

Road to Nowhere

Despite its scholarly trappings, The Road to Dallas is a run-of-the-mill conspiracy book.

*The Road to Dallas: The Assassination
of John F. Kennedy*

By David Kaiser

Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. 509 pp. \$35

By John McAdams

At first glance, David Kaiser's book promises to be one of the more sensible volumes on the JFK assassination. Published by an esteemed press, it is written by a reputable, experienced historian. Kaiser, moreover, is one of the first from his profession to plumb the voluminous collection of once-secret documents assiduously collected, at some cost to the US taxpayer, by the [Assassination Records Review Board](#) in the 1990s.

In several respects, Kaiser does not disappoint. He cheerfully concedes that Lee Harvey Oswald killed the president in Dealey Plaza, and accepts the single bullet explanation.^[1] He supplies a solid account of Kennedy-era assassination plots against Fidel Castro (which originated under President Eisenhower), and he provides a workmanlike narrative of the Kennedy administration's campaign against organized crime. Unlike so many authors writing about the assassination, Kaiser is not in Camelot's thrall, and he does not whitewash any of the questionable actions of the Kennedy brothers.^[2] Among other things, he describes the tactics of the Senate "Rackets" Committee, of which Robert Kennedy was the top staffer, as "reminiscent of" those used by the far more notorious House Un-American Activities Committee, as well as Joe McCarthy's Senate subcommittee on investigations.^[3]

But not far into the book, Kaiser's judgment deserts him. He tries to make the case that the Kennedys' anti-Castro plots and crusade against organized crime climaxed in the president's assassination, and he hammers the facts until they fit this thesis. The result is a clanking, Rube Goldberg-style conspiracy contraption that falls of its own weight. Far from uncovering an "appalling and grisly conspiracy," as the book's [catalog copy](#) asserts, Kaiser merely recycles hoary claims that have been debunked for decades, while putting

back into circulation innuendo and unproven allegations. Kaiser ignores very stubborn facts whenever they are inconvenient to his smoke-and-mirrors history.

Links Where There Are None

Kaiser has a penchant—one fatal to serious history—for the most unreliable evidence and the most implausible scenarios.

Take, for example, his attempt to link Oswald's murderer, Jack Ruby, to the Mafia in a way that might implicate Ruby in a conspiracy to kill JFK. Kaiser claims that in 1959, Ruby visited Santos Trafficante in Trescornia prison in Cuba not long after Castro's overthrow of the Batista dictatorship. If true, the encounter would seem to be highly significant, because it would tie Ruby to a high-level mobster soon to be involved in the CIA's efforts to eliminate Castro.

Kaiser correctly cites John Wilson-Hudson, a British journalist, as the source for this claim. But Wilson-Hudson could hardly be more unreliable as a source, and he is also the *sole* source for the alleged visit. Years before the assassination, one CIA document from 1959 labeled Wilson-Hudson as being “mentally unbalanced.”^[4] Another document, from 1963, reported that “altho[ugh] Wilson [is] intelligent, erratic behavior indicates mental unbalance”; in addition, he was deemed “violently anti-US.”^[5] Even the House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA), which was all but determined to pin the assassination on the Mafia regardless of the evidence, treated Wilson-Hudson's claim gingerly. HSCA's final report refused to embrace Wilson-Hudson's allegation, most likely because a committee staffer reviewed the journalist's CIA file, which included other evaluations such as “believe on first returns from FBI check he [is] likely [to] be [a] psychopath.”^[6]

Yet for Kaiser, none of these red flags matter sufficiently. Wilson-Hudson's story is too pivotal to the conspiracy Kaiser is determined to construct, no matter how flimsy the foundation.

Another key piece of evidence Kaiser presents to implicate Ruby involves long-distance phone calls Ruby made to various mob-upped people around the country in the days immediately prior to the assassination. Ruby's contemporaneous explanation was that he was having trouble with the strippers' union, the mob-connected American Guild of Variety Artists (AGVA). The Warren Commission left it at that, but in the late 1970s, HSCA reopened the matter and it analyzed these calls in detail. Its investigators found that most of them could easily be accounted for by Ruby's problems with the AGVA, although HSCA did leave the door open for some of the calls having been suspicious.^[7] Subsequently, author Gerald Posner investigated three calls that HSCA thought might be worrisome, but he only found that they, too, were related to Ruby's labor troubles.^[8]

None of this bothers Kaiser, who prefers innuendo.^[9] He somehow fails to notice that there were too many calls for them to be conspiratorial. Are we supposed to believe that six or eight hoodlums, from all over the country, were being directed to catch a plane to Dallas and show up in time to help cover-up the killing of Kennedy? Of course, Kaiser might say that only one or two of the calls were conspiratorial. Even so, he has to admit that a large number were exactly what Ruby and the people who received them said they were: appeals for help in dealing with the AVGA. And if most of the calls were, it's perfectly plausible that *all* of them were.

