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Donald E. Wilkes Jr.

University of Georgia School of Law, wilkes@uga.edu

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Amazing Facts About the JFK Assassination

By [Donald E. Wilkes, Jr.](#) - November 14, 2018

Fifty-five years ago, at 12:30 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 22, 1963, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated by hidden sniper fire in Dealey Plaza in downtown Dallas, TX.

This terrible event is still enveloped in mystery. The alleged assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, stridently denied committing the crime, never received legal representation, and was suspiciously murdered while in police custody two days after the assassination. Inept pathologists botched President Kennedy's autopsy, to put it mildly. Witnesses and persons of interest soon began dying violent or suspicious deaths. The first official investigation of the assassination, undertaken by the Warren Commission, was hurried, inadequate and stacked in favor of the theory that Oswald was the lone assassin. The second official investigation, 12 years later, by a select committee of the U.S. House of Representatives, was hamstrung by political bickering, time and money limitations, unavailability of or failures of memory by witnesses, loss of evidence (including intentional destruction of documents), and the CIA's refusal to meaningfully cooperate with the committee.

However, during the past half century, resourceful scholars, journalists and private researchers within the JFK assassination research community, to their enormous credit, repeatedly have uncovered relevant evidence unavailable or overlooked during the official investigations. The members of this research community are the persons who have been the most active in examining the millions of pages of previously secret government documents relating to the assassination that have been declassified and released to the public since 1992.

While many key factual questions about the JFK assassination remain unanswered, we now, in 2018, know more of the facts surrounding the assassination than ever before.

Here are some amazing facts about the assassination, most of which were either unknown or in dispute in 1964 when the Warren Report appeared:

- 1.** Prior to the assassination, both the FBI and the CIA knew a lot about former U.S. Marine and ex-Soviet defector Lee Harvey Oswald, and in early November 1963, only days before the assassination, both agencies knew that Oswald was then living in Dallas, which President Kennedy was soon to visit and be driven through in an open car. Yet neither agency did anything.

We now know that years before Nov. 22, 1963, both the FBI and the CIA were familiar with Lee Harvey Oswald and busy monitoring his activities. We now know that both agencies opened files on Oswald in 1959, four years before the assassination, and that by the time of the assassination these files were voluminous.

We also now know that prior to the assassination, the extensive information about Lee Harvey Oswald compiled by the two agencies included the following:

- He was an ex-Marine radar operator, who in 1959, promising to reveal military secrets to the Russians, had defected to the Soviet Union, where he tried to renounce his American citizenship and where he lived for two years.
- His wife was a Russian woman he married while living in the Soviet Union.
- He was an avowed Marxist.
- He was the founder of the New Orleans chapter of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, which backed Fidel Castro, the communist dictator of Cuba.
- In August 1963, he was arrested in New Orleans after a scuffle with anti-communist, anti-Castro Cuban exiles enraged that he was handing out pro-Castro literature.
- In late September 1963, he traveled to Mexico City and visited the Soviet and Cuban diplomatic compounds where he allegedly attempted to make arrangements to travel to the Soviet Union and Cuba, and met with the Soviet KGB secret police agent in charge of political assassinations in the Western Hemisphere.

Furthermore, in early November 1963, both the FBI and the CIA knew that Oswald was then residing in Dallas, through which, as they certainly also knew, JFK would be motorcading before the end of the month. The FBI even knew that Oswald then had a job working at the Texas School Book Depository, a tall building overlooking JFK's Dallas motorcade route, and the CIA probably knew this too.

Yet, strangely, neither the FBI nor the CIA took precautionary steps to protect JFK from possible harm by Oswald. They did not even bother to contact the Secret Service, which (also strangely) was unaware of Oswald's presence in Dallas.

There has never been a satisfactory explanation for this curious inaction by the FBI and the CIA.

2. The successful assassination of President Kennedy was a gigantic intelligence and security failure by the FBI, the Secret Service and the CIA, and yet nobody was fired.

