

Editor's note: The following essay was published in *Gold Coast* magazine in 2008. It was reprinted in *The Philadelphia Magazine Story - Making Publishing History* (Fort Lauderdale, FL: Sweeney, McCormick and Sons, Inc., 2013), pages 40 through 47, reproduced below with permission. September 2013: A newly released reprinting is now available of *The Last Investigation*, by Gaeton Fonzi (Author) with Marie Fonzi (Preface), Skyhorse Publishing, 496 pages.

Chapter 6

The Odyssey Of An Investigation

In charting the history of *Philadelphia* magazine's growth from obscurity to national recognition in less than ten years, the names D. Herbert Lipson and Alan Halpern are linked. Halpern, the editor sometimes described as a genius, is more aptly recalled as a gifted editor who understood his market and his times. Lipson, the publisher, had a vision of what the magazine could become and the sense to give Halpern largely a free hand, and to support him in running stories that took considerable courage and exposed him to legal risk.

At the time, however, another name eclipsed them both in the minds of many among the growing and influential audience of *Philadelphia* magazine readers. Beginning in the early 1960s, Gaeton Fonzi startled the city month after month. He steadily built readership with a series of investigative stories, colorful profiles and lifestyle pieces that, as a body of work, have few comparisons in the history of magazine journalism. He and Greg Walter exposed the corrupt *Philadelphia Inquirer* reporter Harry Karafin. His two-part series on Walter Annenberg eventually became a book [*Annenberg; A Biography Of Power*, NY: Weybright and Talley, 1970] and some credited it with embarrassing the powerful publisher to the extent that he sold the paper and left Philadelphia.

Less well-remembered, however, is a 1966 article which defined Fonzi's reputation for the rest of his long career. Much of that reputation rests in southern climes, after he moved to Florida in the early 1970s. He did noteworthy work for *Gold Coast* and *Miami* magazines, at the time owned by the same company. He was for several years editor of the latter. The work which proved most enduring came to Fonzi because of his location in Florida; however, it actually began at *Philadelphia*. It led to a book now regarded as must reading for anyone who takes seriously the murder of an American president. "The Last Investigation" originally appeared in two long magazine articles in *Gold Coast* magazine in Fort Lauderdale and *The Washingtonian* magazine. It evolved in book form in 1993, and in 2008 was re-published in an updated version. Let Fonzi take over from here, from an article he wrote for *Gold Coast* in 2008:

The Last Investigation

By Gaeton Fonzi

The title of my book, "*The Last Investigation*," was meant to convey an element of cynicism and more than a touch of irony. It referred to the just-completed inquiry into JFK's murder by the U.S. House Select Committee on Assassinations. I worked for the Committee for almost two years as a staff investigator, and later as an investigative team leader. Prior, I had been an investigator on the staff of U.S. Sen. Richard Schweiker, who headed a JFK assassination subcommittee of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence.

How "*The Last Investigation*" got published in South Florida, in *Gold Coast* magazine, and how I became an official investigator for the U.S. Government, parallels the evolvement of interest in the Kennedy assassination by two magazine journalists out of Philadelphia: myself and Bernard McCormick, my former *Gold Coast* partner and now editor and publisher.

Being in Philadelphia was the key because it was home of two individuals of pivotal importance in the history of Kennedy assassination research. [Arlen Specter and Vince Salandria](#). Specter, at this writing running for his fifth term as U.S. senator, then a young and ambitious assistant district attorney, became a junior counsel on the Warren Commission and is credited with authoring the now fabled “single bullet theory” – the contention critical to the Commission’s conclusion that a lone gunman killed JFK. Vince Salandria was a little-known school board lawyer [who developed an intense suspicion about the workings of the Warren Commission long before it issued its report](#). He didn’t like the secret meetings or the rumors it leaked about designating “a lone nut” named Lee Harvey Oswald as the assassin who reportedly killed to gain attention, yet kept insisting he was innocent and “a patsy.”

McCormick and I were working for *Philadelphia* magazine at the time and heard about a wild-eyed young lawyer giving talks to civic groups and [writing pieces in local legal journals](#) contending that the Single Bullet Theory was hogwash and that the Warren Commission Report was basically a fraud the U.S. government was fostering on the American people. We thought Salandria was likely some kind of lone nut.

