

LIVE BY THE SWORD:
Did Attempts to Kill Castro Backfire on JFK?*

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[Editor's Note: *In his book, LIVE BY THE SWORD, Gus Russo attempts to establish that, in assassinating JFK, Lee Oswald was acting as an agent of Fidel Castro. Such an approach begs the question of whether or not Oswald shot JFK and, as Michael Griffith demonstrates, falls far short--on many grounds--of establishing either proposition.*]

In his book *LIVE BY THE SWORD: THE SECRET WAR AGAINST CASTRO AND THE DEATH OF JFK* (Baltimore: Bancroft Press, 1998), Gus Russo argues that only one man, Lee Harvey Oswald, shot President Kennedy, but that Oswald did it at the urging of Fidel Castro's agents and that Cuban intelligence may have paid Oswald in advance to carry out the deed. Russo provides a great deal of valuable, interesting information. But he also makes numerous invalid claims and often fails to discuss relevant evidence that contradicts his conclusions. What follows is a presentation of some of the errors and omissions in Russo's book.

1. Russo says that at least once in all the series in the various "Oswald" rifle tests, at least one rifleman was able to score two hits (p. 477). This is incorrect. In the CBS rifle test, NOT ONE of the eleven expert shooters scored two hits on the first attempt, and seven of them failed to do so on ANY attempt. This is especially revealing because the CBS test was the most realistic to date. The test used a moving target sled and a 60-foot tower. The test fairly closely simulated the conditions under which Oswald would have had to fire. And, as mentioned, not one of the expert riflemen in the test scored two hits on his first attempt, and seven of them failed to do so on any attempt, even though, unlike Oswald, the CBS shooters fired nine practice rounds prior to the test and were not required to fire through a half-open window in a cramped area.

2. Russo says the marksmen in the Warren Commission's (WC) rifle tests "came close" to duplicating the WC's version of Oswald's feat, i.e., two hits out of three shots in 5.6 seconds (p. 476). One wonders how Russo is defining "close" here. The three Master-rated riflemen who took part in the tests missed the head and neck area of the target boards 20 out of 21 times! And this, even though the target boards were stationary, even though the riflemen were firing from only a 30-foot elevation, and even though two of the riflemen took longer than 6 seconds to fire. None of the WC's rifle tests involved moving targets or firing from the same elevation from which Oswald supposedly fired.

3. Russo says "the most impressive" Oswald rifle simulation was the one performed in 1994 by Todd Wayne Vaughan (p. 476). But Vaughan didn't use a moving target and not once did he get off three shots in less than 6 seconds. Furthermore, on the day of the test, Vaughan fired fourteen shots prior to starting the test, a luxury Oswald would not have had. Nor did Vaughan fire from an elevation, as Oswald would have had to do. Russo says Vaughan "never received any formal firearms training, had never been in the military, had never worked a bolt-action weapon, and had never even fired a

high-powered rifle before." First of all, the Mannlicher-Carcano rifle is not a "high-powered rifle"--it's at best a medium-velocity weapon. Russo fails to mention that Vaughan is an experienced hunter, with some 15 years of experience in aiming at and hitting moving targets. So it's no surprise that Vaughan was able to hit stationary targets from a level position--yet, as mentioned, he never once fired all his shots in less than 6 seconds.

It should be pointed out that the only way one can assume a lone gunman would have had more than 6 seconds to fire is to assume he fired before the limousine passed beneath the intervening oak tree and that he completely missed the entire limousine with this first and closest shot. This would mean the gunman would have had to miss the huge limousine, which was about 20 feet long and over 6 feet wide, from less than 140 feet away and from 60 feet up. Even the Warren Commission labeled the first-shot-miss scenario an "improbability."

