



Case Closed: Lee Harvey Oswald and the Assassination of JFK

Gerald Posner

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Pulitzer Prize Finalist: “By far the most lucid and compelling account . . . of what probably did happen in Dallas—and what almost certainly did not.” —*The New York Times Book Review*

The Kennedy assassination has reverberated for five decades, with tales of secret plots, multiple killers, and government cabals often overshadowing the event itself. As Gerald Posner writes, “Fifty years after the assassination, the biggest casualty has been the truth.” In this first-ever digital edition of his classic work, updated with a special comment for the fiftieth anniversary, Posner lays to rest all of the convoluted conspiracy theories—concerning the mafia, a second shooter, and the CIA—that have obscured over the decades what really happened in Dealey Plaza on November 22, 1963.

Drawing from official sources and dozens of interviews, and filled with powerful historical detail, *Case Closed* is a vivid and straightforward account that stands as one of the most authoritative books on the assassination of John F. Kennedy.

Case Closed: Lee Harvey Oswald and the Assassination of JFK Details

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From Reader Review Case Closed: Lee Harvey Oswald and the Assassination of JFK for online ebook

Scott says

Should be required reading for every American high school student. Quite a disappointment for conspiracy theorists everywhere. An honest and direct approach to this tragic episode in American history. I clearly remember many of the events from November 1963. After I read the book and visited the 6th floor of the Texas book depository I find myself in complete agreement with Mr. Posner, "case closed."

Amy says

Before this book, I didn't have much previous knowledge about the intricacies of various conspiracy theories and hadn't formed my own opinion on the matter. I decided to pick it up because of my new Dallas residency and all the hoopla surrounding the 50th anniversary. And my office is next door to the book depository, so the event has become much more real.

This book was recommended as "THE" book to read - most respected, most thorough, best research etc. And now that I've finished it, I agree.

This book is like drinking from a firehose for someone like me who didn't have much prior knowledge. Posner leaves literally NO stone unturned. His exhaustive research disproves, discredits or at least shows the high improbability for pretty much every conspiracy theory out there.

Posner quotes William Manchester, historian and author of Death of a President, said, ..."But if you put the murdered President of the United States on one side of the scale and that wretched waif Oswald on the other side, it doesn't balance. You want to add something weightier to Oswald. It would invest the President's death with meaning, endowing him with martyrdom. He would have died for something." This is the true essence of our longing for a conspiracy - it just can't be that such a moron took away a leader with so much promise. But based on what I've read in this book, I'm reluctantly convinced that that is the case.

Michael Dorosh says

I have read many of the conspiracy based books, from the sublime (Garrison's ON THE TRAIL OF THE ASSASSINS) to the ridiculous (Lifton's suggestion that the body of JFK was surgically altered before the autopsy). I too strongly believed that a conspiracy was responsible, and I enjoyed the film JFK.

However, I think Posner does a very good job of refuting many of the conspiracy theories, even those approaching credibility. The book, as pointed out by other reviewers elsewhere, is not perfect. And I admit I don't have a firm grasp on the minutiae of the case that has propelled so many theorists into infamy.

However, on a basic "gut" level, the book feels right.

My endorsement of the book goes beyond feelings. The case is made with solid documentary evidence, though much of it comes from the Warren Report itself (which may invalidate it in the eyes of the harshest critics.)

New research, such as Max Holland is doing with the LBJ tapes, is bringing much to light, and the passing of Jacqueline Kennedy and John Kennedy Junior may hasten the opening of some files within my lifetime. It is hard to imagine that these files would contain anything startlingly out of sync with the "official" explanation behind the assassination.

Posner does expect the reader to have a working knowledge of some facets of the case beyond that of the layman, so be advised the book may not be aimed at them. The language is not overly scholarly or dense, however, and there are some interesting appendices, diagrams and photographs to support some of the discussion.

The book is logically organized into different areas of interest, and is easily read.

