WITHOUT SMOKING GUN

Investigating the Death of Lt. Cmdr. William Pitzer

by Kent Heiner

2019 Edition

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgements 3

Preface to the 2019 Edition 4

1. SAILORS 6

2. INQUIRIES 11

3. RUMORS 35

4. SOLDIERS 50

5. DOUBTS 73

6. CRUSADES 87

7. LEGACIES 104

NOTES 114

Appendix: Dan Marvin Revisited 127

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Preface to the 2019 Edition

I have been by turns much gratified and irritated to have seen this work's original edition cited by others in their publications. I have been pleased to see my efforts reach a wider audience, and irritated to see my words used to justify conclusions that in some cases I strongly disagree with. For better or worse, "Without Smoking Gun" (TrineDay, 2004) has become the preferred printed reference on the Pitzer case. This updated e-Book edition is in part a result of my wish to more decisively debunk the Pitzer urban legend and to atone for my earlier credulity regarding Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Dan Marvin.

I first became aware of Dan Marvin in 1997 while watching a documentary on the Kennedy assassination. In 2002, I became personally familiar with LTC Marvin through a correspondent of his in the Netherlands who had read an article I had written on the assassination. The first favor "Dangerous Dan" asked of me was to find any derogatory articles about him which had been posted on the Internet. I was at the time unaware of any such information, and I became intrigued by the controversy which had developed since the taping of the documentary in 1995. Later that summer, Marvin asked me to help him write a book, and I agreed. As the project progressed, LTC Marvin and I decided it might be best if I continued as the sole author. While writing this book, I had the benefit of complete access to LTC Marvin's extensive files of correspondence, which in some ways tell his story more clearly than he could have himself, as years had passed and memories faded.

This is a book about several individuals. First of all, it is about Lieutenant Commander (LCDR) William Bruce Pitzer, an officer at the National Naval Medical Center (NNMC), whose death in 1966 is thought by some to have been a consequence of his knowledge and/or possession of film and photographs depicting the true nature of President John F. Kennedy's fatal wounds. As the story goes, this photographic evidence would have contradicted the officially-endorsed findings of President Kennedy's autopsy, performed at the NNMC three years previously. This book is about the evidence either supporting or contradicting the Navy's conclusion that Pitzer had taken his own life.

Secondly, this book is about the individuals who have struggled to determine the true meaning and circumstances of LCDR Pitzer's death, prominent among whom was LTC Dan Marvin. LTC Marvin claimed that as a Captain in the U.S. Army Special Forces in the summer of 1965, he was asked by a representative of the Central Intelligence Agency to assassinate LCDR Pitzer. When presented with adequate facts, a reasonable person will conclude that Marvin's claims are untrue, and yet his legend was quick to spread.

Lastly, this book is about President John F. Kennedy, also a former naval officer, for whose sake LTC Marvin joined the Special Forces and whose 1963 assassination is thought to have been a factor in the 1966 death of LCDR Pitzer. Even though Kennedy does not appear in all of these pages, he could be regarded as this story's "main character," in the sense that his ghost broods over all the events herein, much like the slain king of *Hamlet*, demanding that his murder be avenged.

Truth is a complicated thing. Even a stopped clock is correct twice a day. At the beginning of this project it was my viewpoint that due to the compartmentalized, deniable nature of illegal clandestine missions, it was extremely doubtful that there would ever be satisfactory corroboration of LTC Marvin's claim that he was asked by the CIA to kill LCDR Pitzer. My strategy was to provide as much indirect evidence as possible, showing how such a mission may be consistent with what is known about related matters. In retrospect, I should have taken a more impartial and skeptical role as investigator; though the first edition of this book in 2004 did not fully endorse LTC Marvin's claims, it did not go far enough in questioning them.

In 2004, I found it worthwhile to ask the related questions: Does the United States, and particularly the CIA and U.S. Army Special Forces, truly engage in acts of assassination and terrorism? Was there a conspiracy to murder President John F. Kennedy and, if so, what was its nature? Was there a conspiracy to cover up the facts in the murder of the President, and, if so, what was its nature? Finally, what do the answers tell us about what kind of country we as Americans are living in today?

This book does not provide all the answers; it does not even resolve all of the questions regarding LCDR Pitzer's death, which I believe to have been self-inflicted. Indeed, the reader may come to share the author's frustration in his search for the final story. But this work does present some crucial facts - some never before revealed -and raises some very important questions.

An investigation of LCDR Pitzer's death is one of many entry points into the "heart of darkness": the *Machtpolitik* which is central to some of the greatest ills in America and the world. This is complicated business. There are no men in black or white hats in this story. The pages that follow are full of flawed and fallen heroes, half-villains who act in what they perceive as the country's best interest, and unwitting pawns who do the best they can with their limited information and false perceptions, within the constraints of a corrupted and dysfunctional socio-political system.

This is an absorbing story in the most literal sense. As will be shown, many who enter the world revealed in these pages never come out. The story becomes part of them, and they become part of the story. Never again will they be able to go back to the land of make-believe, where Presidents are murdered only by lone gunmen; where the primary actors in the American political system are legitimate and known.

Looking back 15 years later, it is clear that this book changed my life dramatically and irreversibly.

Caveat lector.

1. SAILORS

Bill Pitzer was born April 13, 1917 in Gerrardstown, West Virginia, to Harry and Margaret Pitzer. When he was not yet seventeen, he asked his parents for their written consent for him to join the military. So it was that in 1934 he joined the Navy reserve. Pitzer was assigned to the Hospital Corps School in Portsmouth, Virginia the following year. In 1936, he came to the Naval Medical School to be trained as an x-ray technician. He was discharged in 1939, and thereafter stayed in Maryland. He worked for three years as chief x-ray technician at the Episcopal Ear, Eye and Nose Hospital, until the United States entered World War II. Pitzer re-enlisted in 1942, making the Navy his final career. At Normandy, he tagged the dead bodies of U.S. forces and brought them aboard ship for return to their grieving families. It was an experience that haunted him for years afterward.

Bill married Joyce Bruce and had two children with her, of whom William Bruce Pitzer II was first. The Navy returned Bill to Bethesda at some time in the later 1940s. Other officers at Bethesda knew him as far back as 1947; a 1949 credit report included in the FBI's investigative documents identifies William B. Pitzer as a Chief Warrant Officer in the Navy's Bureau of Medicine and Surgery. Robert Bruce Pitzer, his younger son, was born at Bethesda Naval Hospital in the early 1950s.

As is typical of Navy life, the Pitzers were often on the move. There was a brief stay in California before a three-year assignment in Hawaii in the mid-1950s. Joyce loved Navy life and remembered the years in Hawaii with particular fondness. The next move was from Hawaii back to the National Naval Medical Center (NNMC) in Bethesda, Maryland and to the home in Takoma Park which would be their last. Bill was very active in the community, as would be noted in an obituary article in the *Washington Post* of November 2, 1966:

> He was on the board of directors of Help for Retarded Children, Inc., of Washington, was treasurer of the PTA of Takoma Park Junior High and was a member of Masonic Lodge No. 204 in Bethesda. He was also a consultant to the visual arts department of Montgomery Junior College.

Bill Pitzer was known at the NNMC as a friendly and outgoing person. Beginning in the early 1960s, Pitzer worked in the Naval Medical School's TV studio in the Exchange Building. A fitness report written by Captain John H. Stover in August of 1964 praises the excellent job done by Lieutenant W. B. Pitzer in taking over the school's TV operations in the absence of the civilians who had done the work previously. Pitzer was given top marks in nine out of thirteen categories.

Pitzer held a "top secret" security clearance which was in some way related to what are now commonly referred to as weapons of mass destruction. One family member reports that Pitzer's type of clearance was designated "ABC," for atomic, biological, and chemical warfare. Mrs. Pitzer recalls that her husband made several trips during the last year of his life having something to do with "secret warfare."

Among LCDR Pitzer's interests and areas of experience was the use of television for educational purposes, and he looked forward to continuing this pursuit after his retirement from the Navy. He frequently made training films for the Navy; for example, he had recorded Captain James J. Humes in

the NNMC morgue. In 1998, Dr. Humes related that he had known Bill Pitzer well; he was a “nice fellow” with whom he had enjoyed working. He and Pitzer, he said, had worked closely making films on tropical medicine for use in Vietnam. Pitzer was in charge of the recording process, which was done with television cameras. Dr. Humes is better known as one of John F. Kennedy’s autopsy surgeons and as the primary author of the President’s autopsy report. As we shall see, Bill Pitzer became a person of interest in the controversy surrounding the autopsy.

On Friday, November 22, 1963, at 12:30 P.M., President John F. Kennedy was shot to death in Dallas, Texas while riding in an open car in a motorcade. Texas Governor John Connally, riding with the President, was also wounded. As the motorcade rounded a sharp corner in Dealey Plaza, several shots were heard. Kennedy was wounded in the head and throat, and Connally sustained several injuries as well.

At least three witnesses reported having seen a man shooting from a window on the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository building (TSBD). The police description of the man was "white male, approximately 5 feet 10 inches tall, weighing 165 pounds, in his early thirties." The building was searched immediately; one of the first officers to arrive in the building was Marrion L. Baker. One-and-a-half minutes after the last shot was fired, Baker found Lee Harvey Oswald standing calmly in the second floor lunchroom. If Oswald had just run down the steps from the sixth floor, he showed no sign of breathlessness. Holding Oswald at gunpoint, Baker asked the building's supervisor if Oswald was an employee. Roy Truly answered that he was. The two men raced upstairs to continue their search. Oswald remained long enough to buy a coke and then exited the building, bumping into an NBC reporter. A list of TSBD employees was drawn up for the police. Acting on the statements of witnesses who saw a gunman on the sixth floor, and following the lead of Officer Baker, the Dallas Police Department surrounded and entered the TSBD, sealing it off twelve minutes after Oswald's departure, and at least fifteen minutes after the shooting.

The President was driven to Parkland Hospital immediately after the shooting, and he was pronounced dead at 1:00 P.M. Around this time, Oswald appeared in the Oak Cliff neighborhood of Dallas, at the home of Earline Roberts, from whom he was renting a room under the name of O.H. Lee. He ignored her as he rushed through the house, picking up his jacket and his pistol, then rushed out the door.

Upstairs at the Book Depository, spent shells were found next to the sixth floor window, and a rifle was found stashed among some boxes. No one was found at the scene, and the rifle stock was too rough to have held fingerprints.

Within minutes and only a few blocks away from Oswald's rooming house, Officer J. D. Tippit was shot dead. Several witnesses saw a young man of Oswald's description running from the scene, reloading a pistol. One heard him mutter, "Poor, dumb cop." Minutes later, a shoe salesman named Brewer noticed a man nervously turn toward his shop as a patrol car passed, with siren screaming; Brewer followed the man, who then walked into a nearby theater without paying. The authorities were alerted, and the theater was surrounded by squad cars. Lee Harvey Oswald was brought out of the theater under arrest and taken to Dallas Police headquarters.

Captain Will Fritz of the Dallas Police had a list of TSBD employees and had come to headquarters to check on one named Lee Harvey Oswald; Oswald was on the list but had been missing from the building. Fritz found that Oswald was already in custody. No one had seen where he was from about 12:15 until

Officer Baker found him in the lunchroom just after the shooting was over. Now Oswald was the suspect in not one murder, but two. The interrogation began.

Shortly after 3:00 P.M. Gordon Shanklin, the Special Agent in Charge of the Dallas FBI office, called the Bureau's Washington headquarters advising them that a rifle found in the TSBD was a 6.5 mm Mannlicher-Carcano, a cheap Italian war surplus model. The serial number of the weapon was C2766. The trace on the rifle began at Crescent Firearms, Inc. of New York, the company that imported the rifles. Crescent told the FBI that C2766 was part of a shipment sent to a store in Chicago. From there the FBI would seek the name of the owner. As police searched the Paine residence in Irving, where Oswald's Russian wife was living, they discovered that Oswald's rifle was missing from its place in the garage. In place of the rifle, they found a box of several hundred "Freedom for Cuba" leaflets and other Communist literature. By now, the press was aware of Oswald's arrest in connection with the Tippit murder and were asking the Dallas Police if he had killed the President. The police line-ups began, and witnesses began identifying Oswald as the man they had seen running from the scene of Tippit's murder. Oswald went from the interrogation room to the jail.

The President's corpse was flown from Dallas to Andrews Air Force Base, and from there to the Bethesda Naval Hospital, where an autopsy was performed. A shouting match had occurred at the Dallas hospital, as local authorities disputed the Secret Service's right to remove the body before an autopsy had been performed in accordance with the law. The Bethesda autopsy concluded that all shots fired at the President had come from his rear.

As Friday became Saturday, Lee Harvey Oswald was presented by the FBI and the Dallas authorities as an angry young Marxist who had shot the President. Hours later, the rifle found in the Book Depository was finally traced from Klein's Sporting Goods in Chicago to Oswald's post office box, in the name of "Alek Hidell," an alias found on cards in his wallet.

On Sunday morning, Oswald was transferred from his Dallas jail cell. At 11:21 A.M., while NBC television cameras broadcast the event across the nation, Oswald was shot by Jack Ruby, a local nightclub owner apparently outraged by the President's death. Oswald died at Parkland Hospital forty-eight hours and seven minutes after President Kennedy had been pronounced dead there. President Kennedy's funeral followed on Monday, and the world watched and wept together.

The public was not satisfied that justice had been done, and various rumors of conspiracy floated about. In response to this, President Lyndon Johnson appointed a commission to resolve the matter, headed by Chief Justice Earl Warren.

This seven-man commission, known as the Warren Commission, was created by Executive Order 11130 on November 29, 1963, and its members were chosen by Johnson himself. The Warren Commission's deliberations and hearings took place over the course of ten months, and the Commission relied heavily upon federal agencies such as the FBI and CIA for its investigative information. The Commission eventually confirmed the FBI's findings in the case, namely:

- Lee Harvey Oswald killed President Kennedy.
- Oswald acted alone and on his own initiative.

The Commission also concluded that:

- Three shots were fired. One struck the pavement; the final shot caused the President's fatal head wound; a third caused all remaining wounds, passing through the President's neck, through the Governor's body, striking the Governor's wrist, and lodging in his thigh.
- Oswald also killed Officer J. D. Tippit.
- Jack Ruby killed Oswald alone and acting on his own initiative.

The Warren Commission's report, released on September 24, 1964, described Oswald as a malcontent. Citing Oswald's political activities and family life as evidence, the report concluded that Oswald suffered from a poor self-image and wanted to prove his personal significance by killing the President. It also attributed a spring 1963 shooting at the home of General Edwin Walker to Oswald.

Much of the commission's information and the transcripts of its meetings were not released to the public, but were instead classified "secret," for reasons that should become clear. This secrecy only delayed the inevitable discovery of the horrifying truth.

2. INQUIRIES

News came to FBI headquarters in Washington, DC as a teletype from the Baltimore field office in the early hours of October 30, 1966:

> FBI WASH DCFBI BALTO
> 155 AM URGENT 10-30-66
> TO DIRECTOR
> FROM BALTIMORE (70-NEW)
> WILLIAM BRUCE PITZER.VICTIM CGR [crime on government reservation] DEATH BY GUNSHOT WOUND
> VICTIM, A LT. COMMANDER, USN, STATIONED AT NATIONAL NAVAL MEDICAL CENTER (NNMC), BETHESDA, MD., FOUND DEAD TEN TWENTY NINE SIXTY SIX [10/29/66] AT SEVEN FIFTY PM IN TV PRODUCTION STUDIO NNMC, HIS WORKING AREA, WITH GUNSHOT WOUND IN HEAD. BODY LYING FACE DOWN ON FLOOR, AND A POOL OF BLOOD WITH A THIRTY EIGHT CALIBER REVOLVER LAYING CLOSE TO BODY.
> REVOLVER CONTAINED ONE SPENT CARTRIDGE, ONE LIVE ROUND, AND ONE BLANK CARTRIDGE. THREE BLANK CARTRIDGES TYPE IN GUN FOUND ON TOP OF VICTIM's DESK IN AN ENVELOPE.
> VICTIM HAD CHECKED OUT REVOLVER, APPROXIMATELY ONE WEEK AGO, FROM SECURITY OFFICE NNMC, TO USE AS GIMMICK IN CONNECTION WITH TRAINING LECTURES, AND HAD SO USED RECENTLY.
> VICTIM LEFT HOME IN MID AFTERNOON TEN TWENTY NINE SIXTY SIX FOR NNMC, TO SEE SON, WHO WAS PLAYING BALL AT NNMC, AND TO GET A HAIRCUT.
> WHEN HE DID NOT RETURN HOME FOR DINNER WIFE CALLED NNMC SECURITY OFFICE TO LOCATE HIM.
> WIFE MENTIONED, AFTER BODY FOUND, TO VICTIM's SUPERIOR OFFICER, THAT VICTIM HAD RECENTLY COMPLAINED OF BACK TROUBLE AND STATED HE INTENDED TO SEE A DOCTOR.
> VICTIM ATTENDED FUNERALS LAST WEEK OF TWO NAVY FRIENDS AND COMMENTED "I WONDER WHO THE THIRD WILL BE."
> AUTOPSY TEN[T]ATIVELY SCHEDULED FOR EIGHT AM TEN THIRTY SIXTY SIX.
> INVESTIGATION BEING CONDUCTED.

Thus begins the official record of the FBI's involvement in the Pitzer case: the discovery on government property of a dead body with a gunshot wound and a weapon containing a spent cartridge. The exact circumstances of LCDR Pitzer's demise were not made any clearer by the joint investigation that followed. For several weeks after LCDR Pitzer's death, the FBI assisted the Naval Investigative Service (NIS) by interviewing persons of interest and examining the forensic evidence in the case.

In response to a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request filed by LTC Marvin, in 1997 the FBI released all but five of the 145 pages of materials that it still held on the case, including the handwritten notes from its laboratories. Sections of many of the documents released by the FBI are redacted (blacked out);

in each case the notation "b7c" is made in the margin, referring to subsection b(7)c of Title 5, United States Code, Section 552 (FOIA) which exempts government agencies from disclosure of "records or information compiled for law enforcement purposes . . . to the extent that the production of such . . . information could reasonably be expected to constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy." The names and identities of the investigating agents, the lab workers, and individuals interviewed or named by interviewees are all blacked out, with one exception. With careful effort and comparison with other contemporary documents, one can determine the identities of many other key individuals.

In no case were the FBI's lab findings withheld in the 1997 release; only names appearing on the documents were redacted. The five pages not released were FBI forms 302, or parts thereof, which concerned interviews with persons of interest in the case, namely, two pages with Pitzer's widow, two more pages with a person identified as a family member, and one page regarding an enlisted man Pitzer had been helping to "rehabilitate."

The Navy and the State of Maryland also released their documents in response to similar FOIA requests by LTC Marvin. These documents do not contain the solution to the Pitzer mystery; on the contrary, they only demonstrate the great ambiguity of the evidence on which the Navy came to base its conclusions. We will follow the physical evidence as it was developed and documented.

On the evening of October 30, a second teletype was sent from Baltimore to FBI headquarters, in which the preliminary findings of the autopsy were reported:

> H.B. LOWSMA, LT. COMMANDER, U.S.NAVY NAVY MEDICAL SCHOOL, BETHESDA, MD., WHO PA[R]TICIPATED IN AUTOPSY ON DECEASED THIS A.M. ADVISED AS FOLLOWS:
> HIS PRELIMINARY OPI[NI]ON PRIOR TO COMPLETION [OF] ALL LABORATORY EXAMINATIONS WHICH WILL NOT BE COMPLETED FOR AT LEAST A WEEK IS THAT DEATH WAS CAUSED BY GUNSHOT WOUND IN HEAD, FROM RIGHT TEMPLE EXITING NEAR LEFT TEMPLE, WHICH IS NOT INCONSISTENT WITH SELF INFLECTED *[sic]* SHOT FROM PISTOL. GUN NOT RESTING AGAINST HEAD WHEN SHOT FIRED AND HE COULD NOT ESTIMATE THE DISTANCE AWAY. NO MARKES *[sic]* ON BODY NOT ATTRIBUTABLE TO GUNSHOT WOUND.
> [Reference to Pitzer's family redacted] DECEASED INTERVIEWED AND COULD FURNISH NO BASIS TO SUSPECT FOUL PLAY OR REASONS FOR SUICIDE.

The path of the wound through the head, it was noted, did not rule out suicide as a possible cause of death, and there were no marks noted on the body indicating that Pitzer had been attacked. In fact, the complete autopsy report shows nothing which would contradict the conclusion that Pitzer had taken his own life with a single pistol shot.

The FBI's crime lab is often called on by local law enforcement and other agencies of government to analyze crime scene evidence. On November 1, the NIS forwarded several items of evidence to the FBI as listed in the following letter of transmittal from Commander H. H. Rumble II:

> Dear Mr. Hoover:
> Enclosed herewith for examination is the evidence described below:

Item 1. A .38 caliber Smith & Wesson (S & W) revolver, military issue, serial #311546 found near the body.
Item 2. A .38 caliber S & W, Western, cartridge case found in the weapon (Item 1 in the cylinder positioned under the hammer).
Item 3. A .38 caliber S & W, Western, bullet found in the cylinder of Item 1 in the next firing position.
Item 4. A .38 caliber, S & W, (R-P) blank cartridge found in the cylinder of Item 1 in the second firing position.
Item 5. Spent projectile found at the scene.
Item 6. Envelope containing three .38 caliber S & W blank cartridges found on deceased's desk.
Item 7. A pair of eye glasses found in vicinity of the body.
Item 8. Dented section of blackborad *[sic]* located near the body.
Item 9. Four notes containing apparent work notations found near the body.
Item 10. 8" x 10 1.2" lined note pad found on chair near body.
Item 11. A blue grease pencil found on chair next to Item 10.
Items 12. Fourteen latent prints lifted from two chairs and three beer cans at the scene.
Item 13. Work note found on the desk of deceased's assistant.
Item 14. Same as Item 13 above.
Item 15. Half of a paraffin cast of the deceased's right hand prepared at time of autopsy.
Item 16. The other half of paraffin cast (See Item 15 above).
Item 17. Samples of paraffin used in obtaining Items 15 and 16 above.
Item 18. Twenty-one cards containing finger and palm prints taken from the body.

Commander Rumble's letter continues with this narrative:

At 7:50 P. M., on 29 October 1966, PITZER was found dead in the Television Studios of the Television Division of the Naval Medical School (NMS), National Naval Medical Center (NNMC), Bethesda, Maryland. Autopsy conducted at NNMC determined death resulted from gun shot wound, the bullet entering at the right temple and exiting at a point slightly to the rear and slightly above the left temple. Deceased was determined to be right-handed.
A weapon, (Item 1), was found near the body and was determined to have been obtained from the NNMC Security Office on 12 October 1966, along with six blank cartridges, for the deceased's use as a training aid. In this capacity, at least one blank cartridge is known to have been discharged in the weapon on 24 October 1966. Items 2, 3 and 4 were found in the cylinder of the weapon. Items 5 and 7 were found in the vicinity of the body. Three blank cartridges, (Item 6) were found in an envelope on the deceased's desk. An area of a blackboard located at the scene, was found to have been dented, possible *[sic]* by the projectile after passage through the skull of the deceased, and this dented section (Item 8), was removed for the requested examination below. Various work notes, an 8" X 10 1.2" pad, a blue grease pencil and other notes setting forth instructions to a subordinate were found near the body and in the general area. Two wooden chairs and three beer cans at the scene were processed for latent

fingerprints. Paraffin casts of the deceased's right hand were made at the time of autopsy; and palm and fingerprint impressions were subsequently taken from the body.

The body of the deceased was found lying face down between two wooden chairs with the head extending under the lower rung of two aluminum step ladders which were leaning against a foundation post. Extensive examination of the scene failed to determine what the projectile struck resulting in the extensive indentation [in the projectile].

Victim was last known to be alive when he was seen at approximately 3:50 P. M. purchasing a package of cigarettes. Medical examination shortly after the body was found indicated that he had been dead approximately four hours.

Autopsy surgeon advised it was his opinion that the barrel of the weapon was not resting against the head when it was fired and that he found no pattern of powder burn or powder particles embedded in the skin around the entrance of the wound. He stated the weapon could have been very slightly away from the head which could have caused this condition or it was a sufficient distance away from the head that there was no flesh burn or embedded powder particles. He stated this distance could depend upon the capability of the charge of the type of ammunition used to cause this condition.

Deceased was a male, Caucasian born 13 April 1917 at Gerrardstown, West Virginia, He was married, 5' 8" in height, weight 150 pounds, gray hair, blue eyes and of medium build.

In his letter of transmittal, Commander Rumble then asked for the FBI's professional assistance in several areas. Items 1-4, 6, 7, 9-11, 13, and 14 (the revolver, cartridges, eyeglasses, notepad, notes, and pencil) were to be examined for fingerprints. Other questions to be addressed were:

A. Was Item 5 (the projectile) fired from Item 1 (the revolver)?

B. Was Item 2 (the spent cartridge found under the hammer of the revolver) in fact fired from Item 1(the revolver)?

C. At what minimum distance would Item 1 (the revolver) "fail to leave powder burns or embedded powder particles" in human flesh if firing the same type of ammunition as Items 2 and 3 (the spent cartridge and the live cartridge found next to it in the cylinder)?

D. Were the cartridges found in Item 6 (the envelope) ever loaded into Item 1 (the revolver)?

E. What was the prescription of the eyeglasses (Item 7)?

F. What "foreign matter" can be found on Item 5 (the bullet slug)? Can it be determined whether it struck item 8 (the blackboard)?

G. Could any "invisible writing" (indentation from writing on other sheets, for example) be found on the note pad or various notes (Items 9, 10, 13, and 14)?

H. Was the grease pencil (Item 11) the instrument with which the notes (Items 9, 10, 13, and 14) were written (especially Item 14)?

I. Did the fingerprints (Item 12) taken from the chair and beer cans belong to Pitzer?

J. What foreign substances were on the right hand of the deceased? Did any residue in the paraffin casts (Items 15 and 16) indicate that Pitzer's right hand "had held a gun that had been fired"?

All the right questions were asked. One body, one slug, one spent cartridge, one piece of damaged scenery, and one revolver do not necessarily tell a complete and truthful story, as Commander Rumble well knew. Only scientific analysis could tell whether these items of evidence were connected in the manner they appeared to be. We will see that all of these matters were addressed in the FBI's subsequent reports to the NIS.

The evidence listed in Commander Rumble's letter was "personally delivered [to the FBI lab] by Special Agent [redacted]" on November 2, according to the FBI lab's worksheet for the case, and the evidence was recorded on the same day.

Analysis on the handwritten notes appears to have begun immediately and concluded rapidly. An FBI lab sheet stamped November 3 notes that no indented writing was found on any of the notes, apart from a bit of arithmetic. The visible contents of the notes were no more interesting, with one exception. The notepad itself (Item 10) was not found to bear any handwriting at all. Four of the sheets submitted as evidence (Item 9) were blank other than a header at the top of the sheet indicating the name of an office, e.g. "CO's Office." Item 13 contained somewhat more writing:

> [Redacted]WR for construction of container for classified sign, padded see me re: details
> P

Item 14 was far more interesting, as Commander Rumble indicated in his letter (query H), asking particular attention to be given to this item. The note read "[Name redacted]. Remind me to return gun to Sec[urity] off[ice].P." If this note, clearly indicating his intention to return the gun, was written by LCDR Pitzer shortly before his demise, it would lead one strongly to suspect that his gunshot wound was not intentionally self-inflicted.

The FBI did not comment on the contents of these notes. Rather, they limited their efforts to the fulfillment of the Navy's requests. In answer to the Navy's question, the handwritten notes from the FBI lab merely state that "The writing on [Items 9, 13, and 14] is similar in all observable physical characteristics to writing prepared using the pencil [Item 11]; however, because of the lack of sufficient identifying characteristics, it could not be determined whether [Item 11], with the exclusion of all other similar pencils, was used in preparing the questioned writing on [Items 9, 13 and 14]." In other words, there was no scientific proof that the grease pencil found at the scene was or was not the pencil used to make the notes.

A partial heel print from a man's shoe was noted on one of the four notes (Item 9) submitted by the NIS. It was photographed and retained in records for future reference, but the lab noted that "due to the limited detail in this print, it is unlikely that it can be definitely associated with a particular heel."

The first FBI report to come back to the Naval Investigative Service appears to be a brief message on November 15 from the FBI's Latent Fingerprint Section. It read simply, "The requested latent print examination is being conducted and you will be advised upon completion." One week later, on November 22, the Latent Fingerprint Section issued a more substantive report detailing its findings with regard to Item 12 on the Navy's evidence sheet: the prints lifted from the two chairs between which the

body was discovered, and from three beer cans found in a wastebasket at the scene. Only four "latent fingerprints of value," one palm print, and one impression "of value" were found among the lifts submitted by the Navy. As to the identity of the prints, the FBI reported, "The latent prints *are not identical* with the finger and palm prints of the victim Pitzer" (emphasis added). The prints were photographed and placed in the Bureau's files, and returned with the originals. The report concluded by saying that a separate report would be forthcoming, "relative to the results of the laboratory examinations and the disposition of all other evidence."

The FBI's findings with regard to latent prints on the items sent to the laboratory - the revolver, ammunition, eyeglasses, and notepad - were most disappointing. No useful prints were found on the items. One might regard this fact with some suspicion, but prints on the revolver in particular could have been smudged by the shock of the weapon's discharge. The handle of the weapon might have had a surface which did not take clear finger or palm prints.

There is no record of latent fingerprints having been lifted from the lock or handle of the door leading to Pitzer's office. Had the door to Pitzer's office been shut or locked until the time he was found? The hand that shot Pitzer would likely have been the hand to lock or shut the door - whether Pitzer's own or someone else's.

Among the handwritten laboratory notes included in the 1997 FOIA request are the analysis of the weapon and ammunition. The handwritten notes record that the Item 5 "bullet [is] extremely mut[ilated]. . . . Based on cannelures [grooves], base.Cal. .38 S[mith] & W[esson] copper coated l[ea]d bullet."

The bullet, which the FBI had indexed as "Q2," was badly deformed. Conclusively matching the bullet to the revolver ("K1") proved impossible. "Due to mut[ilation] of Q2 micro[scopic] m[ar]ks N[o] G[ood] for ident[ification] purposes. 2 [illegible] same w[i]dth as K1," the lab's notes state.

As to foreign materials on the bullet, the laboratory made the following notations: "Bone fragments on bullet. One side of bullet split open, however, no other material found to assoc[iate] w[ith] any other object the bullet may have struck." Indeed, investigators at the scene were unable to determine what the bullet might have struck to cause this mutilation. The only object found at the scene with any damage that could possibly be attributed to the bullet was a blackboard having a dent in it. A section of the board was removed from the scene and sent to the FBI for analysis.

The lab noted a perplexing discrepancy between the revolver and the live and spent ammunition found with it. The revolver was a ".38 Sp[ecia]l. However," the lab noted, "some .38 S & W cart[ridge]s can be loaded in cyl[inder] w[ith] difficulty." In the case of the particular cartridges found at the scene, the lab found that the "38 S+W R-P blanks go into chamber w[ith] ease. 38 S+W Western go in *with extreme difficulty*" (emphasis added). No further comment was made on this subject, and the discrepancy in ammunition types was not noted in the FBI's typewritten report to the Naval Investigative Service on November 28, though it did report its other findings regarding the revolver and ammunition:

Specimen Q2 [the spent projectile, Item 5] is a caliber .38 S&W copper-coated lead bullet. The few remaining rifling impressions on specimen Q2 are the same width as those found on test bullets fired from specimen K1 [the revolver, Item 1]. However, due to the mutilation of specimen Q2, the microscopic markings remaining on its surface are insufficient to permit identification of the particular weapon from which it was fired.

Specimen Q1 [the cartridge, Item 2] was identified as having been fired in specimen K1. It was not possible to determine whether specimen Q2 had originally been loaded into specimen K1. However, bullets of this type are commercially loaded into cartridge cases such as specimen Q1.

In tests conducted it was observed that at muzzle-to-cloth distances beyond three feet, no powder residues were deposited. It is to be noted that in the case of a tight contact shot, the powder residues will be projected into the wound rather than being deposited on the surface of the skin immediately surrounding the wound.

The markings on specimens Q3 through Q5 [the blanks in the envelope, Item 6] are not sufficiently characteristic to permit a conclusion to be reached whether or not these cartridges were loaded into specimen K1.

The Q6 eyeglasses [Item 2] are executive-type, bifocal glasses with American Optical “Smoked Gray” frames having 5" temples and a pupillary distance of 67mm.

The prescription of the lenses is as follows:

	Sphere	Cylinder	Axis	Add
Right	+.50	+.50	4	+1.00
Left	+.75	+.75	0	+1.00

The writing on Q8 through Q13 [the notes, Items 9, 13, 14] is similar in all observable physical characteristics to writing prepared using the K2 pencil; however, because of the lack of sufficient identifying characteristics it could not be determined whether K2, with the exclusion of all other similar pencils, was used in preparing the questioned writing on Q8 through Q13. No writing appears on Q15 [the notepad, Item 10].

Indented writing was noted on Q9 as follows:

138
140
278

Indentations were noted on Q11 which appear to be the same as those on Q9. No indented writing was noted on Q8, Q10, Q12, Q13, and Q15 [the other work notes and the notepad].

Specimens prepared using K2 and photographs of Q8 through Q13 are retained. Q15 [the notepad] and K2 [the pencil] were not photographed.

The design noted in the partial heel print on Q9 resembles one of the heel designs used by the Goodyear Rubber Company. Due to the limited detail on this print, it is unlikely that it can be definitely associated with a particular heel. However, the partial heel print on Q9 has been photographed for possible future reference.

A separate report is being furnished to you relative to the results of the fingerprint examination conducted.
The examinations requested are continuing and you will be advised of the results in a separate report.

The FBI's final report in reference to the Navy's November 1 letter was dated December 14, 1966, and concerned the blackboard and paraffin casts:

This report supplements and completes the FBI Laboratory report dated November 28, 1966, previously furnished to your office. Please refer to this previously furnished report for a detailed listing of the evidence.
The blackboard fragments Q7 bore foreign soft metallic deposits, which consisted essentially of lead. Antimony and copper were also detected in these deposits. These metallic deposits were similar to the bullet metal of Q2. However, it is pointed out that these small lead deposits on Q7 exhibited too few characteristics to be specifically associated with the bullet metal of Q2 to the exclusion of numerous other sources of bullet metal.
Examination of Q14, paraffin cast, reflected no substance characteristic of, or which could be associated with, gunpowder or gunshot residue.
Foreign material on Q14, paraffin cast, consisted essentially of blood, hair, and skin assumed to be from the person from whose hand the cast was taken.
That portion of the evidence which was not necessarily consumed during the course of examinations conducted is being retained in the FBI Laboratory until called for by a representative of your organization.

In summary, then, the FBI was unable to conclusively match the bullet to the weapon or the blackboard; to match the pistol with the hand that fired it; or to match the latent prints lifted from the scene to the prints of the deceased. Though they were able to determine that the spent cartridge had been fired in the revolver in which it was found, they noted that it was not the proper size for the weapon.

On January 12, 1967 Commander Rumble wrote again to the FBI asking them to perform a comparison on nine enclosed fingerprint cards.

Dear Mr. Hoover:
Enclosed herewith for examination is the evidence described below:
Item 1. Nine (9) fingerprint cards.
Reference is made to Naval Investigative Service Office, Washington, D. C., letter, serial #1956, dated 1 November 1966 (hereinafter referred to as reference (a)) and FBI Identification Division, Latent Fingerprint Section report, dated 22 November 1966, Latent Case No. 73063, (hereinafter referred to as reference (b)); Subject of both: PITZER, William Bruce (deceased), LCDR, USN, 416681.
Attention is drawn to reference (a) in which one of the requests was examination of fourteen (14) latent prints lifted from two chairs and three beer cans found at the scene of Subject's death, for determination as to whether they were identical to fingerprints of deceased.

> Reference (b) reported that only five of the submitted latent prints were determined to be of value and that these latent prints are not identical with the finger and palm prints of victim PITZER. Further, that photographs of the latent prints have been placed on file and would be available for any additional comparisons.
> It is requested that additional examination be made to determine if any of the latent prints of value are identical to those of the individuals on whom fingerprint cards are submitted herewith. . . .

The FBI Laboratory's final report to the Naval Investigative Service on the Pitzer case was written on January 25 and was brief:

> REFERENCE: Letter January 12, 1967
> SPECIMENS: Fingerprints of eight individuals (duplicate set submitted for [redacted])
> The latent prints in this case are not identical with any of the submitted inked fingerprints. Palm prints are not available in our Identification Division files for any of the persons for whom fingerprints were submitted.
> The fingerprint cards are enclosed.

May we presume that the prints sent to the FBI for comparison included those of everyone known to have had access to the studio that evening? If so, we are left with one or more unknown beer-drinking visitors. The record indicates no effort to discover the time of this visit or the identity of the visitor(s).

Pitzer traveled to other Navy facilities on occasion to give training lectures. It was in preparation for just such a trip that Pitzer sent a subordinate to the NNMC Security Office, a little over two weeks before his death. Russell Bray, a supervisory guard on duty at the Security Office on October 12, made a written statement that, to the best of his recollection, at 2:00 P.M. that day he "issued a S[mith] & W[esson] 38 caliber revolver and six rounds of blank ammunition to L. R. Andre HM2. This weapon was issued after a telephone call from Lt. Cdr. W. B. Pitzer, stating that same would be used for instruction purposes." Lee R. Andre was an enlisted man who worked for Pitzer. The firearms log book would later be found to show an illegible signature under "an undated notation that a .38 caliber revolver, serial number 311546 had been checked out for Lieutenant Commander WILLIAM B. PITZER." This was the serial number of the pistol found at the death scene; hence the need for Bray's written statement clarifying the date and circumstances of the issue of the revolver.

Commenting on the revolver and how it allegedly came into Pitzer's possession, LTC Marvin expresses some skepticism: "The U.S. Navy, same as all other American uniformed military services, requires that a firearm be signed out in a proper firearms control register to the individual who would be using the weapon; the one responsible for its security and return. Any person having signed for a weapon must return the weapon to where he or she signed it out and must be cleared from responsibility for the weapon by way of a completed register entry. To the best of my knowledge there is no legal way, outside of actual combat, for one signer to transfer accountability of a weapon he or she has signed for on a legally constituted arms control register." On the following day, October 13, Pitzer departed for the U.S. Naval Aerospace Medical Institute in Pensacola, Florida to provide audiovisual support for a course

there. It seems likely that this was part of ongoing training for the Bethesda medical photography school's graduates stationed in Pensacola. One naval photo technician who was at Pensacola NAS in the early 1960s recalls that they photographed about five or six autopsies per year of student pilots "that didn't quite make it."

