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New Assassination Book Rips Conspiracy Theory

By VICTOR LASKY

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NEW YORK—So much fantasy has been woven around the tragic death of President Kennedy that it is a pleasure to report that a new book, written by one of the nation's finest reporters, successfully replies to the innuendoes, suspicions, and accusations that have created confusion and doubt around the world.

And what a book! It rips to shreds the theories espoused by such critics of the Warren Commission as the exhibitionist Mark Lane, one of whose previous claims to fame was being fined \$415 for ignoring 19 Manhattan traffic tickets. And it even takes on the colorful and ambitious New Orleans Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison.

Charles Roberts, author of "The Truth About the Assassination," was an eyewitness to the dreadful events that occurred in Dallas. Moreover, Roberts, who is White House reporter for Newsweek Magazine, was one of the two newsmen who flew to Washington aboard Air Force One, after he had witnessed Lyndon Johnson's swearing-in as president.

ONE OF THE chapters in his new book deals with the errors he found in the much-discussed book by William Manchester. He takes issue with Manchester's suggestions that Johnson was unseemly in his haste to assume the presidency. Instead, Roberts says, Johnson's takeover was "careful, correct, considerate and compassionate."

And he adds: "A long tradition of quick succession in such circumstances and the uncertain state of the world at the time dictated that Johnson, already President under the Constitution, should take his oath to defend the Constitution at the first opportunity. Not to have done so would have tended to perpetuate the vacuum of power that seemed to exist in the first two hours after the fatal shot."

Although Roberts corrects

other Manchester misjudgments and just plain errors, his main purpose in writing this book was to make a point-by-point refutation of attacks on the Warren Report by such critics as Lane, Harold Weisberg, and Edward J. Epstein. The manner in which they deliberately distorted the evidence contained in the voluminous documentation of the report is truly astounding.

ROBERTS REALLY goes after those deluded souls who believe that somehow the truth about Dallas has been concealed because of a conspiracy. The author quotes a Secret Service agent on this

subject: "If this is a conspiracy, it's really a big one: It's got to include the Dallas police force, the Secret Service, the FBI, all those doctors at Parkland, all those doctors at Bethesda, the entire Warren Commission, the Warren Commission staff, the Justice Department, and finally the attorney general, or it just won't work."

And, as Roberts notes, the attorney general at that time was Robert F. Kennedy. "Somehow, after that," he writes, "I could never take conspiracy theories very seriously."

This is a book that does for the Warren Commission what it apparently was unable to do for itself.

The foreward, incidentally, is by Pierre Salinger who takes issue with those who have called for a reopening of the Warren Commission investigation. Says JFK's press secretary:

"In my opinion those who have made such demands have not taken the time to make the kind of careful study made by Mr. Roberts. Had they done so they would have arrived at the same conclusion that he did. That is, in fact, that not one shred of new evidence has been brought forth by anyone since the Warren Commission made its findings public which would merit such a new hearing."