The book may seem superficial to entrenched conspiracy theorists, who would probably need a more detailed point-by-point rebuttal of their pet theories, which is fine. As a general knowledge book, I think Case Closed successfully demolishes several theories quite handily, though in a very generalized manner. Posner could be busy for the next 99 years if he decided to refute each single theory or book about the assassination one by one.

Given the amount of ink that has been spilled over this issue, no single volume could ever hope to refute all that has been written. Nor is it likely that one single volume (and several have been written making the attempt) can refute CASE CLOSED either.

Recommended to all, whether you are a conspiracy theorist, a backer of the Warren Commission, or honestly undecided or completely ignorant of the entire case. All you need is an open mind to get value from the book.

A better book is Bugliosi's RECLAIMING HISTORY, though it is longer (at 1600 pages), or his shorter

version of same, and Bugliosi talks about some of the shortcuts that Posner allegedly took in his research. All the same, much food for thought.

Pete daPixie says

I must have around two hundred books covering the JFK assassination, both on my home library shelves and on my Kindle reader. I am also a member of a U.K. research group. (Dealey Plaza U.K.)

Needless to say, this is my favourite topic of reading material. Finally getting around to 'Case Closed', I was surprised at how much I liked this book. It comprehensively covers a very large range of topics of the case. Oswald's biography is fairly well detailed, the evidence against him in Dealey Plaza, the Tippit killing and the shooting at General Walker follows Warren to the letter, but there are flaws and omissions.

I've never been convinced of Ruby's mafia links and I go along with Posner that his killing of LHO was pure chance.

Chapter 19 "What happened to the truth" is a very good chronology of the investigative research efforts post W.C. and prior to the A.R.R.B., which should fill the void for readers new to the subject.

I found many opinions in common with the author regarding mafia guilt, Lifton's body theft, the Garrison trial, Jean Hill, Beverley Oliver, the Murchison party, Roscoe White, Dr Charles Crenshaw, Aubrey Rike and others.

Where history has been poorly served is in regard to ballistics evidence and JFK's autopsy. 'Case Closed' omits detail in these areas. Chapter 6 'Hunter of Fascists' tells us that the bullet fired at General Walker has visible markings and good probability it was fired from Oswald's Carcano. What is not mentioned is that in 1978 General Walker wrote to the H.S.C.A. denying that the bullet being reviewed by the committee was the same bullet that had been fired into his home.

Vince Palamara includes in his 'Survivor's Guilt' a statement from limo driver Greer to a motorcycle policemen Nick Principe on the evening of Nov 22nd that "shots were coming from all directions, and one even came through the windshield." We do not read in this book of the witnesses at Parkland who stated that they saw a small through and through hole in the windshield.

Chapter 13 'He had a death look' states that nobody at Parkland turned JFK over to witness the back wound. (A wound that is continuously referred to here as a neck wound.) In fact English nurse Diana Bowron did turn him over when washing JFK's body prior to placing the body in the coffin. She provided diagrams to Harry Livingstone which placed the bullet hole in the same location as the original autopsy diagrams done at Bethesda. Ambiguities that persist and cloud issues. Baden's statement, "and if they say there was a large hole in the rear of the head, they don't know what they are talking about since there is nothing there but the entry injury in the rear cowlick." That statement is true in regard to the autopsy photographs, where the rear of JFK's skull is intact, but is not what Secret Service agent Clint Hill witnessed on Elm Street when he climbed onto the back of the limo, or what Parkland's trauma room personnel originally reported.

As Warren Commission member Burt Griffin said, "there is plenty there that would allow a reasonable person to speculate about a conspiracy theory."

murph says

An absolute must read for the skeptical mind.

A lot has been written on the subject of Pres. Kennedy's death - and far too much of it has taken the format of reading the Warren Commission looking for language that justifies the author's pet theory.

