

Crawl to Judgment All Lowenstein and the RFK Mystery

By Nick Egleston

"Not only was I arrogantly opposed to conspiracy theories, I wanted Sirhan B. Sirhan sent to the gas chamber," says Allard Lowenstein. "I was against capital punishment except in certain circumstances, and one of those I wanted to be the man convicted of killing Robert Kennedy."

"I've had to admit that I was wrong."

Lowenstein, the man who organized the dump-Johnson campaign at the height of the Vietnam war and went on to become a liberal (but not radical) Democrat in Congress, no longer believes that the bullet came from Sirhan's gun. Lowenstein's change of mind began with the disclosures of the Nixon administration's "enemies list" in the spring of 1973.

When the former Representative points to that list he is quick to say he's never seen in it any link to the assassination of the second Kennedy. But "I was ranked seventh in the top 20," he explains, "and I had to say to myself, 'If they were doing this to me, how could I believe that more important people were immune?' About the same time there was a New York Times article that made it clear the FBI had been used against me in my 1972 campaign. You think: 'Wait a minute. Hold on. How naive can a person be?'"

The White House list overcame Lowenstein's resistance to questioning the official version that had survived intact for six years. It was constructed partly as a shield from the emotional impact of Robert Kennedy's death.

"It was the worst blow of my political lifetime. I had tried to talk him into running for the presidency for six months. He wouldn't. I said, 'OK,' and joined the McCarthy ticket. And I said to him at the time that he couldn't come and ask me to switch back. He did, though. He wanted me to run for the Senate."

On the night he died, Robert Kennedy called Lowenstein. Lowenstein was already on the phone, and watching a television broadcast of Kennedy giving his victory speech when the operator interrupted for an



Peter Southwick

might have been. What they want you to believe is that it was Bill Harper.

In 1970 Harper had access to the bullets to photograph them. His pictures reveal the missing cannelle. "Now of all the people I met working on this, he is the most honest and the most decent. The clerk," continues Lowenstein, "never questioned his right to see the bullets. He has been doing police work for 35 years." Harper is widely reported to be held in high regard throughout California legal circles.

I asked who else — even granting the charge (denied by Harper) that Harper was alone with the evidence — could conceivably have altered it. Lowenstein says that is among the questions he has submitted to the LA District Attorney.

"When I went in to see the authorities out there I didn't want to go public. That was partly out of respect for the surviving Kennedys. I expected to get answers. I hadn't asked about anything occult, like the palomino horse or the woman in the polka-dot dress. I didn't get answers then and I haven't yet."

Last week Lowenstein issued a public call for the firing of Sirhan's gun so that a slug marked by its barrel can be compared to the anomalous one taken from Kennedy's body. He wants a neutron test of the various bullet fragments, to ascertain if they were all manufactured from the same metal. He and Paul Schrade, a former UAW official wounded during the assassination, called also for a new study of the trajectories of the bullets fired that night. He doesn't believe all the wounds and marks can be accounted for by the eight slugs that Sirhan fired. And he wants a release of the 10-volume report compiled but never released by the investigating authorities.

Busch may or may not give in under the pressure of the widespread publicity Lowenstein's call and the Harper's article have generated. If he doesn't, the evidence may be reviewed if the Supreme Court agrees to a writ now being sought by Sirhan's lawyer in an attempt to reconvene the trial. Failing that, there are still other governmental bodies capable of investigations, including Congress.

Up until this investigation of the Robert Kennedy assassina-

Up until this investigation of the Robert Kennedy assassination, Allard Lowenstein rejected all conspiracy theories. Now he's not so sure . . .

of isolated crazies. And suppose they are wrong. They've ought to know that, to be able to take that into account in what we try to do."

Beginning in the spring of 1973, within weeks of the publication of the "enemies list," Lowenstein began a series of private meetings with the officials in Los Angeles who control the evidence. His first questions grew out of the original autopsy report.

"It screamed for some explanation. It was signed by all those medical people, including some from the Armed Forces. It said that the bullet that killed him went in from a distance of *one inch* away, and from behind. Then I talked to eyewitnesses. About a dozen. Every one said Sirhan was three to four feet away at least. Some of them said much more. And when I would say that the autopsy said the bullet came from one inch away, they told me I must be mistaken. I must have read the autopsy wrong.

"I tried to find ways around it. I thought for a while that perhaps powder patterns — they show the distance of the gun — could be wrong. I got to be something of an expert. I had real trouble believing what I was looking at, because I had gone there with a 'say-it-ain't-so' attitude. I wanted to go and see, and to come back and say: 'It was Sirhan after all. Forget it.'"

"The second thing that jolted me was a trip to the Ambassador Hotel. The theory had been that since Kennedy turned right and into the pantry by mistake, his route was accidental. That would have meant his being there could not have been predicted and precluded a set-up or a plot. But it was clear from looking that he had to go through that room at one time or another. If he had turned left as he was supposed to, and gone downstairs to speak to the overflow crowd, he would have had to come back up and go through the pantry to get to the press conference or to get to his room."

Betsy Langman, who has spent three

years investigating the case, and Alexander Cockburn examine some of the difficulties posed by the ballistics evidence in the current issue of Harper's. Some of the material is covered in a film by Theodore Charach called "The Second Gun." Lowenstein concedes to supporters of the official version that ballistics is not an exact science, and he adds that the bullet evidence by itself would not move him to call for reopening the case. At this point in our conversation he took from his pocket two live .22 caliber bullets. The slug of one was marked by a single groove, encircling it just above the shell casing. The other slug had two of those grooves, which are called cannellures. They are shaped into the bullet when it is manufactured.

Sirhan's gun held only eight bullets. The police recovered all eight shell casings. All were made by the Cascade corporation. According to testimony at a hearing last spring, Cascade never made a slug with only one cannellure. One of the bullets removed from the body of Robert Kennedy did not show a second one.

According to recent press reports, Los Angeles County District Attorney Joseph Busch, the man who has the power to reopen the investigation, disputes the significance of the missing cannellure. He claims they can be erased on impact, when the slug is deformed. Lowenstein agrees that they can be, but the slug in question is in good shape. The place where the groove would have been has not been destroyed and, he says, the groove isn't there.

"What they say publicly is 'cannellure-shmannelure,' until you press them about the bullet," says Lowenstein. Then they say that the evidence could have been tampered with since the crime. [This is one of the grounds Busch has given for his refusal so far to allow a new examination of the bullets and gun]. They have a grand jury report from 1971 that criticizes the way the evidence was looked after. But the Grand Jury issued no indictments. And no one says outright that it was altered, just that it

agrees to a writ now being sought by Sirhan's lawyer in an attempt to reconvene the trial. Failing that, there are still other governmental bodies capable of investigations, including Congress.

