

# Why I Never Debated the Assassination of President Kennedy

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In my [interview conducted by Paul Kurtz](#) I noted that I never participated in any debate in any forum on the JFK assassination. I will endeavor herein to explain why, notwithstanding my willingness and readiness to do so, I was never afforded the opportunity to debate this issue on which I maintained a constant interest. My explanation will take the form of recounting the experiences I had with Jacob Cohen, a Brandeis University Professor.

Jacob Cohen was a defender of the Warren Report. He had attacked Fred J. Cook, a friend of mine and a distinguished investigative reporter, who had expressed in his writings [doubts regarding the validity of the Warren Commission's findings](#). Cohen had published articles entitled "The Vital Documents," and "The Warren Commission and Its Critics". He was reported to be writing a book, *Honest Verdict*.

I first met Cohen when he visited my home shortly after I had published [my first articles](#) on the assassination of President Kennedy. He was quick to open our discussion by asking me why I was publishing my articles in insignificant small magazines. He advised me that he was prepared to have me publish in all of the major magazines of the country. Being of Italian heritage, I recognized immediately that I was being made an offer I could not refuse. But being of Italian stubborn peasant stock, I responded to him. "I have no interest at all in publishing in the major journals because I am determined to tell the truth about the Kennedy assassination."

As he was leaving my home he asked, "Have you been audited yet?"

I asked, "What do you mean?"

He answered, "By the IRS?"

"No," I replied.

Thereafter, for several years I was audited by the Internal Revenue service, once by a team.

The next time I had occasion to meet with Jacob Cohen was on November 30, 1966, in the Charles Street Meeting House in Boston where a panel discussion had been scheduled on the Kennedy assassination. It was billed as "Seven Judges, No Jury – A Second Look at the Murder of a President". The panel numbered Penn Jones, Jacob Cohen, me and four journalists. Initially I had not been invited. Sylvia Meagher, the leading assassination critic, had been and decided that she could not attend because of a conflict in her schedule. She proposed me as an alternate. It is hard for

me to explain why Sylvia Meagher, the leading critic of that period, was unable to attend because of a scheduling conflict which was more important than this event.

In the panel discussion I told the audience: “If the American people are permitted to see what they have a right and duty to see in a society which is still open, to wit the [Zapruder photographic documentation](#) of the crude manner in which their President was dispatched from this world by a team of assassins, the lone assassin theory of the Warren Commission will be reduced to the proper place it deserves in history, as patent pap—improper sustenance for free minds.”

Following my presentation I approached Cohen and from my briefcase handed him a shirt and jacket with holes in the same location as those in Kennedy’s shirt and jacket. Some white tape connected the holes. As the son of a skilled custom tailor I requested of Cohen that he demonstrate how a custom tailored jacket and shirt could bunch up as the Commission had contended it did. Cohen dealt with the impossible task I had assigned to him by throwing the clothing back to me.

When I had checked into the hotel earlier that day, I learned I had been assigned to a suite with Jacob Cohen. I asked the desk clerk who had made the arrangement. He told me that someone from Harvard University had done so and had arranged to pay the full cost for the suite. I insisted that I could not accept anything of value for my work on the Kennedy assassination, and paid my half of the suite’s fee for the night.

As I was about to fall asleep that night after the event, there was a knock on my door. Jacob Cohen asked me whether I was asleep. He came in visibly anxious and upset and said, “I feel horrible.”

“Why?” I asked.

He replied, “Debating the assassination is horrible.”

“Well,” I said, “you shouldn’t feel like a crumb. Your case is impossible to argue. No one can honestly defend the Warren Commission’s work.”

I then said, “But, Jacob, you’re brilliant. You know what happened in the assassination. Why do you do it? Why don’t you just continue your academic career before you ruin it with this stupid case?”

He replied, “I’m not an academic anymore, Vince. I can’t stand professors. I like people too much.”

I then told him. “Fred J. Cook thinks that you may be a CIA agent,” and then added, “I don’t think that you are.”

I continued, “The case is nearly broken. Jacob, it’s all over in Europe, you know.”

He replied. “Yes, I do know. I’ve heard about the European press.”

I then said, “That’s all I want: for this case to break. That’s what we need in this society. We need to reexamine ourselves from top to bottom, and benefit from this. Maybe the conservatives can do it. The liberal left and the Democrats are hopeless when it comes to the Kennedy assassination. Just hopeless.”

Cohen replied, “Yes, the conservatives may break it because they have the character. But the Birchers already know. And they’re revolutionaries—they’ll use it. They know this society can’t digest a *coup*, and remain the same.”

I responded with, “Breaking the case could make us a better society.”

He replied, “We can’t digest it.”

I disagreed, “I think we can, Jacob. We need to become more American—we need to stop trying to act like a police state and go back to some of our original virtues, like skepticism of government and of power. I can’t live in a police state—not Russian, Cuban, or American.”

Cohen then said, “It’s not a question of whether you want to live in a police state. You’ll have to be killed.”

I replied. “I agree, and I’m prepared for that. You know I’m not afraid of that.”

The conversation that followed this is not of sufficient interest to recount here.

The CIA did not have me killed. That panel discussion in Boston was the closest I ever came to debating the JFK assassination. After that opportunity I was never offered nor invited to be in any debate on that subject. I apparently failed my test, and I feel that Jacob Cohen did likewise. He never finished his book on the assassination.

