

Could Not Have

Connally's View

STILL ALIVE AND WELL, however, is a most important witness whose testimony was contradicted by the Warren Report: the former governor of Texas, John B. Connally.

The cornerstone of the Warren Report is "the single-bullet theory," the argument that one single bullet, the one called Exhibit 399, drilled through the bodies of both Kennedy and Connally.

Neither Connally nor his wife Nellie, who were sitting in front of Kennedy and his wife Jackie in the death car, believes in the single-bullet theory. Said Connally, in an article in *Life Magazine* on Nov. 25, 1966:

"They talk about the 'one-bullet' or 'two-bullet theory,' but as far as I'm concerned there is no theory: There is my absolute knowledge and Nellie's too, that one bullet caused the President's first wound, and that an entirely separate shot struck me."

Connally was unavailable for an interview in connection with this story. But he said in that same *Life* article, "It's a certainty. I'll never change my mind."

No eyewitness in Dealey Plaza testified that one bullet struck both the President and the governor. Despite their views—and although there was no eyewitness testimony specifically buttressing the single-bullet theory—the Warren Commission went ahead with the single-bullet theory as the keystone of its case. For in the words of Norman Redlich, an assistant counsel who wrote more of the Warren Report than anyone else, "To say that they were hit by separate bullets is synonymous with saying that there were two assassins."

EXPLAINING WHY this is true is a little complicated, but here is an attempt:

To begin with, it should be remembered that no one can be absolutely certain how many shots were fired that day. No one had a tape recorder playing and no movie cameras were using sound film. There is no audio record of the assassination.

Although witnesses gave varying counts of the number of shots they heard — some say four or five — the Warren Commission finally decided that Oswald fired three shots. They did so in part because three shells were found in the sixth-floor corner of the Texas School Book Depository from which it is believed he fired.

The initial FBI report on the case said the first and last shots hit Kennedy and the middle one struck Connally. The Warren Commission finally decided, however, that one shot hit both Kennedy and Connally; one missed; and another, the fatal shot, hit Kennedy in the skull.

Another complication, besides the lack of a sound record of the shots, is that the Zapruder film, the best available visual record of the assassination, does not show the moment when Kennedy was first hit.

It shows the final fatal shot; in the now-famous frame 313, the President's head explodes in a corona of blood.

But earlier, when first hit, Kennedy is blocked off from Zapruder's view by a sign, which has since been removed from Dealey Plaza, saying, "Stemmons Freeway — Keep Right."

WHEN KENNEDY REAPPEARS from behind the sign in Frame 225 of the Zapruder film, he has already been hit, his right hand rising toward his wounded neck.

He is behind the sign for only one second. But since Oswald's bullets travelled 2,165 feet per second, the instant Kennedy was hit by the first shot cannot be pinned down with the certainty of the later head shot in Frame 313.

Repeated tests show that Oswald's bolt-action, mail-order \$21.45 rifle could not be made to fire any faster than once every 2.3 seconds. Time measurements of the Zapruder film show beyond doubt, however, that there are less than 2.3 seconds between the earliest instant Kennedy could have been hit, and the latest Connally could have been struck.

Kennedy is obviously all right in Frame 206, the last one in which he is visible before passing behind the sign. Connally is obviously wounded by Frame 236, in which his mouth flies open in pain. Since Zapruder's film rolled through his camera at the rate of 18 frames per second, there is less than two seconds between these frames.

Therefore either Oswald hit them both with one shot, with Connally showing a more delayed reaction than Kennedy, or there was another gun involved and both men were hit by separate shots.

THE CREATOR OF the single-bullet theory was Arlen Specter, an assistant counsel to the Warren Commission, who is now finishing up eight years as Philadelphia district attorney after losing a race for re-election this month. Interviewed for this story, Specter said he has not changed any of his opinions since the report was issued, and still believes that the single-bullet theory is valid.

Specter's strongest argument is the fact that his theory, alone of all the speculations in the case, fits with the physical evidence in the case — the three bullet fragments found.

These three are Exhibit 399, an almost-whole bullet weighing 158.6 grains, and two small mangled pieces, one weighing 44.6 grains and the other 21. (An unfired bullet from Oswald's rifle weighed 160 to 161 grains, or slightly more than one-third of an ounce.)

HERE IS THE WAY Specter fits the three fragments into his theory:

Exhibit 399 went through Kennedy's neck and Connally's chest and wrist and stopped in his thigh. The other two frag-

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Done It Alone

ments are shattered pieces of the bullet that smashed Kennedy's skull. The other shot missed and that bullet was lost somewhere outside the presidential limousine.

The courses of the wounds through Kennedy's neck and Connally's chest are both on downward paths, so the bullet or bullets that caused them had to stop in the car. If another bullet was involved, where is it? Where did it go?

