

# The jfk assassination persuasive essay



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Here it had all happened. The world's most powerful man, the youngest U. S. president ever elected with a beautiful woman by his side, shot dead in full view — the third US president to die by an assassin's bullet. Twenty-seven years before, right on this street, a car full of people was ambushed by a killer or killers.

Here, rolling down Elm Street at ten or twelve miles an hour, comes the presidential car SS100X , the black, stretch Lincoln Continental limousine, twenty-one feet long, over three tons in weight. I could see Secret Service Agent Clinton J. Hill leaping in desperation for the back of the open car; Mrs. Kennedy leaning over towards him -reaching out in a futile gesture to recover part of her husband's head, blown away by a bullet. It would lie in the street until the next day when it was recovered by a medical student, Billy Harper, and handed in to the authorities.

People everywhere, screaming and shouting, throwing themselves down onto the grass to avoid the fields of fire. And up on a four-foot-high concrete block to the right of the John Neely Bryan Pergola steps, Abraham Zapruder, hefting a 8mm Bell and Howell Movie Camera, being steadied by his receptionist, Marilyn Sitzman, shooting a 26-second, 500-frame film that would become the holy grail for what New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison would come to call the " murder at the heart of the American dream. " The killing of Kennedy was the quintessential assassination that became the benchmark against which all other conspiratorial murders would be measured. Probably more words have been written about his death than any other in history. His apparent killer was arrested within hours, only himself to fall victim to a bullet within forty-eight hours. This second killing

would create and generate an aura of confusion and suspicion that demanded explanation, but never really received it.

It pales into relative insignificance however, when stacked against the mystery surrounding the shooting of the man who was killed in Dealey Plaza. The first official government investigation, created by newly-elected President, Lyndon B. Johnson, under executive order 11130 a week after the killing, appointed Chief Justice Earl Warren to ascertain the facts concerning the assassination. This was issued as the Warren Commission Report, twenty-six un indexed volumes, released a year after President Kennedy was killed.

It seemed to raise as many questions as it answered. The murder was over in seconds. The search for the truth behind the killing has gone on for thirty-seven years. Pontius Pilate once asked Jesus: " What is truth? " We have been struggling ever since to answer this. As the years pass, it seems inevitable that we will never know for sure what and who was behind the killing of President John Kennedy. There are so many loose ends they could probably fill every room on all the seven floors of the book depository.

Was there one gunman or two or three? Some sources claim over fifty different names as potential shooters that day. Was Harvey Oswald an agent of the FBI and the CIA or both? Who were the Black Dog and Badge men? What was the " Umbrella Man" doing on the grass verge? What were the three " tramps" doing on the overpass? Was the Mafia behind the killing or the CIA or the Russians or the Cubans or some rapid right-wing movement? How did it happen, why did it happen and most of all who made it happen?

Was it possible that Oswald, a mediocre -to -downright-poor marksman, according to various sources, could fire that rifle with such speed and precision at a moving target, partly obscured by trees, creating such havoc and mayhem with a weapon the Italian army called " the humanitarian rifle" because it never killed anybody when deliberately aimed. A twenty-five dollar, World War One vintage rifle with a single bolt action and a misaligned telescopic sight? Could he have hit a moving target in the given time frame, 270 feet away, a feat expert FBI and Army marksmen were unable to emulate on stationary targets? Why on earth would Oswald send off under an alias to buy a mail order weapon, when he could have bought an accurate gun on any street corner in Dallas? Why use a bolt-action rifle, when he could have used an automatic weapon such as a BAR (Browning Automatic Rifle) or even an M1 carbine that would have allowed a lot more shots and a lot faster? So many questions, so few satisfactory answers. Air Force One touched down at Love Field, the main Dallas airport, at 11: 40 a.

m. Central Standard Time. On board were the President and his wife, and Texas Governor John Connally and his wife Nellie. Also in the group was Senator Ralph W.

