

When the former Governor of Texas, John B. Connally, died recently the burning unresolved questions still surrounding the assassination of President John F. Kennedy surfaced in the world's news again, if only for a few days. John Connally was riding in the same limousine as President Kennedy on November 22nd 1963 in Dallas when those fateful rifle shots rang out over Dealey Plaza. He was struck by a bullet (or bullets) at the same time Kennedy was being fired at.

Many voices in the United States were raised asking the US Government, and specifically the Department of Justice as being responsible for the FBI, to recover the bullet fragments still lodged in John Connally's body. Foremost among those voices was that of Harold Weisberg, author and longtime critic of the official report on the assassination written by the Warren Commission (appointed by President Johnson and enjoined to 'leave no stone unturned' in its search for the truth.) Weisberg is well known in the United States as the individual who took on the might of the US Federal Government through the courts in a number of lawsuits lodged under the Freedom of Information Act to get access to 'secret' official documents relating to the assassination. To date he has succeeded in obtaining copies of about a third of a million once secret official records, from minutes of the secret sessions held by the Warren Commission to files of the FBI whose responsibility it had been to investigate the assassination.

Weisberg has written seven books dealing with the assassination and its aftermath, and he has just finished his eighth, titled Never Again! The Government JFK Assassination Conspiracy. Unlike many authors on this subject who have either attempted to undertake their own investigations or who have resorted to theories and speculation in trying to unravel the many mysteries surrounding the assassination, Weisberg has concerned himself only with what is a matter of public record and can be shown to be indisputably factual. In one of his many lawsuits (for the recovery of the assassination records of the FBI's Dallas and New Orleans offices) the FBI acknowledged in court that Weisberg knew more about the assassination than anybody in the FBI, truly unique credentials for a private person. The information contained in the following story was all obtained from Harold Weisberg by Dal McCuirk, an Auckland teacher and military historian, who shares Weisberg's concern and interest in the JFK assassination and who has carried on a heavy correspondence with Weisberg on this subject. Some parts of what follows come straight from Weisberg's new book, not yet published.

As soon it was reported John Connally had died Harold Weisberg wrote to the US US Attorney General asking that moves be made to recover the bullet fragments and to have them weighed, measured and tested by neutron activation analysis, "in the national interest" and in order "to avoid a new flood of conspiracy theories about the assassination". The Justice Department did not respond to these requests, and the body of John Connally was duly buried with the bullet fragments still *in situ*, where they had been for nearly thirty years.

Weisberg makes the point that central to the controversy over the fate of the fragments in Connally's body is the fate of the official theory of the assassination itself. Connally suffered five wounds in three different parts of his body and bullet fragments remained in all three locations. Which bullet? We still do not know for sure. The finding of the Warren

official

conclusion

Commission, blaming one lone assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, stands or falls on their explanation of what happened to the three bullets acknowledged by the Commission to have been fired at Kennedy. One shot missed, hitting the kerb near the triple underpass at the edge of Dealey Plaza (the commission at first tried to ignore this missed shot but it was too widely known about and it had to be counted). Another shot was the fatal one which hit the President in the brain. This scenario, with just three bullets to account for, now left only one bullet to have caused all the other wounds, to Kennedy and to Connally.

Secret non-fatal

The Warren Commission, the FBI and the Secret Service, all had different theories on how the President had been killed. (The FBI and the Secret Service, while both acknowledging the Commission's explanation was impossible, disagreed with each other on how it may have happened, but only in secret!). The official version adopted by the Commission centred around the so-called magic bullet, Commission Exhibit 399, a 6.5mm bullet fired by an Italian Model 1938 WWII Mannlicher-Carcano military surplus rifle (known to weapons experts as 'Mussolini's contribution to humanitarian warfare' for its poor killing characteristics). This bullet, in its near pristine condition, is held by the Commission to have entered the President's neck from the rear high on the right shoulder, passing downwards through his neck without striking any bone, exiting through his shirt collar and tie, and then, at a speed greater than sound, executed manoeuvres like nothing in science or mythology, turning sharply downwards to the right to enter Connally's chest under his right armpit and smashing four inches of his fifth rib before coming out under his right nipple, from there dipping sharply downward to smash the heavy bones in his right wrist, after which partially exhausted, it penetrated his left thigh just under the skin where it came to a stop after about three inches. This theory, and only this version, can hope to show how one bullet was responsible for Kennedy's non-fatal wounds and for all of Connally's wounds. This fantastic theory was the brainchild of Arlen Specter, an experienced lawyer put in charge of investigating that part of the Commission's work, and now a Senator from Pennsylvania.