"The case is filled with shrouded mysteries, but I'd be willing to accept them all as the kind of crazy coincidences that do happen, if these three things could be explained: the autopsy report, the mismatched bullets, and the extra bullet markings. If one can't explain away those things with the official version, then one has to look at all the others. The second circle of things I'd want to look at revolves around Cesar and Gindroz. Cesar was a guard hired by the hotel. He was said to be standing right behind Robert Kennedy when he was shot. He was in a position to fire a gun that would have left the marks recorded in the autopsy report. He did have a gun. Gindroz was also employed there. When arrested Sirhan wouldn't give his name. He had a key in the pocket, which the police matched with a car in the parking lot that belonged to Gindroz. So they used that name for Sirhan, and Sirhan said, "Sure, that's a good name."

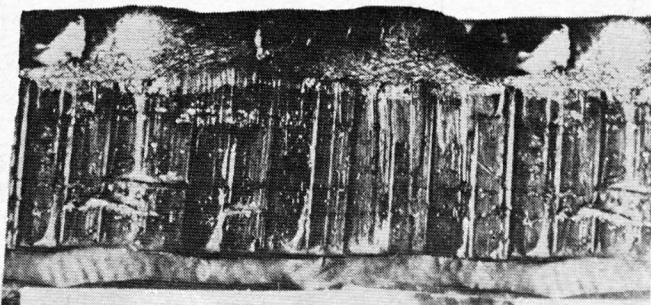
There are things Lowenstein knows about the assassination that he isn't telling. He's concerned that some of the people who might act on his leads might destroy them trying to pursue them. And there are members of some of the investigative agencies involved who, he thinks, are growing uncomfortable keeping secret what they know. He hopes that at some point they may come forward and he doesn't want to discourage them. Others are worried that they might be exposed to danger.

Up until this investigation Lowenstein rejected conspiracy theories. He believed in the Warren Commission report on the assassination of Robert's older brother through the Gulf of Tonkin, through the Cambodia invasion and Kent State, through the assassination of Martin Luther King and the attempt on George Wallace. He thinks that in general his positions through those years have been borne out as well founded — against the war, for civil rights, against campus violence. He thought the left was blind in its stand on campus militancy and on conspiracies. "If I don't admit now that I was wrong about the assassination — then I become what I accused them of being — closed-minded." ■

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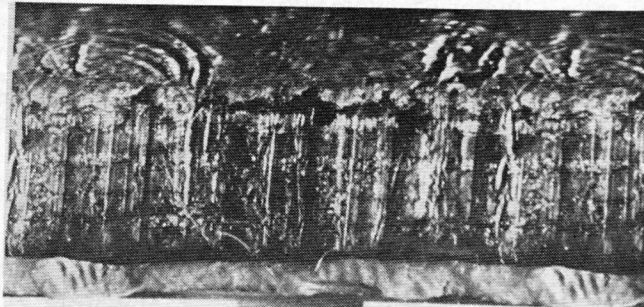
Further inquiries into the assassination of Robert Kennedy

Kennedy



These photographs, introduced at hearings in May 1974, purport to show significant differences between the bullets fired at Robert Kennedy and Edward Weisel in the pantry of the Ambassador Hotel.

Weisel



The sharpness of the markings on the Kennedy bullet suggests that it was fired from a barrel whose rifling was in better condition than the one from which the Weisel bullet was fired.

ANYONE WHO HAS EVER delved into assassination theory—unfortunately, an extensive field of study in this country—will, sooner rather than later, come to recognize familiar landmarks. As he searches through court testimony, eyewitness reports, ballistic evidence, forensic testimony, implications of conspiracy, even a dispassionate observer must finally conclude that nothing is certain; nothing can be believed. People hear things differently, see things differently, draw different conclusions from the same evidence.

The assassination of John F. Kennedy in Dallas in 1963 is the primary case in point. The anomalies that still exist leave anyone adept in the theory and practice of that particular shooting with the unhappy conclusion that the Warren Commission did not say the last word.

Until recently the only assassination that seemed beyond question was that of Robert F. Kennedy, killed by Sirhan Sirhan in the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles on June 5, 1968. Nearly 100 people were in the pantry when the fatal shots were fired. Many eyewitnesses saw Sirhan spring forward, raise his gun, and fire. Many saw Kennedy fall, mortally wounded. There was no hurried autopsy, or whisking away of the body, as occurred in Dallas. There was an enormous investigation, conducted by the FBI and the Los Angeles Police Department.

The police were aware that their investigation would be subjected to the closest of scrutinies. Robert

Houghton, chief of detectives of the LAPD and author of *Special Unit Senator*, the unofficial record of the investigation, understood that he was faced with a crime "that would be examined everywhere in the world, possibly for decades to come. . . . There were the clever people, as usual, standing by to profit from the cry of conspiracy, hooking their theories to journalistic wagons before the Arlington soil was tamped." No one wanted another Dallas and another tidal wave of speculation—so injurious to the self-esteem and reputation of investigative agencies. So the police took enormous pains, and just over a year after the assassination the Special Investigating Unit headed by Houghton reduced its vast researches into ten illustrated volumes entitled *An Investigation and Summary of the Senator Robert F. Kennedy Assassination*. This report has not been made public, but Houghton summarized its main conclusions as follows: that Sirhan fired the shots which killed Kennedy and wounded five others; that his act was premeditated; that he was not under the influence of any drug or intoxicant; that he was legally sane; and that there was no evidence of conspiracy.

Betsy Langman spent three years investigating the circumstances of Robert Kennedy's assassination; she is now writing a book on the subject. Alexander Cockburn is a columnist for The Village Voice. Some of the information in this article was acquired with the assistance of Theodore Charach and Gerard Alcan, producers of the film The Second Gun.

Despite the conviction of Sirhan on a charge of first-degree murder and the proclaimed intensity of police investigation, doubts were raised almost within the year. The most popular area of speculation—as always in such cases—centered around the problem of whether Sirhan had been involved in a conspiracy. Although many theories have been advanced, starting with the famous girl in the polka-dot dress and stretching forward through Sirhan's possible connection with Al Fatah or other Arab groups, no hard evidence has yet been found to support any one of them. And if one considers the Manchurian Candidate theory (that Sirhan was the hypnotized agent of conspirators), then it becomes impossible to arrive at any conclusions without the discovery of other conspirators. But if Sirhan was hypnotized to do the murder, he could have been hypnotized into amnesia about his instructions to perform it. Investigators following this line must mount a treadmill of speculation.

ABOUT TWO YEARS AFTER the assassination, what one might call the conspiracy-minded sections of the community began to speculate along very different lines. Much of this questioning was stimulated by *The Second Gun*, a film made by Theodore Charach in 1970. This film—shown around New York in late 1972 and 1973—tilted the whole RFK assassination industry in an entirely new direction.

