Kennedy killing: who did it?

By DONALD E. WILKES, JR.

On Nov. 22, 1963, while riding in an open limousine in a motorcade, John F. Kennedy, 35th president of the United States, was assassinated in Dealey Plaza in downtown Dallas, Tex. In September 1964 the Warren Commis-i sion, a body appointed by President Lyndon Johnson to ascertain circumstances surrounding the assassination and chaired by Chief Justice Earl Warren, delivered its official report. The Warren Commission found that Lee Harvey Oswald, a 24-year-old employee at the Texas School Book Depository, acting alone, killed the president by firing his rifle from a sixth-floor window in the Depository. While in Dallas police custody, Oswald was shot dead by Jack Ruby, a night-club owner and gangster-type, two days after the Kennedy assassination.

Since 1964 much new information concerning the president's assassination has emerged. Moreover, there have been startling revelations about grave abuses and deception committed by the very federal law enforcement and intelligence agencies on which the Warren Commission relied for information. From 1977 until 1979 a House of Representatives Committee on Assassinations conducted a new official investigation of the death of President Kennedy. Thus, on the 20th anniversary of the assassination, it seems appropriate to re-examine important questions that have been raised concerning John Kennedy's death. Part One of this article explores some of the questions that now have been answered to my satisfaction. Part Two, to be published next week, addresses some of the still unanswered questions about President Kennedy's assassination. sassination.

Were shots fired at President

Kennedy's motorcade from more than one location? Yes. In 1978 the House of Representatives Select Committe on Assassinations commissioned two separate sets of scientific experts to investigate whether there was acoustical evidence indicating that more than one gunman was firing at President Kennedy. Both investigations reached the same conclusion: an examination of a police tape recorded by accident at the time of the assassination provides scientific acoustical evidence establishing a high probability that two gunmen fired at the president.

The Assassinations Committee also found, based on other findings made by the same experts, that (1) probably a total of four shots were fired, (2) probably three shots (the first, second and fourth) were fired from behind and above and from the vicinity of the

shot (the third) was fired from the right front in the vicinity of the wood stockade fence atop the grassy knoll, and (3) probably the fatal headshot which killed the president and which vividly appears on frame313 of the color film taken by Abraham Zapruder was the fourth shot, fired from the Depository.

There is also plenty of eyewitness testimony indicating that more than one assassin was shooting at President one gunman.

Texas School Book Depository, and one the President and Governor Connally were reacting to their wounds less than two seconds apart. Thus, as the Warren Commission recognized, if President Kennedy and Governor Connally were not struck by the same bullet, there had to be two assassins, since the rifle could not be fired twice in less than two seconds. The Warren Commission adopted the single bullet theory because it was biased and prejudiced in favor of the view that there was only

"There is also plenty of eyewitness testimony [that] more than one assassin was shooting. , 性生物、效量器 1/28

Kennedy. It seems incontestable that some of the gunfire came from the Book Depository; several witnesses saw a man armed with some sort of rifle standing behind the window on an upper floor in the Depository, other witnesses actually saw a rifle barrel extending from one of these windows and literally scores of eyewitnesses testified that shots came from the Depository. On the other hand, there is ample testimony to the effect that a shot was fired from the vicinity of the grassy knoll: a railroad employee stationed on an overpass in front of the motorcade was positive that he saw a puff of smoke erupt on the top of the knoll; a Dallas city policeman who (along with many other persons) raced to the knoll moments after the assassination smelled gunpowder there; and another railroad employee stationed on a nearby railroad tower saw suspicious activity on the knoll.

Clearly, therefore, the Warren Comission (which did not know of the existence of the police tape) was wrong when it concluded that all the shots fired at the motorcade came from the

sixth floor of the Depository. Has the single-bullet theory been discredited? Yes. The single-bullet theory is the view that a single bullet fired from the Depository struck President Kennedy in the back and then, after traversing his body and exiting in the front of his neck, struck Governor Connally from the back, exited from his right chest, shattered his right wrist, and then embedded itself in his left thigh. The rifle from which the Warren Commission alleged the single bullet had been fired could not be fired twice in less than 2.295 seconds, and this does not take into account aiming time. On the other hand, the Zapruder provides proof that

There are several reasons why the single-bullet hypothesis can no longer be taken seriously. First, the same 1978 scientific acoustical tests that show gunfire from both the Depository and the grassy knoll also show that shots were fired from the vicinity of the Depository 1.6 seconds apart. Second, if the single-bullet theory is correct. then we must assume a most unlikely, occurrence, i.e., that Governor Connally continued to hold his hat in his right hand after the wrist of that hand had been shattered by a bullet. It is unarguable that President Kennedy was struck by the bullet in his back no later than Zapruder film frame 225; the President's violent reaction is unmistakable in frame 225, and he could not have been struck later.

