

Who Killed JFK?

What Happens Next - 12.09.2023

Larry Bernstein:

Welcome to What Happens Next. My name is Larry Bernstein. What Happens Next is a podcast which covers economics, politics, and history.

Today's topic is Who Killed JFK? Part 1.

Our speaker is Gerald Posner who is the author of the book Case Closed: Lee Harvey Oswald and the JFK Assassination. Gerald has spent years researching this book and interviewed all the major living players in the murder. This year is the 60th anniversary of the assassination, and I want to find out who killed JFK and if there was a conspiracy.

Buckle up!

Gerald, please begin with your opening six-minute remarks.

Gerald Posner:

Why did Lee Harvey Oswald kill Jack Kennedy? He killed him because he was his sociopathic loser, a 24-year-old kid who was looking for his place in the history books. In November of 1963, when he was working at the Texas School Book Depository, he learned by reading the paper that the President's motorcade was going to come directly in front of the building where he worked. It was history on a silver platter. He could not pass it up. He took advantage of it, and that is why he ends up in the sniper's nest on that day of shooting at JFK.

So why couldn't Oswald be part of a conspiracy? You must know Oswald to understand how unstable he was. This is a person who no group of conspirators: the Mafia, the CIA, the Cubans, whoever they were, could have trusted because he was not reliable. He was somebody who had already been judged by the KGB when he defected the Soviet Union as mentally unstable. He had been judged by a psychiatrist when he was a teenager and had been sent there from troubles from school as having all types of sociopathic, aggressive disorders that made him on the borderline personality. And when you realize that Oswald is somebody who is beating his wife, on the one hand, he is handing out leaflets to try to join the revolution to go to Cuba. He does not know what he wants to do in his life except he wants to make a mark. Conspirators would stay 20 miles away from him because they know that somebody like Oswald is the first person who is not only going to tell others, but he is going to blow up the entire conspiracy once he is caught. So, they could not rely on him.

Larry Bernstein:

Why do people believe that there is was a conspiracy with the JFK assassination?

Gerald Posner:

People believe there is a conspiracy because they want to. It makes them feel better about Kennedy's death. Kennedy presented so much opportunity for the future. This young charismatic president, the best of the brightest, Camelot, all of that. After the Eisenhower years, Kennedy offered this potential for the future and then it ends on this day abruptly in Dallas. If some dark cabal had to get together to kill Kennedy because he was going to rip down the CIA or pulls out of Vietnam or whatever the hell it was, that makes you feel as though there is some meaning to his death. These dark forces must stop him. But if it is just Oswald, it is just this kid who decided for whatever reason to end the president's life, and he pulls it off. It is so unsatisfying. It is also the chaos theory. Life is full of chaos. Things happen. Events take place that we have no control over, makes people feel very unstable, and they want it to be a conspiracy.

Larry Bernstein:

I asked my mom, if she believed in a conspiracy and she said, “definitely, because no 24-year-old loser can kill the most powerful person in the world.” What should I tell her?

Gerald Posner:

History has taught us that it is always some young loser that changes the course of history. The Europeans fought the Great War over the death of the Archduke by somebody. We have seen Bobby Kennedy cut down by a young Palestinian assassin who was mad over his Middle East policy. We saw Martin Luther King killed by a guy who came from a dirt-poor family and was looking for a payday of \$50,000 in James Earl Ray.

People who commit the assassinations. It is the loners. It is the people acting on their own. It is the Tim McVeigh's able to plant a bomb at a federal building in Oklahoma City and get away with it because they are on nobody's radar. That is the Oswald's of the world living in their own demonic haze.

Larry Bernstein:

You have spent years investigating Lee Harvey Oswald, tell us why you think that he is a sociopath.

Gerald Posner:

Oswald comes from a dysfunctional family with a capital D. No father. He has a mother who is overbearing, over protects him. He sent to see a psychiatrist when he is just turning 13 years old because he is a truant from school. The psychiatrist remembers him years later before the Warren Commission, a decade later, very vividly, why? He said because I remember this kid that showed

up on a mild charge of truancy. And seemed to be so mentally disturbed on so many levels. The recommendation that he should see regular counseling and go to see a psychiatrist from the get-go. And what does his mother do? Oswald's mother takes him back to Texas, moves out of New York.

