

CBS NEWS

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Gentlemen:

The column "Politics East" by J. W. Masi in your issue of July 6, 1967, has just been called to my attention. In it, I am described erroneously as having been on vacation and unavailable to respond to criticism by Mrs. Sylvia Meagher concerning ballistics tests for the four-part television program, "A CBS News Inquiry: The Warren Report."

Mrs. Meagher's only reasonable charge is that CBS News did not show on television the condition of bullets after they were shot into various gelatin blocks to simulate the wounds of President Kennedy and Governor Connally. Naturally, Mrs. Meagher assumes whatever suits her doubting nature. This time she assumes wrongly.

None of the bullets fired through gelatin blocks to simulate the so-called single-bullet theory was deformed as much as the nearly intact bullet found on a Parkland Hospital stretcher -- which is usually referred to as "exhibit 399."

Failure to show these bullets, or at least one of them, during the program was admittedly, in retrospect, an error. It was neither deliberate nor sinister; it was an oversight, the result perhaps of overfamiliarity with our tests. We knew the bullets were not deformed, even slightly. We also knew that the gelatin, while it simulated the slowing-down effect of human tissue on a bullet, did not entirely simulate the deforming effect of human tissue. So we were inclined not to show a bullet whose intact condition might give the impression we were trying to prove a bullet could penetrate two men and not be deformed in the slightest.

Our purpose in conducting the tests was to see if the single-bullet theory was possible. Dr. Alfred G. Olivier, chief of wound ballistics at the Army's Edgewood Arsenal, and consultant to CBS News for these tests, decided that the tests showed the theory was possible.

Incidentally, in the CBS Inquiry broadcast, the doctor who said the single-bullet theory seemed "remote" to him was not Dr. William F. Enos, of Northern Virginia Doctors Hospital, but Dr. Cyril Wecht, forensic pathologist in Pittsburgh, whose expert knowledge of military wound ballistics compares with that of Mrs. Meagher. Dr. Enos, who has had extensive first-hand knowledge in military wound ballistics, felt the single-bullet theory was not only possible but probable.

Sincerely yours,



Walter Lister
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