On the other hand, Governor Connally still holds his hat in his right hand in frame 231. The Zapruder film moved through the camera at the rate of 18.3 frames per second. If the single-bullet theory is correct, therefore, we must believe that at least a third of a second (six frames) after a bullet completely pierced his chest and shattered his wrist, Governor Connally continued to hold his hat in the hand with the shattered wrist. Actually, the governor's inexplicable delayed reaction might have been longer.

Please turn to page 9 assassination had not been the result of been but a single gunman and that the

Committee of the committee of the committee of the bullet. Did the Warren Committee, the bullet investigating the casassimation of intelligible of the perform dequately with respect to perform adequately with respect to their inquiries into the sasassimation of President Kennedy. It is a committee in 1979, after the Warren Committee in the Warren Committee into the sasassimation of President Kennedy. Leads were not pursued, evidence was destroyed, overlooked or ignored and in various other ways these three investigation of the century. The Warren Commission failed in most important investigation of the century. The Warren Commission failed because (1) from the Commission is the because (1) from the Commission's three bud in saingle gumma and that the examined the evidence, the members been but a single gumma and that the been but a single gumman and that the sasassimation had not been the result of sasassimation that the result of sasassimation had not been the result of sasassimation that the result of sasassimation had not been the result of sasassimation had not been the result of sasassimation that the result of the sasassimation had not been the result of sasassimation that the result of the sasassimation had not been the result of sasassimation that the result of the result of the sasassimation that the sasassimation

The House Assassinations Committee thought that President Kennedy might have been struck as early as frame 200, that is to say almost two full hand Connally and him are absolutely positive that the holding the hat. Third, both Governor Connally and his wife (who was beside him) are absolutely positive that the governor was struck by a different build that the pack, and I think the president in the back, and I think the Warren Commission had no valid Warren Commission had no valid that the President probably was him but that the President probably was him by that the President probably was this by the that the President probably was him by the the stane 200 on the other hand, Connelly as the wrong, there found that the President probably may not have been struck until se late as frames 234-236. Connally as are wrong, there would be an absurdly long interval of at frames) from the time time the president freatner of the found in the time for that the found had not been by the time that the found had not been by the time that the found in the time much him to connally first reacted to his mulder.

Did the Warren Commission, the same builet.

Thus, incredibly neither FBI Director Information; such information it did protect the president dequate staff of independent bothered to tell the Warren Commission and hence relied princision of the CIA-sponsored assas- mation were purposely delayed as long the assassination. This is undoubtedly only the day before when the president that the president that the provided assas- mation were purposely delayed as long the assassination. This is undoubtedly only the day before when the president that the p

stigators and hence relied princi-y on the FBI and the Secret Service arry out investigative duties; (3) the nspiracy; (2) the Commission had

adequate staff of independent

nmission was not given sufficient e to do an adequate job (the final ort of the Commission was pub-ed II months after the assas

thoroughly investigating the Hoover treated the Warren Commission because they desired to sion as a hostile nuisance, and even posed by windows in tall buildings, him with the agent's body before rity information from the public seminated) derogatory information on do so when the presidential motorcade because they wanted to project a the Commission and its staff. The CIA was to travel on a frequently used bad acted with the alacrity of the vice image of incorruptible and assumed a stance of lofty distance and parade route, as the Dallas route was. sination plots against Castro or other as possible.

Was the Secret Service negligent in the gunfire many of the agents reacted place.

The FBI investigation of Lee Harvey protecting, Prestdent Kennedy on Suggishly. Fourth, the Did Senator Richard Russell publicly or Suggishly. Fourth, the Did Senator Richard Russell publicly on Senator Richard Russell publicly scope. Within three weeks of the encies in the job performed by the assassination the FBI leaked news Secret Service on the day of the stories that Oswald was the sole assassination were both shocking and sassasin, thus rendering it impossible out of the ordinary.

The third in the promptly once the shooting had begun, beloved Richard Russell was a member assassin, thus rendering it impossible out of the ordinary.

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The three Toward August August

n thoroughly investigating the signation because they desired to press embarrassing or national

worthy infallibility to the world,

rished throughout the mid-1960s).