Oswald goes into the Marines because his brother had, even though he is not crazy about the US Marine Corps, it is going to straighten him out. He hated it. They thought he was gay. They threw him in the shower. They called him Mrs. Oswald.

Now he decides he is going to change his life and he's going to go to Russia to defect in the middle of the Cold War and show up and say, I'm an ex-Marine. And the Russians are going to say, you are heroic. And instead, they do a psychological test on him. They tell him to get lost. They do not want him there. He tries to kill himself and they move him out to the provincial capital of Minsk. And he hates the Russians after a while. So, what does he do? He decides after meeting a Russian bride, he is going to come back to the U.S. He comes back to the America, which he cannot stand, and he cannot hold a job.

Then he decides, I will be a revolutionary. I am going to kill a retired army general that is going to run for the governorship of Texas. He tries to shoot him. The bullets deflect on a windowpane. He misses him. He had failed again.

Now Oswald's going to commit himself to the real revolution, which is in Havana. Fidel Castro is leading it. He goes to New Orleans in the summer of '63, and he forms his own organization for Castro and prints hundreds of leaflet handouts so people can join his new group. He gets zero, fails again.

Now he's going to go to Havana. He goes down to Mexico City. He had a visa, and the Cuban and Soviet missions reject him three times, and he comes back to Dallas six and a half weeks before the assassination. He cannot find a job. His life is out of control. His wife is living separately from him. He has had a very tumultuous, abusive relationship with her. And he lands a job through a friend of his wife in the Texas School Book Depository. He is only a few weeks from entering the history books.

Larry Bernstein:

Tell us about Oswald's decision to leave the United States and emigrate to the Soviet Union.

Gerald Posner:

Oswald was a contrarian. He disliked his life growing up in the U.S. He disliked the Marine Corps after he was in it. He did his own political studies. He is self-taught, thought he was brighter than he was, subscribed to a Russian language newspaper when he's in the Marine

Corps. They must have had him under a security watch. No, because he was so open about it. They just thought he was odd. They thought that he was just a strange guy and he liked that. His appeal was that there was a time he was enamored with communism and there is nothing better than moving to a strictly authoritarian communist country. Marx and Engels had a theory that could work in practice. And he was disabused of that notion very quickly while he was in the Soviet Union.

Larry Bernstein:

I had a book club years ago with Jack Matlock who was the former US Ambassador to the Soviet Union during the Reagan Administration. He wrote a book entitled Reagan and Gorbachev that is a great read, and he spoke to my group. Matlock got a PhD in Russian Studies and joined the US State Department and was placed in Moscow in the early 1960s. I asked Matlock if by chance he ever met Lee Harvey Oswald. He said how did you know. I did not know.

He told me that Oswald came to the US embassy, and his assistant said there is a total nutjob in the conference room who wants to give up his American citizenship, which was highly unusual. Matlock said he met with him and informed him that there was a 24-hour cooling off period before giving up US citizenship. Oswald did not return.

Instead, Oswald moved to Minsk to work in a factory where he met his future wife Marina. What happened between Oswald and Marina?

Gerald Posner:

There is a real relationship there. There is no question. And although some of his fellow Marines had thought that Oswald was gay and teased him for that, there is no evidence of that. There's just that male brutality which they used that as an insult. I never found any evidence that Oswald was in fact hiding and repressing. He was not in the closet marrying Marina as a cover. They had a real marriage. And how do I know that? Because the Soviets were monitoring their apartment constantly with surveillance equipment. They were worried for a while that Oswald could be an American plant. It was not possible they could really be in love with the Soviet Union. Very few people came over and so they watched them for a while. She was enamored with an American who was clearly the star of the factory. When he decided to come back to the U.S, she thought that would be a great idea. They had washing machines in America.

Larry Bernstein:

In the movie *The Lives of Others*, it was a story set in East Germany about the Stasi who listened to couples in their own bedroom to see if they would disclose information. Are you suggesting that the Soviets put microphones in Oswald's bedroom?

