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## **JFK-The Continuing Inquiry**

### **Newsletter & Interviews**

#### **5/20/14 An Interview with Joseph McBride [by Chris Gallop]**

#### **1. If you were alive, where were you when you heard JFK had been shot?**

On November 22, 1963, I was in the cafeteria line for lunch at Marquette University High School in Milwaukee, where I was a junior. I heard the news from a boy serving food and immediately spun around and ran out the door to a drugstore two blocks away where there was a radio. It was about 12:40 p.m. when I started listening, about ten minutes after the shots were fired. For the first twenty minutes I was listening, the network radio reports were saying that shots came from the front, from the railroad overpass or the hill overlooking the street. Then, around 1 p.m., the radio started reporting that all the shots came from behind, from a building called the Texas School Book Depository. I was struck by the strangeness of how the direction of the shots changed and by the lack of explanation for that drastic shift, although at first I didn't fully understand what was being done to our

consciousness of the event by the news media. Soon there were no more reports of shots from the front. That night, I watched on television as Lee Harvey Oswald, the man falsely accused of killing both President Kennedy and Dallas Police Officer J. D. Tippit, said, “I haven’t killed anybody!” and “I’m just a patsy!” I believed his repeated denials. And so by the early evening of November 22, I was not buying the official story that had begun to emerge so rapidly.

**2. What got you started on your research for your book *Into the Nightmare: My Search for the Killers of President John F. Kennedy and Officer J. D. Tippit* (Hightower Press, Berkeley, 2013)?**

Although I found the assassination a compelling subject from the beginning, I studied the case only sporadically until the mid-1970s, when the Watergate and CIA assassination scandals brought about a renewed focus on conspiracies and vividly showed us (once again) how the official stories could not be trusted. By the late seventies, I was studying the assassination seriously, and in 1982, I decided to launch my own investigation with on-the-scene interviews in Dallas and archival research in Texas, in Washington, D.C., and elsewhere. By then I had realized that the murder of Officer Tippit thirty-nine minutes after Kennedy was killed was also a key part of the story, and I focused on the fact that the Tippit killing had been so little investigated, even though it had been used in an attempt

to show that Oswald killed both him and the President. As a longtime reporter (I've been a professional journalist since 1960, when I was twelve), I realize that the parts of a story that are covered up or not talked about sufficiently are often among the keys to the truth. Psychologists call such matters "points of maximum resistance." That is the phrase they use for the area or subject someone finds most threatening and therefore tries to fend off most strenuously by repressing and denying its reality. Freud observes in his *Outline of Psychoanalysis* that such resistance "opposes and blocks the analytic work by causing failures in memory. . . . The associations which people wish to suppress in this way prove without exception to be the most important, to be decisive for the discovery of the unconscious thought." *Without exception . . . the most important.* Another area of maximum resistance, I realized, was the possible involvement of President Lyndon B. Johnson in the conspiracy. I resisted that conclusion for many years, although it now seems obvious to me. So *Into the Nightmare* contains a great deal of new information on Tippit and offers my detailed views on how and why the higher levels of the U.S. government were involved in the President's assassination.

### **3. What do you believe? Warren Commission or Conspiracy?**

It's clear from the above that I don't believe the clumsy Warren Commission cover story, although for a time after the Warren Report was published in September 1964, I fell under the spell of its disinformation. As Mark Lane, Sylvia Meagher, Léo Sauvage, Penn Jones, Jr., and other important early researchers probed into the case, I began to pay attention to their and other dissenting voices and to reexamine the Report. By December 1966, I was writing a letter to a Madison newspaper discussing my doubts and admitting, "I am totally unable to assess the case," which was the beginning of wisdom. It was hard to shake my indoctrination as an American citizen and Catholic schoolboy that gave me a blind trust in authority. That kind of misguided allegiance has interfered with many people's inability to see through all the lies and to accept the fact that a conspiracy was involved in Kennedy's murder, although, to our credit, a majority of Americans (and more) have believed from the beginning that Oswald did not do it alone. I don't believe Oswald fired any shots that day. He may have entered the Texas Theatre without paying, but even that supposed infraction is in doubt.

#### **4. Who are your heroes and mentors?**

My heroes include President Kennedy himself, for whom I worked as a volunteer in his 1960 Wisconsin presidential primary campaign. He made a number of serious mistakes in office, particularly in his early months, but his courageous moves toward peace in the Cold War and his

stands against the Joint Chiefs of Staff and their pressure to invade Cuba and escalate our involvement in Vietnam, which he was trying to wind down, are what led to his death. The real heroes of the investigation of Kennedy's murder are the witnesses. I dedicate my book *Into the Nightmare* "To Acquilla Clemmons, S. M. Holland, Mary Ann Moorman, and the other witnesses who came forward with great courage, at the risk of their safety and sometimes even at the cost of their lives, to tell us the truth as they saw it about the assassination of President Kennedy and the surrounding events. These people, uncommon common men and women, are the only true heroes of this tragic case; they refused to accept the lies about these events while relentlessly pursuing the truth and making it possible for others to do so on our nation's behalf." Along with these dedicated and patriotic witnesses, I also admire the intrepid researchers who have pursued the truth and persisted in their scholarship and dissent in the face of ridicule and ostracization and other hardships. Especially deserving of praise among them are the "first-generation researchers" who led the way for the rest of us.