My law school, the University of Pennsylvania, planned a debate between a law professor and me. After the school librarian received from me copies of my articles on the assassination, the law professor read them and withdrew from the debate. Instead, later the law school arranged for a debate between Arlen Specter and Josiah Thompson, whom I view as a CIA agent. Thompson was, of course, solidly defeated by Specter.

A debate was organized between Arlen Specter and me by a branch of the Young Hebrew Association. Advertisements were sent out. Without explanation, Specter withdrew.

The question arises of why the CIA did not see fit to have allowed my accident to have happened. It is true that I have been involved at certain times in near accidents after the lug nuts on a wheel of

my car were loosened causing a wheel to separate off in one case, and in other cases causing a wheel to wobble precipitously.

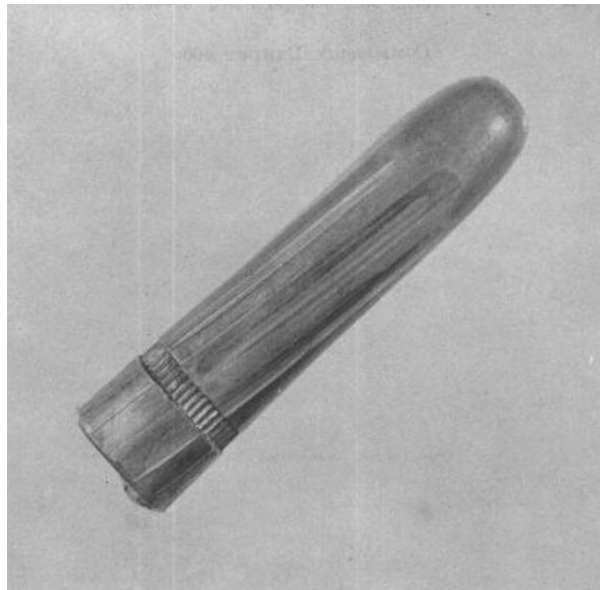
At the time of the assassination I was a lawyer and a public high school teacher. Beginning on the Monday following the Kennedy assassination on Friday November 22, 1963, I taught my students that the assassination was effectuated by the CIA in the service of our national security state. I gave many speeches on the subject and was never harassed or even questioned hostilely. In 1967 I was promoted by the School District and handled all of the labor litigation involving labor strikes against the school district. In my 61 years of service to the Philadelphia School District, 16 of which were pro bono, the FBI never suggested that I was not a trustworthy public servant.

Very early after [my first article](#) on the JFK assassination, pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, I sought my FBI and CIA files. The FBI had in their file two items. I had signed a petition against the rearming of West Germany, and I had written [an article on the Warren Report](#) that was published in the oldest extant U.S. legal journal, *The Legal Intelligencer*. The CIA file accurately reported that I spoke publicly about my view that the CIA had killed Kennedy.

Some twenty years ago I again requested those files. The FBI reported that it had no file on me. The CIA continued to report correctly that I was attributing to them the murder of Kennedy.

I am confident that Jacob Cohen was accurately relating what the CIA had intended for me. Why was I not killed?

I think that the FBI took exception to my being killed. In my [second \*Liberation\* magazine article](#) on the assassination I dedicated a portion of it to Robert A. Frazier, the FBI ballistics expert who had testified before the Commission that [Commission Exhibit 399](#) could not possibly have done the heavy work attributed to it as having coursed through Kennedy and Connally, and, while smashing bones in Connally, depositing fragments in the Governor's right wrist and left femur, but ending up weighing the same as a pristine bullet. This remarkable feat violated the law of physics called the conservation of mass.



**Commission Exhibit 399**

In my article, “[The Separate Connally Shot](#)” which appeared in April 1966 *The Minority of One* magazine, I revealed what I [had discovered in the National Archives](#) which had never been printed as Warren Commission exhibits. I found and reported that the December 9, 1963 [FBI Summary Report](#) on the Kennedy assassination and its January 13, 1964 [Supplemental Report](#), both of which were signed by the FBI Director, J. Edgar Hoover, declared that Commission Exhibit 399 could not have accomplished what the Commission had attributed to it and therefore the FBI rejected out of hand the Commission’s findings of a lone assassin. In the article’s last section I [concluded](#) that, “Among the most devastating critics of the Warren Report is the FBI.”

I was, and am still convinced that the FBI was not complicit in the killing of President Kennedy; the CIA was. The CIA threatened me with death, and I feel did not carry it out because the FBI protected my right to speak out on the *coup* and to function effectively in my careers as a fine high school teacher and an undistinguished journeyman lawyer. My lawyering attacks on the Warren Commission could have been accomplished by any open-minded first year law student.

The Warren Commission’s conclusion of a single assassin and no conspiracy utterly failed to follow from the very evidence presented by the Commission. Not only did the Commission’s evidence not support a single-assassin killing of President Kennedy, but instead it literally dictated clearly and immediately to any objective reader the conclusion that the assassination was the work of a conspiracy. Indeed, the failure of the Commission to arrive at that inescapably obvious conclusion can only be explained on the basis that the conspiracy was a high-level U.S. state crime. For only an assassination at the highest level of our government’s power could have reduced the distinguished members of the Commission to their historical roles as obliging servants humbly fashioning a fig-leaf coverup on behalf of their criminal state.