

Selected Excerpts, Tape Recording of a Discussion of the Warren Report:
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Participants: Curtis Crawford, Sylvan Fox, Charles Kramer,
Joseph S. Lobenthal, Jr., Sylvia Meagher

Randi Mr. Fox, I'd like to start out, if I may, and say that...I've more than thumbed through this book [The Unanswered Questions About President Kennedy's Assassination]...I've read it with great fascination, and I see all kinds of fascinating things in here that to me were total surprises...What would you consider the most startling thing that has been developed since the Warren Report?

Fox It's hard to pick out one particular thing. I think the whole discussion of the shots, and the direction of the shots, has been one of the most fruitful areas, and a lot of good work has been done in this field.

Randi How complete was the autopsy on the late President?...Was it as complete as it might have been? Was it a rushed-through affair? Were assumptions made about it that shouldn't have been made...and did they really locate the path of the bullets through the body?

Fox This is a tremendous area of confusion. Presumably the autopsy was a reasonably complete autopsy. It was conducted by qualified pathologists. But several things connected with the autopsy are problematical. One of them is the fact that there are no x-rays or photographs of the body available to anyone. They were not available to the public, they were not even available to the Warren Commission itself...No reason that I was able to find was ever given...At one point in the discussion of these x-rays and photographs, Warren asked Dr. Humes...whether he thought that his testimony would be changed by the presentation of these x-rays and photographs. He said it would not be. And at that point Warren dropped the whole subject...they operated without ever having seen the x-rays or photographs, thereby failing to establish precisely where the bullets were...

Crawford I'd like to add a word on that, as clarification. I believe--correct me if I'm wrong--that even the doctors themselves did not see developed photographs. The doctors did see the x-rays, and some of their conclusions are based on having seen the x-rays--for instance, the conclusion that there's no bullet in the body was based primarily on the x-rays...Not only did the doctors not see the photographs, and not only does the Chief Justice indicate...that he did not, but I had occasion to speak to one of the staff counsel, after the Report, whose name I'm not permitted to mention in this case, but he told me that the staff counsel had also not seen them. So as far as he knew, no one on the Commission had seen the photographs.

Fox It's obvious all the way through this thing that the photographs and x-rays... which could have settled once and for all the question of the location of the wounds, and even helped clarify the nature of the wounds, were never made available to anyone. But there's another point here which adds to the confusion. The doctors at Parkland, when they first saw the body...in Dallas...they saw a wound in the throat. When the body was moved to Washington, the doctors there, who performed the autopsy, were unable to detect a wound in the throat for the reason that the wound had been obliterated in the attempt to save the President's life, during the performance of a tracheotomy. So there was no extant wound in the front of the throat at the time that the doctors at Bethesda saw the body. And throughout the performance of the autopsy they were unaware of a wound in the throat. They saw merely the evidence of the tracheotomy.

Randi Didn't they have the evidence of the other doctors?

Fox Not at that point. They finished the autopsy at about 11 o'clock...on the night of the 22nd, unable, apparently, to track the bullets, entirely. Then they called Dallas and spoke to the doctors at Parkland who told them about the wound in the throat, which had been obliterated by the tracheotomy. That was the first time they were aware of the throat wound.

Crawford That is not quite correct...My memory of the situation is that there was speculation as to whether an incision at the throat, which they did see, had hidden a wound or not. Some of them had heard press reports coming from Dallas and there was also speculation at the autopsy...that there was a wound at the throat, and speculation that it might be accounted for by a splinter of a bullet leaving from the skull wound--not from the back wound, because the bullet going into the back wound not hit anything that could splinter it...

Fox Right; right. But you see...when a pathologist performs an autopsy this way, presumably he knows precisely what he is dealing with. He knows there are bullet holes--when a man is shot, he sees a bullet hole; and he is able to examine the...bullet hole and decide what kind it is. These doctors did not have the certainty of this knowledge when they examined the body initially. It was only two hours later that they were actually told that a bullet hole had been in the throat...they called at that time and found out about it.

