

HC Let's begin with how you came to undertake a study of the (Warren) Report itself...and because the subject is so complex...let's try to keep it as simple as possible for the listening public. Now, what got you started in this? What was your motivation?

EE This is the simplest question...My motivation was simply that a professor asked me to do a thesis on the subject of the Warren Commission ...how seven men had conducted an investigation and written a report. So he asked me to read the 26 volumes and then go out and interview as many lawyers on the Commission staff as possible, and as many members of the Commission as would speak to me. It wasn't motivation on my part. Like everyone else, I had assumed that the Warren Commission had given all the answers in its Report...and my main interest was, exactly how the Commission set up the investigation and wrote the Report.

HC How long did it take you to read the 26 volumes?

EE Two months. I started in February and I was done by the end of March.

HC On a mere reading of the 26 volumes, did you have any doubts as to the total accuracy and verifiability of everything in the Report...?

EE In the 26 volumes...testimony doesn't always gibe, it doesn't always coincide. As the lawyers on the Commission later pointed out, the truth is a very complicated subject. It's really, dealing in probabilities... When I'd read the 26 volumes, I'd seen some problems, but nothing really worried me about the main findings...It wasn't until I began interviewing the lawyers that the focus of my thesis began to change from the mechanics of the Commission to the substance of their report...I spoke with eight lawyers, I think...

HC At what lengths--in what depth--did you talk with them?

EE The interviews varied from maybe 40 or 50 minutes to 2 or 3 days in one case...The depth also varied, depending on how much they wanted to speak with me. Sometimes they confined themselves to mechanics only...

HC Did you find resistance from any of them?

EE Not really...they were all interested in speaking with me, if possible; they assumed it was for a thesis, and they didn't realize--as I didn't realize--that it was going to become the subject of a book a year later.

HC In other words, when you talked with the 8 lawyers, you had not yet been riddled by doubt as to the total accuracy of the Report?

EE No, I really was intrigued by the question of how these lawyers, with very little previous experience, had conducted this mass investigation, and I began to wonder whether it was really an exhaustive investigation, but I didn't have any doubts, no...

HC What made you begin to wonder? What did the attorneys say that led you to wonder?

EE First of all, let me say that all the lawyers...told me that they agreed with the main finding, that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone...It wasn't what the lawyers said...It was that one of the lawyers...gave me his working papers to look at, and some to keep, quite a few papers, maybe a few thousand pages in all, and these papers told me the story of the Commission, the chronology...the mechanics...the memoranda that were circulated among the lawyers. It told me quite a bit, but what I found among the memoranda were two FBI reports that had not been published with the Warren Commission's reports, and these are what caused my doubts, as to the fact that Oswald had acted alone and as to the possibility that some of the evidence somehow had been tampered with.

HC What were these two FBI reports? The substance of them?

EE They were summary reports to President Lyndon Johnson. The Warren Commission wasn't created until a week after the assassination. In the interim, President Johnson asked the FBI to conduct an investigation. They were the only agency investigating, then, for a week after the assassination. And the first report was a summary of their investigation. It was submitted about 3 weeks after the assassination, and the President turned it over--through the Attorney General--to the Warren Commission. The second report was on January 13...a supplemental report of additional information that the FBI wanted to turn over to the Warren Commission. Now, in the reports, the thing that disturbed me most--really, the only thing that disturbed me...it's not like I found hundred of contradictions--it's the only one, and it's the contradiction that's caused all the controversy and made a lot of people very angry with me, but as soon as I opened the FBI report, on the front page, it said that the bullet that struck President Kennedy in the back went in only a finger's length and did not exit through the front of the President, but worked its way out through the point of entry, in the back, when he had heart massage in Dallas. Now, the only thing important here is that the bullet entered below the shoulder,

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according to the FBI report. This immediately struck me, because in the Warren Report they say the bullet entered, not below the shoulder, but in the back of the neck. And this is a very crucial point in the Report, because they say the bullet exited through the throat. If it entered below the shoulder, as the FBI report says it did, then it could not have continued on, following its downward trajectory, this is obvious, and exited through the throat.

So there was a very important contradiction and both FBI reports carried this contradiction; and I just didn't know really how to handle it, in my thesis.

