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'Into the Nightmare' probes John F. Kennedy assassination



John F. Kennedy Dallas
President John F. Kennedy, First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy, and Texas Governor John Connally ride in a motorcade in Dallas, Texas, on November 22, 1963. Moments later the President and Governor were shot by an

assassin. (Walt Sisco / Copyright Bettmann/Corbis / AP Images) JFK assassination

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on July 18, 2013 at 11:35 AM, updated July 18, 2013 at 2:40 PM

A myriad of books examining **President John F. Kennedy's** life, death and legacy are due as the 50th anniversary of his assassination nears on Nov. 22.

Since that fateful day in Dallas, there have been those who believe JFK was the victim of a government conspiracy. They reject the Warren Commission's conclusion that Lee Harvey Oswald was the lone gunman.

One of most exhaustive looks at an assassination conspiracy is now out – **“Into the Nightmare: My Search for the Killers of President John F. Kennedy and Officer J. D. Tippit” by Joseph McBride. (Hightower Press, 675 pages).**

McBride, a professor in the Cinema Department at San Francisco State University, is a renowned film historian and biographer. A former newspaper reporter, he also wrote about George H. W. Bush's early CIA connections for *The Nation* in 1988. “Into the Nightmare” is the product of McBride's lifelong interest in JFK and 30 years of investigation into the president's murder.

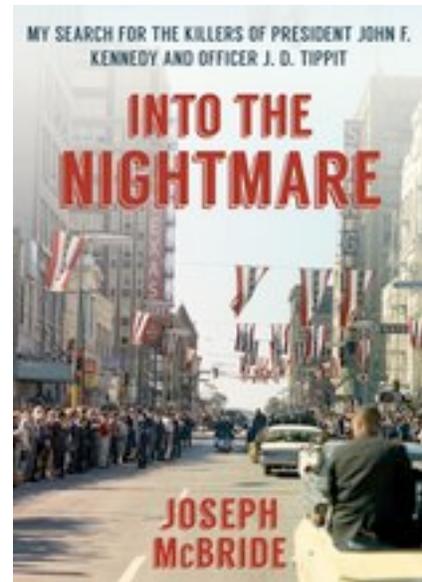


Joseph McBride

As a youngster, you worked on the Kennedy presidential campaign. What did he mean to you as an Irish Catholic?

As a 12-year-old growing up in Milwaukee, I aspired to be a lawyer and a politician. My work as a volunteer on the 1960 John F. Kennedy Wisconsin presidential primary campaign came about because my mother, Marian McBride, was vice chairman of the state Democratic Party. As Irish Catholics, our family was excited that one of our ethnic group was seriously being considered for the presidency; my mother vividly recalled the anti-Catholic prejudice that helped sink the Al Smith campaign in 1928.

My father, Raymond E. McBride, a reporter for the Milwaukee Journal, wore my "Al Smith for President" button to work the day Kennedy was elected president. When my mother and Wisconsin party chairman Patrick Lucey threw their support to JFK instead of Hubert Humphrey, the senator from our neighboring state of Minnesota who had long been a favorite and champion of Wisconsin liberals, it gave JFK a major boost in his campaign. But I responded as much to Kennedy's aura of youthful idealism and his relative liberalism as I did to his ethnicity. He seemed a breath of fresh air after the Eisenhower years, though I now realize how much I underestimated Ike and somewhat romanticized Kennedy. My campaigning for JFK enabled me to meet him twice during the campaign. I would have continued to pursue my goal of a political career if my candidate had not been murdered and the authorities had not tried to cover up the crime. As a result, I lost my faith in the political system and turned to a writing career. Hence this book.



What was your reaction to hearing the news of his murder on Nov. 22, 1963?

