

N.Y. World-Telegram & The Sun
of Oct. 9, 1964

By Robert C. Ruark

Puzzled by Warren Report



LONDON—I am sitting in my flat here with a professional hunter, Walter Johnson of Mozambique. We have just finished a safari—the fourth in Mozambique in two years, my 20th over 14 years in countries ranging from Tanganyika to the Central Provinces of India.

We are talking about the shooting of President Kennedy, in terms of what we both know about rifles. Walter shot his first elephant when he was nine years old. I have been shooting high-powered rifles, with and without scopes, for most of my life.

On this last month's trip to Mozambique I had three guests, who burnt up a power of ammunition on big game. I would reckon that I personally, over 14 years, have fired at least two thousand rounds of ammunition at live targets, from elephant to lion to tiger to buffalo to rhino to dik-dik, the littlest of them all. God knows how many times Walter has fired a rifle. He was champion of the Rhodesian army when he was called up for national service, and I have seen him kill a bird with a rifle, with open sights, at 700 yards.

This being established, I wish to make a point.

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It is a rule of shooting thumb that a hard-nosed bullet goes all the way through. A soft-nosed bullet goes in little and comes out big. A dum-dum, or doctored bullet, might conceivably break up on entry, but on anything as soft as a human skull its chances of breaking up on entry are very small indeed.

What Walter and I cannot understand, among other findings of the Warren Report, is how a bullet fired from behind could tear the back of President Kennedy's head off.

I am speaking only as a semi-professional white hunter, but Walter is all pro, and he agrees with me.

The other day we had a sick buffalo on our

hands, and we were shooting as fast as we could work the bolt. Neither one of us was able to fire three shots in under eight seconds.

Walter was shooting faster than I was, but he was using open sights, which raises another point. Somebody in the Warren Report mentioned that "the scope made fast shooting possible."

This is utter nonsense. Every time you fire a scoped rifle the blast knocks your eye out of the scope, and you have to rediscover the target. There is also something called "parallax" which blurs a scope, making the target disappear if your eye isn't rightly adjusted to the lenses.

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There was some comment that the scope had a slight error in sighting which made a leadoff angle unnecessary. You would have to know the exact span of right-or-left-throwing in order to compensate, and the same would apply to high or low. I doubt very much if Lee Oswald bore-sighted his rifle and then adjusted the scope in order to eliminate the basic necessity of shooting at moving targets—the leadoff angle.

According to reports, Mr. Kennedy was hit in the back, a heart shot, as well as being hit in the neck, the bullet passing through and coming out of the throat. Another bullet blew off the back of his head.

As a rifleman I do not understand the combination of angles. A shot fired on high goes down. A shot fired on the level goes straight in. A shot fired from below travels up. Oswald, shooting from his lofty vantage, would have had to hit Kennedy high in the head to shove the bullet through is throat. To hit him in the back, at that range and elevation, is impossible.

A bullet going in the back of the neck and coming out of the throat would almost have to be fired on a dead level, or from a very slight slant.

Walter Johnson and I have read the report scrupulously, several times, and the ballistic end of it makes no sense.