Gerald Posner:

Yes. We know from the KGB that they had heard them at work.

Larry Bernstein:

Wow, that's good intelligence.

Gerald Posner:

Yeah. I know this in terms of intelligence from the Cold War on both sides, bedrooms were places that you wanted listening equipment because it was possible that you might pick up on somebody's hidden gay life. And that was always good for espionage because you could use it as blackmail against them.

Larry Bernstein:

As I mentioned before, Jack Matlock worked in the US embassy in Moscow in the early 60s and his assistant told him that the crazy guy Oswald is back again now with his new wife Marina who wants a visa to the US. Matlock asks to meet with her alone. Oswald demands to translate for her in the visa interview, and Matlock tells Oswald that he is fluent in Russian, and that Oswald speaks pidgin Russian.

Matlock asks Marina if she has ever been a member of the Communist Party. She says yes. Matlock is surprised because that is grounds to reject the visa and whenever a suspected KGB agent requests a visa, they always deny party membership. Matlock asks her in what way is she a member? Marina says that she participates in the communist party volleyball league. So, Matlock gives her the US visa and the Oswald's move to Dallas. What happened?

Gerald Posner:

She is 19 at the time. She is not devious, cunning. She is not somebody who has played her cards right to come into the United States and taking advantage of Oswald. She very much is the young girl in love with this American and thinks there's bigger picture waiting for her in America. And what she only discovers when they get to America is how isolated she will be. She meets some Russian emigres in Dallas, and they take her under their wing, but for the most part, she is away from family. And she is dependent totally on Lee. And one thing I know from studying Lee Harvey Oswald is he is not a good person to be dependent on because he is not reliable. But she could not know that until it happened.

Larry Bernstein:

When Oswald moves to Dallas, he struggles to find and then keep a minimum wage job. He gets mad. He beats and berates his wife. He becomes mentally unhinged. Why does she stay with him?

Gerald Posner:

Part of the reason that she stays is because she does not know what else to do. I have this feeling from talking to others who have spoken to her that she felt as though there was almost a defeat to go back to Russia, that if she just packed her bags in six months and said, "I'm leaving," especially once they had a daughter, that they would say, "what's the matter with you? You can't make a life there."

And women who are abused in relationships have low self-esteem and blame themselves. They think, "I'm responsible somehow for this having happened. Lee lost a job. He was so angry, and I did not give him enough room. I was asking him, what are you going to do next?" And then he got violent about this. It takes a point to get to in your life where you can say, no, I'm not at all to blame for this. It is completely the fault of the abuser, the person who is beating me. But at that age of 20 and 21, I do not think she was there yet.

Larry Bernstein:

Oswald likes guns. He buys an Italian rifle from a mail order catalog. This is a small world story. My mother's sister's father-in-law owned the mail order gun catalog company that sold the gun to Oswald that killed JFK.

Oswald buys the rifle. Then he decides that he wants to kill a retired US General living in Dallas who is running for political office. What happens?

Gerald Posner:

Oswald gets the gun early in '63, and now we're talking about him doing an assassination of Edwin Walker, this retired right-wing army general in April of '63. He does some surveillance on Walker's single-family home in an area that is quiet. Oswald knows the bus route.

He took some photographs of his house and car. He makes a little scrapbook out of it. The reason we know all of that is Marina discovers it after she reads about an attempted assassination on this retired army general turns out to be by her husband Lee. And he has the entire book. When he fires the shot and he is at a distance, he is behind some trees. Walker is sitting inside his study. He is very brightly lit. Oswald fires the bullet right at the head. What he does not realize is you cannot see from the way the window is lit. There is a very thin wood sash along the window that breaks it in four spots.