I immediately ran from the cafeteria line at Marquette University High School to a nearby drugstore to listen to the breaking news on the radio. I always have an instinctive need to follow the news as it happens. Like just about everyone else, of course, I was stunned by the shooting, and I remember instantly regretting that I had not known that Kennedy was in Texas and resolving never again to be so out of the loop. But part of me was not totally surprised by this shattering development, because for my freshman English class in October 1961, I had written a short story about JFK being assassinated. I think my proximity to him in the 1960 campaign (including rudely blowing off a flashbulb three feet from his face, startling him before he quickly recovered and smiled graciously) showed me how vulnerable he was. I also had studied the Lincoln assassination and understand the dangers presidents face. But the news of his death upended my existence in many critical ways and helped determine my future.

When did you first question the lone gunman theory?

By 1 p.m. that day, Central Standard Time, i.e., 30 minutes after Kennedy was shot. When I first began hearing the breaking network news reports on the radio about 12:40, they all said the shots had come from in front of the motorcade, in the area of the overpass and grassy hill overlooking Elm Street in Dallas's Dealey Plaza. Then at 1, the reports started claiming, without explanation, that the shots had all come from a building behind the president. I was already a budding journalist, from a newspaper family, and knew enough to realize something was awry when a story abruptly changed without explanation. By that evening, as I watched and listened to the

accused man, Lee Harvey Oswald, protesting his innocence and declaring that he was "just a patsy," I believed him.



John and Jacqueline Kennedy at Love Field in Dallas, Texas on November 22, 1963. The president was assassinated later in Dallas. The photo was part of the recent JFK Experience at the Springfield Museums.

You are best known for 15 critical and biographical books on filmmakers and the entertainment industry. How different was this book for you to write?

My first book, which I began writing in May 1963 as a high school student, was a study of baseball slang, "High and Inside: An A-to-Z Guide to the Language of Baseball." So this is my second book that is not about film, mostly, although I have chapters in "Into the Nightmare" on the Abraham Zapruder film of the assassination and on the television and radio coverage during the assassination weekend, and I write extensively about how the media have distorted this case. My interests going far back were always as much directed toward politics and history as they were to film.

Over the years I have read as much about the assassination and related historical topics as about film history. So in a sense this book was not a deviation but my avocation; and I consider this investigation my true life's work. It was a challenge to write about an area in which I was not recognized as an expert. It helped stretch me as a writer. This is a difficult subject for anyone to write about, so it took me 31 years to research and write this massive book and to work out the ideal structure for it, that of a memoir of the evolution of my understanding and personal investigation of the case.

Those who believe in an assassination conspiracy often get painted with a broad brush. Is this a project you have kept quiet during your decades of research?

Anyone who differs from the official view that a lone gunman killed Kennedy has to learn to endure a certain amount of ridicule and disdain, even though opinion polls have consistently shown that about 70 per cent of the American public doesn't believe the official story. Those who uphold the official myth, including most of the mainstream media, have long resorted to mockery and abuse of those of us who dissent. So you learn to choose your arguments. I also learned long ago that it's wisest to keep a low profile in investigating such a sensitive case, for a variety of reasons, including security and the need to steer clear of disruptive disinformation. I kept "Into the Nightmare" mostly on a need-to-know basis while doing interviews and research for the book in Dallas, Houston, New Orleans, Washington, D.C., and California for many years. The writing occupied the last nine years, and only a handful of friends and family knew what I was doing during that period.



Lee Harvey Oswald, accused assassin of President John F. Kennedy, reacts as Dallas night club owner Jack Ruby, foreground, shoots at him from point blank range in a corridor of Dallas police headquarters, in this Nov. 24, 1963 file photo. Plainclothesman at left is Jim A. Leavelle. (AP photo)

"Into the Nightmare" points out numerous holes in the lone gunman theory. You paint Lee Harvey Oswald as the patsy. What drove you to that conclusion?

Not only did I find Oswald credible in his denials, and realized that his murder by the mob-connected Jack Ruby while surrounded by dozens of policemen in the basement of police headquarters was a sign that he was being silenced in what amounted to an official lynching, I came to realize while studying the Warren Report critically and reading other researchers' work that the official account was full of holes and inconsistencies. After I launched my own investigation in 1982, I was able to uncover many more contradictions, lies, and unfollowed leads that convinced me that we were being systematically misled by our government. The supposed "proofs" of Oswald's guilt offered by the Warren Report are ludicrously inadequate and are demolished in the book. I found that there is no credible evidence that

Oswald was involved in the shootings of President Kennedy or of Dallas Police Officer J. D. Tippit.

