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DeLoach

**THE
UNANSWERED
QUESTIONS
ABOUT
PRESIDENT
KENNEDY'S
ASSASSINATION**

(Indicate page, name of newspaper, city and state.)

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By SYLVAN FOX

ONE OF THE MOST bewildering aspects of the Kennedy assassination is the question of how many shots really were fired during those terrifying few seconds on the afternoon of November 22, 1963.

At casual glance, this would seem to be one of the simpler problems the Warren Commission had to solve. The shots were fired in the presence of thousands of witnesses, including many who were familiar with the sounds of rifle fire. Three spent cartridge cases, a nearly whole bullet and several fragments of bullets were found after the assassination. Surely, one would think, the Commission had enough physical evidence and had located a sufficient number of witnesses to determine beyond any doubt how many shots were fired.

But this is not the case. Instead of a comprehensive and convincing answer to this crucial question, we are given contradictory statements, evasions and dubious conclusions.

The Commission tells us that "the weight of evidence indicates that there were three shots fired" at the President's car in the assassination. It bases this finding largely on two bits of evidence: The testimony of a number of witnesses that they heard three shots, and the discovery of three spent cartridges in the room at the southeast corner of the sixth floor of the book depository.

Open To Question

How solid is this evidence? Not very solid, as the Commission is forced to admit, at least in regard to the testimony of the witnesses.

"The consensus among the witnesses at the scene was that three shots were fired," says the Commission. "However, some heard only two shots, while others testified that they heard four and perhaps as many as five or six shots."

So the determination of the number of shots heard by the witnesses is open to question. But the Commission

of the three empty cartridge cases.

"The most convincing evidence relating to the number of shots was provided by the presence on the sixth floor of three spent cartridges which were demonstrated to have been fired by the same rifle that fired the bullets which caused the wounds," the Commission says, adding that "the preponderance of evidence, in particular the three spent cartridges, led the Commission to conclude that there were three shots fired."

Not Conclusive

This might be persuasive proof if only Oswald was firing at Mr. Kennedy. It pales if at least one other person was shooting at the President from another location, in which case the three spent cartridges could hardly be considered conclusive evidence of the number of shots fired. Indeed, even if Oswald alone was firing at the President, the spent cartridges would not tell us for certain how many shots he fired; it is possible that Oswald ejected an empty cartridge from his rifle before doing any shooting, in which case the three cartridges would account for only two shots.

But the Commission weaves its fabric to its own specifications. It insists that Oswald and no one else fired at the President. Then, since this conclusion can only remain plausible if a maximum of three shots were fired, it accepts the consensus of its witnesses and the discovery of three spent cartridges as proof that only three shots were fired.

A serious problem arises, however. At least two separate shots hit Mr. Kennedy. Of that there is no doubt. One hit him either in the back, as the Commission asserts; or in the front of the neck, as others suggest

completely. This too is generally conceded and is substantiated by a witness, James T. Tague, who was watching the motorcade from a spot near the Triple Underpass when the shooting started and was struck on the cheek by an object—either a bullet fragment or a piece of pavement thrown into the air by an impacting bullet. Tague reported his injury to a deputy sheriff, who examined the place where Tague had been standing and found a mark on a curb that appeared to have been caused by a bullet.

That accounts for at least three shots. But an untidy loose end remains. Gov. John Connally was also wounded, you remember.

This would seem to make a total of at least four shots, thus creating an entirely different picture.

proper alignment and an adequate velocity. But doubt creeps into the Commission's explanation almost at once: John Connally, his wife and a host of other witnesses all insist that Connally was hit by a separate bullet.

Governor Connally's testimony about what happened during the shooting was devastating to the Commission's theory of a single shot wounding both the Governor and the President. Connally, you will remember, was riding in the jump seat right in front of President Kennedy when the shooting began.

Hit by Second Shot

Connally said he heard one shot, then was hit by a shot that he did not hear, then heard another shot, and he expressed the belief that all the shots were fired within about 10 or 12 seconds.

When Arlen Specter, a Commission lawyer, asked Connally which shot hit him, the tall, handsome Texan answered without hesitation: "The second one."

Not one eyewitness ever volunteered the opinion to the Warren Commission that Connally was struck by the same bullet that hit Mr. Kennedy. The Commission reached this conclusion, in spite of a wealth of evidence against it, in spite of Connally's own account of what happened.

If the Commission had accepted the implications of its evidence and had concluded that Connally was wounded by a separate bullet, that would have been the end of the neat picture of the assassination as the work of one deranged man acting alone. As we have seen, if Connally was hit by a separate bullet, four or more bullets were fired, and if at least four bullets were fired, more than one man was firing.

shots, after all, automatically mean at least two assassins, and more than one assassin means a conspiracy, which the Commission has rejected as a possibility.