4. Russo says he consulted with "numerous marksmen and current Marine trainers" and that all of them said Oswald's alleged shooting feat would have been "simple" (p. 465). That's odd, because I interviewed a former Army sniper and a competition rifleman, and both said Oswald's alleged shooting performance would have been very difficult. In addition, the most renowned sniper of the 20th Century, Carlos Hathcock, likewise said Oswald's supposed shooting feat would have been very difficult, and Hathcock added he didn't believe that only one man shot Kennedy. The Army sniper with whom I spoke said his instructors invited the students in his sniping class to try to duplicate Oswald's supposed shooting feat, and that not one of them could do it. Former Marine sniper Craig Roberts is another sniping expert who says Oswald's alleged shooting feat would have been very difficult and that no one man could have done the shooting. If Oswald's alleged shooting feat would have been so easy, why hasn't anyone ever scored two hits in three shots against a moving target from a 60-foot elevation using a Carcano rifle in 6-8 seconds on the first attempt? It should be remembered that Oswald would have had only one attempt, that he had no chance to fire "practice rounds" that day, and that he was widely regarded as a rather poor shot by those who saw him shoot.

5. Russo says that "an FBI sharpshooter, using Oswald's rifle, fired three rapid-fire rounds and immediately took paraffin tests. Both his hands and cheek tested negative" (p. 463). Russo is taking the Warren Commission's word on this point. But when Harold Weisberg received what appeared to be records on these tests as a result of a FOIA suit, he discovered a different story:

ERDA [the Energy and Research and Development Administration] . . . decided to give me copies of its records. . . . These records included the results of a number of test firings with that rifle [the alleged murder weapon] and the paraffin test made on those who fired it. The test firing left heavy deposits on all the shooters faces, quite the opposite of what the paraffin test of Oswald's face disclosed. (NEVER AGAIN, p. 337)

As Weisberg mentions, the paraffin test of Oswald's cheeks was negative, suggesting he had not fired a rifle recently. However, I should add that paraffin tests aren't always reliable and that police departments stopped using them a long time ago.

5. Russo says rifle ammo has long been smokeless (p. 471). This is

erroneous. Even the House Select Committee on Assassinations' (HSCA) firearms panel debunked this myth. I've been in the Army 19 years and have fired numerous times with the M-16 rifle--even that rifle's ammo occasionally produces visible smoke. Or, look at the footage of the SLA shootout with police in California in the 1970s--many of those rifles produced very visible puffs of smoke. Or, look at the footage of sniper Charles Whitman from the 1960s, when he fired at college students from a tower on a college campus in Texas--you can see puffs of smoke generated from some of his weapons after the shot rings out..

6. Russo cites the story of Howard Brennan (p. 295). Brennan belatedly identified Oswald as the man he saw shooting from the sixth-floor window. What Russo doesn't mention is that Brennan's boss said Brennan appeared to have been badgered by federal agents into making this identification. Russo also fails to mention that Brennan, who had remarkable distance vision, saw no scope on the rifle that he saw fired from the window. Brennan wasn't the only witness who saw no scope on the sixth-floor rifle before or during the shooting, either. Yet, the alleged murder weapon had a scope on it when it was found on the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository. Another fact that Russo omits is that Brennan said the man in the sniper's window was wearing a light-colored shirt. All of the other witnesses who saw a gunman in the sixth-floor window likewise said he was wearing a light-colored shirt. The problem is that Oswald wore a rust-brown shirt to work that day, and was seen in that shirt on the second floor of the building less than two minutes after the shots were fired.

7. Russo says Kennedy's reaction to the non-fatal bullet strike was a "Thorburn's response" (p. 297). One only has to look at Thorburn's own illustration of the Thorburn position to see that Kennedy's arms clearly were not in this position when he visibly reacted to a wound after the limousine emerged from behind the freeway sign (see Thorburn's illustration in John Lattimer, *KENNEDY AND LINCOLN*, New York: Harcourt, Brace, Johanovich, 1980, p. 244, figure 99). Dr. Gary Aguilar, an M.D., regards the theory that Kennedy's reaction was a Thorburn response as implausible. Wallace Milam has done considerable research on this issue and has shown the Thorburn-response theory is invalid (see Dr. Lattimer and the Great Thorburn Hoax).

