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# The Mutation of a Quote

By Milicent Cranor

Dr. Tom Shires stands in front of Parkland Hospital with Dr. Robert Shaw, and explains that had Connally not turned to his left to look in the back seat, the bullet would probably have struck him in the heart. That turn, he said, probably saved the Governor's life. Shires demonstrates. He turns his body to the left and bends over at the waist. There is no doubt about the *direction* of the turn.

There is also no doubt about the *degree* of the turn. In a CBS bedside interview, the governor described seeing JFK reacting before he himself was hit. This means he had to have gotten far enough around to see JFK reacting. (Shires and Connally interviews can be seen on the video, *The Two Kennedys*, M.P.I. Maljack Productions)

Connally may have seen himself perform this turn on the Zapruder film. He testified that he saw "what purported to be a copy of the film when I was in the hospital in Dallas." (4H145)

Later, an FBI film analyst described this turn on the Zapruder film; it occurs soon after Connally emerges from behind the Stemmons sign. Then all kinds of things changed.

## Before:

- He turned to the left to look behind him.
- He saw Kennedy reacting before he himself was hit.
- This maneuver brought his heart out of the bullet's path.
- He saw the Zapruder film while still in the hospital.
- The FBI copy of the film showed the turn.

## After:

- He turned to the right, and never got a chance to turn to the left. (4H133)
- He did not see "anything unusual" behind him. (4H133)
- He no longer said the move saved his life.
- Thompson obscured the fact that Connally saw the film at Parkland: "Governor Connally himself saw the film briefly before testifying on that Tuesday in April 1964... (4H145)." (*Six Seconds*, p.70)
- There is no such move on circulating copies of the Zapruder film.

Despite the above, Josiah Thompson claimed that Connally's later testimony before the War-

ren Commission "agrees in almost every detail with these early statements." (*Six Seconds*, p.66)

## CBS Interview, November 27, 1963, unedited:

We heard a shot. I turned to my left—I was sitting in the jump seat—I turned to my left to look in the back seat. The President had slumped. He had said nothing. Almost simultaneously, as I turned, I was hit, and I knew I'd been hit badly. (video: *The Two Kennedys*)

## The FBI film analysis

FBI film analyst Lyndal Shaneyfelt was able to study the Zapruder film for weeks if not months. He could study it frame-by-frame, backwards and forwards, in slow motion or in real time. This man cannot be considered a "confused witness" who was "mistaken" about rapidly unfolding events. Shaneyfelt could watch these events unfold again and again. For him, time could stand still while he took notes.

... as he comes out of the signboard he [1] is facing slightly to the right, [2] comes around straight on [3] and then he turns to his left straight on [4] and then he turns to his right. [5] continues to turn around and falls over in Mrs. Connally's lap... (SHI 56, numbers added by the author)

## A Quote Mutates

Regardless of what actually happened, regardless of what one thinks a witness really meant, before any discussion of interpretation should begin, it is important to start with authentic raw material, the witness's actual words, or at least all operative words. A few little words can be pivotal to the meaning of a statement. Change them, and you re-write history. Here is a study of how different people (including Thompson) changed Connally's words in different ways, all with the same effect.

## Actual Operative Words

I turned to my left to look in the back seat. The President had slumped.

## NY Times. Omits: "to look in the back seat"

I turned to my left, and the President had slumped.

Result of edit: by not showing the degree of turn, this quote does not seriously challenge the

contents of the Z film.

## CBS/NOVA. Omits: "to my left"

I turned to look in the back seat. The President had slumped.

This version involved a rather seamless edit. They apparently took pains to cover up any visible jump in Connally's gestures or lip movement. In the original film, the camera stayed on Connally throughout this passage. In the edited version, however, this is what you see:

I turned (camera cuts to scene of men taking notes) to look in the (camera on Connally again) back seat. The President had slumped.

Result of edit: Connally could have been describing a right turn, what remains on the film.

## Thompson. Omits: "to look."

I turned to my left in the back seat. The President had slumped. (*Six Seconds*, p.65)

Thompson names Martin Agronsky of the *New York Times* as his source, but what he actually quotes is neither Agronsky's version nor the CBS edited one. He quotes from the unedited newsreel, and includes the repetition one finds in unedited speech—but omits the words, "to look" which explain how Connally says he moved.

Result of edit: Connally appears to be describing his position ("in" the back seat), rather than where he looked.

