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# Who killed JFK?: Shawnee historian seeks truth behind assassination



Photo by Jennifer Bhargava. Enlarge photo.

Casey Quinlan, of Shawnee, has spent the past five decades researching the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. He has interviewed more than 80 eyewitnesses and read more than 1,000 books on the subject.

By [Jennifer Bhargava](#)

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Casey Quinlan considers his 50 years worth of in-depth research anything but a 'conspiracy theory.' He sees it as a quest for the truth.

The Shawnee resident has dedicated nearly his entire life to exposing the reality behind the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. The neatly packaged story printed in history textbooks, about a lone killer aiming from the sixth floor of a seven-story building, makes him shake his head. All it takes is a little common sense and a look at the hardcore facts to realize something doesn't add up, he pointed out.

Quinlan is certainly not alone in this reasoning.

A Gallup poll taken on the 50th anniversary of Kennedy's assassination in 2013 revealed that 61 percent of Americans believe others besides Lee Harvey Oswald were involved.

Quinlan, a respected author and researcher, began his career analyzing the assassination while in high school.

Over the past five decades, he has read more than a thousand books, interviewed dozens of prime eyewitnesses, poured over thousands of

photos and continues to read his way through the millions of once-classified FBI and CIA case files. The most recent batch of documents was released by President Donald Trump in October.

And earlier this month, Quinlan's reputation as one of the most thorough Kennedy assassination researchers was cemented when he received a standing ovation at the JFK Lancer November in Dallas conference after his presentation, "Grave InJustice, Fabricating the Autopsy of President Kennedy and Institutionalizing its Cover Up."

It was an emotional moment for the former high school history teacher turned college professor.

But it isn't praise Quinlan seeks. As someone who has firmly believed in honesty his entire life, he simply wants the truth to be known. He believes the American people deserve to know how and why their president was killed in 1963. And he wants validation for the many witnesses, some who stood just feet away from the doomed motorcade, who were mocked and disbelieved for telling what they saw.

Only when that happens, Quinlan said, will there be real justice and that is why he has spent a lifetime seeking the truth.

As for what really happened to Kennedy, he believes, based on autopsy documents, bullet trajectory and witness testimony, there was more than one shooter.

"Science and math is now proving 100 percent that JFK was killed in a crossfire," he said. "Not only was there a conspiracy to murder JFK but a conspiracy to cover it up and that's what the United States has known all along."

He also believes the government may have been involved, a prominent theory among those in the research community.

## The world stood still

Despite who is responsible, Quinlan still sometimes gets chills thinking about the moment he first learned Kennedy had been shot.

The Shawnee native actually currently lives in his childhood house where he first heard the news.

Home from school, a reward for selling 48 chocolate bars, Quinlan was playing basketball in the backyard while his mom watched "As the World Turns" in the living room.

Suddenly, she tearfully called him into the house to relay the breaking news on their television screen: the president had been shot.

Within that split second, 13-year-old Quinlan was pushed into history.

The world seemed to stop.

"At church on Sunday, I saw more grown men cry than I ever have in my entire life," he said. "When I got home, all I wanted to do was watch cartoons, but all the channels were talking about was Dallas. I saw Lee Harvey Oswald get shot on live TV.

"When he got shot, there was a sense of relief among people. Life could go on. We were in shock and awe and it allowed a sort of closure."

It wasn't until high school when he started seriously thinking about the incident.

"A couple years after he was shot, theories started to float around because people were questioning it," said Quinlan, who graduated from St. Joseph High School in 1968. "I was more interested in sports and girls than politics. But when Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy were shot, it turned a light on in me. I thought 'oh my god, I have to grow up and figure out what is going on in our society.'"

While he was in college, Quinlan was drafted into the Vietnam War where he served as a medic. Upon returning, he finished college and resumed his research into the assassination.

He also went on to become a social studies teacher with a 40-year career. He worked in the Olathe School District, among others in the area.

## Meeting the witnesses

As a high school and college educator, he was able to combine his love of teaching with his passion for Kennedy research.

Thirty years ago, Quinlan formed "Project JFK/CSI Dallas," where he and his students toured Dallas, visited the assassination site in the historic Dealey Plaza and met actual eyewitnesses.

when he saw the president get shot.

"He said it (Kennedy's head) looked like red Jell-O and he saw Jackie try to shake him," Quinlan said.

Unable to verbally communicate, Hoffman tried to tell a nearby police officer what he saw by waving his arms wildly, but the officer didn't understand him and he was disregarded.

Of the more than 80 witnesses Quinlan interviewed, two others also stand out.

They are Beverly Oliver, then a 17-year-old high school student who said she stood 15 feet away from the president's car when he was shot, and Jean Hill, a kindergarten teacher who was about the same distance away.

Both women insisted they heard shots come from the grassy knoll.

In addition to his research and book-writing, Quinlan also served as a consultant for A&E, helping to establish Oliver Stone's historical documentation of the film, "JFK."

He was awarded the JFK Lancer Mary Ferrell "New Frontier" award in 2011.

## Embracing the 'unknown'

Educating the public on his findings is also an important aspect of work.

Quinlan and Edwards often give presentations to small groups or organizations, such as rotary clubs and American Legions, on their research.

Even now, after it has been widely accepted there is more to the story, the duo still get mixed reactions.

And he still runs into people who call him a conspiracy theorist.

"A lot of people say, 'oh, that's a hobby' and I say, 'no it's a lifetime experience,'" said Quinlan, who is an Adjunct Professor with the

Criminal Justice Department at Washburn University and the Continuing Education Program at Ottawa University.

He acknowledges that even after all these years, and after all the immense amount of research being done by thousands of people around the world, the whole truth of what happened to Kennedy may never be known.

But that won't stop him from trying to grasp it.

After all, at the end of the day, he's just a guy who likes honesty.

"After 50 years, there is still so much to learn and so much that is hidden," he said. "It's been a fascinating journey, but also one that has been creepy and spooky."

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