8. Russo attempts to explain the violent backward motion of Kennedy's head and upper body with the jet-effect theory (p. 298). This theory says the right-frontal explosion that we see in the Zapruder film pushed Kennedy violently backward and to the left. This is most unlikely. Dr. Larry Sturdivan, a wound ballistics expert, testified to the HSCA that this right-frontal explosion would have produced little motion, and that what small amount of movement it might have generated would have pushed Kennedy straight to the left, not backward and to the left. Several other scholars have rejected the jet-effect theory, including two physicists. Proponents of the single-shooter scenario have long had trouble explaining why Kennedy's upper body moves violently backward if he was supposedly shot only from behind. Another theory offered to explain this apparent contradiction is that Kennedy's backward motion resulted from a neuromuscular reaction. This was the theory that Dr. Sturdivan offered to the HSCA as his explanation for Kennedy's rapid backward movement. But this theory is just as problematic and implausible as the jet-effect theory. I asked Dr. Robert Zacharko, a Canadian professor of neuroscience, about the neuromuscular-reaction theory. He said it was absurd and that those who advance it don't understand neuromuscular reactions or how the brain works. I've seen war films and

execution films that show men being shot in the head. In those films (at least in all the ones I've seen) the victims always go limp immediately, and their heads move in the same direction as the bullet. The most logical explanation for Kennedy's fierce backward movement, assuming the existing Zapruder film is pristine, is that it was caused by a shot from the front.

Dr. Michael Kurtz:

Had the committee [the HSCA] exhibited interest in discovering the true explanation of the backward movement of Kennedy's head, it would have studied the evidence about human, rather than animal, response to bullet wounds. The committee, in fact, already possessed one instance provided in its investigation of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. As Dr. King leaned forward on the balcony outside his motel room, a bullet fired from the front struck him in the jaw, tore through his mouth, and exploded into his neck. According to Sturdivan's analysis, this front-entering bullet should have propelled Dr. King forward off the balcony onto the ground below. Instead, the bullet knocked Dr. King violently backward, causing him to fall on his back on the balcony floor. Countless other examples, including war films of soldiers shot in the head, verify without exception the fact that bullets striking people in the head cause the head to move in the direction of the path of the bullet. (CRIME OF THE CENTURY: THE KENNEDY ASSASSINATION FROM A HISTORIAN'S PERSPECTIVE, Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983, pp. 178-179. One of Dr. Kurtz's sources is footage from BBC-TV's program "The Battle of Stalingrad" in its THE WORLD AT WAR series)

9. Russo spends three pages talking about WC member Senator Richard Russell's objections to the Commission's final report (pp. 371-373). Russo fails to mention that Russell rejected the Commission's infamous and implausible single-bullet theory (which Russo accepts).

10. Russo accepts the HSCA's trajectory study as strong evidence of the lone-gunman scenario (pp. 444-445). Apparently Russo is unaware that the author of that study used a questionable location for the back wound. In one of the HSCA's drawings of the alleged trajectory through Kennedy's neck, Kennedy's head is leaning noticeably forward and his head is tilted markedly forward, in order to get the trajectory to line up with the sixth-floor window. However, no film or photo shows Kennedy in such a position during the time period of the first hit. A few years ago a laser trajectory analysis in Dealey Plaza conducted by ballistics and crime-scene experts found that the back-wound shot traced backward to a lower floor of the Dal-Tex Building. A research team from St. Martin's Press studied the HSCA's trajectory analysis and found numerous problems with it (see Bonar Menninger, MORTAL ERROR, New York: St. Martin's Press, pp. 238-248).

11. Russo claims the sixth-floor sniper's nest was "literally blanketed with Oswald's prints" (p. 444). This isn't just wrong, it's erroneous. Not a single fingerprint of Oswald's was found on any of the boxes that were used to make the shield behind the sniper's nest. Nor were Oswald's prints found on any of the boxes under and between which the alleged murder weapon was hidden. Of the four boxes that were positioned near the sniper's window, Oswald's prints were found on only two of them. However, since Oswald worked at the Depository and handled many boxes in the course of his daily duties, the presence of these prints proves nothing. Moreover, only three of Oswald's prints were found on those two boxes, and their distribution was

such that they could easily and logically have been made during the routine movement of the boxes. In fact, what is puzzling is that MORE of Oswald's prints weren't found on the boxes, especially if, as the Commission claimed, he was the one who used them to construct the "gun rest." One of the three prints was found on the box BEHIND the so-called "gun rest." Only two of Oswald's prints were found on the boxes constituting the "gun rest" itself, and both of them were on the same box, at the corners. Why were only two of Oswald's prints found on those boxes, when one of the Dallas police detectives left multiple prints on all the boxes he handled?