The FBI interviewed a close colleague of Pitzer's on October 31. Like most others interviewed by the FBI, this colleague's name is blacked out on the Form 302 record of his interview. His surname appears to be eight letters long, so we will refer to him as Mr. "Eight." He worked with Pitzer on a daily basis and traveled with him as well. "Eight" explained Pitzer's apparent purpose in bringing the gun to Pensacola (short redactions in all FBI documents will hereafter be represented by an "X" for each blacked-out letter or space):

> While on the most recent trip to Florida, PITZER had in his possession a .38 caliber revolver, which he used to signal the end of class periods by firing a blank round. He appeared to know exactly what he was doing with a gun, and appeared by no means to be a stranger to firearms. XXXXXXXX stated he did not see any live ammunition in possession of PITZER.

"Eight" continued:

> He recalled that after one class, PITZER was discussing ammunition with XXXXXXXXXXXXXX, an ardent sportsman. On two occasions, in Florida, while breaking for lunch, PITZER returned to his quarters and drank a beer. XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX PITZER drank his beer, on these two occasions, extremely fast and both times stated to the effect "I really needed that, I have to relax."

A NNMC Photography Lab worker, apparently a Chief Petty Officer, was also interviewed. This man, who had come on the Pensacola trip, mentioned some difficulties Pitzer seemed to be having at home:

> He and Lieutenant Commander PITZER were fairly friendly and socialized together. They went to the Chiefs Club at the Pensacola Naval Base together on several occasions and drank together. Mr. Pitzer on occasions mentioned his problems to him in conversation [three lines redacted]. Mr. Pitzer had previously mentioned to him that every time he took a trip [redacted]. Mr. Pitzer never went into great detail concerning [redacted].
>
> He recalls one occasion while they were at Pensacola, Florida, during the period of October, 1966, when Lieutenant Commander PITZER received a phone call and returned and mentioned the phone call [3-4 lines redacted].
>
> At the time Commander PITZER received this phone call he was very upset and angry about it and mentioned that [2 lines redacted].

Lest we jump to the conclusion that Pitzer's reported anger stemmed from a conflict with someone at home, it should be noted that a Navy document mentions flooding in the Pitzers' basement occurring at about this time. Furthermore, after recounting this incident, this interviewee also explicitly states that "Commander PITZER never mentioned to him that he had trouble with his wife or that he had any financial problems or any problems with his health or sex life." But, after giving this reassurance, he continues with this attention-grabber:

> While they were in Pensacola, Florida, during October, 1966, Commander PITZER went out with a woman a few times. This woman was known as XXXXXXX last name unknown to him. XXXXXXXX a woman 45 to 50 years of age, about 5'2" tall, very nicely built and very attractive and a woman who hangs out at the Chiefs Club at the Pensacola Naval Air Station and is there at least two nights each week. XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX white cadillac convertible.
> He and Commander PITZER went out together a time or two and he dated a friend [redacted] last name unknown. Commander PITZER mentioned to him [redacted] was the widow of an old friend of his. Commander PITZER took XXXXXXXXXXXX both trips he made to Pensacola, Florida, with Commander PITZER.

No further comment is made on the alleged relationship between Pitzer and this woman. The record continues:

> He never knew of Commander PITZER to have any ammunition for the gun except blank ammunition. He knew Commander PITZER had a gun which he kept in his brief case and that this gun was used as a training aid during lectures.

LCDR C. A. Holston, also assigned to the Naval Medical School, accompanied Pitzer on this trip as his roommate. Aware of allegations that Pitzer had been seeing a woman in Florida at this time, Holston denies to this day that any such dates took place in his presence, maintaining that, to the contrary, he and Pitzer spent their evenings together. The FBI interviewed Holston on the day of Pitzer's death:

> During the time they were in Pensacola he [Holston] was fairly closely associated with Mr. PITZER during their work and observed nothing in Mr. PITZER's action, conversation or attitude which would indicate he had any problems or any way depressed. He stated that while in Pensacola they lead *[sic]* a normal life and after work they would indulge in an occasional drink and dinner and then go to bed or read or watch TV in their room and discuss the following day's problems.
> He stated that he had no knowledge that Mr. PITZER gambled, had any family problems, or engaged in any extra marital affairs.

Pitzer remained in Pensacola until Saturday, October 22, one week before his death. A travel voucher submitted by Pitzer indicates that he traveled to Little Creek, Virginia that day "in connection with a course similar to the one at Pensacola." A record of the Navy's interview with Mrs. Pitzer contains her somewhat contrary statement that Bill had "flown home *from Pensacola* on Sunday the 23rd of October to spend Sunday with the family and then flown back to Norfolk [Virginia] Monday morning for that day" (italics added). While in Norfolk, Pitzer was again known to have used the pistol as a "training aid." Pitzer attended the funeral of an old Navy friend that Monday, according to his widow. Whether the funeral was in Norfolk or nearer home, the record does not say. Pitzer returned to Bethesda on Monday, October 24.

On Tuesday, his first day back in the office, LCDR Pitzer announced to Lee Andre that he intended to submit his retirement letter. That being the case, Andre must have thought it wise to ask Pitzer for the

revolver so he could return it to the security office before Pitzer left. After all, Andre was the one who had signed for the gun. Andre told the FBI:

> That same day [October 25], XXXXXXXXXXX PITZER if he wanted him, XXXXXXXXX return a .38 caliber Smith and Wesson revolver to the NNMC Security Office. XXXXX [ANDRE] explained that he had previously secured this gun, along with six blank cartridges, from the Security Office earlier in October [on the 12th, to be precise], to be used by PITZER as a training prop. XXXXXXXXXX [ANDRE said] he had signed for this gun and wanted to return it when it was no longer needed by Pitzer.
> XXXXXXXXXX [ANDRE said] PITZER, when asked about the return of the gun, said that he would take it back to the Security Office himself. In XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX [ANDRE's opinion], this was entirely out of character for PITZER, who usually had enlisted men run all his errands.

As we know, a note written by Pitzer would be found in his office after his death, asking someone - perhaps Andre - to "remind me to return gun to Sec[urity] Off[ice]."

A Bank of Bethesda employee reported that he had gotten a call from LCDR Pitzer some time around October 26 or 27. Pitzer informed the employee that he would be "having a TV program at the National Naval Medical Center" the following week and that he "needed $1000 in pennies to put in a pile to dramatize a particular point."

> Mr. PITZER asked him if they had this many pennies in stock. After checking he determined that they did and so advised Lt. Commander PITZER and told him that this would be 20 bags of pennies. He made arrangements with Mr. PITZER to call him back on November 1, 1966 to make definite arrangements for the delivery of the pennies, as at the time that he was called by Mr. PITZER, a definite date for the TV show was not set, but Mr. PITZER advised him that he thought it would be Thursday, November 3, 1966. They kidded about this situation and Mr. PITZER seemed very jovial.

On Friday the 28th, Pitzer attended the funeral of yet another old Navy friend. After the service, Joyce Pitzer noticed that Bill became "mildly despondent" for a time and remarked, "That's two this week. I wonder who the third will be." Bill then expressed a preference for a military funeral in the event of his own death.

At about 1:30 on the afternoon of the 28th, Pitzer came by the NNMC office of a long-time friend. About four weeks previously, this friend had taken a color picture of Pitzer for use during the training lecture trip in Pensacola. Shortly after the picture was taken, Pitzer had mentioned that "he would like to have a print made of this picture for his wife." He had come to the friend's office on the 28th to repeat this request.

> At the time he discussed making a copy of this photograph for Commander PITZER, there was nothing in Commander PITZER's conversation to indicate that he at that time entertained thoughts of suicide but he merely commented that his wife would like to have a copy of the picture. Commander PITZER gave no instructions as to what he should do with the photograph

after he had printed a copy of it and he assumed that Commander PITZER would come by and pick it up.

Lee Andre's FBI interview states that at some time during the day of the 28th, Andre spoke "with Pitzer for about two minutes. On this occasion, PITZER inquired whether [Andre would] have some slides ready for his use by the morning of October 31, 1966. [Andre told] Pitzer he did not believe the slides would be ready." He last saw Pitzer at about 4:20 that afternoon, when "Pitzer was drinking beer near the audio consul *[sic]* in the control room of the Television Division [deleted]." Andre "did not observe anything unusual" about Pitzer that day.

A woman interviewed by the FBI, presumably Pitzer's secretary, also saw Pitzer for the last time at 4:20 that Friday. She left the office at 4:30. She remarked to the FBI that Pitzer's schedule had been "very erratic" that day and that he "came and left the office many times." Though she told the FBI she had taken a message from his wife earlier that week regarding the death of one of his friends, she may not have realized that this was the day Pitzer attended the funeral, and that this would at least partially account for his "erratic" schedule. According to this woman, "Mrs. Pitzer called her husband about once or twice a week. He never argued with her when she called."

On Friday evening, the Pitzers went out to dinner, then Bill and Joyce went to visit Bill's former secretary, a Mrs. Hawkins, before retiring for the day. They arose early on Saturday morning to ready the house for a visit from Joyce's mother. Bill had arranged for time off the following Monday and Tuesday in order to be free for her visit.

Bill made breakfast and then wore some old work clothes outside to rake the leaves with Joyce. Around noon, Robert was washing the family car when a neighbor came to ask him to accompany her to the NNMC golf course. Bill took over Robert's chore and Robert left with the neighbor, Mrs. Estel. After finishing the car, Bill set the old work clothes on the bed as if to return to them later in the day. He changed into some nicer casual clothes to take Joyce to Hecht's department store for a one o'clock hair appointment. As he dropped her off, he told his wife that he had to go to the office and would get a haircut while he was at the NNMC. Since Bill did not expect to get back in time to pick Joyce up, he asked her to take the bus back home. She agreed, and asked him to stop by the NNMC golf course and tell Robert to get a haircut too.

Between 2:00 and 2:30 LCDR Pitzer was seen by at least one employee at the Exchange Building. According to this employee, he was wearing civilian clothes. Another witness recalled seeing Pitzer in uniform at the front door of the building at noon; this is difficult to reconcile with the family's account of his whereabouts and dress, although one other Exchange Building employee recalled seeing Pitzer shortly before noon and could not recall whether Pitzer was in uniform. Between 3:00 and 3:30, the same Exchange Building employee who had seen Pitzer an hour earlier recalled seeing Pitzer - presumably at or near the building - still wearing civilian clothes, namely, a sport shirt and slacks. On this occasion, as before, he seemed "very cheerful."

Around 2:45, Bill appeared at the NNMC golf course. He was driving the family car and reminded Robert to get a haircut. The boy considered putting off the haircut, but Mrs. Estel set him straight and off he

went. Robert was only gone from the golf course for what seemed like a few minutes, but when he came back, his hair was indeed cut, so the two resumed playing. Bill Pitzer was seen coming through the Exchange Building's front door at approximately 3:30, wearing tan trousers and a white or tan sport shirt. He was also reportedly seen at this time opening the trunk of his car.

At 3:50, Pitzer was seen at the Navy Exchange Building's checkout counter, buying the Camel cigarettes which his wife had so often encouraged him to give up. He was wearing "sports-type clothing, probably a jacket and beige or light-colored pants," according to the FBI's interview of a woman who was, as far as they could determine, the last person to see Pitzer alive:

> His hair was messed up. He had a sloppy appearance and this was entirely out of character for him. XXXXXXXXXXX said PITZER looked like a wild man. She kidded him about his appearance. In her brief conversation with PITZER, there did not appear to be anything unusual with his attitude.

This exchange took place mere minutes before the estimated time of Pitzer's death, around 4:15. Several employees were asked whether they had heard a gunshot. None of them recalled hearing a shot, though a gun might have been fired in the soundproofed TV studio without coming to anyone's attention. Joyce had missed the 3 o'clock bus home and waited for the 4 o'clock bus. When she got home, she did not find Bill there and called his office several times from about 4:15 to 6:15 in hopes of reaching him. Robert and Mrs. Estel played golf until 6:30. When Robert came home with Mrs. Estel at about 7:00, Joyce became more concerned and began calling various places at the NNMC, asking if anyone had seen her husband. She eventually reached the NNMC security office, who went in search of LCDR Pitzer. Shortly afterward, she was visited by LCDR Holston and Bill's commanding officer, Captain Stover, who had the sad duty of informing her that her husband was dead. Mrs. Pitzer was interviewed on Sunday by agents of the Naval Investigative Service and FBI. She told them that the idea of Bill having taken his own life was incomprehensible to her, explaining that to do so would be completely opposed to his principles and philosophy. According to Mrs. Pitzer (as recorded in a Navy document),

> He had always regarded suicide as a "coward's way out" and was opposed to any disfiguring of the human body; that he always maintained the attitude that no matter what the problem, it could be worked out by calm and rational evaluation and that he was not the type of person to act hastily or to do anything which would cause hardship or embarrassment to his family, friends, or associates. In addition, she remarked that even if [Bill] considered suicide, she did not believe that he would perform such an act on Navy property or in any manner which would cause embarrassment to the Navy because of his deep and sincere love for and loyalty to the U.S. Navy.

She went on to explain that Bill had given no indications that he was troubled by anything of great significance.

Suicide is an act of consummate desperation. It is not done without premeditation or in the absence of overwhelming personal pain. For this reason, there are usually early indications of distress preceding any act of suicide. The American Society of Suicidology lists these warning signs of possible suicide:

- Talking about committing suicide
- Difficulty eating or sleeping
- Drastic changes in behavior
- Withdrawal from friends and/or social activities
- Loss of interest in hobbies, work, school, etc.
- Preparation for death by making out a will and final arrangements
- Giving away prized possessions
- Previous suicide attempts
- Taking unnecessary risks
- Experiencing recent severe losses
- Preoccupation with death and dying
- Loss of interest in their personal appearance
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs

Apart from the recent deaths of two old friends, and perhaps an increased appetite for beer, William Bruce Pitzer was in none of these risk categories. On the contrary, he remained generally cheerful and very much involved in routine activities until the very hour of his death.

And yet, the Navy seems to have felt compelled to categorize Pitzer's death as a suicide, and it appears that testimony may have been manufactured or manipulated to support this finding. It is not possible to completely divide fact from fiction in this case, but one thing is clear: the closer one gets to the Navy's "evidence" of suicide, the less credible that evidence is. For example, among the documents released by the FBI are several unsigned, undated memos typed on plain paper rather than the standard Form 302. Given the tremendous level of discipline and emphasis on procedure which prevailed during the tenure of FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, these items are a matter of some curiosity. Most of these "plain-paper" documents contain information reported second-hand to the FBI from the NIS. If the information in these documents was falsified, it is most likely that the Navy that must bear responsibility for it. The FBI was merely in a supporting role and had no apparent motive in bringing the Navy's investigation to a particular conclusion.

The primary basis for the Navy's eventual finding of suicide was an alleged affair between LCDR Pitzer and a woman in Florida, brought on by Pitzer's dissatisfaction with his marriage. A somewhat secondary theme in the Navy's explanation of the suicide is the alleged grief caused Pitzer by his younger son. These aspects of the case show irregularity in the collection and documentation of supporting testimony, suggesting that the facts may have been distorted.

We will see that some of the comments in the Navy's interview of a "Mrs. Gray" demonstrate close familiarity with LCDR Pitzer. One example is a reference to the flooding incident in the Pitzers' basement. The mention of the employment offers awaiting Pitzer upon retirement is supported by the recollections of another of Pitzer's acquaintances. But there are, as we shall see, both internal and external inconsistencies in the information allegedly provided by Mrs. Gray. It is not easy to determine whether these are merely the errors and apparent contradictions which commonly find their way into many honest accounts, or whether they are indicative of fabrication.

The first investigative lead indicating any kind of extramarital affair surfaced on November 1. As mentioned previously, the FBI's Baltimore office heard that Pitzer "went out with a woman a few times" during the October trip to Pensacola. Little more detail regarding this association was recorded on the Form 302 which resulted from this interview, but the woman was described as very attractive, in her late 40s, and apparently affluent. Why would such a woman be known to spend "at least two nights each week" at an enlisted men's club at the Pensacola NAS? Perhaps she was a Navy widow or divorcee who had grown accustomed to the club or Navy social circles.

As we shall see, this woman was alleged to have met LCDR Pitzer at the Chiefs' Club in October 1965 and to have begun an intimate relationship with Pitzer as early as January 1966. If so, why would she continue to hang out at the Chiefs' Club and how could Pitzer continue to associate with her? A married male Naval officer with a top secret security clearance, particularly in the 1960s, would have been a fool to consort openly with any woman who was not his wife, even more so were the woman in question spending a significant amount of her free time mixing with alcohol and sailors.

Neither is any detailed explanation offered as to why Pitzer, a lieutenant commander, was at the Chiefs' Club in the first place; it is merely mentioned that he had attended a "function" there in October 1965. It is possible that he was there by invitation. LTC Marvin comments, "In those days there were strict codes in effect in all military services that did not permit enlisted men or commissioned officers in NCO Clubs or Chief's Clubs. Enlisted personnel had what were nick-named 'peon' clubs and officers had officer clubs. Only Warrant Officers were permitted access to NCO, Chief or Officer Clubs. There were official events at various clubs wherein specific invitations were sent to who it was they wanted to attend, regardless of rank or position, but that did not apply to routine social activities."

Another unsigned, undated memo typed on plain paper (not on the standard Form 302) appears in the FBI's record. This reports the Baltimore office's receipt of a letter, apparently from Mrs. Gray:

> In the interview of XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX, he stated that while in Pensacola, Florida on business, he [the interviewee?] dated a woman named XXXXXXXX
> On November 3, 1966, XXXXXXXXXXX furnished a copy of a letter addressed to LCDR W. B. PITZER, MSC, USN, TV Division, NMS, Bethesda, Maryland, post marked October 28, 1966 at Pensacola, Florida, and signed XXXXXXX. This letter is as follows:

A photocopy of the envelope and enclosed greeting card is included, as well as a photocopy of a handwritten note:

> October 28, 1966
> Friday Night
> Dearest Bill,
> I do not feel like sending this card since not hearing from you is such a let down. I made sure I would have heard from you by this time oh well.can it be out of sight out of mind remember tonight was one week ago we were together. Am I that easy to forget? I tried to make things

> pleasant while you were here. Just tried. I do hope every thing is well with you. Lovingly, [redacted]

Documents released by the Navy under FOIA claim that Mrs. Gray was interviewed at her home by agents of the Naval Investigative Service on November 3, the same day that the Baltimore FBI office received the letter. The Navy has not made any original interview document available, and reports that such material is routinely destroyed twenty-five years after the investigation. The only publicly available record of this interview is an unsigned, undated summary report of two interviews conducted by unnamed NIS agents. There is no indication that FBI agents were present at this civilian interview conducted by military investigators. Indeed, it appears that the FBI was not informed of the NIS's contact with this woman until after a second NIS interview took place a few days later.

The summary of the two interviews, included as an enclosure in the Navy's final report on the Pitzer case, reads as follows:

> RESULTS OF INTERVIEWS WITH [redacted] AS RECORDED BY SPECIAL AGENTS OF NAVAL INVESTIGATIVE SERVICE
> [Redacted] was interviewed at her residence, [redacted], from 1401 to 1530 hours on 3 November 1966, and at Naval Investigative Service Office Resident Agency, Pensacola, Florida, from 1150 to 1324 hours on 7 November 1966. On both occasions, prior to any pertinent questions, [redacted] was informed that an investigation was being conducted into the death to LCDR William Bruce PITZER, USN, and it was desired to question her concerning her knowledge of LCDR PITZER and his death; that under the provisions of the Fifth Amendment of the Constitution of the United States she had the right to remain silent and did not have to make any statement at all; that anything she said could be held against her in a court of law; that she had the right to consult with a lawyer if she desired and to have a lawyer present during the interview; that she was not in custody and could terminate the interview at any time.
> During these interviews, [redacted] provided the following information:
> She was in Pensacola, Florida on 29 October 1966 and has never been in Bethesda, Maryland. She has known LCDR PITZER since October 1965. She did not know he is dead and was very distressed to learn it. She first met him in October 1965 at the NAS-Pensacola Chief Petty Officers' Club, while he was in Pensacola with a Naval Medical Team from Washington, D.C. They had several dates over a period of about a week at that time. Except that he was married, she learned little about his family then; and she and SUBJECT were not sexually intimate during that period. Before he left, he asked her to write to him. She told him she didn't want to write because he was married and she did not want to cause him any trouble by his wife's possibly seeing the letters. He said to let him worry about that. She did not write to him, however, until she had a letter from him shortly after his return. They then corresponded occasionally. Their letters were essentially casual in context, and she wrote him at his business address: LCDR William B. Pitzer, USN, MSC TV DIV NMS, Bethesda, Maryland 20014.
> In January 1966, LCDR PITZER telephoned Mrs. GRAY [here the FBI censor appears to have overlooked the name] and asked her to join him. She flew to Atlanta at her own expense and stayed with him in a hotel for several days. He had the room when she arrived and she does not

know how they were registered. The hotel had “Georgia” or “Georgian” in the name to the best of her recollection, but she can provide no other information to assist in identifying it. An Eastern Airlines ticket stub she provided indicates she departed Pensacola at 10:25 A.M., 10 January 1966 and departed Atlanta at 8:15 P.M., 12 January 1966. She and SUBJECT engaged in sexual intercourse during this period. He paid their living expenses in Atlanta, and he offered her reimbursement on her airline ticket which she declined. During this trip, SUBJECT discussed his domestic problems, but did not seem seriously perturbed by them. He said he had been married to his wife for twenty-nine years and indicated she nagged him all the time about petty problems of the household, the children, and the requirements of his job. He said he had a grown, married son who was no problem, and a teenage son who caused him a lot of trouble. About the spring of 1966, LCDR PITZER telephoned her at her residence from Washington, D.C., indicating he just wanted to talk with her. At this time, he mentioned his teenage son had stolen something - an article of clothing she thinks - from a store, and LCDR PITZER had discovered it and made him take it back. He said there was no need for the boy to steal as he had money to buy what he needed, and LCDR PITZER could not understand why the boy did this.

They continued to correspond casually, and LCDR PITZER came to Pensacola on another official Navy trip in October 1966. He telephoned her when he arrived and she picked him up in her car and went with him to the Rodeway Inn Motel in Pensacola where he registered. This was on the night of Thursday, 13 October; and she stayed there with him at the motel until they checked out on the morning of Saturday, 15 October. During this time they had sexual intercourse. She dated him regularly the remainder of the time he was in Pensacola, until 21 or 22 October 1966, but they did not spend any other nights together. She never took him in her home, though she did drive him by to see where she lived at his request. On their other dates, she went with him to the BOQ at NAS, Pensacola for drinks, to the CPO Club at NAS, Pensacola, to local restaurants, and to the dog racing track. On several occasions - at the CPO Club, at a local restaurant, and in the home of another woman who is married but separated from her husband- they were in the company of [redacted] a Navy Chief Petty Officer on SUBJECT’s medical team. [Redacted] dated several married acquaintances of [redacted] and at times was in the company of [redacted] and LCDR PITZER with various of these women. SUBJECT indicated he felt ill at ease in the Chief’s Club because he was an officer and it was not his club.

Before leaving Pensacola, LCDR PITZER asked [redacted] to write to him. She told him she would wait until she heard from him. He told her not to wait, but to have a letter waiting for him when he got there. He said he was going from Pensacola to Norfolk before returning to Washington. He seemed to be looking forward to the trip to Norfolk.

[Redacted] mailed a one page casual note to him at his business address when he left Pensacola, and she estimates it should have arrived in Bethesda about 24 or 25 October 1966. She heard nothing from him after he left Pensacola; and on 29 October 1966, she bought a greeting card and wrote him a note along with it. She estimates this correspondence would have reached his office at Bethesda on Monday, 31 October 1966.

On Monday, 31 October 1966, [redacted] received a letter from LCDR PITZER which apparently crossed with hers in the mail. At first she stated she had destroyed this letter, but would make a

careful search to be sure. Subsequently, she voluntarily reported that she had found the letter, and she turned it over to investigating agents on 7 November 1966.

It is worthwhile at this point to interrupt this account and to include the alleged contents of the letter. A typewritten transcript included as an enclosure in the Navy's final report reads as follows:

> Saturday afternoon[illegible]
> My dear [redacted]
> Received your very welcome letter yesterday but have been just too busy to call or write you. Have just tried to call you at 2:45 but you were out. I did so want to talk to you and to hear your voice. Please [redacted] do not write to me any more. You will hear from me but please do not write. I am in deep trouble at home so there's no good in hurting any other person at this time. I am sure you will understand and I long to be with you, if no sooner than January. The trip is on for the week of 23 January. XXXXX will be coming back with me. It was such an enjoyable week for me and I wish for you the very best of everything. Until you hear from or of me, I am always,
> Bill

This letter was allegedly written by LCDR Pitzer less than 90 minutes before the time of his death and in it he indicates his intention to travel to Florida. Despite this, the Navy suggests that the letter is indicative of suicide, pointing to the curious phrase "Until you hear from or of me" as evidence of premeditation.

The record of the NIS interview with Pitzer's alleged mistress continues:

> [Redacted] described LCDR Pitzer as the finest man she ever met - kind, clean, healthy, completely normal in every respect. He did not drink excessively, was pleasant to everyone at all times, did not "flash money around," but he was not "cheap." He seemed to like his work and always put his duty ahead of personal affairs. He spoke of employment opportunities awaiting him upon retirement. In discussing his family problems, he never seemed morbid or unduly upset; on the contrary he was a cheerful, mature individual. He did not discuss his work, and she never observed or learned anything having security implications. She learned of no vices on his part such as gambling, involvement with narcotics, blackmail, possibilities *[sic]*, or similar connections. She did not know him to possess a gun. There were no monetary considerations on the part of either in their relationship. They liked each other's company, she provided him transportation in Pensacola and he paid for their meals and sundry expenses. Their relationship was one of mutual understanding and did not involve matrimonial, or serious romantic implications. Each mutually respected the other, and sought to protect the other's reputations and prevent friends and families from discovering the association.
> Regarding LCDR PITZER's stated family difficulties, he related he had been married to his wife twenty-nine years. He said he would never remarry, knowing what he knows now, explaining that when a woman gets married she always has something for her husband to do around the home and looks on him only as a handyman. He said his wife never welcomed him home happily, but invariably greeted him with petty problems of the home. He said his wife called the

> children “curtain climbers” and said they drove her crazy; and she always wanted him to discipline them. He said his wife never wanted to go anywhere with him. . . . During his last trip to Pensacola, he said his wife telephoned him here to complain that their basement was full of water, and she wanted him to come right home. He said his teenage son could be a fine boy at times, but at other times had tantrums and went all to pieces. [Redacted] said that LCDR PITZER did not seem to brood about these matters, however, and did not dwell on them, that he provided this information more or less casually over the entire period of their acquaintanceship, and not all at one time. She said he seemed fond of his wife, always had her picture on his dresser when in Pensacola, which source thought was unusual. He also indicated, in a kind way toward source, that if his wife were different in her attitude toward him, he would not be with source. At one time, he did state he sometimes thought he might “just walk out on it all” but he did not appear upset and source did not take him seriously.
>
> [Redacted] expressed the opinion that possibly LCDR PITZER’s family problems just weighed him down; that he was contemplating suicide when he wrote the final letter she received and did not want her to write so that no letters would be found to implicate her. She expressed considerable regret that she was out at the time his letter indicated he tried to call, stating that if he committed suicide, just having someone to talk to might have prevented it. However, she said she had never previously suspected he might commit suicide and would have thought of him as the last person to do so.
>
> She stated she preferred not to provide a written statement and requested that her identity be protected insofar as possible, especially in regard to SUBJECT’s family.

The rather casual adulteress presented in the above interview is not the same needy woman whose letter of October 29 seemed to express romantic love and an expectation of reciprocation and consideration. It is possible that she had one face for the Navy investigators and another for Pitzer, but there are other inconsistencies here. Though she recognized that one of Pitzer’s sons was grown and out of the house (indeed, he had children of his own), she reported that Pitzer’s “children” (plural) were a problem at home and that Pitzer’s wife called the children “curtain climbers.” That would be a strange epithet for a grown man and his fourteen-year-old younger brother.

It is difficult to reconcile Mrs. Gray’s long list of “regular” outings with Pitzer (namely the “BOQ at NAS, Pensacola for drinks, . . . the CPO Club at NAS, Pensacola, . . . local restaurants, . . . the dog racing track, . . . and . . . the home of another woman who is married but separated from her husband”) with LCDR Holston’s recollection that Pitzer stayed with him in the motel room most evenings.

Mrs. Gray’s statements may seem even less credible in the light of information provided by LCDR Pitzer’s surviving family. According to the interview, Pitzer “said his wife never welcomed him home happily, but invariably greeted him with petty problems of the home.” The author has been told that is not true. Neither was it true that “his wife never wanted to go anywhere with him.” The Pitzers went out frequently and danced beautifully together. A co-worker recalled seeing Bill and his wife on multiple occasions at parties and noted that the couple seemed “completely devoted to each other.”

Furthermore, it does not seem likely that LCDR Pitzer would have complained to Mrs. Gray about his wife's insistence that he discipline his children. Bill's father, Harry M. Pitzer, Sr., had a reputation as a rather stern disciplinarian and Bill carried a similar old-fashioned perspective on his role as the head of the family. Bill is remembered as a loving man who would nonetheless have required no nagging from his wife to correct his boys when they erred. As he applied time-honored methods to reinforce proper values, he would remark that "this hurts me more than it does you" and that he was being more lenient than their grandfather had been to him.

Another of the "plain-paper" memos in the FBI's files seems to relate to this issue and to be an effort to establish Pitzer's state of disquiet on the afternoon of his death:

> On November 5, 1966, SA XXXXXXX advised that NISO agents had interviewed XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX of the Western Auto Store located at 8218 Georgia avenue, Silver Spring, Maryland, and had exhibited him a photograph of LCDR PITZER. After viewing the photograph XXXXXXXXXXX advised that on October 29, 1966 between 2:00 and 3:00 PM, PITZER had come into the Western Auto Store, in a Naval Officer's dress blue uniform, and handed him a fishing reel, XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX and turned around and walked out of the store without saying anything else.

There are a number of reasons to be skeptical of this memo. Note that this civilian interview was again supposedly conducted solely by the Naval Investigative Service, in the absence of any FBI agents. Even when interviewing Navy employees in connection with the Pitzer case, the NIS had otherwise routinely been accompanied by FBI agents who recorded the interview and filed it as a Form 302.

Note further that this account appears to contradict other accounts of Pitzer's location and manner of dress on the afternoon of his death. The dress blue uniform is significant because it is used for solemn occasions. Not knowing what the redactions in the above document were concealing, the author suspected that this story was meant to show or imply that Pitzer was giving away a prized possession in the hours before his suicide. A family member provided a different interpretation: that this account was supposed to show or suggest that Pitzer's son had stolen an item from the store, which may have sold sporting goods, and that Pitzer was upset about the incident and returning the item. If so, such a story would be improbable. According to this family member, Pitzer would have brought the lad to the store to return it himself with an apology, perhaps bearing a stripe or two on his backside. There had been an incident in which Pitzer's young son had taken some golf balls; this had been dealt with in the above-mentioned manner and was several months past. There was no such incident with any fishing reel. The apparent significance of the Western Auto Store interview for the FBI and NIS is the implication that LCDR Pitzer's suicide later that afternoon was influenced by his son's misbehavior.

One has to wonder what prompted the NIS to show a photograph of Bill Pitzer to the person at this store. Perhaps Pitzer, a habitual note-maker, had left a note somewhere indicating his intention to visit the store. However, there is no extant investigative record of any such note having been found.

Finally, there is a minor error concerning the address. The author noted in a visit to Silver Spring that 8218 Georgia Avenue did not exist, at least any longer. In 2003, Champion Billiards occupied 8216

Georgia Avenue and was neighbored by Meineke Muffler at 8220. The age and design of the buildings do not in any way suggest that a former business at an 8218 Georgia Avenue address might have been annexed by one of its neighbors. The Silver Spring Historical Society was kind enough to locate and share information from a 1966 Polk city directory, which listed Western Auto at 8217 Georgia Avenue, across the street.

The FBI's FOIA release contains yet another unsigned, undated memo typed on plain paper (not on the standard Form 302) which indicates the Baltimore office being informed of the NIS's interview of Mrs. Gray in Pensacola:

> On November 7, 1966 XXXXXXXXXXX advised that an NISO Agent in Pensacola, Florida had identified [1 1.2 lines redacted] and that upon interview she stated she first met deceased in 1965 at the Chiefs Club at the Pensacola Naval Station and had dated him each time he had been in Pensacola since that time, and had dated him in Atlanta Georgia during the period of January 6-10 1966.
> During these dates he had discussed his family problems which consisted of a nagging wife and a problem son.
> She had received a letter from him dated October 29, 1966 in which he indicated he had tried to call her about 2:45 P.M. that date. This letter continued that he did not want her to write him any more as he was in deep trouble at home and there was no use hurting any other person at that time. The letter stated that he [planned] a trip to that area in January, 1967 and that he longed to see her, if no sooner than January. This letter closed "until you hear from or of me, I am always."

On November 8, the Baltimore FBI office sent an Airtel to headquarters advising that "[Redacted] All indications are that deceased committed suicide. Report will be submitted upon completion of all investigation and obtaining copy of autopsy report." In truth, the Baltimore office would do nearly nothing further by way of investigation. They would interview one more person, identified in their final report as a family member, before closing their investigation on January 13; otherwise, they were simply awaiting the results of the FBI laboratory's work and the Navy's autopsy.

Also on November 8, the Baltimore office sent an Airtel to the Jacksonville, Florida field office. Its contents will remain unknown, as the FBI insists that all materials related to the Pitzer case available through FOIA have been released, and this item is not included. Interestingly enough, the Jacksonville office's final report implies that they first became aware of the NIS's Pensacola investigation on January 11, when an agent of the NIS informed them. This date is the official start date of the Jacksonville office's investigation, two days before the final interview and official close of the Baltimore office's investigation. Due to the timing involved, none of the information from the Jacksonville investigation would be included in the Baltimore office's original summary report. There is no indication that more than one agent was assigned to this case in Jacksonville. Jacksonville's final report, dated March 25, 1967, reads thus:

> On January 11, 1967, XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX Special Agent, Naval Investigative Service Resident Agency, U.S. Naval Air Station, advised that his organization had conducted an investigation regarding the death of Lt. Cmdr. WILLIAM BRUCE PITZER at Bethesda, Maryland, on October 29, 1966. During the investigation, he determined that Lt. Cmdr. PITZER had been dating [redacted] who resides at [redacted] telephone [redacted]. He advised that XXXXX is divorced from XXXXXXXXXXXXX and resided along XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX She admitted that she had met Lt. Cmdr. PITZER at one of the Chief's Clubs on U.S. NAS, Pensacola, Florida, around October, 1965, when he was at the Naval Station for a temporary duty assignment. She further admitted that a romance developed and she flew to Atlanta, Georgia, and met him and stayed with him in a hotel from January 10, 1966, to January 12, 1966. Also, when he came to Pensacola, Florida, during October, 1966, she stayed with him in the Rodeway Inn, Pensacola, Florida, from October 13, 1966, to October 15, 1966, where he registered as Lt. Cmdr. WILLIAM B. PITZER, 603 Boston Avenue, TK PK, Maryland.
>
> [Redacted] advised that during the interview first conducted on November 3, 1966, XXXXXXXXX said that all correspondence she had received from Lt. Cmdr. PITZER had been destroyed. During subsequent interviews on November 4, and November 7, 1966, she admitted that she retained correspondence and produced the original letter written by Lt. Cmdr. PITZER to her as [redacted] Pensacola, Florida, which was postmarked at "Washington, D.C., 38P (illegible) PM, 1966."

A copy of the letter, as seen previously, is included at this point in the report. On January 13, 1967, two days after learning of the NIS investigation, an agent from the FBI's Jacksonville field office interviewed the woman in question. The Form 302 from the interview reads as follows:

> [2 lines redacted] advised she is divorced and resides alone at that address. She said that during the fall of 1965, while attending a function at the Navy Chiefs Club at the United States Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida, she became acquainted with Lieutenant Commander WILLIAM BRUCE PITZER, who was there on temporary duty from Bethesda Naval Hospital. They became friendly and had several dates while he was in town at that time. He admitted to her that he was married and indicated that he had a satisfactory home life. He later corresponded with her and suggested that she meet him in a hotel in Atlanta, Georgia, which she did, from January 10 to January 12, 1966. In addition, on several occasions, she spent time with him in local hotels in Pensacola, Florida, when he was here on special temporary assignments. She said that it was understood that there would be no permanent relationship between them and he never suggested that his home life was not satisfactory. He did indicate a dissatisfaction with [1 1/2 lines redacted]. He never indicated to her in any way that there would be any reason for him to take his own life. He further never exhibited a gun or any ammunition to her and she would have no knowledge of any motive or way in which he would take his life.
>
> [Redacted] advised that in view of the letter which she received and which was apparently written on the same afternoon in which he was killed, she believes that he did take his own life. She pointed that he ended the letter "Until you hear from or of me" and she now believes at that time he was thinking of taking his own life. She advised that in case anything else comes to

her attention which would relate to this matter, she will immediately contact the FBI. She added that she has furnished full details regarding her relationship to the Special Agent of the Naval Investigative Service who talked to her on several occasions.

This FBI interview is somewhat at odds with the interview reported by the Navy. If LCDR Pitzer "never suggested that his home life was not satisfactory," how does one explain the alleged complaints recorded by the Naval Investigative Service in their interviews with this woman? This is a puzzling inconsistency, for Pitzer's dissatisfaction with life at home combined with this alleged affair is the justification for the Navy's conclusion that Pitzer committed suicide.

The final page of the FBI's FOIA release is yet another unsigned, undated memo on plain paper, this time from the Jacksonville office. This memo reports that on March 16, 1967, the Jacksonville office was informed that the Navy's Board of Investigation had concluded that Pitzer's death was a suicide. Furthermore, "This case is being placed on a closed status as all logical investigation has been conducted and nothing inconsistent with suicide has been developed and investigation did disclose circumstances consistent with suicide and reasons for suicide."

3. RUMORS

LCDR William Bruce Pitzer was, by all indications, a talented and dedicated officer and a devoted family man. One contemporary described him as a "perfect image of a Naval officer." I truly regret that the urban legend that has grown out of his death has not only overshadowed the story of his life, but also made his surviving family reluctant to talk to strangers who have too often sought to sensationalize his demise rather than find out who he truly was.

The materials available to us under FOIA are less than satisfactory in settling the question of whether LCDR Pitzer's death was a suicide. Part of the problem is the private nature of some of the most compelling items in evidence. Allan Eaglesham has seen the relevant crime scene photos, and as he has documented on his web site, there is no damage to either of Pitzer's hands nor any indication of foul play. The blood spatter patterns on the floor tell a very specific story of how Pitzer's body came to rest. The points of entry and exit for the bullet show that the pistol was held in the middle of the range in which it would have been easiest for Pitzer to hold the muzzle to his own temple. Had the Pitzer autopsy and crime scene photos been as free to circulate as all of the rumors, accounts like Dan Marvin's would have gained much less currency. But for legitimate reasons, they continue to be unseen by the general public. No one wants to see their loved one's corpse on the internet. Some ideas and information are not meant to be spread.