Posner turns this model on its head and goes after the theories that claim a conspiracy (vast or otherwise) was the the death of JFK. Many of these theories have been quoted so often for so long that their questionable origin escapes scrutiny.

Posner takes conspiratorial sacred cows like the "magic bullet" and basically beats them senseless.

Moreover, and more importantly - Posner follows the life of Lee Harvey Oswald in exhaustive detail. In his estimation, Oswald's pathetic existence is not one destined to be a man of mystery, a CIA spy, or even a pasty.

Whatever your take on the assassination of JFK, experiencing the counterpoints to the conspiracies will add a great deal to your understanding of what really happened in Dealy Plaza.

Fred Forbes says

The book title can probably be taken literally since the assassination is examined from virtually every angle. Sorry for the conspiracists but I think Posner got it right - at least I have seen no creditable source who has been able to debunk any of this material. Not that they don't keep trying all these years later. Guess it is just tough to believe a lone American crackpot could bring down an American President.

Megan says

I remember watching a recent History or Discovery Channel show on the John F. Kennedy assassination. They took the media from that day, the press coverage and the news anchors and even just bystanders taking video and photos of the entire day, and edited it together to form a cohesive narrative of November 22, 1963, in Dallas. It was absolutely fascinating. In many ways JFK was the first president elected due to television's burgeoning role in politics - and television is what so many people looked to after his assassination for answers.

It was media that played the primary role in establishing concerns about a conspiracy behind the killing. The Dallas police force was unused to so much media attention, and the chaos and publicity of the event led to confused eyewitness reports. It makes sense that people would consider a conspiracy. John Wilkes Booth was part of a group of conspirators, although Garfield and McKinley were likewise the victims of lone gunmen. With politics being what they were in the 1960s - people worried about Communists, minority races, homosexuals and mob hitmen - and JFK being who he was, it seems almost impossible to believe one man could have acted on his own.

It's as William Manchester is quoted in the book, and in the television special I saw: "If you put six million dead Jews on one side of a scale and on the other side put the Nazi regime [...] you have a rough balance: greatest crime, greatest criminals. But if you put the murdered President of the United States on one side of a scale and that wretched waif Oswald on the other side, it doesn't balance. You want to add something weightier to Oswald. It would invest the President's death with meaning, endowing him with martyrdom. He would have died for something."

Unfortunately, there is no conspiracy. Gerald Posner masterfully demonstrates this in his book. "Case

Closed," which is rife with footnotes and citations, follows Lee Harvey Oswald and Jack Ruby from birth to death, accounting for what seems like almost every day of their adult lives. It is easy to see after reading in so much detail about Oswald why he seized the opportunity to kill the President, and it's likewise easy to see how much emotional turmoil Jack Ruby went through before spontaneously deciding to kill Oswald. Not only that, but it becomes obvious that these two were bit players, maybe not even that. They both had fantasies that they were more than they really were. Oswald wanted to be a great Marxist or Communist. He wanted to be recognized. Jack wanted to be known, as well.

Beyond detailing their lives up to the assassination/murder, Posner also delves into some of the concerns people have with the consistency of evidence in the assassination. The bullets, the trajectory, the number of shooters, the evidence in the Book Depository, and witness accounts are all addressed. This book came out in 1993, so it is somewhat dated, but he was able to use computer modeling to recreate some of the questionable situations. He also uses medical evidence to account for certain things such as why JFK looks like he is reacting to a shot from the front when he was shot from behind.

This is really an excellent book and a must-read for anyone interested not only in the assassination itself but also the history of our country in the 1950s and 60s and the prevailing mindset of the time.

Brian Manville says

Where does the evidence lead? That is the central question in both the realms of both science and history. We can believe what we want, but it will be either with a factual basis to support it or it will not. Generally, sources that are credible, and are as close to the event as possible have the most weight in determining the factuality of an event. The use of primary sources from the time of the event is also crucial in determining the facts of the matter at hand.

