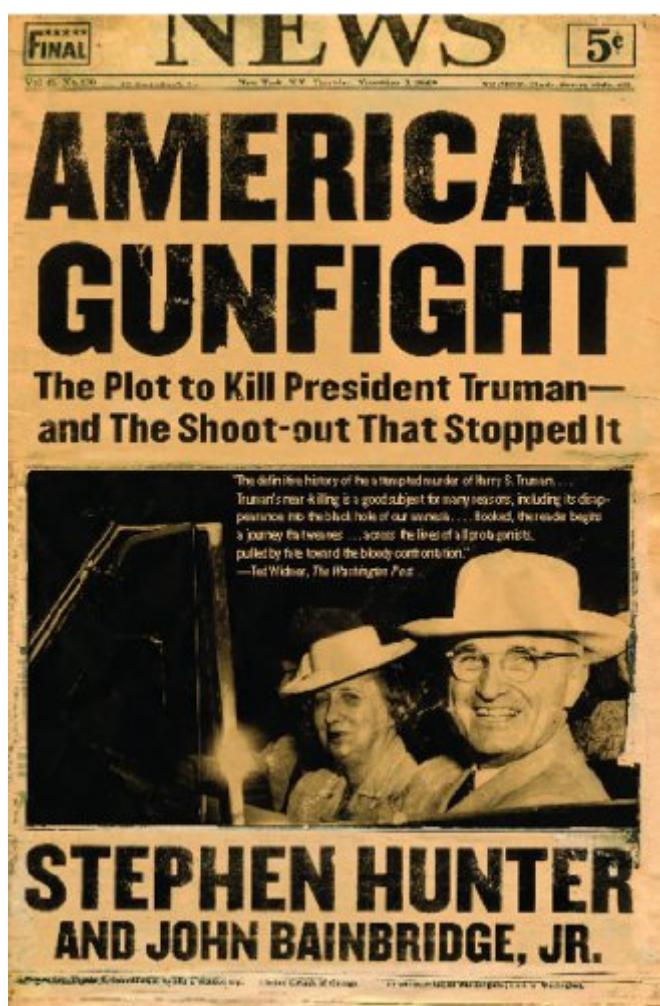


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# American Gunfight: The Plot To Kill Harry Truman--and The Shoot-out That Stopped It



## **Synopsis**

American Gunfight is the fast-paced, definitive, and breathtakingly suspenseful account of an extraordinary historical event -- the attempted assassination of President Harry Truman in 1950 by two Puerto Rican Nationalists and the bloody shoot-out in the streets of Washington, D.C., that saved the president's life. Written by Pulitzer Prize-winner Stephen Hunter, the widely admired and bestselling novelist and author of such books as Havana, Hot Springs, and Dirty White Boys, and John Bainbridge, Jr., an experienced journalist and lawyer, American Gunfight is at once a groundbreaking work of meticulous historical research and the vivid and dramatically told story of an act of terrorism that almost succeeded. They have pieced together, at last, the story of the conspiracy that nearly doomed the president and how a few good men -- ordinary guys who were willing to risk their lives in the line of duty -- stopped it. It is a book about courage -- on both sides -- and about what politics and devotion to a cause can lead men to do, and about what actually happens, second by second, when a gunfight explodes. It begins on November 1, 1950, an unseasonably hot afternoon in the sleepy capital. At 2:00 P.M. in his temporary residence at Blair House, the president of the United States takes a nap. At 2:20 P.M., two men approach Blair House from different directions. Oscar Collazo, a respected metal polisher and family man, and Grisilio Torresola, an unemployed salesman, don't look dangerous, not in their new suits and hats, not in their calm, purposeful demeanor, not in their slow, unexcited approach. What the three White House policemen and one Secret Service agent cannot guess is that under each man's coat is a 9mm German automatic pistol and in each head, a dream of assassin's glory. At point-blank range, Collazo and then Torresola draw and fire and move toward the president of the United States. Hunter and Bainbridge tell the story of that November day with narrative power and careful attention to detail. They are the first to report on the inner workings of this conspiracy; they examine the forces that led the perpetrators to conceive the plot. The authors also tell the story of the men themselves, from their youth and the worlds in which they grew up to the women they loved and who loved them to the moment the gunfire erupted. Their telling commemorates heroism -- the quiet commitment to duty that in some moments of crisis sees some people through an ordeal, even at the expense of their lives.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Excellent historical re-enactment/re-imagining of the 1950 attempt on Pres. Truman's life, and the personalities and backstories of everyone involved; set in the context of the Puerto Rican independence movement which recruited and sent the assassins. Stephen Hunter uses his intimate knowledge of guns and gunfighting to analyze what went down that day at Blair House, and the actions of heroic Secret Serviceman Les Coffelt who--- as he was dying--- struggled to his feet and ended the attack with one well-aimed shot. Engrossing storytelling style that keeps shifting its focus from person to person and place to place, and effortlessly held this reader's attention. IMO one of Hunter's best.