It was not LCDR Pitzer's life of service that made him a martyr figure of sorts to many students of the Kennedy assassination. No, he gained that status by forcing improperly-sized live ammunition into the barrel of a revolver in which he normally kept blank rounds, placing the gun to his temple, and pulling the trigger. Once all the facts are examined, it would take a fertile imagination indeed to suppose otherwise. Tragic, but true. As I review the notes I made from conversations with Pitzer's youngest son, I feel a renewed sadness not only for his family's loss but for the world that Bill Pitzer made a better place by having lived in it. I also am saddened to be reminded that due to having collaborated with Col. Marvin in my investigation of Pitzer's death, doors were closed to me and I was denied some opportunities to learn more about Pitzer's life; thus I also lost the opportunity to include a richer biography and more fitting memorial here.

Wikipedia defines a meme as "an idea, behavior, or style that spreads from person to person within a culture. A meme acts as a unit for carrying cultural ideas, symbols, or practices that can be transmitted from one mind to another through writing, speech, gestures, rituals, or other imitable phenomena with a mimicked theme. Supporters of the concept regard memes as cultural analogues to genes in that they self-replicate, mutate, and respond to selective pressures." As Pitzer's story has spread over the years, its details have indeed undergone a kind of selective replication and mutation. Many, if not most, versions of the story reveal a clear heritage in the elements that they do or do not include. These elements, which one might call "memetic markers," are analogous to the genetic markers passed in DNA, as I will demonstrate. LCDR Pitzer's death is a fact. The idea that he was murdered to safeguard the cover-up of the true nature of JFK's murder is - regardless of its truth or falsity - a *meme,* in a sense more general than the common use of the word in the context of social media.

Pitzer's death on October 29, 1966 was announced very briefly in the Washington Post on the 31st of that month, and at greater length on November 2nd, relating mostly details of his life and explaining only that his demise came "unexpectedly." It set a precedent of factuality that has too seldom been followed in subsequent publications concerning the incident. The *Washington Evening Star* also reported much of the same information as the *Post* on November 2, adding only the polite fiction that Pitzer had died "after a brief illness."

There wasn't much in contemporary reporting to give this story "staying power." Military suicides are not uncommon, and like all suicides, not a matter happily dwelt on. These stories were sterile, destined to die out, memetic dead ends. But, as we shall see, once a certain mutation arose - a “fake news” version of the story - its survival was nearly guaranteed. Indeed, it replicated itself far too readily, not unlike a tumor.

The Pitzer story - as most people have come to know it - was in some ways made possible by Penn Jones Jr. , the owner of the Midlothian, TX *Mirror* and the originator of what came to be known in the JFK research community as the "mysterious death list." He is best known for the self-published, four-volume series, *Forgive My Grief*. While reviewing news stories contemporary with Pitzer's death, one of the interesting items I found was a mention of Jones's "death list" in a *Washington Post* article published three days before the tragedy. Due to the publication of several books on the Kennedy assassination, 1966 was a year of growing criticism of the Warren Report, comparable perhaps to the reaction to Oliver Stone's "JFK" 25 years later. The 1966 article reported the list numbering "at least ten." Gerald Posner writes that by 1967 the list would grow to eighteen. Pitzer himself would not be included until 1976, when the number of persons on list would be reported as "more than fifty." The "mysterious death" meme was picked up by others, and the population of their later lists would exceed one hundred. Many of the deaths on the list were indeed connected to the assassination, but, as we shall see, Pitzer’s name came to be included due to a misunderstanding.

Dennis David had been Chief of the Day at the NNMC on the night of November 22, 1963, and had helped unload the grey shipping casket containing the dead President’s body from the hearse which had delivered it to the morgue. David had left Bethesda for the Great Lakes area in 1966, after being promoted to the Navy Medical Service Corps. In 1975, David was reading an article about the Kennedy

assassination in his local newspaper. He found something in the article to be disturbingly inaccurate, and called the newspaper's office to give them a piece of his mind. Defensively, the voice on the other end of the line asked David what made him think he was so expert in the matter. "Because I was there," he replied.

The newspaper became very interested and Dennis David became the somewhat apprehensive source for an article that would come to have great influence on future developments. Shortly after the President's death, David and others who had been present at the NNMC on the night of the Kennedy autopsy had been called into Captain Stover's office and were promised court-martial and imprisonment if they ever discussed what they had seen that night. All were made to sign orders prohibiting them from discussing the matter. Though retired from the Navy, David still insisted that his name not be revealed.

David told for the first time what he saw as the suspicious circumstances of Bill Pitzer's death. The resulting article contained several inaccuracies, for instance, Pitzer's rank at the time of his death, his dominant hand, the caliber of the weapon, and its location at the scene. These errors were based on assumption and hearsay, and might be attributable to either Art Peterson or Dennis David. In retrospect, it would have been of greater value for the article to have focused more closely on the things which Dennis knew first-hand.

> A Navy technician who filmed the autopsy of President John F. Kennedy may have been an early victim of a mysterious death syndrome that has been a bloody footnote to the assassination.
> In the 12 years since the ambush in Dallas, investigators have identified more than 50 persons connected with the incident who have died under mysterious or unusual circumstances.
> The death of the technician, Lt. William Pitzer, should be an early addition to that list, believes a Lake County man who worked at Bethesda (Md.) Naval Hospital in 1963.
> The Lake Countian doesn't want his identity made public. He contacted the newspaper after reading a series on the Kennedy assassination which concluded in the *News-Sun* Tuesday.
> "He was shot with a 45-caliber pistol and was found with the gun in his right hand," he said. "But he was left-handed. If he would have used a weapon he would have used his left hand."
> The technician had filmed in detail the Kennedy autopsy. Just before he was due to retire, ending 28 years in the service, he was found dead. "I've always believed he was murdered," the former hospital worker said.
> "They said he was depressed, but he was close to retirement and had just received an offer to work for a network television station at $45,000 a year," he added.
> Information on the autopsy was vigorously sought at the time, particularly for evidence that would have indicated if any of Kennedy's wounds were not caused by shots fired from the rear.
> The county man believes his friend may have been killed as part of a coverup of a conspiracy to kill Kennedy. Pitzer, a native of the Washington, D.C. area, was 49 when he died. He was buried in the Arlington National Cemetery. A cousin said, "At the time of the funeral there seemed to be little mystery as to how he died. We were told there was going to be an investigation into his death, but we never heard anything." He is survived by his widow, two sons, and mother. Pitzer had enlisted in the Navy at age 21.

> The Lake County man defends the autopsy as “thorough,” and “well-done,” but doubts that all the necessary information was forwarded to the Commission or made available to experts.
> He contends that one “ambitious” member of the autopsy team may have misrepresented the autopsy results when questioned by the Warren Commission, which concluded in its final report that Lee Harvey Oswald was the lone gunman.
> He also questions the whereabouts of a memo he typed following the autopsy, at the direction of a secret service agent.
> “The memo, for the official record of the autopsy, stated that four large pieces of lead were removed from Kennedy. They were not separate bullets but had jagged edges like shrapnel. There was more material than would come from one bullet, but maybe not enough for two,” he said.
> That assertion would seriously challenge the Warren Commission theory that one bullet missed, another went through Kennedy and into Connally, was virtually undamaged, and a third bullet hit Kennedy in the head.
> “To my knowledge that memo was never made part of the Commission report or any other report,” said the man.
> He recalled the scene at Bethesda. “Several thousand people had gathered on the front lawn, waiting and watching. We had men stationed at every door and no one could use the elevators without special permission.
> “We were scared to death. There had been rumors even then that a conspiracy was involved and no one was taking any chances. Kennedy’s body was brought in through a back door in an unmarked ambulance. An official motorcade from the airport contained only an empty casket,” he said.
> The man, who saw many wounded men while serving in Vietnam, said he saw slides of Kennedy’s wounds. “It looked like they came from the front,” he said.
> Commenting on the Commission conclusion that Kennedy was shot from behind, he said, “I do not believe there was just one individual shooting.”

This “fake news” version of Pitzer’s death first saw print in the Waukegan, IL *News-Sun* on May 1, 1975 as “Another link in JFK death?" The "mysterious death syndrome" it mentions, the "more than 50 persons connected with the incident who have died under mysterious or unusual circumstances," was almost certainly a reference to Penn Jones’ *Forgive My Grief* series, which would soon add the Pitzer story to its next edition.

David was quoted as saying Pitzer "was shot with a 45-caliber pistol and was found with the gun in his right hand . . . But he was left-handed." This was incorrect on more than one point. When asked about it much later, David admitted not knowing where he got the idea that the weapon was .45 caliber. The idea that Pitzer was left-handed appears to have arisen from the fact that David and Pitzer played bridge together, and David recalls having teased Pitzer about having dealt cards left-handed. Peterson then reports that Pitzer "had filmed in detail the Kennedy autopsy," presumably based on David's recollection of having seen such a film in Pitzer's possession. Though his words have been grossly misrepresented on this point, neither Dennis David nor any other credible person has claimed to have seen Pitzer at the

autopsy, with camera or otherwise. Jerrol Custer, an x-ray technician, is the only person to have made this assertion, and his recollection was both inconsistent and full of inaccuracies.

It is difficult to know whether to attribute some of the inaccuracies in this article to either Peterson, David, or the channels through which David was informed of Pitzer's death, but given the overall consistency and character of David's later recorded statements, both public and private, on numerous occasions over a span of several years, I am not inclined to dismiss any of that later testimony based only on what was reported second-hand in 1975. Whatever its precise origins, the Pitzer meme was now "in the wild" and quickly found its way back into print. Mere months after the Peterson article, in a January 1976 edition of his 1969 book *Forgive My Grief, Vol III*" Penn Jones wrote:

> Of all the strange deaths we have reported, the death of Lt. William Pitzer is one of the most glaring removals of an important witness. Lt. Pitzer served as President Kennedy's autopsy photographer. He had to see the wounds to take his pictures, pictures which have never been available to qualified researchers. Pitzer told friends that his debriefing after the photographic session was a "horrifying experience," and he stated that he was visited periodically by military personnel who reminded him repeatedly never to reveal - for reasons of national security - what he saw while taking pictures.
>
> Lt. Pitzer was found dead just before he was due to retire after 28 years in the service.
>
> A co-worker with Lt. Pitzer at the Bethesda (Md.) Naval Hospital, who would not be identified, reported to the *Sun-News [sic]* of Waukegan, Ill., May 1, 1975, that Lt. Pitzer's death October 29, 1966 was ruled "self-inflicted." The co-worker said, "He was shot with a .45 caliber pistol and was found with the gun in his right hand. But he was left-handed." The former hospital worker added, "I've always believed he was murdered."
>
> The informant went on, "They said he was depressed, but he was close to retirement and had just received an offer to work for a network television station at $45,000 a year."

Penn Jones relayed the inaccurate information from the *News-Sun* and apparently added more of his own, declaring that "Lt." Pitzer called his experience of debriefings after JFK's autopsy "horrifying" and that he told to be silent for national security reasons. Whether Jones had a source for any of this additional information or merely invented it is unclear. It is not implausible that he and Peterson may have shared notes, as Peterson's "list" was almost certainly in reference to Jones' work. It seems doubtful that Jones did any research of his own in this matter; had he even looked up Pitzer's obituaries, he would have been obliged to give his correct rank as "*Lt. Cmdr*."

It is unfortunate that it would not be for several years that Dennis David's recollections regarding Pitzer would be captured on tape from his own mouth. Though all the chief elements were reported, only the barest outline for Dennis David's later comments was given in the 1975 article. David was interviewed at length by David Lifton for his 1980 book *Best Evidence*, which focused on the medical evidence in JFK's death. Lifton had learned of David in Peterson's news article, and was eager to discuss what David had seen on the night of the president's autopsy. But an opportunity was lost when Lifton failed to delve into the Pitzer subject with David. As Lifton stated on "Best Evidence: The Research Video," the purpose of filming his witnesses three months prior to the release of his book "was to get the key witnesses on

camera before they themselves realized the full implication of information they possessed." Whatever Lifton's mistakes may have been, getting carried away with the Pitzer story was not among them. On that subject, Lifton seems to have a peculiar aversion which I will outline and discuss shortly.

Forgive My Grief disappeared into obscurity, but Jones' sensationalized Pitzer story reached much wider audiences with the 1989 work (and 1990 mass-market paperback) *High Treason* by Harrison Livingstone and Robert Groden, which devoted an entire chapter to "Strange Deaths." Livingstone, according to an article found on his web site in 2002, had learned of the Pitzer death by reading Jones' book; in an email to me, Livingstone stated that Jones showed him the *News-Sun* article in person during a visit. *High Treason* corrected the record on the matter of Pitzer's rank at the time of his death, as well as his dominant hand, which, according to his widow, was the right. Effort was made to gain new information on the case rather than merely recounting what had already been said; Pitzer's family was contacted:

> The authors believe that Pitzer was murdered . .. as a warning to other witnesses in the hospital. His family was told that his death was a suicide, and no one in his family believes it. The government refuses to give up a copy of the autopsy report or any investigation of his death, if there was one.

Further revelations are offered without documentation (if memory serves, credit for this must go chiefly to Livingstone as primary writer): "All reports indicate it was murder." Reference is made to "several reports that [Pitzer] was not only there but filmed the autopsy" in response to Dr. Boswell's denial that this was the case. If the same fiction is handed down and repeated, does that become "several reports?" One might wonder whether at this point the Pitzer family was telling Livingstone their purely personal insights or whether their opinions had already been influenced by what had circulated in the media.

The book engages in purest speculation:

> Cmdr. Pitzer may have actually been murdered elsewhere and brought into Bethesda where he was found dead to make it far more difficult for the Maryland authorities to investigate his murder, even though they have jurisdiction over crimes committed on Federal property and military bases within Maryland. The fact that Pitzer's autopsy report has never been released to his widow and family indicates that another murder has been covered up.

Dennis David is mentioned twice in *High Treason*, first as "a medical corpsman present at [JFK's] autopsy" and then as "a witness at the autopsy." He is quoted without reference to any other source, and thus the impression is given that the authors had interviewed or otherwise made contact with him. This appears not to have been the case. When all the references to David in *High Treason* are compared with prior sources, it becomes clear that they all have origin in Peterson's 1975 article and Jones' 1976 book, except for Dennis David's name, which must have come from *Best Evidence*. Rather than having contacted David, Livingstone (as a resident of Baltimore) must have found it more practical to contact the Pitzer family. As seen above, the authors twice misreported David's presence at the hospital and morgue anteroom as him having been "at the autopsy." This error becomes more grievous when placed directly alongside David's assumption that Pitzer had filmed the autopsy. *High Treason* makes the highly

regrettable statement: “Dennis David, a medical corpsman at the autopsy, was a friend of Lt. Cmdr. Bruce [sic] Pitzer, who he said ‘filmed in detail the Kennedy autopsy’" [directly quoted from Peterson's 1975 article].

It would take a careful reader not to infer from the foregoing that Dennis David told Groden and/or Livingstone that he had seen Bill Pitzer film the autopsy. Vincent Bugliosi, author of 2007's *Reclaiming History*, demonstrated quite clearly that he was not a careful reader; or, perhaps that he saw only what he was looking for. Bugliosi made precisely this incorrect inference and then, in his brief treatment of the Pitzer case, raked Dennis David over the coals for it:

> After indicating to David Lifton in 1979 that he was not present at the autopsy, and telling Harrison Livingstone in 1988 that he was, in 1997 he went back to his original story and conceded to ARRB investigators that he was not present at the autopsy . . . It's clear that David is incapable of telling the same story twice on this matter.

Bugliosi's cynical, arrogant, and misinformed caricature of David is a straw man of his own construction which he appears to have enjoyed tearing apart. David Lifton also seems to have had the disgruntled impression that Livingstone had been in contact with Dennis David by 1988 (see below), but any such contact is in no way evident in Livingstone's 1989 book with Groden.

In the 1992 sequel *High Treason 2*, Livingstone devotes at least three more pages to the Pitzer death.

> . . . [N]umerous other reasons were presented to me by Pitzer's family as to why he could not have killed himself, and why they believe his death had something to do with John Kennedy's assassination and the pictures he took at the autopsy. Pitzer died on the day the Kennedy family finally transferred the autopsy materials ... to the National Archives. . . . I have now seen, after years of effort (thanks to Joyce Pitzer's and Washington Lawyer Jim Lesar's help) the autopsy report of Bruce [sic] Pitzer. Nobody in his family believes the Navy claim that he died a suicide. After all (according to Dennis David), Pitzer was in the gallery filming the entire autopsy with a movie camera, and David . . . helped Pitzer edit the film. David was a bridge partner and close friend of Pitzer's for many years and used to baby-sit for his children. They all believe he was murdered.

The very next paragraph paradoxically includes Dennis David's denial (quoted below) that he could verify that Pitzer was in the autopsy room that evening. Similarly, Livingstone takes pains to call out the explicit absence of powder burns in Pitzer's autopsy report, saying this is inconsistent with having shot himself, yet his quotation of the report includes the notation that "An area of charring of the skin surrounds the wound." Clearly, this would have been caused by the discharge of the closely-held pistol, yet may in some way be distinct from what a medical examiner was classify as "powder burns:" "[N]o powder burns of the skin surrounding the area are noted." David denies that he ever baby-sat Pitzer's children and recalls meeting his wife on only two or three occasions.

Despite its failings, *High Treason 2* deserves credit for being the first book to directly quote Dennis David at length regarding Bill Pitzer. But despite what one may at first infer (as I did), it contains no real indication that Livingstone had yet made any contact with David directly. It takes the following from a letter sent by David to one Joanne Braun:

> As to Bill Pitzer's involvement, I never asked him, "Were you there?" or "Did you do the filming?" I have always assumed he did, but cannot verify he was in the autopsy room that evening. I do know that he had the film in his possession at one time. When he and I looked at a portion of the film, we remarked only on the extent of the injury, the apparent point of entry, etc. Bill also had some 35mm slides which, again I assumed, were excerpts from the film. I would say that the films which I viewed with Bill were prior to the commencement of the postmortem, as there was no evidence of a Y-incision on the torso, nor was the scalp incised and peeled forward on the face as would be done during a postmortem."

In another letter, David recalls the "massive wound in the rear of JFK's skull," which could not be mistaken for anything other than point of exit.

Robert Groden made brief mention of Pitzer in his 1993 coffee-table photo book*, The Killing of a President*. The following appears under a sidebar entitled "HSCA Mysterious Death Project":

> Lieutenant Commander William Bruce Pitzer, who had supposedly taken photographs of Kennedy during the autopsy, was said to be working with a film of the autopsy shortly [sic] before his death in 1966. It has not been confirmed that the film he was examining actually existed, or whether he was the man who took it; however, all evidence of the film has disappeared. Pitzer was found shot to death in his office at Bethesda Naval Hospital. He was slumped over his desk, with the alleged suicide weapon placed close to his body.

The Killing of a President was my first exposure both to the Pitzer meme and to assassination conspiracy literature. I well remember poring over this book, then over *High Treason*, making notes on index cards as I rode the bus home from work. I recall having particular interest in the Pitzer story. During those days, I was still of a naive mindset that might subconsciously have assumed that "they wouldn't print it if it weren't true." Thus the Pitzer meme passed from Groden to me circa 1997. I would formulate my own version and pass it on in the 2004 edition of this book.

In the same year as *High Treason*, Pitzer's name also appeared in Jim Marrs' 1989 book*, Crossfire*, along with over 100 other names in a list of "Convenient Deaths" thought to have had a connection to the Kennedy assassination or its cover-up.

When interviewing Dennis David for 1980's *Best Evidence*, David Lifton had passed over Dennis' information regarding Pitzer, focusing instead on Dennis' account of the circumstances in which the - or "a" - casket arrived at the morgue for the Kennedy autopsy. In fact, by the time I wrote to Lifton in 2002, he strongly implied that David's talk of Pitzer was a made-up story he had somehow been later induced to tell by Harrison Livingstone. Lifton wrote to me:

> As to any filming of Dennis David, I interviewed him in July, 1979 by telephone. What he told me then appears in my book, verbatim, exactly as he told me. The book went to press over the summer of 1980 and was published at the tail end of 1980 (Dec. 1980/Jan. 1981).
>
> I filmed Dennis David in October 1980. There was nothing about Pitzer mentioned in that filmed interview, which basically put on camera what he told me in our July, 1979 telephone interview. . . .
>
> Somewhere around 1988 or 1989, Harrison Livingstone got involved in this affair and started to promote the theory that Pitzer's death was connected with the JFK assassination. He would call up various witnesses who I had interviewed and attempt to get them to change or amend their accounts about any number of things, but the Pitzer business was part of his agenda. Again, this was all in 1988 and thereafter.
>
> Do you subscribe to the idea that its an author's responsibility to change his book to accommodate a witness who changes his story a decade after the book appears? Changes which apparently occurred after being lobbied by an assassination "researcher" who, incidentally, would call me up and leave death threats on my telephone answering machine? And send me similar letters in writing? [Livingstone wrote comparable accusations regarding Lifton in his emails to this author.]
>
> This is the kind of territory into which you are heading. Do you think that's credible?
>
> I first heard the William Pitzer story coming from Dennis David directly when he was being interviewed by KRON-TV around November 1988. That film shoot was not conducted by me, but I was present. The two experienced news people who were conducting the filming - producer Stanhope Gould and Sylvia Chase - were quite put off by Dennis David's change of story. It appeared to them so completely non-credible that they wanted to drop him from their documentary as a witness. However, out of respect for his prior interview with me (in 1979) and the prior filmed interview (in 1980) they did in fact use him in their show.
>
> . . . the first I ever heard of Dennis David "viewing" "movies" of the autopsy was when he said so in front of me and Stanhope Gould in the fall of 1988, when he was interviewed (as I recall) by Sylvia Chase for KRON-TV.

> Also, as I recall (and quite vividly) he said he viewed them and "edited" them with Pitzer, at his residence. Again, if that Dennis David interview footage is ever located, I defer to whatever he said. Suffice it to say that whatever Dennis David said on the subject, I had never heard it - or at least, heard it stated quite that way - until 1988, and Stanhope Gould was quite unprepared for it too, because it seemed completely bizarre and off the wall. As I mentioned before, it was so bizarre that it essentially destroyed Dennis David's credibility, and extreme efforts on my part were necessary that everything he said was not thrown out along with his allegations about Pitzer.

This was rather astonishing to me because Lifton had only been able to locate Dennis David in the first place after reading of him in Art Peterson's *News-Sun* article (an article which, by the way Harrison Livingstone has taken credit for passing on to Lifton). After further discussion with me and a review of the 1975 article, Lifton did agree that Pitzer's film of the autopsy had been mentioned at that time, but he also maintained that the first he ever heard Dennis speaking of having viewed such a film was in 1988, as quoted above; this may be true, but Dennis David thinks otherwise, and his memory seems to be more reliable than Lifton's. David's email to me in 2003 said:

> In '79, when David and his film crew sat in my living room, I told David of my experiences of the 22 Nov 63. This included my feelings on Bill Pitzer. . . .the story of Pitzer he was not able to corroborate, for obvious reasons, and [therefore] he did not pursue it. Which, I think, was the legitimate thing to do. In 1998 [sic - he means 1988] sitting in my back yard under a maple tree, I told Sylvia Chase and her crew essentially what I had told David in 1979. That: 1) I had seen portions of a 16mm film in Bill's office, and helped edit a portion of the film. 2) I had also looked at photos, some B&W and some colored. 3) I told them from the film and pictures, both Bill and I drew the same conclusion that the killing shot was a frontal entry wound. 4) They ask[ed] me if Bill was in the autopsy room, and if he had taken the film and pictures. I told them I did not know if he took the film or pictures of the autopsy. I did day that "considering Bill's job at Bethesda, it would be logical to assume that he had, however I do not recall seeing him that night."

If David's later testimony can be suspected of having been colored by anyone's influence, it would be Lifton, not Livingstone, who would seem the most likely source, intentionally or otherwise. Lifton bestowed minor fame on Dennis David in a book promoting a hypothesis which has direct connection to the later details of the Pitzer story.

In 2010, Lifton's expressed opinion regarding Dennis David and Bill Pitzer was again highly dismissive and in contradiction of his own earlier recollections. In a post on The Education Forum, he wrote: "To make this clear: Dennis David, who knew Pitzer, does not believe Pitzer committed suicide, and has made a variety of claims about having seen autopsy photographs –and/or films—of the autopsy,because of his friendship with Pitzer. I should also add that Dennis David told me none of this when I interviewed him in July, 1979, via phone, and in Ocotber [sic], 1980, on camera; nor in 1989 [sic], again, on camera." So which of Lifton's tales are we to believe? The one in which David totally sprung the Pitzer story on

Lifton and company during the KRON-TV interview, nearly derailing the program, or the one in which he didn't mention it at all?

On the sole information of Dennis David, William Bruce Pitzer had become one of the more interesting cases on a list of persons connected to the Kennedy assassination who met a violent or suspicious end. Though uncorroborated, David's frank testimony is not easy to dismiss. His account of what he saw in Bill Pitzer's office has apparently not changed since he first revealed it to Art Peterson nearly thirty years ago, though he has been interviewed in much greater depth. As more information bearing on the Kennedy autopsy has been revealed over the years, David neither embellished, retracted, nor attempted to explain his statements in light of the current state of knowledge. He remained adamant about what he saw, and showed no tendency to accommodate his testimony to any emerging theories regarding its significance.

Regarding the Pitzer case, David's recollection was essentially as follows: On the Monday or Tuesday of the week following the Kennedy assassination, Dennis David came unannounced to the NNMC office of his friend and mentor, Bill Pitzer. David had come to get some help preparing for the Medical Service Corps exam and found Pitzer seated in front of a film editor. "Come here," Pitzer said, "I want to show you something." On the editing machine was about two-thirds of a ten-inch reel of 16mm movie film. Together, the two men watched a short segment of the black-and-white film, which showed President Kennedy's examination in what was presumably the NNMC morgue. The camera's somewhat narrow point of view was above and to the right of the deceased, perhaps in the morgue's "gallery," a small area of bleachers where observers could sit. President Kennedy could be seen from the waist up, and no "Y" incision had yet been made for autopsy. The camera point of view did not change and the camera was steady, as if mounted. The only movement was the hands of the medical staff, visible from the waist down, who rolled the body onto one side. Pitzer also had some 35mm color slides and black-and-white prints. Both the film and the still images showed a small wound in the President's right temple and a much larger wound in the rear of the head. From this, the two men concluded that the President had been struck from the front.

Though Dennis David has said otherwise, LCDR Pitzer's family all agree that he was right-handed. Consider that if David had not been mistaken about which hand was Pitzer's dominant hand, he may not have mentioned his late friend to any reporter or researcher; few outside Pitzer's family and acquaintances would know his name or his story. David's misconception is apparently based on his clear memory of Pitzer having dealt cards left-handed at their regular lunchtime games. Perhaps Pitzer did this out of a sense of humor, like using a blank pistol round to signal the end of a lecture.

In the early 1990s, Harrison Livingstone contacted Jim Lesar at the Assassination Archives and Research Center, a non-profit organization in Washington DC. Livingstone knew that Lesar's wife worked at Bethesda Naval Hospital, and he apparently thought that this might be used to his advantage in acquiring a copy of Pitzer's autopsy report.

Acting on Livingstone's behalf, Lesar called Mrs. Pitzer in April 1991 and was impressed by what she told him. Apparently, there were some things that she wanted to say publicly but she was concerned over

potential personal consequences, including losing her Navy benefits if she "stepped out of line." For instance, she was aware that an order of silence had been imposed upon all the Navy personnel who had been present at the President's autopsy. Lesar agreed to send her some information which would address this concern. Then, in one of the many stunning coincidences of this story, tragedy struck again, as related in Lesar's letter of April 14:

> Dear Mrs. Pitzer:
>
> Please forgive the long delay in providing the materials I promised to send you. The evening we spoke my officemate, a close friend and associate of more than twenty years, died unexpectedly. This was quite a jolt. Additionally, I succeeded him as head of the Assassination Archives and Research Center. . . .

"Bud" Fensterwald had fallen ill just prior to leaving on a trip to Texas, and returned early as his condition worsened. He died on April 2, 1991, apparently of a massive heart attack. Mrs. Pitzer's apprehensions were evidently not soothed by this revelation, as shown in the following excerpts from a telephone conversation with Dan Marvin in 1995.

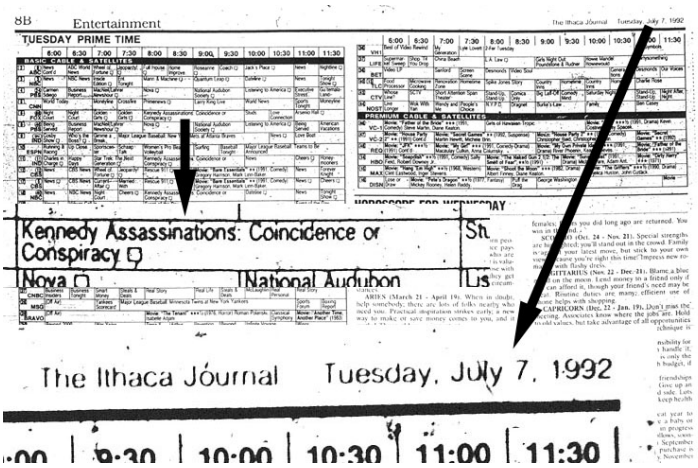
> DM: . . . Your husband wasn't the kind of man that would commit suicide, was he?
> JP: Ha. No way . . . no, he wasn't.
> DM: Would you by chance allow me to - in a letter to [attorney] Jim Lesar - ask him to release all the stuff I sent to go to you, and also ask him to give me a copy of the autopsy?
> JP: Well . . . with his judgment.
> DM: Yes.
> JP: If he thinks that is a good idea.
> DM: Right. One step at a time, like my friend says.
> JP: I trust him, and he was very good to me, and I don't want to step out of line. I am a Navy dependent. I don't really use the Navy for much. I will tell you that the captains and the admirals that were close friends of Bill's have been very good to me. . . .
> DM: Wonderful.
> JP: . . . And one of the admirals' wives said, "I am very proud of you."
> DM: Oh, praise the Lord. Did any of the Navy intelligence people actually contact you and tell you to be quiet about the whole thing?
> JP: They did. They told me not to talk. . .
> DM: [interjects] And when was that?
> JP: . . . to anyone. . . . After his death. But the Navy intelligence [people] were here, and - at the house, and everything - and for twenty-five years, I did not really discuss it. . . .
> DM. Right.
> JP: Only a few close friends have I ever discussed it with. . . . The only thing is that I was . . . Bill was given a top military funeral - everything. And I was given full compensation from the Navy.
> DM: Wonderful.

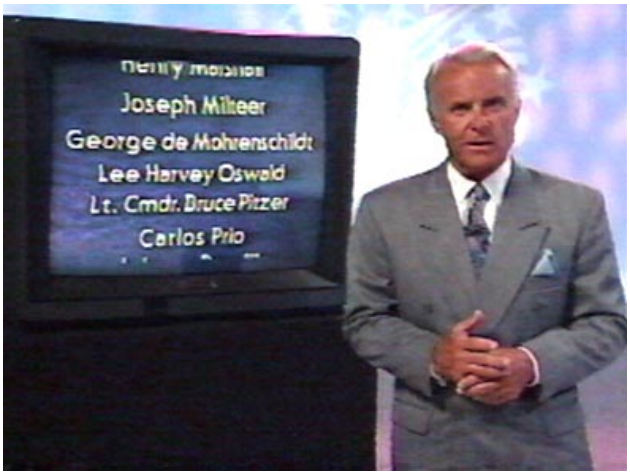
JP: And we have wondered, if more was said about this, if my compensation might be stopped. . . .I am eighty years old at this time, and I - I don't - I really need - You know, I'm not earning at this time.
DM: Right.
JP: And I would hate to see that stopped.

Other family members were privately skeptical of the Navy's conclusions as well. "I know the Navy lied to me," says William Bruce Pitzer II. He came home from college for three weeks to bury his father and settle the estate, and met with the FBI and Rear Admiral G. M. Davis in Davis's office at the top of the NNMC's Building One. When he asked Davis, the commanding officer of the NNMC, to see his father's autopsy photos, he was told that they were "military property" and as such were not available for review. Then, in one of the many ironies of this case, Davis referred to the Kennedy autopsy photos as a precedent. President Kennedy had been brought to the NNMC on the day he died; photos of the two men's bodies had been taken in the very same morgue by the same photographer.

A nephew of Bill Pitzer served as an officer in Vietnam and was shocked to learn of Bill's death. "I knew the man well," he says, adding that Uncle Bill was "my idol." He had entered the military in hopes of following in his uncle's footsteps. He feels somewhat betrayed by the Navy's apparent cover-up of Bill Pitzer's murder. "What was I doing there" in Vietnam, he asks, serving "a country which could do this?"

It is worth noting that it was Livingstone and Groden who first introduced the middle name "Bruce" into the Pitzer meme, as in "William Bruce Pitzer" or sometimes even "Bruce Pitzer," as seen in quotations above. This middle name is an important marker in tracking the spread of this piece of fake news. In July 1992, a combination of the "death lists" from *High Treason* and *Crossfire* aired in a two-hour television special hosted by Robert Conrad, listing "Lt. Cmdr. Bruce [sic] Pitzer." Pitzer's name is listed as the 30th in a total of 42 names.





And it is here that Colonel Marvin finds the story and drives it in newer and stranger directions. But before we follow that thread, there is one more "pre-Marvin" aspect of the case to introduce.

In *High Treason 2*, Harrison Livingstone seems to have been the first to put Pitzer's death in its immediate historical context, namely the squabble between the Justice Department and the Kennedy family for the autopsy photos. A major focus of Livingstone's writings is that many of the Kennedy autopsy photos and x-rays now available to the public are forgeries. Livingstone speculates that Pitzer, a former x-ray technician, may have known something regarding these forgeries.

According to President Kennedy's autopsy report, the undeveloped autopsy photos taken at the Bethesda Naval Hospital morgue by the NNMC's medical photography expert, John T. Stringer, were given directly to Secret Service agent Roy Kellerman. They have been under tight security ever since.

Livingstone noted that Pitzer's death coincided with the Kennedy family's release to the National Archives of materials relating to the late President's autopsy, including photographs and x-rays. Kennedy historian John Davis has also written about the materials transfer, but without reference to the Pitzer case.

In April 1965, Davis writes, as Congress was considering a law "providing for acquisition by the United States of certain items of evidence in the assassination of President Kennedy," Robert Kennedy directed Admiral Burkley to remove all autopsy materials from his Secret Service file cabinet and deliver them to Ms. Lincoln, the late President's secretary, at the National Archives. The law providing for government repossession of these materials was scheduled for passage in the fall of 1965 and would give the Kennedy family one year to comply. The law indeed passed in November 1965. Coincidentally, Captain Marvin said that he had by then been asked by the CIA to assassinate LCDR Pitzer.

Was there a link between a plot on Pitzer's life and the anticipated acquisition of the autopsy materials by the government? If so, what was the connection? What was LCDR Pitzer's exact relationship to these photos?

At some time in 1966, Attorney General Ramsey Clark asked his predecessor Robert Kennedy if he would surrender the materials, as provided for in the recently-passed law. Davis writes that "heated discussions followed, and finally Kennedy agreed in the fall of 1966 to release the autopsy materials."

To be more specific, it was *on the very day* that Pitzer was found dead in his office that the Kennedys, through their attorney Burke Marshall, agreed to deed the autopsy materials to the National Archives. With this agreement, an inventory of the materials was supplied. Two days later, on October 31, the Archives received a footlocker containing many of the promised materials. But some were missing:

> Most of the black-and-white and color photographs and x-rays of the autopsy listed in the inventory were present, but all the physical specimens had vanished. Photographs of the interior cavity of the President's chest were missing, as were most of those taken of the brain during a supplemental examination conducted after the official autopsy. These, of course, were the sites of Kennedy's gunshot wounds . . .

At the very least, we have to admit that it is interesting that the autopsy photos went missing on the same day that Pitzer died, considering that he would later be said to have been in possession of an autopsy film.

4. SOLDIERS

The U.S. Army is a vast organization, but the multitude of crossing paths and overlapping stories that this author discovered during the research for this book makes the Army seem hardly larger than a high school graduating class. If the reader enjoys a tall tale or an intriguing set of coincidences, the following should be worthwhile. But this chapter will do little to further our understanding of the PItzer case *per se*.

Lt. Col. Dan Marvin passed away on January 19th, 2012. Though he routinely misled me and many, many others, even after his death I was still somewhat reluctant to openly criticize him and his "crusades," as he called his efforts to promote what he - to all outward appearances - saw as the "truth." His influence on my life has been both lasting and profound, though not necessarily in ways he would have been proud of. "Colonel Dan," or "Dangerous Dan," as many called him, was a veteran of both the Korean and Vietnam Wars. As a U.S. Army Special Forces captain in 1966, he was awarded the Bronze Star for his heroism in rescuing his wounded men. Though I came to see him as deeply flawed, I initially knew him foremost as a man of honor and I was humbled to have earned his respect. Still inclined to call him a friend, I found myself in emotional conflict while trying to come to terms with his deceptions, and I resisted the conclusion that for a brief time I had allowed my own ambitions and my need for approval to cloud my judgement and to make me a pawn in his schemes for fame. The following is how he told the story of his early life.

Daniel Marvin was born in a poor section of Detroit on October 10, 1933. His father, whom he describes as “a vain, inglorious, hard-drinking womanizer,” left their home on that very day, his young girlfriend at his side, leaving Dan and his brother to be raised by his mother during the depths of the Great Depression. Though accustomed to soup lines and door-to-door begging, Dan grew up headstrong and fiercely independent. As a boy, he says, he “was fearless and gravitated toward any situation involving danger,” regardless of the risks involved or the possible legal consequences.

The Marvin family moved to Chicago when Dan was five. One day when Dan was nine, he and his best friend were walking “Snake Alley” which separated the black and white neighborhoods between 43rd and 47th Streets on the South Side. The two boys found a black man hanging dead from a rope noose in an open garage. Marvin found the spectacle grotesque, but intriguing; he couldn’t resist touching the body, which he discovered was still warm. He would later learn that the black man was hated by locals due to his habit of snatching dogs from their yards and hanging them on fences along Snake Alley.

At the age of eleven, Marvin recruited four other street-wise young toughs from St. Ambrose Catholic School to form a vigilante gang he named the “Blue Jackets.” Their original purpose had been to protect old ladies from the older gangs. Marvin led his gang in ambushes, “using Indian tactics learned from watching Western movies through a roof vent atop the Ken Theater on 47th Street.” After a few victories against the older boys, beating up the high-schoolers became “the thing to do” regardless of what their victims had or hadn’t done to helpless old women. Al Capone, Chicago’s self-proclaimed

“Robin Hood,” was Marvin’s hero. “A typical day would find me skipping school, begging groceries or stealing candy, or jumping rooftop-to-rooftop” among the apartment buildings, he recalls.

