

O'DONNELL CONVINCED THIRD SHOT WAS FATAL

Exclusive to The Times from a Staff Writer

WASHINGTON—For Kenneth O'Donnell, one of President John F. Kennedy's most devoted assistants, there remains the shocking memory of seeing the fatal bullet strike the President.

In testimony before the Warren Commission, which was released Monday, Mr. Kennedy's appointments secretary recalled that he at first thought the shots were firecrackers, but . . .

"I realized then that there had been shots, he said. "But as fast as the realization occurred, I saw the third shot hit. It was such a perfect shot—I remember I blessed myself. I was rather convinced that was a fatal blow."

O'Donnell also recalled the scene at the Dallas hospital where local medical authorities tried to prevent removal of Mr. Kennedy's body until an autopsy could be performed. O'Donnell said he ordered the removal.

"In my own mind, when they said autopsy, I realized we were talking not about hours, but perhaps even days, which was an impossible situation for Mrs. Kennedy," O'Donnell testified.

While a representative of the local coroner's office shouted, O'Donnell said, he and others wheeled the President's casket out of the hospital and put it aboard an ambulance bound for Love Field. *END*