One of the basic purposes of counterintelligence work is to prevent assassinations. However, after the JFK assassination neither the FBI officials in charge of domestic counterintelligence nor the CIA officials in charge of foreign counterintelligence were fired, even though it should have been obvious that they had failed spectacularly to perform their duty to prevent harm to President Kennedy.

The principal reason these officials retained their positions is that they perpetrated a coverup by concealing from the Warren Commission, Congress, and the public the full truth about their pre-assassination knowledge of, and possible involvement with, Lee Harvey Oswald.

James J. Rowley, the Director of the Secret Service when the assassination occurred, was not promptly dismissed but instead remained in his position until he retired in 1973, and

the Secret Service officials who had been responsible for protective intelligence were not fired. Indeed, not even the Secret Service agents in the motorcade, who so disastrously failed to come to JFK's aid during the attack, and some of whom had been out drinking the night before the assassination, were dismissed.

3. Several important scientific test procedures ordinarily used by crime labs to examine firearms or bullets were not performed in the JFK murder case.

Swabbing the inside of the barrel of a recently fired weapon with hot distilled water is a recognized forensic firearms technique. It is used to obtain and examine any gunpowder residue, or fouling, left inside the barrel after the gun has been discharged. Among other things, it permits crime lab experts to determine whether the weapon has been fired since its last cleaning. If there is no residue whatever it is unlikely that the gun was fired, at least recently.

Yet, most peculiarly, the FBI crime lab failed to swab the inside of the barrel of the Mannlicher-Carcano rifle found on the sixth floor of the School Book Depository less than an hour after the assassination. There can be no doubt about this. When Robert A. Frazier, the FBI crime lab expert who examined the rifle, testified before the Warren Commission he was specifically asked, "Was there metal fouling in the barrel?" He tersely replied, "I did not examine it for that." Frazier gave no reason for not performing the examination, and there was no followup question asking why the examination was not performed.

The Dallas police crime lab did not perform the swab test either.

Another routine crime lab technique in firearms homicide cases is to examine spent bullets for blood and other human tissue.

In the JFK murder case, a spent bullet was found on a stretcher in the hospital to which JFK was rushed. This bullet supposedly had passed through the bodies of two human beings, President Kennedy and John Connally, the governor of Texas, who had been seated in front of JFK in the presidential limousine.

Crime lab expert Frazier told the Warren Commission that he had examined the bullet and that there was or might have been a small amount of blood or similar material on the bullet, but "[n]ot any which would interfere with the examination." He said nothing, however, about any attempt to remove and identify the substances on the bullet, and it is apparent that neither the FBI nor the Dallas police crime labs attempted to identify the substances. This was inexcusable. As Charles G. Wilber observes in his 1978 book *Medicolegal Investigation of the President John F. Kennedy Murder*: "Sophisticated crime investigators such as the FBI agents are said to be should have been aware of the value of blood and tissue on a spent bullet which went through a victim or two."

The Dallas police crime lab also failed to test the bullet for organic matter.

Furthermore, and again in violation of standard procedures, the FBI crime lab failed to examine for blood and tissue the bullet fragments found in the interior of the presidential limousine. (The fragments were never in the possession of the Dallas police crime lab.)

To summarize: The President of the United States was shot dead, the alleged murder weapon was quickly recovered and immediately sent off for scientific testing, and yet, without explanation, the crime labs failed to perform standard testing procedures to determine whether the weapon had been fired recently. They also did not perform a routine test for biological material on a bullet and bullet fragments associated with the murder.

Why weren't the usual crime lab protocols for testing firearms or bullets believed to have been used to commit a homicide performed in the case of the murder of JFK?

4. There was no federal grand jury investigation of JFK's assassination.

It is truly incredible that no federal grand jury was empaneled to investigate President Kennedy's assassination and bring appropriate criminal charges against anyone involved in the assassination. An American President was horribly murdered in broad daylight and yet no grand jury was ever convened. When would there ever be more cause to have a grand jury inquire into a crime than in such a case?