Stick Figures

The issue of the telephone calls also highlights one element that is particularly striking in Kaiser's book: the complete superficiality of the characters in it. Kaiser simply doesn't know, understand, or convey a realistic sense of the people he is writing about. To a man (and woman), they are cardboard-character figures, movable at will and whim for the purpose of concocting a conspiracy. Kaiser plays to every exhausted stereotype of the "mobster," "spook," or "right-winger."

When the House Select Committee analyzed the long-distance calls, it found that Ruby had been calling people he hardly knew, often after not having been in contact for years. What was telling, and poignant, was that Ruby utterly failed to muster any support. None of the people he talked to was willing to lift a finger, and others simply failed to return his call. If Kaiser understood Ruby, he would realize the salient point here is that no one responded to Ruby's pleas. Far from being a well-connected mobster, he was a poor *schlub* and wannabe who couldn't bring a smidgen of influence to bear on a mob-dominated union. Not having trouble with mob-connected unions . . . isn't that one of the perks of being an important mobster?

Kaiser's defective understanding of Ruby becomes even more apparent when he has Ruby stalking Oswald in the hours following the assassination. In real life, Ruby was an opportunistic vigilante, but in Kaiser-land, the clear implication is that Ruby was a single-minded mob assassin, waiting for the right moment to silence the "patsy." Ruby's fumbling and bungling of that supposed task, not to mention his own sworn statements, prove that Kaiser's scenario does not ring true. If Ruby really had such a critical assignment, he should have shot Oswald Friday night, when the chaotic scene at the Dallas police headquarters allowed Ruby, a compulsive gate-crasher, to gain easy entry. Surely it was vital to the conspirators to silence Oswald, the mob's fall guy, at the earliest possible opportunity. Instead of attending to serious business, Ruby gloried at being where the action was. He ran around claiming to be a translator for the Israeli press, shrewdly handed out his Carousel Club business card to out-of-town reporters, and he thoughtfully delivered sandwiches to the hard-working staff of KLIF radio.^[10]

By the same token, Ruby was nonchalantly engaged in wiring money to one of his strippers on Sunday morning at the very time when Oswald was going to be transferred to

the custody of the Dallas County sheriff at a moment's notice. Ruby barely sneaked into the police garage in time.

Some hitman.[\[11\]](#)

Tossing in Conspiracy Factoids

In keeping with the cast of his narrative, Kaiser repeatedly throws all manner of conspiracy “buff” lore into his account. It lends the book an appropriate ambiance.

Kaiser asserts, for example, that Oswald “did have contacts with both the FBI and the CIA in the months after his return from the Soviet Union—directly with the FBI, and indirectly with the CIA through the enigmatic George De Mohrenschildt”[\[12\]](#) Kaiser then goes on to quote De Mohrenschildt as telling the Warren Commission that a “G. Walter Moore” had talked with him about Oswald.[\[13\]](#) “G. Walter Moore” was actually J. Walton Moore, who headed the Dallas office of the CIA’s Domestic Contact Service, as it was known in 1963. Much later, in 1977, De Mohrenschildt told author Edward J. Epstein a more embellished version of the same story: that an associate of Moore had actually “tasked” him with meeting Oswald.[\[14\]](#) That would suggest a much more active posture by the CIA toward Oswald.

Yet Kaiser should know better than to use any late-1970s testimony of De Mohrenschildt, because by then, he was certifiably committable. Suicidal, De Mohrenschildt would rave about how the “Jewish Mafia” and FBI were out to get him, and in 1976, he was actually confined in a Texas mental hospital for three months.[\[15\]](#) The weight of the evidence is also overwhelming that De Mohrenschildt was never tasked to meet Oswald. He encountered Oswald only during that brief period when the Oswalds were minor celebrities in Dallas’s White Russian community.