Kramer Randi, in my work I have occasion to view dozens of autopsy reports, and very rarely will an x-ray be of any value, particularly where the missile...is no longer in the body. I don't think the x-ray would shed very much light. But...it ought to be made clear to the public that this autopsy was done by Commander J. J. Humes, who is the senior pathologist at the Naval Medical Center at Bethesda...and he at the time was assisted by two other pathologists...In answer to the question as to where the point of entry was, his answer is as follows, and I quote: We reached the conclusion that a bullet was fired toward the President from a point above and

behind him, sir. It was his opinion, as well as that of most of the doctors at Parkland Hospital--and I had occasion to read their testimony--that the point of entry was the back, and not the front. Now, it is true that one or two of the doctors at Parkland were initially of the opinion that the point of entry was the front of the neck, but that was before they had an opportunity to explore it... It was the unanimous opinion of the pathologists that there was no point of entry from the front and that the point of entry was from the rear...the back of the head.

Meagher I'd like to comment on the autopsy. The first thing that struck me about it is that it doesn't have a date on it, which I find most astonishing...When the Hearings and Exhibits were published and I read the testimony of Dr. Humes, and the documentation, it appears that he completed the autopsy, he says, on Sunday morning, the 24th, and he burned some preliminary notes he had made, in the privacy of his den, and he then turned all the other papers over to the authorities at the Naval Hospital. And he also wrote some certificates attesting to these facts... certificates that would more appropriately have been written at some time after the events that he was testifying to in those certificates. Another thing that strikes me about the determination by Commander Humes and his colleagues of the nature of the back wound is the exact time that there was consultation between Commander Humes and Dr. Perry at Parkland. It is very interesting to see in Dr. Perry's testimony that he simply cannot disabuse himself of a persistent impression that these telephone contacts were on Friday rather than on Saturday. He is told at one point by Mr. Specter, the examining counsel, that the record "shows" that the telephone calls were on Saturday; and so he accepts it and agrees that his recollections were misleading him. However, the record that purportedly shows when these telephone calls took place is not made available...and I do think it's rather important, because although the Report suggests that a very decisive determination was made about the nature of the wound in the back, and its location, there are some contradictory indications. For one thing, one of the questions put by Dr. Humes to Dr. Perry was whether the doctors at Parkland had made any puncture in the back. And it seems to me that if that wound was so conclusively a wound of entrance..that that is rather a strange question.

Furthermore, there is a very serious conflict between holes in the clothing that correspond to the wound in the back--

Randi...holes in the clothing wouldn't be...deflected, they would be on the outside of the body...I'm just saying I'm glad to see you bring this up...

Crawford...we should try to separate in the medical testimony the facts to which the doctors testified, and the inferences they made...The doctors at Parkland all prepared short handwritten reports of what they saw. These reports are remarkably careful to specify merely what they saw, without making any inferences.

They all say--they use words like "small," "small round wound," "small oval wound," and they give dimensions...7 x 4...They also specify a tremendous scalp wound on the right side of the head. And that's all they specify for wounds in those reports.

Fox This is a very important point...because the descriptive evidence is the evidence of a round, neat hole, in the initial reports...and that indicates an entrance and not an exit wound...

Crawford You are going to the inferences already, and I want to hold back for a while...Just to make the contrast to the autopsy, because...the Parkland doctors were very scrupulous not to include inference with facts, but the autopsy doctors piled inference in every line between...But the descriptive material of the autopsy is that the doctors said there was one round hole...about 14 centimeters below the right mastoid process...And then the autopsy doctors say another small round wound was located in the back of the skull...almost at the base of the skull, to the right. Now, these two small round holes are holes that the autopsy doctors testified to, which were not testified to by the doctors at Parkland...The (autopsy) doctors said that they attempted to penetrate the hole in the back but they did have some difficulty; but from investigation of the parts of the body there, they did find some bruises...on the upper part of the chest cavity...and the bruises to the trachea...They were able to trace bullet fragments going in different directions through the scalp.

Meagher I would just add one thing, Curtis--that some of the handwritten or typewritten reports by the doctors at Parkland specify that the wound in the neck was a small penetrating wound; one of them...said it was thought to be a wound of entrance, and that was fairly specific. I realize that this is inferential, but it is reported in their reports, and therefore the comment in the Warren Report --that the doctors formed no opinion one way or the other, as to exit or entrance--seems to me to be open to question.

Kramer I think, however, whatever the initial description may have been of the wound, the testimony that Dr. Perry and Dr. Carrico both gave...was to the effect that they were of the opinion that the wound on the neck was a point of exit. They went along with the proposition that the point of entry was the back of the head. You must bear in mind that initially these doctors were not concerned with whether it was a point of exit, or entry, or exactly where the wounds as such were