

11/13/91

Dear Mr. Weisberg,

Here's ^{the} story I promised you.
Sorry it took nearly 3 yrs. to
send it. Thanks again for your
interest on Arlen Specter.

Sincerely -

Dwight Weisberg Brin

(814)695-1753

The conspiracy

CENTERPIECE

theorists press on



Globe file photo

President John F. Kennedy and his wife, Jacqueline, riding into Dallas with Texas Gov. John B. Connally on Nov. 22, 1963.

By Dinah Wisenberg
States News Service

WASHINGTON - Harold Weisberg, a former Senate investigator and reporter, was selling off his chicken farm in rural Maryland when President John F. Kennedy was gunned down in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963.

As he followed the drama in Dallas through news reports, "I just didn't like the way things were going," Weisberg said recently. "I was shocked at the kind of things that should never happen. Every street corner had a cop, every cop had a press conference" in which he was building a case against Lee Harvey Oswald, which would have made it virtually impossible for Oswald to get a fair trial, Weisberg said.

"The crime itself was never investigated," insisted Weisberg, who, at 75, has spent the last quarter-century criticizing the government's handling of the case and amassing a vast library of assassination documents. Before that he was a reporter for the Wilmington Morning News in Delaware and for Click magazine. In the 1940s, he worked for the Office of Strategic Services, forerunner of the CIA, and later for a Senate committee.

Weisberg, whose crowded basement in Frederick, Md., houses nearly 60 file cabinets filled with government records, photos and other raw material, is a leader among the 100-plus unofficial JFK assassination "investigators."

Twenty-five years after the president's murder, this network of amateur and professional sleuths is still digging for clues to prove their theories, disprove the government's findings, force a new probe, or simply advance the body of knowledge.

They are nicknamed "the critics," a reference to their rejection of the government report that labeled Oswald the lone assassin. Several public opinion polls conducted over the years show that a large majority of Americans share their disbelief in the lone-gunman argument.

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These investigators convened in Philadelphia over the weekend in what one of them called "old home week."

The critics' ideas range from seemingly countless variations on the four major conspiracy theories - plots by the Mafia, CIA, Fidel Castro and anti-Castro Cubans - to

bizarre notions that Jacqueline Kennedy was behind the assassination or that Oswald was really aiming at her.

Many are motivated by a feeling that the American people were robbed of their president in a coup d'etat and then wrongly kept in the dark by their government. Others are moved by an obsession with the endless mysteries of the case. Some, according to their detractors, are self-promoters who are in it for fame and money.

Whatever their backgrounds, motives or theories, most of those devoting their time and money to the assassination agree on two points.

The first is that the government's Warren Commission finding that Oswald acted alone is wrong and that the president's

murder resulted from a conspiracy.

"I don't have any conspiracy theory. I don't regard conspiracy as a theory but as a fact," Weisberg said, explaining that it takes only two to make a conspiracy. Weisberg, who published his own series of "Whitewash" books attacking the Warren Commission, joins most of the critics in his belief that two or more gunmen fired shots across Dealey Plaza on Nov. 22.

Among the evidence cited by two-gunmen adherents is the high improbability that one person could have fired the shots as quickly as Oswald allegedly did, and the many witnesses who heard shots fired from the "grassy knoll" rather than the Texas School Book Depository.

dence to build a case against Oswald, he said, "This is not the way that institutions ought to work."

Ultimately, he blames the Warren Commission. "If they didn't have the backbone to stand up to the FBI, that was all their fault," Weisberg said. "People thought they were going to investigate everything they could, but they never intended to," he said.

A second point where Weisberg and other critics agree is in disputing the commission's key finding that a single bullet traversed Kennedy's neck, wounded Texas Gov. John B. Connally and emerged in pristine condition before the fatal shot to Kennedy's head.

This idea, originating with the commission counsel, Arlen Specter, now a Republican senator from Pennsylvania, is central to the argument for a lone gunman. The critics say separate bullets struck Kennedy and Connally.

Specter stands by the Warren Commission findings, as does another former counsel, David W. Belin, a Des Moines lawyer who said, "There isn't one of these theories that can't be disproved . . . All of these theories are disproved in my new book" — "Final Disclosure: The Full Truth About the Assassination of President Kennedy."

"The truth beyond a reasonable doubt . . . is that Lee Harvey Oswald killed President Kennedy and Dallas Police Officer (J.D.) Tippett," said Belin, as passionate in his view as the commission critics.

Another conspiracy theorist, with whom Weisberg has worked on other cases, is Washington criminal lawyer Bernard Fensterwald, a former classmate and campaigner for Kennedy, who founded the Assassination Archives and Research Center, a nonprofit organization located one block from the Ford's Theater and dedicated to collecting all material on the JFK murder.

"I tend to believe that the murder in Dallas was a coup d'etat," Fensterwald said. "I think things in this country have radically changed since the Kennedy murder."

Fensterwald said he has interviewed someone who knew all about Kennedy's assassination in advance, but "the man's not going to talk. He'll probably leave something after he's dead."

The man receives "some \$3,000 a month from the US government for doing nothing," Fensterwald said, adding, "He'd be a fool to go public."

They also point to men with guns reportedly discovered near the grassy knoll who told Dallas police they were Secret Service agents. The Secret Service did not post agents in or near the knoll that day, they say.

"There is absolutely no doubt from the official evidence . . . that the crime was beyond the capability of one man," said Weisberg, who thinks perhaps Oswald did not pull the trigger at all.

When Weisberg approached his literary agent in 1963 with the idea for a book showing that Oswald was "not a persona non grata to the FBI," he said, "she got hysterical," warned him that no one would publish it and refused to pitch it to anyone. Ultimately, she dropped him, and he published the book himself.

"That frightened me. How could we live in that kind of country?" he said.

Weisberg said he is less interested in the whodunit than in examining what he says is the failure of government institutions to handle the investigation properly. Referring to the FBI's alleged subversion of evi-