Marvin’s gang days didn’t last long before a higher power intervened. He recalls, “The day Mom saw me scoot out our front door carrying a crossbow I’d fashioned from bits and pieces of others’ trash, she decided it was best that we move to the country.” Out in the farmlands, Marvin still managed to find trouble, hopping trains, playing with dynamite, and of course getting in fist-fights. But as the war raged on in Europe and the Pacific, his new role models became the military heroes who fought in that war.

It was an impression that endured. At the age of eighteen, Marvin volunteered for service in the U.S. Army. He had quit school at the age of sixteen to help support his mother and had spent the following two-and-a-half years working as a farm hand, busboy, janitor, and short-order cook. It was now 1952, during the Korean War, and Marvin felt destiny calling him in another direction. He entered the service in June and was assigned to the Indiantown Gap Military Reservation in Pennsylvania. While there, Marvin completed his GED, and attended a leadership course from October to December 1952. He left Indiantown Gap in March 1953 to attend the Engineer Officers Candidate School in Fort Belvoir, Virginia. On August 10, 1953, on completion of Officer Candidate School, Marvin received an honorable discharge from the regular Army and received his U.S. Army Reserve Commission as a Second Lieutenant, immediately re-entering active duty. In February 1954, he was sent overseas to Japan, and on to Korea the following month.

The U.S. Army Special Forces came into being in 1952 and spent nearly ten years in relative obscurity, unnoticed by the media and mistrusted by many of their comrades. The Special Forces, created with the intention of refining American capability and expertise in guerilla warfare, were regarded with suspicion and contempt in some military circles, even within the U.S. Army. In competitive training exercises with their regular Army counterparts, the Special Forces “Red Team” often won by breaking the rules as only unconventional warriors are trained to do. Special Forces were perceived by many other soldiers as undisciplined mavericks, elitist show-offs, or both. Special Forces was and is an elite organization comprised exclusively of three-time volunteers. There were no draftees in Special Forces, only those who chose the Army as their career. A second voluntary step common to all Special Forces candidates was airborne qualification, or in other words, paratrooper training. Non-airborne soldiers were referred to in Special Forces as “legs.” Finally, Special Forces training itself was voluntary.

The distinctive green beret came to be associated with Special Forces as early as 1952, but was suppressed by Army brass as non-regulation attire. Special Forces wore the green beret in defiance of authority until newly-elected President John F. Kennedy officially authorized the wearing of the beret after an official 1961 visit to Fort Bragg. Kennedy gave special attention to Special Forces and emphasized their mission to meet new challenges in warfare with new methods of doing battle. Fort Bragg’s Special Warfare School would come to be named after him.

In November 1963, upon learning of the death of the President, Dan Marvin - by now known as “Dangerous Dan” - volunteered for training as a “Green Beret” in honor of Kennedy’s memory and of Kennedy’s admiration of Special Forces. As one of the Special Forces “triple volunteers,” Marvin began

schooling in January 1964 at the Special Warfare Center in Fort Bragg. He completed his training in April 1964.

While at Fort Bragg, Marvin was indoctrinated in one of America's finest military traditions, one to which he remains committed to this day. Apart from the macho image which Hollywood tried to pin on Special Forces when it finally came into vogue, what makes Marvin proud of his Special Forces service is its commitment to winning the "hearts and minds" of the people who will ultimately determine the outcome of an armed political struggle. While training allied forces in combat and intelligence skills, the Green Berets also assist in the building and rebuilding of hospitals and schoolhouses. Special Forces medics tend to the sick, distribute medicines, and teach disease prevention.

But there are rumors of dark corners in Special Forces where dark activities are organized and executed. The light seems particularly dim in areas concerned with counterterrorism and counterassassination, for in order to defend against these evils, one must know how best to carry them out. Thus, when referring to "counterterrorism and counterassassination training," might one just as well speak of the mirror image of "terrorism and assassination training"? In the following paragraphs, we will hear from those who suggest that the distinction is not clear. The author does not endorse nor vouch for the veracity of any of them.

Americans are conditioned to trust the word of a man who bore arms in service of his country. We need to be more cautious about this. Military officers like a good conspiracy theory as much as the rest of us do, and their rank sometimes gives undue respectability to the tall tales and "fake news" they endorse. Retired Special Forces Colonel James "Bo" Gritz (pronounced "Grites") has identified himself very closely with conspiracy theories regarding the Trilateral Commission, and has himself accused the White House of cooperating with Southeast Asian drug traffickers. He was a colorful fringe presidential candidate in 1992.

Gritz was also an instructor at the Special Warfare Center during LTC Marvin's training there, and makes no bones about the nature of what was being taught: in the early 1960s, "We were teaching assassination and terrorism as part of the UW [unconventional warfare] fields of Direct Action missions and GW [guerrilla warfare]," he wrote in an e-mail to this author. Dan Marvin recalls Gritz, then a Captain, having instructed the enlisted men on these subjects; the officers were instructed by CIA civilians. Gritz confirms that "there were civilians assigned to the UW Department as instructors with UW-SF experience." Gritz's published writings make the claim that he, like Marvin, was well-trained in assassination techniques, having on occasion been equipped by the CIA for such missions. We shall hear much more of him later.

In 1962, novelist Robin Moore, whose bestseller *The Green Berets* was filmed as a jingo extravaganza starring John Wayne, told the Army he wanted to write a book about Special Forces in Vietnam. He was allowed to attend Special Forces training in nearly every subject, including guerilla warfare, counterinsurgency, and psychological operations. The exception, he said, was that he was excluded from one course which "took in the assassination end of guerrilla warfare." Moore was called to testify in 1967 at the court-martial of Howard B. Levy, an Army doctor who had refused to give instruction to

Special Forces medics. While on the stand, the defense referred to part of Army Field Manual 27-10: "It is forbidden to kill [treacherously] or wound treacherously individuals belonging to either hostile nation or Army . . ."

Moore was then asked by the defense, "What is an assassination team?"

> "Well, it's a team trained to hit targets, a target being the term generally used for an individual to be assassinated for political reasons or whatever.. . . It is an integral part of guerrilla warfare just as is medical people trying to help the people of an area to win the hearts and minds of the people. An assassination is also an important aspect. If you have a political chief. . . and you know . . . that he is damaging our effort it only makes sense to assassinate him if possible."

The prosecution then turned to the subject of terrorism, asking, "Have you ever seen a black card with a white eye on it?"

> "Yes," Moore replied enthusiastically. "That was a card which was used by assassination teams to leave on the body of a target or a house of a target after they were assassinated; and they were also used . . . for terror purposes to put them, say, on a Viet Cong political leader's home. They'd tack it up there so he would know he might be assassinated at any time. I have a whole chapter on that subject in *The Country Team*, if you want to get into assassinations, black cards, and all that sort of thing."

Moore's testimony regarding the key roles of assassination and terrorism in American guerrilla warfare was corroborated at the Levy trial by Special Forces Sergeant Donald Duncan. After a proceeding which raised many questions about the legality of many Special Forces activities, Levy was sentenced to three years in prison.

Whether properly referred to as "counter-" or otherwise, Special Forces assassination and terrorism training is secret and is seldom referred to at all; when an outsider such as a Congressman or Senator is necessarily let in on the secret, the emphasis will almost certainly be on the "counter-," lest an unfavorable and perhaps misleading impression be made. Special Forces faced enemy assassination and terror tactics on a regular basis in Vietnam and relied on their specialized training to deal with or prevent such attacks. But the United States military and Central Intelligence Agency have themselves on many occasions resorted to terrorism and assassination in order to achieve military and political goals.

The most infamous examples of U.S. assassination efforts were the many unsuccessful CIA-sponsored plots on Fidel Castro's life and the targeting of other uncooperative heads of state. The practice was first publicly revealed in the 1970s and officially banned by President Ford. Some of the foreign personnel thus employed have gone on to great notoriety. It has recently come to light that Saddam Hussein's "first contacts with U.S. officials date back to 1959, when he was part of a CIA-authorized six-man squad tasked with assassinating then-Iraqi Prime Minister Gen. Abd al-Karim Qasim."

Use of U.S. military personnel as the actual "trigger-men" is less clearly documented, the main problem being that there is no statute of limitations for murder. Like Dan Marvin, Bo Gritz has strongly hinted at

past assassination missions. *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, a book on the Kennedy assassination, contains references to at least three U.S. Army officers who either told of or hinted at having been involved in assassination missions or training. *The Underground Empire* by James Mills includes the story of a former Navy SEAL with a similar background.

In addition to assassination activities, American sponsorship of various terror groups is also on record, though completely unpublicized as such by the government. This disgraceful policy was exposed in the 1980s, when the United States was supporting a terrorist faction of Nicaraguan exiles called the "Contras." Former CIA officer John Stockwell writes,

> Using Argentine trainers at first, and then eventually CIA mercenaries, we armed and directed [a] small Army from bases mostly in Honduras to attack inside Nicaragua and destabilize the country. They systematically blew up granaries, sawmills, bridges, government offices, schools, health centers, mines. They mined roads, ambushed trucks, and raided farms and villages.. . . There were assassinations of hundreds of religious leaders, teachers, health workers, elected officials, and government administrators by U.S.-backed contras. . . . There was the admission by President Ronald Reagan in his national television debate with Walter Mondale in 1984 that the famous "assassination manual," used to train the contras, was the work of the CIA Station Chief in Tegucigalpa.

Similar practices with Cuban exile groups took place during the Kennedy administration and continued long afterward. After the failure at the Bay of Pigs, American-sponsored attacks against the nation of Cuba continued on a smaller scale with Operation MONGOOSE. In addition to raids on military targets, MONGOOSE included attacks on Cuban shipping and industry. These actions, which the United States would categorize as "terrorist" if it were the target rather than the perpetrator, were intended to cripple the Cuban economy.

The Kennedy administration appears to have entertained the most extreme ideas in its passion to be rid of Castro. The most chilling plan to be publicly revealed thus far - especially in light of the events of September 11, 2001 - was "Operation Northwoods," in which it was proposed that a civilian airliner could be blown up and the incident blamed on Cuba as a pretext for invasion. Bobby Kennedy seemed taken by the idea.

"Black terror," in which acts of terrorism are committed against civilian or neutral targets (either personnel or infrastructure) and blamed on an enemy, has been used by the United States on many occasions. One common application is the staging of mock battles in which the unwitting populace is threatened by one group of soldiers dressed in hostile garb and is then "rescued" by another group from the same military force. The late Colonel L. Fletcher Prouty wrote that he had been to "training programs at U.S. military bases where [such] tactics are taught to Americans as well as foreigners." Perhaps the most noteworthy American practitioner of this dark art was Edward Lansdale, a career CIA operative under military cover who used terror tactics in the Philippines to defeat President Quirino and secure victory for Ramon Magsaysay. Lansdale also fought terror with terror. In the mid-1950s, French interests in Vietnam sought revenge over their loss to Lansdale and his sectarian gangs in a Saigon

narcotics turf war. After seeing American officers in Vietnam suffer reprisals, Lansdale responded to the French in kind and "grenades starting going off in front of *their* houses in the evenings."

"Black propaganda" is a less violent, though no less potentially damaging, form of terrorism. Lansdale distributed sensational and terrifying propaganda in the northern areas of Vietnam, warning the Catholic population of violent repression in store for them from the Ho government. For this reason, hundreds of thousands of refugees came to the South, causing massive social, economic and political disruption, and setting the stage for large-scale American intervention. John Stockwell writes of a "massive covert operation" by the CIA designed to prevent Ho Chi Minh from becoming the freely elected leader of a unified Vietnam:

> In Hanoi, anti-Communist propaganda was disseminated to terrify the population. The propaganda campaign targeted the Vietnamese Catholic community in particular. One story that was widely disseminated was that Communists had gone into a Catholic maternity hospital and killed 1000 *[sic]* pregnant mothers.

Col. Prouty wrote of this propaganda campaign,

> This activity of the [Saigon Military Mission] produced one of the most amazing, unusual, and important war-making events of this century: the mass exodus of more than one million Tonkinese natives, presumably Catholics, who were caused to leave their ancestral homeland and pour into the disorganized, strange, and inhospitable southland of Cochin China. . . .
>
> Without a doubt, this mass of Catholic northerners and its unwelcome impact upon the population of the south had more to do with the scope, severity, and duration of the American-made war in Vietnam than anything else.

Ironically, Ed Lansdale is credited with coining the term "civic action," which often is used by Special Forces to describe missions of mercy, but refers generally to efforts to win the loyalty of the people one hopes to defend.

As we shall see, the CIA has occasionally called on adrenalin-dependent or unquestioning individuals in Special Forces to commit or support acts of terrorism, assassination, and other "dirty work" for which their training had made them particularly well-suited. Like the CIA, Special Forces had its roots in the wartime Office of Strategic Services (OSS) which gathered intelligence, ran agents, and parachuted soldiers behind enemy lines. A comment from Colonel George White, a former OSS officer who went on to work for the CIA, is illustrative of some of the personalities drawn to clandestine service. White retired in the mid-1960s and wrote a letter to a friend in which he related, "I toiled wholeheartedly in the vineyards because it was fun, fun, fun. Where else could a red-blooded American boy lie, kill, cheat, steal, rape and pillage with the blessing of the All-Highest?"

“Almost all the instruction in [Fort Bragg’s] guerilla war school was classified,” Dan Marvin recalled in a British-made 1995 documentary, broadcast in America by The History Channel. “The most secret was the top secret training on assassinations and terrorism. At that time we went to a different building that had a double barbed-wire fence around it and guard dogs.”

At this secure facility on Fort Bragg’s “Smoke Bomb Hill,” CIA instructors gave highly classified training on assassination. Early into the course, Marvin said, someone noticed that a chaplain was among the students. As a clergyman, he was neither required nor welcome in that particular course of instruction and was immediately dismissed. Marvin claimed that, as he left, he made a wry comment to the effect of, “Now at least I know how to handle competition back in my parish in Chicago when I get out.”

The assassination instruction, according to Marvin, included film footage and photos of President Kennedy’s death and the surroundings at Dealey Plaza in Dallas. Taking place only weeks after the assassination, this presentation was evidently meant to demonstrate how a nation’s leader could be eliminated and a “lone nut” could be set up to take the blame. Marvin said his class was told that Lee Harvey Oswald had not been involved in the assassination, but was, as he had claimed, merely a “patsy.” Marvin recalls of this instruction,

> We had considerable detail. They had a mock layout of the Plaza and that area, and it showed where the shooters were, and where the routes were to the hospital. . . . [A friend and I both formed] the very distinct impression that the CIA was involved in the Kennedy assassination. During the coffee break, we overheard one of the CIA instructors say to the other, “Things really did go well at Dealey Plaza, didn’t they?” or something to that effect.

Of the inside knowledge that was to be had at Fort Bragg, Colonel Bo Gritz confirms that “many of us [at the Special Warfare School] knew more than we should or wanted about the Kennedy killing.” By the time his training was over, Marvin and his friend strongly suspected that one of the CIA instructors may have been personally involved in the assassination of the President. This was not an easy thing for Marvin to accept, given his reasons for having volunteered for Special Forces. Seeking a way to rationalize the situation, he decided that it must have been done by loyal Americans for just and compelling reasons to which he was not privy, for the good of the country, and perhaps at significant risk to themselves. Perhaps, he thought, high officials had determined Kennedy to be unfit to lead the country in times of crisis.

In the first week of August 1965, Marvin was still at Fort Bragg, assigned to the 6th Special Forces. Marvin said it was then that his commanding officer, Clarence W. Patten, instructed him to meet a CIA official (or a “Company man” as such officials were known in Special Forces) outside the 6th’s headquarters. Another Special Forces captain with whom Marvin had attended assassination training, David Vanek, supposedly joined him outside the building. Marvin cannot recall having seen Vanek for several months prior to this time, and he would not see him again after this day. They approached the meeting point together, Marvin said, each wondering aloud what the meeting was all about, and deciding that it must be a covert mission of some sort.

Many of the CIA missions offered to Special Forces were illegal as well as highly dangerous, and for this reason they were strictly voluntary, Marvin said. In retrospect, Marvin cited "patriotic fervor and a natural bent for danger" as traits which would have made him a likely candidate for such missions. About a hundred yards away, under the shade of some pine trees, stood a man a little less than six feet tall, dressed casually in short sleeves, light slacks and sunglasses appropriate for the August heat and sunshine.

"First the Company man took me aside, showed me his badge, his ID card," Marvin remembered. "Then he asked me if I would volunteer to kill a man, a United States citizen, a naval officer. He didn't tell me who it was at first." Such assignments had been given to Special Forces on other occasions, Marvin said. Because of the personal legal risk involved, Marvin would neither confirm nor deny that he himself had carried out such missions previously. But he would admit that he "had a reputation."

Already scheduled to depart for Vietnam in December, Marvin assumed that the Company man was talking about killing a man overseas. He agreed to take the job and then asked for the name. He was told that the target was Lieutenant Commander William Bruce Pitzer, and that it was important that Pitzer be "terminated" at his workplace before his retirement, which was expected to be not very far in the future. Pitzer was supposedly about to give state secrets to the enemy. In the course of the conversation, it was revealed that Pitzer was stationed in the United States. Marvin had no pity for traitors. Neither was he irrevocably opposed *per se* to assassinating a fellow officer in the United States military. If not for a single circumstance, he would have accepted the mission. However, Marvin could not accept a domestic assassination mission: that was what the Mafia was for. Marvin claimed, as do many others, that the CIA could call on them for jobs in the States.

A manuscript prepared by Marvin in 1998 presents their dialogue in this way:

> "Look, mister," Marvin replied in a very serious tone, "I don't do that sort of thing here in the States. You guys know that. Go talk to the Mafia. They're supposed to do the stateside dirty work."
>
> "Who told you that?" The man's voice wavered, showing his nervousness over the fact that he had revealed the target's name to someone who might not cooperate in the mission.
>
> "Doesn't matter, it's a fact and I know it and you know it and that's what counts. I just can't figure why you're here asking me to make the hit."
>
> "Things change, you know," the visitor said, grasping for some control over a deteriorating situation. "This traitor's got to go and we want you to do it."

Above this apparent departure from standard operating procedure, Marvin said that he was mostly concerned that he would have to be officially listed as AWOL (absent without leave) if he accepted such a domestic mission; otherwise, if he were apprehended, the Army would have difficulty accounting for the time - perhaps several weeks or months - Marvin would necessarily have spent stalking his target and ensuring the safe recovery of whatever secrets the target was preparing to supply the "enemy."

> Dan, in a no-nonsense response, left no doubt in the agent's mind that he was not interested no matter what had changed. "I know how these things work, mister. When I said yes to taking out Pitzer, I felt certain the 'hit' would be in Southeast Asia somewhere. You know I'll be in-country by Christmastime and I know you guys could easily fly me anyplace where I could deal with this guy. You've got Southern Air Transport and Air America to hustle me from one place to another and back. It's different stateside. You know the drill. I accept this job and I disappear without the opportunity to see my wife or even call her and tell her I've gone on a mission. You have me dropped from the rolls as a deserter and my family is left unawares and worrying. No sir."

Whatever the reasons for approaching Marvin on this job instead of a Mafia resource, the mission would have been an extremely sensitive one requiring access to the Naval Hospital. Special Forces soldiers had the skills and background necessary to pull off the infiltration of U.S. military facilities, as they had proved during joint training exercises with their regular Army counterparts. Despite the apparent departure from convention, perhaps the choice of a Special Forces volunteer rather than a Mafia asset would not have been unreasonable.

Marvin said that the Agency official was obviously irritated that the target's name had been disclosed to a man who no longer had an operational "need to know." He also says that the man knew he could count on Marvin to "forget" both his name and Pitzer's. The official then turned around and headed toward Captain Vanek, who had been waiting some 40 feet away, just out of earshot.

Whatever the Company man and Vanek discussed that day was not Marvin's concern at the time, so he went about his business.

In 1966, when LCDR Pitzer died, Captain Marvin was half a world away on the Vietnamese-Cambodian border. That much is certain. After that, the details become blurry, as in subsequent years LTC Marvin seems to have conflated his memories of his tour of duty with the plot of *Apocalypse Now;* indeed, an early draft of what would eventually become Marvin's book was a screenplay called "Apocalypse at An Phu." We'll tell the story the way he might have.

Capt. Dan Marvin and Maj. Phoi Van Le, Vietnam, 1966

Marvin came to the Vietnamese district of An Phu in the final week of 1965. On Christmas Day in Can Tho, Lt. Col. William Tuttle had offered Marvin the leadership of A-424, a Special Forces team at Camp Dan Nam. Included in the offer was the secret mission of taking the war over the border into Cambodia, where the enemy Viet Cong were able to operate with the consent of the Cambodian government, beyond the reach of Vietnamese and American forces. The mission was the result of an arrangement between the CIA and the Vietnamese government and was secret because the Johnson administration was at the time denying that any enemy sanctuaries existed in Cambodia. Marvin accepted the mission eagerly even though he was explicitly told that if he were caught, nothing would be done to bail out him or his men.

On arriving in An Phu, Marvin learned more. His men told him that due to a White House arrangement with Cambodia, neither the American forces nor Vietnamese authorities were allowed to inspect commercial vessels coming up the Mekong River separating Cambodia and Vietnam. Captain Jim Miles, Commander of the A Team at neighboring Camp Tan Chau, told Marvin that his men had taken pictures of weapons being loaded onto North Vietnamese Army trucks from a heavily-guarded ship ostensibly carrying “toys.” In all likelihood, the weapons had been bound for Bung Ven, a large enemy sanctuary a mere three kilometers from the border. It was with great satisfaction that no later than five minutes into the New Year, SF Detachment A-424 began tossing 81mm high explosive rounds into Viet Cong positions in Cambodia.

With the enemy strongholds weakened, they began to reclaim the Vietnamese territory which had been held by the VC as a buffer zone.

For several months, Marvin fought alongside the Hoa Hao people of the area, gaining their trust while gaining the suspicion of his immediate superior, who knew nothing of Marvin’s secret mission and regarded Marvin as dangerously independent. Colonel Brewer had sent two Navy patrol boats into An Phu and Marvin had ordered them away. Aside from A-424, few Americans - military or civilian - were welcome in Marvin’s area of operations.

Then, one hot day in June, CIA officer Walter Mackem allegedly came to visit. Marvin had seen Mackem before, though he couldn’t remember when at first. Five months earlier, Mackem and his six-man “counter-terrorist” team had been stopped on their way to An Phu and brought into Marvin’s camp. Mackem’s group had been on the hunt for Viet Cong sympathizers and were known neither for their diplomacy nor their commitment to due process. Marvin had refused them entry into An Phu and sent them away.

The purpose of Mackem’s June visit concerned Prince Norodom Sihanouk, the Cambodian head of state who had severed diplomatic relations with Washington barely a year before. Marvin was to engineer the assassination of the Prince and make it look like the Viet Cong had done it. The site of the killing was to be 160 kilometers inside Cambodia, and the Prince would be there in less than two weeks. Though Marvin regarded the short-notice job as a “suicide mission,” he entertained the idea. He was also reluctant to risk the lives of the Vietnamese volunteers, who would have to perform the most dangerous roles in the mission. After some consideration, he agreed to plan the mission, but only to carry it out on

the condition that President Johnson would publicly announce a change in policy with regard to the enemy sanctuaries in Cambodia. The Mekong River traffic would have to become subject to inspection as well.

At a third confrontational meeting with Mackem, when it became clear to Marvin that the concessions from the White House were not forthcoming, he refused to accept the mission. It was then that his situation began to deteriorate rapidly. Soon, Marvin said, A-424 and its Hoa Hao allies found themselves in danger of attack from a South Vietnamese Army regiment dispatched by the CIA, who had announced that Captain Marvin had turned renegade and was leading the Hoa Haos against Saigon. It was thanks to the intervention of Vietnamese General Dang Van Quang, Marvin wrote, that he and his unit were spared a bloody battle with their comrades. That dramatic story is found in Marvin's book*, Expendable Elite* (TrineDay, 2003).

Setting aside the factual problems in Dan Marvin's story for the moment, let us note for now that it has some interesting parallels with that of Special Forces Captain John McCarthy. It is worth noting that Marvin on at least one occasion put words in McCarthy's mouth in an attempt to bolster his own claims, and McCarthy rebuked him for this. I have made little effort to verify McCarthy's own story, but will summarize it here anyway. McCarthy also served in Vietnam, was involved in CIA-directed cross-border operations into Cambodia, and says he sought Sihanouk as a "target of opportunity." In the mid-1960s McCarthy had worked with the CIA, training Taiwanese *agents provocateurs* in nighttime high-altitude parachute drops and submarine infiltration into the Communist Chinese mainland. In September 1967, he was assigned as the CIA's case officer (agent handler) for Project Cherry, a "black terror" program in which Cambodian exiles would parachute into Cambodia dressed as North Vietnamese and commit acts of terrorism calculated to disrupt the Viet Cong's ability to use Cambodian sanctuaries. These Cambodian agents, part of an anti-Sihanouk exile group known as the Khmer Serei, were also on standby in case an opportunity arose to assassinate the Prince. Cherry was comprised of twelve men divided into three teams of four. Each team consisted of two "spotters" and two "shooters." The "principal agent," or coordinator, for the twelve was a man named Inchin Lam, known to the Americans as "Jimmy."

As Cambodia was a neutral country, Project Cherry was extremely sensitive. The six American members of Cherry were given fake civilian names and ID cards issued by the U.S. Embassy in Saigon. They were not allowed to associate openly with any American military personnel. Unknown to McCarthy, Cherry and similar CIA projects ("Pine," "Oak," "Elm," and "Birch") were being undertaken against the express orders of President Johnson, who in late June 1966 forbade any American support of the Khmer Serei. David MacMichael, a full-time CIA man, was McCarthy's opposite number on Cambodia's opposite border. MacMichael ran Khmer Serei cross-border operations out of the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok, and in later years told Dan Marvin about Capt. McCarthy.

In November 1967, McCarthy says, "things started to go South." He was told that Cherry was being discontinued for budgetary reasons. In the process of shutting the operation down, McCarthy was riding late at night with Lam to a facility near Saigon. A bullet came through the windshield, killing the Cambodian. In a bizarre turn of events, McCarthy was convicted of Lam's murder in a top-secret court martial, yet was neither dismissed from the service, nor reduced in rank, nor yet denied any of his pay.

He spent two years in Fort Leavenworth before being exonerated under circumstances which, as we will see, cast an interesting light on the deaths of William Pitzer and the Kennedy brothers. Ironically, McCarthy shared a cell at Leavenworth with Howard Levy, the Army doctor court-martialed for refusing to instruct Special Forces.

The reader will please permit an aside on a related subject before we return to the subject of Captain McCarthy. CIA misuse of Special Forces has been rumored to extend far beyond assassinations and terrorism. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, documents and testimony came to light indicating that the 7th and 10th Special Forces Groups had, under the direction of CIA agents Ed Wilson and Frank Terpil, been engaged in a conspiracy which had originally centered on drug smuggling but which ultimately expanded into illegal wiretapping, obstruction of justice, and perhaps even murder in hopes of maintaining its secrecy. Writing now from a post-2016 perspective, it occurs to me for the first time that these documents may or may not have been "active measures" prepared by the Kremlin to sow greater mistrust of an already untrustworthy United States government. To be most effective, such propaganda will contain enough underreported truth to intrigue the reader into accepting its payload of lies.

One of these documents is called the "Affidavit of Edward P. Cutolo," allegedly written by the commanding officer of the 10th SFG just prior to his death in 1980. Though Colonel Cutolo's authorship of the "Affidavit" - at least in its extant form - may be in some doubt, the document itself has been vouched for by, among others, Special Forces Colonel Bo Gritz. If not genuine, the affidavit is believed at least to be based on materials prepared by Colonel Cutolo for release in the event of his death. The chain of possession appears to have gone from Cutolo to an associate named Paul Neri in the National Security Agency; after Neri's death in 1990, the affidavit was forwarded anonymously to retired Colonel Gritz, after which the document finally gained more widespread distribution. Gritz was personally acquainted with Cutolo and two other Special Forces colonels (A.J. Baker and James "Nick" Rowe) who were murdered in the course of investigating the events described in the affidavit. According to Colonel Gritz, who had also conducted a private inquiry on the matter, the information in the affidavit itself is "ironclad." In his own efforts to corroborate the Cutolo affidavit, journalist Mike Ruppert has gathered over 100 pages of supporting documentation. Unfortunately, Ruppert's credibility is also highly questionable.

The Cutolo affidavit begins by describing "Operation Watchtower," a series of clandestine military missions from Panama into Colombia, performed at the direction of Edwin Wilson and Frank Terpil of the Central Intelligence Agency. The first mission took place in December 1975, under the command of Colonel James "Bo" Baker. The purpose of these missions was to establish a series of radio beacons inside Colombia which would enable cocaine-carrying cargo planes to fly undetected from Bogota, Colombia to Albrook Air Station in Panama. Baker was uneasy with the mission and expressed his misgivings to Bo Gritz, his close friend who was also in Panama at the time. Baker had been one of Gritz's students at Fort Bragg. Gritz's account contains detail on the Watchtower missions that the Cutolo affidavit does not:

> The operation consisted primarily of erecting and maintaining radio navigation aids at three critical locations beginning in Bogota, Colombia. A second tower was near Turibo, a tiny isolated town of 7,000 on the Uroba Gulf. . . . The final nav-aid allowed all-weather . . . navigation for CIA-contract aircraft flying beneath the radar mask at less than 500 feet above the ground from Colombia into Panama to land safely at Albrook Army Airfield.
>
> The cargo planes were loaded with Colombian cocaine. The hazardous low-level flights were required to keep the operation secret from the Colombian, Panamanian, and Canal Zone authorities not on the payroll. [Manuel] Noriega received 30-35 flights per month and arranged for distribution of the cargo while washing [laundering] the proceeds. . . .
>
> [Baker] was following official orders in deploying his teams during the month of December [1975] to install, maintain, secure, and operate the nav[igational] aids. He had been assured by Army authorities that Ed Wilson and . . . Frank Terpil were employed by the CIA to conduct what was dubbed "OPERATION WATCHTOWER." While it had all the proper sanctions, it didn't look legit to Baker. . . . [He] had many valid questions and some serious reservations. . . . Baker turned the Watchtower missions over to Ed Cutolo.

Ed Cutolo allegedly commanded a second mission in February 1976 involving some 30 flights, and a third in March involving 40 flights. According to the Cutolo affidavit, these aircraft were met in Panama by Ed Wilson, Panama's Colonel Manuel "Tony" Noriega (the drug-trafficking General later targeted in George Bush's 1989 invasion of Panama), and Mike Harari, Noriega's Israeli advisor. Cutolo became the commanding officer of Fort Devens' 10th SFG in 1978. At this time, Ed Wilson supposedly came to Cutolo's office at the 10th's headquarters and instructed him to initiate "Operation Orwell," which consisted of civilian surveillance operations designed to protect the secrecy of Watchtower. Accordingly, the affidavit states, "intense surveillance was undertaken by my office" against religious leaders, politicians, judicial figures, and law enforcement officials. Targets included Ted Kennedy, John Kerry, Michael Dukakis, and House Speaker Tip O'Neill; the Governors' Residences of Massachusetts, New York, Maine, and New Hampshire; and the cathedrals of New York and Boston. In total, 8,400 police departments, 1,370 churches and 17,900 citizens were said to have been monitored.

Mike Ruppert, the aforementioned journalist who has done extensive research into the Cutolo Affidavit, believes in the affidavit's general accuracy but questions its authenticity due to its reference to the Panamanian National Guard (*La Guardia National* or LGN) as the "Panamanian Defense Forces," or "PDF," which Ruppert says were not so named until after Cutolo's death. This author noted a similar reference in Gritz's autobiography, *Called To Serve*. Since Gritz was a key person in the affidavit's chain of possession - all the people named as holding the document previously having died by the time of its becoming public - this point needed to be explored further. When asked about the apparent anachronisms, Gritz replied, "The PDF/LGN was commonly interchanged in conversation certainly while I was in Panama and possibly years before that. I personally referred to "La Guardia" when conducting training operations with them and reverted to "PDF" in matters of classified U.S. discussions."Gritz continued, "If the [affidavit] document is flawed it is in its use as a defense (embellishment?) instrument for the man who murdered his wife." This was a reference to the case of Private Bill Tyree, which Ruppert has investigated extensively in connection with the Cutolo Affidavit. According to the affidavit,

Tyree had volunteered to join the Orwell surveillance teams. Tyree had been on the Watchtower missions, left the service, and had since re-enlisted with the 10th SFG. Unfortunately for all concerned, Tyree's wife Elaine kept diaries in which she detailed rumors of criminal activity by military personnel. SP4 Earl M. Peters was named throughout the diaries in such activities, one example being insurance fraud. Allegedly. The next two paragraphs are also unverified claims of the Cutolo affidavit and Tyree himself.

In October 1978, Tyree went to his Sergeant and commanding officer, complaining of death threats to him and his wife. Cutolo put the Tyree residence under surveillance to determine if Orwell might become compromised as a result of these threats. On Jan 30, 1979 Elaine Tyree was murdered. As police entered the apartment in response to her scream, Cutolo's surveillance team saw SP4 Peters leaving the apartment via the bedroom window. The following day, Tyree explained to Cutolo about Elaine's diaries and admitted that Elaine had written about Watchtower and Orwell, though she hadn't learned it from him. Cutolo had the diaries taken from the apartment. Tyree was arrested for the murder of his wife on Feb. 13, to stand trial in a civilian court. Earl Peters became the prosecution's star witness. Cutolo supported this arrangement out of some twisted concept of security precautions. A December 1979 letter to Cutolo on the District Attorney's letterhead stated that, according to arrangement, Earl Peters would not be arrested, neither could he be without a special order of the Massachusetts Supreme Court. His part of the bargain being thus fulfilled, the D.A. then asked for Cutolo to surrender "all audio-visual material you have collected concerning me" *[sic]*, and for good measure suggested the destruction of the surveillance records on the Tyree residence. Tyree was convicted on February 29, 1980 and is serving a life sentence.

On July 23, 1990, Bill Tyree received a copy of the Cutolo affidavit as the apparent consequence of the death of the above-mentioned Paul Neri. Tyree followed up that September with an affidavit of his own. In it, he describes his participation in the first Watchtower mission as a soldier in the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg. Three teams of six or seven men flew from Albrook Air Station into Colombia to put in place the beacons described by Cutolo and Gritz. These teams, he was told, consisted of infantrymen from the 82nd and members of the 7th SFG, also based in Fort Bragg. Teams for subsequent missions seemed to consist of international mercenaries. In all three missions, states Tyree, "I personally witnessed members of the Panamanian Defense Force (PDF) unload the bails *[sic]* of cocaine from the aircraft into the tarmac of Albrook Air Station. Edwin Wilson was there. Colonel Noriega and Mike Harari were there."

Tyree's affidavit provides further details on Operation Orwell. Tyree had been on ten surveillance assignments, two of which were of prominent New England civilian officials. The first was the mayor of Lunenburg, Massachusetts and the second, ironically enough, was the District Attorney who would later put him in prison. Tyree tells of a confrontation with Earl Peters just prior to his arrest. Cutolo had shown Tyree Army photos proving that Peters had been in the apartment on the day of the murder, leaving via the window. Tyree says that when he confronted Peters regarding his part in Elaine's murder, Peters drew his pistol and aimed it at Tyree's chest, admitting to the murder and telling him it was because of the diaries.

Bill Tyree's affidavit is further corroborated by that of one Kenneth Garcy, a Special Forces soldier who was assigned to the 10th SFG with Tyree. Garcy confirms the existence and nature of Operation Orwell and has much to say by way of exonerating Tyree and implicating Peters in Elaine Tyree's murder.

Edwin Wilson and Frank Terpil were not just made up names. Around the same time as Operation Orwell was taking place, Wilson and Terpil were using retired Special Forces to train terrorists in Libya. They had recruited the Special Forces men through a contact near Fort Bragg. Wilson and Terpil were also smuggling arms and explosives to Libya, and a grand jury had been convened on this very matter by the time Wilson allegedly came to Cutolo's office to instigate Operation Orwell. Indictments were returned in April 1980, followed by Terpil's conviction in absentia, and Wilson's 1982 arrest and subsequent conviction. Wilson had joined the CIA in 1955, leaving full-time regular employment and moving to contract employment in 1964. In 1971, when his CIA contract was dropped for budgetary reasons, he went to work for the Navy. The Navy eventually dropped him in the mid-1970s, and it was then that his most infamous activities began. The obvious question is how far up the CIA chain of command Wilson's activities were known and/or approved. Indeed, Wilson's defense lawyers argued that their client had been acting on behalf of the CIA. Unfortunately for Wilson, his official resignation from the CIA to become an "independent" agent was undertaken precisely in order to make that assertion difficult - if not impossible - to prove.

Throughout the 1970s and even up to the time of his indictment, Wilson remained in contact with his former CIA case officer, Thomas Clines. The relationship would prove fatal to Clines' Agency career. Through Clines, Wilson became close to Ted Shackley, a high-ranking CIA officer who rose to the second highest position in the agency's covert operations bureaucracy before his association with Wilson effectively ended his career as well. Mike Ruppert reported the following in January 2000:

> While Ed Wilson was training and equipping [Libyan dictator Muammar] Qadaffy, he was also lunching with [Ted] Shackley. He was providing personal airplanes for Air Force General Richard Secord to fly around in, and loaning large sums of money to Shackley's sidekick, Tom Clines. His company, Consultants International, once a CIA proprietary, which Wilson "bought" in 1971, was still receiving referral contacts from the Agency. And while former U.S. Army Green Berets in Wilson's employ were teaching Libyans how to blow things up, Clines, a high-ranking active CIA officer, was walking Wilson employee Douglas Schlachter through the halls at CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia. In 1977 Clines even introduced Schlachter to Jimmy Carter's newly appointed CIA Director, Navy Admiral Stansfield Turner. Exclusive parties, horseback riding events and private hunting parties were held for the "A" list at Wilson's expansive Mount Airy farm in Northern Virginia. . . .
>
> The CIA - according to incredibly detailed reports compiled by the BATF, the FBI, and the CIA's own Inspector General - was "operationally tasking" Wilson and his employees to accomplish specific objectives in Libya before, during and after delivery of the C-4 [explosives]. Both the Justice Department and the CIA had witness statements that the CIA had been tasking and debriefing Wilson's employees at exactly the same time that Wilson's employees were teaching Qadaffy's people how to blow things up. . . .

> The defense was simple: Edwin P. Wilson, a loyal American whose company, Consultants International, received CIA referral business throughout the period, had been sanctioned by the CIA for the purposes of gathering intelligence, gaining access to Soviet military equipment in Libyan hands and other murky objectives. If Ed Wilson had not been sanctioned, he certainly believed that he had been, and the litany of his CIA contacts reasonably justified that belief. It was more than enough to raise doubt in the mind of the jury.

Shackley appeared before the grand jury in the Wilson case, denying that his contact with Wilson had been anything more than social. Watchtower and Orwell were never brought up during the Wilson trial. If Clines and Shackley had been in on an operation such as "Watchtower", it would have not been out of character for them.