Bullet Course

The Commission solves this problem in an imaginative and skillful way. It tells us that one of the bullets must have struck President Kennedy in the back, gone through his neck, come out the front, hit Gov. Connally in the back, gone through his chest, breaking a rib on the way, come out just below his right nipple, slammed through his right wrist, breaking another bone there, and lodged in his left thigh.

Such a coincidence might have occurred. It is possible for a bullet to follow the course assigned to this one by the Warren Commission given the

As confusing as the Warren Commission's description of Connally's wounds may be, it is no more confusing than the Commission description of President Kennedy's wounds.

According to the Commission, you will recall, President Kennedy was shot once in the back and once in the back of the head. The first bullet, the Commission says, struck President Kennedy at a point about 5½ inches below the tip of the right mastoid process—which is the bone behind the ear—and about the same distance from the tip of the right shoulder joint. This bullet, the Commission says, cut through the President's body and exited at a point on the neck where Mr. Kennedy's tie knot was located, or just below the Adam's apple. The second bullet that hit the President entered his head from the right rear, the Commission found, and exited from the right front.

Two Examinations

Two groups of doctors examined the President after he was shot. One group was at Parkland Hospital, in Dallas, where the President was taken right after the shooting and where he was pronounced dead. The second group of doctors examined his body at Bethesda, where the autopsy was performed.

During the autopsy, X-rays and photographs were made of the President's body and its wounds. These vital medical records were turned over to the Secret Service by the Bethesda doctors and have never been shown to the public. Not even the members of the Warren Commission have seen these invaluable records.

Instead of studying these photographs and X-rays, the Commission relied heavily on two sources of information to determine the location of the President's wounds: The testimony of the doctors who performed the autopsy, and some rough though informative drawings made by a medical illustrator who had not seen the photographs or X-rays either, but who drew the sketches at the direction of one of the Bethesda doctors

No Autopsy Notes

No original notes on the autopsy survive. In an act reminiscent of Capt. J. W. Fritz's destruction of his notes on Oswald's interrogation, they were burned by the doctor who made them.

Dr. James J. Humes admitted that he destroyed the notes in a sworn statement on Nov. 24, two days after the autopsy was completed. "I, James J. Humes, certify that I have destroyed by burning certain preliminary draft notes relating to Naval Medical School Autopsy Report A63-272 and have officially transmitted all other papers related to this report to higher authority."

Why did Dr. Humes destroy these preliminary but potentially revealing notes? No reason is given. Nor is any reason given for the Commission's apparent lack of interest in the X-rays and photographs of Mr. Kennedy's body, which would have provided incontrovertible proof of the location of the President's wounds.

Without the X-rays and photographs, we can never be certain of the precise location of the wounds. And without being certain of their exact location, we cannot be sure whether the picture of the assassination painted by the Commission is even possible, let alone probable.

Wound Drawings

The only tangible graphic rendering of the location of the wounds is found in the drawings made by the medical illustrator. What do they show?

One drawing depicts two full-length figures standing side by side, one seen from the

back, the other from the front. Marked on these figures are the locations of the bullet wounds in the President's body. On close examination of the two drawings, we discover a remarkable situation: The bullet wound shown on the back of the figure is lower than the wound shown on the front. The two figures are exactly the same size and were drawn in accurate proportion if not in precise scale. Yet the wound on the back is lower than the one on the front.

Strange Course

If the drawing is correct, the bullet that presumably entered the President's back on a downward course turned inexplicably and exited in an upward direction. To complicate matters even more, this same bullet, according to the Warren Commission, then changed direction again and raced through Connally's body on a downward course.

In addition to the full-length drawings, the Commission was provided with drawings of the President's head and shoulders in side and rear views. These drawings show the back wound far differently than the full-length sketches. On the small drawings, the wound in the President's back has moved considerably higher, toward the nape of his neck, and the track in the side view is clearly downward.

One of these exhibits is obviously wrong. Only the X-rays and photographs can establish which. But we cannot see the X-rays and photographs to find out.

Nature of Wounds

Vital to a determination of whether all the shots fired at Mr. Kennedy came from the book depository, as the Commission asserts they did, is not only the location but also the nature of the wounds.

Initially, the doctors who examined Mr. Kennedy at Parkland Hospital were convinced that the wound in the front of his neck was an entry wound. For one thing, they neglected to examine the President closely enough to discover the wound in his back at all. For another the neck wound was small, round and free of jagged edges. It looked to the doctors and nurses attending the President like an entry wound.

If the wound was what they thought it was, it must have come from a gun aimed at the President from ahead of him, rather than from the book depository to his rear.