Mafia plots to kill Castro that example, it was never told of the tion); and (4) the Commission was

led important needed information

Thus, incredibly neither FBI Director information; such information it did had Hoover nor CIA Deputy Director Helms provide was furnished only on specific ent bothered to tell the Warren Commission of the CIA-sponsored assas-mation were purposely delayed as long

declined to provide certain, vital Third, in violation of regulations, some

motorcade by the Secret Service were so strangely inadequate on Nov. 22 that precautions, arranged for the Dallas covered that the specific security House Assassinations Committee dis-Finally, and most alarmingly, the one of the reasons why at the time of was in Houston, a much less dangerous

never believed that Lee Harvey Oswald assassinated President Kennedy without at least some encouragement from others." (There is also reason to

findings of the Warren Commission were deleted without his knowledge believe that early reservations Senator

Russell had about certain of the

from the final version of the Commis-

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law in the UGA law school.

sion's report.)

Donald E. Wilkes, Jr. is professor of

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remon dividipura but mo as Place dential visit to Chicago in early November, 1963, was cancelled be-cause of assassination threats); (4) persons posing as Secret Service him from a building with a high-powered rifle (and indeed, a Presiand around Dealey Plaza before, during, and immediately after the assassination; (3) during the months preceding November, 1963, different eyewitnesses saw suspicious persons in than one location; (2) plenty of formed to kill the President by shooting information that a plot had been country received from different sources law enforcement agencies around the was assassinated as a result of a the President's motorcade from more of the following: (1) shots were fired at conspiracy seems indisputable in view Kennedy? That President Kennedy

rifle. The question is, what was the membership of the conspiracy? impersonating Oswald, often carrying a randum noting the possibility that the the assassination, one or more impose presponsible for formulating plans for tors were busy in the Dallas vicinity, dealing with Cuba prepared a memocustody shortly after the assassination

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Brading was taken

into temporary

assassinated in Dallas, Tex. In Part

Kennedy

1963,

satisfactorily. In this, Part Two of the article, I shall examine a few of the

hat appear now to have been answered

he assassination and related events explored some of the questions about

ation and related events [including the major questions about the assassin-

> when he was found in the Dal-Tex, aiding terrorist plans to eliminate building, directly across the street from Cuban leaders, they themselves will the School Book Depository, and (6) not be safe, and thereafter a during the weeks immediately before secret U.S. government committee 1963, Castro said: "United States leaders should think that if they are Cubans might carry out attacks on U.S.

This question is not presently. Third, there were the anti-Castro officials,

Who were the members of the conspiracy that planned and carried out regarding the Tippett murder. " the assassination of President regarding the Tippett murder." murder of Lee Harvey Oswald, alleged that I continued are a lot of mysterious better ernain unanswered. eve remain manswered.

because of the bitter antipathy between Robert F. Kennedy (who would be "just another lawyer" if the President 1960s the Mafia had engaged with the CIA in several plots to kill Castro); and the mob had made huge profits from the Havana casinos and resorts (it organized crime; because the Mafia blamed President Kennedy for failing was waging a relentless new battle on brother Robert, the Attorney General, Cubans for the President is notorious should be remembered that in the to recapture Cuba where prior to Castro kill President Kennedy because his violent hatred of the anti-Castro organized crime. The Mafia wanted to assassination. To begin with, there was these might have been involved in the the President, and any one or more of Secondly, the Cuban intelligence and

in a press interview on Sept. 7. President of South Vietnam, Diem,

and connections with the highest echelons of organized crime. (See the

record of serious criminal convictions aka Jim Braden, an individual with a For example, Eugene Hale Brading, viduals were actually detained by the

> answerable. There were a number of Cubans who had been involved in the groups or organizations with both the Bay of Pigs, mission, and other motive and the ability to assassinate U.S.-sponsored actions to attack and well-documented.
>
> Fourth, there were various members betrayer of the movement to liberate Cuba from Castro. The fierce and President Kennedy as a traitor and a U.S.-sponsored actions to attack Castro's Cuba and who regarded

out the assassination in retallation for lawere involved in the Nov. 1, 1963, the CIA-Mafia plots against Castron In. See the Wand, assassination of the secret police agencies (with or without mation Plots Against Foreign Lead the assistance of the Soviet Secret ers.") They had teamed up with the police, the KGB) might have carried Mafla to try to kill Castro Probably they died) and Jimmy Hoffa of the teamsters. Jumerous assassination plots against Union, which was closely allied with warious foreign leaders. (See Interim organized crime. to support America's allies. American intelligence agents, throughout the mid-1960s, had been involved in munism, or pro-pacifistic, or unwilling President Kennedy as soft on comon Intelligence, other or additional reasons regarded intelligence community who shared the the anti-Castro Cubans, or who for and ex-members of the American politics of (and often had worked with) "Alleged Assassi-