The bullet later we find out grooves along that wood part of the sash just enough to deflect Walker's head by a couple of inches and goes into the wall behind him. Walker does not know what happened at first. Oswald leaves, thinks he has pulled it off, finds out afterward that Walker's alive. And for Lee, this is a devastating moment because he has failed at the one thing that is the most important. It is one thing to lose a job. The people who are firing him as

supervisors, they are not as smart as he is. That is what he thinks. They do not appreciate him for what he is. So now he is going to show them all, what he can accomplish, and he has failed at that. And Marina, for the first time in their relationship, stands up and says “enough.” She does not say “I’m calling the police.” She says, “We’re getting out of Dallas. You’re not staying there.” Why? Because she knows that if they stay there, he is going to try to kill Walker again. He’s not going to take a failed attempt and say, “that’s it. I will put the rifle away. No more.” He is going to go back and make sure he kills him next time. So, she gets him to move to New Orleans where he had an uncle. They’ll spend their summer of ‘63 in New Orleans where he can’t shoot Walker.

Larry Bernstein:

The people who believe in a wider conspiracy related to the JFK assassination; how do they reconcile Oswald’s attempted murder of Walker?

Gerald Posner:

Conspiracy theorists have two views of Walker. Some think that it did not happen at all. It was a complete setup. But Marina is the source of all the information about the Walker assassination. Some conspiracy think that Marina was given a script and told, “show us this scrapbook and say that your husband tried to kill this army general back in April”, and Marina did that because she was afraid that she would be sent back to Russia. She was not an American citizen. Well, guess what? 60 years later, she has been remarried for decades. She is an American citizen. She is well placed here, and she has not changed her story.

Larry Bernstein:

Oswald spends the Summer of 1963 in New Orleans trying to get people to support Free Cuba an organization to help Castro but does not accomplish much other than getting arrested after getting into a fight with anti-Castro followers.

Oswald returns to Dallas and decides he wants to immigrate to Cuba and goes to Mexico City where there is a Cuban embassy. But his request for a visa is denied. Oswald goes home to Dallas penniless and is desperate to find a job. A friend of his wife tells him about an opening at the Texas School Book Depository. He gets an entry level job there pulling together books in the warehouse. And then incredibly he gets the news that JFK’s motorcade’s route will go directly in front of where he works. What happened?

Gerald Posner:

It is hard to overestimate the impact that had on 24-year-old. Here is a guy who in his entire life has been dissatisfied in his own skin, tormented by others, fired by his bosses. He has been taunted by his fellow Marines. He was rejected by the Soviets. The Russian emigres inside of the United States do not like him. He cannot succeed on anything he has done. Now, the President of the United States, he has got a chance of taking the rifle and shooting at him.

I ask anyone to look at the pictures of Oswald once he is arrested. It is a different Oswald than anything before. He is the Cheshire cat who has swallowed the canary. He has a smirk on his face. People say Oswald had a smirk. He never really had a smirk beforehand. In the pictures in the backyard that he has pulled it off and all those people thought he was a loser. So, why doesn't he admit it?

Larry Bernstein:

He yells out to the press corps at the police station after he is arrested that he is a patsy.

Gerald Posner:

Why does he say patsy? Because he is this committed leftist communist. And the perfect thing to say is "they've set me up" because he is going to play it out all the way. He does not know Jack Ruby's going to shoot him on Sunday. He pulled it off. He successfully killed the President, and now he is going to get a good lawyer. The spotlight was on him and all those people in the path who thought he was a loser would take notice.

Larry Bernstein:

The night before the assassination, he was in bed with his wife. Marina put her hand on his leg and he brushed it off. What happened?

Gerald Posner:

Oswald was not interested in sex. As a matter of fact, they had not had much sex according to Marina in the tumultuous months in New Orleans, and that he had been distant from her because they had problems in that marriage. So, the key for Oswald was whether she could commit to him again. The girl who was 19 years old in Russia, who was so googly-eyed about him, wanted to be with him and thought of him as heroic.

She now viewed him as somebody who beat her, who was unable to take care of her and their daughter. They are having the second daughter coming along the way. She did not trust him anymore. Could he win her respect back? Could he win her love back? Would she give him another chance that might have spared the president's life?

Larry Bernstein:

Oswald gets up in the morning leaves his wedding ring and all his life savings in cash on his wife's nightstand.

Gerald Posner:

He was not somebody who took off his wedding ring at night. According to Marina, he had never taken it off before.