Kaiser knows that CIA files show no effort to keep tabs on or debrief Oswald, for he admits that “no 1962-63 contact between De Mohrenschildt and [J. Walton] Moore has ever come to light.” Nonetheless, Kaiser dismisses the lack of a paper trail, arguing that “Moore was apparently using standard CIA practice: anything not actually documented in the files could safely be denied.”[\[16\]](#) In other words, J. Walton Moore was doing the lying here, according to Kaiser, rather than De Mohrenschildt, although only the latter had a proven record of unreliability.

As is typical with conspiracy authors, Kaiser never bothers to ask *why* Moore would lie about this. For more than a generation, conspiracists have claimed it is highly suspicious that the CIA did not debrief Oswald on his return from the USSR. But if keeping tabs on a former defector was obviously something that needed to be done and routine, why wouldn’t Moore do it, and cheerfully document having done it?

Oswald

As Norman Mailer once wrote so memorably,

. . . Oswald was a secret agent. There is no doubt about that. The only matter unsettled is whether he was working for any service larger than the power centers in the privacy of his mind. At the least, we can be certain he was spying on the world in order to report to himself. For, by his own measure, he [was] one of the principalities of the universe.^[17]

Yet, in David Kaiser's hands, Oswald has no will of his own. He is an empty vessel, waiting to be infused with motives and actions that Kaiser wants to impute to him.

Kaiser believes, incredibly, that Oswald was not a leftist at all, but worked for the FBI in an attempt to "infiltrate" communist organizations "following in the footsteps of Herbert Philbrick."^[18] As proof that Oswald's extensively documented connections to leftist organizations could not have been the result of genuine conviction, Kaiser asserts that Oswald "certainly could have been under no illusions as to the stature of the Communist Party of the United States of America in 1962."^[19] In other words, Kaiser posits that Oswald recognized that communism in America was an exhausted political movement.

But was that truly Oswald's worldview? Anyone knowledgeable about Oswald's biography would agree that he was more than capable of spinning political fantasies.^[20] Indeed, after his political awakening in the 1950s, during the Rosenbergs' trial, Oswald's life might be labeled an unending serial of political fantasies, all of which sprang from his cockeyed and vulgar understanding of the world around him.

Kaiser observes that Oswald was "trying to create a paper trail tying himself to the Communist Party USA and to the SWP [Socialist Workers' Party]. His simultaneous courtship of both organizations – which he must have known were bitter enemies – is rather suspicious."^[21] This will not ring true to anyone familiar with Oswald, who was an ideological *naif*, not some Jewish kid who grew up in the Bronx and attended the City College of New York in the 1930s, where he might have been tutored in the fine points of Marxist dialectics over lunchtime. Oswald was poorly educated, and what little education he had was in Southern schools where Marxism was not taught in any detail. He didn't interact with other Marxists or radicals.

Once, in August of 1963, he received a perfunctory letter from Arnold Johnson, the director of information for the American Communist Party. In a subsequent argument with his wife Marina about his political activism, Lee read aloud the letter saying "See this? . . . There are people who understand me and think I'm doing useful work. If *he* respects what I'm doing, then it's important. He's the Lenin of our country."^[22] That communism, a powerful force in US intellectual and literary circles during the 1930s, was an all but spent political force by the 1960s, was something Oswald simply didn't want to comprehend.

The naïve and idiosyncratic nature of Oswald's ideological commitments is further evidence of their sincerity. Had some intelligence agency enrolled him in the "How to Look Like a Leftist" bootcamp, it's unlikely he would acted as if he were oblivious to the hatred between Stalinists and Trotskyites, or have written something like "The Atheian System," with its callow utopianism that bears only an idiosyncratic resemblance to standard Marxist doctrine.[\[23\]](#)

Why the FBI would need Oswald to infiltrate communist organizations—and do so merely by having Oswald write letters sucking up to officials a thousand miles away in New York—is a mystery that Kaiser cannot resolve for one reason: it did not happen. Kaiser admits these organizations were honeycombed with FBI informants who actually attended meetings. At one point, Kaiser claims that Oswald's "activities fit into a well-documented, broader effort by the FBI and independent right-wing groups to discredit left-wing organizations in the 1950s and 1960s, especially in the South."[\[24\]](#) But unless Oswald was already slated to kill Kennedy, an exchange of letters between these organizations and an oddball in Dallas and New Orleans would not even register as blip on anyone's radar.