But when McCormick and I met Salandria, a small fellow, soft-spoken and intensely earnest, we were stunned that he could support his sensational assertions with the Warren Commission’s own evidence. Salandria gave me a copy of [the Commission’s thick report](#), as well as its [26 volumes of accompanying evidence](#). McCormick and I, interrupting our regular summer assignment of evaluating the latest flock of classless beach birds at Wildwood by the Sea, studied the report. It quickly became apparent that Salandria’s claims might be valid. There were blatant contradictions between the Commission’s conclusions and the evidence in key areas. Not gray or minor differences, but stark black and white discrepancies.

I couldn’t believe the prestigious members of the Warren Commission would permit so many obvious misrepresentations of facts. Why hadn’t the national news media jumped on this story? I didn’t realize then that even the big media boys had screwed up, lured and then trapped into a defensive position on the JFK murder [that would last for years and still exists to this day](#). The Commission had cleverly withheld release of its 26 volumes of evidence until more than two months after the release of its report. A lengthy *The New York Times* editorial, for instance, lavishly endorsed the Report’s conclusions without having available any supporting or contradicting evidence.

At any rate, at the time I thought Arlen Specter would clear it all up for me. A number of reporters had interviewed Specter when he had returned from Washington and had asked him about the report. Specter, a former Yale Law Debating Team captain, exuded confidence and authority in claiming that the Warren Commission did the most thorough investigation in the

history of mankind. He exuberantly defended the report's lone gunman conclusion and the "single bullet theory." Yet from their questions it was obvious that few reporters, if any, had even read [the 888-page Commission Report](#) and likely not one had even touched [the 26 volumes of evidence](#). I would be the first journalist to confront Specter with the details.

The Warren Commission, The Truth, and Arlen Specter

The 1966 article was based on the first interview with Arlen Specter by someone prepared to ask important questions about the conflicts in the "single bullet theory" which Specter developed to support the theory that Lee Harvey Oswald was the lone assassin of President Kennedy. At the time, few people had read the complete Warren Commission Report. One of them was Philadelphia attorney Vincent Salandria, who had briefed Gaeton Fonzi in detail before his meeting with Specter.

Fonzi wrote several more articles on the JFK murder. One who read them was Pennsylvania Sen. Richard Schweiker. Some years later he hired Fonzi as an investigator when the JFK assassination inquiry was revived by a Congressional committee.

I had known and admired Specter as a young assistant DA, had even worked with him on a story about his courageous battle with the corrupt local Teamsters union. He was not only exceptionally articulate, but always forthright and candid. But [that day in Philadelphia and in the days of follow-up interviews](#), I found another Arlen Specter. He hemmed and hawed and mumbled in his attempt to explain critical points, he was evasive and anything but forthright, often stammeringly frustrated in his inability to provide rationale explanations.

I remember asking Specter one very critical question about [the bullet holes in the back of Kennedy's jacket and shirt](#). The "single bullet theory" hinged on, among other factors, the bullet emerging from Kennedy's throat and tumbling on to do all the damage to Governor John Connally's chest, wrist and thigh. And yet here, I showed Specter, is a photo from the volumes of evidence revealing that Kennedy's jacket and shirt had bullet holes at least six inches down his back and well below where the bullet emerged from his throat. If Oswald was supposedly firing from behind and above the President, wouldn't the entrance wound, I asked Specter, be above the exit wound? Specter sputtered and backed, danced around a few impossible possibilities, finally got up from his desk and went behind me to use me as a model to indicate that maybe Kennedy's jacket might have hunched up. He raised my arm high to pull up my jacket. "See," he said, "he was waving." Yes, but not that much, I said, showing him another photo from the volumes of evidence. Besides, I asked, what about his form-fitting custom shirt? "Same thing," said Specter. And then realizing that was an inadequate explanation, he sat down at his desk, shook his head and softly said, "I don't remember."

