

JFK— The Story That Won't Go Away

BY DENNIS CARACCIOLLO

Why yet another JFK assassination article? Because we want to help set the record straight. Rather than headlining opinion and wild speculation, media expert Dennis Caracciolo offers up facts from the public record. And the facts speak for themselves.

The witness is overwhelming that Lee Harvey Oswald did not act alone and may have been, as he claims, a "patsy" set up to

take the fall. How could Oswald have fired shots that no other marksman could duplicate? How could one "magic" bullet defy the laws of physics, striking both the President and Governor Connally seconds apart, shattering bones, to be found virtually intact resting on a hospital stretcher? Is it believable that mob runner Jack Ruby executed Oswald to "spare Mrs. Kennedy the ordeal of a trial"? What were Oswald's CIA connections? How did authorities allow JFK's bullet-riddled brain to disappear? Why did a score of key



New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison (Kevin Costner) is confronted by reporters in Oliver Stone's gripping suspense drama *JFK*, the first of several new movies to keep this issue before the public.

witnesses die by "suicide" or accident? Why have there been no further investigations despite a congressional committee's judgement that a conspiracy was "probable"? And why are government records still sealed?

There is no shortage of possible conspirators or conspiracy theories. Cuban expatriates were upset with Kennedy's refusal to send air coverage during the aborted Bay of Pigs invasion. JFK was in the process of reorganizing the CIA because of their failure to inform him of Cuban invasion plans. The Mafia was angry at the Kennedys for their vigorous anti-crime stance. The far right wanted JFK out of office because of his accommodations to the Soviet Union. Industrial war interests stood to lose hundreds of millions in profits if Kennedy carried through on his plans to back off from the arms race and military build up in southeast Asia.

Still, isn't all this ancient history? Not when you consider that key conspirators may still be alive. Or that the course of American history may have been altered by a silent coup. And especially not when you consider the most serious aspect of this tragedy, mass media complicity. Why have Americans been sheltered from the facts of this case? Why have all conspiracy theorists been branded as kooky, self-aggrandizing, or traitorous? Not all conspiracy theories can be right—many are self-contradictory. Nevertheless, the conspiracy of silence is undeniable.

We agree with movie maker Oliver Stone that the truth must come to light so that such a thing can never happen again. We believe that writer Caracciolo has done an outstanding job summarizing the political and psychological issues surrounding these events. What do you think? Send your comments to OPEN EXCHANGES, POB 7880, Berkeley, CA 94707. We'll print your reactions in the very next edition.

Contact Dennis Caracciolo directly from his listing under Marketing on page 23.

In one quarter century—Vietnam, race riots, Watergate, abortion marches, feminism, Iran-Contra, Anita Hill says she was sexually harassed, feminists adopt her as a patron saint while conservatives scream that Clarence Thomas is being lynched. William Kennedy Smith goes on trial and Kennedy haters proclaim a woman was raped while those with warm memories of

Camelot point to a woman's promiscuity.

Documents surface, lies unfold. Presidential tapes erased, pay-offs verified, the film at eleven. Yet everyone has an opinion. Never mind the facts. No, never mind them. Facts are crushed in emotion, wishful thinking, and the need for political consistency. Someone once said, "When you want an excuse, any one will do."

Last spring, director Oliver Stone began shooting a \$45 million blockbuster on one of America's bleakest moments, the assassination of the youngest President ever elected. As if on cue, the howl is heard from here to the *New York Times*. Stone is ranted for dramatizing the greatest whodunit since the Lindbergh kidnapping. The cameras were still rolling in New Orleans when *The Washington Post* unleashed, "Dallas in Wonderland: Oliver Stone's Version of the Kennedy Assassination Exploits the Edge of Mania." *New York Times* pundit Tom Wicker opined that the film was "...paranoid and fantastic." Most intriguing was Nichol Lemann's psychoanalysis in *Gentleman's Quarterly*: "People who become fixated on the Kennedy assassination often are engaged in some sort of search for a lost father."

Last February, under the aegis of Dan Rather, a man who bristles at the mention of a Kennedy conspiracy, CBS produced a special 48 Hours titled "JFK." After an obligatory roll-call of assassination footage, testimony from all sides, and recreations of rifle firings, Rather solemnly concluded: "Facts—hard evidence—are the journalists guide."