12. Russo accepts all of the research and findings of the various HSCA experts, all except the acoustical experts, whose findings contradict Russo's lone-shooter scenario (pp. 444-445). The HSCA's acoustical experts analyzed a police dictabelt recording and concluded (1) that it was made in Dealey Plaza during the assassination, (2) that it contained four impulses that were caused by gunshots, i.e., FOUR SHOTS, and (3) that one of those shots, to a degree of certainty of 95 percent or better, came from the grassy knoll. Russo cites the National Academy of Sciences' (NAS) negative review of the HSCA's acoustical research as his reason for rejecting the acoustical evidence. Russo doesn't mention that one of the HSCA's acoustical experts responded to the NAS's criticisms. So has Dr. David Scheim, who holds a doctorate in math from MIT. Nor does Russo mention that the HSCA acoustical experts traced the grassy knoll shot back to a spot behind the fence on the knoll that was within just a few feet of the location that so many eyewitnesses identified as a source of gunfire. Last year another scientist, Dr. D. B. Thomas, reviewed the HSCA's acoustical evidence and the NAS's critique. He concluded the select committee's acoustical findings about a grassy knoll shot were valid and that the NAS critique was badly flawed. Dr. Thomas discussed his findings in an article published in the forensic science journal SCIENCE AND JUSTICE (2001, 41:21-32), "Echo Correlation Analysis and the Acoustic Evidence in the Kennedy Assassination Revisited."

13. Russo says the HSCA's photographic evidence panel proved the famous Oswald backyard rifle photos to be genuine, and that two prominent photographic experts from Canada and England who had previously questioned the backyard photos retracted their criticism and agreed "the photos were genuine" (p. 444). This is not exactly correct. One of those experts, Detective Superintendent Malcolm Thompson from Scotland Yard, did NOT accept a key claim of the HSCA's photo team. Thompson said he was not convinced by the panel's explanation of the disparity between Oswald's chin and the chin of the figure in the backyard pictures. Furthermore, the HSCA never invited Thompson and the other expert to study the original backyard photos.

The HSCA photo panel's work was not exactly inerrant. For example, the panel concluded that all of the backyard photos, including the newly discovered officer prints, were first generation prints from Oswald's Imperial Reflex camera. But this was incorrect. The officer prints were made by a copy camera in the Dallas Police Department's crime lab (Gary Savage, JFK: FIRST DAY EVIDENCE, The Shoppe Press, 1993, pp. 131-132). In other words, the HSCA's photo experts couldn't tell the difference between copy camera prints and the original backyard photos. Valid questions remain about the authenticity of the backyard rifle photos.

14. Russo dismisses the idea that an unusual number of assassination witnesses have died, and he seems to doubt that any of them died under suspicious circumstances (p. 444). Gary Cornwell, the former deputy chief

counsel for the HSCA, disagrees. In his recent book on the assassination, Cornwell says,

The number, circumstances and timing of such deaths . . . did suggest the possibility that witnesses had been silenced, and thus, the possibility of conspiracy. (REAL ANSWERS, Paleface Press, 1998, p. 97)