Together, Clines and Shackley had been involved in some of the Agency's most infamous undertakings. Both men were codefendants in a conspiracy-theory-*qua*-lawsuit (Avirgan v. Hull) painting them as key figures in a global, decades-long criminal enterprise. The narrative behind this suit contained enough factual scandal to get quite a bit of attention. And, like the Cutolo affidavit, it would have been a propaganda coup with which the Kremlin would have been pleased.

During the early 1960s, Shackley was head of the CIA's Miami station, code-named JMWAVE. There, he and his staff (including case officer Clines) were responsible for collecting intelligence on - and directing activities against - Castro's Cuba. Raiding parties went to Cuba by boat and airplane from bases in Florida. JMWAVE, in its secret location at the University of Miami, was the CIA's largest station in the continental United States. Long before al-Qaeda and ISIS, the U.S. government was sponsoring a Cuban terrorist navy on its own shores.

The CIA made arrangements with Florida law enforcement at all levels - from the Dade County Sheriff's office to the FBI and Coast Guard - to look the other way and release any of its people who got themselves into trouble, whether they got pulled over on the highway with a station wagon full of small arms, or showed up on the beach with a boatload of illegal aliens. Pilots working for CIA fronts - of which there were dozens - would be fed information from Agency contacts in the military on how to time their flights to pass through temporary holes in U.S. radar systems.

Of course, such clandestine activity provided perfect cover for drug smuggling. The smuggling ran rampant in the anti-Castro campaign, as it had in many Agency-operated covert wars before then and as it has in many such operations since. After the Kennedy assassination and the death of the Cuba project under Lyndon Johnson, Shackley transferred to Laos.

In 1965, Shackley became the CIA's Deputy Chief of Station in Laos and brought in some of his former Miami CIA colleagues, including Clines. Here in Southeast Asia, a core group would be formed which would surface twenty years later in the Iran-Contra scandal. In Laos, Shackley directed an Army of Hmong tribesmen against the communist Pathet Lao forces. The Hmong, under the leadership of General Vang Pao, grew opium as a cash crop; both the CIA and the French colonialists before them had bought the Hmong opium to gain their loyalty.

A Special Forces colonel who was in Laos in early 1965 told journalist Daniel Hopsicker that up until that time, the opium bought from the tribesmen was disposed of in a monthly bonfire. He stated that the arrival of Ted Shackley, Oliver North, and Richard Secord coincided with a change in procedures; orders were given to store the opium for removal to another site instead of burning it. Secord sent his Air Force planes to bomb Vang Pao's opium-growing rivals. The opium was flown aboard CIA-owned Air America planes from the hills of Laos to factories in Long Tieng and Vientiane, the country's capitol, where it was refined into morphine or heroin. From there the product went to Saigon. Shackley is alleged to have had an account with Nugan Hand bank where his percentage of the proceeds was deposited.

The Nugan Hand Bank was incorporated in Sydney, Australia in 1973 by Frank Nugan and Michael Hand. Nugan was an Australian lawyer. Hand was an American former Green Beret and CIA agent who had worked for Ted Shackley at Long Tieng. The Nugan Hand bank successfully recruited some of the intelligence community's most prestigious members to manage it and market its services, surviving for eight years before collapsing in a scandal that makes the Enron debacle look unremarkable in comparison. In addition to leaving depositors penniless in the collapse, Nugan Hand was exposed as the launderer of funds for millions of dollars in drug money. Even more disturbing, the institution seemed closely connected to the CIA:

> The bank's founders, along with Nugan and Hand, were four officials of Air America, a CIA proprietary. . . . The director of [Nugan Hand's] Chang Mai [Thailand] office claimed on Australian television that he handled $2.6 million in less than six months. The money was garnered from the drugs transiting the area. The bank, he put it starkly, was a laundry for [Hmong] tribesmen and other poppy growers. The Bangkok office was run by the former CIA chief of station in Bangkok. . . . Records from the Bangkok office were full of descriptions of troop deployments and arms sales in the region. Investigators found it hard to believe Nugan Hand was just a bank and not an abettor of U.S. intelligence.

Nugan Hand had facilitated the smuggling of drugs not only by "laundering" the money (that is, obscuring its origins), but also by providing a channel for cash to avoid Australian export controls on its way to Bangkok to buy the drugs. As its operations expanded, it continued to attract former intelligence officials, including William Colby, who became the bank's legal counsel in the late 1970s, and Dale Holmgren, who had been chairman of Air America's predecessor, Civil Air Transport. Nugan Hand's rise in the later 1970s coincided with the exposure and closing of another CIA-connected bank, owned by Paul Helliwell. Helliwell had served U.S. intelligence in China as an officer in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), which was the wartime forerunner of the CIA. Helliwell, Howard Hunt, Lou Conein, and Mitch WerBell were part of a team that paid its informants in opium. After China had been won from the Japanese and lost to the Communists, the Chinese Nationalist (Koumintang or KMT) army retreated into Burma. With the help of Helliwell and the CIA, the KMT continued to fight, depending heavily on opium crops to buy its supplies. Throughout the 1950s, Civil Air Transport flew the opium, the KMT fought the battles and grew the opium, the Chinese Nationalist government in Taiwan paid for it all, and Helliwell - by then a lawyer in Miami - organized the shipment of arms to the KMT through Sea Supply, Inc., which was a CIA-front company in Miami. This arrangement dovetailed into the CIA operations in the 1960s across the border from Burma in Laos. In these the KMT were replaced by the Hmong, Civil Air

Transport by Air America, and Sea Supply, Inc. by companies like Edwin Wilson's Maritime Consulting. Helliwell's Castle Bank was exposed in the late 1970s as a "laundry for both CIA and organized crime funds," some of which Helliwell skimmed in order "to pay off men close to party leaders in Washington."

The association between North, Shackley, Clines, Secord, a handful of their anti-Castro Cuban associates from Miami, and the pilots from Air America would survive the Southeast Asian years and come again to prominence during the Iran-Contra affair of the 1980s. And the drug trafficking rumors would persist in that scandal as well. In the 1980s, the Christic Institute, a public interest law firm, charged that Shackley and others helped sell the Laotian guerrillas' opium to Miami Mafia boss Santos Trafficante in return for a "piece of the action." David MacMichael, the CIA officer mentioned previously, was one of Christic's chief investigators. Nonetheless, the antics of the Christic Institute's head lawyer and publicist in the case, Daniel Sheehan, brought no small amount of ridicule upon their cause. A 1994 biography of Shackley paints Sheehan as a rumor-monger and reckless opportunist, and his case as a "grand unified theory" of all conspiracies, portraying Shackley as a modern Professor Moriarty pulling all the strings. In fairness to Sheehan, it must be pointed out that, for a period of several years, in nearly every place in which the CIA was involved in large-scale dirty deeds - especially drug trafficking - one does not have to look far to find a connection to Shackley.

Colonel Gritz came across some highly damning information on Shackley while searching for American prisoners of war in Southeast Asia's "Golden Triangle," the opium-rich area where the borders of Burma, Laos, and Thailand converge. Someone had given the White House a detailed report alleging that Burmese warlord Khun Sa had information on American POWs. In 1986, Gritz led a team to investigate, reporting back to National Security Council Staff Officer Tom Harvey. The report about a POW connection turned out to be false, but the trip was nonetheless worthwhile. General Khun Sa and his Army controlled a large portion of what was then the largest opium-producing region of the world. Gritz's account of his adventure with Khun Sa (whose Chinese name is Chang Chi-fu) is in basic harmony with what little credible information has been published elsewhere regarding the General.

In conversation with Gritz, the General ridiculed American anti-drug efforts and offered to sell the U.S. government the region's entire crop for no more money than was being spent on eradication programs. For only a tenth of that amount, in addition to an American trade mission in his territory and the help of the Peace Corps in making the transition to alternate crops, he would guarantee the eradication of the opium poppy in his region. Upon hearing the offer to sell the opium to the U.S. government, Gritz chuckled and told Khun Sa that he did not believe his government would want to become the world's largest buyer of opium and heroin. To his utter shock, Khun Sa replied that it already was! He added to the bargain that he would name every American official he had dealt with over a twenty-year period. Gritz returned to America and reported back to Tom Harvey, asking him what he thought about Khun Sa's offer. After a long silence, Harvey replied "Bo, there's no one here who supports that." Gritz pressed on, reminding Harvey of the so-called "War on Drugs." Harvey merely reiterated his position. Gritz came to understand this response when, in May 1987, he returned to Burma to interview Khun Sa again. For obvious business reasons, the General did not name his current partners in drug trafficking, but he did name several former contacts. These included Ted Shackley, whom Khun Sa claimed was in charge of U.S. involvement in the Southeast Asian opium trade during the period 1965-1975; Santos

Trafficante, the South Florida Mafia boss, who handled the distribution of the product in the U.S.; and Richard Armitage, who in recent years served as number two in George W. Bush's State Department under Colin Powell. Armitage, the General said, handled the financial transactions with the Australian banks. Gritz reports that he has since received confirmation of Khun Sa's claims from a CIA man with whom he had been long acquainted.

The U.S. government responded to Gritz's discovery in typical and expeditious fashion: indictments were returned against both Gritz and Khun Sa. Khun Sa could thus never come to the U.S. to testify. Gritz was to be discredited. After Gritz was acquitted of passport fraud and Neutrality Act violations charges in 1989, U.S. Attorney William Maddox identified the instigator behind Gritz's persecution. Maddox told the press that "George Bush called me up and told me to get Bo Gritz."

This author noted that in his preface to the 2003 edition of Alfred McCoy's *The Politics of Heroin*, McCoy had also made a dangerous trek into the wilds of Southeast Asia, meeting with Khun Sa in 1994. In preparing this book, I asked McCoy for his thoughts on the allegations made by Khun Sa as recorded by Gritz. He replied that Khun Sa is "a wily chameleon, playing skillfully to the needs and preconceptions of interviewers: ruthless warlord for ABC news, drug reformer for filmmaker Adrian Cowell, and eye-witness to global conspiracy for Col. Gritz."

Distinguishing truth from fiction is, alas, never simple.

And now, in a rather roundabout way, we will tie McCarthy's story back into the Pitzer case. As McCarthy told it to JFK researcher James DiEugenio :

In February 1970 Captain John McCarthy's lawyer, Stewart Davis, was having coffee in the Pentagon cafeteria when he was approached by an attorney who worked for the office of Dr. Pierre Finck. As head of the Wound Ballistics Pathology Branch of the AFIP, it was Dr. Finck's job to review military records of autopsies in cases of violent death. The attorney asked Davis if he had seen the McCarthy file. This came as a great surprise, because Davis had been told by Finck that no such file existed. Davis was taken into Finck's office, shown a file and a copier, and then left alone.

In this file were two pieces of evidence tending to exonerate McCarthy. One was a recantation by the government's expert witness against McCarthy, a forensic pathologist named Captain Richard Mason. He was wrong about the wound having been a contact wound, he wrote, and about the caliber of the weapon used. Secondly, there was an FBI report sent to Mason after McCarthy's conviction regarding a bullet fragment sent by Mason for analysis at the FBI laboratory. The FBI had found quartz on the tip of the bullet, indicating that the bullet had struck some other object before the victim, thus ruling out the alleged muzzle-to-neck contact wound which McCarthy was accused of having inflicted on Inchin Lam. As a result of this evidence, the judgement against McCarthy was finally overturned.

How interesting that one of the men responsible for the official findings of guilt in the assassination of the President appears to have obstructed justice in another murder case. As mentioned previously, Dr. Pierre Finck was one of the three military doctors who participated in the John F. Kennedy autopsy.

Summarizing records of the House Select Committee on Assassinations, Harrison Livingstone relates the circumstances in which Dr. Finck became involved in the Kennedy autopsy:

> Dr. Boswell indicated that he and Dr. Humes decided during the autopsy that Dr. Pierre Finck should be brought in from the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology. Previously, the AFIP had offered the services of anyone on their staff. Humes and Boswell decided on Finck when they first examined the body and recognized that the main problem was bullet wounds. Finck had little active experience in actual autopsies. His job was reviewing thousands of files of violent death. By Finck's testimony, the brain had been removed by the time he arrived at 8:30.

In 1969, Dr. Finck was called to testify at the trial of Clay Shaw, the only man ever brought to trial for participation in the assassination of President Kennedy. Finck testified thus:

> Finck: I will remind you that I was not in charge of . . .
> Q: You were a co-author of the [autopsy] report, though, weren't you, doctor?
> Finck: Wait. I was called as a consultant to look at these wounds; that doesn't mean I am running the show.
> Q: Was Dr. Humes running the show?
> Finck: Well, I heard Dr. Humes stating that - he said, "Who's in charge here?" and I heard an Army general, I can't remember his name, stating, "I am." You must understand that in those circumstances, there were law enforcement officers, military people with various ranks and you have to coordinate the operation according to directions.
> Q: But you were one of the three qualified pathologists standing at the autopsy table, were you not, doctor?
> Finck: Yes, I was.
> Q: Was this Army general a qualified pathologist?
> Finck: No.
> Q: Was he a doctor?
> Finck: No, not to my knowledge.
> Q: Can you give me his name, Colonel?
> Finck: No, I can't. I don't remember.

Later in the trial, Finck is asked:

> Q: Colonel, did you feel that you had to take orders from the Army general that was there directing the autopsy?
> Finck: No, because there were others, there were admirals.
> Q: There were admirals?
> Finck: Oh, yes, there were admirals, and when you are a lieutenant colonel in the Army you just follow orders, and at the end of the autopsy we were specifically told - as I recall, it was by Admiral Kenney, the Surgeon General of the Navy - this is subject to verification - we were specifically told not to discuss the case.

Finck was asked about the wound in the President's upper back, which he misleadingly describes as an entry wound on the "neck." The wound was actually in the back (specifically, 5-6 inches below the collar line), but Warren Commission member (and future President) Gerald Ford had altered the wording of a staff member's notes from "back" to "back of neck," in effect raising the location of wound in the commission's final report. This slight change of wording was key to the falsification of the report as a whole. In order to keep the number of bullet tracks to a minimum - and thus preserve the plausibility of a single shooter firing from the rear - the Warren Commission's position was that this "neck" wound was a bullet entry wound corresponding to an "exit" wound in the throat. The Commission refused to recognize the fact that this throat wound was correctly identified as one of two frontal entry wounds in Dallas.

According to Dr. Finck's examination made at the time of autopsy, the rear back/neck wound was very shallow and came to a dead end. Finck probed the wound with both his finger and an instrument and could find neither a projectile nor any possible path of exit. If all the facts are examined in this light, the government case for single shooter is destroyed. Indeed, a minimum of two shooters are necessary, which can mean nothing other than conspiracy. Testifying at the Shaw trail, Finck took great pains to avoid this disclosure, stating that he did not dissect the track of the wound nor remove related organs.

> Q: Did you have occasion to dissect the track of that particular bullet in the victim as it lay on the autopsy table?
> Finck: I did not dissect the track in the neck.
> Q: Why?
> Finck: This leads us into the disclosure of medical records.
> Q: Your Honor, I would like an answer from the colonel and I would ask the court to direct.
> The Court: That is correct, you should answer, doctor.
> Finck: We didn't remove the organs of the neck.
> Q: Why not, doctor?

Several more evasive responses followed, as well as further pressure from the questioner. Dr. Finck finally responded: "As I recall, I was told not to, but I don't remember by whom," avoiding an admission that the path of the wound came to an abrupt end.

Indeed, Dr. Pierre Finck has enjoyed a most remarkable career. For example, he also consulted with the Los Angeles authorities in the autopsy of Senator Robert F. Kennedy in 1968.

Thomas Noguchi was the Los Angeles coroner responsible for examining the fallen senator. On the advice of a colleague, he says, he called the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology to invite their experts to participate. "Fight off any pressure to have the body flown to Washington," the colleague said as a reminder of the Dallas fiasco. "This time bring Washington to you." As Robert Kennedy lay dying, the director of the AFIP offered to send three of his best if needed. He asked if it was all right to send Dr. Pierre Finck. Noguchi consented, recognizing the irony of the situation.

Unlike the shooting in Dallas, there were dozens of eyewitnesses who had seen a young man named Sirhan Sirhan firing a pistol at the victim. Sirhan was immediately subdued by onlookers. It seemed

obvious that Sirhan had killed Robert Kennedy. But, as in Dallas, appearances were deceiving. When the autopsy was done, Dr. Noguchi admitted that it appeared to contradict the observations of all seventy eyewitnesses at the scene of the shooting. The location of the fatal head wound and the soot particles found in Kennedy's hair told the coroner that the fatal shot had unquestionably been fired from three inches behind the victim. No one had seen Sirhan in a position at Kennedy's immediate rear; all agreed that he was in front of the senator and never got closer than three feet away. Sirhan's pistol held a maximum of 8 rounds; Noguchi acknowledges that there were at least twelve distinct bullet tracks at the crime scene. A scientific analysis of an audio recording made at the scene showed at least ten distinct gunshots.

The obvious conclusion was that Sirhan did not fire the fatal shot. Indeed, it is unclear whether Sirhan fired any live ammunition at all. But in his published autobiography, Noguchi does not question Sirhan's guilt despite his own findings and despite other investigative leads pointing to a second gunman.

All three wounds were determined to have been the result of shots fired from behind the senator. One theory is that Sirhan's gun contained only blanks and was fired as a diversion for another gunman. A CBS employee saw a security guard standing behind Kennedy draw his gun in an apparent response to Sirhan's attack; the guard apparently returned fire in Sirhan's direction, possibly hitting Kennedy instead. One early CBS news report broadcast this fact, but it was not followed up in subsequent coverage.

The name of the guard standing behind Kennedy was Thane Eugene Cesar, and he is thought by many to be the actual killer. Cesar owned a gun of the caliber matching the fatal bullet, and in the famous photo of the fallen Senator, it is his clip-on tie that is seen on the floor next to Kennedy's right hand. Film containing images which might have conclusively proven his guilt or innocence was confiscated by the LAPD, and the photos were never seen by their owner or by the public. Interestingly, Cesar passed both a polygraph and a voice stress analysis test, supporting his claims of innocence.

Bobby Kennedy's 1968 presidential race had pitted him against the same forces which he and his brother had fought from the White House. In the introduction to Philip Melanson's book on the Robert F. Kennedy assassination, author John Davis outlined how, in so many ways, 1968 was a replay of 1963:

> The most powerful groups arrayed against Kennedy [in 1968] included the Teamsters Union, organized crime, . . . the big oil companies and oil magnates (Kennedy wanted to repeal the oil depletion allowance), the military-industrial complex (Kennedy wanted to pull out of the Vietnam War), and the Southern white segregationists, who were violently opposed to Kennedy's ardent support for civil rights. A Robert F. Kennedy presidency would have severely threatened all these individuals and groups. . . . For organized-crime boss Carlos Marcello it would have meant certain deportation. For [J. Edgar] Hoover it would have meant the dreaded netherworld of immediate retirement.

Perhaps most ominous of all possibilities to Robert Kennedy's enemies was that, if elected, the dead President's brother might have reopened the case of his murder. On the day before his own death, RFK told a crowd of students in Los Angeles, "I now fully realize that only the powers of the Presidency will

reveal the secrets of my brother's death." This possibility was prevented by Robert's assassination in Los Angeles, California in the early hours of June 5, 1968, the night after his victory in the California primary elections.

In *Mafia Kingfish*, John Davis shows the possible connections of Cesar, Sirhan, and Sirhan's defense attorneys to crime boss Mickey Cohen. Cohen controlled the L.A. rackets, including the Murchison-owned racetracks where Hoover vacationed and where Sirhan earned and lost his money. As a mob debtor and as one plausibly disturbed enough to commit the crime, Sirhan fit a profile of "mob patsy" as old as the Sicilian hills.

The two LAPD officers who led the investigation into the possibility of conspiracy in the murder both had worked for the CIA; Lieutenant Manny Pena was an especially key figure, having the final say on what direction the investigation took. Pena had worked for the State Department's Agency for International Development, known as the CIA's channel for training overseas police agencies in the science of repressing Communism. Other suspicious circumstances surrounding Jack Kennedy's death were repeated in Bobby's case. The Los Angeles Police experienced a fifteen- to twenty-minute communications blackout. Witnesses were intimidated; some were shot at. Evidence vanished.

Of course, Dr. Finck is not responsible for the deaths of either John or Robert Kennedy. Indeed, his role in both cases is somewhat ambivalent about supporting a "lone gunman" hypothesis. For example, Finck pointed out the invalidity of Arlen Specter's "single bullet theory," by noting that there was more bullet metal left in Governor Connally's wrist than was missing from Commission Exhibit 399, the so-called "magic bullet."

But his name just keeps surfacing in cases of political murder and cover-up, as in the McCarthy case. Perhaps this review of his career seems irrelevant to the case at hand, that of William Bruce Pitzer, but as another footnote to the strange career of Dr. Pierre Finck, we have an intriguing item published by Allan R. Eaglesham, a researcher interested in the Pitzer case: The copy of Pitzer's autopsy released to the victim's family in the late 1980s bears Pierre Finck's stamp, dated 23 January 1968, apparently signifying that he had reviewed the document.

But the connection runs deeper. A Pitzer family member who has the autopsy photos reports that one set of photos is in a folder on which Finck's name appears again. The photos were apparently held for a time at the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology.

Of the pictures, Finck noted, "peculiar - no powder burns."

5. DOUBTS

A few months after the release of their Report in September 1964, the Warren Commission also published twenty-six volumes of hearings and exhibits. These were ostensibly the facts on which the final report had been based. However, a survey of some of the earliest books critical of the Warren Report (*Rush to Judgement*, 1966; *Inquest*, 1966; *Forgive My Grief*, 1966; *Accessories After the Fact*, 1967) shows that the Commission's twenty-six volumes of "evidence" became the primary source of material for the Report's earliest critics.

In *Inquest*, Edward Jay Epstein succeeded in establishing an objective middle ground between the extremes of "demonology and blind faith" which he had seen in previous writings on the Warren Commission. The interplay of personalities on the Commission and its staff which Inquest reveals is fascinating. Rather than focusing only on the conclusions reached by the Commission, Epstein broke new ground in critiquing the methodology, procedures and processes behind the Commission's 1964 report. Epstein had begun the project as a master's thesis at Cornell University and at the time of publication in late Spring 1966 was in an American government doctoral program at Harvard. *Inquest*'s rational tone, Ivy League origins, and insider interviews all appealed to readers who might otherwise have been skeptical; its publication created no small stir in the press.

We will briefly review *Inquest* here not only to shed light on the Kennedy assassination and the Warren Commission's work, but also to show this book's place in history. Epstein's work is a prime example of Warren Report criticism contemporary with the death of William Bruce Pitzer.

Inquest also relates to the work begun at this time and later published by David Lifton. Lifton's *Best Evidence*, published in 1980, provides good insight into this period and, as we shall see, somewhat deepens the Pitzer mystery.

The seven men appointed to the Commission were much less involved in the investigation and writing of the Warren Report than one might think. The responsibility for each of several subject areas of the Commission's report was delegated to one of the staff's lawyers, who in turn often left the day-to-day work of interviewing witnesses and evaluating evidence to a junior partner. There was little contact between the staff and the Commissioners; communication between the two parties went through J. Lee Rankin, the former Solicitor General, whom the Commission had chosen as their chief counsel.

Epstein interviewed senior staff member Joseph Ball, who commented that the Commission "had no idea of what was happening; we [the staff] did all the investigating, lined up the witnesses, solved the problems and wrote the Report." Junior staff member Wesley J. ("Jim") Liebeler, when asked by Epstein what the Commission did, answered, "In one word, 'Nothing.'" Liebeler was often a dissenting voice both as a staff member and afterwards, as we shall see.

“By February 1964,” Epstein writes, “it became evident that it was possible for a lone gunman to have accomplished the assassination if and only if President Kennedy and Governor Connally were hit by the same bullet.” A Dallas businessman named Abraham Zapruder had captured the assassination on his home movie camera; the Commission’s analysis of the Zapruder film had shown that the two men were struck in too short a time frame for a gunman to have been able to fire once, then load and fire a second bullet. Indeed, the Commission only allowed that there were three shots in total: one which missed, one which struck the President’s head, and one which caused the remaining wounds in both men. It became necessary, then, to show that the bullet which struck President Kennedy in the back had not only exited through the throat, as the Bethesda autopsy suggested, but that the same bullet continued onward to pass through Governor Connally’s chest, strike his wrist, and lodge in his thigh.

This is, in fact, what the Warren Report alleged to be the case. Arlen Specter, who in 2011 ended a 30-year tenure as U.S. Senator from Pennsylvania, was in 1963 an up-and-coming lawyer on the Warren Commission’s staff. Specter was the junior member of the two-man panel assigned to investigate “Area I,” the basic facts of the assassination. His senior, Francis W.H. Adams, had all but resigned from the staff, so it fell to Specter alone to determine the source and number of shots fired in Dealey Plaza.

A reading of *Inquest* shows that Specter took a prosecutorial role in his work for the Commission; that is to say, he intended to show Oswald’s sole guilt and managed the facts and the witnesses to fit this conclusion. His arguments were either obtuse or disingenuous. He irresponsibly stated his assumptions and hypotheses as fact, misrepresented the testimony of key witnesses and ignored the evidence which undercut his position.

But Specter was not alone in taking the approach of “making the facts fit.” In this he had been preceded by Commander James J. Humes, the lead surgeon in Kennedy’s Bethesda autopsy and the principal author of the autopsy report. For reasons which will become yet clearer in the pages to follow, it may be argued that Humes had been faced with one of the more uncomfortable jobs in history.

In recent years it has been revealed that even before the autopsy began, Dr. Humes had been informed of a bullet entry wound in the front of the President’s neck. The wound had been partially obscured in Dallas by Dr. Malcolm Perry, who used it as a tracheostomy site. As the body was en route to Bethesda, Humes received a phone call from Dr. Robert Livingston of the National Institutes of Health, telling him about the frontal entry wound seen in Dallas. Livingston had been listening to news reports from Dallas, and discovered in course of conversation that Humes had not been doing likewise. Livingston informed him of the exact location of the entry wound and stressed the need to distinguish it from the tracheostomy. Finally, Livingston told Humes, look for entry wounds in the rear, because they would prove that shots had come from two directions and therefore from multiple gunmen. At this point in the conversation, Livingston says, there was an interruption, after which Humes returned to the telephone to say that “the FBI will not let me talk any further.”

The Warren Commission heard testimony that the Bethesda doctors had searched in vain for both the projectile and a point of exit for the bullet entry wound in the President’s back. The two Secret Service agents present at the autopsy both noted this problem. Agent Roy Kellerman (who had ridden two seats

in front of Kennedy in the presidential limousine and had astonishingly neglected to climb over Governor Connally to shield the President with his body) asked Dr. Pierre Finck where the bullet had gone. Kellerman testified that Finck replied, “There are no lanes for an outlet of this entry in this man’s shoulder.” (Note two things here: one, the bullet went into the “shoulder,” or back, rather than the neck; and two, the bullet seemed o have come out the way it came in) that Of the three doctors who performed the autopsy, Colonel Finck alone was a qualified forensic pathologist. Humes testified that they were unable “to take probes and have them satisfactorily fall through any path at this point.”

Inquest was the first book to publish FBI reports dated December 9, 1963 and January 13, 1964. Epstein had acquired the as-yet-unreleased documents in the summer of 1965 from the personal collection of former Warren Commission staff member Jim Liebeler. Based on information gathered by agents present at the Bethesda autopsy, these reports stated that the bullet entered the President’s back at a sharp downward angle and “penetrated to a distance of less than a finger length,” but the bullet was no longer in the body.

On the morning after the autopsy, Dr. Humes telephoned Dr. Malcolm Perry of Parkland Hospital and was again informed of the bullet entry wound in the front of the President’s neck. Nevertheless, in the final autopsy report, the throat wound became the exit point for the entry in the upper back. This, despite the facts that the Dallas doctors were certain that the throat wound was one of entry, and that Humes and his colleagues had determined that the back wound came to a dead end after “the first fraction of an inch.”

This treatment of the neck wound was apparently brought about by the application of pressure upon the good doctor and the creative use of “deductive reasoning.” By the time Dr. Humes spoke with Dr. Perry, Lee Harvey Oswald had been officially charged with shooting the President. A rifle and spent cartridges had been taken into evidence from the sixth floor of the TSBD, Oswald’s place of employment. Witnesses had been found who had heard or seen shots fired from the sixth floor. The authorities had found the man designated to take the fall, and no doubt word was coming through channels about exactly how the autopsy could support his guilt. By the time the autopsy report on President Kennedy was completed on November 24, Oswald was dead as well, having been shot to death in the basement of Dallas Police headquarters by a local underworld figure.

It was simple if one began with the conclusion and worked backwards, ignoring whatever facts one found inconvenient. The conclusion was that the assassin had fired from behind. There was a bullet wound in the back with no bullet in it. Since there were “no lanes for exit,” the projectile must have worked its way backward and fallen out from the shallow wound. It seems that, at the time of the autopsy, the fact of the neck wound had been ignored entirely. When Dr. Humes’s telephone call with Doctor Perry made it impractical to ignore the neck wound any longer, a slight revision was made. The conclusion was still that the assassin had fired from behind. There was a bullet wound in the back with no bullet in it. But there was a wound in the front, so the bullet must have exited there. *The fact that the bullet did not transit the body was ignored entirely.*

Inquest's revelation of Arlen Specter's attitude as an overeager prosecutor was in sharp contrast to its anecdotes regarding Mr. Liebeler, who had in many instances spoken up in the interest of objectivity. Revealed for the first time was a twenty-six page memorandum which Liebeler submitted to Chief Counsel J. Lee Rankin on September 6, 1964, attacking point by point the then-final draft of the Commission's case against Lee Harvey Oswald. The memo complained of the tendency to focus only on the facts which pointed toward Oswald's sole guilt: "To put it bluntly, this sort of selection from the record could seriously affect the integrity and credibility of the entire report." Liebeler stated that the exclusion of one particular fact was "simply dishonest."

The report as then written claimed that Army rifle experts were able to duplicate Oswald's alleged feats with the "murder weapon," in roughly the same span of time. This was stretching the truth in regard to both the accuracy of the test shots and the time allowed for them. But the report did not mention at all that the rifle could not be aimed accurately *until three "shims" had been added to the sight!* Liebeler's memo was not well received, but it did have a small influence on the final report.

Liebeler then went to UCLA as an Assistant Law Professor in 1965. That October, he was visited by David S. Lifton, then a graduate student who also worked as a computer engineer for one of the contractors on the Apollo space program. Though he was to become of the Warren Report's strongest and most effective critics, and thus an indirect contributor to many "conspiracy theories," David Lifton has always been a skeptic, and perhaps a somewhat hasty one at that. In April 1961, he had carried on a public argument with a man who was handing out "Fair Play for Cuba" leaflets and claiming that the invasion at the Bay of Pigs had been sponsored by the CIA. Lifton thought the claim "preposterous" and that "people who made such claims were kooks." To this day, he is quick to attack "urban legends" and controversial "conspiracy theories," demanding to see the proof (or "data") to back them up.

In mid-1964, Lifton was one of many thousands of Americans who held the opinion that, with respect to the assassination, "any person with common sense would know a conspiracy was out of the question. Too many people would have to be involved." This is a common viewpoint, but some serious logical fallacies underlie it. One implied argument is that any one of the people involved in the events of November 22, 1963 could have been in a position to cause a different outcome and their cooperation could not be guaranteed; therefore history as we know it could not have been planned beforehand. This of course does not rule out conspiracy; it only rules out control of the consequences.

Ruling out conspiracy because "too many people would have to be involved" also implies that among a necessarily large number of people required to execute and safeguard a conspiracy, at least one of them is bound to break secrecy and thus generally expose the grand plot. Let us grant, merely for the sake of argument, that a large number of collaborators were necessary in order to plan, execute, and cover up the murder of the President. Let us grant further that such a conspiracy would require the cooperation of large numbers of people within the government and even loyal to the President. The fallacy behind the skeptics" argument is in assuming that in order to get the cooperation of such people, one must let them in on the entire scope of the plot, or at least tell them the true purposes and consequences of their actions. "False flag" recruitment is the common intelligence term for gaining an agent's cooperation under false pretenses.

Attorney Mark Lane was contacted in December 1963 by Lee Harvey Oswald's mother, who had read an article written by Lane criticizing the official case against Oswald. Marguerite Oswald asked him if he would represent her dead son before the Warren Commission. This, Lane wrote, was the beginning of an intense investigation which lasted for over two and a half years. Lane's *Rush to Judgement* appeared in August 1966, questioning the Warren Report's conclusions and presenting the many suspicions Lane had been raising in a series of lectures. The book was tremendously popular. As David Lifton wrote:

> Within weeks of publication, *Rush to Judgement* soared to the top of the bestseller list. The book seemed to be everywhere. Displays of it appeared in all the bookstores, the same stores which, two years earlier, had been straining to keep pace with the public's seemingly insatiable demand for the Warren Report.

A look inside a late 1966 edition of *Rush to Judgement* shows that it averaged one additional printing a month for the first several months after its premiere. By Fall 1966, the American media were, in the words of David Lifton, "covering subjects which, a few months before, were the shop talk only of assassination researchers."

In September 1964, Mark Lane had come to lecture in New York, where Lifton was visiting his parents. On a whim, Lifton decided to attend. He writes, "The notion that a presidential assassination plot had escaped official detection seemed so absurd that I wanted to attend Mark Lane's lecture simply as entertainment. For similar reasons I might have listened to an eccentric lecture that the earth was flat." Educated as an engineer, Lifton thinks in scientific terms, and when he saw Mark Lane's "data," his viewpoint changed: "It seemed clear that something was wrong." Lifton was somewhat reassured by the Warren Report, which was released later that month, but his faith in the "official story" was again undermined by the revelations of the twenty-six volumes of hearings and exhibits, released a few months later.

It is despite his personal prejudices, then, not because of them, that Lifton finally concluded that there had been a conspiracy behind the events of November 22. Lifton would continue to gather more "data" for fifteen years before publishing his findings. A series of frames from the Zapruder film were published in the twenty-six volumes. In March 1965, it was brought to Lifton's attention that these images clearly showed that the President's head moved violently backward at the moment of impact. Lifton quickly verified this with a ruler applied to the printed page. No physics student could fail to appreciate the clear implication of this action. For David Lifton, it was a first step into the uncharted and uncertain world of dissent. He thought it was astounding that this backward motion was not mentioned in the

Warren Report; after all, Lifton thought, the Commission had seen the images in motion. Lifton learned about the number of witnesses in Dealey Plaza who had seen or heard shots fired from the "grassy knoll," which was in front and to the right of the presidential limousine at the time of the shooting. He also read of the Parkland Hospital staff who had been sure that the President's throat wound was an entry wound and who denied seeing any small entry wound in the rear of the head, as reported in the Bethesda autopsy.

Lifton began to suspect that the Bethesda surgeons had lied and that the Warren Commission had perpetrated a fraud. So when he came to Jim Liebeler's UCLA office on October 12, 1965, he was expecting - perhaps even looking for - an argument. Liebeler defended his own integrity and that of his former colleagues, but did show a certain irreverence and candor which Lifton found somewhat disarming. Thus began a dialog between the two men which would last for over a year. Liebeler listened to Lifton about what he had found in the Zapruder film and was impressed enough to send a letter to J. Lee Rankin the next day. When the responses came from Rankin and his Warren Commission assistant Norman Redlich, Lifton got his first view of the "personal differences" which had existed between staff members. Liebeler's annoyance with the shallow and dismissive letters of response was a continuation of his earlier experience on the Commission's staff.

In his contacts with Liebeler, Lifton began to understand a significant factor in the Warren Commission's bias in favor of the Bethesda autopsy. Lawyers are taught that certain types of evidence are to be given greatest weight, and the Warren Commission staff was comprised of lawyers. Eyewitness accounts from a moment of excitement are always given less credence than forensic evidence coolly uncovered in the laboratory or morgue. For this reason, the autopsy became the focal point in determining the number and source of the shots fired at the President. It was, in Liebeler's words, the "best evidence." Hence the title *Best Evidence* for Lifton's book.

But what if the chain of possession of the President's body had been broken? A subsequent autopsy would not then be the "best evidence," Lifton argues; it would be irrelevant.

The most interesting outcome of the Lifton-Liebeler dialogue was Lifton's discovery of a passage in an FBI report stating that the President's body had been surgically altered (in addition to the tracheotomy) prior to the Bethesda autopsy. This became the thesis which Lifton eventually published. The FBI report, acquired from the National Archives by researcher Paul Hoch, and previously published in a Fall 1966 edition of Inquest, was the work of Special Agents Sibert and O'Neill, present at the Bethesda Autopsy. The report read, in part:

> . . . it was ascertained that the President's clothing had been removed and it was also apparent that a tracheotomy had been performed *as well as surgery of the head area, namely, in the top of the skull* [Lifton's emphasis].

The drama of Lifton's discovery (as well as his subsequent research) is well-captured in *Best Evidence*, and we will discuss the possibly underappreciated historical significance of his original discovery later. At this point it seems proper to synthesize the evidence and testimony relevant to the body-alteration hypothesis, as recorded by Lifton and others.

The severe damage done to the President's head, including the massive exit wound at the rear, made it obvious that he had been shot from the front, and the Dallas coroner could not have helped but reach this conclusion if given the opportunity. But before an autopsy could be performed, the Secret Service removed the body from Dallas's Parkland Hospital, almost at gunpoint and over the vehement protests of local officials. The body was taken to Bethesda, Maryland for an autopsy at the National Naval Medical Center.

In *Bloody Treason*, author Noel Twyman divided the elements of the body-alteration scenario into what he called "allegations." The first four deal with events prior to the autopsy and are summarized here as follows:

> 1. The President's body was put aboard Air Force One in Dallas in a bronze ceremonial casket; the body was wrapped in a sheet. It arrived at the Bethesda morgue in a plain shipping casket and a zippered body bag.
>
> 2. The rear head wound observed in Dallas measured approximately three inches in diameter. At Bethesda, the wound was measured approximately five by seven inches.
>
> 3. When the President's body left Parkland hospital, about two-thirds of the brain was intact. When received at Bethesda, the brain was almost completely missing.
>
> 4. A wound in the front of the President's neck was enlarged between the time it left Parkland Hospital and when it arrived in Bethesda.

Aubrey Rike, a Dallas ambulance attendant at the time of the President's death, has stated many times that the President's body was wrapped in sheets at the time it was placed in the ceremonial casket. This is corroborated by his assistant at the time, Dennis McGuire, and Dr. Charles Crenshaw, who attended the President and witnessed the casket lid being closed.

Over twenty-five witnesses who observed the President's wounds in Dallas remembered a wound approximately three inches in diameter in the lower rear of the head. Not one of the Dallas doctors, nurses or hospital technicians has contended otherwise.