Larry Bernstein:

Oswald retrieves his Italian rifle from the garage and gets a ride to work from his neighbor.

Gerald Posner:

Because he does not drive. Also never learned to drive.

Larry Bernstein:

There are still people like that?

Gerald Posner:

Yeah, there are a few. They are the dangerous ones.

Larry Bernstein:

Oswald gets a ride. His friend says, what do you got there? Oh, these are some curtain rods. Work is uneventful, except of course that JFK is in town. Everyone leaves work at lunch to go see the President. Some workers hang out on the fifth floor looking out the window, the others are waiting on the street. What happened?

Gerald Posner:

Yeah, at noon they break for lunch. They all go down. And they yell out, "Lee, are you coming?" And he said, "no, I'll be down." So, Oswald's on his own. A few minutes after 12, he sets up a sniper's nest in the window that overlooks the roadway, meaning the place where you want to place your gun and not be seen by the adjoining buildings to the left of the Texas School Book Depository. As the car turned around the corner at Main Street and headed up toward the depository, many people think that's the shot to take. Why isn't he taking that? Because that is the shot that exposes him to everybody around him. So instead, he set up what I call a sniper's nest with a position of books just so he can rest the rifle.

He can sit on a box, and he can have a view of the president's car that moves away. Now, I am convinced it's not a suicide mission. He does not intend to do it to get killed. He does not want to be shot on the scene. He does not want to be turned in. He does not want to be arrested. He has some idea for an escape. So, if other workers were on the floor, he is not going to take the gun out. He is going to try to find another place to do the shooting. If he cannot pull the assassination off that day, he is going to bring the rifle back out to where it was the day before at Marina's house and leave it there. The assassination's only going to happen if he finds the time to do it alone.

Three African American coworkers were on the sixth floor with him. Half an hour before they come back upstairs to watch the motorcade, they go to the fifth floor. They are right underneath

him when he is firing. They do not know it is him, but they hear the sounds of the rifle right above them. They hear the bullets dropping on the floor. They are the greatest ear witnesses to the assassination. And their testimony was not given the credit it was due in 1963 because I think they were three black witnesses.

Larry Bernstein:

Oswald fires three shots with his rifle.

Gerald Posner

In eight and a half seconds, eight and a half. And everyone should remember the clock starts running when the first shot is fired.

Larry Bernstein:

Abraham Zapruder takes his Kodak silent 8-millimeter movie camera to Dealey Plaza to record the JFK visit. He runs the camera during the assassination. It is remarkable that we have a documented video feed of the bullets striking the president.

Gerald Posner:

So, the amateur film is the time clock for the assassination. 18 frames to a second. Oswald positioned in the first shot comes around frames 160 to 162. There is a range because all we know is the reactions of people that you see on the film. A little girl running Rosemary Willis, the Secret Service agents stop and turn back up toward the direction of where the shot was fired, toward Oswald. That first shot starts the clock running the assassination clock. Oswald misses on that shot. Does not just miss the president, misses the car entirely. The limousine is not hit by an extra bullet. Nobody on the side standing on either side of the roadway. A crowd there is hit by the bullet. Nobody ducks screams or whatever else. What happened to that bullet? That bullet gets deflected by a tree, hits the curb, wounds a bystander which causes some minor bleeding on the cheek.

So that starts the clock running. Oswald has now three and a half seconds to operate the bolt. Put it back. Aim takes the next shot. Wounds the president: high neck, shoulder area. That is the bullet that then comes out does not hit any bone. Kennedy lives through that shot. That is the bullet that goes into Connally. The governor who testifies as follows. I heard the first shot. I am a hunter. I knew what that was. I knew it is a bad sound. I am going to turn around and see if he is hit. I am paraphrasing a little bit for the way Connally said that he is holding a Stenson hat.

The bullet that goes out of Kennedy's neck is tumbling, goes into Connally, hits his rib, flattened down a little bit, comes out into his hand, into the wrist at 900 feet a second enough to shatter the bone on the wrist, but not damage the bullet. His hat comes up. He is holding it to reflexive

action, and it pops right in a straight line into his thigh. That is the second shot. Meanwhile, Oswald operates the bolt again. And he has full five seconds the longest time between the shots.