Facts?! Hard Evidence?!

Indeed, where are they, Mr. Rather? Have we finally reached a point in this country where facts have been replaced by political correctness candy-coating the contradictions and violations of physics, optics, pathology, and ballistics?

Yes, where, oh where, Mr. Rather, have the facts been for you in 28 years? And where have the journalists been who should have uncovered them and lit them

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RASPAD: The Chernobyl Movie



On April 26, 1986, reactor number 4 at the Chernobyl nuclear power station exploded and caught fire. Some eighteen days after the disaster, Mikhail Gorbachev made an address on television acknowledging the incident, but until that moment, panic, mystery, deception, and confusion prevailed. Millions of innocent inhabitants of nearby Kiev, and the entire Ukraine region, stood on the brink of an apocalypse while the authorities told them that there was nothing to fear. Some of those people died immediately. Countless others would wait—indeed, some still wait—to learn what effect Chernobyl would have on their lives.

RASPAD is a haunting and powerful drama that recreates the Chernobyl disaster and its aftermath. In a series of fictional vignettes, alternately touching and terrifying, RASPAD—which means "collapse"—tells us for the first time what actually happened and does so from the perspective of those who were witnesses to, and victims of, the tragedy.

As rumors circulate, a Soviet journalist tries to get the truth about the explosion at the Chernobyl Power Station. Meanwhile, public officials delay and deny the facts to the public. Themes of betrayal and faith in public and private life emerge in this surprisingly candid drama of the Easter/May Day weekend in the Soviet Ukraine. Intimate details of family life and the relationship between women and men parallel the massive scale of public hysteria and the ultimate evocation of the Chernobyl district.

Filmed three years after the event on actual locations, and with unprecedented government cooperation, RASPAD combines intimate scenes of personal peril with epic-scale evocations of mass exodus and frenzy. The end result, which is at once moving, shocking, informative, and cautionary, is in every way equal to the enormity of its subject.

RASPAD is playing at the Kabuki Theater in San Francisco this Spring. See the announcement on page 10 for complete details.

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up on screens the size of football fields? For nearly 30 years I have asked myself these questions a thousand times. It wasn't until recently, when the Stone film was released and fury reached a boiling point, that I think I finally arrived at the answers.

But first, one must begin with facts. We start with 27 volumes of facts about a grim week-end in Dallas a long time ago. These facts weave a story that must be understood on several levels—before some larger and more compelling facts emerge.

The Warren Report

Afereight months of investigation, seven men signed the Warren Report in September, 1964 and handed it to President Lyndon Johnson. It concluded Lee Harvey Oswald fired three times from the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository and hit President Kennedy two times at exactly 12:30 p.m., e.s.t. One of the shots which struck the President also pierced Governor John Connally in the seat ahead.

Oswald left the building three minutes after the assassination, caught a bus, got off, took a cab, and arrived at his boarding house in Dallas' Oak Cliff section around 1 p.m. Three minutes later, Oswald left the house with a jacket and was seen standing at a curb waiting for a bus. He reached an intersection about nine-tenths of a mile away approximately 15 minutes later where he shot Dallas patrolman J. D. Tippit four times with a .38 caliber revolver. He fled the scene and went into a movie theater. The ticket lady noticed he hadn't paid, and she called the police. After a scuffle, Oswald was arrested and taken to headquarters.

Meanwhile, president Kennedy was pronounced dead at Parkland Hospital, and Governor Connally who had undergone surgery recovered. The President's body was flown to Bethesda Naval Hospital where an autopsy was performed later that night.

Oswald denied killing anyone for nearly 48 hours, then, on November 24, was led out of the Dallas police basement. Dallas nightclub owner Jack Ruby stepped out of the crowd and fired a shot into Oswald's abdomen. Minutes later Oswald was pronounced dead at Parkland Hospital.

In general, the Warren Report revealed the following about Lee Harvey Oswald: a psychologically disturbed background. Marxist leanings. Defected to Russia. Documents proving ownership of assassination rifle and revolver used to kill Tippit. Picture of accused in backyard with both weapons. In the building at the time of shooting. Friend saw Oswald carrying a package of "curtain rods" into the building that morning. Unstable, described as "loner" by many. Tried to kill General Edwin A. Walker only months before. Killed Officer J.D. Tippit while fleeing the assassination scene.