A grand jury investigation would have meant that the assassination would be officially regarded as an active criminal homicide case, rather than merely the occasion for a fact-finding report prepared by a temporary, ad hoc governmental agency (such as the Warren Commission). The President's murder (and any crimes committed in connection with it) would have been professionally handled by experienced prosecutors and investigators utilizing the vast powers grand juries possess to subpoena witnesses and documents, to question witnesses, and to lodge criminal charges.

Why was there no grand jury investigation of the assassination?

The Warren Commission's excuse was that murdering a President was not a federal crime in 1963. It is true that Congress did not make presidential murder a federal crime until 1965. But this overlooks the fact that other federal crimes relating to the protection of federal officials could very well have been committed, and that therefore a federal grand jury investigation into the assassination was amply justified if not required. For example, since the 19th Century it has been a federal crime to conspire to injure any federal official while he is engaging in his official duties.

If, therefore, there had been a conspiracy behind the assassination, then a federal crime had occurred—and a grand jury investigation would be warranted to identify and prosecute the conspirators. The Warren Commission itself admitted that federal jurisdiction could have been asserted under the law criminalizing conspiracy to injure a federal official if "there had been reason to believe that the assassination was the result of a conspiracy." But, the

Commission asserted, “once it became reasonably clear that the killing was the act of a single person, the State of Texas had exclusive jurisdiction.”

This is ridiculous.

First, it never has been reasonably clear that there was no conspiracy behind the JFK assassination, and it is a certainty that the absence of a conspiracy was not reasonably clear on Nov. 29, 1963, a mere seven days after the assassination, on which date the Warren Commission was created.

Second, conspirators fiendishly clever enough to plan and carry out the murder of a President in broad daylight and thereafter escape the scene undetected would cunningly cover their tracks, plant false leads and remain deep undercover. They would leave behind them false trails and arrange for the assassination to be blamed on a false sponsor. (In the lingo of the intelligence community, a false sponsor is a person who will be publicly blamed for a covert operation after it takes place, thereby diverting attention away from the individuals who actually carried out the operation.) Such a monstrous conspiracy could be unearthed, if at all, only after a protracted, full-blown criminal investigation making full use of the plenary powers of a grand jury. Proving the existence of the presidential assassination conspiracy, and identifying the conspirators, would be an arduous process that would take months, perhaps years.

State grand juries also should have been convened to investigate JFK’s murder—at a minimum, one in Dallas (where JFK was murdered) and one in New Orleans (where Lee Harvey Oswald resided from April to September 1963 and where he hobnobbed with a shady cast of unsavory characters, including persons with law enforcement, CIA, organized crime, or right-wing extremist connections).

5. The mayor of Dallas, who was secretly a paid CIA asset, sat in on planning sessions for JFK’s Dallas visit where he urged minimal security precautions for JFK’s motorcade limousine.



In 1963, the Dallas mayor was a man named Earle Cabell. Earle Cabell's brother, Charles Cabell, served as Deputy Director of the CIA from 1953 until 1962, when he was forced out by JFK because of the Bay of Pigs disaster, the CIA's epic, failed military invasion of Cuba in April 1961. These facts have been well known for many years. A fact we did not know until very recently, however, is that, like his brother Charles, mayor Earle Cabell was affiliated with the CIA.

Specifically, we now know that the mayor was a CIA asset and had been since 1956. This astonishing fact became a matter of public knowledge only last year, in 2017, when a batch of previously secret government documents was declassified.

Earle Cabell, US Government Printing Office
Congressional Pictorial Directory, 91st US Congress, p. 137

The fact, deliberately withheld from the American people for 54 years, that the mayor of Dallas secretly worked for the CIA, is sobering. It "illuminate[s] that the CIA's extraordinary penetration of domestic American institutions extended to the city where JFK was killed," says renowned assassination researcher Jefferson Morley, who adds: "If anyone had said over the past 50 years that the mayor of Dallas in 1963 was a CIA asset, they would have been derided as a 'conspiracy theorist.' Now we know for a fact that he was."