There was a footnote in the FBI report, and the footnote had photographs that had not been published by the Warren Commission, and these photographs were of the President's shirt and jacket, and they showed the bullet hole—again, perfectly consistent with the FBI reports—below the shoulder, about six inches from the top of the collar. It was very hard for me to visualize how a bullet striking six inches below the top of the collar could cause a wound in the back of the neck. It seemed that the FBI was really plausible, and I began to focus my attention on this area, to go back to the 26 volumes and check other evidence. And I found a good deal of other evidence which supported the FBI's assertion.

Now, I never came to a conclusion that the FBI was right, and the Warren Report was wrong.

HC Did you go to somebody in the FBI?

EE No, I didn't go to anybody in the FBI, mainly because the FBI documents were classified when I received them. They had not been released, and I really just didn't have the nerve to call up the FBI and ask them if their classified documents were accurate or not.

HC Yet you used this contradiction as the basis for your book. Now, if you are going to publicize it that way, stirring national controversy, certainly, as a reporter, because this is what you became, at that point, shouldn't you have gone to the FBI immediately?

EE No, that doesn't follow. I took what the FBI had said in their report. Now, whether the FBI was telling the truth or not in their report isn't only ascertainable by speaking to the FBI...

HC How did you ascertain it?

EE I took the other relevant evidence surrounding it, like the shirt, like the autopsy sketch the doctor did, like the still earlier FBI...

HC Granted that that other evidence was relevant, you still get to the question of more direct evidence, and certainly I would think you would go to the FBI, and then, back to the staff of attorneys representing the Warren Commission, and try to reconcile this.

EE I had my research assistant call the FBI, this was after the book was published, but I had him call and ask them about this contraction--mainly because a number of reporters had called them and had been unable to get an answer. And the FBI of course said that they stand by their reports, that the reports were accurate, but that the doctors changed their decision.

I don't want to give you the idea that they thought the doctors changed their decision for any sinister reason--they said the doctors changed their decision because they found additional information in Dallas, after the autopsy was completed--let me give you the chronology of this.

The autopsy was done on the night of November 22nd, the night of the assassination. Two FBI men, Sibert and O'Neill, were present in the room. They prepared a report and submitted it a few days later. Now, what the FBI now says--and this is also in the Warren Report--is that after the autopsy, the next day, the doctors found out that there had been a hole in the throat. Now this hole was obliterated by a tracheotomy performed in Dallas before the autopsy, when they were trying to prolong the President's life. When they learned about the wound in the throat, the doctors changed their opinion; and the FBI reports didn't reflect (this is what the FBI says, not what I say) and the FBI reports didn't reflect the change of opinion that the doctors made.

Now I think this might explain why there was a path...why the FBI reports say--and I just read a gruesome FBI report made on the night of the assassination--that the end of the wound could be felt with the finger, but later they say the bullet went clear through the body. That would explain that.

But it would not explain how a wound that was originally supposed to be below the shoulder turned into a wound in the rear of the neck. Because a wound doesn't change its location because of additional information--I mean, you can change your deductions about a wound, whether it went through the body or not, on the basis of additional information, but because the doctors learned of another wound--obviously, the wound wouldn't have changed from below the shoulders to the back of the neck. And the FBI still hasn't given a satisfactory explanation.

HC And the FBI...

EE I just want to say--you say I didn't call the FBI...The New York Times called the FBI when my book came out, and the Detroit News, the Los Angeles Times, the Washington Post--and the New York Times got a very definite "No Comment," and the other papers got a very ambiguous reply from the FBI ...and so calling the FBI to ask them whether their report is accurate or not --I mean, when you call the FBI you get a public relations man, a man from

their office of public relations, who generally says just what they told my research assistant, "I stand behind the report," and "I also stand behind the Warren Report"...so if there is a contradiction, it must be explained by some change of decision.

What I put down in my book was simply that there was a contradiction. Let me explain this a little further: What I thought was important was not the fact that there was a contradiction but the fact that the Warren Commission had never resolved the contradiction. This was the important thing as far as I was concerned.

HC Here is the point I was leading up to. Let's leave the FBI for the moment. You learned of the contradiction through some pages given to you by one of the Warren Commission attorneys. Did you go right back to him with this apparent contradiction?

EE Yes, I went right back to him. What you have to understand is that the lawyers were compartmentalized into different areas, and the autopsy wasn't in his area, and he simply said that he didn't know a great deal about the autopsy. If there was a contradiction, it was very possible the FBI report was wrong.