The Shooting

Specter developed his theory around the idea that this bullet somehow lurked hidden in Connally's thigh until that moment when it could sneak itself under the mattress of a gurney (mobile hospital trolley for transporting patients) and then fall out later when the gurney was pushed against a hospital corridor wall. No evidence was ever produced that connected this particular gurney where the bullet was found with Connally. This bullet, found in near pristine condition, with almost no distortion and little if any loss of its weight, when examined later by the FBI was found to have been wiped clean of any surface residues of human blood and tissue or traces left by fibres of clothing material that may once have been there. This strange fact was never explained by the FBI, or followed up by the Commission.

The US Government had its chance to resolve at least some of the mysteries surrounding the 'magic' bullet in the late 1970s when the House of Representatives set up a special committee to study the investigations of the JFK and Martin Luther King assassinations. Unfortunately this committee became mired in affirming the official assassination mythologies, and a chance to get at the truth was lost. Even so, the testimony of some of the

committee's expert witnesses pointed up parts of the official coverup that had not been public knowledge before.

The committee engaged one Dr Vincent Guinn, a respected authority on neutron activation analysis (an advanced technique for identifying specimens with each other or establishing no connection with each other) to carry out its tests. Weisberg used a friend of some twenty-five years standing, the Washington Post Pulitzer ~~Post~~ reporter George Lardner, to ask Guinn if he had validated his specimens of bullet fragments said to have been removed from Connally's wrist and JFK's head.

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Guinn had testified on Friday, September 9th, 1978 and the essence of his testimony was correctly encapsulated in the Washington Post's headline on Lardner's next day story: "New Tests Said to Match Fragments in Kennedy, Connally". This indicated they had a common origin, but, they did not in the historical context of what was assumed about their origins! When Lardner had a chance to ask Guinn about his validation of the fragments in relation to the earlier FBI analysis, the truth emerged which was the exact opposite to what the government was saying. Guinn's tests had only confirmed the specimens he had been given had themselves a common origin.

Guinn's tests however created a new mystery. He told Rothian (a member of the committee), "the fragments which the FBI had tested in 1964 have all disappeared" (emphasis added). When Guinn examined in his Irvine California laboratory the fragments supposedly taken from Kennedy and Connally he found that they did not contain any of the specific pieces the FBI had tested earlier. "Where they are I have no idea", Guinn said.

Floyd/i

Guinn also told Lardner the weights of the official specimens and those he had been given were different. To cap this incredible situation, Guinn further said he had been assured by the US National Archives, the custodians of the evidence, that what it handed to him was all that had been recovered from Connally's wrist! The significance of this will become clearer as you read on.

That there is a fragment in Connally's left thigh was admitted by the Commission which also downplayed it. But when in Dallas on March 23rd 1964 Arlen Specter deposed the Parkland Hospital doctor in charge of Connally's medical care, George Shires, he testified that there was also a fragment of bullet left in Connally's chest. Specter did not bother to bring Dr Shires to Washington to testify before the Commission, neither did he bother the Commission with the information about this additional bullet fragment in Connally's body.

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According to the FBI's expert evidence given to the Commission, the magical bullet had lost only two and a half grains of its original unfired weight! Absolutely basic to the Commission's finding is the accertion that all fragments left in Connally must have come from this one bullet. The Commission believed that this magical bullet has passed through Kennedy's neck without leaving a single particle. However, a panel of outstanding medical experts in the field of forensic medicine and radiology convened in 1968 by the Department of Justice to study and report on the autopsy film and X-Rays, reported there were bullet fragments in JFK's neck.

It must be remembered that in addition to whatever fragments may still remain in Connally's body after burial, there were many more fragments that came from his wrist. Some of these were washed away as the wound was being cleansed for treatment and repair.

There has been a major dispute between what the FBI's records say about the fragments recovered from Connally's wrist and what the nurse in charge says about the fragments she collected and handed over. Audrey Bell has stoutly insisted right from the beginning, and in the face of intimidating pressure, that she gathered, washed, packaged and turned over a larger collection of bullet fragments than the FBI will admit to receiving.

The FBI was quite unambiguous when it told the Commission how much weight this bullet of super magical capabilities had lost, "two and a half grains". No more and no less.

How much is a grain?

Well, it takes 480 grains to make an ounce!

Postage stamp weight!

And we are talking about fragments of lead! Can this miniscule weight account for the not inconsiderable number of known and officially admitted bullet fragments reported above? What of those fragments washed away and lost in the first emergency treatment of Connally's wrist? Or those recovered by Bell and not accounted for in any official record? Or the fragments identified by the 1968 review panel as being in Kennedy's neck? And what of the fragments still in Connally's body? Can such a tiny fraction of an ounce account for all these fragments?

As Dr Guinn's testing pointed out, the original specimens recovered from Connally's wrist no longer exist and have not existed for many years. In the light of this it is conjectural what neutron activation analysis may have shown using the fragments that should have been retrieved from Connally's body before burial.