Didn't remember a defining issue about a critical piece of evidence in the most important murder case in recent American history? I came away from my two long sessions with Arlen Specter

numb with disbelief. He had not eased my concerns about the Warren Commission Report, he had magnified them.

Philadelphia titled the article “[The Warren Commission, The Truth and Arlen Specter.](#)” It garnered the attention of what began as a small core of ordinary citizens who, like Salandria, had been paying attention and were concerned that their government was not being truthful. (Yes, young folk, there was a time when that was a difficult reality to embrace.) As they began probing deeper into the Warren Report’s evidence, these independent researchers began spreading the word, holding forums, giving speeches and publishing their findings in whatever publication that would print them, however esoteric and obscure. Vince Salandria found a home for a few of his historically important articles in the unlikely *Computers and Automation* magazine.

[“[The Assassination of President John F. Kennedy: A Model of Explanation,](#)” Issue 20, December 1971, pp. 32-40; “[The Promotion of Domestic Discord,](#)” Issue 21, January 1972, pp. 37-39, 47.]

I did several follow-up articles and each one developed more information that made the Warren Commission appear to be a scandalous cover-up of the crime of the century. More than a decade later, then U.S. Sen. Richard Schweiker (R-Pa) began to listen to the slowly rising grumble of the Warren Commission critics. As a member of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Schweiker was shocked to learn that CIA Director Allen Dulles had withheld from the Warren Commission crucial revelations about the CIA’s plots to kill Fidel Castro. He decided to do some initial research into the JFK case on his own. Tracing Lee Harvey Oswald’s activities, he concluded that “the fingerprints of intelligence” were all over them. Schweiker got Intelligence Committee Chairman Frank Church’s permission to form a subcommittee to review the Kennedy case.

I had never met Schweiker but he remembered my story about Arlen Specter in *Philadelphia* magazine. He also learned I had moved to South Florida and that’s what interested him. His subcommittee had been assigned a few investigators from the committee’s operations, but Schweiker was getting concerned that, guided by CIA-provided documents, they were focusing too narrowly on pro-Castro elements as possible suspects in Kennedy’s murder. And Schweiker felt that the involvement of anti-Castro Cubans was just as or even more likely. To probe that possibility he needed a man on the street in Little Havana. One day his top assistant called and asked if I could “check out a few things” in Miami for the Senator. It would only take a couple of weeks, he said.

We were still at it more than a year later when Schweiker was forced to shut down his subcommittee because its parent Select Intelligence Committee was expiring. But by that time we had gotten lucky and stumbled upon a secret door. Cracked open a bit, the door revealed a world the government had long denied existed – an operative link between the most militant anti-Castro groups and the Central Intelligence Agency. Every one of these groups [despised President](#)

Kennedy, blaming him for the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion and considered him “a coward and traitor” for making a deal with Khrushchev to end the Cuban Missile Crisis. Now, we discovered, the most deadly terrorist actions of the most militant of these groups, was directed by a CIA agent and that agent was linked directly to Lee Harvey Oswald.

Prior to being forced to wrap up his subcommittee’s investigation, Sen. Schweiker presented the Intelligence Committee the evidence and the key informant we had developed in Miami. The committee reviewed the evidence, questioned the informant, classified the information and declared it had neither time nor funds to continue pursuing the new revelations. To Schweiker’s disappointment, the most significant evidence developed in his subcommittee investigation never made it into the Committee’s final report.

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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
LABOR AND PUBLIC WELFARE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

November 13, 1975

Mr. Gaeton Fonzi
7532 West Treasure Drive
North Bay Village, Florida 33141

Dear Gaeton:


Enclosed is the background information which I promised on the phone today.

I am delighted by your enthusiasm for this investigation, and look forward to working with you. I am impressed by your prior work in this field, and I appreciate your sensitivity to the considerations which preclude any publication of information received from my office, without my prior approval.

Please get in touch with us as soon as you have a chance to digest this material and are prepared to proceed.

Warm regards.

Sincerely,



Richard S. Schweiker
United States Senator

RSS:mfh

Encl.

A letter that changed history. U.S. Senator Richard Schweiker from Pennsylvania hired Gaeton Fonzi based on articles Fonzi had written for *Philadelphia* magazine. Schweiker was convinced Lee Harvey Oswald had U.S. intelligence connections. Fonzi confirmed his suspicions.