So I went to speak to three other lawyers—one was Philadelphia's district attorney, Arlen Specter. First I went to Francis Adams, who was the senior lawyer in the area, but he had only spent very little time, because he had another law case at the time. He said he was only acting as a consultant, and he only spent a small amount of time, and he said the main work was handled by his assistant, Arlen Specter, who at that time was running for district attorney...So I went to Philadelphia and I asked Arlen Specter about it, and he gave me an answer which I put verbatim in my book. His answer was that the FBI men were present at the autopsy, and they ran out in the midst of the autopsy to make a telephone call, and at that time the doctors discovered the path. It's true that one of the FBI men did go out to make a telephone call, that's in another autopsy report, but I'm not sure that they then discovered the path...But I did put exactly what Specter told me in the book. And I also went back to J. Lee Rankin for a second time and asked him about it—I didn't deal specifically with this question, I had a number of questions...

HC All right, Ed: Now, you're familiar with the piece written in the recent

LOOK magazine by Fletcher Knebel. In that piece he says (we are now talking about the bullet hole in the back): "Epstein is also guilty of seemingly small but important errors. An example is provided by Kennedy's jacket and shirt...Both show bullet holes in the back, and Epstein argues that they are too low to permit the bullet...to exit from the throat, as the Bethesda autopsy report states. He is entitled to his opinion, which is essential to his theory that there may have been two assassins. But in stating his case, he deceives the reader...The Commission quite fully discussed the jacket and shirt holes, gave measurements (on page 92 of the Report) drawn from the examination of FBI agent Robert A. Frazier, a ballistics expert.

"Furthermore, the Commission cited Frazier accurately, which Epstein does not do. The Commission said, as did Frazier, that the bullet hole measurements were from the top of the collar. Epstein, in the case of both the jacket and shirt, says below the collar, thus gaining at least an inch in his argument against the Commission. A mere inch may seem a small thing over which to quibble with Epstein, but his entire case involves fractions of feet, and fractions of seconds. In this instance Epstein is trying to prove that a bullet shot from above could not enter Kennedy's back at the designated point and exit from the throat because the point on the back is lower than the throat wound. A Commission photo disputes the point by reconstructing the probable angle."

What do you say?

EE Well, I can tell you, simply, what Mr. Knebel did not say in his article, and that is that, it's not that I say where the bullet entered the shirt--I show where the bullet entered...I say the pictures show where the bullet entered the shirt...I say 5 and 7/8 inches below the collar, and right next to it, I show the pictures of the shirt, and the jacket...showing exactly where the bullet entered. Now, of course, I should have been more specific and said from the top of the collar--but I wasn't trying to deceive the reader, because I show the pictures, right where the bullet entered, and I refer the reader right there to the pictures.

The Commission never published these pictures. The first I had seen these pictures was in the FBI report. Now, it's true that the Commission somewhere in the 26 volumes or in the Report says that the hole was 5 and 7/8ths inches below the shirt collar, but they don't show the picture and 5 and 7/8th inches is a very abstract measurement...

HC So that our listeners don't get lost in this, and we established the inordinate complexity of the subject at the top of the show, and you yourself are intimately familiar with the complexity, let's establish for our listeners why this is so important. It led you to a theorem concerning the assassination --is this not so? What is your theorem?

EE It's really--and I can't take credit for it, because this is really the Commission's theory--developed not by the members of the Commission but by the lawyers--and that theory says, in a nutshell, that Kennedy and Connally were both hit by the same bullet.

Now there were three bullets fired. The third bullet can be seen--there's a film of the assassination made by one Abraham Zapruder, an amateur 8 mm. film and this film shows the sequence of events--Now the third shot, which hits the President in the head can be seen on the film, so there's no problem with that. But the first two shots--you just see both men reacting, but you can't tell when they reacted. So the Commission was trying to determine when they were hit, from the film, and what they found out was that Kennedy and Connally were hit very close together. In fact, the maximum time between the two hits was 1.8 seconds.

Now the reason that this figure is important is that they also found out that the rifle cannot be shot twice in less than 2.3 seconds, and this was because the rifle bolt could not be operated in less than 2.3 seconds --it was a bolt-action rifle. So the Commission lawyers came up with the theory--or really, the fact--that Kennedy and Connally were both shot in less time than the rifle could be fired twice.

