

1

Writing Proposal
Re: Bradford Piece

**BUGLIOSI FAILS TO RESUSITATE THE
SINGLE-BULLET THEORY**

By

Jerry McKnight

Need to check copy on Reclaiming History

add = FBI failed to check 2 of 3 reports on Carlin Oct 1999
McKean VAK & COAT + shirt

Plus other than

Was this ever published?

The Warren Commission concluded that there was only one gunman involved in the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. This assertion rested on what in the JFK assassination literature is called the “single-bullet theory.” This theory, as Vincent Bugliosi rightly points out, “is a sin qua non” to the Commission’s single assassin and essential supporting contention that Texas Governor John Connally and Kennedy were hit by the same bullet. In his book, *Reclaiming History*, Bugliosi embraces the single-bullet theory without fear or trembling.¹ This theory, largely the creation of Arlen Specter, asserts that one shot entered the back of the President’s neck near the right shoulder, transmitted his neck without striking bone, exiting through his shirt collar and tie, and entered Connally’s chest under his right arm pit, smashing four inches off his fifth rib before exiting under his right nipple, after which, with enough residual kinetic energy, it penetrated his left thigh just under the skin before it came to a stop.

Begin write

Not account for wrist

Bugliosi’s assertion that the single-bullet theory is based on substantial or irrefutably convincing evidenced is so removed from reality as to defy caricature or parody.

The first FBI laboratory reports on Kennedy’s clothes revealed that the holes in his coat and shirt submitted to both X-ray and spectrographic analysis showed traces of copper (bullet metal) around the edges of the holes. This was forensically consistent with

JFK having been shot in the back with copper-jacketed ammunition. The same tests run on Kennedy's collar and tie showed no bullet metal was found in the surrounding fabric. Rather than admit that the slits in the President's collar and nick in his tie were not caused by an assassin's bullet, the FBI lab report noted that the slits had the "characteristics of an exit hole for a bullet *fragment*." (My italics).²

The FBI knew that the origin of the slits and the nick in the tie were not caused by a bullet fragment, but it was essential to stay on message: The official story decided upon over the weekend of the assassination was locked into all three shots originating from above and to the rear of the presidential limo, so the FBI was willing to go the extra mile and pretend that a fragment from the bullet that struck Kennedy from the rear caused the "holes," (the report's description) in the collar and the nick in the tie.

However, the ^{Stubbout} inescapable fact is that the FBI and the Secret Service maintained from the outset that the shooting scenario was three shots and three hits: JFK was hit by two bullets and a separate shot hit Connally. While this disagreement remained secret there is nothing in the released official record indicating that either agency altered its conclusions to bring them in line with the Warren report.³ Clearly both the FBI and the Commission's shooting scenarios could not have been right. (In fact, neither was.) But *Reclaiming History* makes no credible effort to resolve this contradiction and salvage the single-bullet explanation, the Commission's "sin qua non" for the Warren report's lone assassin conclusion. It must be noted that according to the official record, the FBI, the

Commission's investigative arm, made no bones about the fact that it believed the Commission's explanation of the shooting was impossible.⁴

It was politics, and only politics, that drove and shaped the evidence in the government's investigation into the Kennedy assassination. For example, in March 1964 Commission counsel Arlen Specter went to Parkland Memorial Hospital to depose doctors, nurses, and administrators involved in treating the stricken President and the Texas Governor. Dr. Charles J. Carrico was the first physician to examine the agonal Kennedy, whose breathing was spasmodic and his color cyanotic (bluish gray) symptoms associated with a terminal patient. Because time was critical the attending nurses took scalpels and cut off Kennedy's clothes. In their haste to free the patient from his clothes one of the nurses nicked the tie and left two slits in his shirt collar. As Carrico explained to Specter the use of scalpels was "the usual practice" in a medical emergency of this nature. Allen Dulles, who accompanied Specter to Dallas, asked Carrico *twice* to show him the location of the hole in Kennedy's anterior neck. The Parkland doctor responded on both occasions locating a point *above* the collar line. So Specter had unimpeachable first-hand testimony that would have persuaded any good faith investigation to have ruled out the Commission's single-bullet explanation. (My italics).⁵

