

Remember John Wilkes Booth?

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ONE of our boyhood memories is of a very old man who claimed he was John Wilkes Booth, the actor who assassinated Abraham Lincoln.

This despite the fact that it was then more than 60 years after Booth was killed by a Federal cavalryman on a Virginia farm and the corpse identified by a tattoo on one hand and by a surgeon who had removed a tumor from the actor's neck.

But since Booth had been only 27 at the time of the assassination, the age factor was possible. And the ground for such a story was fertile because Booth's body had been given secret burial.

One trouble was there were a number of John Wilkes Booths thruout the country at the time. About all they got out of their bids for notoriety was the wide-eyed attention of youngsters in their neighborhoods and sometimes a brief mention of their claims in their obituaries.

It is only three years since President Kennedy's assassination but already we're beginning to get this John Wilkes Booth business. So far it has taken the form of books, lectures and magazine articles to the effect the Warren

Commission didn't do its job and there really was much more behind President Kennedy's murder than has been told.

No Lee Harvey Oswald impersonator has popped up yet. But most of the critics of the Warren report claim there had to be another man firing another rifle.

You can bet your life that some day there'll be a character who'll claim such — possibly about the year 2010.

UPI White House Reporter Merriman Smith, who won a Pulitzer prize for his coverage of President Kennedy's assassination, says any book dealing with the late President is a cinch to sell 20,000 copies. And lecture fees for those allegedly exposing the Warren Commission's findings are reported to be in high figures.

The gents who have a good thing going don't care a hoot that every responsible Federal official is satisfied that Oswald and Oswald alone killed President Kennedy. Or that Sen. Robert Kennedy, as Attorney General at the time with the total power of the Federal investigative apparatus at his control, says he has no reason to doubt the Commission's findings.

And they won't care in the future. But that doesn't mean they are worthy of attention.