

Hal - Whether Jerry's theory is valid or not, this comment by the psychiatrist who coined the word "psychedelic" (in 1957) <sup>from Dr. Humphry Osmond</sup> may be interesting. *Walter*  
4-27-78

APRIL 15, 1978...

(Prompted by Diane Judge column NY Post, 1/11/78)  
THE CONTINUING MYSTERY OF THE JFK ASSASSINATION, AND A GENERAL UNWILLINGNESS TO CONFRONT THE OBVIOUS.

As the co-author of a play (with Frank McEnaney), *Covet Honour*, which views Lee Harvey Oswald in a slightly different light, my "conversion" to Jerome Agel's theory of the JFK assassination has a weight. I still think our view of Lee HO, which is not wholly incompatible with Agel's, is psychologically more elegant. I think the evidence supports his hypothesis. Most impressive of all the evidence is the fact that had Lee HO been aiming at JFK with that rifle and there could not have been an assassination, although someone in the admiring crowds might have been hurt or even killed.

Lee HO had only six human targets in the Presidential car. The driver and another Secret Service man, the two Connallys, and JFK and Jack Ruby. As a matter of fact, Connally is a possibility, and it would be interesting to work out where those shots would have gone had they been aimed at the Texas governor. By far the most accessible targets were the two Kennedys. It is quite likely that apart from Connally no other victim was considered -- Marina has always said LHO was the assassin, but was not aiming at the President -- because traditionally in the USA assassins shoot men. In Europe, of course people would be much less surprised if an attempt was made on a head of state or upon the female consort of a male head. There are still people who can remember Sarajevo.

Part of Marc Jaffe's <sup>theory of a</sup> "conspiracy of silence" may well be a mixture of sexism, chivalry, and lack of imagination: combined with the thought that LHO could not have been unsporting enough to shoot a woman.

However, the resistance to Jerome Agel's brilliant rethinking of

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becomes painfully evident. This I believe is a major source of resistance to the Agel hypothesis. The planners and determinists very unwilling to admit for a moment that history is unpredictable. Yet who could have predicted LHO. After the event, perhaps, but post-prediction, although wonderfully certain, a little shabby and even silly. JFK's friends and enemies alike would be most unwilling to believe that this interesting and lively man died because of a mistake. It is not at all easy to guard against mistakes.

Then there is inertia, simple or complex, starting with the Warren Commissioners. I don't know how many of them are still alive after more than fourteen years, but it would not be easy for anyone of them to admit to such a massive error. They had all the facts presented to them, and had to do little or none of the painful digging through their own voluminous report. They began, as most of us began anything, with a set of assumptions, and the assumptions were that whoever fired the gun intended to kill JFK. (The Mayor of Chicago was killed in Miami in 1932, but no one in that instance claimed that he was the target — he was sitting beside President-elect F.D.R.) This was a common sense assumption that was, however, refuted by the ballistic experts and the gun experts. It was at that point ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ that everything began to go astray. If Lee HO was intending to kill JFK and aimed at him, then he must have missed him.

Experiments by set theorists such as Ashe have shown how hard it is to break a set once it has become accepted. It is not hard to see why the press steers clear of the "Jackie theory," for who would be the first at whom criticism should be levelled

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as the rest of us. The press do have bouts of self-criticism from time to time, but this particular affair would require more heroism on the part of the press than was shown over Watergate. Indeed, some might feel that such self-sacrifice might come close to masochism.

If one adopts the Agee theory, then one has to jettison a host of other theories, which have become a middle-sized industry over the last 14 years or so. The Agee theory is incompatible with these other explanations. There must be millions of dollars changing hands yearly in support of the various conspiratorial theories. The present fashion seems to be to find retired agents from the C.I.A., KGB, etc., and help them to refresh their memories for a little honorarium. Purveyors of such information presumably want to remain more or less anonymous, so that authors must meet them under unusual and exciting circumstances.