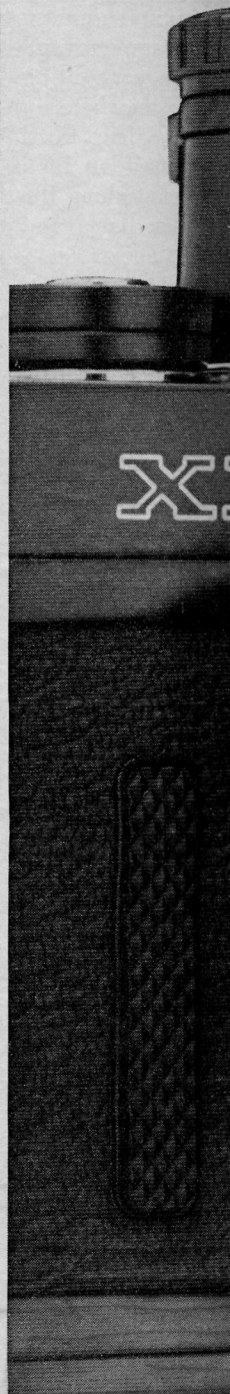
Charach's film raised questions surrounding the physical circumstances of Kennedy's death: the gun fired by Sirhan and the bullets that struck Kennedy and five others. Charach's film suggested that a second gun had been fired, that ballistic evidence seemed to show that all the bullets could not have come only from Sirhan's gun, and that the autopsy evidence of where the bullets hit Kennedy could not be reconciled with eyewitness testimony.

In all this there was something both disturbing and bizarre. After all, Kennedy had been shot in front of many eyewitnesses, who, unlike some of the participants in the Dallas drama, are still alive. It seemed a little like saying that there were "questions" as to whether Jack Ruby really killed Oswald, despite his committing the deed on national television.

Because the speculation seemed so absurd, many journalists felt there was little point in pursuing the implications of Charach's film. Editors thought that the RFK case was one that need never burden their columns, and so any reporter who wanted to follow it up had the utmost difficulty in getting a story into print. Nonetheless, after the Charach film, there were a number of people both on the West and East Coasts who felt that serious questions required answers, and that the investigation should be reopened.

These questions have been repeated so often during the past few years, multiplying and extending themselves among journalists and politicians in Washington, Los Angeles, and New York, that Sirhan's current lawyer, Godfrey Isaac, has declared his intention of filing a writ of error *coram nobis*. This is a writ asking the Supreme Court of California for a judicial review on the grounds that subsequent to Sirhan's conviction new evidence has come to light that might have affected the course of the trial. In October Isaac said that he expected to file the writ before the end of the year, explaining that the questions were of sufficient importance to demand the consideration of a court rather than the speculation of "journalists, filmmakers, and book-writers."

Although the origin of these questions can be attributed to Charach's film, the present uneasiness arises from two lines of inquiry.



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In the hope of clarifying these inquiries, we have gone over the testimony of the grand jury hearing and the trial, and examined the autopsy and ballistic evidence developed by the original prosecution and by forensic experts brought into the investigation at later dates. We have talked to the original prosecutors and defense attorneys, to scientists who were consulted and those who were not. As we shall see, it is valid to propose that a number of questions remain unresolved.

LEAVING ASIDE ALL conspiracy theories and concentrating on material evidence of what took place in the Ambassador Hotel pantry, the doubts and the evidence that encourage them arise from these contradictions: the autopsy shows that Kennedy died from a wound in the head, the trajectory being back to front, right to left, and upward. But Sirhan was ahead of Kennedy in his path to the kitchen, and therefore his wounds are not compatible with Sirhan's position. The autopsy also shows that Kennedy was shot at virtually point-blank range. Yet eyewitnesses say that the muzzle of Sirhan's gun was never closer than two feet. Finally, all eight bullets fired by Sirhan should match in characteristics with each other and with the gun that fired them. Yet some ballistic experts claim that the bullets cannot be matched to each other nor to the test bullets introduced at the trial nor to Sirhan's gun. Although evidence can be found to support the official accounting for the position of Kennedy's wounds, the problems arising out of the gun and the bullets are not so easily settled.

The autopsy on Robert Kennedy's body was carried out over a period of six hours in the early morning of June 6, 1968. It was performed by Dr. Thomas Noguchi, the county coroner, along with two assistants and in the presence of at least a dozen people, among them U.S. government pathologists from Washington who had flown to Los Angeles expressly to witness the autopsy. Noguchi found that Kennedy had been hit by three bullets. One had struck his head just behind his right ear and fragmented in the right-hand side of his brain. This was the bullet that killed him. Another had entered the back of the right armpit and exited

in the front of the right shoulder. This bullet had left no fragments and was listed in the police accounting as having been "lost somewhere in the ceiling interspace." The third bullet, entering within half an inch of the second one, traveled along the muscle structure of the back and lodged at the base of his neck.

Noguchi retrieved this third bullet, the only one of those striking Kennedy that remained in good enough condition for constructive forensic examination, scratched his initials on its base and handed it over to the police. Noguchi also found that a fourth bullet had passed through Kennedy's right shoulder pad, without actually touching his body.

In the course of his autopsy Noguchi came to certain conclusions regarding the distance of the muzzle of the weapon from Kennedy's body when the shots were fired. He discovered a phenomenon he later described as "very distinct paper-like stapling, as we call it, powder tattooing on the surface of the right ear," confirming the back-to-front trajectory, as "there was no powder in the front of the ear, no powder on the side." At the grand jury hearing he said that the position of the tattooing indicated that the muzzle distance was "very, very close." "Do you have an opinion," he was asked, "as to the maximum distance the gun could have been from the Senator?" "Allowing a variation," Noguchi replied, "I don't think it will be more than two or three inches from the right ear." On June 11, Noguchi organized a test firing with LAPD officers of an Iver Johnson .22 revolver acquired from the LAPD property office on June 10. This gun, the same type used by Sirhan, was used to observe the tattooing pattern on a hog's ear. The observation substantiated the autopsy's conclusion that the shots were almost contact wounds. This conclusion was buttressed by the opinion of DeWayne Wolfer, the LAPD officer who conducted a series of chemical tests on Kennedy's jacket, conducted the test firing with Noguchi, and gave evidence in the trial of Sirhan that the maximum distance would be six inches. That is, Wolfer was allowing for all conceivable errors. During the same examination, he said that he believed that the gun had been fired against Kennedy's head at a range of one inch.