Air Force One arrived at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland at 6:00 P.M. At 6:10, Mrs. Kennedy and Robert Kennedy accompanied the bronze casket in a gray Navy ambulance to Bethesda Naval Hospital. At approximately 6:45, before the Kennedys arrived at Bethesda, a black hearse delivered a plain gray casket to the morgue dock at the rear of the hospital.

A key witness on this point is Dennis David. David watched the hearse arrive and helped unload the casket from the hearse. He was later told by his commanding officer that this, not the ceremonial casket which came in later through the front entrance, had contained the body of the fallen President.

James Curtis Jenkins and Paul O'Connor were Navy orderlies who stood at the autopsy table side by side and assisted the pathologists. Jenkins recalled the plainness of the casket in which the President's body was delivered: "It was not something you'd expect a President to be in." Paul O'Connor likewise

recalled, “It was more like a cheap commercial casket, nondescript and not ornate, or anything like that.”

Inside the morgue, the casket was immediately opened; in it was the President’s body, *in a zippered body bag*. When the casket was opened, O’Connor says, he “saw a pinkish-gray body bag.” Captain John Stover, commanding officer of the Naval Medical School, told David Lifton that “I remember seeing a body bag . . . I think I remember seeing a body bag peeled off.” Inside the bag, the body was nude and the head - only the head - was wrapped in a bloody sheet.

When the head was unwrapped, a gaping wound was seen which extended to the top of the head. The three-inch hole seen at the rear of the head in Dallas now measured nearly six inches. James Jenkins told David Lifton that “at least one-third of the skull was gone when Kennedy was brought in.” The skull fell apart only as the head wrapping was removed, despite the fact that the body had been subjected to violent movement as the Dallas doctors had attempted to revive the President by external heart massage. The skull was fractured, or more specifically, comminuted. Paul O’Connor received the body in the morgue and removed it from the shipping casket. He explained his use of the term “comminuted”: “like somebody takes a hard-boiled egg and drops it on the floor; thousands of fractures to it.”

The brain was almost entirely gone. Paul O’Connor noted that the skull was nearly devoid of brain tissue and thought that the damage was remarkably severe for a bullet wound. “In most cases, we remove the brain for gross anatomy,” he said. “But he didn’t have any brains left . . . there wasn’t anything to remove.” Not having any other reason to suspect prior surgery, he supposed that the brain tissue had ended up all over the presidential limousine. “Nothing left at all?” he was asked in response to his recollection. “The cranium was empty,” he answered. On another occasion, he stated that there were perhaps enough small remnants of brain to constitute a quarter of the brain mass. In either case, this was clearly much more damage than was noted at Parkland Hospital.

Dr. James J. Humes was the author of the final autopsy report and one of three pathologists who performed the autopsy. Both he and Dr. J. Thornton Boswell were present as the body was removed from the casket. According to O’Connor, everyone present was “aghast” to discover the severity of the head wound.

X-ray technician Jerrol Custer agrees with Paul O’Connor regarding the absence of the brain. “There definitely was no brain. I [could have] put both my hands inside the skull cavity,” he told Harry Livingstone.

It is thought by some that the brain had been brought into the hospital separately, having been removed and probed for projectile fragments, which were then removed. Any bullet metal that had lodged in the brain at the time of death was no longer to be found by the time of the Bethesda autopsy. In fact, no projectiles would be found in the corpse at all, much to the surprise of those present.

At about 7:05 P.M., Dennis David, who had just helped unload the casket containing the President’s body and deliver it to the morgue, was looking out of a second-story window. He saw the motorcade

arrive, and the Kennedys get out of the gray Navy ambulance and enter the front door of the hospital. This was the ambulance which contained the ceremonial casket.

Donald Rebentisch had also helped deliver the shipping casket to the morgue. He also remembered that this was a plain, non-ceremonial casket. After unloading this casket at the dock, Lifton writes, “He went upstairs to the lobby area of Bethesda where he saw Mrs. Kennedy, who had just arrived in the Navy ambulance, waiting for the elevator.”

Jerrol Custer says he was carrying x-rays of the dead President when he saw Mrs. Kennedy coming in through the front entrance. His account, combined with those of Dennis David and Donald Rebentisch, shows that the bronze ceremonial casket with which the Kennedys arrived did not contain the President’s body.

Outside the hospital, the ambulance drove away with the ceremonial casket. It was followed by a “casket team” in a pick-up truck who lost the ambulance, expecting to find it at the rear entrance to the morgue. After a half-hour of confusion, the casket, casket team, and ambulance were reunited at the front of the hospital, at about 7:50 P.M. The bronze ceremonial casket was delivered to the morgue at 8:00 P.M. It was opened in the presence of Doctors Humes and Boswell. James Felder, a member of the casket team, said that the President’s body was found inside.

In Dallas, a small, neat tracheostomy had been made in the throat over an existing bullet wound; by the time the body was examined in Bethesda, this wound had become a much larger, jagged gash in the throat: a “great big, nasty, blown-out wound,” according to Paul O’Connor.

The FBI agents who were present at the NNMC when the body arrived noted in a field report that the “first incision” was made at 8:15 P.M. They also noted, on the basis of comments made by one of the doctors present, that there had already been “surgery of the head area, namely, in the top of the skull.” No such surgery had been performed in Dallas. O’Connor and Custer are apparently contradicted regarding the absence of the President’s brain by James Jenkins, who says that the brain was in the body, but required no surgery to free it. In 1991, he was asked several questions on the subject:

> Q: There was brain inside the head, wasn’t there?
> A: Yes.
> Q: And you removed that brain?
> A: Yes. Dr. Humes actually removed the brain.
> Q: Did he cut the brain stem?
> A: He didn’t cut the brain stem. He didn’t have to.
> Q: In other words, that was a free-floating brain inside the cranium?
> A: Yes.

The skull was damaged enough that to free the brain, no “skull cap” operation was necessary. The doctors merely extended the sagittal suture, a naturally occurring fissure in the skull, before removing the brain. “Dr. Humes was ready to cut the stem” in order to free the brain, Jenkins says, “and the brain - the brain virtually fell out into his hands. . . It wasn’t connected.”Jenkins recalls Dr. Humes’s remark

that ""It fell out in my hand!", referring to the brain." Jenkins, according to writer Harrison Livingstone, "described a clean scalpel cut through the brain stem" which appeared to have been performed before the body arrived for autopsy. "There was speculation at the time as to whether this had been done by a bullet or not." In Jenkins opinion, a bullet "could not have made such a clean cut." However,

> "I guess the probability is always there of that and there was a discussion of that [at the time of the autopsy]."
> "How long did the discussion continue?" [asks Livingstone].
> "Until it [the discussion] was cut off."
> "Who cut it off?"
> "Basically the same person who cut all the others off."
> "Somebody in the gallery?"
> "Yes." [Admiral Burkley]
> "Was it fairly lengthy?"
> "No. It was basically a proposal that was negated."
> "So, Humes asked if there had been surgery at Parkland?"
> "Yes. He asked, "Did they do surgery at Parkland?" and he was told that there was no surgery done at Parkland. . . ."

While Jenkins says that there was a brain present in the President's skull, his description of this brain and the ease with which it was removed suggests that it may not have belonged to the President. Four of the doctors who had observed the rear head wound in Dallas stated to the Warren Commission that damaged cerebellar tissue protruded from the wound, using words such as "shredded," "macerated," and "blasted out" to describe the damage to this brain structure. The tissue making up the cerebrum is easily distinguished from other brain tissue due to its texture. In contrast to the testimony of the Parkland doctors, Jenkins said, "I don't remember major damage to the cerebellum," and "The brain that I saw basically had the cerebellum intact."

Astonishingly, Jenkins's recollection is supported by the photos of the brain held in the National Archives, which do show an intact cerebellum. This contradiction has led neurological expert Dr. Robert Livingstone to conclude that "the photographs and the drawing of the brain in the National Archives are those of some brain other than that of John Fitzgerald Kennedy." This question might have been resolved by examining the brain itself, which has unfortunately been missing at least since the time the autopsy materials were surrendered to the National Archives by the Kennedy family in 1966.

Whether the brain had been removed by the time the body arrived at Bethesda (as stated by O'Connor and Custer), or whether it was first removed at the Bethesda autopsy, we can be certain that it had been subjected to surgery in between its departure from Dallas and its arrival in Bethesda. The brain was present in Dallas and no small amount of gunfire could completely free the brain from its moorings in the skull. Several nerves and blood vessels hold the brain in place. These would have to be severed before the brain could be removed. At some point, Humes and Boswell must have realized that no bullet could have accomplished this feat, as evidenced by Humes's question regarding whether surgery had been performed at Parkland Hospital. Other indications of prior surgery are found in Dr. Humes" notes.

Apparently facing a body which had been quite obviously subjected to prior surgery, Humes and his associates followed orders and attempted to perform a semblance of duty in the surreal circumstances of having their every move closely scrutinized and occasionally overruled by others.

At the time of the Kennedy assassination, Paul O'Connor had assisted in over sixty autopsies. He told British filmmaker Nigel Turner:

> "When somebody is shot and killed, they usually do what they call a legal post-mortem. And that involves plotting the trajectory of a missile - where it comes from and goes out, what angle it was - and we didn't do any of that. At all. They weren't really interested, it seems . . . how it happened, where it happened from . . . Nobody had mentioned whether he had got shot in the front, or the back, or the side, or what.
> "I remember that Dr. Humes was just about ready to pull his hair out - because he was a very meticulous person. And he'd start to do something, and Admiral Burkley [President Kennedy's personal physician] would say, *"Don't do that!"* and he [Humes] would just tense all up and we'd have to go to some . . . other procedure. I thought to myself, this is a very unbelievable, strange night. . . .
> "Kind of mysterious people in civilian clothes were there. [It] seemed like they commanded a lot of respect and attention . . . *sinister* looking people. . . . They would come up, look over my shoulder, look over Dr. Boswell's shoulder, and run back, and they'd have a little conference in the corner. Then . . . there's an order [that] comes down saying, 'Stop what you're doing and go on to the other procedure.' And that's the way it was all night. We just jumped back and forth, back and forth. There was no smooth flow of procedure."

On another occasion, O'Connor recalled that Admiral Burkley's orders "drove us all up the wall." O'Connor told Harry Livingstone that Burkley interfered constantly:

> "We didn't hardly do the job. It was the worst postmortem I've ever done in my life. . . . Admiral Burkley was a maniac. I'd never seen anybody like that in this life. Scared the hell out of me, I'll tell you. He was yellin' and cussin' and carrying on all night. . . .
> "[Burkley] kept saying, 'Don't do this because the Kennedy family won't want that done and don't do this and don't do that.' It's just unbelievable. . . .
> "[Boswell and Humes] had not done an autopsy in probably years. They were the paper pushers. . . . They were scared to death anyway when they got down there. And Admiral Burkley started screaming at them."

O'Connor's account is supported on this point by that of Jim Jenkins. Jenkins recalled a high degree of tension between the pathologists and some men in civilian attire. These other men "had a preconcluded idea" of what the autopsy should show, and tempers flared "because it was not panning out." Jenkins sensed animosity directed toward the physicians from these men, and it became apparent that Dr. Humes and fellow autopsy physician Commander J. Thornton Boswell were becoming irritated.

The third pathologist at the autopsy table was Lt. Colonel Pierre Finck, Chief of the Wound Ballistics Pathology Branch of the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology. Humes and Boswell were administrative

officials, rarely if ever seen at the morgue. Humes was no doubt conscious of his own lack of qualifications when he insisted on having Dr. Finck take part in the autopsy and resisted pressure to commence without him. Of the three pathologists, Finck alone was a forensic pathologist, that is, trained to examine wounds as evidence in homicide cases.

After the completion of the autopsy report, Admiral Burkley, the late President's personal physician, requested written confirmation from Dr. Humes that Humes had burned his original notes. All Naval Hospital staff who had been involved in the autopsy were called into the commanding officer's office several days after and required to sign orders acknowledging their obligation to remain silent about what they had seen and heard, under penalty of court-martial.

With hospital staff sworn to silence, it was unlikely that the autopsy report would be contradicted. All autopsy-related materials were delivered to Admiral Burkley, and from thence to the Kennedy family, who also seemed committed to absolute secrecy.

Why were the family and the government so secretive about the autopsy? Who was behind the alteration of the President's body? Could the two questions be related?

There has been speculation that the alterations took place at Walter Reed Army Hospital. Lifton points out, it is important to note, that there was radio communication from Air Force One arranging to have the body brought to Walter Reed for autopsy, that Walter Reed was only a short helicopter ride from Bethesda, and that the body could have been altered at no other time than between its departure from Dallas and its arrival at the NNMC. In films taken that day, a helicopter can indeed be heard immediately after Air Force One's arrival at Andrews Air Force Base in Washington; one was also heard arriving at Bethesda Naval Hospital immediately before the body was brought to the NNMC morgue. Walter Reed was - and is - home for the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology (AFIP), the nominal home of military expertise in determining circumstances of death by gunshot wound. In 1977, the House Select Committee on Assassinations interviewed Dr. Boswell. Some notes from that interview concern the issue of the proper site for the President's autopsy:

> Dr. Boswell was notified by Bruce Smith, Acting Director of the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, in the early afternoon that he would have to participate in the autopsy of her President. Apparently the Navy Department had gotten a communique from Dallas. Boswell indicated that he was the first one contacted (Humes was on vacation at the time). Boswell then contacted the command officer of the medical school and hospital. Boswell said that he told Bruce Smith that it was "ridiculous to do the post [-mortem] here [at the NNMC]. He said he was told that Dr. Burkley had insisted that the President be brought there. Boswell felt the post-mortem should have been done at DFIP *[sic]*.

It would have made perfect sense for the body of the President to have been brought to the AFIP for autopsy, in hopes of getting to the bottom of the most alarming crime of its time. It would also have made sense, if a cover-up were afoot, to check the body over and destroy inconvenient evidence before an official examination by men having little relevant experience. We are, however, told that the corpse went directly to the NNMC morgue; this, despite the fact that when the body was delivered (allegedly

from Andrews Air Force Base), the hearse's driver and front-seat passenger were clothed in white smocks more typical of lab or hospital workers.

Kennedy assassination researcher Harrison Livingstone called a 1991 conference of Bethesda autopsy witnesses in Dallas. Among these were James Jenkins, Paul O'Connor, and photographer's assistant Floyd Riebe. Livingstone presented them with the publicly-available photographs which were purported to have been taken at that autopsy. He wrote of this meeting, "The men studied the autopsy photographs. . . .Then the bomb exploded."

> "This doesn't even look like the morgue!" Paul said.
> "What?" I exclaimed.
> "That's true," Jenkins said. "It does not look like the morgue [at Bethesda]."
> Floyd Riebe said, "No, I just noticed that floor."
> "What did the floor look like?"
> "Well, it was similar in design, but it was white! . . . The floor at Bethesda was stone tile. It was put in there so it would last for years."
> "What color was it?"
> "It was white and black."
> "This area does not exist in that morgue," Jenkins said.
> "Does not!" Paul said. "We have no wooden structures in the morgue."
> "The Bethesda floor had the small dots," Floyd said. . . .
> "We didn't have anything wooden in there," Paul said.
> "It does not look like the morgue," Jenkins said.
> FLOYD: This area here would have been steps going up to a gallery.
> JENKINS: That's where it would have been, wooden steps going up to a gallery. And the gallery would have extended to the head of the table.
> All insist that the "Death-Stare" picture of the President was not taken in the morgue at Bethesda.

The telephone, says O'Connor, was on another wall, "not where it is in the picture." The metal head brace shown in some of the pictures is also a problem.

> "As Paul said," Jenkins commented, "we had a chock. It was a block approximately six inches long that had four prongs on it." This was used instead of the metal head brace, according to them.
> PAUL: It could be turned to different sizes to raise or lower the head.
> "And it was matched more or less to the . . . behind the neck as opposed to supporting the back of the head," Jenkins said.
> Nobody recalled the metal brace under the head shown in the pictures. They said it was never used.

O'Connor told Livingstone of some "hearsay": "I heard the body was at Walter Reed." "In fact," Livingstone writes, "nearly all of the men had this idea. Their officers had told them that the body was

coming over from Walter Reed." It was "three or four minutes" after hearing the sound of two arriving helicopters that Paul O'Connor saw the body come into the morgue. One of the helicopters had "landed out in the rear someplace, and I think it was in the Officer's club parking lot."

Harry Livingstone writes that Jerrol Custer "was told by the security chief at the Naval Hospital that the President's body was arriving by helicopter from Walter Reed and would land as close as possible to the Naval Hospital, where it would be brought the rest of the way by ambulance." He recalled the incident thus:

> ". . . [T]he officer of the day, a lieutenant, made the statement to me that 'Kennedy will be coming in by helicopter from Walter Reed.' And then they said Alexandria, Virginia, and I said, 'Wait a minute, Walter Reed isn't in Alexandria, is it?' 'No, it's coming in from Walter Reed from Alexandria.' I've never forgotten that. He came up and got me personally."

Every American who is old enough remembers where he (or she) was and with whom on the day of the Kennedy assassination. The author asked Bill Pitzer's son Robert whether Bill was at home or at work on the night of the autopsy. The Pitzer family was together at dinner at 4:30 that day, when the phone rang, Robert says. Bill got up from the dinner table to answer the call and listened silently. After taking this phone call, he retrieved his dress blue uniform and his 35mm camera and told his family that he was going to work. Nothing further was said, even after he returned the next afternoon.

There are photographs showing the President's lifeless body face up on an examination table in a morgue. The body has not been autopsied, as there is no Y-incision on the chest. The morgue is not that of the NNMC, and at no time was such a photograph taken in Dallas. Were Pitzer's film and stills taken at the NNMC? No one can support this assumption, and the wounds seem to be different. The wounds match the Dallas wounds, not the Bethesda wounds. We do know that Pitzer had access to Walter Reed. According to a family member, he would never be stopped at the gate, even when not in uniform. On the night of the autopsy, Pitzer went to work somewhere, and it wasn't Bethesda.

Is it possible that he went to Walter Reed, where the President's body was examined and altered prior to its arrival at Bethesda?

6. CRUSADES

Dan Marvin retired from the U.S. Army in 1973 and became a born-again Christian in 1984. Thereafter, he embarked on a series of “crusades” ostensibly to address unfinished business in his past but objectively focused around promoting his Walter Mitty-esque fantasies to the reading public. His heart may have been in the right place, but he was not right in the head. Most of the last twenty years of his life, as revealed in his writings, were full of fanaticism; unrealistic thoughts of persecution; an unusual fixation on finding names he could list as allies to his cause, whether genuinely or by misrepresenting their sympathy; attempts to make contact with people whom he had implicated in serious crimes; joining forces with other people having serious credibility issues; efforts to attain fame through the publication of books or movie scripts; an aversion to cool, objective analysis; and a profound failure to see other points of view.

Dan's first "crusade" followed immediately after his conversion. He began writing a book about his the alleged Vietnam experiences shared here in a previous chapter; in the process, in 1988, he learned that General Đang Van Quang was living in Montreal under difficult circumstances, separated from his family in the United States, and in danger of being deported back to Vietnam. Dan took up the General's cause. Marvin's reason for getting involved was that he felt that he owed Dang his life due to Dang's intervention in the alleged 1966 incident. According to both Marvin (a story he told innumerable times, referring always to "Quang Van Dang") and Dang's family, Marvin was instrumental in getting the general his permission to enter the US in September 1989, personally driving Dang across the border. According to Wikipedia, the Honorable Matthew McHugh (Marvin's congressman) is credited with having cleared Dang's name of corruption charges. Dang also had the support of former CIA officer Tom Polgar.

All of this really did happen. Among Dan's letters from the early 1990s, I have contact information for half a dozen CIA personnel including, apparently, Ted Shackley's office and home phone numbers. I am still not entirely comfortable with having this information, though Shackley has been deceased for quite some time. Other, less infamous, contacts are also listed, and they check out as genuine. Polgar, Shackley's successor as CIA Saigon station chief, is also listed among Dan's contacts, along with a number currently registered to Polgar's widow.

But even this relatively early stage in Dan's civilian career is colored by mental dysfunction. At least as early as the 1980s, his wartime assignment to a quiet Vietnamese backwater became - in his mind - an experience highly reminiscent of *Apocalypse Now*, Francis Ford Coppola's epic 1979 movie in which a renegade Special Forces officer (played by Marlon Brando) is targeted for assassination by the CIA and Army intelligence after setting himself up on the bank of a Cambodian river as the revered leader of an ethnic Vietnamese minority and disobeying the orders of his superiors. When Marvin's book was finally published, the dramatic climax was (perhaps tellingly) titled, "Apocalypse at An Phu."

This is the story Marvin told a local newspaper even as he worked to get Dang into the US, although details would change over time. In the 1989 article "No Laughing Matter,", "Marvin doesn't remember [the] names [of the CIA man and his female companion], only the CIA IDs that were swiftly flashed and re-pocketed" before the assignment to assassinate Sihanouk was given in June 1966. But by 2003, Marvin had read of CIA officer Walter Mackem in Douglas Valentine's 1990 book*, The Phoenix Program*, which concerned a large-scale American program to assassinate or otherwise neutralize the VC. By then, Marvin's story had become that Marvin not only knew his CIA mystery man by name as Mackem, but that he had encountered Mackem nearly six months earlier, telling him "we did not need or want his [VC-hunting] team operating in An Phu." Again evoking *Apocalypse Now*, Marvin reports Mackem's response as: "Who do you think you are, Captain, King of the Hoa Haos?" The much earlier conversation with Mackem appears to have been a later addition to Marvin's manuscript-in-progress, which Marvin then needed to account for in his existing description of the June meeting, lest a continuity problem arose. In the subsequent description of the June meeting, Mackem is re-introduced to the reader as if for the first time, complete with a description of Mackem flashing his ID for Marvin to read:

> The sound of the incoming Air America helicopter signaled the arrival of our visitor . . . A short, muscular man, whom I'd guess to be in his mid-thirties, wearing khaki slacks and a short-sleeve, gray shirt slid out of the chopper and walked toward me. A black leather shoulder holster with a .38 special was tucked under his armpit . . . He flashed his ID. It read: Walter Mackem, CIA, and had a photo of his likeness.

The continuity of the story is then set straight:

> I'd met him before but didn't recall right off when or where. Then, like a picture out of the past, the time and place suddenly came to mind. It was five months earlier that I'd refused Mackem's counter-terrorist (CT) team entry into An Phu district. It was somewhat confrontational.

Though the 2003 version is thus made consistent, it still greatly contradicts the 1989 version.

General Dang remained a high priority for Marvin for a long period after his victory; at least through late 1991, Marvin campaigned for an official announcement to be made of Dang's innocence and for an alleged $20,000 CIA payment to Dang to be made official and taxable rather than being paid as "hush money." Marvin complained of CIA intimidation efforts made against Dang and of threats coming to Marvin's own family from Matt McHugh's local office; he also complained about the same congressional staffer accusing him of having "fantasies about the CIA." McHugh supported the woman's refusal to have any further dealings with Marvin, and insisted that Marvin make future contact through his Washington office. Marvin then began insinuating that McHugh was taking sides as if "in the employ of the CIA." During this time, an FBI contact allegedly warned Marvin that George Bush had reactivated one or more of the FBI's "Hit Teams" upon taking office, and also asked Dan if he weren't afraid of a bomb being planted under his car. Marvin pressed McHugh to act on evidence Marvin had allegedly provided regarding the CIA's connection to the famous Savings and Loan scandal. Marvin's "Memorandum for Record" of a December 2 1990 meeting in McHugh's office refers to his "July 1990 report to McHugh

regarding an alleged shooting in Philadelphia of one-time CIA operative Maxwell Erbe and the alleged torture of former CIA operative John Grey in the Dallas, Texas area," which violence supposedly followed directly after Marvin having named these two men in an earlier communication to McHugh.

After the publication of Marvin's *The Expendable Elite* in 2003, he and his publisher both became defendants in a suit organized by the Special Forces association. The complaint was one of libel against the members of Marvin's A-Team:

> The plaintiffs are soldiers who served under Marvin as well as William Tuttle Jr. of Rock Hill, S.C., a lieutenant colonel who was Marvin's superior.
>
> One of the plaintiffs, James Taylor of Fayetteville, N.C., a sergeant assigned to the forward base, took the stand and for several hours read passages from the book.
>
> "This book does not reflect anything that happened in the camp at An Phu," said Taylor, who served six months under Marvin in 1966. Marvin was then a captain.
>
> The book includes an account of a firefight with enemy troops but that "did not happen," Taylor said. "We did not fire mortars for any hostile reason at all."
>
> Fantasy?
>
> Taylor told jurors: "I don't know where he got any of this information other than to fantasize it in his mind."
>
> On cross-examination, Taylor said a veterans group, the Special Forces Association, is paying the cost of the lawsuit. He said the group sent two letters to the publisher, Trine Day Press, asking the book be pulled from the shelves or recast as a novel. Trine Day is also a defendant.
>
> Another plaintiff, John Strait of Jonesville, Mich., a lieutenant and executive officer under Marvin at An Phu, testified the area was considered pacified and he never fired a weapon there.

The libel charge arose specifically from Marvin's allegation that A-424 had fired high explosive shells across the border into Cambodia, an act that would have been illegal. The suit was unsuccessful:

> Tuesday, January 31, 2006
>
> Green Beret suit ends in draw
>
> Jury decides neither side defamed the other in legal fight over book
>
> BY SCHUYLER KROPF
>
> The Post and Courier

A $700,000 defamation lawsuit over a book that says U.S. Green Berets illegally fired into neutral Cambodia in 1966 and nearly committed mutiny during the Vietnam War ended in a draw Monday.

A jury of four men and four women ruled that neither side in the legal fight over the book "Expendable Elite" defamed the other.

The book's author claimed victory for the truth, while lawyers for the Green Berets said their fight might not be over.

After deliberating for 2 1/2 hours, a jury at the U.S. District Courthouse in Charleston said the seven Green Berets who sued retired Green Beret Lt. Col. Daniel Marvin over his portrayal of their actions failed to prove that his written words defamed them.

In tandem, the jury said Marvin failed to prove his claim the ex-soldiers defamed him when they made public statements that his book is "100 percent lies."

Marvin's second and most famous "crusade" concerned LCDR Pitzer. Marvin appeared in the 1995 History Channel series "The Men Who Killed Kennedy," talking emotionally about the unforgettable day that he had watched a 30th-anniversary JFK assassination television special hosted by Jack Anderson and saw the name "William Bruce Pitzer" on a list of 42 people known to have died under questionable or suspicious circumstances connected to the assassination. Seeing the name triggered his memory of having been asked to kill Pitzer by the CIA, he said on camera. He remembered David Vanek, the fellow captain whom he had last seen in the company of the CIA officer who had offered Marvin the mission to assassinate Pitzer in August 1965. Marvin searched for him to no avail, now fearing that he had come to harm.

This story was false in several respects, beginning with the date of Marvin's alleged epiphany. *The Kennedy Assassinations: Coincidence or Conspiracy?* was a two-hour television special hosted by Robert Conrad and released 1992, airing in Marvin's home of Ithaca New York on July 7th. No other television special comes close to matching Marvin's description. In it, "Bruce" Pitzer's name appears 30th in an alphabetical list of 42. The use of Pitzer's middle name reveals something about the program's sources, likely to have been books by Marrs and/or Livingstone. One might wonder whether Marvin had a recording of it which enabled him to count the names; I could only do so with some difficulty after repeated viewings. The matching name count and the fact that Marvin in his earliest discussions also referred to "Bruce" Pitzer strongly suggest that this program was what planted the seed of his second crusade in his mind. Martin Kelly, acquainted with Marvin at the time, also believes the TV special to have aired in 1992, and he had seen it as well. Kelly holds a PhD in psychology and came to believe that Marvin was delusional: a "confabulator" with a "rich fantasy life." Kelly told me:

> I looked at the still from the documentary Allan [Eaglesham] sent to me. It shows Robert Conrad, the actor, standing next to a list of names on a separate TV monitor and Lt. Cmdr Bruce Pitzer is on the screen with some other names. Now I know I saw the Robert Conrad documentary in that time period [July 1992]. No doubt. I remember the names being in white as they are in the still . But most important is the presentation of Pitzer's name as "Bruce Pitzer." Both Dan Marvin and I for our first couple of conversations had Pitzer's name as "Bruce Pitzer" without the William. Only some time later did Marvin start calling this guy "William Bruce Pitzer" and I had to go to some books the confirm the "William" when I heard Marvin use [it].

Marvin had written to Captain Vanek in April of 1993 regarding an August 1965 “mission”; this contradicts his assertion that he did not realize the significance of Pitzer’s name until November of 1993, a time frame he was very specific on during his television interview in April 1995. Kelly and Marvin both agree that Kelly was given a blind copy of Marvin’s April 1993 letter to Vanek, but of the two men, only Kelly recalls that this letter was written specifically with the Pitzer death in mind. Kelly's recollection of a 1992 time frame for Marvin's alleged November 1993 epiphany is supported by the April 1993 letter to Vanek and also by another of Marvin's letters (March 1997 to Rick Russo):

> [19]93 Aug 25 I first spoke to you. Prof. Martin Kelly had met with you at an assassination convention and suggested I get in touch with you.
>
> Aug 26 I wrote you a summary of my involvement in SF operations (FILE:II-C-RUSSO.JFK).
>
> Sep 02 You called me, Told me of Nigel Turner's new documentary on the Kennedy assassination. Said he wanted me in it. Probably film in Sep/Oct 93.

Clearly, Marvin had been talking about Pitzer before having seen any 30th anniversary special on the Kennedy assassination. After making contact with Kelly at the above-mentioned convention, Russo immediately called Dennis David, who recalls this:

> I picked up the phone and [Rick] asked, "Are you sitting down? I just completed going through a little seminar in here in Chicago on the assassination.. . . I walked out and a man walked up to me and he asked, 'Have you ever heard of a man named William Pitzer?' . . . that name had not been mentioned or even brought up in the seminar." And Rick said, "Yeah, I've heard it; in fact, I know a good friend of his." And the man said, "Well, I know who killed him . . . The guy didn't give me any names, but he told me the name of somebody who could." (Law/Eaglesham, *In the Eye of History*, p. 27)

A few weeks later, Dennis David says, Rick Russo gave him Dan Marvin's name and telephone number. Russo confirmed to me that it was at a Chicago symposium in 1993 that he was sitting with Prof. Kelly and Robin Palmer (another of Dan's confidants) when the subject of Pitzer was brought up and Dan Marvin's name was mentioned. Palmer and Kelly related their experiences to me, which told a story far

different from the one Dan Marvin later presented regarding his "epiphany." Over the course of our correspondence, Kelly offered these recollections:

> From the beginning of our conversations, Marvin kept referring to the documentary as having been narrated by Jack Anderson. It is not true. . . . Marvin had this faulty memory when his story was first taking shape because he announced it on [the] local access TV show [that] Robin Palmer and I hosted, and I vividly remember his incorrect announcement. . . . Marvin always knew the number of names on the [mysterious death] list shown on the TV documentary. I do remember quite vividly his reporting to me the number as he prefaced his remarks in a couple of our earlier meetings. ...
>
> Also of extreme importance here . . . Marvin NEVER gave me Pitzer's name by itself. He gave me a list of three names [Robin Palmer confirmed this point to the author, saying that at this point he had been as much in the dark as Prof. Kelly as to which of the three names was the significant one]. . . As Dan and I talked over a meeting or two with his rough description of having been given the contract . . . a story which took more specific shape as time went on, I eventually told him that he could only be talking about Pitzer because the other two names were of no consequence in conspiracy lore. At that point, Dan nodded an assent and the Pitzer legend took hold. . . . [B]ecause he was bound by some code of secrecy ethics [h]e had originally told Robin Palmer that he'd taken [the] three names from the [TV] list . . . [F]or a time after he assented to my offering of Pitzer's name, he kept referring to Pitzer as this doctor at Bethesda and Dan reported to me a couple of times, as he described his meeting with the hit assigners, that he was told "this doctor" needed to be neutralized. After I corrected him on two or three subsequent occasions, he stopped referring to Pitzer as a doctor....
>
> It took Dan a while to come up with Vanek's name because he didn't remember who it was initially. How long did it take, I don't remember but it was some weeks at least I would guess. BUT, after he came up with Vanek's name, his memory of the assignment being offered, etc. took on more vivacity and now Vanek was appearing in the recalled scenario as if he had been remembered vividly from the start. Of this, I am very sure. In his later meanderings, Dan even told me he was waiting off to the side for these "assassination assigners" with Vanek; the latter memory flies in the face of Dan's original [and later!] vagueness. He did tell me initially that the person who came up to the contract offerers after him, what at this time wasn't yet named as Vanek, shipped out the next day and nobody ever heard of him again....
>
> I'm dead sure I discussed with Russo the "hit" on Pitzer [in April 1993]. No doubt about it. it was what ... spurred his visit [later, to Ithaca]. . . . Marvin had given me all of the details on his story well before the April '93 conference in Chicago.

No response came from Vanek or the Army Personnel Records Center to Marvin's April 1993 letter. A follow-up letter was sent to the Army in November 1994 insisting on a response and hinting that Marvin

would take the matter up with his elected representatives if necessary. Finally, on December 15, 1994, a response did come. The Veterans Services Directorate reported that they were "unable to identify a record of service for the person concerned" and therefore could not forward Marvin's letter to Vanek.

Marvin's story regarding Pitzer was first presented to the public in early October 1994, at a conference held by the Coalition on Political Assassinations (COPA) in Washington D.C. Robin Palmer presented to COPA an early version of an article written by Marvin, called "Bits and Pieces," which would later appear in print. Also while at the conference, Palmer met attorney James Lesar, until then unaware that Lesar had been in contact with LCDR Pitzer's widow.

Robin Palmer's networking efforts among JFK assassination researchers eventually resulted in Marvin's introduction to British filmmaker Nigel Turner. Beginning in 1988, Turner had made a series of one-hour documentaries on the Kennedy assassination, entitled *The Men Who Killed Kennedy*. Palmer knew Rick Russo (above), and Russo knew Turner. Via Russo, Marvin and Palmer began sending information to Turner, who was already planning on interviewing and filming Dennis David for what would be the sixth installment of his series. Marvin corresponded with Jim Lesar from October to December, asking that Mrs. Pitzer be told about him. Marvin even provided privacy waivers so that Lesar could verify his credentials, but the effort seemed to go nowhere. In early January 1995, Palmer traveled to Washington in hopes of seeing Lesar personally. Palmer didn't find Lesar in, but found it surprisingly simple to locate Mrs. Pitzer herself. Marvin called Mrs. Pitzer twice that month, and over the course of their two conversations found that this widow was confident that her husband had not taken his own life, but was wary of becoming involved in any effort to force a re-investigation.

When asked, Mrs. Pitzer told Marvin that her husband was right-handed, settling a long-standing controversy. But then she volunteered, "And they couldn't give me the wedding ring because - they said - his left hand was damaged . . . they never were able to explain [how it got damaged]." As mentioned previously, the autopsy photos show no such damage.

Did Bill carry a gun with blanks during the last year of his life? "Well, he did eleven trips . . . secret warfare for Vietnam. And he made eleven trips that year. And he did have to carry a gun that was blank. It had no [ammunition]."

Asked about the day Bill was found dead, she related that "he wasn't on duty that afternoon, he was just going out there to write this speech that he was to make out at the college on Wednesday." Was this the college where he had been offered a job? "Yes, it was out in Rockville, Montgomery Junior College. He was going to teach educational television. . . . He was quite enthused about it."

On April 22, 1995, Nigel Turner and his crew came to New York and videotaped Marvin's recollections in Robin Palmer's home. Marvin spoke about his early Army career and his joining the Special Forces. He was interviewed at length about his training in assassination and terrorism, which he claimed had included an insider's account of the Kennedy killing. He was also questioned extensively regarding the mission to assassinate LCDR Pitzer and his recollection of Vanek being the next man the CIA officer spoke to. Though by now Robin Palmer had provided Marvin with Vanek's address – which, according to Palmer, was in Marvin's pocket during the taping – Marvin told Turner about his unsuccessful efforts to

locate Vanek, and the emotion in his voice and in his face made apparent what Marvin feared had become of this comrade. Finally, he was interviewed about the 1966 mission to assassinate Norodom Sihanouk.

After Marvin's interview was over, Palmer had the idea of retrieving some old Army orders from Marvin's files showing that Captain Vanek had in fact existed and was among several soldiers with whom Marvin was temporarily assigned to Little Creek, Virginia in April 1964. Palmer showed these orders to Turner for inclusion in the documentary.

In May 1995, Marvin's article, "Bits & Pieces: A Green Beret on the Periphery of the JFK Assassination," was published in *The Fourth Decade* (TFD), a Kennedy assassination research journal. In it, he told of his training at Fort Bragg, the mission to kill Pitzer (including Vanek's name), and the later mission against Sihanouk. Pitzer's death had long been a subject of interest to JFK researchers, but Marvin's article was met with less than uniform enthusiasm. A letter to the *TFD* editor expressed "serious doubts" about Marvin's anecdote regarding a Fall 1964 trip to Boston, during which he had had a brief flirtation with the local mafia. This letter and Marvin's response appeared in the September 1995 issue of *TFD*.

That July, Colonel Marvin had written to Harry Livingstone, who in return offered his encouragement and sent Marvin some of the materials he had acquired during his earlier inquiry. In August, Livingstone provided Marvin with Dennis David's address.

One cynic has suggested that Dennis David and Dan Marvin conspired to promote a false story about LCDR Pitzer's death. A letter from David to Marvin in September 1995.in response to Marvin's introductory letter of August 1995 makes it clear that this is not so:

> I was taken aback when I received your ltr. with the accompanying papers and documents. I underwent a variety of emotions from relief to sadness, to anger and back again. Relief because you confirmed everything I've contended to, and lived with for nearly thirty years. Sadness because it brought back memories of Bill and the senselessness of his death. Anger at the perpetrators of his murder, and, yes, partly anger at you for your not letting this information become public before. But, then I recalled why I kept my own counsel of my knowledge of the event at Bethesda on and after the assassination . . . I still keep one eye on my backside.

"The Truth Shall Make You Free," episode six of *The Men Who Killed Kennedy*, premiered in the United States on The History Channel on November 19, 1995. Most of the areas covered in Marvin's April interview were included in the final edit and were presented along with Dennis David's recollections regarding LCDR Pitzer. David recounted seeing the autopsy film and photos in Pitzer's office, noted the employment offers which he understood were awaiting Pitzer upon retirement, and expressed his belief that Pitzer was murdered to keep the film and photographs from becoming public. Marvin's final, emotional comments on the documentary were his concerns over revealing himself as a former assassin and his hopes that his coming forward would accomplish some good. It was an interview that many people would find hard to forget. The History Channel airing was accompanied by an article in the *Ithaca Journal* ("Local Man Tells JFK Story," November 16) and an appearance on Robin Palmer's local public access TV show ("For the Duration," November 20).