I am not sure how many books, apart from the Warren Commission Report, have been published on the JFK Assassination, but it can be less than one hundred. The subject must be a useful publisher's standby; when in doubt, another book on the assassination is likely to get its quota of readers.

As I have noted in another memo of this date, dealing with the affair, one might expect the F.B.I. at least to have made better use of its data, which, properly used, would have clinched the issue. I suspect that J. Edgar Hoover considered the matter resolved by the Warren Commission Report. In his opinion, he had convinced the right people and not much else mattered. He was a seclusive old bachelor, married to his Bureau, and secure in the knowledge that his files had the dirt on everybody. He felt that

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country's and his bureau's benefit. In his mind, the two would be synonymous.

Hoover was not a mind preoccupied with the hypothetical; if the President was shot, he was shot and if the man who shot him was found, then that was that. The whys and wherefores were of no interest to him, and therefore of no interest to the loyal members of his bureau. Those who disagreed with his views were by definition no good, immoral, frivolous, interfering.

We do not know why the Warreners worried so little about LHO's motives, but one factor in their failing to do so must have been the form and emphasis of the FBI investigation. The case was so because there was no conspiracy, not because Oswald's actions had become one jot more comprehensible. The little attention paid to the psychiatric evidence happened in this case to be crucial, unlike the Hiss case, where what the psychiatrists contributed threw little on that mysterious affair.

It was essential that Oswald's actions should make sense to or people, if the Commission's report was to be useful to the country. Oswald's hatred of women, his recent rebuffs from them, as fact that he must have been aiming at Jackie Kennedy (Marina thought Jackie was "a goddess") raises the simple question, Why? There is a simple answer: If you aim a gun at someone, maybe intention is to kill that someone.

This was not so much rejected or suppressed as determinedly rejected. Why not? Male pride, I fear. Who would want to kill JFK? Large numbers of women get murdered in the US every year, and there is no reason why Jackie should not have been the target of an assassination. (She was extremely well known and popular.) There is strong

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that she was, but this was not the kind of crime that the W.C., the FBI, and the CIA thought they were up against. Interestingly enough, there is other evidence to support this blindness to certain kinds of motives as regards Jack Ruby. There is much evidence that Ruby was one of those slightly brutal romantics who might very well kill LHO to spare Jackie Kennedy embarrassment. It was an old-fashioned motive, but Jack Ruby was an old-fashioned man. However it has been thought much more interesting to present Ruby as part of a vast conspiracy, something he stoutly denied, because he was proud to have avenged Jackie.

Failure to show enough interest in the human beings involved in the tragedy has resulted in that strange and moving event becoming a conspiratorial farce. Some of the responsibility for this must lie with the W.C., the FBI, and the CIA, all bodies dominated by high status males who collectively paid little or no attention to the feelings of those with whom they were communicating or attempting to communicate.

Perhaps the time is coming when the tragedy can be restored to its proper place. The accidental is no less part of the human condition and the human tragedy than that which is most intricately and exquisitely plotted. Indeed, if the very stuff of the universe is indeterminate, it should not surprise us or dismay us unduly if our lives are permeated by this same quality.

April 16, 1978...THE HISS-CHAMBERS AFFAIRS....SOME PARALLELS  
WITH THE ASSASSINATION OF JFK....  
(stimulated by Irving Hower review of "Perjury" in Times, 4/9/78)

Like old soldiers, famous legal affairs never die, but unlike the military they don't fade away either. As this review shows, famous trials and similar events have a Lazarus-like capacity for being revived many years later. In this case, much new data have become available, so that in a sense the case is being retried. What an odd fellow Hiss seems to be I would love to know what really happened, but that does not seem to be possible now. This excerpt from a good and fair review raises two interesting points, at least:

1) The FBI's zeal to track down Hiss was not excessive; indeed, for at least three years it did nothing at all. Then the efforts to find the typewriter were wholly unsuccessful; as I recall if, the machine would have been found without belated "belated" help from Hiss himself. One mystery that has not been explained is just why Hiss did not destroy the machine.