Such conclusions, by both Noguchi and Wolfer, raised some serious contradictions with the eyewitness recollections of people who saw the shooting take place.*

THE EYEWITNESSES, many of them—standing next to each other, saw—or remembered they saw—very different things. Against the recollections of the assistant maître d'hôtel, who says that he was holding Kennedy's hand and leading him along—toward Sirhan—one can place the recollections of at least four other people who testified that Kennedy was turning to his left at the time Sirhan fired in order to shake hands with one of the waiters. Frank J. Burns, a friend of Kennedy's, was standing off Kennedy's right shoulder when the shots were fired, and he testified at Sirhan's trial that Kennedy had turned "almost ninety degrees" at the time and therefore was not facing Sirhan's gun muzzle but indeed presenting his right and hinder side to it. It is difficult to find witnesses—apart from the assistant maître d'hôtel—who directly contradict his recollections and those of many others, such as Edward Minasian, Martin Petrusky, Jesus Perez, and Vincent Di Pierro, all employed in the Ambassador's kitchen.

It is, however, impossible to find witnesses who directly corroborate the autopsy evidence that the gun was practically touching Kennedy's head. Their estimates vary wildly. Pete Hamill, the columnist, put Sirhan seven feet from Kennedy. Juan Romero, a busboy who had just shaken hands with Kennedy, es-

* At the trial the prosecution bypassed the dilemma, arguing that the eyewitnesses who testified for the government must have been mistaken.

David Fitts, prosecuting attorney: "With reference to the circumstances of the shooting, Your Honor, Your Honor has heard Karl Ucker and any number of witnesses who attempted to describe what happened; one witness has put the muzzle of the revolver some three or four feet from the Senator's head; others have it at varying ranges. The only way we can clear up whatever ambiguity there may be there and to show the truth is by the testimony of this witness [Wolfer], who, on the basis of the powder tattooing, and the experiments he performed with respect thereto, will testify that the muzzle range with respect to the Senator's head was about one inch."

Grant Cooper, the defense counsel, agreed with this position.

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timated "approximately one yard." Valerie Schulte, a college student, said at the trial that "Sirhan's arm and gun" were "approximately five yards from me, approximately three yards, something like that, from the Senator." Edward Minasian, who was walking about a yard in front of Kennedy, thought that the barrel of Sirhan's gun was "approximately three feet" from Kennedy. The closest to Kennedy that one can place the gun muzzle, going on these recollections, is about two feet—a distance calculated from one recollection that Sirhan was "three or four" feet away from Kennedy. Taken together with the evidence of autopsy, this presents a problem. Defenders of the official story merely say that witnesses cannot be relied on, which, as anyone familiar with investigations knows, is entirely true. At the time of Sirhan's trial, no one worried about such inconsistencies because no one—including the defense attorneys—thought there was the slightest doubt that Sirhan had fired all the shots. Sirhan's defense rested on insanity-plea questions of "diminished capacity" rather than on the possibility of persuading the jury that there were reasonable doubts about the physical evidence. Sirhan's chief defense attorney, Grant Cooper, subsequently said that he wished he had raised these questions at the trial. At the time it simply never entered his mind to do so.

The prosecution seems to have been more sensible of the problem. On May 13, 1974, one member of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, Baxter Ward, held a public hearing on the problems arising out of the ballistic evidence in Kennedy's assassination. Ward has long been one of the doubters of the official version, and his office has been engaged for some time in amassing as much evidence as possible to confirm his suspicions. At the hearing, Dr. Noguchi was asked if the district attorney's office had been aware of the discrepancy between the testimony of their witnesses and the implications of his findings.

"I do not know," Noguchi answered, "whether they knew or not. One of the deputy district attorneys approached me after I testified in grand jury. . . . He said, 'Tom, are you sure three inches?' He offered that if I misunderstood—if I misstated—this is time now to correct it.

. . . He was surprised that there was such a distance we were talking about."

None of the foregoing doubts would have arisen if all the bullets fired in the pantry could be identified as having come from the same gun. But it is the problem of identifying the bullets that creates the most troubling difficulties, difficulties which, to this day, have not been settled and which more than anything else have fostered uneasiness among those who have examined the circumstances of the assassination.

SIRHAN'S GUN was taken from him by Rafer Johnson, who turned it over to an officer in the LAPD. In the grand jury hearings on June 7, DeWayne Wolfer testified briefly that he had examined the "near-perfect" bullet taken from Kennedy's neck and that it had been fired from Sirhan's gun. He had established this, he said, by test-firing Sirhan's gun into a water tank, thus being able to retrieve the slugs unharmed. He had brought "some of the test shots"—four—along to the grand jury and was able to testify that microscopic comparison showed the four bullets to agree in characteristics with the bullet taken from Kennedy's neck, thus showing that the latter bullet came from Sirhan's gun.

As we shall see, it sometimes becomes difficult to keep up with the vagaries of Wolfer's ballistic evidence; even his statement before the grand jury about the four bullets was later contradicted in remarks he made under oath on September 20, 1971, to an attorney who had challenged his professional credentials in this and other cases. In these later statements, Wolfer suggested that the four bullets he had brought to the grand jury didn't prove his point as well as three other bullets that he had left in his laboratory. On June 11, Wolfer performed further tests with another Iver Johnson .22. These tests, conducted in the company of Noguchi and other witnesses, were the ones having to do with the hog's ear.

It is unclear why Wolfer could not have used Sirhan's Iver Johnson .22. At the trial Wolfer said that it was not "available," even though the grand jury hearings had been concluded at the time of his testing and he could have got the gun by court

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order. Whatever the reasons, Wolfer used for his testing an Iver Johnson he withdrew from the LAPD property division on June 10, 1968. It bore the serial number H18602. The serial number of Sirhan's gun was H53725. The LAPD said it destroyed the test gun in July 1969.

This test gun has caused many confusions and uncertainties. Among the exhibits at the trial was an envelope, labeled "Exhibit 55," which, according to Wolfer, contained "three of the test shots that I took from people's number six, the weapon [Sirhan's], and this was from the water recovery tank, and that would be three test shots I used for comparison purposes."

No one at the trial bothered to examine this envelope. We must remember the mental disposition of the defending attorneys. As Grant Cooper later explained, "there was no question" in his mind "but that Sirhan was the one that fired the fatal shots that killed Kennedy. Not only did we have the testimony of the witnesses but the conversations I had with Sirhan myself." Some scrutiny of the evidence at the trial would have raised one immediate problem. The envelope alleged to contain the three bullets from Sirhan's gun (test-fired into the water tank the day after the assassination) was quite clearly marked as containing bullets fired from the gun which Wolfer used on the hog on June 11.

This leaves a variety of possibilities. Either Wolfer put the test bullets from the Sirhan gun in the exhibit envelope and then made a mistake and wrote the wrong serial number on the outside; or he simply sent the wrong bullets along to the trial. It is hard to ascribe very sinister motives to the mislabeling, since any vigilant counsel would have noticed it. But the fact remains that at the trial—as at the grand jury—nobody introduced any evidence which scientifically, or even demonstrably, linked Sirhan's gun to the bullets and fragments that made up the other relevant exhibits.