Yarborough. The party had flown into Dallas from Fort Worth. This was the fourth stop on a whirlwind tour of Texas, which had begun on the previous day in San Antonio. From there the party had gone to Houston and then on to Fort Worth.

It was scheduled to end in the evening of that Friday. Earlier that morning at the Texas Hotel, where the party had spent the previous night, the President

and his wife had been talking to special White House assistant Kenneth O'Donnell, who was acting as coordinator for the trip. The President had said that if anybody really wanted to shoot the President of the United States, it was not a very difficult job. All one had to do was get on a high building someday with a telescopic rifle and there was nothing anybody could do to defend against such an attempt. " It was an amazingly prophetic observation by a man who, within a few hours, would fall victim to exactly this scenario. That morning, the Dallas Morning News carried a full-page advertisement paid for by oil billionaire H.

L. Hunt asking the President twelve loaded questions including, " Why has the foreign policy of the US degenerated to the point that the CIA is arranging coups and having staunch anti-Communists allies to the US bloodily exterminated? " " We're heading into nut country today," Kennedy said when he saw the ad. It was another prophetic observation from a man who, until this day, had seemingly been well protected from the kind of people who made the Secret Service all too necessary in a country as violence prone as America. Vice President Lyndon Johnson and his wife met the Presidential party and approximately ten minutes after the arrival at Love Field, the motorcade began its journey into Dallas. Known as the " southwest hate capital of Dixie," Dallas was, to say the least, an unusual place.

There were more murders within its metropolitan boundaries in 1963 than in the whole of Great Britain. It was a city that lived and breathed oil and armaments and to say it was right wing politically was an understatement. It

was John Birch Society and Minuteman territory in a big way. It was anti-Communists and anti-left wing and full of extremists.

Here to Dallas came President Kennedy, the man who had just signed a nuclear test-ban treaty with the Communists, had also agreed to the sale of surplus American grain to the Soviet Bloc, had talked his way into a peaceful solution to the Cuban Missile Crisis rather than following the advice of those who had advocated the use of force, and was now trying his hardest to withdraw his troops from Vietnam. The man from the White House who had stipulated an investigation was to be held regarding the oil depletion allowance tax benefit, which made millions for the oil barons of Texas. There were sixteen cars, three buses and numerous Dallas police motorcycle officers making up the convoy. The President and his wife along with Governor Connally and his wife rode in the third car in line.

This was a specially designed Lincoln Continental limousine, fitted with a removable plastic bubble. Because the weather was fine, it had been decided not to operate the bubble, and the party was travelling completely exposed. The President sat in the right rear seat with his wife to his left, and immediately to his front sat Governor Connally in a jump seat with his wife also seated to his left. William R.

Greer, a top agent of the Security Service, drove the car. Next to him was Assistant Special-Agent-in-Charge Roy H. Kellerman, head of the White House Secret Service detail. The route from the airport to the motorcade's final destination, the Dallas Trade Mart, where the President was scheduled to make a luncheon speech to business and civic leaders, lay straight

through the heart of the city. It would proceed down Main Street, make a right into Houston and then a left into Elm Street.

This last short leg of a few hundred feet would lead down to and then through an underpass and onto the Stemmons Freeway, the quickest way into the Trade Mart complex. At the corner of Elm and Houston stood a squat, rust-coloured, square roofed, seven story building, number 411. Built in 1901, it had been leased in 1961 to the Texas School Book Depository, a business incorporated in 1927, charged with fulfilling book orders from schools all over the Southwest. The convoy swung past this building just at 12: 30 p.

m. according to the clock on top of the Depository Building and the President's car was rolling down Elm Street at perhaps ten to twelve miles an hour when it happened. Of all the millions of words written about the assassination of President Kennedy, none are more critical than those that revolve around the zone of the killing field. With him as its centre, two concentric circles of possibility overlap, creating a presumption of confusion, disbelief and misinformation, unparalleled in any investigatory enquiry before or since. In the few seconds just before and just after the time of 12: 30 p. m.