And what is the car doing? This is the key to the assassination. It is just frustrating because the assassination at this point is so preventable. All William Greer the driver of the car must do is speed out of Dealey Plaza. Two shots have been fired, president's been hit, there's chaos, breaking out, hit the gas. Instead, he turns around to see what is happening in the back of the car, and that is when the headshot takes place. Kennedy is in a back brace. His heads rolled a little bit to the left. He has been wounded from this shot. Jackie, if you look at the film, he is pressing on. He has had this neurological response. His arms have come up response to that bullet that does not hit any bone.

His arms flex up. Jackie's pushing down on the left elbow and it is not coming down. Oswald gets the straight on shot, full five seconds aimed, looks like it is 25 yards away through the scope. The four-power scope shoots, almost misses, hits Kennedy high right rear portion of the head. An inch and a quarter higher, misses entirely. But that shot blows out the right front of the president's head. The first time I saw the Zapruder film, 1975, Geraldo Rivera showed it for the first time. I had this same reaction. I think most Americans have. It looks like Kennedy shot in the front. I have seen enough movies to know that you shoot somebody, and they fall over the opposite direction. So, you look at that film in real time, and it looks like Kennedy's head goes violently back and to the left, had to be shot from the grassy knoll. No question about it.

Only when you slow the film up, you see it frame by frame. The frame before the headshot. 312 is when the bullet hits. Kennedy moves two to two and a half inches further away from the backseat. That is the impact of the bullet. Frame 313 is when it blows out the front of the head an 18th of a second later. And there is this brain matter and blood. A third of the brain is blown out. The Dallas police on motorcycles who were on the rear of the car, they got splattered with blood. That means a front shot. Guess what? When you go through frame by frame, the two motorcycle policemen drive right into the mist and blood that is coming out of Kennedy's wound. So, there is no mystery to it. It is gory. It is terrible to talk about.

I cannot imagine the horror to a young wife of having your husband's head blow up in front of you and the ride to Parkland to this hospital at 90 miles an hour on the freeway with a secret service agent who is in your protection detail hanging onto the rear of the car and she is cradling her husband's head this entire time. Then that evening, you must be strong for the rest of the country and for your children and to show you're stoic and you have to stand there. While the president's being buried a few days later, she was a remarkable woman for that.

Larry Bernstein:

Most murders are not videotaped. This is an extraordinary piece of evidence as to what happened.

Gerald Posner:

Indispensable. Without it, we would have no answers to this case because without the Zapruder film used to be used by conspiracy theorists all the time to say, oh, there is a conspiracy. It is a front shot of it. I was the first person to use it in detail. The Warren Commission did not even use it because they did not have the ability to do the digitizing of the film and see it in the clarity that could be seen. By the time I was doing the research on this book, I am the first writer who used it to say that the Zapruder film is incredibly important. It proves that the only shooter who hit anyone in Dealey Plaza that day was shooting from behind the president in this general vicinity of where Oswald just left a half an hour before by his coworkers. Without that film, we would be left with just guesswork.

Larry Bernstein:

We would be left with the conflicting evidence from the crowd.

Gerald Posner:

People would say, oh, I think I heard the shots from the front. I think I heard from the grassy knoll, I heard four shots, six shots, two shots. We would have no idea what happened.

Larry Bernstein:

Let us go back to the Texas School Book Depository. Oswald's just fired three shots. What does he do with the weapon? What other physical evidence did the police find in the depository that assisted the murder investigation?

Gerald Posner:

He does what he has to do with the weapon to get rid of it. The same thing happens by the way, in 1968 when James Earl Ray kills Martin Luther King with a rifle and leaves the flop house from where he just shot King. He throws the weapon aside in a doorway because they know instinctively, if they are caught with the rifle, game over, that is it. There is no chance of walking out from an assassination scene with a rifle and trying to explain it away. So, he must toss the rifle there. Conspiracy theorists say, well, why would he leave the rifle on the sixth floor? The answer to that is, where else is he going to take it? He does not have a confederate; he does not have another member of the conspiracy to hand it off to otherwise he would have done that. So, he puts the rifle down. That rifle is tied ballistically to the fragments that are left from Kennedy's headshot and the bullet that went through Kennedy's neck and into Connally to the exclusion of any other gun in the world. And Oswald's palm prints on it. His fingerprint is on it.

