

Some

By Lee Winfrey

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The Warren Report is like an old used car: It rattles a lot and the tires are thin, but it's still running.

Ten years after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy the report remains the authoritative account of his death. A decade of criticism has failed to overturn it.

Across the nation, from Fire Island to Wounded Knee, from Haverford, Pa., to Belleville, Mich., some critics remain convinced that the report is a tent of lies, concealing rather than revealing the truth. Sylvia Meagher, Josiah Thompson, Mark Lane, Dr. Cyril Wecht, Dr. E. Forrest Chapman, Bob Smith, Bud Fensterwald and Penn Jones Jr. — these are only a few of the researchers who do not believe that Lee Harvey Oswald "acted alone," as the report asserts, on Nov. 22, 1963, when Kennedy died in Dallas.

Yet a tenth-anniversary review of the Warren Report, including a reassessment of the evidence and interviews with the critics, leaves standing the conclusion that, although some questions remain and some of the report's findings are debatable, no acceptable alternative has been found that explains the assassination better than the report.

THE REPORT IS a vast tableau: 888 pages with 26 volumes of supporting testimony behind it, including interviews with 552 witnesses. It is often microscopically detailed, at one point even offering an analysis of Oswald's pubic hair.

There are holes in it, questions unanswered and wonders that remain. Some of them:

- Who was the Umbrella Man? Why has he never been identified? Was he a co-conspirator?
- Who was the unknown man that the CIA photographed in Mexico City before the assassination and misidentified as Oswald? Was he another plotter?
- Where is the brain of John F. Kennedy? It was not buried with him, but government agencies will not say where it is now. Several physicians who doubt the report believe the brain might show the marks of other bullets besides Oswald's.
- How could one bullet pass through the bodies of two men (Kennedy and John B. Connally, who was then the governor of Texas) and emerge looking virtually like new? Could this bullet be a piece of false evidence that was planted?
- Why should anyone believe a report that apparently was doubted even by President Lyndon B. Johnson, the man who ordered it prepared?

Umbrella Man

Roughly 400 persons were in or around Dealey Plaza, a three-acre park in downtown Dallas, when Kennedy was slain there at 12:30 p.m. on a Friday. The names of more than 250 are known. Of those unknown, the Umbrella Man is the most puzzling.

The dark blue Lincoln limousine carrying Kennedy was fired on as it approached a sign saying "Stemmons Freeway — Keep Right." Standing next to the sign was a man holding an open umbrella.

The sun was shining and the sky was cloudless. Rain had stopped falling almost three hours before. In all the hundreds of photographs taken along the route of Kennedy's motorcade through Dallas, the Umbrella Man is the only person seen with an open umbrella.

In photos taken immediately after the shooting, his umbrella is closed. Several critics of the Warren Report suspect that the opening of his umbrella by the Umbrella Man may have been a signal for the gunfire to commence.

The Umbrella Man was middle-aged, in his late 30s or early 40s, dressed conservatively in a dark suit. He walked away after the assassination and he has never been identified, nor questioned about his puzzling behavior.

The CIA Photos

Oswald, who travelled widely, made his last foreign trip less than two months before the assassination. He was in Mexico City from Sept. 27 until Oct. 2, 1963, vainly applying for a visa to travel to Cuba and Russia.

Four days before the assassination, the FBI received a report on Oswald's visit to the Cuban Embassy in Mexico City. The report included photos, taken by a CIA surveillance camera across the street from the Cuban Embassy on Sept. 27, of a man whom several CIA identified as Oswald.

It obviously is not Oswald. It is an older, heavier man. Queried after the assassination, the CIA said a confidential source inside the embassy had identified the man as Oswald.

The CIA has never learned, or at least never revealed, the man's real identity, nor disclosed exactly how he was misidentified. Critics wonder if he was a secret associate of Oswald, and whether they might have met and plotted while they were both in Mexico City at the same time.

Missing Brain

No physician has seen Kennedy's brain since shortly after the autopsy that was performed on the President the day he died. Two sources who know the whereabouts of all the other assassination evi-

Researchers Insist

dence do not know the whereabouts of the brain.

The National Archives holds virtually all the assassination evidence, including such grim artifacts as Oswald's rifle and the three bullet fragments involved in the case.

Asked about the brain, archivist Marion Johnson said, "We don't have it and I don't know where it is." Burke Marshall, former assistant U.S. attorney general who is now on the faculty of Yale Law School, represents the Kennedy family in matters pertaining to the assassination. Asked about the whereabouts of the brain, Marshall said, "I can't answer that question. I have never asked that question of the family and I do not know."

The Warren Report concludes that both bullets that hit Kennedy came from behind him, from the Texas School Book Depository where Oswald worked. Some critics think that the brain, if it were made available for examination, might show evidence of a shot from the front, from the spot in Dealey Plaza commonly called "the grassy knoll."

That Bullet

The Warren Commission decided that the first bullet that wounded Kennedy struck him in the back, went through his neck, then hit Connally in the back, went through Connally's body and broke his fifth right rib, went through Connally's right wrist where it broke the radius bone, and finally lodged in Connally's left thigh.