Now, they saw two possibilities. One, that there was a second rifleman. The second possibility was that they were both hit by the same bullet. And they developed the theory then that both Kennedy and Connally were hit by the same bullet...the only theory that explains the assassination in terms of one assassin, acting alone. If you get them hit by separate bullets, then you really have to consider the possibility of a second assassin, because of this time bind.

HC That's perfectly clear, and I think will be clear to our listeners. Now, why was it impossible, as you see it, for both men--the late President and the Governor of Texas--to have been struck by the same bullet?

EE It's only impossible if the FBI reports are accurate. If the FBI reports are erroneous, and if some other evidence is explained, then it's possible that they were hit by the same bullet. But what I said in my book was that if the FBI report is accurate--and I still believe that most of the evidence strongly supports the FBI reports--then the bullet that struck Kennedy did not go through his body. It struck him below the shoulder and it just went in barely below the surface. In that case, Connally was seated in front of Kennedy--in other words, Kennedy was between Connally and the assassin's line of fire--so that a bullet striking Kennedy that didn't go through his body obviously couldn't go on to hit Connally. Therefore they must have been hit by separate bullets.

In other words--if the FBI report is right when it says that the bullet struck Kennedy below the shoulder, then the Warren Report's entire theory of a single assassin is on very shaky ground.

HC All right, I think we have now related all the information so that the question of where the bullet entered, what happened to it, now makes sense, at least in terms of our discussion. Nobody here is agreeing with you or disagreeing with you, you understand that.

EE No, the thing to remember here is that I am not talking for myself, that I developed this theory--the Commission lawyers developed the theory, which was that Kennedy and Connally were hit by the same bullet. Now that theory was contradicted by the FBI reports, and this contradiction was never resolved by the Warren Commission--either in favor of the Commission lawyers, or in favor of the FBI.

So when the Warren Report went to press, and ten months later when I did my thesis, there was still an unresolved contradiction. And that was the thing really that I was saying in my book--that by leaving an unresolved contradiction in their findings, the Commission left wide open the possibility of a second assassin. I am not saying that I believe there was a second assassin, or that the FBI believes there was a second assassin. I'm just saying that by leaving it unresolved, they give grounds to all the speculation about the possibility.

HC All right. Now I'm going to place you squarely on the spot. Fletcher Knebel in his article in LOOK said, "Then we started to check some of Epstein's statements. We soon became convinced that Epstein was guilty of the very sins of which he accused the Warren Commission."

"Distortion--ignoring testimony--sifting the evidence, and adroitly selecting it to fit his theories and assumptions. At the worst, Epstein has written a dangerously deceptive book. At the best, he is guilty of precisely what he lays at the door of the Warren Commission--a superficial investigation."

Your answer?

EE Well, there's a difference between the method of a police reporter like Mr. Knebel and the method that I used in preparing a thesis...I based my work on documents. I'll just give you an example.

I quoted a lawyer on the Commission, one of his memoranda, which said that a newspaper report in Texas named Alonzo Hudkins had informed the Secret Service that he had heard from Allan Sweatt, a Dallas (Sheriff's) chief of criminal investigation, that Oswald was on the FBI payroll. And I put this in the book--I quoted straight from the memorandum in the lawyer's file.

Well, Knebel saw this and he decided to call the reporter...Alonzo Hudkins. He called him...and Hudkins told Knebel that he never spoke to the Secret Service, that he never said this about the FBI, and that the whole thing was a fabrication. So Knebel said in his article that he actually checked out what I had quoted from a second-hand source--a Commission memorandum --and he found that I was mistaken.

Now, after Knebel's piece came out, someone leaked the document out of the National Archives--Secret Service report No. 767, which I have and which I sent to Fletcher Knebel afterwards, which actually says that Hudkins requested an interview with the Secret Service man, I think his name is Bartlett, that he went into the Secret Service office, and that he gave this information--that Oswald was receiving \$200 a month, that he had an FBI number, S172, that Hudkins' source was this Dallas chief (deputy sheriff) Allan Sweatt, and everything that I say in my book.

The point I'm making is simply that people don't always tell you the truth when you interview them. When Knebel called up Hudkins, he obviously didn't tell Knebel the truth. He obviously did speak to the Secret Service; add Knebel's way of checking things out, by calling people and asking them, isn't always the best way of finding out facts.

I really respect Knebel in a lot of ways; and the main difference is that he gave me parity with the Commission. He said that I didn't do the job the Commission should have done. He said, it's true the Commission didn't interview this witness, but neither did Epstein. This was the whole tone of

his article; that I didn't find the answer to the assassination. He winds up with a quote from Allan Dulles, that I didn't produce a second assassin.