, shots were fired at the convoy, resulting in the death of the President and the wounding of Governor Connally and one of the spectators. Just where those shots came from has generated more hypotheses in the last thirty-seven years than probably any other mystery in modern history, from the existence of the Abominable Snowman, the Loch Ness Monster, the

existence of the Bermuda Triangle and the wreck of the Mary Deare.

Mysteries that have absorbed our imagination and fascinated us with their intractable and unworkable solutions. But none of these other classic mysteries occurred in broad daylight in full view of spectators, police and the forces of government, to be also recorded on film and on photograph.

The mystery of how President Kennedy was killed is matched only by the bigger mystery of who actually killed him. He was either shot by one man firing from behind or shot from at least one, possibly two, men firing from in front, or a combination of all three. Either one man, acting alone, killed him, or at least one other, possibly two assassins, carried out the killing as part of a conspiracy. According to an analysis of the Zapruder film, and eyewitness testimony, the shooting went down, something like this: As the motorcade turned onto Elm Street, passing by the Book Depository, Jacqueline Kennedy was looking over to her left, waving to the people gathered on the grass lining the street. Just seconds before, Mrs. Connally had turned to the Kennedy's and said, " Mr.

President, you can't say that Dallas doesn't love you. " The President said, " No, you certainly can't. " It was the last words he would ever utter. Hearing a noise that to her, sounded like a motorcycle backfiring, and a cry from in front from Governor Connally, Jackie turned towards her husband who, with a quizzical look on his face, had his clenched hands up near his throat and his elbows pushed out to the sides. This was a condition known as the " Thorburn's Position," indicating an automatic nervous reaction to a spinal injury. This was at least the first shot or perhaps the second fired at the President, and perhaps the first one that had struck him.

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There was then another explosion and the right hand side of her husband's skull exploded in a shower of blood and matter. Two Dallas Police motorcycle officers riding to the left and rear of the car were hit with the President's remains. Their uniforms, helmets and windshields were splattered with blood and brain matter. Either as a continuation of the first shot, or between that and the second bullet impact on the President, Governor Connally was struck by a bullet, which entered his back just to the left of his right armpit.

As he collapsed into his wife's arms, Mrs. Kennedy was struggling up away from the back seat and reaching across the back of the car. It seemed to onlookers that she was attempting to reach out to Special Agent Clinton Hill, who had leaped from the running board of the car behind and ran towards the Presidential limousine at the sound of the first shot. Just as he reached it, the driver accelerated and Hill stumbled, but regained his balance and leaped onto the car.

Hill recalled, " Mrs. Kennedy had jumped up from the seat and was, it appeared to me, reaching for something coming off the right rear bumper of the car, the right rear tail, when she noticed I was trying to climb on the car. She turned toward me and I grabbed her and put her back in the back seat, crawled up on top of the back seat and lay there. " In fact, it was assumed later that Mrs. Kennedy was reaching out vainly to recover part of her husband's head, which had been blown away by the gunshot. She, in fact, had no recollection of her actions in those few, desperate seconds.

As these few moments were unfolding, Roy Kellerman was radioing the lead car, " Let's get out of here; we are hit. Get us to the hospital immediately. "

Dallas Police Chief Jesse E. Curry in the lead car and police motor cyclists led the way to Parkland Hospital, which lay four miles or five minutes away at high speed across the Stemmons Freeway and Harry Hines Boulevard. At the hospital, two trauma rooms had been prepared and twelve doctors were on stand by to receive the two wounded men. In the case of the President, it soon became obvious that there was no surgery possible that would be able to resuscitate him, and at approximately 1 p.

m. , Dr. William Kemp Clark, the chief neurologist, pronounced the President dead. As the one team of surgeons worked to save the President, another group labored over Governor Connally. He had received a large, sucking wound to the right chest, and an elliptical wound in the back. He also had wounds to the right wrist and palm, and a wound in the left thigh.