We also now know that Dallas mayor and CIA asset Earle Cabell may have been responsible, at least in part, for the disastrous decision not to have two Secret Service agents standing at the rear of JFK's motorcade limousine, where they could provide instant assistance to JFK in the event of an assassination attempt and possibly even use their bodies to block bullets being fired at the President.

Vincent Michael Palamara is the foremost scholar on the Secret Service and the JFK assassination. His book *Survivor's Guilt: The Secret Service and the Failure to Protect President Kennedy*, published in 2013, is classic. We learn from this book, published years before either Palamara or the general public knew that mayor Earle Cabell was a CIA man, that the mayor not only participated in the planning for JFK's Dallas visit but urged that security precautions for JFK be as minimal as possible and that agents not be posted at the rear of JFK's limousine on the steps specially installed on each side of the limousine near the rear bumper.

One of JFK's Secret Service bodyguards on the Dallas trip was Stewart Stout, who died in 1974 without ever being interviewed about the assassination by the Warren Commission

or the FBI. In *Survivor's Guilt* we learn that in 2010 Stout's son wrote author Palamara as follows:

"Thought I would mention that one of the influential people that attended the advance planning meetings for the Dallas trip was the Mayor of Dallas in 63 and I think it was Earle Cabell... I distinctly... remember during a conversation at the dinner table weeks following (that surreal day), my father telling my mother that 'the Mayor thought agents riding on the back of the car (which was a common protocol) would send a message and [he] did not want his city to appear dangerous to the world through the media. He asked for subtle security exposure if and where possible."

Today it is widely recognized that JFK probably would have survived the sniper attack if (as was usual during presidential motorcades) Secret Service agents had been standing on the rear steps of the limousine.

We still don't know who made the decision to keep agents off those steps, or whether the mayor's objections to having agents standing there actually contributed to that calamitous decision. We do know that, disturbingly (and suspiciously), some of JFK's Secret Service agents blamed JFK for his own death, falsely claiming that a few days before the Dallas visit JFK ordered agents not to position themselves on the limousine's rear steps—and that he had done so for flippant reasons.

Photo of Clay Shaw, originally published in *Esquire*, December 1968.



6. Clay Shaw, a prominent New Orleans businessman who was arrested in 1967 and put on trial in 1969 by New Orleans district attorney Jim Garrison for conspiring to murder JFK, was and had been for years secretly a paid CIA asset. He therefore committed perjury at his criminal trial when he denied his longstanding close ties to the CIA.

Garrison, who investigated the JFK assassination, was the first government official to publicly assert that the assassination had been planned and carried out by a conspiracy of persons with CIA affiliations. Garrison strongly suspected but could not prove that Shaw (who Garrison thought was one of the conspirators) was CIA-connected and that Shaw lied at his trial when he testified under oath that he was not affiliated with the CIA. We now know, based on declassified documents, that Garrison was correct in believing that Shaw had CIA ties and that Shaw lied under oath about those ties. We know that Shaw was not only a CIA asset, but also (in the words of a CIA document) "a highly paid CIA contact source." We also know that the CIA deliberately destroyed some of its files on Shaw. We even know that the person who was with Shaw the day of JFK's assassination had, like Shaw, a CIA security clearance.

7. Before, during and after Shaw's 1969 trial, and using its influential assets and numerous supporters in the mainstream media, the CIA secretly orchestrated a massive public relations campaign to the effect that Shaw was the innocent victim of a crazed, irresponsible prosecutor and in fact had no intelligence connections. As part of this covert operation to deceive the public, Shaw, a right-winger, falsely described himself to the press as a liberal Democrat and JFK supporter who had no connections with the CIA—"none whatsoever," to quote his own untruthful words.

James DiEugenio's book *Destiny Betrayed* (2012) provides an overview of the CIA's clandestine media campaign in behalf of Shaw.

Want to watch a video of Shaw lying to an interviewer about his CIA connections and his political leanings? Just type in "Clay Shaw" on YouTube and click on "New Orleans Businessman Clay Shaw interview 1967."