Well, I never started out to do an investigation of the assassination --I couldn't have done it. I had no resources to do it. I wouldn't have even thought of doing it. What I did was something much simpler--I did an investigation of an investigation. It's not a very difficult matter to see how "deep" the Commission's investigation was. It would have been an impossible matter to try to reconstruct the Commission's investigation and try and find out the answers myself.

Knebel assumed that I was doing an investigation into the assassination of Kennedy, which I wasn't doing, so that what he considers superficial aspects of my "investigation" simply stem from a difference of opinion about what I should have been doing. Professor Andrew Hacker, who asked me to do this thesis, and myself, never envisaged a thesis where I would actually start investigating leads.

HC I understand. In fairness to you, because I have quoted Fletcher Knebel, there is an introduction to the book (Inquest) by Richard H. Rovere, who is a most distinguished columnist, as you know, for the NEW YORKER magazine, he is their Washington columnist. And he writes in the introduction to the book, "The day the Warren Report was issued the American press should have begun to do what Mr. Epstein has done--it should have cast a very cool eye on the report and sought to learn from those who prepared it how it was prepared, who did the heavy work, and what individual workers thought of the collective product. Mr. Epstein's scholarly tools happen to be those employed day in and day out by journalists, but the press left it to a single scholar to find the news." I cite that quotation to be fair to you, Edward; and I myself take no stand on this--I find it much too complex, and it's impossible for me today, with all the reading I've done on the subject, to form a judgment.

I am trying to get as much information out of you as I can, you understand that?

EE Yes; I'm unable to form a judgment myself. I never form conclusions in the book for the simple reason that it's such a complex business--the entire questions about bullets and shirts and holes...I think Dwight Macdonald pointed out that evidence isn't like marbles which you just arrange and see a picture. Every time you change the position with respect to another piece of evidence, the evidence itself changes. It's a terribly complex thing.

The only thing I tried to go into was the question of whether the Commission itself conducted the type of investigation that would leave no doubts, no stones unturned.

HC Are you now convinced that the Warren Commission did conduct a superficial investigation?

EE Well, superficial isn't the word I would use, because in a lot of areas the Commission conducted a very thorough investigation. But what I think is the threshold question, the only question that has real meaning, is whether the Commission precluded the possibility that there was a second assassin helping Oswald. If the Commission did preclude this possibility, then Oswald did it alone--all the other questions and speculations really become irrelevant, no one really cares about anything else as long as Oswald did it alone.

On the other hand, if this possibility remains open--that there's a second assassin--then it gives grounds to all sorts of speculation, much of which is very damaging to the coherence of American life. I think it could raise all sorts of problems. So I think it was very important that the Commission should have settled this doubt, whether Oswald acted alone or not, and the Commission never did settle this.

HC So at the very least, without charging the Warren Commission with having conducted a "superficial" investigation, you do charge the Warren Commission very directly with a very great omission.

EE Yes, I do.

HC Okay. Now, do you think there was a second assassin?

EE Well, common sense tells me "no." I mean, it's hard for me to envisage that there's some second assassin running around the country, even though many strange things do happen--like in Truman Capote's "In Cold Blood," there were these two people. And I can imagine that a second madman was with Oswald--in other words, I wouldn't be shocked to death if there was a second assassin. But the question--the real question--is that the Commission has set up a problem of time, from the film of the assassination, which seems to show that one man could not have fired the shots alone.

I just can't conceive of a second assassin, and yet, if you just take the Commission's analysis of the evidence, you come up with the conclusion that there was a second assassin. The problem is, of course, whether the Commission--and I know how much time they spent on this evidence--very little time--and I don't mean just the members of the Commission, I mean the staff lawyers working in this area spent very little time--then I wonder whether the Commission's whole analysis of the evidence is so above doubt that we could follow this analysis to a second assassin. It's quite possible that something entirely different happened, that the lawyers didn't realize--that Oswald was at a different window, or something like that...I wouldn't say that I had proved that there was a second assassin, or that the Commission has proved that there was a second assassin, or that there is a second assassin. I just think that the possibility is still open.

HC Now, with regard to a second assassin, you alluded to a witness named Rowland, right?

EE No; I didn't refer to him with regard to a second assassin.