By far the most controversial piece of assassination evidence is this bullet, called Exhibit 399 by the Warren Commission and dubbed "the magic bullet" by sarcastic critics. Some of the reasons:

- Although this bullet is supposed to have passed through several layers of skin and broken two bones, it still is in almost per-

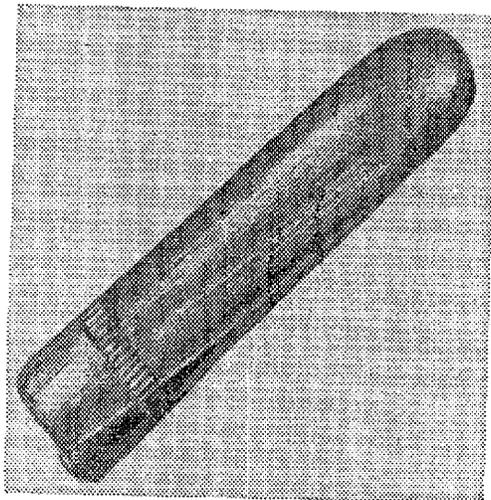


Exhibit 399

fect condition. Test bullets, fired for comparison through the wrist of a cadaver and the chest of a goat, were both mashed up and defaced.

- Despite passing through all this skin and bone — plus two suit coats and two shirts, Kennedy's tie and Connally's sleeve and pants leg — the bullet when found did not have any blood, tissue or threads on it. It was clean.

Unlike the other two bullet fragments involved in the case, Exhibit 399 was not found in the presidential limousine. It was found on a stretcher at Parkland Memorial Hospital, supposedly after falling out of Connally's thigh. Some critics suspect it was a piece of false evidence planted there, possibly by Oswald's assassin, Jack Ruby.

Johnson's Doubts

In a recent issue of the *Atlantic Monthly*, Leo Janos, a former member of President Johnson's staff, quoted Johnson as having said, "I never believed that Oswald acted alone, although I can accept that he pulled the trigger." Janos said Johnson believed that Kennedy was killed in retaliation for an unsuccessful CIA assassination plot against Cuban Premier Fidel Castro.

Johnson's doubts were shared by at least one member of the Warren Commission, the late Sen. Richard B. Russell of Georgia. In 1970, Russell said of Oswald, "I think that someone else worked with him."

SINCE THE WARREN REPORT was issued on Sept. 24, 1964, following a 10-month investigation that cost \$1.8 million, there have been two and possibly three stages in public attitude toward it.

In the first stage, there seemed to be skepticism and doubt, fed by the publication of such critical books as Edward Jay Epstein's "Inquest" and Mark Lane's "Rush to Judgment," both in 1966; and Josiah Thompson's "Six Seconds in Dallas" and Sylvia Meagher's "Accessories After the Fact," both in 1967.

This stage perhaps ended for some in 1969, when a New Orleans jury acquitted Clay L. Shaw on charges brought by District Atty. Jim Garrison that Shaw conspired with Oswald to murder Kennedy.

The case brought by Garrison was widely judged a farce. Although several critics including Ms. Meagher steered clear of Garrison, others including Lane backed the swashbuckling DA. In the fallout following the Shaw trial, there seemed to be public rejection of all Warren Report critics in general.

Now a third stage seems to be coming up. No one, however, is exactly sure of its shape. Part of this quandry is due to the Watergate scandal.

WATERGATE, a great segment of the

Oswald

public has concluded, has manifestly demonstrated that the federal government is quite capable of lying, destroying evidence and obstructing justice. Critics hope that the public will thus be more moved to re-examine the Kennedy case.

There is another side to the Watergate question, however, which cuts the other way. If the Watergate plotters failed so conspicuously to cover up a petty burglary, how can anyone believe that some cabal of plotters against Kennedy could have gotten away with murdering a president in full public view?

Time is now taking away important figures in the case. If anything more was involved than simply Oswald's lone action, soon graves may hold the secret. Already further testimony is no longer available from some figures:

- Two days after the assassination, Dallas nightclub owner Jack L. Ruby shot Oswald fatally, in the basement of the Dallas police station, in a murder seen live on television. On Jan. 3, 1967, Ruby himself died of cancer at age 55 in Parkland Memorial Hospital, the hospital where both Kennedy and Oswald died.

- Abraham Zapruder took perhaps the most famous amateur movie ever made, 22 seconds of silent color film which shows Kennedy being shot. He sold it to Life Magazine for \$150,000 and, except at the Clay Shaw trial, it has not been publicly shown in full, though Life published many frames from it.

Zapruder, who owned a dress shop in a building across the street from the Texas School Book Depository, died of cancer at age 66 in Dallas on Aug. 30, 1970.

- After the assassination, Oswald caught a cab ride home in a taxi driven by William W. Whaley. On Dec. 18, 1965, Whaley was killed in a two-car accident on the Trinity River bridge in Dallas.

- Earlene Roberts was the housekeeper at the rooming house at 1026 N. Beckley St. in Dallas where Oswald lived. In an incident never entirely explained, she testified that after Oswald reached home via Whaley's cab, a Dallas police car pulled up in front of the house, honked its horn several times as though in signal, and slowly drove away.

On Jan. 10, 1966, Mrs. Roberts died of an apparent heart attack at the age of 60.

- Thirteen days before the assassination, a Dallas auto salesman named Albert Guy Bogard gave a demonstration ride to a prospective customer who gave his name as Lee Oswald and said he expected to have money enough to buy a car soon. The Warren Commission subsequently concluded that this was not Lee Harvey Oswald.

On Feb. 14, 1966, St. Valentine's Day, Bogard committed suicide in a cemetery in Hallville, La., by running a hose into his car from the exhaust pipe. He was 41.