8. James Jesus Angleton, the infamous chief of the CIA's counterintelligence section from 1954 to 1975, was in charge of the CIA's massive—and ultimately successful—clandestine campaign to sabotage New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison's criminal prosecution of businessman Clay Shaw (now but not then known to be a CIA asset), who was put on trial for conspiring to murder JFK but acquitted by a jury.

The existence of the CIA's secret operation to discredit prosecutor Garrison and procure the acquittal of defendant Shaw, the only person ever criminally charged with being involved in the JFK assassination, has been known for years, but only in 2017 did it become known that Angleton was the CIA official in charge of the whole operation. In addition to stage-managing the relentless, hostile media coverage of Garrison, the CIA's operation also obstructed justice by, among many other things, harassing prosecution witnesses, stealing documents and infiltrating Garrison's office with undercover agents.

Two books provide a full account of how the CIA successfully surreptitiously sabotaged Garrison's prosecution of Shaw: Joan Mellon's *A Farewell to Justice* (2005), and William Davy's *Let Justice Be Done* (1999).

9. Prior to the JFK assassination, the CIA, not the Secret Service, prepared the identification documents used by the Secret Service agents.

Ten years after the assassination, it was disclosed that, before Nov. 22, 1963, the CIA's Technical Services Division prepared and provided to the Secret Service the identification documents used by Secret Service agents, including photo IDs, commission books and security and gate passes. The Secret Service, like the Bureau of Engraving and Printing (which prints U.S. currency), was a subdivision of the Treasury Department, and it is difficult to understand why these documents were not printed by the Treasury Department itself.

In January 1964, Secret Service agents were required to turn in their identification documents, which were replaced by new ones prepared in-house. The recall appears to

have been ordered in response to reports by Dallas police officers that while searching the Dealey Plaza area immediately after the assassination they encountered imposters flashing Secret Service identification papers.

10. The decision of the Board of Trustees of Texas Christian University to refuse to grant an honorary degree to President Kennedy, a decision kept secret for years, may have contributed to the assassination.

On his trip to Texas, President Kennedy originally was scheduled to receive an honorary degree from Texas Christian University in Fort Worth on the morning of Nov. 22. After the honorary degree ceremony the President was scheduled to fly to Dallas for a midday luncheon. Amazingly, however, on Nov. 1 the Board of Trustees of TCU held a meeting and decided not to award President Kennedy the honorary degree. The strained explanation later given for the decision to refuse to grant the degree to President Kennedy rested on alleged technical violations of TCU's rules for the granting of honorary degrees. Actually, the decision to refuse to grant the degree appears to have been due to objections by right-wing board members, who hated JFK's liberal politics.

If the trustees had voted to issue the honorary degree and the ceremony at TCU had not been cancelled, there probably would have been some delay in the President's arrival at Dallas, the Dallas motorcade would have taken place later than it did, and the assassination might have been frustrated or rendered more difficult, according to a 1979 report of the U. S. House of Representatives Select Committee on Assassinations.

11. The Warren Report's conclusion that Lee Harvey Oswald, acting alone, assassinated President Kennedy is discredited, as is the Report's conclusion that Oswald murdered Dallas police officer J.D. Tippit, who was shot to death less than an hour after the JFK assassination.

Today, except for a few diehard Warren Commission defenders (many of whom are apologists for or dupes of the American intelligence establishment or appear to have ties to that establishment), hardly any serious student of the JFK assassination believes the Oswald-was-the-single-assassin theory anymore, although the mainstream media remain wedded to it.

The current view in the JFK assassination research community is that the assassination resulted from a conspiracy, but there is lively disagreement within the community as to whether Oswald was one of the conspirators and whether, if he was, he fired any shots.

With respect to the Tippit killing, there is now a huge amount of previously unknown information about the circumstances surrounding his slaying, and they have turned out to be far more complicated and convoluted than the Warren Commission realized. There is also new information about Tippit's personal life, his unusual activities on the day he died, and the lackadaisical investigation of his death. As a result, today the majority view in the assassination research community is that an unknown person or persons killed Tippit and that Oswald was framed for the crime by unknown conspirators who went so far as to plant

at the Tippit murder scene a mock or stolen Oswald wallet helpfully filled with Oswald identification documents.