HC But he said that, looking up in the window--

EE He saw a second person.

HC A second person...that relates to the possibility of a second assassin.

EE No; I never made that connection.

HC I'm not saying you did--but Mr. Knebel does! in writing about your own discrepancies in your book, is this true or not true?

EE Yes, Knebel cites Rowland as some sort of important witness, when in my book he's mentioned I think only three times, and he's not at all an important witness. I mean, he had nothing to do with the actual case I'm exploring.

HC But in effect Knebel charges you with saying that Rowland was one evidence of establishing that a second person was on the scene, because he had testified to seeing a second person; and he said you attribute Rowland with authenticity without investigation, whereas the Commission and the FBI

both discredit him, the credibility of Rowland as a witness. Is this true?

EE It's true that Knebel says that, exactly as you quote him, but I don't see how he could say that when he says he's read the book, read it two or three times, because it's very clear that I say is that I was going into the reasons why the Commission discovered no new evidence. And I said that one reason why the Commission discovered no new evidence in their hearings was that they tended to discount evidence that was not previously given in FBI reports. And the example I gave—I said, for example—I gave Arnold Rowland. Rowland gave them some new evidence. He saw a second person. I wasn't making any point about that being a second assassin. He simply said he saw a second person and the Commission itself gave the reason why they discounted this. And I quoted one of the three reasons, and I said, partly because Arnold Rowland had never given this testimony before in the FBI reports. I used a direct quote from the Commission.

Now, what Knebel said—he ignored that I had said "partly because," and he tried to make it look as if I had said "the main reason" or the "only reason"—and then he cited that there was another reason: that Rowland's general credibility (and general credibility's an interesting question in itself)...(because it involves not what the witness saw on the day of the assassination, but when you look back at his life...

HC It involves his general reputation, his character...

EE That's true...It's very interesting, because a witness says he saw someone who could possibly have relevance to the case...This witness, Arnold Rowland, was correct in many other details. For example, he's the only witness who identified the rifle before the rifle was found as a rifle with a telescopic sight. He said that he had seen it in the window. So he's a fairly accurate observer. Yet the Commission was right in saying, when they had checked into his past, that he tended to exaggerate about himself. He said that he had mostly A's when in fact he only had 40 percent A's; he said that his IQ was 140 when it was in fact only 129; but the exaggerations were about himself.

Now, what do you do with a witness like this? Do you reject what he says because he tends to exaggerate about himself?

HC Are you establishing, then, the general proposition--to keep this discussion as orderly and clear as we can--in the face of the complexity of the subject--are you seeking to establish that the Warren Commission did in fact ignore potentially--I use that word measuredly--potentially important witnesses?

EE Well, I don't know...I have not studied law, and I don't know what you do about the problem of, as you say, a witness' general credibility. When you have the problem that a witness gives you evidence that conflicts with other evidence you have, what the Commission tended to do was to look back into their general background, reputation, everything else...

HC Certainly this is understandable...certainly you understand that through all the centuries of common law, and later, statutory law development, it has been an unchanging pattern that a person who is not to be relied upon for truth, generally, throughout his lifetime, is not to be relied upon for truth in a specific case. You can understand this.

EE Yes, I understand it, and this is one of the reasons I say, and I still stand by it, that the Commission did not find new evidence--because when they did find evidence that was potentially new evidence, they looked back into the witness's general credibility--or into, every witness that appeared before the Commission had given an FBI report--and they found, if it was new, obviously by definition it could not have been in the earlier FBI report--therefore they tended to reject it, that's all I was saying. With this type of bias, and it is a historical bias--I agree with you--and it's probably a practical bias because in English common law...the problem isn't the same as the problem the Commission had--usually they're trying to find "beyond a reasonable doubt" whether someone did something. Well, the Commission was faced not with finding beyond a reasonable doubt, but finding definitively, whether Oswald acted alone. That was their charge--perhaps it was an impossible charge, maybe no one could do it.

HC Do you feel that the Chief Justice imposed an impossible deadline upon the staff and its investigation?

EE I think there was an impossible deadline imposed upon the Commission. I don't know whether the Chief Justice imposed it on the staff or did not in turn have it imposed on him...

HC Let me ask you how long they took to conduct the investigation, I mean, what was the time involved?

