

JFK assassination

Opening OCC class draws buffs, dabblers

By RALPH R. ECHTINAW
STAFF WRITER

What do a library card, an umbrella and a woman in a polka dot dress have in common?

A group of 30-some Oakland Community College students learned Monday that all those things had (or allegedly had) something to do with the Nov. 22, 1963, assassination of President John Kennedy.

With minutiae such as that contributing to the intrigue surrounding the Kennedy murder, it's apparent that the larger body of related data is considerable in deed, and the students who have taken this new OCC course on the Kennedy assassination have a great deal to learn.

The course is taught by the tag team of history professor Tim Koerner and psychology professor Jim Berry, a Farmington Hills resident.

Personally, Koerner has "immersed" himself in most everything written about Kennedy's assassination, and has become "very skeptical of the Warren Commission report," which concluded that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone in killing the president.

"My reading has led me to be very, very, very skeptical that Oswald did it by himself," Koerner said.

Who's Sparky?
He may have his hands full in

that case with student Todd Tucker, a Jackson resident and Kennedy assassination buff who came to OCC just for this course.

Tucker — who has done research, and continues to do research, for several authors of Kennedy books — believes Oswald alone killed Kennedy.

Why take the course if he knows so much already? "I want to see how it is taught, how it sticks to primary sources," he said.

Yet even this fellow learned something new on the first day of class. He didn't know that Jack Ruby's nickname was Sparky, or that ABC News correspondent Cokie Roberts is the daughter of Warren Commission member Hale Boggs.

Berry and Koerner welcomed Tucker and 32 other students Monday with what they called a "pre-test" to see how much they already knew about the Kennedy assassination.

It's no easy exam, so students are no doubt glad it won't be graded. A few questions were elementary, like what city did the assassination occur in? Others were sufficiently esoteric that Tucker and two other armchair experts in attendance were stumped: Which figure in the intrigue was a Libra? (Oswald). And what was Oswald's I.Q.? (118).

JFK buffs attend
Troy resident Dennis Bourland

is one of the other two students who have made a significant study of the Kennedy assassination. Not your typical college student, Bourland came to OCC just for this course carrying a bag of videotapes on the event and an almanac through knowledge of what happened. "I've got papers, videos, books. You name it I have it," he said.

After class Bourland, who believes Oswald had help, participated in a long hallway discussion with Tucker and Alene Soloway, a West Bloomfield resident.

Soloway is more representative of most of the students in this course. The 26-year-old student took the Kennedy course because it was convenient, and she's a history major.

Student Travis Swinson, a Farmington Hills resident, said

he took the course because he plans to be a teacher someday and wants to be able to answer intelligently when students inquire about the assassination.

Conspiracy lover

Farah Mongeau at 17 is probably the youngest student in the class. "I just love the whole conspiracy surrounding (the assassination)," she said. "I have Italian roots, so I studied the Mafia, too. So what about the library card, the umbrella and the woman in a polka dot dress?"

Oswald had someone else's library card in his possession when arrested. An umbrella was quickly opened and closed just before the shots that killed Kennedy were fired. And a woman in a polka dot dress allegedly helped Oswald.

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