As one of the Warren Report critics, Richard H. Popkin, has conceded, "For those who do not accept the Commission's one-bullet hypothesis, there is a genuine problem of explaining where the bullets went."

Specter doesn't have that problem. His hypothesis covers them all. In the absence of a more convincing counter-argument, his theory has stood the test of a decade.

Other Leads

Two recent leads that failed to pan out are examination of the photographs and X-rays of Kennedy's official autopsy, and the rumor that Oswald was an informant on the payroll of the FBI.

The first lead arose from the fact that two sets of doctors saw Kennedy's body, but neither saw all of his wounds.

Dallas doctors, who were civilians, first saw Kennedy's body when he was brought wounded to Parkland Memorial Hospital. While they strove vainly to save his life, he lay face upward and they never turned him over. So the Dallas doctors never saw the wound in his back.

Trying to help the dying president breathe, the Dallas doctors performed a tracheostomy, which means cutting a hole in the windpipe. The place they chose to cut was across the wound in Kennedy's neck.

WHEN THE BODY reached Bethesda Naval Hospital, the three military doctors who performed the autopsy did not notice the neck wound because it was obscured by the tracheostomy incision. So they saw only the wound in the back, and obviously, the gaping wound in Kennedy's head.

The two sets of doctors did not consult with one another and get their signals straight until after the autopsy was over and the body was gone, on its way to be prepared for burial in Arlington National Cemetery.

The Warren Report subsequently reconciles their examinations by deciding that the back wound marked the entrance of the bullet called Exhibit 399, and the neck wound marked its exit.

Some skeptics suspected the Commission got it backwards, however, and that Kennedy was shot through the neck from the front. They also wondered if he could not have been shot in the head from the front.

The key, supposedly, lay in the autopsy and X-ray photographs taken of Kennedy — photographs locked up in the National Archives and forbidden to public view. These photographs were not even shown to the Warren Commission. The ban on them was not lifted until last year.

To date, only three non-government physicians have been permitted to see these two sets of photographs. They are Dr. John K. Lattimer of New York in January 1972; Dr. Cyril H. Wecht of Pittsburgh in August 1972; and Dr. E. Forrest Chapman of Belleville, Mich., in July 1973.

In a lengthy article published in the May 1972 issue of the magazine *Resident and Staff Physician*, Dr. Lattimer declared that his examination "brought to light no basic discrepancies in the concepts put forth in the Warren Commission Report."



Diagram of the mystifying bullet's presumed course is imposed on a photograph taken during an FBI reenactment of the assassination. Bullet entry spots were marked on the unidentified men portraying Kennedy and Connally.

His article included sketches of the X-rays.

DYED-IN-THE-WOOL critics brushed Lattimer's findings aside however, declaring that he was a patsy who had made known his favorable attitude toward the Warren Report beforehand. They were willing to place more faith in Wecht and Chapman, both qualified pathologists who do not believe that the Warren Report is true. Lengthy interviews with Wecht in Pittsburgh and Chapman at his home in Belleville, however, disclosed that neither now questions the basic accuracy of the drawings and physical measurements in Lattimer's article.

Neither Wecht nor Chapman believes that Oswald "acted alone." But they both concede that there is nothing in the autopsy photographs and X-rays to prove he didn't.

ANOTHER SPECULATION that has fascinated Warren Report critics for years is the rumor that Oswald was a secret informer paid by the FBI.

Texas State Atty. Gen. Waggoner Carr and Dallas District Atty. Henry Wade relayed to the commission a story that Oswald had been an FBI informant since September 1962; that he was on the FBI payroll at \$200 a month on the day he was arrested; and that he had been assigned an FBI informant number, S-179.

Epstein justifiably criticized the commission's investigation of this tip as ridiculously inadequate. Essentially, the commission asked FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover about it and he said it wasn't true. Chief Justice Earl Warren, commission chairman, refused to even look at Oswald's FBI file. The commission never questioned the apparent source of the Carr-Wade tip, a newspaper reporter in Houston named Alonzo Hudkins.

Last week I talked to Hudkins on the phone in Baltimore, where he is a reporter for the News-American. "I think Oswald was either a stoolie for the FBI or the CIA and turned out to be the greatest double agent of all time," he said.

He declined to name the exact source for his belief, but said, "I was told by several sources from at least four different agencies — the (Dallas) city police, the sheriff's office, the DA's office and one federal agency."

When I asked him his source for Oswald's informant number, Hudkins said he and three associates "made up the number."

"I've never told anybody about making up the number until this week," Hudkins said. He said he had no idea where the figure of \$200 a month as Oswald's pay came from, that he wasn't the source of that.

Maybe, just maybe, Oswald was an informer for the FBI. But obviously the original tip was much flimsier than the way it has been standing in print for the last few years.