EE Well, the assassination was on November 22nd. The lawyers arrived in Washington, the lawyers who were going to conduct the investigation, in mid-January. Because of the Ruby trial, and because the lawyers had to read the material in the FBI files, it took them until March 15th before the field investigation began. Now, the deadline was June 1st. That left about 10 weeks for the investigation itself. And as a number of lawyers didn't show up, it turned out that there were very few lawyers, conducting a very impossible investigation, in a very short time; and of course the deadline was extended--but it was extended for writing the report, and not for more investigations. A number of lawyers actually went against the orders of J. Lee Rankin and actually went to Dallas on their own...

HC So in effect you also charge that it is prima facie true that there was not a sufficiency of time to conduct an exhaustive investigation that would have definitively answered all questions?

EE Yes, exactly.

HC So that this would be the fault of Government, either within the Commission or at the Presidential level?

EE Yes; I think the lawyers and staff--a number of them, at least--did all that was humanly possible. They worked 60, 70 hours a week.

HC By the way, do you think Lee Harvey Oswald was a paid informant of the FBI?

EE No...I know of no evidence that he was a paid informer of the FBI. I have no reason to believe--anything is possible--but I have no reason to believe he was a paid informer. Now, what I dealt with in the book was that the Commission received the charge that Oswald was a paid informer--they received it from the attorney general of Texas, Waggoner Carr, and the district attorney of Dallas, Henry Wade. And this caused an emergency meeting of the Commission.

And I described this emergency meeting in detail.

HC And is there any record in the Report of the Commission immediately sending to Mr. J. Edgar Hoover to check out the charge?

EE Yes; there is a record.

HC And what does that record state?

EE The Commission at their meeting--Senator Russell and Senator Cooper did not want to have J. Edgar Hoover check out the charge against the FBI because they felt that the Commission should independently check out this charge. And Chief Justice Warren agreed with them, at the meeting, which was January 27th. However, on January 28th, J. Lee Rankin went over to J. Edgar Hoover and gave him the charge, and asked J. Edgar Hoover to check it out. Well, Hoover simply got affidavits from all the FBI men who could possibly have had contacts with Oswald, and they all submitted affidavits that Oswald was not a paid informer.

But the actual source of the rumor, who was this reporter I mentioned earlier, Alonzo Hudkins, was never called by the Commission--he was never questioned by the FBI, the Secret Service--

HC Why wouldn't the Commission invade the ledgers, the bookkeeping records, and so on, of the FBI? subpoena them and examine them? Because if an informer is getting paid, it must be recorded somewhere, must it not?

EE Well, the FBI offered to make these records available to the Commission, but Chief Justice Warren--and this is in the record--refused because he thought that the records of the FBI might contain national security information and he didn't want to have these records brought over to--

HC This is the point I wanted to bring out. I mean, the FBI, Mr. Hoover, had no objection whatsoever to opening all records to the Commission.

EE Not according to the record, no.

HC Right. And certainly there is no disposition on your part, or any reasoning person's part, to believe that the FBI was seeking to keep this a secret if it existed in fact? in the wake of the national crisis created by the President's assassination?

EE No; the point I was making in the book was not anything to do with the FBI but that when the Commission had a charge, they tended to take the path of least resistance and give it to the FBI to answer, in fear that they might find some substance to it.

HC I understand.

EE That's my own speculation.

HC That's your speculation; and it has to be just a speculation--one that would not be popular with a great number of people in this country, you understand that.

EE Yes; well...

HC But you're willing to live by your own academic research and scholastic evaluations?

EE Well, I didn't write the book for a popular audience, I wrote it for one professor...so I have to live with it now.

HC I understand that, Edward. Now, earlier in the show we started to talk about the bullets, and where one bullet actually entered the President's body. And you talked about an autopsy report the next day. Right?

EE Yes.

HC Is it your conviction that this report was altered? by the doctors in Texas, in that hospital?

EE The hospital was in Washington, and they were Naval doctors.

HC Correction, Bethesda, Maryland, I'm sorry.

EE First the President was brought to a Dallas hospital, and then he was brought to Bethesda, Maryland...Now, you see, I really don't have convictions on that question, it's a very difficult question, and what it really again goes back to is the FBI report. If the FBI report is accurate, then the doctors certainly changed their opinion sometime after the original autopsy.

HC Let's again draw the distinction between the original autopsy, what it said, and the subsequent autopsy.

EE There was only one autopsy.

HC I understand that, but the original autopsy as you would have produced it.