Over the years, and with continuing revelations coming forth from citizen researchers, the public had begun to accept the fact that the Warren Commission had not performed a valid investigation, had instead distorted and covered up evidence and had lied to the American people. Was Lee Harvey Oswald the lone assassin or was there a conspiracy? The public was confused, but beginning to lean sharply toward the latter. The citizen researchers turned their increasing public support into a measure of political clout. Finally, in 1976, Congress was pushed to

establish a House Select Committee to “conduct a full and complete investigation” of the circumstances surrounding the assassination of President Kennedy. Shortly afterwards, I was asked to join the committee’s staff by its first chief counsel, Richard Sprague, another former Philadelphia prosecutor with a reputation as tough, uncompromising and scrupulously honest. Finally, I thought, there was going to be a complete and valid investigation.

By the end of my tenure and the life of the House Select Committee on Assassinations, I was more disillusioned than ever and convinced that, when its report was issued, the American people were once again going to be deceived. The Committee’s claim that it had fulfilled its mandate to “conduct a full and complete investigation” was going to be a lie. I wrote “The Last Investigation” that appeared in *Gold Coast* magazine to explain what really happened inside the committee, to reveal the distorted priorities, the manipulations and political machinations that derailed any legitimate effort to disclose the truth about the Kennedy assassination.

The *Gold Coast* article and subsequently the book, documented the frustrations and planted obstructions blocking staffers’ access to key witnesses and documents. Blocked by whom? To some extent by the Committee’s own Congressional members who, for political expediencies, had voted to form the committee but saw no residual political gain in being involved in a Kennedy assassination investigation. They wanted it ended as quickly as possible. These were the committee members who forced Chief Counsel Sprague out when he dared to confront the CIA’s power. And that’s why the new Chief Counsel, Robert Blakey, a former federal prosecutor, forthrightly told staffers at our first meeting: “We have two priorities: One is to get the report finished on deadline and the second is to do it within our budget.” Taken aback, I asked, “What about finding the truth about the Kennedy assassination?” Blakey’s reply: “Oh, sure, we’ll do that too.”

We didn’t do that too. Instead the committee’s investigation was sabotaged at almost every important point along the way. And, for whatever assumptions that may come from it, the most disabling roadblocks were set up by the Central Intelligence Agency.

Chief Counsel Bob Blakey never believed it. Blakey had previously worked in Washington and had experience running Congressional committees. He thought he could sweet talk the Agency into complete cooperation. He ignored the lesson Sprague had learned when he refused to sign the [CIA Secrecy Oath](#) in return for access to its documents. “Why should I sign an agreement with an agency that might be a subject in my investigation? ” Sprague had asked. Almost immediately, Sprague began to feel the heat. Critical barrages were fired at him from Capitol Hill and members of his own committee took potshots. A budget battle was the ostensible issue and, to keep the Committee alive, Sprague resigned. Sprague later admitted, “[I had no problems in Washington until I bucked the CIA.](#)”

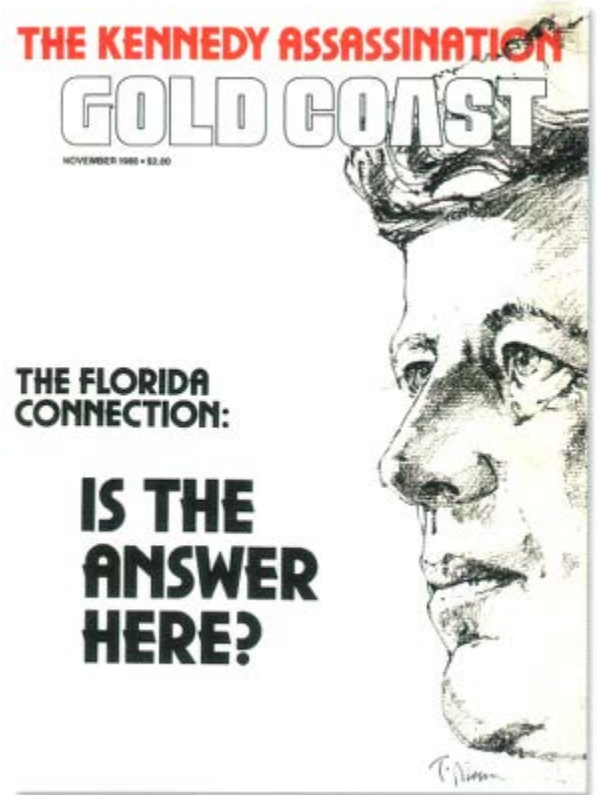
Blakey believed he could handle the CIA. He sat down with its top bosses and negotiated and renegotiated “agreements” that would eventually provide committee researchers access to all its files. Of course, all the Committee’s staffers who wanted access to the files had to first sign the CIA Secrecy Oath. Blakey saw no problem with that.

