

# Pathologist: Kennedy Postmortem Incomplete

Witness Concedes 'Oversights' but Says Autopsy Backs Warren Report Findings

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NEW ORLEANS — A pathologist who helped perform an autopsy on President John F. Kennedy the night of the assassination admitted Monday the postmortem surgery had been incomplete.

Army Lt. Col. Pierre A. Finck also conceded that

—He had been guilty of an oversight during the autopsy in failing to identify the exit wound of a bullet that struck the President in the back of the neck.

—The three-man pathologist team of which he was a member had to rely on what some could construe as "hearsay" evidence to complete their report on the postmortem.

Called as a defense witness on behalf of Clay L. Shaw, Finck frequently appeared hesitant—and at times badly shaken—during cross-examination by Asst. Dist. Atty. Alvin Oser.

## Critics Helped

The doctor's admissions, uncertainties regarding some facts surrounding the assassination and oblique answers to certain of Oser's questions are bound to furnish new ammunition for critics of the Warren Commission, which now, in a sense, is even more the defendant in the trial than Shaw himself.

Still, at the end of a long day's testimony the prosecution had produced nothing to contradict what really was the nub of the evidence Dr. Finck had to offer the 12-man jury:

That the autopsy in Bethesda Naval Hospital

outside Washington the night of Nov. 22, 1963, established "definitely" and "positively" that the President was shot from the rear, not from the front as Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison contends.

## Crucial Claim

The contention that Mr. Kennedy was struck at least once from the front, thus caught in a cross fire, is crucial to Garrison's claim that the President was the victim of a con-

spiracy, and if established, it would destroy the Warren Commission's conclusion that all shots were fired by Lee Harvey Oswald from the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository.

Shaw was indicted two years ago for conspiring with Oswald and the late David W. Ferrie to murder the President.

But the 55-year-old civic leader has been little more than a spectator since the thrust of Garrison's case turned about two weeks ago toward discrediting the Warren Report.

## Begins Crisply

The Swiss-born Dr. Finck began his testimony crisply enough under direct examination Monday morning by F. Irvin Dymond, Shaw's chief defense counsel.

He said he found two rear-entry wounds in the President's body, one at the base of the neck and another in the back of the head.

The latter, he said, exit-

ed from the front of the President's skull with such force that it carried with it a 5-inch "star shaped" piece of bone.

While the autopsy was still in progress, he said, three surgeons received three fragments of the front of the skull from Dallas. He said they confirmed that the shot was fired from behind.

## Flesh Pushed In

The flesh around the wound at the base of the neck, like that at the rear of the head, "was pushed inward," he said, establishing it also was caused by a shot from the rear.

This was additionally confirmed, he said, by the fact that the fabric in the front of the President's shirt was pierced and puffed outward just below the collar button.

But he conceded he was "puzzled" by the absence of a frontal exit wound and that X-rays showed no bullet in the President's neck, though fragments of another one were found in the brain and metallic substance was found in the skull.

This was clarified next morning, he said, when Naval Comdr. James J. Humes, surgeon in charge of the autopsy, was told by doctors at Parkland Memorial Hospital in Dallas that they had found a small wound in the throat.

The throat wound had been obliterated, Finck



Lt. Col. Pierre Finck  
in Wirephoto

said, when the Dallas doctors had performed a tracheotomy in the area, making a "long, sidewise surgical incision."

Oser made much of the fact that the exit wound in the throat had gone undetected until this "hearsay" evidence had been received from Dallas.

"You examined the incision but did not notice the wound . . . did not see the wound?" Oser asked, incredulity in his voice.

"Why didn't Finck try to trace the 'track' of the wound by 'dissecting' tissue in the throat area? As near as I can recall, I was told not to—but I don't remember by whom." X

"Could it have been by one of the admirals or generals?" Oser demanded.

"I can't recall," the pathologist replied.

Finck had testified earlier that the small autopsy room was crowded not only with FBI and Secret Service agents but with top-ranking Army and Navy officers.

On another occasion, Dr. Finck said he did not dissect the track, but tried only—and unsuccessfully—to trace the wound with a surgical probe because "I was told the family wanted the head and chest examined."

Mention was made at least once more of Kennedy family members during the lengthy cross-examination which is scheduled to resume today.

### 3 Shots Mentioned

Dr. Finck said he did not have available autopsy and X-ray pictures of the autopsy when he testified before the Warren Commission in March, 1964, because "I was told it was the wish of the attorney general, who was then Robert F. Kennedy."

Oser also established that in the autopsy report, signed by the three pathologists Nov. 24, 1963, they had referred to three shots

omitted from the book repository.

Finck said that this was based on newspaper information and the presence in the autopsy room of witnesses to the assassination in Dallas.

"Having not been at the scene, we had to get the information from someone," the pathologist replied.

Oser also brought out that Finck had not examined the undamaged portion of the President's brain, which had been removed from the skull before he arrived for the autopsy and placed in a preservative.

### Asks for Answer

"If you did not go into the other half of the brain . . . you did not do a complete autopsy, did you?" Oser asked. "Yes, or no give me an answer."

"Yes," Finck replied.

"Was it complete as defined by the American Board of Pathology?" Oser demanded.

"No," said Finck. But he said it established that the fatal shots came from the rear "based on reports and information from people at the scene and a gross autopsy, and findings pertaining to wounds on the body."

He said Dr. Humes later

conducted microscopic examination of brain tissue which, as he recalled, indicated metallic substance was found in the brain.

Finck frequently waited so long before replying to Oser's questions that Judge Edward Haggerty Jr. at one point asked Garrison's assistant, "Are you waiting for an answer?"

An impasse was reached over testimony Finck gave the Warren Commission about a nearly intact bullet thought by commission investigators to first have penetrated the President's neck, then the body and wrist of former Texas Gov. John Connally.

"Did you or did you not tell the Warren Commission it could not have been the same bullet for the reason too many fragments were in that wrist?" Oser asked.

"I can't answer that question the way it is asked," Dr. Finck replied. Judge Haggerty said, "You're going to have to

answer like any other witness, yes or no, then explain your answer."

Finck said he thought the commission was asking him if he believed a bullet could shatter the President's skull—not penetrate the neck—then hit Gov. Connally and still remain nearly intact. *JKH*