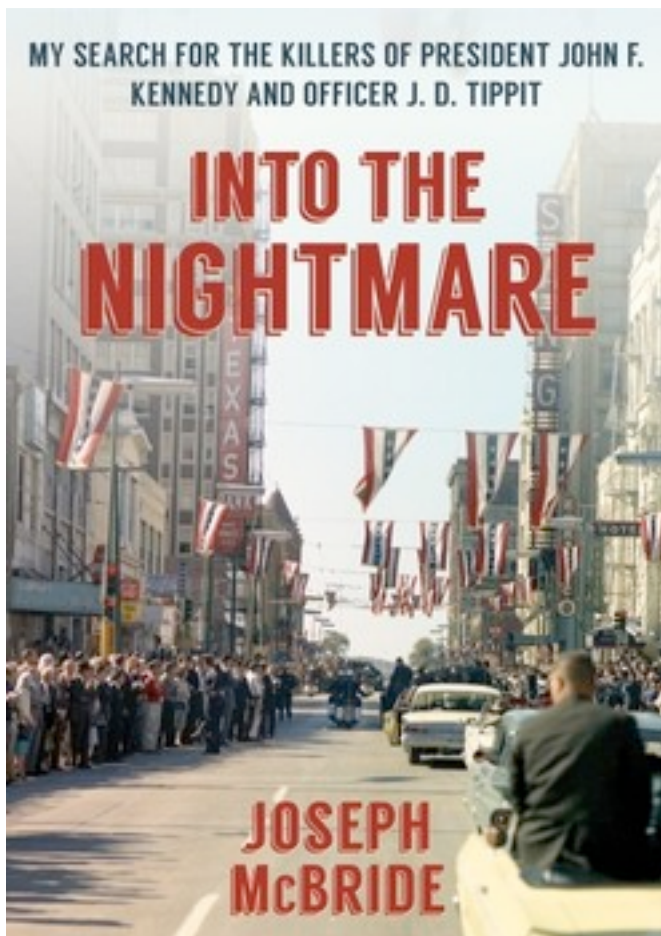


1. <http://www.examiner.com/article/jfk-assassination-revisited-part-2-joseph-mcbride-on-into-the-nightmare>
2. [Arts & Entertainment Books](#)

## JFK assassination revisited, Part 2: Joseph McBride on 'Into the Nightmare'

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**This week, *Hartford Books Examiner* will commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of President John F. Kennedy's assassination with special content exploring new literature on the case, which remains one of the most controversial and divisive events in history.**

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Today, [Hartford Books Examiner](#) welcomes [Joseph McBride](#).

The author of [Into the Nightmare: My Search for the Killers of President Kennedy and Officer J.D. Tippit](#) (Hightower Press; 2013), McBride is an American film historian, biographer, screenwriter, and professor in the Cinema Department at San Francisco State University. He has published seventeen books since 1968, including acclaimed biographies of Steven Spielberg, Frank Capra, and John Ford; further, he has written for publications including *Life*, *The New York Review of Books*, *The New York Times Book Review*, *The Los Angeles Times Magazine*, and *The Nation*. *Into the Nightmare* is the result of a thirty-one

year investigation into the Kennedy and Tippit murders and draws upon the author's rare interviews with people in Dallas, archival discoveries, and his expansive knowledge of the country's social history.

*Into the Nightmare* was published last June and has been met warmly by members of the research community. Vincent Palamara, civilian expert on the Secret Service and author of *Survivor's Guilt*, praised, "Every once in a while, a book comes along that is not merely a book, a good book, or even, for that matter, a great book, but what I am fond of calling a master work. "Into The Nightmare" by Joseph McBride is just such a rare commodity: a master work on the assassination that is very well written (even poetic at times), thought provoking, and well researched." Further, Joseph Green of OpEdNews.com called the book "a jagged reminder of old school reportage" and noted, "Going against the grain, he [McBride] he asks difficult questions and tries hard to answer them. And even if every question cannot be answered satisfactorily, much compelling information surfaces throughout."

**From the publisher:**

"AMERICA'S NEED TO WALK INTO THE NIGHTMARE . . ."