Bugliosi attempts to validate the Commission's single-bullet construction is really a fatuous exercise in trying to make the worst appear the better case. He cites a 1965 memorandum from Dr. Pierre A. Finck, one of the Bethesda Naval Hospital prosecutors, to his commanding officer in which the Army pathologist contends that there

was a “bullet hole perforating both flaps of the [Kennedy] shirt, right and left.”⁶ It is necessary to point out that Finck and the other prosecutors did not see Kennedy’s clothes until March 1964 when Specter made them available in preparation for their appearances before the Commission. Even more to the point, according to Finck when he attempted to examine the President’s clothes during the Bethesda autopsy he was blocked by an “officer who outranked me told me that my request was only of academic interest.” It was during the autopsy when Finck’s examination of the collar would have had some legitimate evidentiary value, not four months later.⁷

If the FBI has a reasonable doubt or even a fleeting suspicion that the “holes” or perforations in JFK’s collar were caused by a bullet or a missile fragment it would have subjected the collar to testing to determine whether the “holes” or slits overlapped or coincided and whether the fibers around the perforations were pointing in or out. The specialist who would have conducted these tests was SA Paul M. Stombaugh, the FBI’s chief hair and fiber expert. Stombaugh did appear before the Commission but during his lengthy testimony not a single question was asked about an examination of JFK’s collar and whether in his expert opinion the slits or “holes” in the collar overlapped or coincided.⁸

Was Stombaugh ever tasked to make an examination of JFK’s collar and tie? According to Robert A. Frazier, the FBI’s firearms expert, Stombaugh ran tests on JFK’s collar and tie at Frazier’s request. In 1977 Frazier was deposed in a FOIA suit brought by prominent JFK assassination researcher Harold Weisberg. Frazier was under oath and admitted that Stombaugh ran tests on the collar and tie. He also admitted that Stombaugh

made a report of his findings. Whatever the results, that report is not in the Warren report or the 26 volumes of testimony and exhibits. Frazier also intimated that the nick in the President's tie was result of a knife or scalpel cut.⁹

The Warren Commission, despite all the testimony and evidence to the contrary insisted: "These two holes fell into alignment on overlapping positions when the shirt was buttoned."¹⁰ Commission exhibits include photographs of Kennedy's coat (CE 393), his shirt (CE 394), and the tie (CE 395). What the Commission did not include was a picture of the collar because it dared not. The slits (not holes) clearly do not coincide and any claim of alignment is patently untrue.¹¹

In its own unique way *Reclaiming History* is a masterful prosecution brief. But in his crusading zeal to reclaim the Warren Commission for History the author has allowed his critical faculties to go on French leave. His command and understanding of the relevant facts surrounding the single-bullet theory are so minimal that it approaches the vanishing point. Perhaps we should expect this given his profession in the law. Lawyers are paid for parading experts before juries, not for presenting the evidence. When it comes to the single-bullet explanation all of the convincing evidence and testimony is stacked against Bugliosi.¹²

¹Bugliosi, *Reclaiming History*, xx and xxix

² Director FBI to SAC Dallas, Urgent, 11/26/1963, FBI HQ JFK File, 62-109060-421; Jevons to Conrad, 11/26/1963, FBI HQ JFK Assassination File, 62-109060-1086; Hoover to James J. Rowley, Chief of U.S. Secret Service, 12/5/1963, FBI HQ JFK Assassination File, 62-1090601781.

³ For the FBI's three shots and three hits scenario see "Investigation of Assassination of President John F. Kennedy, November 22, 1963," Federal Bureau of Investigation, United States Department of Justice, J. Edgar Hoover, Director (This is the first Warren Commission document and is referred to as CD 1.) The report was rushed and slipshod. It spent fewer than 60 words describing the assassination. For more on the shoddy nature of the report see Gerald D. McKnight, *Breach of Trust: How the Warren Commission Failed the Nation and Why* (University Press of Kansas, 2005), 27-28.

⁴ In 1966 the media drew attention to these irreconcilable discrepancies about the shooting. When this was brought to Hoover's attention he wrote on the bottom of the memo, "We don't agree with the Commission as it says one shot missed entirely & we contend all three shots hit." See Rosen to DeLoach, 11/22/1966, FBI HQ JFK Assassination File, 62-109060-4267. For a more detailed treatment of this issue see McKnight, *Breach of Trust*, Chapters 8 and 9.

