

*W. Humes*

# THE WORLD'S WORST AUTOPSY AND THE WORLD'S WORST ARTICLE ABOUT THE WORLD'S WORST AUTOPSY

*W. Humes  
to JAMA  
article*

1. The JAMA article asserts that this is the first time Boswell and Humes have spoken out on the autopsy. It says the two men are breaking a long silence.

facts: Boswell was interviewed by Josiah Thompson in 1967 (thereby violating the orders he had signed to remain silent--see note # 5 below); Humes testified on national public television before the HSCA in September, 1978, and Boswell was interviewed twice by assassination researchers as late as 1990 and 1991.

*Harrison Livingstone (High Treason II)*

2. Humes asserts that he was in total charge of the autopsy. "I was in charge of the autopsy--period. Nobody tried to interfere--make that perfectly clear." The article contains sidebars with captions: "No generals in morgue" and "Humes was in total charge." Humes says that Admiral Burkley, the President's personal physician, was the only "high-ranking officer in the morgue" and he left soon.

facts: a. The Sibert-O'Neill Report, from two FBI agents who were present at the autopsy, lists all persons known to have been present. Among them: Brigadier-General McHugh, Admiral Galloway, Major General Wehle, Capt. Stover, Capt. Osborne, and Lt. Cdr Cross. There are also indications that Admiral Kinney, Surgeon-General of the Navy, was present.

b. In contradiction to Humes' statement that Burkley was the only high-ranking officer and he left soon, Admiral Galloway told Warren Commission investigators that he [Galloway] remained throughout the autopsy.

c. Under oath at the Shaw trial in New Orleans in 1969, Dr. Finck testified that:

- \* there were many Admirals and Generals present--in uniform
- \* that Dr. Humes asked one of these Generals who was in charge; the General replied, "I am."
- \* that someone in uniform ordered the doctors not to dissect the throat wound [Humes claims this was his decision]
- \* Finck had previously told investigators that when he asked to see Kennedy's clothing, he was told by an officer that his request "was of academic interest only" and the request was denied. [It is ironic that in the JAMA article Dr. Humes states, "If only we had seen the President's clothes, tracking the second bullet would have been a piece of cake, but we didn't have the clothes." Yet Humes says there was no interference.]
- \* Finck also stated that since some required dissections were not done, he had suggested that they mark the autopsy as "incomplete." The

officer said they should mark "complete autopsy." Humes then said to mark "complete autopsy."

**3. "[Humes] had performed several autopsies on military personnel killed by gunshot wounds....[Boswell] too, had previously autopsied several gunshot wounds...."**

facts: a. neither man was a forensic pathologist

b. HSCA, Volume 1, p. 311: "he [Humes] had not performed autopsies in deaths due to shooting previously-- neither had the other autopsy pathologists. So they were required to do an autopsy that by experience and by the way our society is structured...is reserved for forensic pathologists..."

c. When Humes testified before the Warren Commission, he was asked about this specifically:

SPECTER. What specific experience have you had, if any, with respect to gunshot wounds?

HUMES. My type of practice has been more extensive in the field of natural disease than violence. However, I have had to deal with violent death, accident, suicides, and so forth."

[Clearly, Humes did not directly answer the question. What does "deal with" mean?]

**4. Humes admits that the pathologists did not dissect the neck area, in spite of the fact that they had a bullet wound in the upper back/neck area which seemed to stop about one inch into the flesh, with no lane of exit. Humes says that "Dissecting the neck was totally unnecessary and would have been criminal."**

facts: a. It would also have been in conformity with the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology's manual, which requires that the organs of the neck always been examined.

b. Failure to dissect the neck and to trace a mysterious bullet wound caused erroneous reports to be sent from the autopsy room during the night. Failure to dissect the neck area left Dr. Humes to learn that there was a bullet wound in the front of the throat after the autopsy was over and after the body had been embalmed and removed to the White House.

**5. Humes called this "probably the least secret autopsy in the history of the world."**

facts: a. military security was posted around Bethesda, even within the morgue area.

- b. all who participated were given written orders from the Surgeon General of the Navy not to discuss their duties or what they saw. [As we have seen, Dr. Boswell violated this order.]
- c. Dr. Perry told the Warren Commission that when Dr. Humes called him on Saturday morning and was told that there was a bullet wound in the President's throat, the pathologist told him to discuss with no one what they had talked about.

6. **"The pathologists found two wounds from a high-velocity missile that would later be matched to the military-jacketed bullets fired from above and behind the President by Lee Harvey Oswald.**

fact: a. an absurdity. As anyone knows, bullets cannot be matched to wounds unless the bullets (or pieces large enough to be ballistically-identifiable) are in the body or near it. The body which Humes and Boswell had on the morgue table contained no metal which would have allowed the conclusion stated above.