The observation that the envelope had been mislabeled, or contained the wrong bullets, was made by William Harper, an expert in the study of technical and forensic investigation of firearms. A man of considerable reputation in the field, he had for seven years been a consultant to the Pasadena Police Department,

and during a period of thirty-five years had handled more than 300 cases for both defense and prosecution in state and federal courts. In his professional capacity, Harper had often disagreed with Wolfer over the years and had warned Grant Cooper not to take Wolfer's statements on trust. Cooper introduced Harper to Theodore Charach in the summer of 1970. Charach had pointed out various anomalies in the case to Cooper, who suggested that he communicate his doubts to Harper. In November 1970 Harper went to the county clerk's office to examine the evidence. The normal apparatus for assessing and comparing bullets is a "comparison microscope." This is a heavy piece of equipment, difficult to drag around, and so Harper used a Balliscan camera which he had developed with the help of Marshall Houts, a writer on medical and legal topics. The camera takes a series of photographs of a cylindrical object rotated in front of it. The resultant images are then blown up and used for comparison purposes. Harper made several visits to the clerk's office, and in December 1970 he swore out an affidavit outlining his conclusions. He mentioned the mistake in the numbering of the exhibits, but he also raised far more serious doubts.

His affidavit reads in part: "From the general circumstances of the shooting, the only reasonable assumption is that the bullet removed from victim Weisel [one of those wounded in the pantry] was in fact fired from the Sirhan gun. This bullet is in near-perfect condition. I have, therefore, chosen it as a 'test' bullet from the Sirhan gun and compared it with the bullet removed from the Senator's neck. . . . My examination disclosed no individual characteristics establishing that Exhibit 47 [the bullet from Kennedy's neck] and Exhibit 54 [the bullet from Weisel] had been fired by the same gun. In fact, my examinations disclosed that bullet Exhibit 47 has a rifling angle of approximately 23 minutes [14 percent] greater than the rifling angle of bullet Exhibit 54. It is, therefore, my opinion that bullets 47 and 54 could not have been fired from the same gun."

More simply, Harper had said this: Bullet A was fired from a different gun than Bullet B. Furthermore, there is no evidence connecting either bullet with Sirhan's

gun, apart from Wolfer's sworn testimony to the grand jury and the stipulations of counsel at the trial. Harper's affidavit was made public in the spring of 1971. As could be expected, it provoked a series of attacks and counterattacks. An attorney acting on Harper's behalf attempted to block Wolfer's appointment as chief forensic chemist in charge of the LAPD crime laboratory, charging incompetence in the Sirhan case and others. This move failed. The district attorney of Los Angeles County, Joseph P. Busch, countered by saying that "serious questions" had been raised about the handling of the exhibits in the county clerk's office. These questions were serious enough, he said, to warrant a grand jury investigation into the clerk's handling of the exhibits. Meanwhile, all investigative activity should be suspended. The grand jury duly reported that it had reservations "about the present integrity of the ballistics exhibits." Finally, in the fall of 1971, a board of inquiry dismissed all the questions raised by Charach, Harper, and others. Among other things, it found that Harper's contention was "based on the rifling angle of one bullet being 23 minutes greater than that of a second bullet. When the meaning of 23 minutes of difference is analyzed its importance is questionable."

MATTERS HAD REACHED this impasse at about the time that Charach's film was being released. Vague intimations of ballistic anomalies were reaching a generally somnolent public and receiving—apart from spotty coverage of Charach's film—little public debate.

On April 26, 1974, William Lystrop, medical photographer at the Los Angeles County coroner's office went to the county clerk's office armed with another Balliscan camera and rephotographed the Kennedy and Weisel bullets. He had been dispatched on this mission by Baxter Ward, the inquisitive Los Angeles County supervisor. A former anchorman for KHJ-TV in Los Angeles, Ward was campaigning for the governorship of California, and he decided, in the midst of last spring's primary campaign, to hold a public hearing on the Kennedy assassination.

Convened on May 13, the hearing was attended by, among others,

SIRHAN'S GUN

Thomas Noguchi, who confirmed his autopsy report and said that a few weeks earlier he had reexamined the bullet from Kennedy's neck and found the initials he had scratched on it during the autopsy on the night after the shooting. Also at the hearing were two additional experts in forensic ballistics—Herbert MacDonell and Lowell Bradford. MacDonell has a high reputation in the world of forensic investigation; he has appeared in many criminal cases and has developed some widely used techniques in the field of forensic science.

In an affidavit MacDonell agreed with Harper on the rifling angle variations and added another point—the difference in cannelures. A cannelure is any groove that runs around a bullet or cartridge case; cannelures are sometimes described as “knurled grooves.” MacDonell's affidavit stated that the bullet from Kennedy's neck had one cannelure and the bullet from Weisel two cannelures. To expound a piece of news that might seem unexciting to a layman, MacDonell explained that all eight cartridge cases taken from the Sirhan gun were said to be manufactured by OMARK-C.C. 1. So far as MacDonell had been able to determine, all bullets manufactured by this firm have two cannelures. MacDonell found that the location of the cannelures on the Weisel bullet was close enough to the position of regular OMARK-C.C. 1 cannelures that the Weisel bullet was probably of OMARK-C.C. 1 manufacture. He concluded that, since the Kennedy bullet had only one cannelure, “it could not have been part of one of the cartridges taken from the Sirhan revolver.” MacDonell also noticed “a lack of agreement between any of the identifiable characteristics that appear on the two bullets.” He concluded that the Kennedy and Weisel bullets could not have been fired from the same weapon and, furthermore, that the bullet taken from Kennedy's neck could not have been fired from Sirhan's gun.

Harper was ill and could not attend the hearing, but an affidavit confirming his previous conclusions was read into the record. Evidence was heard from Lowell Bradford, the director of a crime laboratory and a former employee of the state Department of Justice laboratory in Sacramento. Both Bradford and Mac-

Donell agreed that the new set of Balliscan photographs matched those taken by Harper. Bradford could not find a rifling angle difference between the Kennedy and Weisel bullets, but he agreed with MacDonell on the difference in cannelures. Both Bradford and MacDonell called for a refiring of the Sirhan revolver in a test presided over by a panel of forensic experts. Both agreed that a comparison of the new test bullets with the Kennedy and Weisel bullets would be the only way to resolve the problems. Ward's motion that the county supervisors propose an official reexamination of the evidence was defeated 3-2.

ALL SPECULATION ABOUT the presence of a second gunman in the pantry of the Ambassador Hotel arises from two questions: the discrepancies of eyewitness testimony and autopsy reports, and the problems of reconciling the Kennedy and Weisel bullets with each other and with Sirhan's gun.