Blakey always returned from Langley beaming with pride at his skillful handling of the CIA. And on the surface it appeared that Blakey was successful. Even the Agency’s liaisons, wing-tipped bureaucrats who handled committee staff requests for documents, became unusually friendly and smilingly cooperative. And if it were necessary to research documents at CIA’s headquarters, committee staffers were greeted with an organized efficiency.

That attitude didn’t last long. Yet Blakey continued to maintain his faith in the CIA’s professed total cooperation even in the face of his researchers’ increasing number of complaints. Despite the unprecedented pact Blakey had made with their top-level bosses, the CIA’s operative-level staffers were claiming that more and more requested documents were “unable to be found,” or were “missing for some reason,” or were “inadvertently” destroyed in routine file purges. Still Blakey refused to be cynical. “Maybe they’re telling the truth,” he said. “Would the CIA lie to me?”

And yet now, a couple of decades later, there is hard evidence that the Agency did lie to Blakey and to Congress and the American people. And that evidence also reveals the deceit and shocking arrogance with which the Agency handled those who tried to penetrate its fiefdom. A defining example that recently came to light:

When Kennedy made a deal to avert a nuclear war stemming from the Cuban Missile Crisis, among his stipulations to Khrushchev was that, in return for removal of the missiles, he would shut down a secret guerilla war the anti-Castro Cubans and the CIA were waging against Castro. Kennedy had quietly supported this secret war and the CIA was providing money and covert advisers to dozens of the groups. Directed by the CIA’s JM/ WAVE station in South Miami, the groups conducted