What's Wrong Here?

This is the essential story. Slick. Packaged. Hand-delivered. Case closed. Until you begin to examine these facts. When you do, a whole new universe opens up.

For example, there's Oswald's so-called "Marxist" background. The address on the

leaflets of Oswald's Fair Play for Cuba Committee was 344 Camp St. Curiously, this "office" connects to 531 Lafayette St., the New Orleans headquarters of Mr. Guy Bannister. Bannister was the leader of the right-wing, anti-communist League of the Caribbean. Both locations turn out to lead to the same place. What's a committed Marxist doing sharing space with a right-wing redneck?

But this is just the beginning.

The Single Bullet Theory

When it comes to facts, the single bullet theory is harder to swallow than an entire side of beef.

When Abraham Zapruder innocently took home movies of the Presidential motorcade, he unwittingly created a clock for the timing of the assassination.

The film's speed (18.3 feet per second) and a frame-by-frame analysis reveal that the span of time from the first shot fired to the last shot was 5.6 seconds. Since the Warren Report concluded three shots were fired, it meant Oswald had to have shot all three times in the required 5.6 seconds.

This minimum time in which the weapon (a 6.5 Manlicher-Carcano rifle) could be fired was 2.3 seconds (42 frames). This made it inconceivable that the rifle was fired twice when the President and Connally were first wounded. "To say that they were hit by separate bullets," said commission lawyer Norman Redlich, "is synonymous with saying that there were two assassins."

Thus, the report concluded that one bullet went through Kennedy (neck and throat) and also pierced Connally (five separate wounds). This bullet (commission exhibit 399) has been called the "magic bullet." The idea of one bullet penetrating both men is called "the single bullet theory."

But what happened to this bullet? Where did it go?

A hospital technician, Darrell Tomlinson, found a bullet most fortuitously on a stretcher at Parkland. It was later pronounced to have come from Connally's stretcher and was the bullet that pierced both men. The bullet is near pristine, unscathed virtually, and appears to be a bullet never even fired at all. One FBI expert said pristine it would have weighed 161 grains. It weighed 158.6 grains after the assassination—98 percent intact! Yet chunks of more than what was lost were taken from Governor Connally. But this bullet supposedly passed through President Kennedy and went on to shatter Connally's fifth rib, pulverizing five inches of it.

Moreover, Tomlinson maintains to this day the bullet did not come from Connally's stretcher, but another stretcher completely. And there is Governor Connally himself: "An entirely separate shot struck me... I'll never change my mind," he said.

As to the rifle's firing capability, the commission assigned three marksmen to match Oswald's performance. All three failed, even correcting scope defects present when Oswald allegedly used it.

No wonder the Italians called the Manlicher-Carcano, "The rifle that never hurt anybody."

Who Was Lee Harvey Oswald?

Oswald was a chameleon: Marxist, CIA, KGB, FBI, Naval Intelligence, you name it. Fingerprints of all of the above are stamped upon him. This alone should be a clue to his real identity. But view it this way:

Imagine your neighbor is John Doe. You learn the following facts about him: Marine Corps training at secret U-2 base, acquires bogus hardship discharge, boards steamer to France, then England, flies to Helsinki on a night for which there are no listed commercial flights, defects to Russia, marries daughter of high-ranking KGB official, returns to U.S. trouble-free, creates Fair Play for Cuba Committee whose "office" connects to a right-wing, anti-Castro headquarters, interviewed by FBI at least twice, works for a company that does classified Defense Department work, is befriended by a wealthy oil geologist with intelligence connections, is arrested for killing a President, says, "I am a patsy," then is shot dead 48 hours later. Now who do you think John Doe was?

Very Disturbing Incident

According to the Warren Report, Oswald reached his boarding house around 1 p.m. after the assassination. His housekeeper, Mrs. Roberts, testified he rushed in and went into his room. He was in there about three minutes when an incident occurred that to this day has never been explained. Yet it may be the single most enigmatic element of that time-frame.

Mrs. Roberts stated a police car drove up to the house with two uniformed policemen in it. Then one of the officers sounded the horn and the car drove off. Roberts even identified the car to the FBI as "No. 207." Relying upon police statements, the report stated that car was at the depository building at that time.