The book spends its first 40% concentrating on Oswald himself. The picture that emerges is one of a incredibly small man who possesses two of the worst traits possible; arrogance and stupidity. Time and again, Posner provides eyewitness testimony to the fact that Oswald was simply a blithering idiot and/or a complete loon. His mental state one could charitably claim as disturbed, yet he never got any help. He comes to his Marxism by reading and cannot adequately defend himself against competing views except by argument. He goes to Russia, finds life there to be in opposition to the worker's paradise he envisioned, and comes home with his Russian wife and child. Upon returning home, he drifts from job to job and attempts to curry favor with the American Communist Party by being the only member of his local Fair Play for Cuba organization. He is delusional, grandiose, yet paranoid. Above all else, he wants to make a name for himself. In the end, it is that need to be famous which puts him on the sixth floor of the Texas Book Depository on that fateful day. Posner spends much time going through the timeline of the events of that weekend, along the way destroying the various conspiracy theories that have arisen in the last 50 years. Some of the competing theories have at least a kernel of logic and truth to them, but some - such as the switching of JFK's body at Love Field on Air Force One - simply defy logic and common sense. But Posner dissects all of the major alternate theories and goes about eliminating them as possible explanations. The problem with most conspiracies is they can only be kept truly secret if only one person is left alive who knows the plot. BOTTOM LINE: This is the definitive work on the Kennedy assassination and worth reading whether you believe Oswald did it or not.

Dick says

Posner does a superior job of running down all the allegations and conspiracies. His detailed run down of the facts, rumors and innuendoes is impressive. For those who think there was more than one person shooting that day - read this book. For those who think that Lyndon Johnson was involved - read this book. The pristine bullet is explained - which has subsequently been proven through use of computer modeling - to have hit both the president and the governor. And the bullet was not pristine - conspiracy folks will show that part of the bullet that appears undamaged.

Sean Chick says

If you think Oswald acted alone then you are either lying, ignorant, or stupid. I'm not sure where Posner fits into these categories but I lean towards stupid.

Paul Spencer says

Way too much detail but Posner obviously had to cross every t and dot every i in order to make a convincing argument that Oswald acted alone. He convinced me. The thing about all the Kennedy conspiracy theories (and this is true of pretty much all conspiracy theories) is they're really meant to reassure us that the world is an orderly place (even if it's an evil one). What Posner reveals is just how random world events are, so random that a loser, with little to distinguish himself in life other than his skill at marksmanship, can change the course of history.

Dave Maddock says

I've been interested in the JFK assassination since the 90s, probably due in large part to the Oliver Stone movie. (Indirectly. I was pro-conspiracy before actually seeing the film.) I'd read Jim Marrs' *Crossfire*, Fletcher Prouty's *JFK: The CIA, Vietnam and the Plot to Assassinate John F. Kennedy*, *Murder in Dealey Plaza*, and others. None of the various conspiracy stories seemed quite right, but it seemed to me that there was enough oddities to the official story that "where there's smoke there's fire," as the saying goes.

Marrs' book in particular had so much detail that impressed me at the time. Many years later, I discovered to my dismay that Marrs also had similar books about aliens and other crazy conspiracies--*Rule by Secrecy* and *Alien Agenda*--which made me begin to question my earlier estimation of the quality of his research in *Crossfire*.

With the assassination 50th anniversary media blitz, I decided to actually read a book which supported the "lone gunman" view. *Case Closed* was recommended to me by skeptic Kenneth Feder, one of my professors in college. Posner didn't disappoint. Not only is the book very well-written and engaging, he covers many of the issues which caused me to lean pro-conspiracy all these years. He does an admirable job explaining, without defending, the missteps and obfuscations of the FBI, CIA, etc. while clearing up a lot of

misinformation masquerading as evidence of conspiracy.