On the boxes all around the Sniper nest. Now, I am not persuaded by the fingerprints on the boxes that create the Sniper Nest because he worked there.

Yes, it is his gun. So, it is possible that he touched it the day before and that the real assassin used it that day. He was given a paraffin test after he was arrested. And people say, oh, that is interesting. He tested negative for that, which means he did not fire a gun. First, Dallas was one of the few police jurisdictions in the country in 1963 still doing a paraffin test. They were notoriously unreliable. Oswald tested negative on the cheek, but positive on his hands.

CBS did tests. They took Oswald's rifle and had shooters operate it firing the gun. And none of the tests ever resulted in a positive on the cheek paraffin test.

Larry Bernstein:

Oswald said that he was eating in the lunchroom when the President's motorcade rode by.

Gerald Posner:

Lee Harvey Oswald was obsessed with politics. The last thing he would do is sit in a lunchroom while the president was going by.

Larry Bernstein:

After JFK is shot, Oswald hides the rifle, walks down the stairs, where he bumps into a police officer who hearing the shot ran into the building. The cop says halt, and Oswald's boss is there and explains that Oswald works here, and they take off to a higher floor. Oswald ducks into the lunchroom and buys a coke, and then heads for the exit of the building where he sees Robert MacNeil from the MacNeil-Lehrer Report who was then a junior reporter. MacNeil tells Oswald that the president has been shot and asks him where can make a phone call. Oswald points him to the lunchroom and exits the building. What happened?

Gerald Posner:

Oswald's very smart. Not only does he know he has to get rid of the gun, that's common sense, but he cannot be looking nervous, sweating.

He is drinking a Coca-Cola, cool character. If there was a plot involving a conspiracy to kill the president, and Oswald was involved without any question, he would have been dead. That cop who ran into him would have been a hero for shooting the assassin who is tied to that gun that killed the president.

Some conspiracy believers say, well, Oswald gave the conspirators the slip by going out the front door by walking into a taxi. Oswald had never taken a taxi. Marina says he never knew that he took a taxi while they were together. Nobody ever remembers him taking one because they are

expensive by his standards. He does not have much money. But he was in a rush to get back to his boarding house. He had things to get like his pistol, but the traffic was terrible. It was at a standstill, the motorcades in town. So, he gets off that to get on a regular bus.

Larry Bernstein:

Oswald gets out of the taxi and gets on a city bus and asks for a transfer. The transfer ticket is found in his pocket after he is arrested later. Oswald gets on the bus, and he walks past his old landlady who recognizes him. She despises him because Oswald bolted without paying his rent. It is incredible in life how many people who see you in everyday life without realizing it.

A witness to the shooting of JFK gave the police a description of Oswald. They put out an all-points-bulletin to look out for a white male in his mid-20s, brown hair, with Oswald's approximate height and weight. Police officer JD Tibbit spots Oswald while driving his police car, slows down, and asks Oswald to approach the vehicle. What happened?

Gerald Posner:

That police officer JD Tippit gets out of the car and starts to walk toward Oswald. Oswald whips out the revolver and empties it into Tippit in front of a dozen witnesses. More witnesses that you can shake a stick at watch Oswald shoot Tippit. Tippit was not the only Dallas police officer that stopped someone in the 40 minutes after the assassination. There were several others who, based upon that generic description, which had been given by a construction worker at the scene of the assassination, they saw someone that fit that general description, who somehow seemed a little suspicious, walking too fast, maybe looking for cover, and they stopped them as well. None of them radioed into headquarters, which you are supposed to do if you think you have the suspect. Tippit did not do that. He also did not pull his gun out. So, he did not think he was in danger in any way. The President had just been assassinated. You could be stopping somebody suspicious, but the gun is not pulled out of your holster. So, he is surprised by Oswald clearly in that moment when Oswald kills him. One of the parts of history on this that I find so personally irritating is that in the conspiracy view of the world, they at first try to ignore Tippit.