America's mainstream press continues, of course, to back the Warren Report's account of Tippit's murder.

For insights into our new understanding of the Tippit murder, read highly respected assassination researcher James DiEugenio's essay, "The Tippit Case in the New Millennium," which was posted on his website *Kennedys and King* on Apr. 28, 2018. Or take a look at Joseph McBride's book, *Into the Nightmare*, published in 2013.

12. The Warren Report's conclusion that the murder of Lee Harvey Oswald by Jack Ruby was not a gangland rub-out, and that Ruby shot Oswald for purely personal reasons and without the encouragement or assistance of others, is discredited.

Today, the JFK assassination research community overwhelmingly rejects the Warren Report's three-fold conclusion that Jack Ruby did not have organized crime connections, that he killed Oswald out of personal motives, and that he received no encouragement or assistance from others.

While America's mainstream press continues to back the Warren Report version of Ruby's slaying of Oswald, the current view of the research community is that the murder was a successful organized crime hit carried out for the purpose of silencing Oswald.

Here are some additional facts we now know about Ruby's shooting of Oswald:

- Carrying the concealed revolver he would later use to murder Oswald, Ruby stalked Oswald at the Dallas police headquarters for two days prior to killing him.
- It is still uncertain how Ruby was able to enter the supposedly sealed-off police station basement where he shot Oswald.
- The fatal shooting of Oswald was the direct result of an appalling and unexplained breakdown of Oswald's police protection—a breakdown for which Will Fritz, the head of the Dallas police homicide squad, was responsible. As the handcuffed prisoner Oswald was being walked through the basement, the four policemen escorting him were supposed to protect him from harm by stationing themselves close to him, using what is called a four-star formation, with one officer closely flanking Oswald on his right side, the second officer doing the same on Oswald's left side, the third officer positioned immediately behind Oswald, and the fourth officer immediately in front of Oswald.
- But just before the Oswald shooting, Fritz, the officer protecting Oswald's front side, suddenly speeded up and began to walk ahead so fast that he became separated from Oswald by several feet, thereby leaving Oswald no longer protected in front. This permitted Ruby to step in front of Oswald and shoot him.
- Immediately after being shot, Oswald was dragged into a nearby room where an unknown policeman administered CPR to Oswald. This severely reduced Oswald's

chances of surviving the gunshot. CPR is one of the worst things you can do if you want to save the life of a person who, like Oswald, has been shot in the abdomen.

- Bizarrely, Jack Ruby was relieved, not distressed, when he found out that Oswald had died. A Dallas police detective, Don Archer, was with Ruby in Ruby's jail cell when word arrived of Oswald's death. According to the detective, Archer, this news caused Ruby, who had been behaving in an over-excited and agitated manner, to calm down.

Here are the detective's own words: "He [Ruby] was sweating profusely. I could hear his heart beating. He asked for one of my cigarettes. I gave him a cigarette. Finally... the head of the Secret Service came up... and he told me that Oswald had died. This should have shocked Ruby because it meant the death penalty... I told Jack it looks like it's going to be the electric chair for you. Instead of being shocked, he became calm, he quit sweating, his heart slowed down. I asked him if he wanted a cigarette, and he advised me he didn't smoke. I was just astonished that this was a complete difference in behavior from what I expected... I would say his life had depended on his getting Oswald."

You can watch the detective describing the episode in these very words by typing in "Don Archer and Jack Ruby" in quotation marks on YouTube.

Donald E. Wilkes, Jr. is a Professor of Law Emeritus at the University of Georgia School of Law, where he taught for 40 years. He has published more than 100 articles in Flagpole. This is his 52nd article on the JFK assassination. Wilkes will speak on "The JFK Assassination and the CIA" at the ACC Library on Baxter St. Thursday, Nov. 15 at 7 p.m.