Some of these deaths have indeed been suspicious or unusual. Potentially key witness Eladio del Valle was brutally murdered in Miami soon after an investigator from the New Orleans District Attorney's office arrived to interview him. Mafia man Johnny Rosselli, who knew a lot about the CIA-Mafia assassination plots against Fidel Castro, was murdered just before he was supposed to testify to the HSCA. CIA agent Gary Underhill claimed to have important information about the assassination, but he was discovered with a bullet in his head in May 1964. George DeMohrenschildt, who knew Oswald in Dallas and also had links to the CIA, committed suicide hours before he was to be interviewed by an HSCA investigator. Clyde Johnson, a former candidate for governor in Louisiana, told the New Orleans DA's office that he had seen Oswald with Jack Ruby and Clay Shaw in New Orleans in August 1963. Six years later, the New Orleans DA, Jim Garrison, took Shaw to trial on the charge of having been involved in a conspiracy to kill President Kennedy. Clyde Johnson, however, never testified at Shaw's trial, because he was severely beaten seven months before the trial started, and then he was killed in a shotgun attack five months later. David Ferrie, who by all accounts was a key witness, supposedly committed suicide just a few days after it was revealed in the press that Ferrie was a target of Jim Garrison's investigation. Some believe Ferrie was forcefully fed a fatal dosage of Proloid. The deputy coroner of New Orleans, Frank Minyard, noted a contusion on the inside of Ferrie's lower lip. Minyard concluded the contusion had been caused by "something traumatically inserted into his mouth" (William Davy, LET JUSTICE BE DONE: NEW LIGHT ON THE JIM GARRISON INVESTIGATION, Reston: Jordan Publishing, 1999, p. 67). Ferrie's alleged suicide occurred on the same day Eladio del Valle's brutalized body was found in Miami.

15. Russo says "the recovered bullet and bullet fragments, through sophisticated nuclear technology, were traced to a rifle that proved to be owned by Oswald" (p. 444). This is highly questionable. Russo's referring to Dr. Vincent Guinn's nuclear activation analysis (NAA) tests that Guinn did for the HSCA. But other scholars who have examined Guinn's documentation argue Guinn misrepresented his data to the committee and that in fact Guinn's NAA did not prove what Guinn said it proved. Dr. Kurtz:

On the surface, the neutron activation analysis tests performed by Dr. Guinn provided strong support both for the single-bullet theory and for the contention that the fatal head shot was fired from Lee Harvey Oswald's rifle. Since the write fragments and Bullet 399 [the alleged "magic bullet" of the single-bullet theory] matched each other, the committee accepted Dr. Guinn's thesis that they came from the same bullet. Likewise, the committee endorsed the Guinn theory that the head and limousine fragments came from the same bullet.

A more careful analysis of the neutron activation analysis tests, however, shows numerous deficiencies that contest all of Dr. Guinn's central conclusions. First, of the more than thirty bullet fragments in John Kennedy's head, only two were subjected to the

test. The rest remained embedded in brain tissue and skull bone. That two head fragments matched each other does not mean that others did so. Second, Dr. Guinn did not analyze the large copper fragment found in the limousine. The origin of that fragment, therefore, remains scientifically unproven. Third, Dr. Guinn had previously performed neutron activation analysis on Mannlicher-Carcano ammunition, one of the bullets being from the same manufacture and production lot (Western Cartridge Company, lot 6003) as bullets from Oswald's rifle. NONE of the bullets matched each other. Moreover, Guinn analyzed pieces of the same bullet, and they, too, failed to match. For example, the four pieces of the bullet from lot 6003 had figures ranging from 7.9 to 15.9 parts per million (ppm.) silver, from 80 to 732 ppm. antimony, and from 17 to 62 ppm. copper. Dr. Guinn himself admitted that "some Mannlicher-Carcano bullets cannot be distinguished from each other."

The most serious shortcoming in Dr. Guinn's analysis is his failure to properly interpret the data from the assassination fragments. For example, the Connally wrist fragment contained 25 percent more silver and 850 percent more copper than Bullet 399. It also contained 2400 percent more sodium and 1100 percent more chlorine, and it contained 8.1 ppm. aluminum, while Bullet 399 contained none. Similarly, the Kennedy head fragments and limousine fragments contained wide disparities in their chemical composition. Guinn and the committee, therefore, were hardly justified in their conclusions about "matches." (CRIME OF THE CENTURY, pp. 180-181)