Or they turn it around. So, they say, "you know what? Tippit must be part at the conspiracy. He was out to kill Oswald. Oswald knew this was the conspiracy about to kill him. So, he kills him first." Not only is Tippit dead; he had a wife. He is the forgotten victim. But in addition, his memory is sullied forever in history by people who now make him part of some nebulous dark cartel conspiracy without any evidence at all to support it. He was the smart cop stopping somebody who fit the description, who did the wrong thing, which was not taken enough of a precaution when he got out of the car that day, he had stopped the right guy.

It is to me the ultimate evidence with ballistically tied to that revolver and with the eyewitnesses. You have all the evidence there of guilt of something. He has run away from the assassination

scene. The only one of the employees at the entire Texas School Book Depository that left. He said, "I heard the president was killed, so I figured we had the rest of the day off."

He is out shooting a policeman on his way to go somewhere else. If you want to think he just brought the rifle in so a world-class assassin could use it, or he knew what was taking place. He is involved in the murder of the president and the most irritating thing for me, and I still can get exercised about this are people that absolve him from any guilt at all. But people want to say he is just an innocent person. He has been set up by these dark diabolical forces, and I see this person has blood on his hands now you want to determine the extent of it to that.

Larry Bernstein:

He scurries toward a movie theater.

Gerald Posner:

He does not know he is going to the movie theater. He scurried to get away. His plan's been thrown off wherever he was going. He is getting away now. What he does not know is somebody is following him. One key guy who sees him going to the movie theater, following him at some distance, not right on top of him, because he was smart. Oswald slipped into the movie theater. The Texas Theater was playing this John Wayne movie and the person selling tickets at the little stall in the front did not see him.

Larry Bernstein:

Cops come into the movie theater, turn on the lights. An officer approaches Oswald, Oswald hits him and then the cop punches him. Oswald says I give up. They search him and he has the revolver used to kill Officer Tippit a few minutes before.

Gerald Posner:

Had to be a bad moment for him.

Larry Bernstein:

Oswald says, "I'm not resisting. Don't hit me." They asked him why are you carrying this gun? Well, I like guns. What do you make of that whole scene?

Gerald Posner:

There is a question to whether Oswald tried to fire the pistol again, inside the theater. But the one thing that Oswald did when he gives up and he does that very quickly, again, it goes back to the idea this is not a suicide mission. It is not death by cop. He is not going to have a shootout in the theater so that they can shoot him on the spot and that's the end of it. He intends to live.

Larry Bernstein:

They take Oswald back to the police station. The cops ask him some questions. What does he say?

Gerald Posner:

He is not very talkative in the beginning. They cannot get much out of at all. He is smart enough to ask for an attorney. He wants a guy, John Abt who is a prominent attorney up in New York for the Communist Party. He complained about police brutality since he had been punched and hit before. But he refused to admit anything. He did not admit to shooting the police officer. He was typical Oswald obfuscation, confusion. and denial.

Larry Bernstein:

Thanks Gerald, this ends the first of this two-part series on the JFK assassination. Next week, we will hear from Gerald about the events at Parkland Hospital, JFK's autopsy, Jack Ruby's murder of Oswald, the assassin's KGB's file, and the role of the Mob in the conspiracy. I can't wait.

If you missed last week's show, check it out. The podcast's topic was Napoleon: Military Genius, Despot, and Lover. Our first speaker was David Bell who is a Professor of History at Princeton and the author of Napoleon: A Very Short Introduction. David spoke about the continuing relevance of Napoleon and how he shaped Europe, its institutions, and modern warfare.

The movie Napoleon directed by Ridley Scott was recently released. I interviewed Darren Schwartz who is the What Happens Next film critic to evaluate whether our audience should make the investment to watch this 2 hour and 38-minute epic.

You can find our previous episodes and transcripts on our website whathappensnextin6minutes.com. Please subscribe to our weekly emails and follow us on Apple Podcasts or Spotify.

Thank you for joining us today, good-bye.