As in the JFK assassination, the FBI appears to have been easily daunted and incurious. Presumably so much depended upon Hoover's personal assessment of the importance of a particular event, that not much energy could be expended unless he was wild about it.

Since, in the Hiss affair, this was three years after the indications of Hiss' treachery reached the bureau the trail was cold.

The parallel with the JFK assassination involves, I suspect, the same principle manifesting itself differently. Hoover:

JA packet: nice, Ja, nice -- decided for reasons best known to himself that Lee HO was a loner and that there was no great conspiracy. Having done this and having found that the W.C. agreed with him, he did not bother to solve the case. There would

*Clare Murphy*

HISS CHAMBERS....2

that the assassination called for an intellectual as well as a moral and legal solution. Lacking that, people would inevitably seek such solutions for themselves, and in seeking them would inevitably come to see the FBI as opposing any solution. In such a context, opposition must suggest a "conspiracy." There was no such conspiracy for the good reason that as far as J. Edgar Hoover, and hence the FBI, was concerned the case was a "solved." This lack of imagination and intellectual inadequacy meant that the FBI, who had actually had "solved" the case through the efforts of its ballistics people, did not bother to consider the meaning of their own discoveries, which were that JFK had been shot with a rifle that could <sup>not</sup> have been aimed at him. However, in Hoover's FBI no one was encouraged to raise awkward or teasing questions. That was the quickest way to some distant FBI office for the rest of your career. Until Hoover sicked them in, the FBI did not bother about Hiss, and, unless he became concerned, I am sure it would never have entered the head of his ballistics people to ask unasked questions or to proffer unwanted answers to hypothetical questions.

It does not seem wholly unfair to ascribe a good deal of the subsequent turmoil surrounding the assassination to Hoover's personal limitations. His success with the Warren C. went a long way to creating an atmosphere of suspicion. Interestingly enough, once Hoover became interested in the Hiss affair, Hoover continued to spy on him and his friends in a perseverative and vindictive manner.

(last line on this page; sorry about the typing:  
him ~~as~~ among great detectives.; Perhaps he was a Maigret  
manque?)  
HISS CHAMBERS....3

2) The observations on the dubious quality of the psychiatric evidence is of ~~great~~ great interest and significance. Carl Binger and Henry Murray were both very well known, Murray from Harvard invented the TAT, yet their evidence was both dubious, and, as the amusing story about Binger shows, easily refutable.

The early 1950s was a time when dynamic psychiatrists were taking themselves and their activities very seriously. One of the eras of what might be called "pan-psychiatry" ushered in by the experiences of WWII and especially, I suspect, the Nuremberg trials. I wonder whether the remarkable disinterest in the psychiatric testimony at the W.C. may not have been rooted in the poor performance of the psychiatric witnesses in the Hiss case?

Unlucky, the psychiatric witnesses had access to much important information about Lee Harvey Oswald, and their observations combined with those of Hoover's gunsmith-ballistic experts made a sense of the whole senseless business. They apparently noted that LHO liked JFK and hated women (as subsequent research has fully substantiated). I think one even suggested that LHO might have thought JFK's head from the back looked like his (O's) mother. What the psychiatrists did not know was that LHO, when sighting his sniper scope, had to be aiming at the very feminine head of Jackie K. (In secret testimony, on July 9, 1964, three psychiatrists told the W.C. that LO's fury was at women, not at men, and that they were surprised LHO had shot at JFK. In his gunsight he must have perceived his mother and his wife.) Hoover had enormous authority, but of what kind? The evidence is that his was moral authority of a highly personal nature. He seems to have been an introverted feeling experiential whose life was quite secluded. As the years passed, his authority grew enormously, so that it became impossible to distinguish