16. Russo matter of factly accepts the Dallas Police Department's belated claim that Oswald's palm print was found on the alleged murder weapon (p. 462). However, there are serious questions surrounding the origin and discovery of this print. For example, no photograph of the print on the rifle exists. Why? Because the police lieutenant who supposedly found and lifted the print, Lt. J. C. Day, "failed" to photograph the print on the rifle before he allegedly lifted it off the rifle's barrel. This was a suspicious violation of long-established standard procedure. Also, the Dallas police didn't send the print to the FBI until several days later, after Oswald had been shot and his body had been kept in the morgue and then in a funeral home. The FBI agent who took the Mannlicher-Carcano rifle from Lt. Day insisted Day said nothing about having found any Oswald prints on the rifle. When the FBI examined the rifle a few hours later, not only did the FBI fingerprint expert find no prints on the barrel, but he found no indications whatsoever that the barrel had even been processed for prints. Just as odd is the fact that the Dallas police said nothing about the alleged discovery of the palm print until after Oswald was dead, even though the print was supposedly found and lifted on Friday night. Journalists with long-established contacts on the police force were reporting well into that Saturday, if not that Sunday, that the police had NOT found any Oswald prints on the rifle. Yet, during that same period, the police and the Dallas DA's office were quick to trumpet any and all evidence, valid or otherwise, that they believed they had found of Oswald's guilt. Why, then, wasn't the dramatic, crucial discovery of the palm print immediately announced to the world? Many researchers suspect Oswald's palm print was either planted on the rifle when his body was at the morgue or that it was taken from Oswald's fingerprint card.

17. Russo believes Dale Myers' computer trajectory reconstruction is "conclusive" (p. 471). Says Russo, "Myers' work . . . is not only consistent with the previous studies, and is much more dramatic, but resolves virtually the remaining nagging mysteries of Dealey Plaza," and "Myers' work is conclusive that the wounds track back" to the sixth-floor window. It's hard to understand how Russo could feel this way about Myers' work given the obvious problems with Myers' reconstruction. For starters, in his simulation Myers places Kennedy's back wound noticeably higher than where the autopsy photos place it. In fact, Myers puts the back wound higher than where the FBI placed it on the back of the Kennedy stand-in in the May 24, 1964, reenactment in Dealey Plaza. Anyone can verify this fact by comparing Myers' placement of the wound as seen in his video to the location of the wound on the stand-in's back in the well-known photo from the May 24 reenactment (the

photo is found in several books on the assassination; see, for example, Robert Groden, *THE KILLING OF A PRESIDENT*, New York: Viking Studio Books, 1993, p. 125, which not only shows the Dealey Plaza reenactment photo but also shows a photo of a WC staffer having to ignore the spot for the back wound in order to get the single-bullet theory's trajectory to work). It should be pointed out that FBI ballistics expert Robert Frazier told the WC that the wound dot on the stand-in's back was based on the autopsy measurements (5 H 166). (Frames from Myers' video are shown on pp. 478-479 of Russo's book. The first two frames on page 479 show the reader just how high Myers places the back wound.)

Another problem with Myers' reconstruction is that his Kennedy and Connally figures aren't clothed, so there's no way to determine the location of the wounds in relation to the holes in the clothing they were wearing when they were shot. This is an important flaw, since the clothing holes are crucial evidentiary items. Also, in order to get the single-bullet theory's trajectory to "line up" with the sixth-floor window, Myers has his Kennedy model leaning so far forward that his back is nearly completely off the seat, a notion that is not shown in the Zapruder film.

As for Russo's claim that Myers' study is consistent with previous trajectory analyses, this is incorrect. For instance, in the HSCA trajectory analysis, which Russo accepts, the Connally figure is rotated markedly to the right, by at least 20-25 degrees, and is shifted so far to the left that a third of his torso is in between the two jump seats. But, in Myers' reconstruction the Connally model is rotated only 15 degrees to the right and is seated entirely in the right-side jump seat (see photo 28 in *MORTAL ERROR* and p. 478 in Russo's book; the HSCA diagram is in *MORTAL ERROR* and the relevant frame from Myers' reconstruction is in Russo's book).

