

# Back Brace May Have Doomed Kennedy's Life

Doctor Says Corset Prevented President  
From Slumping After First Bullet Struck

BY ARTHUR J. SNIDER

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CHICAGO — Former president John F. Kennedy was wearing a stiffer back brace than usual at the time of his assassination and this may have been a factor in his death, a physician said Tuesday.

Rigidity of the brace did not permit him to topple or crumple forward or sideways, which might have put him out of the line of fire, after being struck by the first bullet, which the physician believes did not kill him.

"Instead he could only tilt stiffly and slightly to his left, toward Mrs. Kennedy, with the back of his head still exposed to Oswald's telescopic rifle sight," said Dr. John K. Lattimer of New York in the Journal of the American Medical Assn.

## Second Bullet

"It was while he was in this position that he was struck by a second bullet from Oswald's rifle, which entered the back of the head 2.5 centimeters to the right of the midline and slightly above the external occipital (back of head) protuberance and shattered into several fragments.

The fragments of the second bullet devastated the skull and caused the death, Lattimer said.

The first bullet went through the soft tissue of the neck, grazing the pleura (membrane lining the chest cavity) on the right side and causing a blood clot with some purple discoloration, but no perforation and little blood loss.

The fate of the third bullet is unknown and it appears to have missed the auto completely, Lattimer said.

The President was wearing an unusually stiff brace because of pers-

piration into the back, it was pointed out.

The brace consisted of the customary canvas corset with metal stays. It was laced tightly around the President's waist to give rigidity to the spine.

"In addition to this, however, he had immobilized himself further by wrapping a knitted elastic bandage around the lower portion of his body and the lower portion of the frame in a figure-eight arrangement to give the back added rigidity," Lattimer said.

## Defective Sight

Lattimer, a urologist at Columbia University college of physicians and surgeons, is a student of the medical aspects of Presidential assassinations.

Had it not been for the stiff brace coincidence and a second coincidence—a defective telescopic gun sight—Oswald would not have been successful, Lattimer said.

The bullets struck about four inches to the right of the aiming point and little high because of the defective sight.

Coincidentally, however, the Presidential auto was following a course that curved to the right just enough to compensate for the error, the phys-