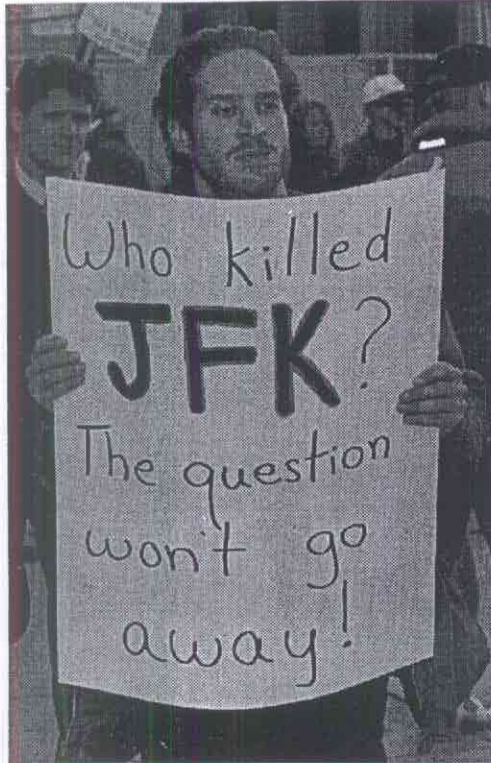
One of the latter is the so-called "Umbrella Man", the man in Dealy Plaza at the time of the shooting who rapidly raised and lowered an umbrella.

This was seized upon by Stone and Groden as a signal to gunmen on the infamous grassy knoll, the theorists' most common source of other shots.

Umbrella Man then disappeared. But he didn't. He was Louie Witt, who testified to the House Select Committee in 1978 that he used his umbrella as a way to attract Kennedy's attention.

The House Select Committee gave new impetus to conspiracy theories because it concluded, solely on the basis of a police radio tape, that there had been more than

# truth died in Dallas



A protester poses the continuing question during a rally calling for a reopening of the case

three shots and that Kennedy had been killed "probably" as the result of a conspiracy.

It couldn't say who conspired with whom and, as Posner argues, the tape evidence was about the last the committee heard and it made no attempt to re-examine its earlier evidence that had borne out the Warren Commission's findings.

Chasing shadows on the grassy knoll will continue for years; long after any possible witnesses (or even conspirators) have died.

It's as if Americans can't accept that the crime of the century was committed by a single, crazed man: they want their president to have died for more complex reasons, to have been martyred for a much

greater good; they wanted some purpose in his death.

Perhaps the best response to the conspiracy theories was from John Kennedy jr: "None of it alters the fundamental fact that nothing will bring my father back to life."

□ Ron Palenski is assistant editor of the Sunday Times



Robert Kennedy holds Jacqueline's hand as they leave Air Force One that brought John Kennedy's body back from Dallas in November 1963. Her clothing is stained with her husband's blood