An Exit Wound

But the Warren Commission says that the autopsy performed at Bethesda established that this neck wound was an exit wound. The autopsy, the Commission says, showed that the small wound in the President's back was the bullet's point of entry, and that it cut through Mr. Kennedy's lower neck and exited at about the point where the knot of his tie lay.

Unfortunately, the doctors who performed the autopsy on President Kennedy at Bethesda could not make an empirical judgment about the neck wound because they never saw it. During the desperate efforts to save the President's life earlier that day, the doctors at Parkland Hospital had mutilated the wound in the President's neck. They had cut it open and enlarged it in order to insert a tracheotomy tube that was intended to help the President breathe.

"In the earlier stages of the autopsy," the Commission reveals, "the surgeons were unable to find a path into any large muscle in the back of the neck. At that time they did not know that there had been a bullet hole in the front of the President's neck when he arrived at Parkland Hospital because the tracheotomy incision had completely eliminated that evidence."

Incision Hid Wound

Only after talking to one

after the autopsy had been completed at 11 p.m., Nov. 22—did the Bethesda doctors learn that the tracheotomy incision had obliterated a bullet wound.

Since the doctors performing the autopsy did not know for quite a while that President Kennedy had suffered any neck wound at all, they would inevitably have had to conclude that the back wound was caused by a bullet entering rather than exiting his body. As far as these doctors knew, there was no point of exit for this bullet. One wonders to what extent this initial decision, based on erroneous information, colored the ultimate findings of the pathologists.

Holes in Clothing

Without Dr. Humes' preliminary notes, we have no way of knowing how confused the pathologists were about this back wound, operating as they were under completely false premises.

The waters grow even muddier when one looks at the

clothes Mr. Kennedy was wearing when he was shot.

FBI agent Robert A. Frazier told the Commission about two little holes in President Kennedy's shirt and jacket which cry out against the Commission's version of the assassination.

"I found on the back of the shirt a hole, 5% inches below the top of the collar, and as you look at the back of the shirt 1% inch to the right of the midline of the shirt . . ." Frazier said. He added that he found a similar hole in the President's jacket 5% inches below the top of the collar and 1% inches to the right of the mid-seam. The slight difference in the positioning of the two holes, Frazier explained, could be accounted for "by a portion of the collar sticking up above the coat about a half inch."

Try a little experiment yourself. Get a jacket and measure 5% inches from the top of the collar along the mid-seam in the back. Now move 1% inches

to the right. That spot is precisely where Frazier said Kennedy was shot. Now try to figure out how a bullet entering at that point could travel downward and exit from a spot just below the President's Adam's apple. As you will discover, it is an impossibility.

No Description

Not only does the Commission deprive us of the conclusive evidence about the wounds that exists in the photographs and X-rays made during the autopsy, but by a peculiar omission it deprives us of a description of the wounds that might have shed important light on them.

In Jacqueline Kennedy's testimony to the Commission, she told how the shooting started, and how she heard a voice cry, "Get to the hospital," and how President Kennedy fell into her lap mortally wounded.

At this point in her testimony, a bracketed statement appears. It says: "Reference to wounds deleted."

We are given no explanation

for this censorship of testimony by the Commission. Presumably the Commission was concerned about the sensibilities of the American people. Describing the wounds was not too much for Mrs. Kennedy, but apparently the Commission decided reading her description would be too much for the American people to bear.

Misplaced Concern

The Warren Commission's concern is misplaced. We do not need the Commission's solicitousness for our sensibilities. That was not the Commission's function. Its purpose was to provide us with the truth. We counted on the Warren Commission to provide us with the most complete record of the assassination that we could hope to obtain. Along with other omissions and evasions, the deletion of Mrs. Kennedy's description of her husband's injuries suggests that we did not get what we had a right to expect.

Even more alarming is the

possibility that the Commission deleted this description because Mrs. Kennedy's words conflicted with the Commission's own version of what the President's wounds were like. By deleting this testimony, the Commission leaves itself vulnerable to the charge that it was intentionally hiding something.

A Challenge

As we have seen, the evidence to support the Commission's thesis that Gov. Connally was hit by the same bullet that hit President Kennedy is seriously challenged by evidence suggesting that Connally was hit by a separate bullet. In addition, there remain many questions about whether Mr. Kennedy's back and neck wounds originated in precisely the way the Commission says they did.

The Commission's inconclusive evidence about the number of shots that were fired, the doubts that linger about the direction of the shots, the flimsy basis on which the

Commission decides that Governor Connally and President Kennedy were hit by the same bullet—all compel the belief that we have gotten something less than the full story of President Kennedy's assassination from the Warren Commission.