Kaiser has the same logical problem with respect to the radio debate on WDSU in New Orleans in August, 1963. He believes the whole thing was set up—with the witting cooperation of Oswald—to discredit and embarrass the Fair Play for Cuba Committee (FPCC). But in the New Orleans radio market, there was scarcely any need to discredit an organization with a total membership of one, namely Oswald himself. Claiming that this was a plot to embarrass the FPCC nationally requires some evidence that the plotters knew that Oswald would soon shoot John F. Kennedy, and become infamous as the president's assassin.

The notion that Oswald was really a rightist is perhaps the most bizarre element in the entire book. For this to be true, Oswald had to have been engaged in a brilliant imposture that involved all of his writings, his public activities and statements, his conversations with White Russians, his conversations with Marina, down to his having a picture of Fidel Castro hanging in his apartment (not to mention that he read [The Nation](#) and [Corliss Lamont's](#) writings on Cuba)![\[25\]](#)

But if he was somehow recruited to play a leftist radical, as Kaiser postulates, at what point was he recruited? Even before he left home to join the Marines, Oswald was expressing communist political opinions to his friends. He told Palmer McBride, a fellow employee at the Pfisterer Dental Laboratory in late 1957 or early 1958 that (in McBride's words),

. . . President Eisenhower was exploiting the working people. [Oswald] then made a statement to the effect that he would like to kill President Eisenhower because he was exploiting the working class. This statement was not made in jest . . . Lee Oswald was very serious about the virtues of Communism, and discussed those virtues at every opportunity. He would say that the capitalists were exploiting the working class and his

central theme seemed to be that the workers in the world would one day rise up and throw off their chains.[\[26\]](#)

In the same vein, William E. Wulf, who went to high school with Oswald, testified to the Warren Commission that Oswald on one occasion,

. . . started expounding the Communist doctrine and saying that he was highly interested in communism, that communism was the only way of life for the worker, et cetera, and then came out with a statement that he was looking for a Communist cell in town to join but he couldn't find any. He was a little dismayed at this, and he said that he couldn't find any that would show any interest in him as a Communist, and subsequently, after this conversation, my father came in and we were kind of arguing back and forth about the situation, and my father came in the room, heard what we were arguing on communism, and that this boy was loud-mouthed, boisterous, and my father asked him to leave the house and politely put him out of the house, and that is the last I have seen or spoken with Oswald.[\[27\]](#)

In addition, of course, there is Oswald's famous 1956 letter to the Socialist Party of America, written three weeks before he turned 17 and joined the Marines, in which he asserted that "I am a Marxist, and have been studying socialist principles for well over fifteen months."[\[28\]](#) Are we really supposed to believe that Oswald was recruited as a teenager by some intelligence agency, and tasked with conducting an elaborate charade for purposes that were undefined and unimagined at the time?

Kaiser's portrayal of Oswald as something other than a self-styled leftist leads the author to make bizarre statements about some of Oswald's activities. Kaiser writes, for example, that "Why Oswald decided to go after [Edwin] Walker is not entirely clear."[\[29\]](#) Yet given Oswald's statements to his wife Marina and to George De Mohrenschildt, it's patently obvious why Oswald targeted a man he considered an up-and-coming American fascist. Kaiser doesn't seriously deny that Oswald shot at Walker, although he throws out yet another red herring by suggesting that Oswald might have had an accomplice.

To believe Kaiser one has to believe that all of Oswald's leftist activity was an elaborate pose, and/or an "infiltration" attempt directed toward the left. The accurate explanation is that Oswald was what he really appeared to be—a self-styled leftist and party of one, because no organization on the left was willing to embrace him.

Oswald and the Conspiracy in New Orleans

Misrepresenting Oswald's politics is only half of Kaiser's game; making Oswald fit some ill-defined conspiracy is the other necessary component. Kaiser is just as tendentious here as he is with respect to Jack Ruby.