*. . . was how Norman Mailer predicted the tumultuous period that led to President John F. Kennedy's 1963 murder on a public street and the fifty years of controversy that have followed that turning point in our nation's history. Journalist and historian Joseph McBride, a volunteer in JFK's 1960 Wisconsin presidential primary campaign, began studying the assassination minutes after it happened. In 1982, McBride launched his own investigation. Both epic and intimately personal, Into the Nightmare: My Search for the Killers of President John F.*

*Kennedy and Officer J. D. Tippit incorporates rare interviews with key people in Dallas, archival discoveries, and what novelist Thomas Flanagan, in The New York Review of Books, called McBride's "wide knowledge of American social history." McBride chronicles his evolving skepticism about the official story and shines a fresh, often surprising spotlight on Kennedy's murder and on one of the murkiest, most crucial aspects of the case, its "Rosetta Stone," the Tippit killing.*

*Joseph McBride has been a journalist since 1960, writing for such publications as Life, The New York Review of Books, The New York Times Book Review, The Los Angeles Times Magazine, and, on this subject, The Nation. An internationally renowned film biographer and historian, he has written acclaimed biographies of John Ford, Frank Capra, and Steven Spielberg. McBride lives in Berkeley and is a professor at San Francisco State University. Now, Joseph McBride takes readers Into the Nightmare ...*

**1) What inspired you to write INTO THE NIGHTMARE – and how did your personal experiences with President Kennedy influence your telling of the story?**

I was a volunteer in John F. Kennedy's 1960 Wisconsin presidential primary campaign when I was twelve and met him three times. On one occasion, at a small event called "Kids for Kennedy" two blocks from my home in the Milwaukee suburb of Wauwatosa, I had the chance to talk with Kennedy about his book PROFILES IN COURAGE, and when I answered a question he asked about it, he quipped to the crowd, "I hope I don't have to run against you in 1964." He inspired me to want to go into politics. I admired his record on civil rights and his aspirations for world peace, although I was somewhat naive, as most of us were, about many of the major issues, as well as in the dark about the forces arrayed against him. My aspiration to enter

politics vanished when my candidate was murdered and the government did not want to solve the crime. That shock and disillusionment made me pursue a career as a writer.

I consider myself an investigative reporter at heart. Though most of my work has been as a film historian, I have always tried to penetrate behind the often false and mythical official stories, as I do in *INTO THE NIGHTMARE: MY SEARCH FOR THE KILLERS OF PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY AND OFFICER J. D. TIPPIE*. I did not believe the official story from the first day, because my reporter's instincts made me focus on the stark contradictions in what Oswald referred to as "the so-called evidence" against him and the changing stories about the directions of the shots in Dealey Plaza. I followed the case sporadically until the 1970s, when Vietnam and Watergate and the revelations about CIA assassination plotting made me focus more intensively on the [Kennedy assassination](#) as the start of all these problems that beset our country. I decided to launch my own investigation in 1982, on the scene of the crime in Dallas and in Washington, D.C., and it took me thirty-one years to complete my in-depth study of what happened to Kennedy and Tippit. I regard this as part of my service to President Kennedy, to help tell what I could learn of the truth that was still suppressed about aspects of his murder and the surrounding events.

**2) You are a proponent of J. D. Tippit's murder being a "Rosetta Stone" to understanding Kennedy's assassination. Can you briefly tell about the original research you did in this area and what the overall ramifications are?**

Officer Tippit's murder thirty-nine minutes after Kennedy was shot was falsely blamed on Lee Harvey Oswald, who was innocent of both crimes and was, as he said, the "patsy" for other forces who were guilty. The authorities seized on the Tippit

murder to make him seem guilty of killing Kennedy, an irrational ploy that still works in some circles today; I learned from my interviews with Dallas Police Detective James Leavelle and District Attorney Henry Wade that the Dallas authorities knew they had no real case against Oswald for either crime. I began focusing on Tippit when I realized that his murder had hardly been investigated and was being largely ignored by the Warren Commission and most writers on the case. This is what is known by psychiatrists as a “point of maximum resistance,” which, as Freud taught us, is always of critical importance.

What was Tippit’s role on November 22, and why was he killed? Who was this obscure policeman? What were his involvements and connections? I set out to answer those questions and have come up with a great deal of fresh information about him and his activities. One of the most important revelations in my book is that Tippit was actively hunting down Oswald at the direction of the Dallas Police Department for the last twenty-four minutes of his life, driving and dashing ever more frantically around Oak Cliff trying to find the fall guy, to capture or perhaps to kill him. Another Dallas policeman, Sergeant William D. Mentzel, evidently was involved in the same hunt. Tippit drove his police car into an ambush connected with the conspiracy in Dealey Plaza; I discuss possible suspects in his shooting and exonerate others, including Oswald.

This pursuit of Oswald by Tippit, which had been speculated upon by some earlier researchers, was confirmed for me with the help of an interview with Tippit’s father, Edgar Lee Tippit, who had never been interviewed before, and in connection with other evidence. It proves that Tippit was, at least, part of the conspiracy to capture or perhaps silence Oswald, since Oswald’s identity was not officially known to the Dallas police at the time. In fact, they did know who he was, as did the FBI, and he was being set up for the crime by the authorities, also including the

CIA. I believe Oswald had been infiltrating the plot against Kennedy as an FBI informant but was unaware that he was to be the fall guy. Tippit, though he left few traces about his own political views, was a troubled war veteran with what we would now call PTSD, financially overextended as well, and he moved in a milieu that included many important rightwing figures in Dallas and connected him indirectly at least to Jack Ruby, anti-Castro Cubans, and others.

