

Post
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Covering the RFK Assassination Theories

In its coverage of the Kennedy assassinations, The Washington Post would perform a service to its readers if it treated separately those researchers of these tragic events who raise incisive questions based upon the actual evidence, as opposed to those who contrive answers about what might have happened on the basis of little more than their own vivid imaginations.

I suggest that the former group, by and large, is composed of responsible men of integrity and probity while the latter group contains a largely unstable and irresponsible element.

To lump the two in the same article (such as William Claiborne's story of April 28) is to whitewash a serious question with the brush of ridicule.

I feel it's high time that The Post, first of all, make this distinction clear to its readers, and secondly, begin to take seriously the legitimate questions that have come to light as a result of the most objective kind of inductive reasoning.

Perhaps my own experience in that regard would be instructive.

Although my predisposition and my desire was to believe that Sirhan Sirhan acted alone in the killing of Robert Kennedy, when evidence was presented to me that seriously challenged this belief, I felt obliged to examine it in as dispassionate and logical manner as my legal training and intelligence could reach.

First, I checked the professional credentials of the men such as William Harper who had prepared the data. They were—and are—impeccable.

Second, I read all relevant testimony and affidavits and was struck by cer-

tain glaring discrepancies. Example: the markings on the bullets taken from the shooting site were inconsistent with their having been shot from the same gun.

Third, I personally interviewed Los Angeles officials and found that, although the basic discrepancy apparently could be cleared up merely by shooting a bullet from Sirhan's gun and comparing it with the bullet taken from Senator Kennedy's body, the L.A. authorities refused to do so.

I have yet to hear a convincing argument for not making this simple and decisive test. I have no choice but to conclude that a serious effort, successful thus far, is being made, therefore, either to cover up the truth, or to keep from the American people the final, conclusive evidence that the official findings are in fact credible.

I must add that I have been troubled by the fact that immediately after a Post reporter (Ron Kessler) wrote that William Harper had backed down on his affidavit that the bullets probably came from different guns, Mr. Harper wrote to the Post and vehemently denied that he had in any way changed his position; yet nothing has been done to bring Mr. Harper's denial to the attention of your readers.

On several occasions I have called Post editors and offered to arrange for them to sit down with Allard Lowenstein to review his findings in a dispassionate manner. They have not, to my knowledge, extended any such invitation to Mr. Lowenstein; nor have they given coverage to his public statements.

It is more than just disturbing to note that The Post can devote so many column inches of space to the fantasies of the so-called lunatic fringe in this matter, while failing to devote equal space to the findings of men like Allard Lowenstein or William Harper. I find this lapse inconsistent with The

Post's longstanding reputation for fine journalism.

Neither Harper—nor Lowenstein—nor I ever has suggested to The Post that there was a conspiracy or even that there was a second gunman in the room.

All we have said is that there are serious discrepancies in the available evidence that deserve resolution. All we have done, all we responsibly can do, is ask questions and pursue the answers.

The fact that mentally unbalanced persons, rip-off artists and charlatans, who propose answers based on mere conjecture, also are involved in the assassination story, should not be allowed to deter a responsible search for the truth.

It should be noted that such persons can indulge in their flights of fancy simply because they are predicated upon the cold, hard fact that a critical piece of ballistics evidence—which could be furnished—is missing. The way to end such speculation is to conduct the scientific tests that can yield a conclusive answer.

If it can be proven that the bullet found in Senator Kennedy's body was in fact shot by Sirhan Sirhan's gun—and no other gun—then those of us who have been asking questions will be willing to abide by the results and will be completely satisfied that the myriad of often incredible theories which The Post so fulsomely reports all are irrelevant.

Instead of pooch-pooching any efforts made to question the disparity of bullets, would it not be more constructive to explain the discrepancies and call for controlled tests to resolve them? I would hope that The Post could contribute to ending the doubt and skepticism surrounding these overwhelming tragedies by giving serious attention to serious research and supporting efforts for the needed tests.

Lester S. Hyman.

Washington.