scene; (5) certain suspicious indi-

agents and carrying false credentials were present at the assassination

Dallas police at the assassination scene

doubtful that the probably small in number, and it is If this was the case, the conspiracy was his brother. affiliated with any of the above groups the memoership of the conspiracy Of course, it is always possible that

identity of

the

conspirators ever will be learned. district attorney, who unsuccessfully were involved in the assassination. Jim individual members of organized crime Garrison, the former New Orleans ever, that the evidence did not preclude the assassination of President Ken-nedy. The committee concluded, howthe Soviet government, the Cuban government, the Secret Service, the the possibility that individual members government, the Secret Service, the FBI and the CIA from involvement in Assassinations Committee In its 1979 Final Report the House anti-Castro Cuban groups absolved

there was no other direct evidence, the eyewitness could identify the person or Castro Cubans. Although there is after, the assassination. of the School Book Depository minutes Assassinations Committee in 1979 concluded that Oswald shot the President with an old, cheap 6.5 mm. President Kennedy? Both the Warren together in the past to kill others. small group of American intelligence operatives, anti-Castro Cubans and conspiracy probably consisted of a legedly found hidden on the sixth floor Mannlicher-Carcano Italian rifle al-Commission in 1964 and the House Mafia members who had worked explanation, my own view is that the insufficient space here for a factual American intelligence and military persons on the periphery of the was killed by a conspiracy consisting of nation, concluded that the President legedly being involved in the assassiprosecuted several persons for al-Did Lee Harvey Oswald shoot no

Mafia than the Warren Commission had. Hence it concluded that "Ruby's shooting of Oswald was not a spontane, ous act, in that it involved at least some premeditation;", and the Committee also thought it more likely that Ruby had enirered the basement with the assistance or the compivance of the Dallas police. The House Assassinations Communities' recognized that the Warren Commission's investigation of Ruby's background had been incomplete. The between Ruby and committee found larger and ties Dallas police.

1960s, apparently in behalf of the mob, and once had visited Santos Traffi-cante, the notorious Mafia don, there. Second, Ruby's contacts (both in person and by telephone) with Mafia hitmen and other violent gangsters increased suspiciously and dramatic-I consider it likely but not proven that Ruby conspired with organized crime to murder Oswald. Here are some of the reasons. First, Ruby's involvement in organized crime was quite deep and preceding Nov. 22 and continued up to the shooting of Oswald. Third, shortly before killing Oswald Ruby, usually short of cash and plagued by debts, stretched back over many years. He had visited Cuba in the 1950s and early during the period acquired large sums

the scene of the Tippett killing and the bullets found in Tippett's body. Of the

the cartridge cases conveniently left at

Third, there is a discrepancy between

identifiable marks on bullets fired).

modified with the result it did not leave

barrel of which had been conveniently

bullets removed from Tippett's body were fired from Oswald's gun (the

but have been unable to prove that the drive.) Second, the experts have tried

in an automobile (Oswald could not

killers, and that at least one of them fled

pett's killer. There was some testimony by witnesses that there were two

testimony identifying Oswald as Tip-

think that the evidence is sufficient to conclude that Oswald shot Tippett. First, there was no reliable eyewitness

For the reasons that follow, I do not was additional circumstantial evidence that Oswald shot President Kennedy.

and the Assassination Committee found that Oswald's killing of Tippett

shortly thereafter in a motion picture theater. Both the Warren Commission

was still carrying when he was arrested

Tippett to death with a pistol Oswald

Oswald shot Dallas Police Officer J.D. the President was shot-Lee Harvey

22, 1963—that is, 30 to 45 minutes after

between I p.m. and 1:20 p.m. on Nov.

tions committee found that sometime

Commission and the House Assassina-

there Oswald shot President Kennedy.