The explanation? There isn't one, short of grandiose speculation. If this incident did happen—and why would Mrs. Roberts lie?—it suggests a signal. But of what? Roberts said that Oswald then emerged from his room with a jacket, went out, and stood on the curb at the bus stop.

Approximately 15 minutes later officer Tippit was shot four times about nine-tenths of a mile away, by Oswald, according to the report.

If Mrs. Roberts wasn't hallucinating, then either the Dallas police were implicated with Oswald, or others, disguised as Dallas police were. Either way it suggests conspiracy. Yet the Warren Commission was satisfied that Mrs. Roberts was mistaken.

Autopsy of the Century

Author Harold Weisberg (Whitehouse) wrote, "President John F. Kennedy got an autopsy unworthy of a bowery bum."

Nothing in the assassination aftermath is more riddling, shocking, and eye-opening than the President's autopsy.

Disturbing that Commander James J. Humes was assigned the task of performing the autopsy. Disturbing because Humes had never before performed an autopsy on a gunshot victim.

X-rays and photographs were made of the body, turned over to the Secret Service, and the autopsy began at 8:15 p.m. on November 22. About two dozen government agents crowded into the room at Bethesda Naval Hospital, including FBI and Secret Service. When Colonel Pierre Finck, assisting Humes, requested the President's clothing to trace bullet holes and pathways, the request was denied.

If the official version of events was correct, Oswald fired downward from behind the President, and the wounds had to correspond. In short, it meant a pathway should have existed in the President's neck; however, none of the pathologists could find one. A hole in the back of the neck was

probed by Finck with his finger, but terminated at about the length of the knuckle.

Consequently, the autopsy doctors concluded that one missile entered the skull's rear (the fatal wound) and exited from the front; and one missile entered the back of the head and "apparently dislodged during cardiac massage at Parkland Hospital." The pathologists found no bullets, of course, but Humes was obviously aware that a single assassin had been arrested and had fired from the depository. He was forced to conclude the bullet must have dropped out previously.

The next morning, Humes spoke with the Parkland doctors. He was flabbergasted to learn that doctors there observed an entry wound at the throat, then proceeded with a lateral incision and performed a tracheotomy. Humes had assumed that only a tracheotomy was the source for the hole.

He returned to his home unsettled, trying to make it all fit. Humes concluded the throat wound was exit, the neck wound entry. And the Parkland bullet had to be the culprit. However, the next comedy of horrors can scarcely be comprehended.

Humes tossed his autopsy notes into the fire. His story changed whenever the topic arose, but generally Humes said he did not want paper splattered with Presidential blood to reach the public.

Even worse, however was yet to come. By 1971 it was discovered that the President's brain, microscopic slides, and photographs of the interior chest—had vanished from the National Archives. No one has ever explained the disappearance, but what is certain is that Commander Humes and the person or persons responsible for all this robbed history of the right to know once and for all if a conspiracy existed in the killing of John F. Kennedy.

In 1965 Commander James J. Humes was promoted to Captain.

Facts heaped upon facts. One glaring hole and outrageous revelation after another. So a man makes a movie admittedly fusing facts with fiction because hypothesis is all we have—and the roof caves in.

Opinions and Facts

Why? I finally concluded that it goes to the heart of facts themselves. What if facts didn't shape opinions, but rather opinions shaped facts?

There are people right now who reject evolution, believe in the innocence of Richard Nixon, are convinced the U.S. never landed on the moon, and will argue the Jewish holocaust was a hoax—all despite the facts.

And there are those who believe a dysfunctional Marxist put the President in the crosshairs of a laughable Manlicher-Carcano rifle, shot him twice causing a head to snap violently backwards, then ran down four flights of stairs and bought a Coke knowing full well the whole world was about to converge on the building.

The Kennedy assassination is approaching three decades. But for the truth to come to light it will take more than film showing clearly a grassy knoll gunman or a damning government document. It will require a transformation in the way we think: that domestic tranquility is all too often domestic stupor. The truth will unfold the day we realize the fundamental right to question in a republic is the highest form of patriotism.



Jim Garrison, the only public prosecutor ever to bring an alleged JFK conspirator to trial, is today a Louisiana Court judge. Garrison is author of the very readable *On The Trail Of The Assassins*. Get it and decide for yourself if you believe Garrison's suspicions are justified.