By 5 p. m. that evening, the operations were complete and he was in a stable condition. At 2: 15 p. m. the same afternoon, the body of the President enclosed in a casket was loaded into Air Force One.

At 2: 38 p. m. , before the aircraft departed for Washington, Federal Judge Sarah T. Hughes swore in Lyndon Baines Johnson as the 36th President of the United States. At least seventy-five amateur and professional photographers were taking over 500 exposures in and around Dealey Plaza on that day. Small groups of people scattered about the verge of Elm Street, crouched or lay down on the grass.

Police officers were running towards the apparent source of the gunfire, but none of this activity was directed towards the Book Depository, all were making for the grassy knoll. However there was police interest taking place

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in the building on the corner of Elm Street. Sometime between 12: 34 and 12: 35 p. m. , motorcycle cop Robert Hargis reported that he had received a report that shots had been fired from the building. This was followed by another report from Officer Clyde Haygood confirming the potential site of the shooting and for the first time, indicating the exact window from where gunfire had originated.

What was really interesting about these two transmissions, the first to indicate the Book Depository as the site of the shooting, was that they were made by police officers that in fact had been among the first to charge the grassy knoll. Both men could identify the sources of the information, and no witness ever came forward to be identified as such. Although the area was subsequently flooded with police officers, many of who entered the building, it took them forty minutes to find the apparent site of the shooter on the sixth floor. Within a few minutes, by 12: 45 p.

m. , police broadcasts were putting out an APB for a white male, about five ten in height and about 165 pounds in weight. The man they were looking for was Lee Harvey Oswald. A misfit, mostly out of step with everyone around him, Oswald had been born in New Orleans 24 years earlier, two months after the death of his father. At the age of 3, he had been farmed out, and then taken by his mother from city to city and school to school. Along the way, he developed a reputation as a malcontent, troublemaker and loser.

An ex-Marine, with two court martials against his name, he had gravitated to Marxism and defected to Russia. Denied citizenship there, he returned to America with a Russian bride and a baby daughter. He had been hired a few

weeks earlier on October 15th by the Texas School Book Depository as an order filler at \$1. 25 an hour. Minutes after the shooting, Oswald left the Book Depository and went by bus and taxi to 1026 North Beckley in the Oak Cliff suburb, where he rented a room about two miles south west of downtown Dallas. One of his former landladies, Mrs.

Mary Bledsoe, had seen him board the bus about seven blocks away from the Book Depository. He apparently picked up a . 38 caliber revolver and then left his room. Minutes later, at approximately 1: 15 p. . , a man assumed to be Oswald was seen walking near Tenth Street and Patton Avenue, when police officer J.

D. Tippit called him over to his car. Oswald spoke briefly to the officer through the vent window of the cruiser. The policeman was getting out of the vehicle and walking to the front of the car when Oswald shot him three times in the chest.

As he lay on the sidewalk, Oswald walked around the rear of the car, walked up to Tippit and shot him again, in the head. Officer Tippit was only the third Dallas policeman to die in the line of duty in ten years. Although it was never established just where Oswald was walking to, a theory put forward by Warren Commission counsel David Belin suggested he was making his way to a bus stop about four blocks away. From there he could have caught a number 55 bus that was due at 1: 40pm. This would have linked him to a Greyhound bus stop on Lancaster Road, where a bus was scheduled to leave at 3: 30pm for Monterey in Mexico.

Oswald had exactly \$13. 87 with him when he was arrested, just enough to cover the bus fare. By this time, he had walked and jogged a few blocks south and entered a movie house, called the Texas Theatre on West Jefferson Street. Johnny Calvin Brewer, a manager in Hardy's Shoe Shop, noticed Oswald hanging around the shop before going into the theatre and, because of his strange behaviour, Brewer called the police after he had followed the man about 50 yards to the cinema building.