Small as the fragments in Connally's body may be, they could well be too large to have come from the only possible part of the bullet to have lost weight, the exposed lead core at its base. Photographs of the base area studied by Weisberg show that the only visible missing part was that cut out for testing by the FBI ballistic expert, Laboratory Agent John F. Gallagher. Even though a very small amount was needed for scientific testing, a much larger amount was actually removed. (Gallagher admitted this when he was deposed in court by Weisberg in a 1975 Civil Action.) The question must be asked, were the bullet fragments given to Dr Guinn in 1978 for testing taken from this extra portion of the lead core cut away by the FBI in 1964?

Still, if the US government had collected the fragments from Connally's body it could have matched them by neutron activation analysis with the magic bullet itself, still reposing in the National Archives. It could have matched them with the results obtained by Dr Guinn when he tested the mysterious specimens given to him in 1978. It could have weighed the total

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(also examined
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of the fragments removed from Connally's body and put that weight against the two and a half grains which the FBI testified were missing from the magic bullet as it was found by a hospital engineer on a gurney in a corridor in Parkland Hospital. Any or all of these things would have helped put to rest the question over whether the one bullet, the magic bullet, had caused all the non-fatal wounds suffered by Kennedy and Connally. And this is the whole crux of the commission's case, it stands or falls on this one aspect of its finding. It is obvious to anybody who dispassionately looks at all the evidence that not only was it impossible for one bullet to have caused all the non-fatal wounds to Kennedy and Connally, but also impossible for the near perfect 'magic' bullet to have caused the bone smashing wounds suffered by Connally.

The question must be asked whether the US government wished to avoid any official disproof of the official solution. As Harold Weisberg puts it, "the government wanted those bullet fragments to rest in peace in Connally because the government will have no peace with them anywhere else."

As Harold Weisberg points out in his new book, there is no need to rely solely on the evidence contained in the bullet fragments still in John Connally's body to disprove the 'magic bullet' theory. Among the many telling weaknesses in the Warren Commission's version, he points to the flaw in the Commission's contention that this one bullet entered Kennedy's back and exited through the front of his neck, through the President's collar and tie, when the Commission's own photographic evidence indicates the exact opposite.

FBI's

When Charles Carrico, the only doctor who had seen Kennedy's body before the clothing was removed was giving his testimony, Commission lawyer Arlen Specter avoided asking the one question that would have precisely located the wound in the neck. When Specter failed to ask Carrico this most obvious question, Allen Dulles, one of the Commissioners and the former head of the CIA, did put the question. Dulles asked Carrico twice, just to make sure. Each time Carrico told him it was above the shirt collar. Dulles spoke the very words as a question, "Above the shirt collar?" Carrico agreed.

You will not find this evidence mentioned anywhere in the Commission's report. In the same way as Specter left it out of his questioning, he also left it out of the report. The Commission's conclusion is based on the false belief that the bullet went through the shirt collar and the knot of the President's tie.

When Weisberg interviewed Charles Carrico he not only confirmed that the President's shirt and tie ~~was~~ cut off in what was a normal emergency procedure, he demonstrated it using his own tie. Carrico pulled the tie away from his body using his left hand at the same time slashing at it with an imaginary scalpel in his right hand, first one cut upwards, and another directed downwards.

Working under Carrico's direction in the trauma room at Parkland Hospital were two nurses from the emergency team, Diana Bowen and Margaret Henchcliffe. When Kennedy was wheeled in, one nurse cut off his tie, in the exact manner Carrico had described to Harold Weisberg, there not being time to undo it, while the other got ready to cut away his shirt. (Kennedy's

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shirts were tight fitting, they were tailored and he liked wearing them that way.) The nurse quickly saw that without any space she could not cut the close fitting shirt away without injuring the President, so she unbuttoned it from the top. These nurses were used to working with scalpels. Both of these women were Commission witnesses, but Specter asked neither if that was what they had done. Weisberg knew that this had been done after examining the photos provided to the Commission by the FBI. Even in the poor quality prints the FBI had seen fit to make available to the Commission the evidence was there to see. The nicks to tattle from the scalpel ~~was~~ apparent, even in an exceptionally poor photograph of the tie. There was however a relatively clearer view of the shirt collar in a composite photograph of the clothing which the FBI included as an exhibit in the five volume report it prepared on President Johnson's instructions given to it on the night of the assassination.