EE Well, if the FBI report is accurate--let me just formulate it in these terms--then the autopsy report published in the Warren Report must have been a different autopsy than actually came out of the examination of the President's body. Now, Fletcher Knebel has some interesting information in his article. He interviewed three of the Commission lawyers and one of the doctors on this very question--I mean, he sent my book to them and asked them about it. And the doctors told him that they did change--at least, he says so in the article--that they changed their mind the next day, which is contrary to what the Warren Report says. But as I said earlier, that really doesn't explain all the things in the FBI report. The FBI report is quite detailed and it gives a completely different version of the autopsy. Now I don't think this is really a question--you asked me whether my conviction was that the autopsy report was changed, and I must admit that from my book it seems that I lean toward this conviction--but I just don't think that this question has to be the subject of speculation, because there are photographs of the autopsy--at the

time of the autopsy, they took photographs of the President's body, and these photographs would show exactly where the bullets entered. Now, if they show a bullet wound in the back of the neck, where the later autopsy report says it is, then quite obviously any implication in my book that the autopsy was changed would be wrong. On the other hand, if these pictures show the bullet hole below the shoulders, then the autopsy report has been changed.

HC Now, why in the name of logic and reason would some of the most distinguished Americans in this country in their respective fields, which is law and justice, seek to suppress or omit to find evidence?

EE Well, this is a very interesting question, and there's a very short answer to it--the members of the Commission never saw the photographs of the autopsy. The lawyers, who investigated for the Commission, never saw the photographs of the autopsy. In fact, no one has ever seen the photographs of the autopsy. And the photographs exist. And that's the fascinating part--that this entire question over which there's this controversy really could be settled by having the Warren Commission look at the photographs. You asked me why the Commission didn't look at the photographs, and I have to answer, "I don't know." Maybe they weren't give access to the photographs; maybe they simply felt that it wasn't a matter of (good) taste to look at the photographs; I just don't know the real answer to that...But there's an article in the (Greater) Philadelphia Magazine which says that Arlen Specter, who was investigating this area, was practically in tears because he could not get the photographs to work with. Because in any legal case, as you said, the way you start out is to look at the photographs of the autopsy--especially when there's a contradiction between the FBI and the autopsy doctors as to where the bullet went in--you simply look at the photographs and you resolve the contradiction right there. And that's what I mean--that it's sort of futile to speculate as to where the bullet entered.

HC Why couldn't we get to look at the photographs?

EE I just don't know. I just know from the lawyers on the Commission and some people I've spoken to after my book came out, people that had a fairly close--

HC The photographs still exist?

EE The photographs exist.

HC Where are they now physically?

EE I don't know. All I know is that after the autopsy the photographs were turned over to the White House and to the Secret Service protective research division. From that point on...they're not in the national archives...they have not entered the Commission's record...Chief Justice Warren said recently, when he was asked about my book, that all the files of the Commission were turned over to the national archives--and that's true. And the photographs were not turned over to the archives; therefore, the photographs are not part of the Commission's record; and why they weren't part of the Commission's record, and why the Commission didn't look at them, I don't know...There's probably a good reason, I'm not trying to say that these people didn't do it for a good reason, I just don't know the reason.

HC What did Fletcher Knebel say about that?

EE Well, he didn't mention it in his article. He was really doing a critique of my book rather than an investigation of the subject.

HC Do you find that people, now that your book is out, people who are aware of what you have written, the doubts you may have raised in some people's minds in this country--do you find that people now look at you a little bit askance? Maybe they don't like the doubts that you have created?

EE To tell you the truth, I find a much more constructive attitude. I'm talking about professors at Harvard, and people in the government--people like Richard Goodwin who has recently written a review of my book in Book Week which caused quite a stir because he asked for a new--

HC You're talking about people of intellect, who face all their lives the quest, on an academic level, for truth. I'm talking about the man in the street.

EE I don't think the man in the street likes to have doubts, but at the same time I don't think the American public has to be treated like children...that's just my own speculation, but I think that they could face up to the problem that the Commission might not have conducted an exhaustive investigation. I think if they want to believe that the Commission conducted an exhaustive investigation, they'll believe it despite my book--I don't think my book is going to change their mind.

HC I understand. I hope that under any circumstances we were able to present this terribly, terribly serious and complex subject in your book in a way that the people could reasonably grasp and ponder for themselves. Edward, thank you for coming by.

EE Thank you very much, Mr. Cosell.