18. Russo says Jack Martin recanted his claims that David Ferrie knew Oswald (p. 402). But Martin himself indicated his retraction was made under pressure from FBI agents (Davy, *LET JUSTICE BE DONE*, p. 48). In fact, at the same time Martin was changing his tune to the FBI, he wrote a letter to the FAA reminding them that their case records might show that Oswald was in Ferrie's CAP squadron and that group photos of the squadron might show Oswald and Ferrie together (years later just such a photo did surface, and the photo has since been shown in TV documentaries on the assassination). What's more, it's not clear that Martin actually changed his story to the FBI. The HSCA concluded the FBI exaggerated the nature of Martin's alleged "retraction" (see HSCA Report, pp. 143-145).

19. Incredibly, Russo opines that "it is questionable whether Clay Shaw even

knew David Ferrie" (p. 411). Several credible witnesses positively identified Shaw and Ferrie together in Clinton and Jackson, Louisiana, a few months before the assassination. These witnesses said they saw Shaw and Ferrie in the towns of Clinton and Jackson, that Shaw and Ferrie were riding in a large black Cadillac, and that the third man traveling with them in the car (and whom they saw get out of the car) was none other than Lee Harvey Oswald. Ferrie had a very odd appearance, which made it hard to confuse him for someone else. At one point during the visit to Clinton, the Clinton town marshall, John Manchester, went over to the black Cadillac and asked the driver to identify himself. Manchester testified to the HSCA that the driver identified himself as Clay Shaw, and he indicated Shaw even showed him his driver's license:

HSCA Counsel: The driver of the car identified himself, did he not, sir?

Manchester: Yes, sir, he did.

HSCA Counsel: What name did he give you?

Manchester: He gave Clay Shaw, which corresponded with his driver's license. (Daley, LET JUSTICE BE DONE, p. 106, quoting from HSCA document #008503)

Some have suggested the driver was actually Guy Banister. But one of the Clinton witnesses knew Banister and insisted the driver was not Banister. William Davy presents a thorough analysis of the Clinton-Jackson witnesses in chapter eleven of his book LET JUSTICE BE DONE.

19. In all seriousness, Russo argues that Clay Shaw was a liberal, that he never associated with right-wing extremists, and that he admired Kennedy (and reportedly even voted for him, according to one of Shaw's friends) (p. 412). Let's examine just a small amount of the evidence that refutes Russo's arguments. One of Shaw's close friends was right-wing extremist Alton Ochsner. Ochsner openly admired the writings of Wilmot Robertson, who called upon citizens of Northern European extraction to take control of America from usurping racial minorities because Northern Europeans were genetically superior to minorities. Ochsner was involved in several radical right-wing organizations. In a 1994 interview, Dan Campbell, who worked for right-wing extremist Guy Banister, said Shaw was involved with Banister in a gun running operation to the Alpha 66 Cuban exiles in Miami. Notes Daly,

New evidence seems to support allegations of Shaw's interest in gun-running. A CIA document reports that Shaw and his ITM associate Mario Bermudez traveled together to Cuba in 1959 on a gun-smuggling operation. (LET JUSTICE BE DONE, p. 94)

Shaw sat on the boards of two secretive international companies that were suspected of having fascist leanings and intelligence connections. Both companies, Permindex and the Centro Mondiale Commerciale, were widely regarded as being fronts for the CIA. Centro Mondiale Commerciale was expelled from Italy and Switzerland for allegedly engaging in illegal political-espionage activities on behalf of the CIA. Permindex was publicly accused by French president Charles de Gaulle of channeling funds to the violent and outlawed Secret Army Organization, which tried to assassinate him on several occasions. This is only a small sampling of what could be said about Shaw's friends, political leanings, and intelligence connections.

20. Russo's appendix on Jack Ruby is both inaccurate and incomplete. For example, Russo says "for every witness who claims that Ruby had direct contact with the Mafia, there are hundreds who know that to be an absurdity" (p. 501). One has to wonder if Russo has read the detailed HSCA report on Ruby's extensive Mafia contacts, or any of the other scholarly research on Ruby's Mafia links. The HSCA concluded Ruby had a significant number of Mafia ties:

The evidence available to the committee . . . showed that he [Ruby] had a significant number of associations and direct and indirect contacts with underworld figures, a number of whom were connected to the most powerful La Cosa Nostra leaders. Additionally, Ruby had numerous associations with the Dallas criminal element. (HSCA Report, Section I C 4)