**3) You also explore the social context of the time. What specific factors do you believe may have led to Kennedy's killing – and how would an accurate historical perspective benefit the young(er) generation of researchers?**

As Democratic Senator Ralph Yarborough, who was riding in Vice President Lyndon Johnson's car in the Kennedy motorcade, told me, "Too many people wanted Kennedy dead." These included rightwing extremists in Texas, including wealthy oil men and others bitterly opposed to the president's economic and civil rights policies and eager for a widening of the war in Vietnam to benefit what his predecessor, President Dwight D. Eisenhower, had called "the military-industrial complex." I believe the assassination was a military coup carried out with the help of intelligence agencies and the Dallas police and the Secret Service, among others.

I explore the Texas milieu in great detail in INTO THE NIGHTMARE, as well as the connections between Oswald and the FBI and the CIA, and analyze the reasons some key military leaders and Lyndon Johnson himself badly wanted Kennedy out of the way. Besides Johnson, I also identify Kennedy's aide Kenneth O'Donnell as a disloyal figure who helped facilitate the assassination and its cover-up. This was a complex plot whose composition revealed the degrees of violent antagonism

Kennedy's policies had engendered as he tried to end the war in Vietnam and deescalate the Cold War. The often tragic history of our country over the past fifty years cannot be understood without coming to terms with the Coup of 1963. So young people should care deeply about these events, not only those of us who were around at the time. If the younger generation wants to help redeem and save our country -- if it's not too late -- they should "Study the Past," to quote the words carved on the front of the National Archives. The hopeful news is that I have found many younger people who are more open-minded about the assassination than some older people who continue to refuse to face the facts. Even so, the majority of Americans consistently have not believed the official U.S. government version of that history since 1963.

**4) Other than your own book, what would you suggest as essential reading for students of the assassination – and what specific areas of inquiry would you say warrant further investigation?**

There have been and continue to be many books on Kennedy and his assassination, some merely worthless, some mendacious, and some good, with original research and analysis. I think the best book on the assassination remains Sylvia Meagher's *ACCESSORIES AFTER THE FACT: THE WARREN COMMISSION, THE AUTHORITIES, AND THE REPORT* (1967). Meagher was a private citizen who took it upon herself to deconstruct and thoroughly discredit the Warren Report. Her book remains an acute piece of analysis that shows by indirection much of what happened in Dallas, although we've learned a lot since then. Other excellent books on the assassination include Peter Dale Scott's *DEEP POLITICS AND THE DEATH OF JFK* (1993/96), Carl Oglesby's *THE YANKEE AND COWBOY WAR: CONSPIRACIES FROM DALLAS TO WATERGATE* (1976), David S. Lifton's *BEST EVIDENCE:*



DISGUISE AND DECEPTION IN THE ASSASSINATION OF JOHN F. KENNEDY (1980/88), Gaeton Fonzi's THE LAST INVESTIGATION (1993), John Armstrong's HARVEY AND LEE: HOW THE CIA FRAMED OSWALD (2003), and Douglas P. Horne's five-volume INSIDE THE ASSASSINATION RECORDS REVIEW BOARD: THE U.S. GOVERNMENT'S FINAL ATTEMPT TO RECONCILE THE CONFLICTING MEDICAL EVIDENCE IN THE ASSASSINATION OF JFK (2009).

**5) Would you care to speculate as to how things might have been different had President Kennedy not perished on that fateful November day?**

I believe we would not now be living in a country that has shredded its Constitution and is spying on all of us indiscriminately. We have always been a violent country, so we would not be free from gun violence at home and wars abroad, but we would not be regularly attacking countries on false pretenses and torturing people and using drones to kill both Americans and foreign citizens and all the other outrages that have happened in these past fifty years. We would have at least tried to turn toward peace and coexistence with our adversaries rather than fighting perpetual wars as a matter of course, as Orwell predicted in NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR, which is the best book to understand our dystopic modern world. Our precipitous downward slide began in November 1963, at a time when most citizens still trusted our government, partly for good reasons. The widespread distrust, apathy, and hostility toward government we see today is an outgrowth of the violent overthrow of our government in 1963. The fact that most of the mainstream media still largely pretends it didn't happen is a major part of the problem. A country that can't face the truth about its history is doomed to keep repeating its tragedies.

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With thanks to Joseph McBride for his generosity of time and thought.

The author's next book, [Hawks on Hawks](#), will be published on December 1st by The University Press of Kentucky.

## 1 1 Comment

**Mark O'Blazney** · 7 months ago

You are to be commended for your excellent book, Mr. McBride. Coming from that land of illusion we know as Hollywood, it is refreshing to see you appear in life's movie. Thanks.