⁵ *Investigation of the Assassination of President John F. Kennedy, Hearings Before the President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964), Volume III, 361-362 for Carrico's exchange with Specter and Dulles. (Hereafter cited as 3H 361-362).

⁶ *Reclaiming History*, pp. 400-401 

⁷ See Finck's revised November 1963 "Summary" to General Blumberg, Otis Historical Archives, National Museum of Health and Medicine, AFIP, 3. I have the same reservations about Hoover's assurances to Commission chief counsel, J. Lee Rankin, that the "ragged slitlike hole [sic] and the ends of the torn threads around the hole were bent outward. "Characteristics," the director insisted, "typical of an exit hole for a projectile." Note that Hoover used the term "projectile," which could be any object in motion and avoids bullet, which is telltale. The FBI boss, the man formally in charge of the investigation into the JFK assassination, was careful not to ascribe to any single-bullet construction. In any FBI document or testimony the Bureau's party line was always to use the term "projectile" or "fragment" but never a bullet when referring to the slits in JFK's collar.

As mentioned above, Hoover and the FBI have maintained that there were three shots. Two hit Kennedy and a separate bullet struck Connally. Hoover to Rankin, March 23, 1964, FBIHQ Oswald File, 105-82555-2788.

⁸ For Stombaugh's April 3, 1964, Commission testimony see 4H 56-88.

⁹ For Frazier's February 1977 deposition see *Harold Weisberg vs. U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Energy Research Development Administration*, Civil Action 75-226, U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, February 24, 1977, 61-62. The suppression of Stombaugh's report and the FBI photo of JFK's collar are only exceeded by the Commission's conscious exclusion from the report and the 26 volumes JFK's two-page death certificate, signed by his personal White House physician, Dr. George G. Burkley. The only reason one can assign to this Orwellian humbuggery is the location of Kennedy's back wound at the third thoracic vertebrae which burdens the Commission's account of a shot from above (the 6th floor of the TSBD) and to the rear entering at a 45 degree angle and exiting the throat without having struck bone.

¹⁰ *Warren Commission Report*, 92.

¹¹ The best picture of the FBI photograph of Kennedy's shirt collar can be found in Harold Weisberg's *Never Again* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 1995), 245; there is also one in *Breach of Trust*. The FBI did include a clear picture of the shirt collar in the report on the assassination it sent to President Johnson. A quick examination of Kennedy's coat (CE 393) he was wearing that day in Dallas vividly reveals the great tears made by scalpel-wielding nurses to prepare Kennedy for emergency medical attention. Specter

³ For the FBI's three shots and three hits scenario see "Investigation of Assassination of President John F. Kennedy, November 22, 1963," Federal Bureau of Investigation, United States Department of Justice, J. Edgar Hoover, Director (This is the first Warren Commission document and is referred to as CD 1.) The report was rushed and slipshod. It spent fewer than 60 words describing the assassination. For more on the shoddy nature of the report see Gerald D. McKnight, *Breach of Trust: How the Warren Commission Failed the Nation and Why* (University Press of Kansas, 2005), 27-28.

⁴ In 1966 the media drew attention to these irreconcilable discrepancies about the shooting. When this was brought to Hoover's attention he wrote on the bottom of the memo, "We don't agree with the Commission as it says one shot missed entirely & we contend all three shots hit." See Rosen to DeLoach, 11/22/1966, FBI HQ JFK Assassination File, 62-109060-4267. For a more detailed treatment of this issue see McKnight, *Breach of Trust*, Chapters 8 and 9.

⁵ *Investigation of the Assassination of President John F. Kennedy, Hearings Before the President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964), Volume III, 361-362 for Carrico's exchange with Specter and Dulles. (Hereafter cited as 3H 361-362).

⁶ *Reclaiming History*, pp. 400-401

⁷ See Finck's revised November 1963 "Summary" to General Blumberg, Otis Historical Archives, National Museum of Health and Medicine, AFIP, 3. I have the same reservations about Hoover's assurances to Commission chief counsel, J. Lee Rankin, that the "ragged slitlike hole [sic] and the ends of the torn threads around the hole were bent outward." "Characteristics," the director insisted, "typical of an exit hole for a projectile." Note that Hoover used the term "projectile," which could be any object in motion and avoids bullet, which is telltale. The FBI boss, the man formally in charge of the investigation into the JFK assassination, was careful not to ascribe to any single-bullet construction. In any FBI document or testimony the Bureau's party line was always to use the term "projectile" or "fragment" but never a bullet when referring to the slits in JFK's collar.

