



Shooting Questions

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The three diagrams at left show wounds suffered by Gov. John Connally during John F. Kennedy's assassination. The bullet that struck Connally would have been fired at a 45-degree angle to the ground, according to the Dr. John Nichols. But Lee Harvey Oswald's angle of fire was slightly more than 20 degrees, making it impossible for Connally to have been wounded in the manner suggested by the Warren Commission's "one-bullet theory," Dr. Nichols said. The diagram at right shows the positions of Kennedy (dark figure) and Connally (white figure) during the assassination. In order to

miss Kennedy's backbone, the bullet causing his neck wound would have to have been fired at 28 degrees from the left. But how could such a bullet—exiting from Kennedy's throat—also have hit Connally in the right upper back? The straight dotted line indicates the path that might be expected for the Kennedy neck shot and the curved dotted line indicates how the bullet that struck Connally would have to have traveled to hit Connally, Dr. Nichols said.

(Adapted from the Warren Commission Exhibit No. 689 and from a 1968 copyrighted drawing by John Nichols)

Doubts Medical Data on Connally Wound

By Phillip S. Brimble
Science-Medical Editor

"I keep asking pregnant questions about the (President John F.) Kennedy assassination. It's embarrassing to people," Dr. John Nichols said.

The latest offspring of his lengthy, 11-month investigation into the November, 1963, killing of the President is an article in the October issue of the Maryland State Medical Journal challenging the medical opinions of all of the physicians at Parkland Memorial Hospital in Dallas who attended the wounded Gov. John Connally of Texas. "That article was turned down by 30 medical journals," Dr. Nichols, associate professor of pathology at the University of Kansas Medical Center, said.

The Journal of the American Medical Association sent the manuscript back in the next return mail, he said, adding, "The prestigious New England Journal of Medicine chided him for using that journal to force Connally to complying with requests for additional X rays and possible removal of a piece of material beneath the skin in his left leg."

Foreign medical journals declined to publish the grounds "it was an American problem," Dr. Nichols said.

"I finally found a gutsy journal editor who would run the piece," he added.

The Warren Commission Report concluded that Lee Harvey Oswald fired three shots within 5.8 seconds from above, behind and to the right of the car carrying the President and Connally, who sat in the front seat 28 1/2 inches in front of Kennedy.

The first bullet was said to have passed through the President's neck, without hitting bone, hit Connally in the right upper back, emerged below the right nipple, fractured his right wrist, then became entangled in the governor's clothing. A fragment of this bullet, identified as CE 399, was said to be lodged in the thigh bone of Connally's left leg.

Dr. Nichols doesn't see it that way. In essence Dr. Nichols's article repeats much of what he has contended for years:

- The bullet that passed through the President's neck was not fired from the position from which Lee Harvey Oswald was alleged to have fired the fatal shots.

- The bullet that passed through the President's neck was not the same bullet that smashed through Connally's wrist, a direct challenge to the "one bullet" theory, and also suggesting there may have been more than one assassin.

- The medical aspects of the assassination by the Warren Commission investigation were inadequate and superficial.

This time Dr. Nichols is focusing on the object in Connally's left thigh alleged by Parkland physicians to be a metal fragment from bullet CE 399.

He has studied copies of the original Connally X rays that have been enhanced using computer techniques that helped scientists clear up the faint images sent to earth from spacecrafts sent to Mars.

The X-ray films are copies of those published in the Warren Commission Report and on deposit in the National Archives. What he sees, he said, is not a metallic object embedded in the left thigh bone, as stated by the Parkland physicians, but a nonmetallic object just below the skin. The films clearly show a partly erased arrow drawn to an object just below the skin, he said.

Dr. Nichols said his requests to review the original X-ray films of Connally's wounds have repeatedly been denied by the Parkland hospital, even though Connally gave Dr. Nichols written permission in 1969 to examine his medical file.

Dr. Nichols is convinced that the tiny, faint object in the Connally leg X ray is not metal. More likely, he said, it is a fragment of bone, perhaps from Connally's wrist wound, or a piece of glass or button or sand. Since the object is so near the skin surface, it could

easily be removed with minor surgery, something Connally apparently is not interested in pursuing, Dr. Nichols said.

Removal of the object would clear up whether it was from the CE 399 bullet. If it turned out to be metal, it could be tested to determine if it came from CE 399.

In an interview, Dr. Nichols sat in the library at the Department of Pathology at the medical center and pondered his lengthy, plodding investigation.

The rejection of his manuscript by so many journals, he suggested, represented a "head in the sand" attitude of the medical profession to the issue of an incomplete medical study done at Parkland at the time of the shootings.

"The medical profession does not

like to investigate itself," he said.

His dogged pursuit has irritated many of his fellow physicians, he said.

"But I think the American people have a right and should be interested in solving the problem of this assassination," he said.

"The public should get as much information about this as possible instead of hiding it. I'm disappointed in Connally. But I can understand him wanting to avoid dragging this up some more."

Dr. Nichols recounted how his efforts at examining the bolt-action Mannlicher-Carcano rifle Oswald allegedly used was met with rebuffs at every turn.

"It was 5 years of effort on my part before I was allowed to see it," Dr. Nichols said. "Then it took another 2

years before they would let me touch it, and another year before they let me photograph the inside of the barrel.

"But I'm a patient man." But even a patient man can be worn thin by some events.

Over the Labor Day weekend a Mannlicher-Carcano rifle that Dr. Nichols had assembled over 300 hours using the best parts from more than 30 rifles inferior to the firing characteristics of the Oswald weapon was stolen from his office at the medical center.

He valued the rifle at \$25,000. It was the one he fired in his tests to try and duplicate, or disprove, contentions of the Warren Commission.

"Few people have encouraged me," he said. "Most say I'm wasting my time and my money."

"Maybe I am."