

Original Finding on Kennedy Supported

8 of 9 Doctors Appointed by House Panel Accept Lone-Assassin Theory

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WASHINGTON—A panel of doctors appointed by a House committee said Thursday that they had found no medical evidence to support theories that President John F. Kennedy was fired upon by more than one assassin.

Dr. Michael Baden, chief medical examiner of New York City, and the man who headed the panel, told the House Assassinations Committee that all medical evidence indicated Kennedy was killed by one of two shots that struck him from the rear during his Dallas motorcade in 1963.

The findings of Baden's group, endorsed by all but one of nine pathologists, supported the central conclusions of the 1964 Warren Commission report on the assassination. The commission found that Kennedy was killed by a lone assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald.

Baden's panel said a careful examination of Kennedy autopsy records—as well as a study of the wounds of then-Texas Gov. John B. Connally, who was riding in the same limousine—provided no evidence that any shots had come from the side or in front of the motorcade.

Only one panelist, Dr. Cyril H. Wecht, dissented. Long a critic of the Warren Commission's findings, Wecht, who is coroner of Pennsylvania's Allegheny County, said he still rejected the commission's conclusion that a single bullet struck both Kennedy and Connally. Wecht believes more than one gunman fired from the rear.

The Baden panel's findings, resulting from months of study, were presented as the committee concluded its second day of public hearings into the Kennedy slaying.

Baden illustrated his testimony with sometimes grisly sketches and enlarged photographs showing the slain President's neck and head wounds. The necktie, shirt and coat worn by Kennedy, displayed on a mannequin, were also used to show entry and exit points of the rifle bullets.

Aside from selected photos and sketches published by the Warren Commission, it was the first time such grim reminders of the tragedy had ever been displayed publicly.

G. Robert Blakey, the committee's chief counsel, said the committee had sought in vain to locate a steel canister believed to contain Kennedy's brain, which was removed during the 1963 autopsy when the skull was being examined.

Blakey said the brain—flecked with bullet fragments, according to the autopsy report—could hold further clues for the committee's medical examiners, who believe the brain matter was never fully examined.

Blakey said the canister was not buried with Kennedy's

body and was not among materials being kept by the National Archives. It may have been disposed of by Kennedy's brother, the late Robert F. Kennedy, who once told associates he feared it might one day be publicly displayed, Blakey told the committee.

Baden said his panel found "a number of deficiencies" in the way the autopsy was conducted by Navy pathologists shortly after Kennedy's body was flown back to Washington. Retired Navy Comdr. James J. Humes, who was in charge of that autopsy, followed Baden to the witness stand and acknowledged that his examination had been hurried and incomplete.

Humes, testifying publicly for the first time, conceded Baden's point that the autopsy had erred in reporting the location of Kennedy's fatal head wound.

Both men said the fatal bullet had struck Kennedy four inches higher on the back of his head than the autopsy reported. But the error, Humes said, was "semantic."

"There was only one point of entry in the head," he said.

The reason for the error, Humes said, was that he had to write the autopsy report from his rough notes several hours after examining the body and without having seen the photographs and X rays that were taken.

Some critics of the Warren Commission have charged that Humes engaged in suspicious conduct by destroying his original notes a short time later. Questioned on this point by the committee, Humes said his notes "were

stained with the blood of our late President." He said he felt it was inappropriate for him to submit such a document, and feared it might later become a grisly souvenir.

Besides Baden and Wecht, other members of the committee's medical panel were Dr. Werner Spitz, medical examiner of Detroit; Dr. James T. Weston, chief medical investigator at the University of New Mexico school of medicine; Dr. John I. Coe, chief medical examiner of Hennepin County, Minn.; Dr. Joseph H. Davis, chief medical examiner of Dade County, Fla.; Dr. George S. Loquvam, director of the Institute of Forensic Sciences in Oakland; Dr. Charles S. Petty, chief medical examiner of Dallas, and Dr. Earl Rose, professor of pathology at the University of Iowa.