Citing "dozens" of Ruby's friends and relatives, Russo argues that Ruby deeply admired Kennedy and was devastated by the assassination (pp. 496-497). Given all that researchers have long since known about Ruby, it's difficult to take these claims seriously. If Ruby was such a devoted Kennedy fan, why didn't he watch the motorcade? Russo accepts Ruby's belated claim that he shot Oswald because he wanted to spare Jackie Kennedy from having to endure the ordeal of Oswald's trial. Is Russo not aware that Ruby himself later wrote a note in which he admitted the spare-Jackie-grief excuse was false and that his first lawyer gave him the idea for that excuse?

As for the convenient claims of Ruby's friends and relatives, many of these same folks attempted to minimize Ruby's Mafia activities during his Chicago days. Former HSCA chief counsel G. Robert Blakey relates what the HSCA discovered when it investigated the claims of Ruby's friends and family members concerning his involvement in organized crime in Chicago:

During the 1964 investigation [i.e., the WC's investigation] Ruby's relatives and friends attempted to minimize his criminal associations and acts of violence during the early Chicago years. (His sister Eva went so far as to claim that she "knew more racketeers" than Jack did.) But their testimony, when weighed against other evidence, rang hollow. . . . There was . . . persuasive evidence that Ruby was a strong-arm man, a "goon," for a racket-ridden union in Chicago. (FATAL HOUR, New York: Berkley Books, Berkley Books edition, 1992, pp. 302-303)

Russo doesn't even address the key issue of how Ruby entered the basement of the Dallas Police Department, where he shot Oswald as Oswald was being transferred to a waiting police vehicle. It has long been clear that Ruby lied about how he gained access to the basement. Nor does Russo address the fact that Ruby lied about being at Parkland Hospital shortly after the assassination. Ruby could have explained his presence at the hospital by claiming to be a Kennedy devotee, but apparently that never occurred to him. Instead, he adamantly denied he was at the hospital that afternoon. Yet, two witnesses saw Ruby there, and one of those witnesses knew Ruby and even briefly conversed with him while at the hospital. Why did Ruby deny he was at the hospital? Why didn't he claim he was there because he wanted to be near his dearly beloved president, whom he supposedly admired and all but worshipped?

Finally, it's worth noting that Ruby's polygraph suggests he might very well have lied when he was asked if he had been involved in the assassination. The HSCA polygraph experts stated the following in their report regarding the reaction to the question, "Did you assist Oswald in the assassination?":

In fact, the reactions to the preceding question--(Did you assist Oswald in the assassination?)--showed the largest valid GSR reaction in test series No. 1. In addition, there is a constant suppression of breathing and a rise in blood pressure at the time of this crucial relevant question. From this test, it appeared to the panel that Ruby was possibly lying when answering "no" to the question, "Did you assist Oswald in the assassination?" This is contrary to Herndon's opinion that Ruby was truthful when answering that question. (8 HSCA 217-218)

I would like to stress that, in spite of the problems discussed above, I believe Russo's LIVE BY THE SWORD is an important, worthwhile book. It contains a great deal of new information on key aspects of the JFK assassination. Russo does a superb job on the possible involvement of Cuban intelligence in Kennedy's death, on the reports that Oswald had contacts with Cuban intelligence in Mexico City, on the possibility that some intelligence elements had foreknowledge that Kennedy was going to be killed, on the flaws in the Warren Commission's investigation, on the conflicts among the Warren Commission's staff and members, on Lyndon Johnson's political standing with John Kennedy at the time of the shooting, on the suspicious activities at Red Bird Airport, and on several other subjects. But Russo's devotion to the lone-gunman scenario and his dismissive, hypercritical attitude toward the Jim Garrison investigation cause him to err badly on the Dealey Plaza shooting, on the Shaw-Ferrie-Oswald-Banister link, on the evidence of Oswald's ties to American intelligence, on the evidence that more than one gunman was involved in the assassination, on Jack Ruby and his killing of Oswald, and on much of the physical and medical evidence in the case.