The extraordinarily muddled evidence in the Tippit case, which has largely remained underexplored up until now, took a great deal of work for me to make sense out of, and it points to two, three, or even four men involved in the shooting. I believe that "Into the Nightmare" is the most exhaustive and revealing study yet conducted of the crucial Tippit case. I go into considerable detail in the book in demonstrating the falsity of what Oswald called the "so-called evidence" against him, and in addition to exonerating him, I point to other suspects in both murders. I believe Oswald was a patriotic American who was working undercover for the FBI and other U.S. agencies to infiltrate the plot against President Kennedy, not realizing until too late that he was being framed as the perpetrator.



A 1952 Dallas Police Department photo of Officer J.D. Tippit

Authorities determined Dallas Police Officer J.D. Tippit was killed by Oswald. Why have you rejected that conclusion?

The Dallas police quickly dropped their shoddy "investigation" of the Tippit murder when Oswald was shot two days later, and the Warren Report relied on ballistics evidence to claim that Oswald shot Tippit. That "so-called evidence" is a mess that fails to link Oswald to the shooting and, if anything, points to two other shooters. Some witnesses claimed to have identified Oswald being at the scene, but other witnesses would not identify him as a shooter, and some described other men involved and suspicious cars at the scene. Perhaps most importantly, Oswald could not have walked from his rooming house in Oak Cliff to the scene of the Tippit shooting in time to have committed the murder; the Warren Commission falsified the time involved to make its dubious theory work. If Oswald was at the scene at all, he would have had to have been driven there, but there is no proof of that.

In my research, which included rare interviews with key people in Texas and archival discoveries, I uncovered new evidence that Officer Tippit in fact was hunting for Oswald in Oak Cliff during the last 24 minutes of Tippit's life, becoming more and more frantic in his search. This behavior indicates that Tippit was involved in a conspiracy, since the Dallas police at that time officially did not know of Oswald's identity.

Whether Tippit was supposed to capture or kill Oswald is not certain (probably the latter), but the officer's actions in that period clearly demonstrate that he was not the innocent, heroic victim he was portrayed as being.



In this Nov. 22, 1963, file photo, provided by the White House, Lyndon B. Johnson is sworn in as President of the United States in the cabin of Air Force One as Jacqueline Kennedy stands at his side. Judge Sarah T. Hughes, a Kennedy appointee to the Federal court, left, administers the oath. (AP photo)

Who do you think stood to gain the most from the death of JFK?

As New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison put it, "The one man who has profited the most from the assassination – your friendly president, Lyndon

Johnson!" Garrison was unfairly maligned for trying to bring a criminal case against a CIA operative for involvement in the plot, and in those early years I was in a state of denial that LBJ could have been involved in the assassination, but that conclusion now seems inescapable. The planning of the motorcade in the vice president's home state, the staging of the crossfire in Dallas's Dealey Plaza, and the new president's engineering of the cover-up make it clear that he and his allies were involved. He was facing expulsion from the 1964 Democratic ticket as well as a possible jail term for corruption, but the assassination rescued him from ruin. I believe the evidence is abundantly clear that this was a military coup abetted by other government agencies, including the FBI and the Secret Service. While that may be hard for some people to believe, a careful study of the security lapses that allowed the assassination to occur, as well as the blaming of the crime on a patsy who worked as a government informant, the murder of the patsy in police custody, and the alteration or destruction of much of the evidence to cover up the conspiracy make it obvious to anyone with an open mind that this was an inside job.

The beneficiaries were Johnson and the military-industrial complex that owned him and which he helped enrich with the Vietnam War. Through my extensive research, I shed new light on the murderous political context of the case, including the hatred against Kennedy by Texas right-wing extremists, and I demonstrate that Officer Tippit was one of the key ground-level functionaries in that high-level plot.