He later said, "... he looked like he had been running, he looked scared, he looked funny..

. he was standing there, staring. " When the police responded and entered the theatre they found Oswald and after a brief, but violent struggle, apprehended him. En route to the Dallas police station, Oswald kept asking the arresting officers why he was being detained. He kept repeating over and over again, " Why am I being arrested? " He repeatedly denied he was the man who had shot the President. Early in the morning of November 24, Lee Harvey Oswald was formally charged with having assassinated President Kennedy.

He maintained he had been on the first floor of the Texas School Book Depository when the Presidential motorcade passed by. He was having a soft drink in the employee's luncheon room on the second floor, when a police officer arrived shortly after the shooting. Mr. Truly, the building superintendent had vouched for him, and the police officer had then gone on to examine the rest of the building. Following the shooting, Oswald thought that there would be no more work carried out that afternoon, and so he had

left the building and had gone to his room, changed and then went to a movie. Although he was repeatedly questioned on the Friday and Saturday, Oswald continued to maintain his innocence.

In addition he was subject to four separate identity parades. Just after midnight on Friday night he was taken into the police basement for a press conference that lasted about fifteen minutes. On Sunday morning it was decided to move him from the city jail to the maximum-security wing of the county jail. At exactly 11: 21 a. m.

as he was walked through the basement of the police headquarters, he himself became the victim of a killer. Handcuffed to Detective J. R. Leavelle, who was wearing a light coloured suit and a white Resistol cowboy hat, with Detective L. C.

Graves holding his left arm, surrounded by other officers, he had just been hustled through the swing doors into the basement area, when a stocky man in a dark suit and a fedora, pushed through the crowd of reporters and photographers. He stepped up to Oswald, produced a snub-nosed Colt Cobra . 8 Special revolver and shot him once in the left chest, the bullet ripping through the spleen, stomach, aorta, kidneys and diaphragm, causing massive haemorrhaging. It was estimated that 80 million people around America watched the event unfold on their television sets.

Quickly overpowered, with Detective Graves wrestling away the revolver, the killer was identified as Jack Ruby, a well-known local strip club owner. Oswald was rushed to Parkland Memorial Hospital and died there at 1: 07 p. m. , almost exactly forty-eight hours after the President had been declared dead.

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We were guarding the body of the President here on Friday," Fort Worth Police Officer B. R.

Everett said. " Now we are guarding the body of the man who killed him. " Ruby claimed he had visited the Western Union office to post a money order to one of his strippers who was stranded in Fort Worth and then, on impulse, had wandered over to the police station to see what was happening. It is also claimed that one of Ruby's principal sources in the DPD, Officer W. J. " Blackie" Harrison, had telephoned Ruby at 9: 30 am that morning to let him know he had been assigned guard duty to move Oswald out of the station that morning.

Ruby had been standing behind police officer Harrison just before he shot Oswald. Dallas Police Department Sergeant Patrick Dean, who was reportedly a close ally of the Dallas Mafia boss Joe Civello, had allegedly reassigned police guards that morning, away from the elevators and door to the stairway into the basement garage, allowing Ruby unrestricted access. Ruby was born on the east side of Chicago in 1911 and had grown up to be a street fighter, small time gambler and ticket scalper. He moved to Dallas and established permanent residence there in 1947, and in December of that year had legally changed his name from Jacob Rubenstein.

It was rumoured that he had moved to Dallas to manage criminal activities on behalf of the Chicago Syndicate. Throughout his sixteen years in the city, prior to the shooting, he had operated nightclubs and dance halls as a primary source of income. It was a less than successful career, and he often had to borrow money from his sister and brothers to help cover his

expenses. His last club, the Carousel, was netting about \$5000 a month, most of which went on overheads and to cover its payroll.

He was described as a foul-mouthed, mean-tempered prude, who loved kids and hated ethnic jokes. He was apparently involved in many shady financial transactions, and the IRS was on his back for taxes he owed. He later claimed that he had killed Oswald to end the grief of Mrs. Kennedy and the American people.