As mentioned above, Hoover and the FBI have maintained that there were three shots. Two hit Kennedy and a separate bullet struck Connally. Hoover to Rankin, March 23, 1964, FBIHQ Oswald File, 105-82555-2788.

⁸ For Stombaugh's April 3, 1964, Commission testimony see 4H 56-88.

⁹ For Frazier's February 1977 deposition see *Harold Weisberg vs. U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Energy Research Development Administration*, Civil Action 75-226, U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, February 24, 1977, 61-62. The suppression of Stombaugh's report and the FBI photo of JFK's collar is only exceeded by the Commission's conscious exclusion from the report and the 26 volumes JFK's two-page death certificate, signed by his personal White House physician, Dr. George G. Burkley. The only reason one can assign to this Orwellian humbuggery is the location of Kennedy's back wound at the third thoracic vertebrae which burdens the Commission's account of a shot from above (the 6th floor of the TSBD) and to the rear entering at a 45 degree angle and exiting the throat without having struck bone.

¹⁰ *Warren Commission Report*, 92.

¹¹ The best picture of the FBI photograph of Kennedy's shirt collar can be found in Harold Weisberg's *Never Again* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 1995), 245; there is also one in *Breach of Trust*. The FBI did include a clear picture of the shirt collar in the report on the assassination it sent to President Johnson. A quick examination of Kennedy's coat (CE 393) he was wearing that day in Dallas vividly reveals the great tears made by scalpel-wielding nurses to prepare Kennedy for emergency medical attention. Specter

and 64
Serp " file was cut off the side
KW

questioned both of the emergency room nurses, Diana H. Bowren (6H 134ff) and Margaret M. Henchcliffe (6H 115ff), but he never asked them if they used scalpels to remove JFK's clothes.

¹² My purpose was limited to disclosing why the single-bullet theory had self-destruct written all over it before the Warren Commission was forced in the summer of 1964 to create its own reality with an out-of-the-blue solution to a political problem. The problem was the need to impose upon the American people a credible official explanation of the Kennedy assassination: that Lee Harvey Oswald was the lone assailant and there was no foreign or domestic conspiracy; at least none that the Commission was able to uncover.

The operational word here is limited. The author is aware that there is much more to the single-bullet construction that is absolutely essential to the Commission's assertion that the crime was the act of a lone nut. For instance, I do not go into detail on why the FBI (and the Secret Service) never agreed with the Commission about the basic facts of the shooting that day in Dealey Plaza. I say nothing about the FBI's failure to collect Connally's clothes for months when it rushed JFK's clothes to FBI Washington in a C-130 U.S. Air Force cargo plane in the early morning hours of November 23. By the time Connally's clothes were in evidence they had been dry cleaned and any crucial evidentiary value had been compromised. I mentioned nothing about the Tague bullet and how Jim Tague was allowed to bleed in vain, since he was the third victim of the shooting that day in Dealey Plaza. Tague and the curbstome shot was an inconvenient fact forced on the Commission in late summer 1964 that necessitated the fabrication of the single-bullet mythology. I say nothing about the fortuitous discovery of CE #399 and the "magic" of this magical bullet and its Olympian-like romp through the bodies of JFK and Connally, the track of devastation it left in both victims but still managed to emerge in almost pristine condition. Having spared the reader these details there was no occasion to remark on the unique unanimity that all the medical doctors connected in some way with the victims' wounds suffered in the Dealey Plaza shooting, all refused to believe in the magic that the Commission attributed to CE #399—Humes (2H 375-6), Boswell (2H 376-377), Finck (2H 382), Shaw 4H 114), Gregory (4H 127 conceded possibility but not probability), and Joseph Dolci, the Army's ballistic man (*Breach of Trust*, 195).

add to notes
→ Arriva (3H 358) ~~not~~ for nurses removed JFK's clothes "in the usual procedure" For Bowren comments for see and Henchcliffe "cut off his clothing" see 6H 134