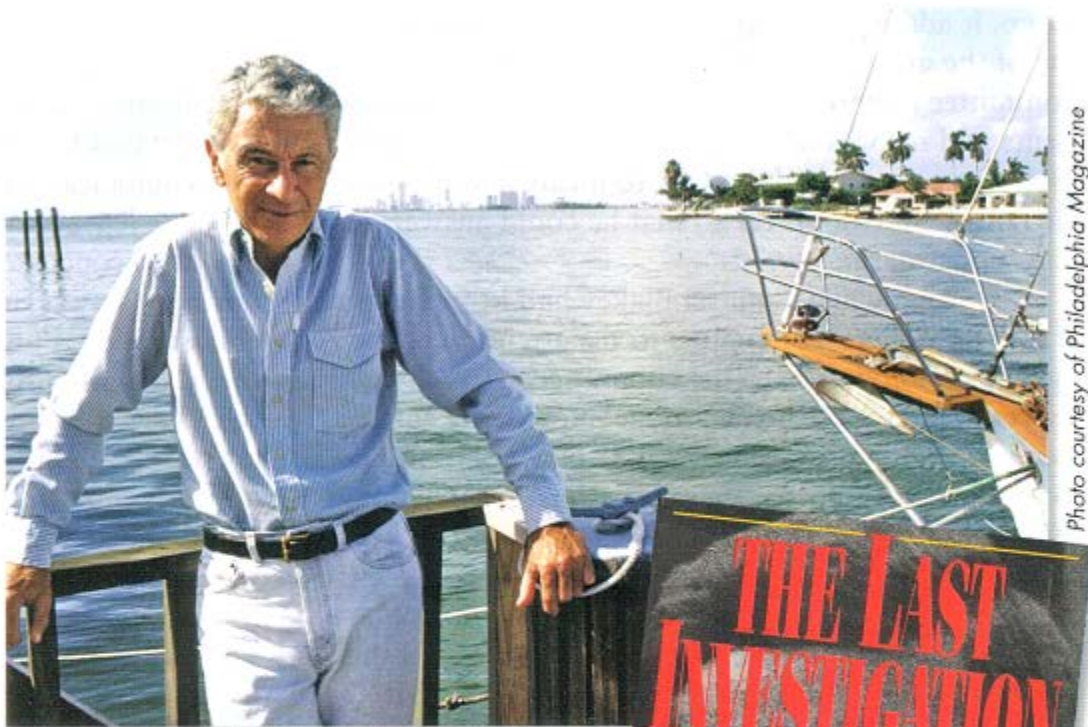


Gaeton Fonzi, after five frustrating years working for government committees investigating the JFK assassination, wrote long magazine articles for *Gold Coast* in Florida and *The Washingtonian* magazine. They eventually turned into a book which has been cited by numerous researchers.

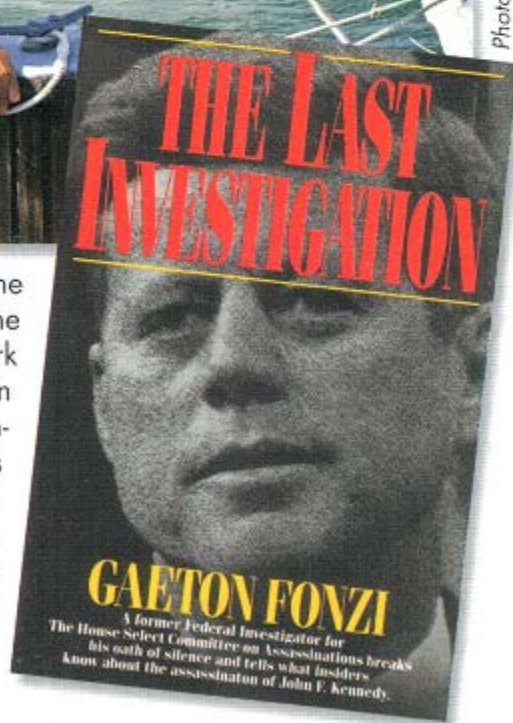
very successful, almost nightly missions into Cuba, destroying both military and civilian targets, burning government buildings, planting bombs in large department stores and committing general acts of terrorism.

But the Missile Crisis was a cathartic awakening for Kennedy. He suddenly realized he had helped bring the world to the brink of nuclear annihilation. His subsequent speeches reflect a more conciliatory approach in dealing with the Soviet Union. He also planned withdrawing troops from Vietnam and, to augment his promise to Khrushchev that the U.S. would not invade Cuba, he ordered the CIA to completely shut down the secret military operations of the anti-Castro Cuban groups.

There are those who believe that in issuing directives to augment his enlightened policy, JFK was signing his own death warrant. Among some of the CIA's own field personnel, there appeared pockets of insubordination. A few of the anti-Castro guerilla groups initially ignored his edict against further military operations and one even tried to sink a Russian ship in Havana harbor. To enforce his directive, Kennedy had to call on the U.S. Navy and the Coast Guard to raid a few anti-Castro bases in Miami, the Keys and the Bahamas – bases the CIA itself had helped establish. What more evidence could there be that Kennedy was a “traitor” and maybe, as the leaflets being passed around Little Havana declared, a communist himself.



Gaeton Fonzi continued his research into the JFK murder for 13 years. In 1993, when he was living on Biscayne Bay in Miami, the work that started as magazine articles appeared in book form. It inspired a number of researchers to develop additional information. As government files were gradually declassified and long silent witnesses came forth, it has become obvious that his connection of Lee Harvey Oswald to the CIA was historic. The updated book was republished in 2008.