- b. If one takes this statement at face value, it implies that all of Kennedy's wound, head, neck, and throat, were caused by one bullet. This in a medical journal.

7. **Dr. Humes: "The tracheostomy was a gaping wound about 3 or 4 centimeters around."**

fact: Autopsy report written by Humes: "Situated in the anterior neck at approximately the level of the third and fourth tracheal rings is a 6.5 cm. long transverse wound with widely-gaping irregular edges." Humes told the Warren Commission the wound was 7 or 8 centimeters.

8. **"I believe in the single bullet theory that it struck Governor Connally after exiting the President's throat."--Dr. Humes**

fact: When he testified before the Warren Commission, Dr. Humes said it was "extremely unlikely" that the bullet he was shown [CE399] could have caused the wound in Governor Connally's thigh.

9. **Dr. Boswell: "We documented our findings in spades. It's all there in the record."**

fact: a. photographs of the interior of the chest are missing  
b. tissue slides from the entrance of wounds are missing  
c. the President's brain is missing  
d. Some very strange things are found in the autopsy report-- things which don't belong there. For instance, Dr. Humes' handwritten second draft originally stated, "Three shots were heard and the president fell face downward to the floor of the vehicle..." Humes lined

through this and wrote "fell forward." This is, of course, untrue--Kennedy's head and body flew violently backward. More importantly, why is this in an autopsy report. Humes did not see this; he was 1,200 miles away. This reads more like a brief for the prosecution.

**10. Drs Humes and Boswell both assert that they believe Kennedy's "missing" brain was actually buried with his body. They say they gave the brain to Dr. Burkley, who said the Kennedy family wanted to bury it with this body.**

facts: More absurdities:

- a. Kennedy was buried at Arlington on November 25.
- b. Humes and Boswell did a supplementary autopsy on the brain on December 6--two weeks later !!
- c. How could the brain have been buried with Kennedy on November 25 if Humes and Boswell had it in their hands two weeks later? And when did they give the brain to Burkley?

**11. The article praises the autopsy as thorough and asserts that it answers the questions about JFK's wounds. There is not a word of criticism about any of the findings or procedures.**

- facts:
- a. It is intellectually dishonest of the editor and/or author not to report that the HSCA medical panel found that Dr. Humes had mis-located the entrance wound in the back of the head by 4 inches, placing the wound in a different bone!
  - b. Or that Dr. Humes, presented in the article as supremely confident about his autopsy findings, actually caved in before the HSCA panel and acquiesced in their finding not in his autopsy location. Thus, Humes, under oath, supported a different location for the wound than the one he so vigorously champions in the JAMA article.
  - c. The HSCA medical panel listed three pages of errors made in the Bethesda autopsy, including such things as the failure to measure wounds from proper points, failure to dissect the neck area, "insufficient training and experience to evaluate a death from gunshot wounds," not retaining original notes, not examining the clothing, and not mentioning that the neck had not been dissected.

**12. Dr. Humes states categorically that the President did not arrive at the morgue in a body bag. He says there was no body bag anywhere in the area.**

- facts:
- a. Medical technician Paul O'Connor, who lifted JFK's body out of the casket, says the body was

*gray bag  
2" x 2" trapezoid  
or 2" x 1 1/2"*

*... first bag*

in a gray body bag. The HSCA reported O'Connor's observation in 1979.

b. Assistant photographer Floyd Reibe also states that the body was in a body bag.

c. Dr. Humes' commanding officer, Captain James Stover of the Bethesda Medical School, said in a taped interview that he remembered a body bag.

*When & where?  
David Lifton '78 or '79*

d. The list of autopsy materials turned over to the Secret Service by Dr. Burkley includes the following: "One receipt, dated Nov. 22, 1963, for bed sheet, surgical drapes, and shroud used to cover the body in transit." Captain Stover stated that he felt the "shroud" was a euphemism for the body bag.

*stated where?*

13. Dr. Humes: "I'd done gunshot wounds before and this one was perfectly obvious."

- facts:
- a. In point of fact, four hours after the autopsy began (and one hour after it ended, if we accept the doctors' own timetable), they had decided nothing about the nature of either of the two wounds they now allege the President had suffered.
  - b. Until bone fragments were brought into the room from some undetermined source, there was no "hole" in the back of the head, where an entrance wound would later be located.
  - c. Until these bone fragments were brought into the room, no exit wound was observable on the right side of the head. Humes admitted this.
  - d. Humes admits that the exit for the second, the defect in the front of the throat, was not suspected of being a bullet wound until the next morning--after conversations with Dr. Perry--long after Kennedy's body was gone.
  - e. One wonders what did go on for four hours, and what kinds of conclusions would have been reached if the wounds had not been, Humes' words, "perfectly obvious."

NOTE: THESE ARE BY NO MEANS ALL THE ERRORS PRESENT IN THE JAMA ARTICLE. TIME PERMITS ONLY THESE CITATIONS.