À la New Orleans DA Jim Garrison, Kaiser tries to link Oswald to David Ferrie in New Orleans, initially via their mutual participation in the Civil Air Patrol (CAP) while Oswald was still in high school. Kaiser notes that the HSCA turned up five witnesses who confirmed that Oswald was in Ferrie's unit.^[30] What Kaiser fails to mention is that the HSCA witnesses also made it clear that Oswald was not any sort of gung-ho cadet (attending only a few meetings), and he didn't have any sort of special relationship with Ferrie. Yet Kaiser makes a point of asserting that Ferrie lied when he claimed not to know Oswald when questioned a few days after the assassination. But not recalling one cadet who was briefly in his unit *8 years earlier* seems plausible enough. Not yet done, Kaiser points to the somewhat famous photo of Ferrie and Oswald together at a CAP picnic as evidence they knew each other. But the two are standing at opposite sides of a small crowd, and it's hardly clear that Ferrie would have personally interacted with Oswald at that picnic, and if he did, hardly obvious that he would remember it.

For Kaiser, of course, Ferrie represents a twofer, since he had "connections" (again, that indispensable word) to both anti-Castro Cubans and to local mobster Carlos Marcello. Kaiser appears not to know that Ferrie's connections with the anti-Castro movement had been severed well before the summer of 1963. A homosexual with a penchant for young boys, Ferrie's lifestyle was not particularly appreciated by the Catholic (sometimes devoutly Catholic) Cuban exiles. Kaiser treats Ferrie's "connection" to the exile community as still active during the summer of 1963.^[31] As for Marcello, because Ferrie did investigative work for this hoodlum, in Kaiser's world that is sufficient, in and of itself, to establish a sinister link to the assassination. By this logic, Marcello's barber was equally "connected" to the conspiracy to kill the president. In any case, Kaiser doesn't actually bother to link Oswald with Ferrie in 1963—nor can he, although that would seem to be instrumental to his argument.

What's amazing about Kaiser's scholarship here is that while he clearly recognizes that Garrison's 1967-69 probe was a sham, he doesn't desist from marshaling some of Garrison's material. Kaiser implies, using logic that can only be called McCarthyite, that it's very significant that Oswald's employer in New Orleans, a businessman named William Reily, was a prominent anti-Communist and supporter of the Information Council of the Americas, a local anti-Communist propaganda organization. In reality, working for a conservative anti-communist running a business in New Orleans in 1963 was about as odd as finding a leftist in the English department of any given university today—unavoidable, in other words. Kaiser finds meaning in Oswald's brief employment at Reily's coffee packing plant, notwithstanding that there is no evidence Reily ever knew Oswald. He was a low-level employee, frequently missing from his post because he preferred to hang out at a parking garage next door, where he would sit and talk to a gun buff named Adrian Alba.

In one of the book's more regrettable sections, Kaiser gets suckered into part of Jim Garrison's deplorable case against Clay Shaw. The so-called "Clinton scenario" involved testimony by several individuals from Clinton, Louisiana, who claimed that Oswald, allegedly in the company of David Ferrie and Clay Shaw, was sighted in their town in late August/early September 1963. While there, Oswald reportedly visited a barber shop

in nearby Jackson, inquired about a job at the local mental institution, and got into a voter registration line in Clinton before departing.^[32] Kaiser is impressed with these Clinton eyewitnesses, and their testimony at Shaw's 1969 trial was consistent and coherent—indeed, suspiciously so.^[33] The earliest statements made in 1967 by the most important of these witnesses are altogether different. Kaiser apparently is unaware of that, and he is also oblivious to the old news that the Clinton story has been discredited. He persists in using it despite acknowledging elsewhere that Garrison had a habit of fabricating “fantastic” accusations.^[34]

In New Orleans, where Oswald resided for five months during 1963, Kaiser also tries to couple Oswald to the mob via his relationship with an uncle, Charles “Dutz” Murret. Murret was a bookmaker and he apparently had real Mafia connections. Kaiser, in an evidence-free piece of speculation, says that “Certainly it would have been easy enough for Murret to have passed it through the grapevine that his somewhat notorious nephew, the ex-Marine who had defected to Russia and returned with a Russian wife, was back in town.”^[35] It certainly would have been easy, but the point is, did Murret ever do anything of the kind?