Did Lee Harvey Oswald shoot
Officer Tippent? Both the Warren

established one way or another whe-

President. I conclude that it is not

repeatedly denied that he had shot the

killed American presidents, Oswald did not glory in the deed; he firmly and

previous persons who have shot and

way we would expect a Presidential assassin to act. Unlike virtually all

complete statement of the facts now known about Ruby's ties to the Mafia may be found in Seth Kantor's book Who Was Jack Ruby', published in 1978, and in G. Robert Blakey's book The Plot to Kill the President, published in 1981. (Blakey was general House Assassinations Committee and is a recognized exper counsel to the

is still

Assuming that Ruby's actions conspiracy,

of a

the result unclear silence Kennedy. It is certainly conceivable hat the two conspiracies were separate out related.

kill President

sixth floor may not be genuine, and wald holding the rifle later found in the photographs supposedly showing Osbore the same serial number (C2766),

Certainly this evidence is highly ssassination; and (5) three empty cartridge cases allegedly found near cartridge cases allegedly found the rifle.

in natural, subprincials, ne worked interest moving boxee as part of hits job.

There are still other reasons for doubting that Oswald was the assessin. For example, Oswald was not a sufficiently good marksman to have shot the President with this rifle from the starth floor. I also observe that after the assessination he did not behave the would expect a Presidential is hardly suspicious; he worked there were found on boxes on the sixth floor contradictory, and the bullet may have been planted. That Oswald's prints bullet at the hospital are suspicious and surrounding the finding of the stretcher also note that circumstantial evidence even if genuine are suspicious. I will

the Chicago-born Ruby had been involved in criminal activities with crime, although it did acknowledge that significant affiliations with organized Institute find accepted Ruby's assertion that the acced out of grief, anger, and sympathy for the dead President's family. The commission found no prior tonnection between Oswald and Ruby, it also found that Ruby had no elemificant affiliations with oreanized elemificant affiliations with oreanized that Ruby had acted alone when he shot conspiracy to prevent Oswald from talking. The Warren Commission found Speculation immediately arose that Oswald had been killed as a result of a assassination of President Kennedy. 24, 1963, less than 48 hours after the police prisoner, in the basement of the Dallas City Jail at 11:21 a.m. on Nov. result of a conspiracy to silence him? Jack Ruby shot and killed Oswald, a Was Lee Harvey Oswald killed as a

to answer whether Oswald shot Tippett. sufficient evidence one way or another Trippert's prior life or his possible previous connections with Oswald, Jack Ruby, or persons connected with Oswald or Ruby. Jecond, it has not been satisfactorily explained why Oswald (if indeed he was Tippert's faller) was at the place where Tippert was falled when the been an adequate investigation of Tippert's prior, life or his possible.

(,7861, Meagher, Accessories After the Fact, or tampered with. (See Sylvia A. was where he was at the time he was billed, and the police log transcripts produced to explain this matter, are internally contradictory, incomplete and bear signs of having been altered or the product of the product surrounding the Tippett murder. First, there has never been adduced a satisfactory explanation of why Tippett mysterious or suspicious circumstances I note further that there are a lot of

was a Remington-Peters. body, three were Westerns and one four bullets removed from Tippett's death, two were Western .38s and two were Remington-Peters .38s; of the four shells found at the site of Tippett's

same rifle; and (5) the famous ordered and the rifle found are the therefore it is not certain that the rifle bear the same serial number, and cal 6.5mm Mannlicher-Carcano rifles possibility that other similar or identithe fact remains that there is a definite post office box and the sixth floor rifle the rifle allegedly shipped to Oswald's a mail-order house; (4) although both ly ordered in his own handwriting from length than the rifle Oswald supposedon the sixth floor was of a different sembled; (3) the rifle said to have been there only when the rifle was disasfound under suspicious circumstances, not photographed (in 'violation of regulations) and reported late, and at any rate the palmprint was under the barrel and could have been placed cloth, none of his fingerprints was found on the rifle itself or the cartridge cases; (2) the so-called palmprint was cleaned the rifle or the cartridges with Oswald's: (1) although there was no evidence that Oswald wore gloves or been found on the sixth floor was it doubtful that the rifle said to have might think. The following facts make dence is as strong or as reliable as one this inculpatory circumstantial evihandled the rifle. Moreover, not all of Oswald) was used and that Oswald had only that a particular rifle (belonging to tell us who fired the rifle, but at most ly, the circumstantial evidence does not note that none of it really proves that Oswald fired the rifle; stated differentincriminating to Oswald, but I must

bullet fired from the rifle were found in the Presidential limousine after the where the rifle was supposedly found and from which the shots were sillegedly fired; (4) fragments from a were found on boxes in the sixth floor rushed; (3) Oswald's palmprint was found on the rifle and his fingerprints President and Governor Connally were stretcher at the hospital where the fired from the rifle was found on a (I) Oswald owned the rifle; (2) a bullet evidence, including most importantly:

Kennedy probe