In probing this area of their investigation, the Assassinations Committee staffers focused on a small number of anti-Castro Cuban groups that were the most active and militant. The largest was the Student Revolutionary Directorate, called the DRE from its Spanish acronym. What made the DRE more significant than others was that, within hours of the assassination, rumors and reports flew out of the DRE's branch in New Orleans that Lee Harvey Oswald had tried to infiltrate the group. Its leaders, however, claimed they had quickly seen through his guise and later caught him handing out pro-Castro pamphlets to the public. That led to a street brawl which got Oswald arrested briefly by the police and that, in turn, led to his appearance on a local talk radio program defending his Marxist beliefs.

The Warren Commission used that DRE-generated incident to bolster its portrait of Oswald as a pro-Castro fanatic. However, over the years researchers burst that balloon of disinformation, producing evidence that the pamphlets originated with a CIA front and Oswald was likely a

willing role player. By the time the Assassinations committee began probing the DRE, emerging evidence had forced the Agency to retreat from its stance of non-involvement with any anti-Castro Cuban group. It admitted it played an “advisory” role with a few of the groups and, yes, the DRE among them. The Committee researchers immediately requested all documents and records of the agency’s contacts with the DRE. They also asked the CIA to locate and produce the DRE’s control officer so that he could answer questions under oath.

Just prior, Chief Counsel Blakey had brought some of his researchers’ complaints to the attention of the Agency’s main liaison to the committee, a usually glib lawyer named Scott Breckenridge. Now Breckenridge seemed solicitous and suggested a “new point of contact” for the committee, an expert the Agency would bring out of retirement to “facilitate” the researchers’ requests. His name was George Joannides.

Joannides was a tall, patrician-looking man who wore tailored suits and a dour demeanor around the Committee’s offices. It soon became apparent that instead of facilitating document requests he was more and more dancing around, delaying and blocking them. More, Joannides said, he could not find any records indicating the name of the DRE’s control officer or documents revealing his operational activities with the group. Nor did he find any records revealing Oswald’s contacts with members of the DRE.

But, Joannides said, he would continue looking for the agency’s DRE files as well as any records which would help him identify and locate the agency’s control officer, the one man who would have the most information about the DRE and its contact with Lee Harvey Oswald.

The tenure of the House Select Committee expired before the CIA ever responded to its DRE document requests. Congressional committees come and go, the CIA is a perpetual institution. The Agency chose to simply “wait out” the committee’s life. By law, the CIA’s legal mandate is to function as the Administration’s intelligence advisory and support entity in a duly elected democratic government. In fact, the CIA has evolved into an independent institution, its ultimate priority survival. Refusing to comply with dictates issued by elected representatives of the American people reveals its disdain for the basic values of a democratic society. The Assassinations Committee’s relationship with the CIA regarding the DRE indicates, in itself, what a renegade institution the Agency had become. Through the lies and deceptions of Joannides, the CIA was able to control and stifle the Committee’s efforts to pursue the truth about an important – perhaps pivotally crucial – aspect of President Kennedy’s assassination.

The CIA never informed the committee that Joannides was more than a clerkish Agency expert in “facilitating” document requests. When Kennedy was assassinated he was chief of Miami station JM/WAVE’s “psychological warfare” branch. He worked with the agency’s legendary psych war guru, David Atlee Phillips, who concocted many of the Oswald-as-pro-Castro misinformation rumors planted immediately after the assassination. Phillips, who got the CIA’s equivalent of the Medal of Honor, was later promoted to Chief of the Western Hemisphere Division, the agency’s highest staff level. However, as a young covert operative in the early ’60s, he went by the name of Maurice Bishop and planned at least two Castro assassination plots with another militant Miami group, Alpha 66, headed by Antonio Veciana, a former bank accountant. It was Veciana who saw “Bishop” meeting with Oswald in Dallas weeks before Kennedy’s murder.

Phillips had also been instrumental in helping members of the Student Directorate regroup in Miami after they were forced to flee Havana. Once reorganized and strengthened with zealous exiles anxious to take the fight against Castro to its most effective level, the DRE was deemed by the Agency to be worthy of a high degree of both advisory and monetary support. The control agent the CIA assigned to the DRE soon began handing DRE’s leaders a monthly contribution that would reach, in current dollars, \$1.5 million a year.

More than 20 years later we finally learned the name of the CIA’s control agent assigned to the DRE. It was George Joannides. The man he said he could not locate in CIA files was *himself*.