This book did a good job in reminding all of us of a day in history which will live forever. People all over the world who love liberty understand that there are those who will do anything to attain it and defend it at any cost. In this case, it is the Puerto Rican People who have managed to take their war of liberty to the steps of the very powers that hold them captive. Although this book has biases towards the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party and toward those who support the restoration of Puerto Rico's sovereignty, it has wonderful pictures of what is clearly evidence of an armed revolution by the Puerto Rican People against the occupying powers of the United States military government

entities. A revolution that not only attacked it's enemy where it occupies & oppresses, but also attacked in the "den of the enemy". Liberators like George Washington, Michael Collins and Mandela are remembered by history for their "Valor & Sacrifice", I'm sure these people will be too.

I am a big fan of Stephen Hunter. I'm a gun guy too. Also a history buff so this is the best of both worlds for me. Hunter breaks down the shoot out in great detail but this is more than just a historical shoot'em up. He delves into the background of the people involved and explains a lot of Puerto Rican history that really set the events in motion. Hunter does an excellent job of humanizing the would be assassins but not excusing their actions or making them out to be heroes. His style of writing this book is to take you up to an event and then profile one of the principals involved or explain what was going on in Puerto Rico, socially and politically. I found it interesting but not surprising that our government would deny rights to the citizens of Puerto Rico that we consider basic here. There is some speculation on Hunter's part as far as what some of the people might have been thinking but he makes this clear in the book and he did interview survivors and their families so he does have some insight. Very interesting piece of history I knew almost nothing about. History channel should do an episode of Shootout on this American gunfight.

This story is a bit like visiting a neighbor who lives five miles East by going West for 24,995 miles. One would never expect to learn so much about the history of the nationalist movement in Puerto Rico by reading the title. The movement continues to this day, by the way, and Bill Clinton pardoned several Puerto Rican nationalist prisoners as he left office. Hunter's specialty, and it shows well here, is his insight into the dynamics of "the gunfight," in terms of the events that unfold and the reasons for the outcome, i.e. fifty shots fired and very few striking a target. I know of no novelist who is better on firearms technical writing than Mr. Hunter. American Gunfight is often heavy lifting for the reader, but well worth the effort.

I was pointed to this book by a comment made by a writer in a shooting magazine. I have to agree with him in that this book is about as accurate a description of a real gunfight as you can get. Much of what most people see are scenes meant to entertain rather than describe. This book is more of an analysis of the actual 30 plus seconds of the engagement. It splits off and goes into extreme details of the parties involved and the actions culminating in the battle. At times I felt like I really wanted to skip over some of that and get to the final outcome, but I resisted. It also points out the lessons later learned because of the shortcomings encountered in this battle. I also found that it is a

part of history that few people I knew actually knew that these events took place. So it has been an education for myself and some folks around me as well. I think it is well written and does a good job of analysis. It also does a good job of getting into the characters themselves giving insights into the parties surrounding the battle, and their families. I enjoyed it very much.

Interesting account of a little known incident in American History - the assassination attempt on Harry Truman. Having grown up in the Washington, DC area and visited New York City during the mid 50s, I recognized the era and was placed back in time to "see" the plans and schemes and the background that led to the tragic event.

Wanted to like this as the authors earlier fiction works are enjoyable- but the style of the book made it painful to read and am curious about some of the things he states as fact in his reconstruction. Would recommend his earlier fiction instead.

As the headline says, there was too much information about the history of the plotters/terrorists. I didn't buy the title to learn of the issues with Puerto Rico, but I guess there wasn't enough material on the actual assault to fill a book. But I'm a fan of Hunter's other books and look forward to more of them

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