To surmise that another person could have placed a gun within three inches of Kennedy's head and pulled the trigger without being observed by anyone requires a leap of the imagination so enormous that such a possibility could only be forced on us by absolute contradictions in the material evidence. Despite the anomalies that now seem self-evident, the absolute contradictions have not yet been conclusively proved.

The most direct way of discovering whether such contradictions do exist is to conduct a test firing of the gun, together with a review of all the ballistic evidence by a panel of experts. This is now being called for by various concerned people, including Grant Cooper, Sirhan's former attorney; Paul Schrade, who was himself wounded in the pantry; and many others. The district attorney's office has adamantly opposed such an undertaking. In the spring of 1973, Busch insisted that “a refiring of what we absolutely know to be the murder weapon . . . would only give some sort of backhanded credence to sensationalists who are trying to raise some question about the validity of Sirhan working alone.”

In fact it appears that the DA's office has been following the debate about the evidence with keen attention. We have seen documents cir-

culated throughout the DA's office which attest to extensive research into Charach's investigation and into other assassination theories.

Since this is so, why won't the DA's office go ahead with the business of firing the gun, examining the bullets, and getting the whole matter resolved? There are, of course, the reasons that Busch publicly adduces, but there are other reasons that are not so obvious. Not everyone feels total confidence in the validity of conclusions established by forensic science. In the words of one detective, “forensic science is a lot softer than forensic scientists would care to let on.” Different schools of forensic experts have different methods of evaluating evidence. Wolfer, for example, turned down Noguchi's proposal, immediately after the shooting, to have a neutron activation analysis (NAA) done on the various bullet fragments. This technique involves bombarding metal fragments with neutrons, then measuring and comparing the effects of radioactivity to establish whether the fragments came from the same manufacturer.

At Ward's hearing, Dr. Vincent Guinn, a leading authority on NAA, said this test could still be done. It is entirely possible to find—as we did—forensic experts less confident that neutron tests are absolutely “conclusive.” Wolfer appears to have thought that Guinn's NAA test would be so sensitive that results would vary within a single bullet and comparisons would be impossible between different bullets—an opinion hotly disputed by Guinn. Following this line of the absolute uncertainty principle, there are those in the DA's office who believe that a test firing of the gun would not solve anything; they hold that the act of refiring would sufficiently alter the characteristics of the barrel, and hence the bullet, to make satisfactory comparison impossible. MacDonell's answer to this is “Hogwash.” The firing of 1,000 rounds from a high-powered rifle, he says, could make alterations, but certainly not a few test firings from Sirhan's revolver. Furthermore, he says that the gun need not necessarily be refired. There is a process called swaging in which soft lead is pushed through the gun barrel, thus displaying characteristics sufficient for forensic purposes.

The district attorney's office has one final position: that the time and

place for a refiring of the weapon and comparison of the bullets will come whenever Sirhan's present attorney files a motion for a retrial. Then, says Busch, the reexamination of the evidence—in the framework of a proper court procedure—could take place. Either way, Busch and the DA's office have the situation firmly under control. On the one hand they say that only "assassination freaks" are raising any questions about the shooting. On the other hand, the DA's office indicates that the art of forensic evidence leaves something to be desired and from this position announces that when a motion for retrial is filed, the examination can take place.

And so we come back to where we began. Six years after the assassination of Robert Kennedy, the one shooting that almost everyone believed to have been satisfactorily resolved, the circumstances still attract serious questioning from lawyers, journalists, and politicians across the country who now feel some doubt about the case, even if they are not quite sure why. These doubts will grow and feed on themselves. Hints about a cover-up will become assertions that one exists. This painfully familiar process can be averted by a decision that the DA or the attorney general of California should be sensible enough to make: to establish a panel of forensic experts, organize an independent examination of the relevant bullets and other physical evidence, and examine Sirhan's gun. As Grant Cooper says: "My approach to the DA would be this: 'Look, the biggest feather in your cap would be to show how honest you are. Take the credit for it.' No one likes to be horsewhipped into doing things!"

The world of assassination theory is dense with non sequiturs, misunderstood evidence, wild claims. In this case, excluding the *theoretical* possibilities of Sirhan having been a member of a conspiracy, it is not too difficult to settle speculation about what actually happened in the pantry of the Ambassador Hotel. It takes a candid acceptance by the DA's office of the existence of doubt and a candid effort to dispel that doubt. Given the massive uncertainties of evidence and what that evidence means, one test firing might exorcise at least one of the ghosts of the Sixties.

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The Odd Couple and the old conspiracy theory

By Lionel Rolfe and
Jon Newhall

Conspiracy theories are no longer as popular as they were following the Big Three assassinations of the late '60s: JFK, RFK and Martin Luther King. Not even Gov. George Wallace's hint that there might be more to his shooting than a lone maniac nor James Earl Ray's attempt to get a new trial by claiming he was framed have much revived the dark game of conspiracy. Presumably produced to exploit lingering doubts, a string of assassination movies has bombed disastrously at the box office. Over a year ago, *The Second Gun*, a feature documentary on the murder of Robert Kennedy, ran less than a week in New York and never got out of town. Next came *Executive Action*, a sort of fictional documentary about the assassination of JFK; it knocked around listlessly for a while, and then flopped. The most recent assassination movie, *Parallax View*, has done the best of the three. A purely fictional treatment of a two-gun assassination of an RFK-like senator, it is still in release six months after opening. But movie experts credit the leading man, Warren Beatty, more than the film's message, and even at that, it will probably not turn a penny of profit.

Yet conspiracy theories, even if they do not make for box office bonanzas, will not go away, and none has proved as hardy as the notion that Sirhan Sirhan had help in killing Robert F. Kennedy. To be sure, the RFK assassination, at the time, seemed the least open to question. No one had seen Oswald or James Earl Ray actually pull the trigger, but dozens of

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spectators had watched as Sirhan squeezed off his fatal rounds. Not even Sirhan himself has questioned his role in the assassination. But, from the start, there had been disquieting evidence—not the evidence of the eye or the ear, but hard, metallic evidence: bullets and guns. Ballistics tests seemed to show that two guns, not one, had been fired that afternoon.

That theory—that two guns rather than one had killed RFK—is enjoying a renaissance on the West Coast, thanks to two prominent Los Angeles public offi-

The second-gun theory of the RFK assassination, long dormant, is having a rebirth, thanks to Baxter Ward and Dr. Thomas Noguchi

cials: Baxter Ward, Los Angeles County Supervisor, and Dr. Thomas Noguchi, L.A. County Coroner. Both men are well suited for the role of gadfly. Ward, a former television anchorman who has a bit of the populist demagogue in him, has most recently been outraging his fellow supervisors by investigating the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. Noguchi, who came to fame as the coroner of both the RFK assassination and the Charles Manson murders, is as flamboyant as he is brilliant. He was briefly suspended in 1969 for wishing out loud for more bodies to work on—specifically, he fantasized about the crash of a 747 jet into a Los Angeles skyscraper. Yet the two men have more in common than their talent for

publicity: there always seems to be something at the bottom of the things they investigate. Which is why the American Academy of Forensic Scientists will hold a symposium solely on the RFK assassination at its meeting Feb. 19-21 in Chicago.