Many of the revelations about Joannides and the CIA’s sabotaging the Assassination Committee’s investigation were uncovered by former *Washington Post* reporter Jeff Morley, who discovered Joannides’ personnel file in newly released National Archives documents. The Post never ran his story, the Kennedy assassination being history and the details too esoteric.

Chief Counsel Blakey, now a professor at Notre Dame Law, no longer believes he was right in trusting the CIA. In fact, he now accuses the agency of “obstruction of justice.”

Several years ago there was a petition circulated asking that still-classified CIA documents in the National Archives pertaining to the assassination be released. Among those who signed was Robert Blakey. The man who trusted the Agency had lived to rue the day.

End Of The Odyssey

We had hoped the Bronco would make it to see this book published. He made a major contribution to it, both in editing and writing two excellent pieces while suffering the debilitating effects of Parkinson's disease. Bronco was Gaeton Fonzi's code name. It was coined by Frank King, our investigator, probably with an assist from our good detective friend, Fran Lederer, more than 40 years ago at *Philadelphia* magazine. Apparently it was an old Philadelphia Irish neighborhood nickname for Italians. It is unclear whether it was a term of derision or respect. Probably a bit of both, and in Gaeton's case definitely the latter.



Photo: Michelle Kennedy, *Gold Coast Magazine*

Until stricken with Parkinson's, Gaeton Fonzi (left) led an active Florida lifestyle. He was an avid sailor and ran distance races, including several marathons. He is shown with Bernard McCormick after a 5-mile race in 1997.

Anyway, Gaeton did not quite make it. He died August 30, 2012, several months before this book was scheduled to appear. He did not go silently. Major papers carried his obituary and the [excellent one in the *The New York Times*](#) was picked up as far away as Europe and Australia. [Walter Naedele's obit](#) in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* quoted Herb Lipson on the contribution Gaeton made to *Philadelphia* magazine's explosive growth in the 1960s. The [Miami Herald](#) emphasized Investigative pieces that originated in South Florida. *The New York Times* quoted Robert Blakey, whom Gaeton had criticized for trusting the CIA, when Blakey headed the congressional committee reopening the inquiry into the death of President Kennedy in the late 1970s. Blakey praised Gaeton's tenacity and admitted that he was right in claiming the CIA impeded the investigation.

Those of us who followed Fonzi's JFK odyssey from that first meeting with attorney Vince Salandria in Wildwood, New Jersey, in 1966, could not help being struck by the irony of his remarkable sendoff. When Gaeton first [wrote about the Kennedy assassination in *Philadelphia* magazine](#), few people outside of Philadelphia read it. In that time, those challenging the Warren Commission were often characterized as publicity seeking sensationalists. Fourteen years later, when he published magazine articles in *Gold Coast* in Florida and *The Washingtonian*, there was a bit more interest, especially in Washington where that magazine was sued by a CIA officer who thought he had been libeled. The magazine won.

Even as late as 1993, when "The Last Investigation" [was expanded into a book](#), the response was muted. It was partly because Gerald Posner's "Case Closed" appeared at the same time. Posner's book was incredibly shallow and distorted; there is a suspicion it was commissioned by the CIA to offset both Fonzi's book and Oliver Stone's film, "JFK." And yet numerous sources praised Posner's book; it even was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. Among those dismissing Fonzi's book as confusing, while praising Posner's, was *The New York Times*.

In the two decades since, much has changed. Fonzi's work has been a prime source for other writers. [1] [2] They have validated "The Last Investigation" with the support of recently declassified documents and testimony of witnesses long silent in fear. Fonzi was sought out by writers almost until his death, and in fact after it. His widow, Marie, still gets contacts from researchers.

Paul Vitello, writing in the *The New York Times* which ignored him 20 years ago, said "historians and researchers consider Mr. Fonzi's book among the best of the roughly 600 published on the Kennedy assassination, and credit him with raising doubts about the government's willingness to share everything it knew."

The pendulum of time has a way of swinging in the direction of truth, even if it takes 50 years and death to make it happen.

By Bernard McCormick