Kaiser's cardboard-character approach to his historical subjects is on full display here. In reality, Murret held a very negative view of his nephew. He was put off by Oswald's failure to hold down a job to support his family (one child already, with another on the way), and that he was failing to teach English to his daughter June (preferring Russian). When Murret heard Oswald debate on behalf of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee on WDSU radio, with Lee defending the organization, he was not at all pleased.^[36]

Presumably, Kaiser believes Murret's sworn testimony before the Warren Commission was a pack of lies, and that Murret happily volunteered up his nephew to kill President Kennedy. But Kaiser does not provide a scintilla of proof.

The Odio Episode

By now it should be manifest that while Kaiser claims to be the first historian to mine the assassination-related documents opened in the 1990s, most of his book consists of material recycled from 44 years of conspiracy books, despite source notes which overwhelmingly list archival documents. This is nowhere more true than in his account of the Odio incident, which is quite similar to the treatment this subject received in a deservedly obscure book entitled *Oswald Talked*, written by Ray and Mary La Fontaine.^[37]

Sylvia Odio, a young Cuban exile living in Dallas, testified that three men came to her door one evening in late September 1963, soliciting funds for their anti-Castro activities. (And indeed, three men did). After the assassination, she was convinced that one of them was Lee Harvey Oswald. If it was Oswald, the encounter would tie him to anti-Castro activists, which for Kaiser constitutes proof that Oswald was involved in a conspiracy.

The alleged Odio episode opens the book, later takes up an entire chapter, and is singled out by Kaiser as being the most important evidence of a conspiracy save for Ruby's murder of Oswald.[\[38\]](#)

Kaiser insists that investigators for both the Warren Commission and House Select Committee on Assassinations found Odio "highly credible."[\[39\]](#) This is an oversimplification, since the Warren Commission didn't believe she had really seen Oswald, and HSCA had a statement from her psychiatrist saying,

Let me say, consciously, I don't think she would want to lie, but to me, it's very conceivable that in the histrionic personality, the kind of personality that she had that where she would not lie, she could be—has a degree of suggestibility that she could believe something that did not really transpire.[\[40\]](#)

There is no reason in the world to think that Odio consciously lied about Oswald's presence. But as Kaiser ought to know, there were scores of false "Oswald sightings" in the wake of the assassination. Well-meaning citizens earnestly swore, for example, that they had seen Oswald bring a rifle into an Irving, Texas sporting goods store so that a telescopic sight could be mounted on it.[\[41\]](#) (In fact, Oswald had purchased the rifle with the sight already installed). In Alice, Texas a total of 17 eyewitnesses came forward to report a fellow they were positive was Oswald had showed up in various locations prior to the assassination, sometimes with Marina in tow. (In fact, it could not possibly have been Oswald).[\[42\]](#) Each and every lead that came flooding into the FBI after the assassination was dutifully tracked by the bureau's field office in Dallas and dozens of other cities across the nation. The vast majority did not pan out, and only a handful were dealt with by the Warren Commission.

Could the Odio affair, like all the other eyewitness sightings, including those in Clinton, be just another mistake? That possibility is plausible enough, and becomes more plausible if one looks carefully at the circumstances. There is no evidence that corroborates Sylvia Odio's conviction that she saw Oswald.[\[43\]](#)

The Warren Commission determined that if Oswald visited Odio in Dallas, it almost certainly had to be on the evening of September 25. Oswald apparently got an employment check at a New Orleans post office on the morning of that day, and cashed it at a Winn-Dixie store by 1:00 PM.[\[44\]](#) (Kaiser posits that perhaps the check arrived a day earlier, or perhaps somebody else cashed it, but there is absolutely no evidence for that). After leaving New Orleans, Oswald either went to Dallas or Houston. But Kaiser ignores good evidence that Oswald called the Houston home of Horace Twiford, an official in the Texas Socialist Labor Party, on September 25.[\[45\]](#) In addition, how could Oswald be aboard a bus that left Houston at 2:35 AM, bound for Laredo, if he had been in Dallas that same evening?[\[46\]](#)

Not easily deterred, Kaiser is so intent on putting Oswald in Sylvia Odio's presence that he even attempts to shift their alleged encounter to October 3, after Oswald got back

from Mexico City. Although Kaiser acknowledges that Odio moved around this time, he is apparently unaware Odio occupied her new residence no later than October 1. Given that it was such an unforgettable encounter, it strains credulity to believe that Odio did not manage to remember accurately where the alleged meeting took place when she told the FBI and Warren Commission about it. (Indeed, packing boxes filled the living room on the day the three men made their visit, Odio recalled).^[47] But to make the facts fit his preferred thesis, Kaiser modestly suggests that he has noticed “what everyone has missed.” Odio “could have been mistaken.”^[48]

Apart from everything else, the mere fact that Kaiser devotes so many words to the alleged Oswald-Odio encounter is a telling indicator of just how bent his whole approach to this subject truly is. By comparison, Oswald’s proven attempt to assassinate General Edwin Walker in April 1963 is given short shrift, even though nothing is more revealing of Oswald’s willingness to commit political murder than the Walker episode.

