

*This will be in next Newsletter, whenever it comes out. I have decided to try to separate my own views from those of Bud & Jim.*

THE RESEARCH CORNER

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(prepared by Robert Smith, Director of Research)

Herewith and in future issues of the CTIA Newsletter, the Director of Research will review items of current research for the benefit of our readers. Previous issues have been somewhat deficient in this respect for various reasons. One recurrent problem concerns the propriety of discussing matters which are still being investigated, particularly where sources of information might be frightened or antagonized by premature disclosure. Another lies in the differing political or theoretical views of the various critics, and the difficulty in presenting such views accurately and objectively.

The Director of Research is not without his own biases and preferences for certain subjects, and it is inevitable that they are going to show in anything he writes. He is also aware that there are many things in the field of assassination research of which he is uninformed, or only partially informed. Nevertheless, he thinks the effort ought to be made and welcomes any suggestions for future coverage. The errors and the opinions can be blamed on him.

We begin with what amounts to a book review of some recent work by R. B. Cutler, Two Flightpaths: Evidence of a Conspiracy, Mirror Press, Danvers, Mass., 1971, 81 pages, illustrated (available at \$7.00 from the author at 38 Union Street, Manchester, Mass. 01944; also available from either him or the CTIA are copies of the Zapruder film for \$25.00.)

Where Did the Bullets Come From?

Bob Cutler is a professional architect and an expert in the analysis and solution of civil engineering problems. Solving the assassination of President Kennedy in Dealey Plaza involves a great deal more than engineering analysis, and Cutler does not claim otherwise. But in his latest work, Two Flightpaths: Evidence of a Conspiracy, he has shown how helpful such analysis can be toward understanding what happened on November 22, 1963.

Students of the Warren Report have long been aware that the Commission and its Staff, lacking in any real scientific competence and smugly oblivious to the need, never satisfactorily reconstructed the dynamical details of the shooting. Proceeding frankly on the principle of consensus of opinion, the Commission concluded that three shots were fired, all from the same source.

But the Commission failed miserably to account for the actions of any of the three bullets, or for their effects on the bodies of President Kennedy and Governor Connally. On several details crucial to the whole official theory, such as whether the bullet known as Exhibit 399 could have done all the things that the Commission claimed it did, while remaining as nearly unblemished as it was found to be, the Commission even rejected its consensus-of-experts approach and resorted to proof by proclamation.

Mere technical details, the Commission's apologists might say. But the troublesome fact remains, eight years after the event, that the medical evidence, or that portion of it which the public is allowed to see, simply does not jibe with the postulated trajectories of the shots. Flight angles of the bullets stand in naked contradiction to the reported entry angles of the wounds. Reactions of the victims' bodies seem to have defied both the expectations of physiology and the laws of physics. Serious and baffling questions remain unanswered about the impact and subsequent fate of the bullets or their fragments, e.g., how, when, where, and in what condition they were found or, as in some instances, why they were not found at all.

Running through all the Warren Report's ballistic analyses, the careful reader detects a sophomoric approach to the computation of angles, distances, speeds, times of events, and other technical matters. Yet all these things ought to have hung together, at least approximately, if the official theory was to be worthy of public credence.

All this has been known to diligent students of the Report for many years, and it has been documented in several publications. Yet the Government seems not to care. The Warren Commission, having operated in almost cathedral isolation from criticism throughout its existence, promptly disbanded upon submission of its Report, leaving no official body to whom such weaknesses could be pointed out. The Justice Department and the FBI, who did most of the investigating for the Commission and who might be thought to have retained some interest if not jurisdiction, have been about as responsive as the Pyramids. Most Congressmen have been unapproachable on the subject. It now seems clear that if the mysteries of Dealey Plaza are ever going to be solved, private citizens will have to do it rather than the Government.

This is where work like Cutler's comes into consideration. It is a serious, technical analysis of ballistic, photographic, medical, and architectural data which attempts to reconstruct the probable bullet flightpaths and thus determine where the shots came from. It is exactly what the Commission should have done but failed to do.

The first part of his analysis is a refutation to the "Single-Bullet Theory," the Commission's fantasy that Exhibit 399 caused seven different wounds (four entries and three exits) on two different bodies, broke two bones in Governor Connally, lodged temporarily in a third before "falling out," and emerged from all of this destruction with little more than a moderately flattened base.

Cutler analyzes the possible flightpaths of this bullet, examining a range of times when the remarkable event might have occurred, and shows by diagrams that it just could not have happened the way the Commission said it did. This part of his work, subtitled "The Flight of CE 399," had been published previously, but there are some who are not aware of it and many who have not given it sufficient attention.

The second part is genuinely new and is devoted to estimating the source of the shot that pierced Governor Connally's chest. Here, of course, Cutler is under no constraints, as was the Commission, to find that this bullet had to come from the same source as the one that initially struck the President, nor to account for other wounds conceiv-

ably inflicted at other times. Cutler's answer, which may disturb some critics as well as defenders of the Warren Report, is that the shot did come from the sixth floor of the TSBD, but from a window well over toward the west of the building rather than from the southeast corner window where Oswald was supposedly located.

I hasten to add that there are many uncertainties in Cutler's calculations, as he himself is careful to point out. There is actually a zone of possible firing locations indicated by his calculations, and it extends both horizontally and vertically around the point which Cutler finds most likely. Those who naively imagine that calculations must be precise or else they have no value should realize that practically all such analysis is approximate. Only such amateurs as the staff of the Warren Commission would pretend to have calculated angles to tiny fractions of a degree.

Moreover, it should not be forgotten that Cutler's estimate applies only to one particular shot, namely the one that caused Governor Connally's back and chest wounds. More work of this kind needs to be done. Perhaps if we can ever get an unequivocal description of the President's wounds from the Government, it may be possible to estimate the source or sources of the bullets that caused them also.

One can find matters on which to disagree with Cutler in his analysis, and some of his comments on peripheral matters are a little incautious. Some critics will feel uneasy with the admitted uncertainty in his work, sensing a possible resurrection of one or another conclusion of the Warren Report. Still others seem to disdain hard thinking about the physical evidence altogether, preferring instead to reason from assumed motives in faraway places such as Moscow or Vietnam. To each his own, but to this reviewer the kind of work done by Cutler seems more likely to achieve some real understanding of what happened during the JFK assassination. I'd like to see more of it.