In addition to his media efforts, Marvin called repeatedly on government officials in his efforts to "get the truth out." Immediately after suspecting a government cover-up in his frustrated efforts to locate Vanek, Marvin sent letters to New York Senators D'Amato and Moynihan and to Attorney General Janet Reno; Ted Kennedy and Hillary Clinton were included for good measure. But Marvin knew that the politicians in the House are typically more responsive to their constituents than Senators are. Marvin set his hopes on his Congressman to help force federal action in the Pitzer case.

It was a tough job being Dan Marvin's elected representative. Rep. Matt McHugh learned that during Marvin's efforts to bring his rescuer General Dang to the United States. Maurice D. Hinchey was next in line. In early March 1995, Marvin sent Rep. Hinchey a copy of his "Bits & Pieces" article with a one-page letter explaining that LCDR Pitzer's 1966 death had been mischaracterized as a suicide and that he himself had been asked by the CIA to kill Pitzer. He also mentioned what he saw as the Navy's long-standing intimidation of LCDR Pitzer's widow, concluding with a plea for justice and answers.

Weeks passed without a response, and follow-up letters were sent in early April and mid-May. Finally, a meeting was held in Hinchey's Ithaca, New York office with Jim Testani, Hinchey's district representative, to discuss what might be done. Interestingly, Testani had pursued a master's degree in American history and during that time had done "a lot of research" on the Kennedy assassination. He had read the materials Marvin had sent to the Congressman. "One of the problems that we've got," Testani explained, "is that virtually all of the stuff we're talking about is information that could only be accessed by the intelligence community." Marvin and Robin Palmer did most of the talking during the first part of the meeting, and it became clear that acquiring at least some official documents in the Pitzer case would greatly improve their ability to take action. There had been buck-passing between the civilian and military authorities on the matter (even extending to whose investigation it actually had been!), and no one present at this meeting had yet seen the Pitzer autopsy report. "I don't know, to be very honest, what we do at this point," Testani said.

Perhaps Rep. Hinchey could find out from the Justice Department if any investigation had been conducted, Marvin suggested. Testani answered, "I will speak directly to Maurice." There would be no intermediaries and Hinchey would give him his frank assessment. "I give you my word on that."

Further discussion revealed Testani's misgivings about the government's handling of the Kennedy assassination. He noted that many people who had in some way been connected to the assassination were dead, "including [Dorothy Kilgallen,] the only newspaper reporter to ever interview Jack Ruby." Drugs and alcohol were reported as factors in her purported self-inflicted death, he noted, although she was not known to use either. "There were so many things . . ." he continued. Doctored wounds, forged autopsy photos, decoy caskets, a missing brain . . . "I think it's really wrong that we've never been able to put all the cards on the table thirty years later."

The discussion came back around to Testani's commitment to speak to Rep. Hinchey. When one talks among politicos about the Kennedy assassination conspiracy, Testani explained, "the first thing you've got to fight from the first moment is being called a crackpot, a nutcase, a lunatic . . . all that stuff. That's why I want to talk to Maurice directly. . . I don't want to have to go through the skeptics and cynics." The meeting ended as Testani needed to prepare for an important phone call on an unrelated matter.

Months passed. After repeated calls to Rep. Hinchey's office in hopes of setting up a personal meeting, it became clear that Hinchey's staff were not being honest about his travel schedule and ability to meet with Marvin. On September 16, Marvin left a message on Hinchey's office answering machine complaining about the lack of response and promising to air his grievances in public if satisfaction was not made within one month.

The long sought-after meeting finally took place in the early afternoon of October 28, 1995 at the Enfield School Auditorium. Rep. Hinchey was presented with a numbered list of seventeen questions related to the Pitzer case. The meeting lasted just over forty-five minutes, and Hinchey gave his word that action would be taken. Marvin was determined to see him make good on that promise, as shown in his letter of December 28:

> Congressman Hinchey, I again advise you that I do not take it lightly when a United States Congressman shakes my hand and tells me he is going to do something. . . . I expect that you will honor your word. I wrote you on 7 November 1995 and 29 November 1995, asking that you "PLEASE regularly mail me copies of actions that you take in this matter. It is extremely important that we keep each other informed on this matter." To date I have received no response from you or your office.

More months went by with more letters from Marvin and fewer responses from the Congressman's office. Though Hinchey and Testani said that inquiries were being made at Army Records in St. Louis, Marvin never received copies of any of their correspondence on the matter despite repeated requests.

At the beginning of July, Testani called Marvin to inform him that he would no longer be corresponding with him on the Pitzer matter and would instead pass Marvin's letters on to Hinchey's Washington, DC office. This, following after sixteen months of unanswered letters and hollow promises, was the final straw for Marvin. His July 10 letter to Hinchey reflected his complete loss of faith:

> You are forcing [us] your constituents to call long distance when you have a staffed office right here in Ithaca. Why?

> You and your staff have quite clearly shown by word and deed that neither you nor they intend to muster the courage and integrity needed to honor your word in these matters. Though you promised action, though you know "in your heart" that truly heinous deeds have been perpetrated by people and agencies within our government against U.S. citizens, you have not, over the past fifteen months, done anything concrete. . . .

Marvin's less than cordial relationship with his congressman was reported in late August 1995 in the *Ithaca Times*. In "Smoking Gun," reporter Jay Wrolstad detailed the history of Colonel Dan Marvin and his crusades, the Pitzer case, and the frustrations of Marvin and his supporters in trying to enlist congressional support. Marvin followed this article up with a letter to the editor, restating his case and calling for greater pressure to be put on Rep. Hinchey. The published response of one reader illustrates how the issue of the rule of law can be subordinated to lesser concerns, and obscured by election-year politics. Or maybe she is just too polite to call a veteran a fraud and a liar:

> In two recent issues you have run a story and a letter to the editor about Col. Dan Marvin and his conspiracy theory concerning the JFK assassination. His assertions are very interesting and may well be true. However, Marvin, the *Ithaca Times*, and Robin Palmer of public access TV all have tried to transfer the burden of proving Marvin's theory onto Rep. Maurice Hinchey. This attempt to link our Congressman with this cover-up is wrong. It is nothing more than a shameless attempt to manipulate Maurice Hinchey during an election year. Dan Marvin, the *Ithaca Times*, and Robin Palmer should all apologize to Hinchey and to the public.
>
> Whatever the merits of Marvin's information, they relate to events which happened three decades ago and Hinchey has nothing to do with them. He is not linked with this story in any way except by the questionable election year tactics of Marvin.
>
> Hinchey stands for strong environmental protection, reproductive choice for women, and a budget which is balanced, yet which does not threaten our vital social safety net. We need Hinchey to be re-elected. In the weeks leading up to the election, we do not need old conspiracy theories to distract the voters into electing the radical reactionary *[sic]* who is running against him. The pressing needs of the present demand focus and every voter's vote to re-elect Maurice Hinchey.

Over a year's worth of efforts with the Congressman and his staff had come to naught. Marvin had pursued his cause with a tirelessness that could only have come from deep personal conviction. In the end, Hinchey, his staff, and some of his constituents all seemed to agree that openly siding with Dan Marvin was politically inadvisable.

In 1992, after the release of Oliver Stone's *JFK*, public pressure had grown for the declassification and release of government records related to the Kennedy assassination. The Assassination Records Review Board was created as a consequence. In addition to reviewing existing records, the ARRB had the authority to collect new documents and take statements from persons of interest to the case. In September 1995, Marvin wrote to the Chairman of the ARRB, submitting materials for the Board's

review and offering to meet with the ARRB staff regarding his experiences related to the Kennedy assassination and the Pitzer case. He received a polite but lukewarm letter the next month. He wrote again in February 1996, asking to be interviewed.

The Bureau of Naval Personnel in Washington, D.C., in response to Colonel Marvin's January 1996 Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request, had provided him LCDR Pitzer's service records. Marvin shared these with Livingstone. In the Fall of 1996 Livingstone provided Marvin with a copy of a fitness report on Pitzer covering the period of the JFK autopsy. This removed all doubt from Marvin's mind that Pitzer had filmed the JFK autopsy and that it was his possession of that film and the related photos that led to his extermination.

In March 1996, Marvin received a letter from Timothy Wray, who had recently joined the ARRB staff as its chief analyst for military records. Wray explained the position of the Board and wrote that the ARRB would not be able to meet Marvin at his home in New York. Wray asked for specific details regarding Marvin's assassination training at Fort Bragg and the request to terminate LCDR Pitzer, emphasizing the need for concrete evidence that Pitzer did not die by his own hand if the Board was to take further action. "As you can well imagine, we receive many 'leads' that consist of little more than hearsay, speculation, or opinion," he wrote. "I tell you this candidly because I know a man of your character and integrity would not want to be patronized."

Marvin was pleased with Wray's letter and replied later that month with some of the information requested. He also began misusing Wray's name in some of his other correspondence, asserting in a letter to Rep. Hinchey that Wray and others "want to know why, in early August 1965, a CIA operative told me [Marvin] . . . to assassinate this man [Pitzer]." Wray received a copy of this letter and noted his objection in an ARRB internal memo (May 3, 1996), writing that "Marvin's letter grossly misrepresents my interest . . . After consultation with ARRB General Counsel Jeremy Gunn, I have decided not to take any other action with respect to this incident other than to note it for the record."

Marvin asked to be deposed by the ARRB regarding the Pitzer mission. He wrote that covert activities of that nature are not documented and the notion of finding corroboration was "naive," but Marvin did wish to show his sincerity by testifying under oath. He followed up this letter in June 1996, offering to come to Washington for the deposition if his expenses were paid. Wray replied on July 2, 1996, implying that Marvin's information was not a matter falling within the Board's charter and suggesting that he submit his recollections on audio cassettes. Marvin was quite upset with the inadequacy of this approach. He responded in September: "Why bother? Not legally deposed - they would be invalid as evidence." Indeed, Wray already had Marvin's 1995 television appearance on videotape. Other witnesses had been deposed by the ARRB. Marvin closed his letter with a suggestion that if the Board was unwilling to depose him and other witnesses "who have first hand knowledge relative to the JFK assassination . . . you may just as well CLOSE SHOP." This is as far as Marvin ever got toward being deposed by the ARRB - or any other official body - regarding his knowledge of the Pitzer case.

Soon, David Vanek was located and identified as a Colonel in the U.S. Army Reserve Medical Corps. The ARRB made their first contact with Dr. Vanek on November 1, 1996. After speaking with his secretary,

Timothy Wray faxed a letter of introduction to his office and asked for a few minutes of the doctor's time on the 4th, at which time he would call again.

The November 4 call is recorded in the ARRB's records as a memo based on notes taken by Wray and ARRB staffer Christopher Barger, who participated in the call by speakerphone. Dr. Vanek confirmed that he was a Captain in the Army's artillery branch in 1964-65 and attended the Special Warfare School in early 1964. In 1963, he had come to Fort Bragg from Vietnam and he returned there in 1964. He was now a Colonel in the Army Reserve and had been on active duty for three months during the Gulf War. He "speculated that the reason his records might not have been available in St. Louis is that he has remained active in the U.S. Army Reserve, and so his records would not yet be among the retired records there." He planned to retire next year at the age of 60. Vanek recalled neither Dan Marvin, nor a "counter-assassination course," nor any course taught by CIA instructors. Regarding the counter-assassination course, he added, "I think I'd remember that." When asked whether he recalled attending any course where movie film or still photos of the Kennedy assassination were shown, he replied, "Jesus, I don't remember that at all." He did not recall the August 1965 incident described by Marvin in the "Bits and Pieces" article, but he did show a strong interest in viewing the relevant segment in *The Men Who Killed Kennedy*.

ARRB staffer Wray agreed to send Vanek a copy of the documentary and to "call him again in 2-3 weeks to determine his reaction." The doctor "said that he had no objection to a face-to-face interview in the future should ARRB decide that was desirable," and he "agreed to look through his personal effects to see what he could find" from his time at Fort Bragg. The tape was sent on November 18 and Dr. Vanek was re-interviewed by telephone on the 26th.

Doctor Vanek sent a fax from his office to Timothy Wray on January 16, 1997. Included were his military records, *curriculum vitae*, and a signed "draft affidavit." Vanek's final communication with the ARRB appears to be a three-page final affidavit dated January 28, 1997. No true photocopy of this affidavit nor the earlier draft appears to be publicly available, but a transcribed version obtained from researcher Allan Eaglesham agrees with the information recorded in the ARRB's memo regarding the November 4 phone call. For some reason, many of the Vanek materials are "withdrawn items" from the ARRB collection at the National Archives. Where the records ought to appear in the public files, a notation appears citing *Public Law* 102-526, *Section 6*, "Grounds for Postponement of Public Disclosure of Records," specifically paragraph three, which allows postponement when "the public disclosure of the assassination record could reasonably be expected to constitute an unwarranted invasion of privacy. . . ." On these grounds, the affidavit is withheld but Dr. Vanek's address, telephone number, and curriculum vitae are freely available. Puzzling.

Wray sent Marvin a copy of the affidavit immediately after receiving it from Dr. Vanek in late January, according to information gleaned from Marvin's subsequent correspondence. Marvin wrote to Wray again on February 17, 1997, expressing his pleasure that the Board had contacted Vanek and affirming his recollection of the August 1965 incident, despite Vanek's denials. This letter, too, is for some reason a "withdrawn item" in the ARRB's collection, but remains among Marvin's files. In the letter, Marvin

voiced skepticism regarding the legal value of the affidavit. He also encouraged Wray to make Vanek's whereabouts, during the first week of August 1965 and on October 29, 1966, a matter of record.

Within two hours of mailing the letter, Marvin discussed its contents with Robin Palmer and Allan Eaglesham, with whom he had been working on the Pitzer case for many months. The language in the letter, specifically a passage referring to "the man who I thought was" Captain Vanek, was a source of concern for Palmer and Eaglesham, who saw the vagueness of the reference as a potential danger to Marvin's credibility. Marvin followed up on February 18 with a second letter to the ARRB, clarifying his meaning and emphasizing his firm belief regarding the identity of the man who was with him that day when he was asked to assassinate William Bruce Pitzer.

Vanek's discovery and denials were costing Marvin the confidence of his two closest allies. Palmer and Eaglesham telephoned Marvin, insisting that Marvin call Vanek in their presence. In Eaglesham's words, Marvin merely "denied the need to call Dr. Vanek, and brought the conversation rapidly to an end." That didn't sit well with Palmer and Eaglesham, who had the distinct understanding - which they were sure Marvin shared - that Vanek had probably accepted and completed the mission to kill LCDR Pitzer.

This call had immediately followed a "big scene" in Eaglesham's kitchen on February 19 in which Palmer and Eaglesham "took Marvin to task" on his recall of the events of August 1965. Palmer led the discussion, and Eaglesham noted a confrontational attitude in Palmer which he had never before seen him take with Marvin. Marvin, who was no shrinking violet, suddenly demonstrated an evasiveness Eaglesham had never before seen. The clarity and certainty of Marvin's recollection regarding Captain Vanek was the central issue. How far away was he? Eaglesham asked. Marvin answered that Vanek was forty feet away, never closer, but remained adamant that it was Vanek to whom the CIA officer spoke. The meeting lasted only fifteen minutes before Marvin called it to a close.

How could the distance of forty feet be reconciled with Marvin's earlier statement that he and Vanek had approached the CIA representative together? Unfortunately, this question was not addressed. It was only after this brief and puzzling exchange that Palmer and Eaglesham had the opportunity to go back to Marvin's "Bits and Pieces" article and confirm that Marvin had written of speaking with Vanek as they went to meet the CIA man.

On February 24, as Eaglesham temporarily left the country, he wrote Marvin a letter asking him to "please be frank" regarding his recollection of Vanek and the CIA officer. Eaglesham did not find the strong confirmation he was looking for in Marvin's response of March 7. Instead, he saw a phrase which appeared to be yet another "retreat" on Marvin's part: "Perhaps one should remember that, from the beginning, the primary value of reaching Vanek was to obtain corroboration of the assassination training." It appeared to Eaglesham that, in writing this, Marvin was distancing himself from the Pitzer story and taking a second line of defense. This was not an unreasonable conclusion, considering the strong suspicion the men had shared regarding who had killed Pitzer.

Unable to escape the conclusion that Marvin was lying and/or hiding the truth in some way, Eaglesham wrote to Marvin from Vienna on March 15, 1997 informing him of the termination of their working relationship. Marvin reciprocated on August 9. In a 1997 letter to the editor of *The Fourth Decade*,

Eaglesham announced his termination of a three-year friendship with Marvin. This single word, friendship, fails to capture the complexities of the relationship. Always on principle, Eaglesham had often found himself at odds with Marvin. Eaglesham had helped Marvin prepare the "Bits and Pieces" article printed in *The Fourth Decade*, but insisted his name be removed from the byline after differences arose regarding the article's content. An April 1995 letter from Marvin to Robin Palmer reads, "I am not certain enough about Allan Eaglesham's attitude that I want him to see the tape" (of the Nigel Turner interview). That August, the two men disagreed regarding whether to push for a re-opening of the Pitzer case, Eaglesham being strongly opposed for reasons having to do with the feelings of Pitzer's surviving family. Marvin's notes for a September 1995 strategy meeting include the following notation among potential enemies: "Allan Eaglesham. Actively attempting to destroy my credibility." In an October 1995 telephone conversation with Marvin and Dennis David, Robin Palmer spoke of Eaglesham's working relationship in the past tense, also implying that Eaglesham was out to undermine Marvin's credibility. Eaglesham writes that he had suspicions regarding Marvin's credibility and motives from the beginning, but tried to put these suspicions aside due to Marvin's obvious religious devotion.

For Marvin, Eaglesham's cooperation (and yes, friendship) was sorely missed, but Robin Palmer's loss must have been felt even more deeply. Palmer had been regarded as Marvin's trusted ally and "co-crusader" for the better part of ten years. On March 10, Palmer appeared on his public access TV program with Martin Kelly and denounced Marvin as a liar, apologizing to the viewers for having led them to believe otherwise. Marvin said that he had been given no prior notice of this by Palmer, nor an opportunity to respond. He had found out about it only days before the show aired when reporter Kathy Hovis of the *Ithaca Journal* warned him that he was in for some bad publicity. Marvin put a rebuttal of Palmer and Kelly's accusations in writing and asked for a written response. He did not get one. Palmer had personally called Vanek on February 24. Marvin asked him for a written synopsis of what Palmer had learned from him. One was not forthcoming.

In late July 1997, Palmer and Eaglesham contacted Dr. Jerry Rose, the editor of *The Fourth Decade*. Their letter of July 22 (with cover letter written on July 26) related the recent discovery of David Vanek and his denial of acquaintance with Marvin or any recollection of having met with a CIA officer as described by Marvin. They quoted Marvin's February 17 letter to Timothy Wray of the ARRB, noting a "significant retreat" in the strength of Marvin's recollection of Vanek's identity.

They pointed out Marvin's recent statement that Vanek had never been nearer than 40 feet away as Marvin and the "spook" conversed under the pine trees, which they said contradicted Marvin's earlier recollection in TFD that he and Vanek had approached the CIA man together. Marvin maintained that both statements are true. Palmer and Eaglesham continued, stating that Marvin's "new version" of events amazed them; "his account of this meeting had always been that he and Vanek had approached the CIA agent together," they wrote, citing the relevant passage from the earlier *TFD* article as evidence. The letter to Rose (which Rose did not publish) concluded thus:

> We do not know whether Dr. Vanek is telling the truth, but we are now certain that Col. Marvin has been lying in crucial elements of his story. . . .Where lie the limits of his deceit? It is pointless to speculate. But the implications of what he wrote in his *TFD* article and what he said on *The*

> *Men Who Killed Kennedy* are so important that we feel obliged to alert the research community of his duplicity, hence this letter.

Eaglesham continued to feel this obligation, and to be Marvin's most persistent critic. "You have to have known him as Robin and I did to understand how much his behavior changed," he wrote of Marvin. And in 2002, to Marvin:

> We have made it plain from the start that we do not, and cannot, know where the falsehood starts and ends. You were in my kitchen on that Wednesday afternoon in February 1997 and you participated in the telephone conversation two days later. . . . Your conflicting written and spoken statements, uncharacteristic evasiveness, and your bringing both discussions to an early close, left us with no conclusion other than that you were lying about some aspect of your . . . story.

Palmer told the author in 2002 that after Vanek produced affidavits for the ARRB contradicting Marvin's claims, Marvin refused to produce an affidavit of his own or to call Vanek. Marvin instead chose to "cut and run."

The fallout from LTC Marvin's "crusade" extended well beyond his relationships with friends, family, and the so-called "JFK research community." Marvin's activism in the Pitzer case was also a contributing factor in his 1998 dismissal from the Special Forces Association (SFA), a private organization comprised of retired soldiers. Similar to the Association of Former Intelligence Officers, which runs interference for the CIA, and the Society of Former Special Agents of the FBI, which has kept quite busy varnishing the history of the Bureau's Hoover era, the SFA is quick to refute any allegations of wrongdoing by Special Forces.

In 1995, William Pepper published *Orders to Kill*, a book purporting to document the involvement of the United States government, and particularly Special Forces, in the assassination of Martin Luther King. Pepper was the attorney for James Earl Ray, commonly believed to have been King's killer. Though there was much in Pepper's book which was worthy of attention, both it and Pepper's ongoing investigation were a minefield of disinformation, and the Special Forces Association smelled blood. Pepper had been told - and had written - that one Billy R. Eidson, deceased, had been in Memphis on the day of the assassination to lead Special Forces Detachment A-184, whose ostensible purpose there was to serve as backup shooters in the event that the primary shooter failed to kill Dr. King. The SFA located Eidson, who confronted Pepper unannounced in a televised "ambush" on ABC's *Turning Point* in 1997. Pepper was co-defendant with his publisher in a $15 million dollar lawsuit filed by Eidson and supported by the SFA later that year.

Dan Marvin became involved some time in late 1997, offering Pepper information on an Army automatic weapons smuggling case in which he had testified in the late 1960s and which he felt might have had some relevance to Pepper's investigation. In October 1997, Marvin came into contact with Rudi Gresham, the SFA's point man in its "get Pepper" campaign, and this resulted in the SFA beginning an investigation of Dan Marvin as well. The SFA worked for several months before writing back in May 1998 to inform Marvin that he was being investigated, and that "the Association Board of Officers has taken

action to temporarily suspend your SF Association membership." This action was undertaken apparently even before Marvin had been given any warning or opportunity to respond. The reason given for the temporary suspension, interestingly enough, was not that Marvin's "stated allegations" had been found to be *false*, but rather "because of the *seriousness* of your allegations" [emphasis added].

In addition to Marvin's support of Bill Pepper, the SFA had become interested in his statements regarding the Pitzer case. Marvin was told that he must appear at a hearing at SFA headquarters in Fayetteville, North Carolina on August 12, or face "summary expulsion." In his written responses Marvin told the SFA, among other things, that he stood by all of his statements and would not be appearing at the August hearing. He was informed on August 19 that his membership was revoked, and replied with a one-page letter of protest in September. As in all previous correspondence, Marvin's letter was answered by SFA secretary James C. Dean.

The matter rested there until the summer of 2000, when an attorney working for a man who was interested in the film rights to Marvin's Vietnam experiences contacted the SFA. The attorney was told by James C. Dean that Marvin's story about coming under attack from friendly forces in Vietnam was a "fantasy," and that his approach by the CIA regarding an assassination did not happen. (The attorney apparently was also told that Vanek had testified before Army CID in Washington. If so, it wasn't about the Pitzer case. When this author provided the service numbers for Vanek, Marvin, and Pitzer, the CID's Freedom of Information Act office was unable to locate any record pertaining to Pitzer's demise).

Marvin then sent Dean a four-page letter complaining of Dean's false statements "that impugn the credibility of and malign the character of the undersigned." Dean's response in September 2000 was very brief, stating that "I stand by any comments I have made" regarding Marvin's "false allegations." He referred Marvin to the SFA's attorney for all future correspondence. Dean, who had in all previous correspondence closed with "Sincerely," ended this letter with "F.Y.," which could easily have been interpreted as something far less cordial than "Faithfully Yours."

7. LEGACIES

To better evaluate the death of LCDR Pitzer, we might first seek to understand the death of his President, and the bloody regime change which this death signaled. It was, after all, in this context that Lieutenant Commander Pitzer's body was discovered at the National Naval Medical Center (NNMC) in October 1966. As stated previously, it is the author's strong opinion that Pitzer's death was self-inflicted, but there at least two extraordinary coincidences to consider regarding the time of his death, neither of them having to do with the allegations of Dennis David or Dan Marvin. First, as previously noted here and by Harrison Livingstone, there is the transfer of the autopsy materials from the Kennedy family to the National Archives. The second is something that has been noted only by this author.

In the less than three years that John F. Kennedy had occupied the White House, he and his brother Robert, the Attorney General, had mightily offended some very powerful interests. Prominent among these interests was the illegal narcotics industry, which was controlled to a large extent by the Kennedys' political rivals.

Even during the 1960s, illegal drugs were big business. This industry had long passed the point of being the territory of a few ethnic gangsters in a handful of big cities, if indeed it had ever been so. Now it was the domain of Wall Street bankers and lawyers, Congressmen and Senators. The insiders might have sought to soothe their consciences by calling it a matter of "national security": drugs are money, money is power, and power is security. Everyday citizens may feel free to remain ignorant of the truly enormous volume of money generated by the world's black markets. But the bankers who laundered the money in between high-level political appointments surely did not. "If we don't control the narcodollars," the argument would have gone, "then who will? The Communists?"

This dilemma was hardly unprecedented in history. The British Opium Wars of the 19th century were a result of China closing its doors to British opium exports, which at the time were monopolized by the East India Company. Britain demanded Chinese tea, silks, and other products, and knew that if it couldn't sell the Chinese something in return, the Chinese would end up holding Britain's silver. One could neither buy arms nor support armies with tea and silk, and there was always another war to be fought. So the British sent their Navy to soften up the Chinese for "free trade." It was a matter of "national security." Hundreds of years of opium profits had provided finance capital for the industrialization of Britain and its rise as the world's foremost naval power.

Likewise, the Americans who traded opium in China brought home the money which industrialized the North and subjugated the South. By no coincidence, many of 20th-century America's notable statesmen could trace their political, social, and/or family roots back to the 19th-century opium trade with China. After the Civil War, pressures grew for the construction of a great Navy which could extend America's military power to the Far East. When the United States declared war on Spain around the turn of the century, it decided to remove the Spanish not only from Cuba, our neighbor to the southeast, but from the faraway Philippines.

America's Central Intelligence Agency is the 20th-century heir to the legacy of the East India Company. The British Crown had founded the Company in 1600 to gather intelligence, explore the world, and expedite the building of a vast empire. The CIA (known simply as "the Company" to insiders) was founded in 1947 for the same purposes and, like its predecessor, has become deeply entangled in the politics and economics of opium.

The CIA and other elements of the U.S. "intelligence community" frequently relied on gangsters to combat Nazism and Communism; they patrolled the docks, broke labor strikes, and swung elections in New York, France, Italy, and Japan. It was only natural that the Mob was also Uncle Sam's chief partner in enforcing U.S. hegemony in the global drug trade. They and their financiers made vast amounts of money, and the business only got bigger. There was just one problem: sooner or later the business would get so big that the President couldn't help noticing it, no matter what his political or moral inclinations, and sooner or later someone in the White House would be the first to think he would put a stop to it or take it over.

That "someone" was John F. Kennedy. The dirty but lucrative arrangement between the CIA, big business, and the Mafia had come into full bloom during the Eisenhower years and had thus come to benefit the Republicans more than the Kennedy brothers could tolerate. After all, who would know the power and influence of illegal commerce better than the sons of one of the Prohibition Era's biggest bootleggers?

During the previous administration, American interests made enormous inroads into the Southeast Asian opium trade, as U.S. forces took over the French colonial war against indigenous nationalist forces. Long before Vietnam became a household word, the CIA was arming mountain tribal groups all over the region, mobilizing them against the Communists or other insurgent groups, and buying their opium crop, which was then sent aboard CIA-owned aircraft to morphine and heroin refineries in the cities.

Beginning even before the 1960 elections, the Kennedys fought an all-fronts war to divide their foes from the drug money. Robert went after the Teamsters and several mob bosses, first as a counsel in the Senate and finally as head of the Justice Department. The McClellan Committee, of which Senator John Kennedy was a member and for which Robert was counsel, put Chicago gangster Sam Giancana and Teamsters President Jimmy Hoffa on national television to answer some extremely uncomfortable questions. The Committee identified Teamsters Local 320 in Miami as a "key distribution point for drug shipments entering the United States." The Teamsters were of course sponsored in this enterprise by regional Mafia bosses, many of whom became targets of the Kennedy Justice Department. After taking office as Attorney General, Robert managed to get New Orleans boss Carlos Marcello deported; the latter was unceremoniously dumped in a Guatemalan jungle. Needless to say, when he got back he rarely lost sight of his desire for revenge.

As if additional foes might be needed, Vice President Johnson, whose ties to Carlos Marcello resulted in the resignation - and eventual prosecution and conviction - of his secretary Bobby Baker, was to be dropped from the 1964 ticket.

Both the CIA and the Mafia were very anxious to depose Cuban leader Fidel Castro, who had taken power in 1959 and then taken sides with the Soviets. The CIA and military were anxious to rid themselves of a "communist dictator" in a country only 90 miles from Florida, and the Mafia were anxious to resume their gaming, prostitution, and narcotics activities on the island. The CIA and several Mafia bosses (not coincidentally, the very bosses being targeted by the Kennedys) cooperated in efforts to assassinate Castro, failing on multiple occasions. Both the CIA and Mafia sponsored exile organizations hoping to overthrow Castro. As mentioned previously, drug trafficking flourished in the Cuba Project. The Mafia and their CIA handlers would have hated to see the operation turned off by the White House. And the thought of the administration cutting off any prospect of future operations might have been unbearable.

After just three months in office, President Kennedy refused to approve overt military support for a CIA-sponsored invasion of Cuba, then underway at the Bay of Pigs and failing miserably. The exile invasion force was rolled up on the beaches like a blanket. The CIA officials responsible for the invasion, left over from the previous administration, were let go. The administration cut off official aid to the anti-Castro Cuban exiles favored by the Mafia and their allies in the CIA, and sponsored other exiles more to their liking. Several of the CIA's exile training camps were raided and shut down by the Justice Department. This outraged not only a large number of heavily-armed Cuban terrorists, but also their Mafia sponsors and their CIA handlers. It was a perfect formula for provoking violent retaliation. Treasury agents arrested CIA agents who were counterfeiting Cuban currency. President Kennedy signed directives limiting the power of the CIA and requiring that covert operations come under the direction of the military. The administration went after the dope-dealing military and intelligence officers in Southeast Asia, threatening even to withdraw U.S. support for Vietnam. The President threatened to smash the CIA into tiny pieces and appoint Robert Kennedy as Director.

The Kennedys miscalculated the tenacity of their foes and their own vulnerability. FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover knew very well which side would prevail and resisted the White House to the point where his replacement in a second Kennedy term was a foregone conclusion. When the time came for the administration's enemies to settle their scores, Hoover was more than prepared to look the other way, to shepherd the ensuing investigation toward an acceptable conclusion, and to bury any inconvenient leads turned up by his field agents.

Thus it was that at 12:30 Central Time on a sunny November day President John F. Kennedy found himself on the wrong end of too many gunsights. He had remarked that morning how easy it would be for someone to shoot him from a tall building. As he lost consciousness en route to Parkland Hospital, he may have for the first time fully realized exactly how naked and alone he and his brother had been during their short crusade.

The weekend of November 22, 1963 was a bloody one. But these three deaths - Kennedy, Tippit, and Oswald - were only the beginning. There would be dozens of suspicious deaths to follow over the years.

First there were the presumably innocent: A congressman who criticized J. Edgar Hoover for "Gestapo tactics" and called into question his findings in the Kennedy case disappeared. Dorothy Kilgallen, the

nationally-famous reporter who interviewed Jack Ruby in prison, died of unexplained causes, after hinting at an explosive breakthrough in the Kennedy story. A railroad worker who saw a shooter on the "grassy knoll" died in an automobile accident. Strippers employed by Ruby had reported having seen him with Oswald before the assassination; these too were soon dead. Sheriff's deputies who talked too much about what they saw were killed on duty or driven to suicide. A witness who saw men other than Oswald fleeing the TSBD after the shooting received several telephoned threats and survived multiple attempts on his life. And, of course, there is the Pitzer case. These examples seem largely anecdotal; but once serious investigations into the Kennedy murder were initiated, the suspicious-death phenomenon began to spread from the presumably innocent victims to the possibly guilty and the deaths were much more indicative of a campaign to silence witnesses.

CIA- and mafia-connected smugglers Eladio del Valle and David Ferrie, both implicated in the assassination, were sought in 1967 by the New Orleans District Attorney's office; they were murdered on the same day in separate locations. In the fallout of Watergate, more investigations were opened, and the body count rose again as witnesses being sought for congressional testimony met violent or suspicious ends. By the time the House of Representatives closed its investigation of the Kennedy assassination in the late 1970s, high-profile gangsters such as Sam Giancana and Johnny Roselli had been brutally murdered. Jimmy Hoffa simply disappeared. Rolando "el Tigre" Masferrer, the financial middleman for Carlos Marcello and his favorite Cuban exile terrorist faction, died in 1976 when his car exploded. On March 28, 1977, the House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA) made telephone calls attempting to locate Chicago hitman Charles Nicoletti; the following day he was shot to death in his car.

The deaths weren't limited to gangsters. On the same day that Nicoletti died, HSCA investigator Gaeton Fonzi was on his way to meet George deMohrenschildt, an oil-company geologist who had befriended Lee Harvey Oswald; before Fonzi arrived for the interview, deMohrenschildt was dead from an allegedly self-inflicted gunshot wound. Bill Harvey and David Morales, both of whom were CIA officers with the means, motive, and opportunity to have participated in the President's death, worked together at the CIA's Miami station during the Cuba program. Harvey died in 1976 as a result of heart problems. Morales died two years later at the age of 53, just after the HSCA decided to seek him for questioning. Bill Sullivan had been the number-three man in the FBI and had had an important role in the post-assassination investigation; he died in a hunting "accident" days before he was to give testimony to the HSCA.

Meanwhile, the Mafia and its CIA partners had been reaping the profits of the Southeast Asian heroin trade, under cover of a conflict which they had killed the chief executive in order to protect and expand. Some skeptics argue that Vietnam was Kennedy's war to begin with, and he was not about to end it. Not so. Though more American troops were in Vietnam when Kennedy died than when he took office, it must be noted that these were Special Forces advisors, not the regular combat troops which Kennedy had refused to the end to authorize. Indeed, shortly before the assassination, the administration announced its plans to withdraw even the Special Forces troops by 1965. One of Lyndon Johnson's first acts in office was to reverse this decision. As Johnson shifted the war into high gear in 1965, the

gangsters and their allies in the CIA gave up on Castro and moved from Miami to Southeast Asia, taking the final steps toward U.S. domination of the region's opium and heroin trade.

And then there were more high-profile political murders. Martin Luther King was murdered in Memphis, Tennessee on April 4, 1968, after it became clear that he would attempt to use his popular influence to stop the war that the Kennedy conspirators had so much invested in. The Memphis investigation smelled every bit as suspicious as Dallas. It would be years before it began to become clear how King's death had been orchestrated.

The world barely had time to mourn Dr. King's passing before Robert Kennedy followed his brother to the grave. Robert was in Los Angeles on the campaign trail, aiming for the White House, and he was doing fairly well. Robert had mentioned the possibility of re-opening the investigation into his brother's death. If his mere candidacy had not been enough to make him a target, this surely mobilized his most deadly opponents. Yet another official whitewash blamed a "lone gunman" for this assassination, despite concrete evidence to the contrary.

Perhaps we should include in our death toll the hundreds of thousands who died in a war that Kennedy would likely have stopped, or in all the wars since that time in which the United States has acted as catalyst or aggressor. The simple truth is that we may never know the full consequences of that November day. The body count rises with increasing speed every day in far away places such as Colombia, Afghanistan, and Iraq, and recently in much closer locations such as New York City and Washington, D.C.

If we follow the trail, we may see that the forces that asserted their control over the United States government in November 1963 are still in control today.

Though almost purely speculative, it is possible that LCDR Bill Pitzer went to Walter Reed Army Hospital to take some part in activities there related to the death of the President. It is also within the realm of possibility that he and/or his staff may have seen, photographed, and/or made motion images of the body just prior to its alteration. Allowing for these thin possibilities, the film Dennis David saw would have been a pre-alteration record, made at Walter Reed. Let us review the information supporting this possibility:

1. Pitzer reportedly went to work (with his camera) in the late afternoon / early evening of November 22, 1963.
2. Pitzer was not seen at the Bethesda morgue. Indeed, we have no reason to believe that he was anywhere at the NNMC that evening.
3. Some of the extant photos purportedly of Kennedy's autopsy were taken in a place other than the NNMC morgue: Details in the room do not fit eyewitness recollections of the surroundings.
4. Surgery seems to have been performed on the body at a place between Parkland Hospital and the NNMC morgue: The obvious candidate is Walter Reed, just a few minutes away, and home of the AFIP. There was some contemporary rumor to this effect.
5. The wounds which Dennis David said that he saw in Pitzer's film did not match those described by the Bethesda autopsy witnesses: The film might therefore have been taken somewhere else.
6. Pitzer went to Walter Reed as a matter of course: The NNMC was unique as a military medical photography school and supported Walter Reed.

We have few facts from which to formulate a theory about Pitzer's relationship to the autopsy film photos which Dennis David said he saw with him. We do not know for certain whether Pitzer had personally created these images. We do not know for certain whether someone suspected him of secretly retaining copies of the autopsy images, nor whether he finally surrendered or refused to surrender them.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we have little more than Dennis David's word on which to base any connection at all between Pitzer and the Kennedy autopsy.

There are many contradictions in the publicly available autopsy images. Some of the photographs which were finally released to the public are inconsistent with the x-rays, and neither the photos nor the x-rays agree with what eyewitnesses described in Dallas or Bethesda. Some of the x-rays and photos have been identified as forgeries by experts. The remaining photos, though possibly genuine, are of limited value due to a lack of context regarding the time and place of the exposure, the scale of the image, and the location and orientation with respect to the body. We do not know whether LCDR Pitzer may have played some part in creating dubious images later released to the public.

Clearly, there are a number of contradictory conclusions to which the existing evidence could lead. By Fall 1966, as criticism of the Warren Report grew and the Kennedy family prepared to deed their autopsy evidence to the National Archives, it was also becoming quite clear that, metaphorically speaking, the evidence had better get its story straight, because it was about to be put to greater

scrutiny than in the past. Indeed, very few people at this time had yet seen the late President's wounds, the autopsy photos, or the x-rays. It is conceivable that up until this time, contradictory and falsified "evidence" had been retained so that it could be available to support whichever position the government needed to promote in light of emerging testimony. But after the Fall of 1966, when the Kennedy family released their materials to the National Archives, some positions would no longer be tenable, and both the supporting "evidence" for those positions and the people connected to it would have to disappear.