A Generic Conspiracy Book

One could go on *ad nauseam* about the mistakes in interpretation, outright errors, fallacies, and gaps in logic or fact which appear on virtually every page of *The Road to Dallas*. Such a list would be tedious to compile and boring to read, relieved only on occasion by a few outright howlers. Kaiser lends credence, for example, to Jim Garrison’s notion that Melba Marcades, aka Rose Chermie [sic], a prostitute and heroin addict with 51 arrests on her rap sheet, was beaten and thrown from a moving car after she acquired “foreknowledge” of the assassination from two dark-complected men.^[49] (For readers not steeped in buff lore, Marcades’s undignified exit from a car was the opening scene in Oliver Stone’s film, *JFK*). This episode has been debunked *repeatedly*.^[50]

Kaiser, for all his credentials, has produced a typical conspiracy book, indistinguishable from 300-400 others that are floating around out there. The inevitable failing of such books is they inexorably involve a cast of hundreds of witting and unwitting accomplices in their supposed conspiracy, and for good reason. Because they don’t have anything like a compelling, rational case, conspiracists have no recourse but to grasp at every available straw. They will take one piece of evidence that arouses suspicion about an anti-Castro Cuban, and add to it another item that raises questions about some Mafia figure. Then they suggest that some unexplained event implicates the CIA, and another, the FBI. With a wink they will add a tenuous piece of evidence about a second anti-Castro Cuban, then give a nod to another Mafioso, and finally, throw in a couple of rich, anti-Communist businessmen for good measure. When all is said and done, the reader is left overwhelmed, and may even be moved to double-check his or her own whereabouts on November 22, 1963. All this spooky stuff *must* add up to something coherent.

Anyone expecting Kaiser to provide clarity about who killed JFK would be better advised to go find a game of three-card monte. Your odds of fingering the money card in that rigged game are much better than trying to extract any meaning from *The Road to Dallas*, and sense out of Kaiser's fervid imagination.

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[1] It must be pointed out, nonetheless, that Kaiser also hedges his bet by stating, "If someone fired a [fourth] shot from the grassy knoll, he missed." Kaiser, *Road to Dallas*, 416.

[2] For the latest example of a whitewashed account, see David Talbot's [Brothers](#).

[3] Kaiser, *Road to Dallas*, 22.

[4] Memorandum for the Record, Carl John Wilson-Hudson, 6 October 1959, Record Number [104-10182-10187](#), JFK Assassination Records Collection, National Archives (courtesy [Mary Ferrell Foundation](#)).

[5] CARL JOHN WILSON aka JOHN WILSON-HUDSON, 3 December 1963, Document ID Number [1993.06.30.12:35:59:530530](#), JFK Assassination Records Collection, National Archives (courtesy [Mary Ferrell Foundation](#)).

[6] "Carlos – John Wilson-Hudson," 11 July 1978, Record Number [180-10143-10177](#), JFK Assassination Records Collection, National Archives (courtesy [Mary Ferrell Foundation](#)). Trafficante himself flatly denied the alleged visit ever took place. US House of Representatives, *Report of the Select Committee on Assassinations* 95th Congress, 2d Session (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1979), [154](#).

[7] *Ibid.*, [154-56](#).

[8] Gerald Posner, *Case Closed: Lee Harvey Oswald and the Assassination of JFK* (New York: Random House, 1993), 362-63.

[9] Kaiser, *Road to Dallas*, 339-40.

[10] *Warren Report*, [338-43](#).

[11] The best work on Ruby remains a biography written more than 40 years ago by Garry Wills and Ovid Demaris, *Jack Ruby: The Man Who Killed the Man Who Killed Kennedy* (New York: New American Library, 1967). Kaiser's utter failure to present a believable alternative to the compelling account by Wills and Demaris is one of the outstanding deficiencies in Kaiser's book.

