

INVESTIGATION OF THE ASSASSINATION
OF PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY

HEARINGS
BEFORE THE
SELECT COMMITTEE ON ASSASSINATIONS
OF THE
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Dr. HUMES. We stayed to assist the morticians and their associates to prepare the President's body.

Mr. CORNWELL. How many hours did that take?

Dr. HUMES. Until about 5 o'clock in the morning.

Mr. CORNWELL. Then, what did you do?

Dr. HUMES. After the President's body was removed, half an hour or so later, I went home.

Mr. CORNWELL. Did you get any sleep?

Dr. HUMES. Not too much. I had to take one of my children to a religious function that morning, but then I returned and made some phone calls and got hold of the people in Dallas, which was unavailable to us during the course of the examination, as you heard from Dr. Baden, and I couldn't agree more with the apparent findings of his panel as to problems that we had had and hoped they would never be repeated, and spoke with Dr. Perry and learned of the wound in the front of the neck and things became a lot more obvious to us as to what had occurred.

Mr. CORNWELL. And you finally began to write the autopsy report at what time?

Dr. HUMES. It was decided that three people couldn't write the report simultaneously, so I assumed the responsibility for writing the report, which I began about 11 o'clock in the evening of Saturday, November 23, having wrestled with it for 4 or 5, 6 hours in the afternoon, and worked on it until 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning of Sunday, the 24th.

Mr. CORNWELL. Did you have any notes or records at that point as to the exact location of the—

Dr. HUMES. I had the draft notes which we had prepared in the autopsy room, which I copied.

Mr. CORNWELL. Was the distance between the wound and the external occipital protuberance noted on those notes?

Dr. HUMES. It was not noted in any greater detail than appears in the final report.

Mr. CORNWELL. So, the exact distance, then, above the external occipital protuberance was not noted—

Dr. HUMES. Was not noted, with the feeling, of course, that the photographs and X-rays that we had made would, of themselves suffice to accurately locate this wound.

Mr. CORNWELL. I only have one final question.

First, however, the notes are no longer in existence; is that correct?

Dr. HUMES. The original notes which were stained with the blood of our late President, I felt, were inappropriate to retain to turn in to anyone in that condition. I felt that people with some peculiar ideas about the value of that type of material, they might fall into their hands.

I sat down and word for word copied what I had on fresh paper.

Mr. CORNWELL. And then destroyed them?

Dr. HUMES. Destroyed the ones that were stained with the President's blood.

Mr. CORNWELL. The final question is, you were present throughout the entire embalming operation; is that correct?

Dr. HUMES. I was in the morgue from 7:30 in the evening until 5:20 in the morning. I never left the room.

Mr. CORNWELL. During that period, were there efforts made to reconstruct the President's head?

Dr. HUMES. Yes, indeed.

Mr. CORNWELL. Would it be accurate to state that those efforts entailed handling of the head over a long period of time?

Dr. HUMES. Very accurate.

Mr. CORNWELL. Dr. Baden testified that exhibit 302 and the other photographs which we have of the brain may not be entirely complete, although they show nearly the entire circumference in all directions, but you would have become familiar during that period of time with all of it, I suppose, exterior of the head in order to reconstruct it; is that correct?

Dr. HUMES. That's correct.

Mr. CORNWELL. And based upon that, is there any question about the fact that there were no other bullet holes entering the head?

Dr. HUMES. I was absolutely convinced at that time that there were no such. I have had no reason to change my opinion in the intervening 15 years.

Mr. CORNWELL. I have no further questions. Thank you.

Chairman STOKES. Thank you, counsel.

Are there any members of the committee that would seek recognition?

[No response.]

Chairman STOKES. Dr. Humes, under the rules of our committee, any witness may have 5 minutes in which to explain or in any way expand upon his testimony before our committee. I extend to you at this time such time as you so desire.

Dr. HUMES. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I certainly don't choose to avail myself of 5 minutes. Having heard most of what Dr. Baden said, and the findings of his committee on forensic pathologists, I think the committee was very well advised to gather such a distinguished group. I wish I had had the availability of that many people and that much time to reach the conclusions that I and my associates were forced to reach in approximately 36 hours.

I hope that the committee, in its wisdom, will make recommendations to appropriate authorities to preclude such a difficulty in the future.

I would say that our testimony—and my associates and I are quite elated, in fact, that the findings, to the best of my knowledge, the substantive findings of all the various panels that have examined these materials in such great detail, are in basic accordance with what we originally ascertained to be the situation. We are pleased by that.

Our testimony before the Warren Commission is quite lengthy, as I am sure some of the committee members are aware. However, I feel it also was hampered by our inability, No. 1, to never have seen, after about midnight of that night, the X-rays, to never have seen at any time until a year or two after the Warren Commission the photographs which we made. I think had we had those opportunities, some of the confusion and difficulties which seem to have arisen might not have arisen.

I will be pleased to answer any other questions from you, sir, or any other members of the committee.