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JFK Photos Uphold Verdict, Doctor Says

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WASHINGTON—The family of the late President John F. Kennedy, which previously had allowed only representatives of the government to inspect pictures and X rays of the assassinated leader's body, has now begun to let interested medical specialists see the items.

Dr. John K. Lattimer, a New York physician who has written and lectured extensively about the assassination, became the first person outside of government auspices to see the items when he examined them Friday in the National archives here.

In an interview Friday night he said that they "eliminate any doubt completely" about the validity of the Warren Commission's conclusion that Lee Harvey Oswald fired all of the shots that struck the President.

The commission found that when Kennedy was killed on Nov. 22, 1963 while riding in a motorcade in Dallas, Oswald did all the shooting, firing from a building behind and above the President.

The 65 X rays, color transparencies and black-and-white negatives taken during the autopsy have been a focus of controversy because the Kennedy family had previously guarded them so closely that not even members and staff officials of the Warren Commission—which was appointed by President Johnson to investigate the assassination—were allowed to see them.

Critics of the Warren Commission's conclusions have charged that the items could disprove its conclusion that the President was struck by only two bullets, both from the rear.

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It has been unofficially explained that the photos were suppressed to spare anguish to the family of President Kennedy, whose head was partially shattered by the second fatal bullet. Lattimer said the wound that blasted away most of the right side of the brain was "horrible," and that the pictures should never be made public.

But he concluded that the Warren Commission might have made a stronger case if the staff personnel who prepared its report had had access to the pictures and X rays. He said the items make three crucial points:

First, the initial bullet passed through the President's body at a distinctly downward angle, more so than the drawings released by the Warren report show. The artist who portrayed the path of the projectile into the back

of Kennedy's neck and out the base of his throat made it seem to be travelling almost parallel to the ground, while the pictures show that the front bullet hole is considerably lower than the one in back.

Some critics have asserted that this shot was fired from the front, by a second assassin hiding on a grassy knoll facing the presidential car. Lattimer said that the front hole is so far below the back one that "if anyone were to have shot him from the front they would have had to be squatting on the floor of the car in front of him."

Second, photos of the wound in the back of the neck show "what appears to be a circular bruise which is typical of wounds of entry" he said.

Third, the X rays prove that the front and back bullet holes were made by the same bullet, which passed

through the president's body and left two tiny flakes of metal and air in the tissues along the path between the two holes.

Some critics have suggested that the two bullet holes were made by separate bullets—one fired from the front and one from the rear.

Lattimer was also allowed to see other items that have been shown to only a few persons, but have not been absolutely denied to nongovernmental experts. These included the President's bloody and bullet-punctured clothing, the sole bullet which was found after the shooting, and the President's back brace.

One final item—which was mentioned only in passing during the hearing conducted by former Chief Justice Earl Warren and other members of the commission—gives a revealing insight

into the discomfort that Kennedy suffered as a result of his wartime back injury.

The item is a knitted elastic "ace" bandage. Lattimer said he has learned from physicians who gave emergency treatment to the President that he wore this bandage in a tightly-wrapped figure-eight, through his crotch and around the back of his buttocks. Its purpose was to help immobilize his lower spine, but Lattimer said it could also have helped keep him upright after he was hit by the first bullet, so that he was exposed to the second.

Lattimer, who is 57 years old, is the chairman of the Department of Urology at Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons. He became a student of assassinations by firearms after he observed numerous wounds as an Army doctor during World War II.