

Excerpts from a monograph

"The First Shot: A New Line of  
Evidence Challenging the Warren Report"

by

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We have already seen that the scapula and flesh of the upper back move about quite freely outside the ribcage. We cannot automatically assume that the position of the flesh at the time of the autopsy measurement was the same as at the time the wound was received. As a matter of fact, there is evidence that it was not.

The location of the bullet hole was determined by measuring down from the mastoid process. The latter is a bony knob on the lower part of the skull just behind the ear. The autopsy measurements located the wound as being 14 centimeters (5 1/2 inches) down from the mastoid process. Measuring from a point on the skull can introduce some error because of flexibility of the neck and variation in the position of the head.

A much greater error is caused by the fact that when the body is in a prone position the shoulders have a different relationship to the rest of the body than they do when the person is standing or sitting erect.

In the prone position, the shoulders fall forward and downward closer to the head and front of the body than they are in the erect position. (see figures 7 & 8) This difference in shoulder position produces a measurement difference of from 1 1/2 to 2 inches. Observations on people varying considerably in size and shoulder-neck proportions shows this difference to be a fairly constant one.

What this means is that a point on the shoulders which measures 5 1/2 inches (14 cm) down from the mastoid process in the prone position would be 7 to 7 1/2 inches down with the person erect. In the actual sequence of events, the order was reversed. The President was sitting

erect when hit with a bullet entering 7 to 7 1/2 inches below the mastoid process. In the prone position during the autopsy, his head and shoulders were closer together so that a measurement of 5 1/2 inches resulted. In other words, the bullet hole as observed during autopsy was not in line with the path of the bullet through the rest of the body.

This should help us to explain a conflict between the autopsy report and the FBI Summary Report of 9 December 1963 and Supplementary Report of 13 January 1964. The information about the autopsy in the FBI reports is based on the observations of two FBI agents who were present during the autopsy. The agents reported that the missile path extended downward at an angle of 45 to 60 degrees and was less than a finger length in depth.

It has never been explained how a bullet traveling at a downward angle of approximately 18 degrees (as determined by the Commission) could make a wound at an angle of 45 to 60 degrees, and also why a bullet which traveled through the President's body would not have left a path that could have been probed all the way. What we conclude here is that the angle observed at autopsy was determined not by the actual angle of travel of the bullet, but rather by the change in the position of the President's shoulders caused by being in the prone position. This would also produce a bend in the bullet path which would make the wound appear to be a shallow one. I suggest that had the doctors arranged the President's shoulders in their natural position while erect, they could have run a probe through the body following the bullet path. (See diagrams *A* and *B*)

We still need to inquire into the two other sources of information about the back wound to see if they support either of the first two or raise still more problems. Statements by Secret Service and FBI agents who saw the wound either in Dallas or during the autopsy show a considerable amount of agreement in placing the wound four to six inches down on the back. The two FBI agents present at the autopsy described the wound as "below the shoulders." While the statements of agents do not pinpoint an exact location, there is nothing from this source to support the verbal description indicating a high location of the wound.

The fourth source, definitely in the category of "hard" information, is the bullet holes in the President's clothing. They were to the right of center and were located  $5 \frac{3}{4}$  inches down from the top of shirt collar and  $5 \frac{3}{8}$  inches down from the top of the jacket collar. These measurements may be confirmed by photographs.

The clothing measurements would place the wound lower on the body than would the autopsy measurement of  $5 \frac{1}{2}$  inches from the mastoid process. Edward Jay Epstein noted this discrepancy. Various people have suggested that the shirt and jacket could have ridden up on the President's shoulder as he waved his arm. If the clothing were bulged or folded a wound high on the shoulder would appear to be lower when the clothing was flattened out and measured. This explanation has been widely accepted and until now the matter has not been pursued further.

We can now resolve this apparent conflict. We saw earlier that differences in shoulder position would result in the point of entrance actually being 7 to 7 1/2 inches below the mastoid process at the time the wound was received. The top of the President's shirt collar would have been about 1 1/2 inches below the mastoid process. Subtracting this amount from the 7 to 7 1/2 inch measurement shows us that the bullet would have entered the body 5 1/2 to 6 inches down from the top of the shirt collar. This is exactly where measurements on the shirt place the bullet hole, as do the jacket measurements. There is no necessity to speculate that the clothing rode up or was folded, for which there is no evidence in various pictures taken at the time.

We have looked at four indicators of the location of the wound in back and have seen that three of them agree very closely with each other. Reports of agents, the bullet holes in the President's clothing, and the autopsy measurements as explained here all place the wound at about the same location. When we keep in mind that the verbal portion of the autopsy report was written well after the autopsy itself and was attempting to piece together information from the autopsy plus telephone reports of doctors in Dallas, that Dr. Humes burned his original autopsy notes, and that <sup>he could well have been influenced by knowledge of</sup> the location of the presumed assassin, ~~we know~~ we cannot have utmost confidence in the verbal description.

Agreement between indicators is only part of the picture though, because we have an objective way of verifying the bullet path. Our task is simple because there are only three possible bullet paths, and two of

them can be ruled out. If the bullet traveled either over the outside of the ribcage or entered between the first and second rib, it would have been traveling in a downward direction and could not have escaped either hitting someone else in the car or being trapped and discovered in the car. Because of the sideways angle of the bullet it could not possibly have hit Governor Connally.

This leaves only the third possibility--that the bullet entered between the second and third rib, the place suggested by three of the four sources. But this place is level with the point of exit in front and while the bullet would have been going in a sideways direction it would not be traveling at a downward angle. (see figure 9) There are two implications to this: 1) the bullet must have come from near the street level and not from the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository, and 2) a bullet traveling in that direction could have escaped the car out the side window and buried itself in the grass in Dealey Plaza.

While the horizontal direction of the bullet was determined on the basis of autopsy measurements supported by evidence from clothing and agents' reports, it is thus confirmed by the fact that the bullet was not found in the car. The absence of the bullet in the car is what suggested the one-bullet theory in the first place, because Arlen Specter concluded that if the bullet were fired from above and did not land in the car the only place it could go was into Governor Connally. But we have seen that the sideways angle of the bullet would make it impossible for it to hit the Governor.