## **5. What other authors, researchers do you look up to?**

Those first-generation researchers I especially admire include Penn Jones, the intrepid smalltown Texas newspaper editor who broke many important leads in the case and served as a mentor of mine; attorney Mark Lane,

whose early and almost solitary defense of Oswald and 1966 book *Rush to Judgment* (as well as his 1967 film version of that book, made with Emile de Antonio) helped establish the grounds for reasoned dissent; and Sylvia Meagher, a research analyst at the United Nations' World Health Organization whose brilliant deconstruction of the Warren Report in her 1967 *Accessories After the Fact: The Warren Commission, The Authorities, and The Report* remains, in my view, the best book on the assassination. There are numerous other, more recent researchers whose work I have been influenced by, including David S. Lifton, John Newman, Oliver Stone, Peter Dale Scott, John Armstrong, Douglas P. Horne, Vince Palamara, Dr. E. Martin Schotz, and James DiEugenio. Two other books that have influenced my political thinking are Richard Condon's astonishing 1959 novel *The Manchurian Candidate* and David Halberstam's corrosive 1972 account of the political culture and the men responsible for the Vietnam disaster, *The Best and the Brightest*. Although Halberstam doesn't go deeply enough into some of the causes or results of the war (we can rely on Peter Dale Scott for that), *The Best and the Brightest* helped open my eyes to the endemic corruption of our political system, as have Robert A. Caro's volumes of biography on Lyndon Johnson. Caro unfortunately fell down on the job when it came to telling the truth about the assassination, a predictable lapse for an author so honored by the establishment media that continue to lie to us about the case.

## **6. Is *Into the Nightmare* your first book?**

*Into the Nightmare* is my seventeenth book. I started writing my first book, *High and Inside: An A-to-Z Guide to the Language of Baseball*, in May 1963, when I was still in high school. Baseball was my principal passion at the time; I was putting myself through private school by working at Milwaukee County Stadium as a vendor, and I'd come home and compile my study of baseball slang, which took three years to write the first version. That early work shows I was beginning to think of myself as an author even before Kennedy was shot, although the murder of the candidate I worked for and the government's coverup of the crime turned me definitively from an intended career in law and politics to a life concentrated on writing books (as well as, in recent years, teaching as a professor in the Cinema Department at San Francisco State University). And it's an eerie fact that I wrote a short story about the Kennedy assassination two years before it happened, "The Plot Against a Country," for my high school English class in October 1961. Evidently I was influenced by my study of the Lincoln assassination and by my worried awareness, at close hand in the 1960 campaign, of how vulnerable Kennedy was, as well as by the dangers of the Cold War.

## **7. In your opinion what needs to happen in order to solve this case?**

On my first research trip to Dallas in 1983, I asked Penn Jones if he thought the assassination would ever be fully solved. He replied, “I and several other people solved the case back in the sixties.” The broad outlines of what happened to Kennedy have indeed been clear, or should have been clear, to anyone watching with open eyes and listening carefully since the first day. But we have learned a great deal more in subsequent years. Researchers have turned up much groundbreaking and paradigm-changing evidence. Millions of pages of previously withheld government documents have helped clarify and enlarge our views of the case. Some of it still remains mysterious, and some probably always will, but I believe we know much of what happened that day in November 1963. Even if we don’t know for sure who the shooters were or how all of the plot went down, we know a great deal about who was responsible for planning the crime and covering it up, and why this all happened. My book goes into those aspects of the case and breaks new ground in the murders of Kennedy and, especially, Officer Tippit.

**8. In your opinion, who or what has been the most influential in finding the truth?**

The witnesses. And then the researchers. And much of the American public for not buying the Big Lie, although the public’s inaction in pursuing the case, despite their skepticism, has been one of the most troubling aspects of this whole tragic history. Perhaps the best explanation of

the widespread cognitive dissonance surrounding the assassination was offered by Dr. E. Martin Schotz, the author of *History Will Not Absolve Us* and a psychiatrist from Kennedy's hometown of Brookline, Massachusetts, who wrote in the early 1990s, "It is so important to understand that one of the primary means of immobilizing the American people politically today is to hold them in a state of confusion in which anything can be believed but nothing can be known, nothing of significance that is.