In one passage that stuck with me, an interviewee stated that the assassination has become almost a religious experience, complete with relics, sacred texts, and a holy site that people pilgrimage to. I think this comparison is more accurate than he perhaps realized. I'd add that the conspiracy narrative also has a heavy dose of mythic power that resonates with people in the same way that religion does. It is truly an American myth--and with an extremely well-documented event. Can you imagine how easily such myths would overwhelm the truth in history where they cannot be debunked by surviving evidence?

So yes, I now think Oswald acted alone. The government wasn't co-opted by an evil conspiracy, it was just a bureaucratic rat's nest of petty infighting and incompetence. *sigh*

Timothy O'Brien says

I've spoken to Posner online. I stopped short of telling him that his entire thesis is a pile of horse excrement. But it is. I believe Posner could look at dollar bill and call it a table.

Anyone with half a brain can see how empty his conclusions are.

William says

A restatement of the Warren Commission report - with the same mistakes and faulty reasoning.

Ulrich Krieghund says

First off, I would like to say that the case will never be entirely closed, thanks to Jack Ruby. America was done a great disservice by not having a full trial of Oswald.

While this book is meticulous in its examination of the actions, beliefs and motivations of Oswald, the author does have one annoying aspect that seeps into his analysis of the most prevalent conspiracy theories. He constantly refers to those who pursue various conspiracy stories as "buffs". This is a slight and belittles those who have arrived at a different conclusion. Would Posner the author like to be constantly called a lone gunman buff or single shooter theorist?

That small matter aside, I am convinced that Oswald was the only shooter. And I really wanted to believe that some conspiracy had to be the truth. The evidence is just not there.

Oswald was a total nobody who killed a great somebody. The man only had four bullets and managed a kill shot with the third bullet. Oswald was not placed in the Texas School Book Depository by some mafia or CIA conspiracy. Rather, he was sent there by a woman who knew his wife and was trying to help the unemployed bum.

Think like Oswald for a moment. You are a communist who was disillusioned by your brief attempt to live in the Soviet Union. As a former marine and an American defector, you expected to be treated as a special

individual in your new country. Instead, you are given a menial job and relegated to the life of a common Soviet citizen. Bitterly, you return to America, a country you still hate and now view as "the lesser of two evils".

On your return to America, your political views and poor social skills ostracize you from co-workers and cost you various crummy jobs. You have an inflated sense of your intellect and become increasingly frustrated at the world's failure to realize your genius. Frustrated, you stew and abuse your wife verbally and physically. You take a sniper's shot at a retired general in his home. You miss. You admit to your wife that you took a shot at the general and missed. You stew in the dark outside your home, sitting in your underwear and making dry bolt runs with your Italian rifle. You cannot even drive a car. You are a loser.

Estranged from your wife, living apart from her and disappointed with your life, you open yesterday's paper in the break room and see that the President of the United States is coming to your city in just a few days. The entire route of the President's motorcade is in the newspaper. The route will go right by the building in which you work. You own a high powered rifle that has a scope on it.

Now, after you fire three bullets at the slow moving car containing the President and score a headshot with the final bullet, you race down from the sixth floor sniper's nest, poorly hide that rifle on the sixth floor and race down to the second floor and buy a coca-cola to appear nonchalant.

Shortly thereafter, you exit amid the chaos in Dealey Plaza right through the front door and walk a few blocks to catch a bus. You are the only one who leaves your job at the Texas School Book Suppository. You go to your boarding house room and pick up a pistol. A policeman tries to stop you. You shoot him dead and start running.

Now, it is a fact that Oswald was arrested with a pistol and tried to shoot the arresting cop. If he wasn't guilty, why did he leave work and pick up a pistol from his boarding house room?

There are still some troubling aspects of the assassination of JFK. Why was the car immediately cleaned? It was the scene of a murder. Why were there so many non-doctors in the autopsy room? What colossal incompetence let Jack Ruby walk up and shoot at point blank range the most important murder suspect in the history of the world? Imagine if Jack the Ripper had been caught. Oswald was more important than that.