Something was bothering LCDR Pitzer, according to one of his sons. It began after JFK died and intensified around the beginning of 1966. Had this World War Two veteran witnessed anything suggestive of a *coup d'état*, he would have found it increasingly difficult to remain silent. The United States suffered six thousand combat deaths in 1966, with five times that number injured. As Pitzer watched the new President send increasing numbers of U.S. forces to Vietnam, he must have recalled the bodies he had handled at Normandy. Pitzer had been to Vietnam in 1965. Naval officers are not out of touch with politics. Pitzer and his peers must have seen the dramatic turn the country had taken since Dallas. As the truth began to surface about how Johnson had succeeded to the office of the President, any burden of imposed silence must have grown unbearable.

In mid-October 1966, the *Washington Post* noted an alarming rise in heroin use and introduced the residents of the nation's capitol to the street terminology associated with this trend. The *Post* mistakenly identified the source of the influx as Turkey, failing to see the connection to the increased American intervention in Vietnam.

It was on October 24, 1966 that David Lifton's body-alteration hypothesis was first introduced. He may have had proof in the form of the report filed by FBI agents Sibert and O'Neill, who were present at the autopsy and recorded that there had been "surgery of the head area" prior to the autopsy. Lifton writes in *Best Evidence* that the revelation of his discovery to his associate - and former Warren Commission staffer – Jim Liebeler apparently resulted that day in some anxious phone calls between Liebeler and at least two other former members of the Warren Commission staff. This author attempted in 2003 to corroborate this exchange between Lifton and Liebeler, but discovered to his sorrow that Liebeler had perished in a place crash the previous year. We have only Lifton's word that after speaking to Arlen Specter (principal author of the Warren Commission's single-bullet theory) about Lifton's discovery, Liebeler commented that "Arlen hopes he gets through this with his balls intact." If Specter was indeed so distraught and fearing for his reputation, his personal security, or his freedom, we can expect that he would have taken action, calling other Washington insiders who could offer assistance or reassurance.

I am inclined to believe Lifton regarding his account of October 24th 1966. One can only speculate regarding the extent to which word of Lifton's discovery spread in official circles and the number and severity of the "red flags" which were raised.

On that same Monday, LCDR Pitzer attended the first of two funerals of old Navy friends for that week. It is difficult to determine exactly who this old friend was or where the funeral was held, but the timing of Bill's travels strongly suggests that it was in Norfolk. Pitzer left for Norfolk in the morning, and the only Navy funerals listed in the *Washington Post* for that day were in the afternoon. The only Navy funeral in Norfolk indicated in the *Virginian-Pilot* on or near this Monday was for a World War II veteran who had died in a Newport News hospital the previous Friday. Pitzer returned home to Bethesda on Monday, October 24. He had five days left to live.

On Tuesday, his first day back from Pensacola, LCDR Pitzer came to the office and announced to Lee Andre his intention to submit his retirement letter. Was it merely that the inevitable day had finally come when Pitzer decided to move on to "greener pastures," or had he in the last several hours received news of personally dangerous developments related to the Kennedy assassination controversy (namely, that former Warren Commission staffer and gadfly Jim Liebeler was phoning other former staff members regarding the discovery that Kennedy's corpse had been altered prior to autopsy and Lifton's possession of credible evidence in the form of the Sibert-O'Neill report)?

If Dennis David's testimony is accepted as valid, whatever Pitzer's intentions on October 24, 1966, it would be clear that he had the power to blow open the cover-up and indicate complicity in high places. If his knowledge or possession of the film David describes was known in any official circles, red lights would have been flashing.

Since HM2 Lee Andre had signed for the gun Pitzer had taken to Pensacola, Andre asked him if he might return it for him. Pitzer apparently declined the offer, and this seemed puzzling to Andre. Andre told the FBI, "When asked about the return of the gun, [Pitzer] said that he would take it back to the Security Office himself. . . . This was entirely out of character for PITZER, who usually had enlisted men run all his errands." Was he keeping the gun close at hand because he now felt he was in danger? Because he had an important and dangerous contact to make? His intention to return the gun at a later date is confirmed by the note left in his office: "Remind me to return gun to Sec[urity] Off[ice] - P"

Bill Pitzer and Dennis David had on occasion spoken together regarding the sometimes laughable, sometimes tragic efforts of the Warren Commission to establish Lee Oswald's guilt as the sole assassin of President Kennedy. If Pitzer and David had browsed through the *Washington Post* for Wednesday, October 26, an article on the Kennedy assassination controversy on page A2 would doubtless have caught their attention:

In a story headlined, "Magazines Attack, Back Warren Report," the work of Penn Jones Jr. was mentioned. Jones's investigation of suspicious deaths surrounding the Kennedy killing had been the basis for an article in a then-recent issue of *Ramparts* magazine. As reported in the *Post*, *Ramparts* noted "at least 10" persons "known to have been murdered, to have committed suicide or died in suspicious circumstances since the Kennedy assassination" two years previously. Pitzer had no way of knowing that one day, his own name would be included on Penn Jones' growing list of Kennedy-related deaths.

On Thursday evening, October 27, as American television audiences became acquainted for the first time with "It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown," at least one Navy family mourned the loss of their husband, brother, and father, and prepared to bury him the following day. Navy officers set out their uniforms for a funeral at noon. So it was that on Friday the 28th, Pitzer attended the funeral of yet another old Navy friend. The *Washington Post* obituaries mention the funeral of only one Naval officer on October 28. Commander Thomas E. Shea was buried that day at Arlington National Cemetery, having died of a heart attack only two days previously, at the age of 54. Like Pitzer, the retired Commander Shea was a veteran of World War II who had worked at Bethesda Naval Hospital. One of the 251 original members of the Navy's Medical Service Corps, Shea's work after the war centered on radiation safety and treatment.

After the service, Joyce Pitzer noticed that Bill became "mildly despondent" for a time and remarked, "That's two this week. I wonder who the third will be." Did this remark merely stem from the oft-repeated aphorism that "things happen in threes," or was there a deeper concern? Bill then surprised her by expressing a preference for a military funeral in the event of his own death. At about 1:30 on the afternoon of the 28th - which would have been immediately after the noon funeral - Pitzer came to ask this friend to make a copy of a photograph for his wife (see chapter three, "Controversies").

Saturday, October 29 was the birthday of Joyce Pitzer's mother, whom Bill reportedly adored. She was to arrive from her home in Vermont on Sunday. Bill had arranged for time off the following Monday and Tuesday in order to be free for her visit. He would not live so long. According to Joyce, Bill went to the office that Saturday afternoon to prepare a speech to be given at Montgomery Junior College, where he was looking forward to teaching educational television. This was the last time she saw her husband alive. Pitzer was last seen alive at the Navy Exchange Building's checkout counter at 3:50, P.M. buying the Camel cigarettes which his wife had so often encouraged him to give up. According to the last person to see Pitzer alive, "His hair was messed up. He had a sloppy appearance and this was entirely out of character for him."

And now we come to the second extraordinary coincidence regarding the timing of Pitzer's death.

David Lifton came to believe that Commander James J. Humes had noted the tampering which had taken place on the President's body prior to the autopsy and that Humes had attempted to subtly draw attention to these alterations in his testimony before the Warren Commission. Lifton called Humes at his home on November 2, 1966 and related his theory to Humes, but the call was immediately cut off. Calling back seconds later, Lifton says he was told that Humes had left home for his office at the NNMC. It is likely that on the following day when Lifton called and spoke to Humes again, Humes had just attended Pitzer's funeral. An account of the conversation as recorded by Lifton is found in *Best Evidence*. It is a compelling but fanciful idea that as these men were speaking, each was ignorant of the other's connection to Pitzer's funeral : Lifton being unaware that Humes had just attended (indeed, Lifton having no way of knowing it had taken place), and Humes unaware that Lifton's recent conversation with Liebeler could have brought it about, if in fact Bill Pitzer had any connection whatsoever to the Kennedy autopsy. But of course Lifton himself would dismiss that notion and any of its implications for his own actions just as he has contradicted himself in denying that his conversations with Dennis David

ever included Bill Pitzer. It's one thing to set aside an allegation that you are unable to corroborate. It's quite another to attack it with such disregard for facts as Lifton has done with regard to Pitzer, treating Dennis David's account almost like a threat even though, if true, it would support the theory which is Lifton's own life's work. I'm not saying that David Lifton precipitated Bill Pitzer's death by presenting his body-alteration hypothesis to Jim Liebeler five days earlier; but his behavior suggests to me that that he fears that very accusation, though no one has yet made it. He certainly couldn't have failed to notice the coincidence of that particular death with what – according to him – was the crux of his entire career. If I have been the first to point the coincidence out, I wonder if Lifton has been either relieved or disappointed that no one else had put enough faith in his account to put two and two together.

And here ends the story. We may never know the reason Bill Pitzer put a gun to his head and pulled the trigger. As with so many other deaths connected to the Kennedy tragedy, too many questions are left unanswered, and the greatest certainty is that something has gone horribly wrong.

The funeral was held on November 3, 1966. The recent shortening of the day due to the observation of daylight savings time must have intensified the feelings of darkness and loss felt by those who knew him. Hundreds of men in dress blues looked on as a riderless carriage brought his body to its final resting place at Arlington National Cemetery. Joyce learned to drive and do the household finances. She renewed her nursing license, and continued working as a volunteer long after retirement. She never remarried.

NOTES

1. SAILORS

The Kennedy Assassination:

There are a large number of books on the Kennedy assassination which cover the basic, agreed-upon facts of the incident. Unfortunately, the agreed-upon facts tell us little about what really happened that day.

Biographical information on LTC Marvin:

Marvin, Dan. "Bits and Pieces: A Green Beret On the Periphery of the JFK Assassination," *The Fourth Decade*; Vol. 2, No. 4 (May 1995) p.14

Marvin, Dan. Letter to the Editor. *The Fourth Decade*; Vol. 2, No. 6 (September 1995) p.7

Marvin, Dan. 2003. *Expendable Elite*, Walterville, OR: TrineDay.

Turner, Nigel (director). 1995. *The Men Who Killed Kennedy: The Truth Shall Make You Free*, A&E Home Video.

The Levy trial:

Morgan, Charles. 1979. *One Man, One Voice*, p. 141-144. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

Saddam Hussein as U.S. intelligence asset:

Sale, Richard. "Exclusive: Saddam key in early CIA plot." UPI , April 10, 2003.

Possible use of U.S. military personnel as assassins:

Gritz, James. 1991. *Called To Serve*. Sandy Valley, NV: Lazarus Publishing Co.

Russell, Dick.1992. *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. p. 762-63 . New York: Carroll & Graf.

Mills, James. 1986. *The Underground Empire*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

Contra terrorism:

Stockwell, John. 1990. *The Praetorian Guard*, p. 64-65. Boston: South End Press.

Operation Northwoods:

Heyman, C. David. 1998. *RFK*. p. 268 (footnote) New York: Dutton.

Bamford, James. 2001 *Body of Secrets*. p. 82-89. New York: Doubleday.

Prouty on U.S. terrorism:

Prouty, L. Fletcher. 1992. *JFK*, p. 33-35. New York: Carol Publishing Group.

Lansdale vs. the French in 1950s Saigon:

McCoy, Alfred. 1991. *The Politics of Heroin*. Brooklyn, NY: Lawrence Hill Books.

Black propaganda in Vietnam:

Stockwell, *The Praetorian Guard*, p. 79.Prouty, JFK, p. 71.

Lansdale credited with coining term "civic action":

Newman, John. 1992 . *JFK and Vietnam*, p. 40. New York: Warner Books.

White on the clandestine service:

Marks, John. 1979. *The Search for the "Manchurian Candidate,"* p. 109. New York: Times Books.

Special Forces ability to penetrate U.S. military facilities:

Simpson, Charles M. 1983. *Inside the Green Berets.* Novato, CA: Presidio Press.

2. INQUIRIES

Nearly all of the information in this chapter (and much in the following chapter) is from the FBI's 1997 FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) release to LTC Marvin. Subsequent FOIA requests by researcher Allan Eaglesham and the Pitzer family have made it clear that no more material will be released.

The author is indebted to Allan Eaglesham for pointing out the FBI lab findings with regard to the revolver, etc. and for offering his insights on possible reasons for the lack of usable prints. I had originally missed or misinterpreted the brief mention of these items in the FBI FOIA release and had thought the apparent omission of this information to be astonishing.

3. RUMORS

This chapter has benefited greatly from the information in the recorded telephone conversations of LTC Marvin with members of the Pitzer family. Between 1995 and 1997, LTC Marvin spoke with LCDR Pitzer's widow, nephew, older son, and grandson. He also spoke on several occasions with Pitzer's friend Dennis David.

Also very helpful was Washington attorney James Lesar, whose friend and colleague, Bernard Fensterwald met an untimely end while Lesar was corresponding with Mrs. Pitzer. Bud Fensterwald, Lesar's co-founder of the AARC, was a man of great renown among JFK assassination researchers. Fensterwald had represented many notable clients, among them Watergate criminal James McCord and James Earl Ray, who had pled guilty to the murder of Martin Luther King and later declared his innocence.

Fensterwald represented and corresponded extensively with American intelligence agent Richard Case Nagell, a fascinating individual who claimed to have been entangled in a plot to kill Lee Harvey Oswald in order to foil the conspiracy to assassinate President Kennedy. On September 20, 1963, Nagell walked into an El Paso bank, twice discharged his .45 automatic into an area of the wall just below the ceiling, then walked outside and sat in his car, apparently waiting to be arrested. As he was being taken into the custody of the FBI, he directed the arresting officer to check the contents of his car, the trunk of which was found to include a spy camera, portable film lab, and two briefcases full of documents. He stated to the FBI merely that he "would rather be arrested than commit murder and treason." The young police officer who arrested Nagell recalled that he was glad to have been caught: "I really don't want to be in Dallas," he said. When asked the meaning of this comment, he replied, "You'll see soon enough."

Fensterwald was also the neighbor and lifelong friend of John Paisley, a CIA electronics expert. When Paisley disappeared in 1978, a body was found and Paisley's death was ruled a suicide, but his widow remained skeptical and hired Fensterwald to pursue the truth.

Pitzer and Kennedy photographed by same autopsy photographer:

ARRB Testimony of John T. Stringer.

Humes and Pitzer:

Eaglesham, Allan. "Pitzer: An Update." http:// www. manuscriptservice. com/ Article-3.html.

Medical photography at Pensacola NAS:

Spencer, S. K. Testimony before the Assassination Records Review Board.

Jerrol Custer on W. Pitzer:

Eaglesham, Allan. "Pitzer: An Update." *The Fourth Decade*, May 1998, p. 11

CCTV in NNMC morgue:

Eaglesham, Allan. “Pitzer: An Update.”

Pitzer possibly in contact with U.S. government regarding autopsy materials:

Dennis David recollections recorded for LTC Dan Marvin, October 1995

Brown, Walt. *The Warren Omission*. Cited in Eaglesham, “Pitzer: An Update.”

*In Forgive My Grief, Volume III (*p. 95-96), Penn Jones also told of “horrifying” debriefings undergone by Pitzer, but his source for this information - if legitimate - is unknown.

Transfer of autopsy photos from Kennedys to US Government:

Livingstone, Harrison. *High Treason 2*, p. 556-57.

Davis, John H. 1989. *Mafia Kingfish*, p. 324-26. New York: Signet Books.

Harrison Livingstone’s claim to have been Lifton’s source:

“Later, Dennis David was located by a famous researcher to whom I had given the *News-Sun* article, but then would not tell me where David was and did not bother to publish the whole story David had to tell, which was very startling. There was nothing about Pitzer.” www.harrison-e-livingstone.com/jfk/chapter09.htm, circa 2003.

4. SOLDIERS

Mike Ruppert, who has been in contact with Bill Tyree for many years, wrote in *Crossing the Rubicon:*

> The original trial judge, having received a very weak prosecution case, dismissed all the charges [against Tyree], indicating clearly that the suspect was another member of the 10th Special Forces Group [probably meaning Earl Peters . KGH]. However a young assistant D.A. from Middlesex County, Massachusetts, named John Kerry, reinstituted the prosecution under a second judge. Kerry is now, of course, the junior senator from Massachusetts and the Democratic Party presidential nominee in 2004.

Dan Marvin in Vietnam:

Marvin, *The Expendable Elite*.

"Apocalypse at An Phu" screenplay:

Author conversation with Robin Palmer, 15 June 2002. See also the chapter of the same name in *Expendable Elite.*

John McCarthy:

Morgan, Charles. *One Man, One Voice*.

McCarthy, John. Internet radio appearance. http:// www. blackopradio.com.

Cutolo affidavit:

Gritz, James. *Called To Serve*.

Ruppert, Mike. *The Tyree Papers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: From The Wilderness.

CIA subversion of South Florida law enforcement:

Hinckle and Turner, *Deadly Secrets.*

Nugan Hand Bank:

Nathan, James A. "Dateline Australia: America's Foreign Watergate?" *Foreign Policy*, No. 49 (Winter 1982-83)

McCoy, Alfred. *The Politics of Heroin*, p. 468.

Kwitny, Jonathan. 1987. *The Crimes of Patriots*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Helliwell, OSS drug activities:

Scott, Peter Dale and Jonathan Marshall. 1991. *Cocaine Politics*. p. 92. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Marshall, Jonathan et al. 1987. *The Iran-Contra Connection*. p. 32. Boston: South End Press.

Shackley biography:

Corn, David. 1994. *Blond Ghost*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Khun Sa/Chan Si Fu:

Mills, James. *The Underground Empire.*

McCoy, Alfred. *The Politics of Heroin*.

Gritz, James. *Called To Serve*.

John McCarthy and Pierre Finck:

https://kennedysandking.com/john-f-kennedy-articles/385

Morgan, Charles. *One Man, One Voice*.

Finck becoming involved in the John F. Kennedy autopsy:

Livingstone, Harrison. 1995. *Killing Kennedy*. p. 187. New York: Carroll & Graf.

Shaw Trial:

Garrison, Jim. 1991. *On the Trail of the Assassins*. New York: Warner Books.

Ford altered wording of report:

Feinilber, Mike. "Ford altered crucial JFK report." (Associated Press) *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 3 July 1997, p. A3.

Robert F. Kennedy autopsy:

Noguchi, Thomas. 1983. *Coroner*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

CBS News report of guard shooting RFK:

Melanson, Philip H. and William Klaber. 1997. *Shadow Play*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Cesar passes lie detector test:

Moldea, Dan. 1995. *The Killing of Robert F. Kennedy*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Finck review of Pitzer file:

Eaglesham, Allan. "Interpretations of New Evidence in the Pitzer Case"

Author interview with Pitzer family member.

5. DOUBTS

Careful readers may have noticed the similarity of the terms “tracheotomy” and “tracheostomy” and wondered what the distinction is. A tracheotomy is a surgical operation which enables the patient to breathe through a hole in the throat. This hole is called a tracheostomy.

Warren Commission proceedings:

Epstein, Edward Jay. 1966. *Inquest*. New York: Viking Press.

Dr. Robert Livingstone conversation with Dr. James J. Humes:

Fetzer, James. 1998. *Assassination Science*. Chicago: Catfeet Press.

Non-transit of bullet through Pres. Kennedy’s torso; starting with the conclusion and making the facts fit:

Epstein, *Inquest*, p. 42, 48-49, 87. “Humes testified that he had not discerned a path for the bullet but had deduced its path from the entrance and the assumed exit wound, and from a slight bruise on the right lung.” (Epstein p. 48, citing *Warren Commission Hearings and Exhibits Vol. II*, p. 368,377)

Liebeler as source for Epstein:

Lifton, David S. 1980. *Best Evidence*, p. 97-98. New York: Macmillan.

Public demand for Lane’s Rush To Judgement, media attention to Kennedy assassination in 1966:

Lifton, David. *Best Evidence*, p. 115,134.

Lifton’s experiences 1964-66:

Lifton, David. *Best Evidence.*

Condition of the president’s body and coverings at various places/times between murder and autopsy:

Lifton, David*. Best Evidence.*

Livingstone, Harrison. 1992. *High Treason 2*. New York: Carrol & Graf.

Turner, Nigel. “The Men Who Killed Kennedy.”

Twyman, Noel. 1997. *Bloody Treason*. Rancho Santa Fe, CA: Laurel Publishing.

Jenkins and O’Connor recollections of autopsy:

Lifton, David. *Best Evidence.*

Livingstone, Harrison. *High Treason 2.*

Turner, Nigel. *The Men Who Killed Kennedy*.

Twyman, Noel. *Bloody Treason.*

Discrepancies between autopsy photos and Bethesda morgue:

Livingstone, Harrison. *High Treason 2*, pp. 277, 291-92, 306.

President's body to have come from Walter Reed:

Livingstone, Harrison. *High Treason 2*, pp. 218-221, 273.

It is with some reservation that I have quoted Jerrol Custer regarding the condition of the President's body when it came to the Bethesda morgue. He has told some tall tales, even under oath. Some might think this book incomplete without including Custer's account of seeing "Chief" Pitzer at the Kennedy autopsy. Here it is, for what it's worth:

> ASSASSINATION RECORDS REVIEW BOARD DEPOSITION OF JERROL FRANCIS CUSTER, OCT. 28 1997
> [p. 16-17: Custer is describing to Mr. Jeremy Gunn a photograph of himself with other NNMC personnel]
> A: This is the chief I was talking to you . that I had mentioned his friend. Oh, Darn. I can't think of his name.
> Q: Is that Dennis David?
> A: That's him.
> Q: Okay. And that's the person who's sitting in the center of the photograph.
> A: He's . . . right. His friend was the chief that committed suicide at Bethesda, that had the deformed right hand. And they found the gun in that hand. . .
> [p. 40-41: Custer is asked about any photographs possibly taken at the Kennedy autopsy. The above reference to Dennis David's friend who supposedly committed suicide makes it clear that he means Bill Pitzer.]
> Q: In addition to Floyd Riebe's taking photographs, did you see anyone else take photographs?
> A: There was a chief there that night that was taking movies. Remember how I had stated that he was the gentleman that had committed suicide, supposedly, and had the deformed hand . where they found the gun in that deformed hand? He was there that night, taking movies.
> Q: Did you actually see him taking movies?
> A: Yes, I did.
> Q: What kind of movie camera was he using?
> A: I would imagine, a simple eight-millimeter.
> Q: Was he wearing a uniform?
> A: Yes, he was.
> Q: And what was his rank?
> A: Chief.
> Q: Did you hear any discussion during the time of the autopsy about movies being taken?

A: Well, there was quite a few upset people from the gallery that were . didn't like the idea. But the Chief just kept right on going. He said, "I'm doing my job."

6. CRUSADES

The information in this chapter is taken largely from the correspondence of LTC Marvin, both in his own files and at the National Archives, and supplemented by correspondence and interviews with the author.

Fans of Fox Television's *The X-Files* would be interested to know that Dan Marvin's revelations in Nigel Turner's *The Men Who Killed Kennedy* clearly influenced a fourth-season episode. In "Musings of a Cigarette-Smoking Man," which aired in November 1996, a captain at the Special Warfare Center is recruited to kill President Kennedy. He sets up Oswald as the patsy and fires the fatal shot himself. The title for this segment of the episode is a quotation from Marvin's appearance in Turner's documentary.

Regarding Pitzer's reported enthusiasm for his post-retirement job offer, there are other likely reasons beyond the financial. Montgomery Junior College's main campus had been, until 1965, located one block from his home, and he must have known it well. After the Rockville campus was opened in 1965, redevelopment was planned for the Takoma Park campus, where the Communication Sciences and Information Sciences program was to be located. Today, Bill Pitzer's specialty is taught in classes which, from across a city park and playground, overlook his former home .

2006 Libel Trial:

http://fortfairfieldjournal.com/ffj_danmarvin_trial.htm

Jones on Pitzer:

Jones, Penn. *Forgive My Grief Vol. III*, p. 95-96.

Kennedy family release of JFK autopsy materials to National Archives:

AID as CIA front:

Stockwell, *The Praetorian Guard*, p. 74.

Turner, William and Jonn Christian. 1978. *The Assassination of Robert F. Kennedy*. New York: Random House.

"More constructive pursuits":

Marvin repairs antique furniture and writes a gardening column in addition to his "crusades."

7. LEGACIES

There are numerous books on the Kennedy assassination conspiracy, ranging from the excellent to the awful. I highly recommend *The Hidden History of the JFK Assassination* by Lamar Waldron (2013). On the subject of CIA drug trafficking I recommend Peter Dale Scott's collected works, particularly *Deep Politics and the Death of JFK*, *Cocaine Politics* (with Jonathan Marshall), *Drugs, Oil and War,* and *The American War Machine*; and *The Politics of Heroin* by Alfred McCoy. William Chambliss is also an important authority on this and related subjects. With his permission, I have made some of his essays available on my website, which moves from time to time but is usually easy to search for.

Appendix: Dan Marvin Revisited

Long after I stopped believing in Dan Marvin's stories, some of them would come back to nag at me. In December 2014, I sat at my desk with a lap full of ice-cold, inch-thick manila folders I had just retrieved from storage, looking at an 8-by-10 black-and-white photo of a very young-looking Dan Marvin and Master Sergeant Joe Hill at the US Army's Natick, Massachusetts labs, modeling what appeared to be parachutes and other packs.

The photo is dated January 1965 and is connected to an incident which Dan appears to have begun talking about at roughly the same time as the Pitzer case. Its first recorded mention is in connection with his 1994 "Bits and Pieces" story which evolved into the article of the same name in the May, 1995 issue of *The Fourth Decade*. Of all Dan's stories, this one had been hardest for me to dismiss, for reasons which I will discuss below. I wrote that evening of Marvin on my blog:

> What basis in reality did his tales of intrigue have? Were there any secrets which he took to his grave? Sometimes it seems easy to dismiss any of his claims which are not supported by documentary proof, but there is one matter on which he seemed to exercise an uncharacteristic reticence, pertaining to his former acquaintance with a mafia don and his son in the Boston area and having been offered work as a contract killer to eliminate their competition.

Marvin's November 1994 notes refer to this meeting as having taken place in the Spring of 1964. His January 1995 letter to Jerry Rose of *TFD* reports that after having acquired some old letters to family, he was able to certainly identify the time frame as having been January 6 or 7 of 1965, following his assignment at Natick beginning in November 1964. In December 1964, Marvin had written family regarding his testing of "a new nylon rucksack." Marvin also mentioned the alleged incident twice during his April 1995 interview with Nigel Turner for *The Men Who Killed Kennedy*, but Turner turned the interview's focus back to matters more directly related to Pitzer's death and did not include any such mention in the final edit. The full *TFD* article is available at the Mary Ferrell Foundation site. Its key points: In late 1964, Marvin and Hill were selected to test "secret equipment" at Natick Labs. "On our first evening there in late November, 1964" they ate dinner in uniform at a fancy nearby "motel" and grew suspicious that it was a mob hangout. "As Sinatra crooned onstage near our table," drinks began to appear at their table, sent by an anonymous admirer. By threatening the waiter with grievous bodily harm, Marvin convinced him to reveal the source, then confronted the man and asked him why he had been sending them drinks. The man introduced himself and invited Marvin and Hill to join him. He said he was impressed with the camaraderie between Marvin, an officer, and Hill, an enlisted man.

In other accounts, this man would be described as the son of the local mafia don, who would soon introduce Marvin and Hill to the don himself.

> One thing led to another, and Joe and I then engaged in a little game of subterfuge: could we infiltrate the Mafia and lead them to think that it was part of our mission in Massachusetts? It was common knowledge in Mafia and CIA circles that Green Berets were tapped by the Company to terminate selected 'targets' in foreign countries, whereas the Mafia provided the CIA's pool of able assassins in the U.S.

They developed a relationship of trust with the man. Marvin and Hill's testing duties "involved parachuting with the new [secret?] hardware [sic], evaluating it, and designing modifications that might take days or weeks to engineer." They would go back and forth from Ft. Bragg to Natick in the meantime. While in Massachusetts, they continued their meetings with "our mafioso 'friend,'" visiting his home. On the 3rd visit on January 6th 1965, "we were invited to meet the 'family' don himself the next evening at his home." At this meeting, they were solicited to enlist as enforcers for the mob, killing off rival gangsters who invaded the don's territory. Before answering, Marvin "used this opportunity to pose a question that had been on my mind for some months: had the don been approached by the CIA prior to the Kennedy killing?" The don replied that he had been asked if he wanted a part in the hit, but refused to participate. Marvin then declined the offer, and "the four of us swore by a blood oath never to disclose the others' identities."

Continuing the blog entry mentioned earlier:

> A skeptical person would readily conclude that no such [don] did in fact exist, and that this was simply one of Marvin's tall tales. But this story nags at me. Maybe I want it to be true, because I think I have puzzled out the identity of Marvin's secret contacts and deep down I need to show off, even though it could incur the displeasure of the megacorporation which the family now runs. These are the kind of unhealthy thoughts that must motivate many proponents of conspiracy theories. I thought I had put the paranoia behind me, but there it is. It could be a long night. You can see my need to show off in my other writings, can't you? Or is it something other than that: a need to matter, a need to make sense of the world?

Dan opened all his files to me and I have copies of most of them. I have stored them chronologically along with my own work. I am leafing through the earliest correspondence Dan had been able to preserve from his years of "crusading for truth." I notice and recall a very judgmental missive written to his earliest collaborator who was living in sin. I see dim patterns emerging, leading up to his 1995 public revelation that he was asked by the CIA to eliminate a key witness to the cover-up of the Kennedy assassination. I see former allies referred to as enemies. This is a man who saw in black and white. Once again, I am unable to find the letter I am looking for, even by doing a keyword search in my electronic copies of Dan's files. It's frustrating because I know I saw it at one time, probably in 2003 when I visited Dan in New York. Every couple of years, I go looking for it, hoping that maybe this time I will be successful.

What was in this all-important letter, you must be wondering. Dan was not the kind of man who used the word "Google" as a verb. When there was something he wanted to find out on the internet, he would ask for help. It was one of the first things he asked of me when I made his acquaintance. In the letter I am once again searching for, Dan (to the best of my recollection) asked one of his confidantes to see what he can find out about the last name Perini in the Boston area. He doesn't make a big deal of it; he is just asking a casual favor in a private letter, some time in the late 1990s. When I saw this letter I was certain that Dan was making a discreet inquiry regarding the current status of his former mafia contacts. So of course I did a search on "Perini Boston."

What I found was very unsettling. Result number one, from BusinessWire.com, May 2004: "Boston Globe Ranks Perini as Massachusetts' #2 Company." Result number two, from Boston Business Journal, July 2004: "Perini wins $52M Afghanistan project." Result number three, from casinovendors.com: "Perini Building Company provides general contracting, construction management and design/build services to private clients and public agencies nationwide. Areas of specialty include gaming and lodging, entertainment, sport and public assembly, correctional, health care, warehousing and manufacturing, office, retail and parking structures." Even now, I feel a knot in my stomach reviewing these results. Perini's Massachusetts headquarters are in Framingham, the town neighboring Natick.

From time to time, I am reminded of all this, for example when a New England relative mentions to me some enormous Boston public works project which is being defrauded by the mob, fifty years after Dan first went to the Natick labs to test out gear. When I dare to stop and think about it, I am troubled at the prospect that Dan was right and that I didn't give him enough credit; horrified that I [may have been] right in my thesis that dirty money rules this country as the illegitimate child of high finance and thuggery.

It was apparently not until a year before Marvin's death that any article would appear on the internet discussing Tutor Perini in the context of organized crime. This article, by all appearances, was an April 7, 2011 editorial by the Florida Courier, entitled "When the Federal Government Embraces a Gangster Corporation." It is no longer available on the Courier's site but a link to it was given on the New York Teamsters Local 157 site the following June, along with excerpts of the editorial text, and apparently quoted in full by the National Black Chamber of Commerce:

> The Construction Industry has a bad reputation. That reputation is well earned as we are constantly being informed of fraud, cost overruns and safety violations related to big and small construction projects at a relentless and never ending rate. So it was apropos when the federal government along with the State of New York decided to come up with a crime busting task force aimed at the construction activity within the region. They knew they were going after the five Mafia families but they also ended up with a big catch outside the typical organized crime membership. They took the "scalp" of the gigantic firm known as Tutor Perini. . . .

My unease grew after reading this. If not true, Dan Marvin's story at the very least seemed to show remarkable prescience. Could he have been spinning tales about the Pitzer case while still telling some measure of truth about his adventure in Boston? This bothered me enough to contact Allan Eaglesham about it. Though we initially had been in disagreement over Marvin's credibility, Allan and I had come to see eye to eye years ago. I wanted to find the letter in which Dan gave the name, and asked him if he had ever heard Dan mention Perini. Allan's memory was not clear on it, but it seemed to ring a bell. Ironically, I was able to locate the letter weeks later while going through my old emails to Allan. I had actually discussed it with him in 2004 and we had both forgotten about it. Otherwise, my recollection of the letter's content was correct. A long December 13, 1996 letter from Dan to a correspondent in Pennsylvania contains this paragraph toward the end:

> ...if, during your time on the internet you can attempt to locate any documents or whatever related to an Italian family named Perini located in the Boston, Mass. area - I would appreciate it. Please don't say who you are getting the info for. This could be very important. I do know they have been involved in BIG construction in Boston - all over the US I believe and even - in 1965 for the Russians in Egypt building the ASWAN High Dam on the Nile in Egypt. [sic]

Here we see another aspect of the Boston story that has been intertwined with the "Mafia don" aspect from the beginning: a planned mission to blow the Aswan High Dam using a man-portable atomic device, or SADM. In the above-mentioned January 1995 letter to Rose, Marvin wrote:

> I apologize for including the wrong time frame in the article submitted. I wrote that it was in the Spring of 1964 that Hill and I went to Natick. It was a simple error. Three significant events impacted my life in 1964 and none were officially recorded due to their highly sensitive nature. In April, 1964 I received assassination training by CIA instructors at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. That Spring myself and thirty-one other Green Beret volunteers were trained as six-man teams to deploy and detonate a man-portable atomic device. And last, but not least, in November of that same year MSG Joe Hill and I went to Natick to test equipment and, on our own, infiltrated the MAFIA.

From Dan's letter of June 12, 1996 to Col. L. Fletcher Prouty:

> In 1964 I commanded one of the six man Special Atomic Demolition Munition (SADM) teams. Sound familiar? My contingency targets included the Aswan High Dam... At the time being built by the Russians with help from the Perini Construction Company out of Boston. Perini allegedly is a major Boston-area mafia family.

In 2002, Dan wrote a series of articles in connection with the release of his book, *The Expendable Elite*. This series, called "The Unconventional Warrior," touched on most of the stories Dan had shared over the years. Part Six was titled: "Blow the ASWAN High Dam":

> In the summer of 1964 I volunteered to command an eight-man team of volunteers that would take a man-portable atomic device into an objective area by parachute to destroy targets we would be told to neutralize. There were a total of four teams trained to carry and activate the SADM (Special Atomic Demolition Munition) device. As team leader I would carry the 95 lb device and my XO would carry the 35 lb trigger mechanism. Once on the ground in the target area we would first scout out a location within 15 minutes walking distance of the target site and quietly dig or prepare a pre-existing covered location such as a cave for our protection from the explosion and fallout. We would, after scouting the area during daylight hours, move with the device once darkness was again our protector to the detonation location, lock the two parts together, arm the device and return quickly to our own survival site.
>
> The man who brought a device from the Seneca Army Depot in NY State in an unmarked 3/4 ton truck to train us in its operation (short of arming it of course!) told us this first model used the timing device from a commercial washing machine. How true I don't know, but I do know that the maximum time we could set for the blast delay was 15 minutes and that made it absolutely necessary to put together a team of truly optimistic, really daring volunteers. There seemed to be no problem within the ranks of the Special Forces.
>
> If there had been an activation of the contingency mission we would secure the Special Atomic Demolition (SADM) devices in their special canvas containers, similar to the parachutist's adjustable equipment (PAE) bag, along with other PAE bags loaded with sharp entrenching tools, survival rations, skyhook harnesses and special radio equipment that would act as air-to-ground communications and homing signal devices for our after-mission pick up by C-130 aircraft equipped with a "skyhook" system.
>
> . . .
>
> The intelligence we needed to provide us accurate target site information was derived from "'Company" sources, **including a Mafia-owned, CIA employed construction company out of Massachusetts in Egypt at the time on an "arranged" contract to help the Russians build the dam using mostly Egyptian labor.** Strange bedfellows, I thought at the time, but perhaps necessary to get the job done. If the mob men got it right we'd be honing in on a location about four hundred yards from the fence that surrounded the hydroelectric station with its six huge water tunnels and we would have in hand the blueprints needed to place the device for maximum destructive results.
>
> At the time I thought nothing about the potential loss of lives and widespread contamination downstream where millions of Egyptians lived.
>
> Needless to say, the contingency mission remained just that and the geographies of politics in that region changed sufficiently to remove the ASWAN High Dam from danger

> of Special Forces actions as was envisioned when I commanded that small team of death-defying volunteers.

This is, as far as I know, Marvin's first *public* mention of a Mafia construction company in Massachusetts. Not coincidentally, the next article in the "Unconventional Warrior" series dealt with Marvin's Boston adventure, recycling much of the narrative from the "Bits and Pieces" article but also going into greater detail about the field testing of "some new tubular-frame rucksack and armor insole jungle boots" in coordination with the Natick Labs. It is significant, I believe, that this equipment had earlier been referred to as "hardware" and "secret;" as Dan had by this point already conflated this story with that of the SADM training. He was but one step away from equating this "Mafia construction company" with his Boston "don", which he did the following year on a Russian documentary called "13th Version:"

> ...We [Joe Hill, Dan, the Don] were talking about a lot of different things and I told him [the Don] that we'd heard rumors that some people from Boston were working on the Aswan High Dam. And he [the Don] said, "Those are my people. The Company hired me to go over there to work with the Russians so I could send back intelligence on the hydroelectric plant." The same intelligence of course was the same intelligence that was given me as the leader of the team that would go and bomb it.

Marvin then goes on to say that he had been trying to get in contact with the family; that he understood the father to be dead (Lou Perini died in 1972) but supposed the son was still alive. He wanted to get their permission to release their name in a book he planned to write(!). He also said that he later came to know another man in Syracuse who in 1966 had also trained for a mission to destroy the same dam (with a portable atom bomb).

Once it is examined as a whole, the implausibility of this story grows greatly. Let us review and summarize, setting aside the obvious questions of why on earth the US would want to have a plan in place to blow this dam, and why this American firm would have been contracted to help the Russians build it. We are implicitly asked to believe that one of the Perinis just happened to send drinks to Dan Marvin and Joe Hill in a Natick area restaurant when they were there to test boots and rucksacks at Natick Labs. Then, after playing footsie for a while, toying with the idea of infiltrating the mob, Marvin and Hill are introduced to the don, who also happened to be the intelligence source for Marvin's mission to blow the dam? And, perhaps coincidentally, the owner of the Braves baseball team? And he had been approached by the CIA to kill JFK. And if that weren't enough, Frank Sinatra had supposedly been onstage at this suburban Massachusetts hotel while simultaneously holding down a three-week gig at the Las Vegas Sands.