In May 1971, Ward says he still believed the Warren Commission version of what happened in Dallas, but one day, as a newscaster for KHJ-TV, he came across a highly respected southern California criminologist, William W. Harper, who apprised Ward of oddities in the RFK case. Harper is a forensic firearms identification expert from Pasadena who for the previous 35 years had been a consulting criminologist with various Los Angeles area police forces, and the county granted him permission to study the ballistics evidence after Sirhan's conviction. After analyzing the bullets, Harper concluded that the official assassination story was false, that at least two guns fired the bullets in the Ambassador Hotel pantry that night. He studied the bullet recovered from Kennedy's neck by Dr. Noguchi; he compared it microscopically to another slug removed from the abdomen of an ABC-TV technician named William Weisel, who was wounded during the assassination. Kennedy and Weisel were struck by bullets from similar but different .22 caliber pistols, he said.

Ward knew he had a good story, so he played it big. In his TV commentary he appealed for a refiring of Sirhan's gun so that new tests could be conducted to clear up the mystery of the two bullets that did not match.

At first the police and the district attorney's office ignored the allegations; but as other conflicts surfaced, they began a crusade to discredit the physical evidence pertaining to the Kennedy case. They suggested that the bullets and gun



may have been "tampered with" by unknown persons, and convened a Grand Jury which alleged that County Clerk William Sharp had not properly protected the criminal evidence. A panel of Superior Court judges stepped in, reexamined the evidence, and concluded unanimously that the integrity of the bullets and other evidence in the Kennedy case had not been compromised. Still, Ward's crusade to reopen the case disappeared until he was reelected last year to the Board of Supervisors. In a county populated by 7 million people, each of the five publicly elected supervisors wields enormous political power.

Ward had not mentioned Kennedy during his campaign, but a couple of days after taking office, he spoke with the former county clerk, whose career had been ruined by the Grand Jury. Sharp was bitter. He told Ward that he had become a "victim of a political play just to provide an excuse not to refire the Sirhan gun." Ward still didn't bring up the matter. The first few months of his second term were stormy. After he clashed with the sheriff's department, he surprised everyone by declaring himself a candidate for governor of California in last June's Democratic primary election. Ward was trounced by half a dozen other candidates, but for the first time in Ward's political career, the Kennedy case became an issue. During his uninspired effort to capture the governor's office, Ward was asked by people who remembered his television crusades if he would use the office to get to the bottom of the Kennedy murder.

"I thought about it," said Ward, "and decided the logical person to reopen the case would be the attorney general or the governor. The attorney general, however, was Evelle Younger." When serving as Los Angeles district attorney, Younger had been Sirhan's prosecutor.

Rather than wait for election, Ward decided to hold his own hearings. His opponents and the newspapers immediately suggested that he was exploiting the Kennedy tragedy. But Ward went on with his probe.

Noguchi was the final witness before his committee. Noguchi said, in his highly precise but heavily accented English (he was born in Japan), that his profession had been disgraced by Navy doctors' sloppy autopsy of President Kennedy. He said that autopsy haunted him as he prepared to do an examination of equal historic importance on yet another Kennedy. This time, he explained, he saw to it that the autopsy was thorough, precise, open and honest.

The key findings in Noguchi's examination—a fact ignored when first re-

vealed by Noguchi six years earlier—was that Bobby had been struck by bullets from extremely close range. Using life-size charts and scientific language to detail his findings, Noguchi reported that the fatal bullet had been fired at the senator with the muzzle of the pistol only one to three inches away from Kennedy's ear. The other two shots that struck Kennedy hit him directly under the right armpit, and both of these shots, said Noguchi, were perhaps fired with the muzzle actually pressed against Kennedy's body as the trigger was pulled. What's more, said Noguchi, the shots were fired from behind the senator.

This version did not mesh with the police version. Virtually every person who witnessed Sirhan's movements in the pantry testified that he jumped off a low table and approached Bobby from the front. They all stated that Sirhan had started firing at a perceptible distance away—generally placing the gun three to twelve feet from Kennedy. No one recalled that the muzzle was ever closer than two feet in front of the senator.

Recently, Noguchi gave *New Times* some of the background to his testimony. He claims that it was a year after the Sirhan trial that the implications of his autopsy began to sink in. He had given the whole story of his autopsy to the Grand Jury that indicted Sirhan, but was not allowed to repeat it during the trial. Ironically, it was defense objections that kept him from testifying; its strategy was not to contest Sirhan's role as the lone assassin. What was really on trial, Noguchi said, was Sirhan's state of mind.

The judge imposed a strict gag rule during the trial, and thus few of the witnesses were aware of what the others were saying. The press seemed to notice no discrepancy between what the coroner was saying and what witnesses to the assassination were saying. A deputy district attorney did, however. He approached Noguchi right after he had given his testimony before the Grand Jury and asked him if he wanted an opportunity to change—or correct—his autopsy. The deputy, whom Noguchi says he officially wants to "leave nameless," grasped the significance of the coroner's evidence apparently before the coroner did.

One of the witnesses at Ward's hearing was Dr. Vincent Guinn, a chemistry professor at the University of California at Irvine. Guinn testified that he had been contacted by Noguchi within days of the assassination. Out of thoroughness rather than suspicion, Noguchi arranged for Guinn to conduct a neutron activation analysis on all the bullets in the pantry.

Neutron analysis is a relatively expensive and complex testing procedure because it requires a nuclear reactor, and few police departments keep one of those around. Noguchi wanted the test because he knew it was more sophisticated than the conventional spectrographic emission tests usually used to link bullets to a suspect's gun.

Noguchi said that he had made all the arrangements for the tests when DeWayne Wolfer, a Los Angeles Police Department ballistics expert, stopped him. "I respected his opinions at the time," Noguchi says now (one senses regretfully). Wolfer said the tests shouldn't be conducted because they might confuse the issue and the results are subject to interpretation. During the Sirhan trial, the only evidence introduced to show the bullets had come from Sirhan's gun came from Wolfer, who said he had examined them under a microscope. The results of microscopic comparisons are highly judgmental and the spectrogram was, he said, "misplaced."