“ I hope I killed the son of a bitch,” Ruby said just after the shooting. “ It will save you guys a lot of trouble. ” He later said the District Attorney Bill Alexander, “ Well you guys couldn’t do it. Someone had to. That son of a bitch killed my President. “ It is just possible that he wanted to be seen as a saviour for the people.

Plus, he probably realised that he could well make a fortune, as being seen as the man who killed the man who killed the President. It is also quite likely that Ruby was following instructions when he shot Oswald dead. Detective Leavelle said later, “ Everybody has fantasies about wanting to be a hero. ” Subsequently tried and convicted and sentenced to death for first degree murder in March 1964, Ruby died of cancer, while waiting out his appeal, on January 3, 1967.

He was 56 years old. Police motorcycle officer Marion Baker had entered the Book Depository building within sixty seconds of the shots being fired, and had found Oswald, relaxed, drinking a soft drink in the company canteen, know among the employees as the “ Domino Room” on the second floor. The Commission determined, however, that Oswald had been able in this one-



minute-period, to descend by foot from the sixth floor (police found the elevator jammed open on the fifth floor), find change for the machine, operate the soft drink machine and begin to drink just as the officer found him. No one ever saw Oswald at the window on the sixth floor from where shots were allegedly fired. His fingerprints were never found on the gun and gunpowder residue checks on his cheeks were negative. There was absolutely nothing, when you came down to it, to prove he had fired any shots at anybody.

In fact, one of the many photographs taken that day, this one by press photographer James Altgens, seems to show Oswald standing in the doorway of the building watching the procession approaching Elm Street. Years later, Dallas Police Chief Jesse Curry said to newspaper reporters, “ We don’t have any proof that Oswald fired the rifle, and never did. Nobody’s yet been able to put him in that building with a gun in his hand. ” The three policemen who found the rifle near the window on the sixth floor identified it as a German Mauser. Later, two of them, Seymour Weitzman and Luke Mooney, changed their testimony and said it was a Mannlicher-Carcano.

The third, Roger Craig, refused to recant his statement and was later dismissed from the force. He committed suicide by shooting himself on May 15, 1975. Secret Service Agent Roy Kellerman who was in the front seat of the limousine testified that he distinctly heard the President say, “ My God, I am hit,” after the first shot. Since the bullet that caused the throat wound also punctured the windpipe, it seems medically highly improbable that the President would have been able to speak after he received the throat wound. In essence, the Commission found that Oswald had fired at least three shots.

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One had missed the motorcade, ricocheted off the sidewalk and injured a spectator, James Tague.

The second bullet exploded off part of the President's head. Then, wondrously, another bullet had entered his back on a downward trajectory, and then channelled itself upwards at least five inches, exited, tumbling out of Kennedy's throat. This incredible bullet left a small wound, made a right upward turn, pausing in mid-air for two seconds before making a left and steep downward curve, careened across into Governor Connally's back near his right armpit crashing through a rib, through his chest, back out into the fresh air then somersaulted like an acrobat falling off a high wire, down into his right wrist, finally finding its way out of there and making one last frenzied attack in a left and downward direction before finding a home in his left thigh, where small fragments remained until the day he died. No one bothered to explain how the bullet that injured Tague if fired from the Book Depository was at least twenty feet off target if intended for the President.

Tague was standing almost a block away on Main Street; a line marking the path of the bullet from the curb stone to the sixth floor of the Book Depository followed a pathway above the Presidential convoy. However, a line drawn from the same position on the footpath, back and close to the head of President Kennedy and then continued on takes it into the second floor of the Dal-Tex building directly across Houston Street from the Book Depository building and a potential sniper's site with no obstruction to the line of fire. The next day, the curb stone was removed and replaced. Just one of the hundreds of loose ends that dangle, frustratingly out of reach.