"And the American people are more than willing to be held in this state because to KNOW the truth -- as opposed to only BELIEVE the truth -- is to face an awful terror and to be no longer able to evade responsibility. It is precisely in moving from belief to knowledge that the citizen moves from irresponsibility to responsibility, from helplessness and hopelessness to action, with the ultimate aim of being empowered and confident in one's rational powers."

## **9. What is the single most important piece of evidence that has yet to be released by the US Government?**

One might say the President's brain, which has been missing for many years. And if Kennedy's body could be exhumed for an honest forensic study, we could determine more of the facts about his wounds, even though the body has been altered. There are thousands of documents from various agencies that still remain classified in government vaults more than fifty years after the crime. What does that

tell you about whether the government actually believes that a lone gunman without any political motive shot the President? And many, many documents have been destroyed, so we only have sketchy ideas of what some may have contained. Also, much of the physical evidence in the case has been altered. So part of the problem in studying the case is sorting through and analyzing what is legitimate evidence and what is not. As Lee Harvey Oswald told his brother Robert on November 23, 1963, "Don't believe all this so-called evidence."

## **10. What legacy do you want to leave behind?**

The dedicated effort of a concerned American citizen who loved John F. Kennedy, helped work for his election, still grieves for his loss and for what it meant to our country, and has never given up on trying to solve his murder in the face of the indifference and hostility of the government he served both wisely and too well.

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### **5/20/14 JOSEPH McBRIDE BIO**

Joseph McBride is a professor in the Cinema Department at San Francisco State University, where he has been teaching screenwriting and film history since 2002. He is an internationally recognized film historian, the author of seventeen books, including the acclaimed biographies *Frank Capra: The Catastrophe of Success*, *Steven Spielberg: A Biography*, and *Searching for John Ford*. McBride has also published a celebrated book of interviews with director Howard Hawks, *Hawks on Hawks*, and three books on Orson Welles, most recently *What Ever Happened to Orson Welles?: A Portrait of*

*an Independent Career.*

In 2013, McBride published a new edition of *Hawks on Hawks* as well as *Into the Nightmare: My Search for the Killers of President John F. Kennedy and Officer J. D. Tippit*. McBride was a volunteer in John F. Kennedy's 1960 Wisconsin presidential primary campaign and appears in the classic documentary film about that campaign, *Primary*.

McBride's books have been published in French, Italian, German, Polish, Spanish, Finnish, Japanese, and Chinese. The French edition of *Searching for John Ford, A la recherche de John Ford*, won the Best Foreign Film Book of the Year award from the French film critics' organization in 2008.

McBride has been a professional journalist since 1960 and has written for such publications as *Life*, *The New York Review of Books*, *The New York Times Book Review*, *The Nation*, *Sight and Sound*, *Film Quarterly*, *Film Comment*, *Cineaste*, and the Writers Guild of America magazine *Written By*. He was a founder of *The Velvet Light Trap*, a reporter for *The Wisconsin State Journal* and *The Riverside (Ca.) Press Enterprise*, and a reviewer, reporter, and columnist for *Daily Variety* in Hollywood.

McBride is also a veteran film and television writer whose decades of experience in the industry have brought him a Writers Guild of America Award, four other WGA nominations, two Emmy Awards nominations, and a Canadian Film Awards nomination. McBride was one of the screenwriters of the cult classic punk rock musical *Rock 'n' Roll High School* and cowrote five American Film Institute Life Achievement Award specials for CBS-TV, honoring James Stewart, Fred Astaire, Frank Capra, John Huston, and Lillian Gish. McBride plays a film critic in Welles's legendary unfinished film *The Other Side of the Wind* (1970-76), for which McBride cowrote his dialogue with Welles. McBride wrote the segment on war movies, *War and Peace*, for *100 Years . . . 100 Movies* (American Film Institute/TNT), 1998, and co-wrote the 1982 United States Information Agency worldwide live television special in tribute to the Polish Solidarity Movement, *Let Poland Be Poland*. He is a member of the Writers Guild of America, the American Cinema Editors, and the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, and he was a founding member of the Los Angeles Film Critics Association.

McBride co-produced the 1997 documentary *Obsessed with "Vertigo": New Life for Hitchcock's Masterpiece* and the 2002 documentary *John Ford Goes to War*. McBride was a consultant and interviewee for the documentary *Becoming John Ford*, released in 2007 as part of the *Ford at*

*Fox* boxed set of DVDs, which won the “Film Heritage” award from the National Society of Film Critics and was chosen as “DVD of the Year” by *Time* magazine. In 2011, McBride became the subject of a feature-length documentary, *Behind the Curtain: Joseph McBride on Writing Film History*, written and directed by Hart Perez.

McBride lives in Berkeley, California. His personal website is [josephmcbridefilm.com](http://josephmcbridefilm.com), and his website for *Into the Nightmare* is [intothemidnight.com](http://intothemidnight.com).

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