Wolfer refused, on the advice of counsel, to testify before Ward's committee. Like Noguchi, he has had his share of controversy. The 1971 Grand Jury report, which had put all the blame in the Kennedy case on Sharp, had arisen from a controversy about Wolfer. A Los Angeles attorney, Barbara Blher, filed a protest with the city's Civil Service Commission, protesting Wolfer's proposed promotion to head of the LAPD crime laboratory. She cited his botched ballistic examination in the Kennedy case and that of Jack Kirschke, the former deputy district attorney who came home one day to find his wife in bed with another man. Wolfer got his promotion. A police department investigation said he was a fine fellow after all.

Noguchi wasn't Ward's only witness. In an affidavit, Harper, who was ill, stated flatly that the official police version of a lone assassin wasn't true. Using a microscopic camera, known as a Hycon Balliscan camera, he studied the significant bullet slugs removed at the scene. The Hycon Balliscan camera enables a criminologist to photograph the entire 360 degree surface of a spent slug, magnifying the bullet with its grooves so that the "rifling angles" can be compared with those of other slugs.

Harper said the rifling angles of the bullet removed from Kennedy's neck and those on the slug removed from Weisel did not match. He said the two bullets "could not have been fired from the same gun."

Lowell Bradford, of Campbell, California, the former head of the Santa

Clara County District Attorney's crime laboratory, explained cannellures. Cannellures, he said, are "circumferential grooves" that bullet manufacturers cast in slugs to help guide the bullet from the gun's muzzle. The cannellures are plainly visible to the naked eye. Some have one cannellure, some have two. Bradford pointed out that the fatal Kennedy bullet had one and the Weisel bullet had two.

What this meant, said criminologist Herbert MacDonnel, from Elmira, New York, is that Kennedy and Weisel were apparently struck by bullets of different manufacture.

After Sen. Kennedy's shooting, conspiracy rumors swept the nation. One young Kennedy worker, Sandy Serrano, had been sitting on a fire escape directly outside the pantry area. She told a national television audience that minutes after bullets felled the senator a girl in a "polka dot dress" raced down the fire escape past her, yelling, "We shot him. We shot him. We shot Kennedy." Serrano's account meshed perfectly with the testimony of another Kennedy supporter, Thomas DiPierro, who was standing in the pantry when Kennedy entered the room. He said he saw the girl in the "polka dot dress" just before the shooting started. DiPierro told police that Sirhan and the girl were standing next to each other on a low metal table, and that the young woman appeared to be steadying Sirhan. Moments later, Sirhan was filling the pantry with bullets, Kennedy was down, and the girl in the polka dot dress was gone. Los Angeles police were never able to crack the story of the mysterious polka dot lady. Under intense police pressure, DiPierro reluctantly admitted the polka dot lady might have been Valerie Schulte, a Kennedy worker who was wearing a dress with large green circles, not black polka dots. DiPierro later backed away from his identification of Valerie Schulte, and policemen themselves determined that she had not entered the pantry until after Kennedy.

The most prevalent theory among assassination researchers—a theory that neither Ward nor Noguchi would ever publicly subscribe to—paints Sirhan as a kind of programmed assassin, à la *The Manchurian Candidate*.

Researcher and writer Robert Blair Kaiser, whose book *RFK Must Die* is the standard reference work on the case, was the first person to hint of this possibility. When he was an investigator for Sirhan's defense team, he witnessed a series of bizarre hypnotic sessions between Sirhan and psychiatrist Bernard Diamond. A University of California at Berkeley psy-

chiatrist specializing in criminal behavior, and something of a hypnotist, Diamond quickly discovered how easily Sirhan could be hypnotized. Kaiser sat in on a great many of the sessions. Diamond found he could utter the right words to place Sirhan in a trance, get him to climb a wall like a monkey, and then bring him out with Sirhan remembering nothing. There was also George Plimpton's testimony from the night of the assassination. Plimpton, who had helped wrestle the gun away from Sirhan, said that Sirhan's eyes had a peaceful look as he pulled the trigger. It was as if, he said, Sirhan were in a trance.

Diamond discovered that Sirhan displayed puzzling blocks. Even under hypnosis, he was unable to remember



Dr. Noguchi above, Baxter Ward below.

bringing his gun into the Ambassador. He could not remember the shooting, and where he had been before the assassination remained hazy.

Sirhan bristles at the suggestion that he was hypnotized, and Diamond apparently accepted his explanation that he hypnotized himself. Sirhan was enchanted by self-hypnosis. Yet there seemed to be telltale blocks in his memory. He always balked at the name of a man who went on the lam after the Kennedy murder. He was a man with whom he had explored the occult, but Sirhan always insisted that he had nothing to do with the assassination. When the FBI caught up with the man in a small northern California town, they quickly accepted

his explanation that he was trying to run away from his wife.

Sirhan's diary was filled with writing that repeated over and over again: "RFK must die. RFK must die. Robert Kennedy must be assassinated." To police, these mad scribbles indicated the premeditation that drove Sirhan to kill. These same police officials disregarded the words Sirhan repeatedly wrote on the same pages: "pay to the order of . . . pay to the order of Sirhan Sirhan."

Assassination enthusiasts, who are convinced Sirhan was selected and hypnotically programmed to walk into the pantry and begin shooting at Kennedy, are convinced that they know who the second gunman was. In the confusion when Sirhan stumbled forth and began shooting wildly, the real gunman shot Kennedy from behind. (This is the central idea of *Parallax View*.) They point out that an armed security guard had his pistol drawn during the terrifying chaos in the pantry. A newsman named Robert Schulman told police he saw the guard fire a few shots. He thought the guard was firing back at Sirhan (who was never hit), or at Kennedy from behind. What makes this theory even more intriguing is that the guard later admitted he owned a .22 caliber Iver-Johnson pistol, but he sold it to a friend who lived in Arkansas. The new owner of the pistol reports that the gun was "stolen" from his home.

Ward compiled an official transcript of the hearings and presented it to the four other members of the board. He pleaded with his colleagues for permission to turn the county's evidence over to an independent body of investigators. All but one, Kenneth Hahn, voted no. Those who had voted negatively openly admitted that they had been swayed by pressure and pleas lodged by Los Angeles city, county and state agencies—the ones that had conducted the 1968 investigations. The *Los Angeles Times* threw its editorial weight against Ward and Noguchi, calling Ward's hearings a "ghoulish inquiry."

These two—Baxter Ward, the politician, a sort of foreshortened John Kenneth Galbraith, and Noguchi, a quick but amiable little man whose merry eyes seem to reflect knowledge of which he is sole possessor—these two mainly want an objective review of the Kennedy case by a body with no government connections. Ward sees little chance of this, but Noguchi thinks the truth will emerge. Perhaps the forensic scientists' symposium will reveal the truth, and if it shows that two guns did it instead of one, all that will be left is who and why. ●