Harold Weisberg was unable to obtain clear photos of the tie, even after winning a court order against the FBI ordering it to release copies of such photos. However, he did obtain excellent photos of the shirt collar, by a strange accident. Richard Kleindienst, later of Watergate fame but then the Deputy Attorney General, was the official to whom FOIA requests were directed. At the time he had just had been advised of another summary judgment handed down against his department in favour of an FOIA action brought by Weisberg. He ordered the FBI to let him see what Weisberg was asking about and the FBI sent him a file containing some original prints. Apparently disgusted by the whole FOIA process Kleindienst looked at them and put them in an envelope with Weisberg's name on it and they ended up being sent to him, through the US Mail, without return address and even without postage.

The clear photos of the shirt showed that without question the most essential element of the official allegation concerning the path of the magical single bullet was wrong. It did not touch the shirt collar at all. It is apparent there was no bullet hole in the collar. What the photos do show are the two slits that are scalpel cuts. These two cuts do not coincide, as bullet holes would. They are not even the same length. They were made by two separate cuts as the nurse cut Kennedy's tie away, with one upward pointing stroke and one downwards. The extremity of the scalpel in each case nicked the shirt just below the collar. All this and more is plainly visible in the accompanying photos. And there is still more - there is no bullet hole or anything that can be taken for one in the tie. It was the knot of the tie which was of evidentiary value. The whole fantastic story of the magical bullet required there to be a hole right in the middle of the tie knot. There was no hole. The only damage to the knot in the tie was in the extreme upper left as it was worn. It was nicked slightly by the scalpel in the nurse's right hand as she pushed it toward and into the collar in the act of cutting the tie off. And that nick does not correspond with either of the slits in the shirt that themselves do not coincide with each other!

That the FBI tampered with evidence is obvious from looking at the photos of the tie used as evidence by the Commission. That the tie was cut off during the emergency procedure is clear, it was cut at a point so close to the knot the nurse could not avoid nicking it. This spot and the place where a small section was cut out for spectrographic analysis show in black

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carried on
buttoned to
able to get
his shirt's way
out of the tie*

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and white photos as white spots. This white is the inside lining of the tie, at no point was the tie penetrated. To make it look as if there was a bullet hole in the knot the FBI undid the knot and reknotted it with the nick moved closer to the centre of the 'knot' and photographed from an angle to make it look more like a bullet hole.

There was separate proof that showed neither the shirt collar nor the tie was ever touched by a bullet- the results of the FBI's spectographic examination of the clothing said so. To protect itself the FBI had communicated this information to the Commission, and to Specter personally, saying specifically no bullet traces had been found on either tie or shirt collar (though spectographic analysis had confirmed the passage of a bullet in other holes consistent with Kennedy's wound in the back). Specter protected the Commission's version of events by ignoring any mention of this proof that no bullets had passed through collar or tie when he wrote up this part of the report.

The reason why this particular aspect of the commission's report had to be defended by apologists for the Warren Commission at any cost has to do with the angle taken by this bullet as it passed through Kennedy. The Warren Commission's explanation postulates a bullet fired from the back at an angle that would align itself with the so-called sniper's nest on the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository building. A bullet going through Kennedy's neck at any other angle would rule this version out. To achieve this 'evidence' the Commission had the wound in the President's back shown as higher than it was, virtually at the base of the neck (even in the face of evidence from the autopsy showing its true position further down on the back), and to represent the nicks in the President's shirt and tie as being caused by a bullet, and this is the face of evidence from every single medical person who saw this wound in Dallas, who described it as a neck wound, and furthermore as a wound of entry situated above the collar.

Of course there is more, much much more to understanding how impossible the Commission's explanation is of the path of this fantastic bullet. But these two photographs of the shirt collar and the tie, enlargements of the FBI's own photos which were not given to the Commission, make it plain that this part of the official 'solution' to the crime is totally false. So, with this mere glimpse of this available but almost entirely unknown factual evidence, we can see that the bits of bullet that were buried with Connally are not essential to prove that the official 'solution' is not in any sense a solution.

The terrible questions surrounding the assassination of John F. Kennedy remain with us. For many years US public opinion polls have shown the great majority of Americans do not accept the findings of the Warren Commission. What this means is that most Americans believe there was a conspiracy to kill the President of the United States, and that this crime remains unsolved. It means most Americans accept the fact that there was, and has been, a coverup orchestrated by the government to protect the identities of those involved in the conspiracy to assassinate the President of the United States. The most recent episode in this long history of official coverup has been this failure of the government to recover the bullet fragments from the body of John Connally. More chillingly, this means that for years now there have been many Americans in positions of trust who know the truth

The official Dallas hospital statements in anonymous Presidential desk Specter actually told the Commission they would not get the exact words - published all around the world and recorded in transcripts. The press by the White House

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but whom have either become accomplices or who have remained silent in a policy ensuring what has been called 'the crime of the century' will not be investigated.

The last word belongs to Harold Weisberg who says, "that awful crime of silence when men must not be mute!"

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