Washington Decoded

- [12] Kaiser, *Road to Dallas*, 172.
- [13] George De Mohrenschildt Testimony, [9 H 235](#).
- [14] Edward J. Epstein, *The Assassination Chronicles* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 1992), 558-59.
- [15] De Mohrenschildt eventually succeeded in taking his own life with a shotgun. George De Mohrenschildt [Death Investigation](#), 29 March 1977.
- [16] Kaiser, *Road to Dallas*, 176-77.
- [17] Norman Mailer, *Oswald's Tale: An American Mystery* (New York: Random House, 1995), 352.
- [18] Kaiser, *Road to Dallas*, 179.
- [19] Ibid.
- [20] The two outstanding works on Oswald are Priscilla Johnson McMillan, *Marina and Lee* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), and Jean Davison, *Oswald's Game* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1983).
- [21] Kaiser, *Road to Dallas*, 181.
- [22] McMillan, *Marina and Lee*, 351.
- [23] Warren Commission Exhibit (CE) 98, [16 H 433](#).
- [24] Kaiser, *Road to Dallas*, 4.
- [25] Murret Testimony, [8 H 187](#); the literature in Oswald's possession was listed in the course of Ruth Paine's Testimony, [9 H 420-21](#).
- [26] CE 1386, [22 H 710-11](#).
- [27] *Warren Report*, [384](#).
- [28] Ibid., 681.
- [29] Kaiser, *Road to Dallas*, 183.
- [30] Ibid., 202.
- [31] Ibid., 203.

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[32] Ibid., 234-37. For a recent article disproving the allegation that Oswald visited a mental hospital near Clinton, see Pat Lambert, "[The Good Witness: Dr. Frank Silva and Lee Harvey Oswald.](#)"

[33] Two writers have thoroughly debunked the Clinton scenario and the manner in which the eyewitness testimony was developed. Patricia Lambert, *False Witness: The Real Story of Jim Garrison's Investigation and Oliver Stone's Film JFK* (New York: M. Evans and Company, 1998), 129-32, 179-80, 185-200, and Dave Reitzes, "[Impeaching Clinton.](#)"

[34] Kaiser, *Road to Dallas*, 204.

[35] Ibid., 205.

[36] Charles Murret Testimony, [8 H 187-88](#).

[37] Ray and Mary La Fontaine, *Oswald Talked: The New Evidence in the JFK Assassination* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing, 1996).

[38] Kaiser, *Road to Dallas*, 1-4, 238-260, 377. It should be pointed out that even if Oswald visited Odio as she claimed, all it would likely prove is that Oswald was still unilaterally trying to infiltrate anti-Castro groups after he left New Orleans, just as he had when he lived there in the summer of 1963.

[39] Kaiser, *Road to Dallas*, 2.

[40] [Sworn Testimony of Dr. Burton K. Einspruch](#), 11 July 1978.

[41] *Warren Report*, [315-21](#).

[42] Dave Reitzes, "[Another Oswald Sighting: Allegations of Lee Harvey Oswald in Alice, Texas.](#)"

[43] Kaiser points out that Vincent Bugliosi, in his recent non-conspiratorial book on the assassination, actually concurs with the conclusion that Oswald was among those who visited Odio's apartment. This is a rare instance where Bugliosi seems to have abandoned common sense. Vincent Bugliosi, *Reclaiming History: The Assassination of President John F. Kennedy* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007), 1299-1315.

[44] *Warren Report*, [323](#).

[45] Sworn affidavits of Horace E. Twiford and Estelle Twiford, [11 H 179-80](#). In addition to their testimony about the telephone call, the Twifords produced an envelope with Oswald's return address on it, which had been forwarded to Horace from the Socialist Labor Party's national office. Lastly, the Twiford's home phone number was listed in Oswald's address book.

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[46] Although the ticket agent was unable to recall Oswald, two passengers on the bus testified they saw Oswald riding alone on the bus when they awoke at 6 AM. *Warren Report*, [323](#).

[47] CE 2942, 26 H 401; Odio Testimony, [11 H 370](#), [374-75](#).

[48] Kaiser, *Road to Dallas*, 257-58.

[49] *Ibid.*, 359-60.

[50] Dave Reitzes, "[The Prediction of Rose Cherami](#)."