## Thompson's interpretation: left = front

Please compare the words of the FBI film analyst with Thompson's re-interpretation. Shaneyfelt said "as he comes out of the signboard he is facing slightly to the right, comes around straight on and then he turns to his left straight on." It is clear that Connally's left turn originated from a front-facing position. But, had Connally been facing the right, then a turn to the left would merely bring him around to the front—what Thompson wishes us to believe he did with these two Zapruder frames:

Frame 222: Connally faces his right.

Frame 230: Connally faces the front.

His caption:

Frames 222 and 230: Governor Connally turns to his

left, a movement he said he made immediately after the first shot." (Six Seconds, p.34)

### Connally's Accommodations

As long as Connally isn't seen looking in the back seat, it can be said that he only assumed Kennedy was hit by the first shot, that he only heard that JFK had "slumped." This clears the way for the claim that the second bullet struck both men. Connally's changes—that he saw "nothing unusual" behind him (4H133), render this scenario possible. Another example of Connally's accommodation: he said he thought there were "two or three people involved...or someone was shooting with an automatic rifle...because of the rapidity of these two..." (4H133). Asked by the HSCA about the time between the first two shots, he said "I guess 6, 8, or 10 seconds, in that range..." (1 HSCA 53) Hardly what Connally (who was very familiar with rifles) would consider rapid fire. Connally continued throughout his life to insist that Kennedy was hit first but, as far as I know, he never again repeated what it was that made him so sure that first shot did not miss: he actually saw Kennedy reacting before he, Connally, was hit.

### What else is missing?

Both Connallys swore to yet other action that is missing from the Zapruder film: the impact of the bullet on Connally:

The force of the bullet drove my body over almost double...[then] I more or less straightened up. (1 HSCA 42)

...he lunged forward and then just kind of collapsed. (1 HSCA 52)

### Update: Enter Anthony Marsh

Sequence of events on the Internet:

I posted quotes showing the curious coincidence between what an FBI film analyst said about events on the Z film, and what Connally said about those same events.

Anthony Marsh responded with this assertion: Connally never said he turned to the left. Period.

I then posted Gary Mack's confirmation of my transcription of Connally's interview in which he says these things.

Marsh then revised his assertion: Connally never said he turned to his left and then to his right. He presented this as if it were a rebuttal to what I had written—only I never wrote it. It is a straw issue.

Rather than lying outright, Marsh employs the device of insinuation. For proof that he has misrepresented these most interesting facts about Connally and the Z film—as well as my own presentation of them—you will need to contrast what I wrote in my article in *The Fourth Decade* (July 1994, pp38-39)—versus what Marsh insinuates that I wrote in his essay, "Did Connally turn left or right" at <http://www.boston.quik.com/amarsh/Connally.htm> You also need to be aware of the

information Marsh left out.

### Misleading Title

"Did Connally turn left or right?" Intended interpretation: it was one or the other. Since we can see Connally turning to the right on the Z film, that settles it; he didn't turn to the left, or so one is supposed to think.

### Devastating Information Omitted

Marsh could not intellectually cut the corroborating connection between 1) testimony of the FBI film analyst who described the left turn, and 2) the deleted part of Connally's statement—so he cut it out physically.

### Devastating Information Ignored

Marsh directs all your attention to the direction of Connally's turn, unimportant were it not for its absence on the Z film, an already questionable issue—and he directs your attention away from yet another revision, what Connally said he saw when he turned: Kennedy reacting before Connally was hit.

### False: that I misquoted Connally

On page 39 of *The Fourth Decade*, I provide my transcription of Connally's original, pre-doctored statement. It is essentially the same as Marsh's transcription on page 2 of his essay, except mine ends sooner. Yet, Marsh insinuates that I misquoted Connally by suggesting that I am the source of an error made by Jack White in the book *Assassination Science*:

It is bad enough that eyewitness testimony is already acknowledged to be the most unreliable form of evidence. But it is made worse when sloppy researchers misquote eyewitness testimony to support insupportable conclusions. But it is even worse when a researcher simply makes up an eyewitness statement from his imagination to support his pre-conceived conclusion... Jack White states that "Connally said he turned to his left to look at the President, then turned to his right. The film does not show this." Jack White does not provide any footnotes for his chapter, so the reader can not find out where this statement came from. After repeated questioning Jack finally admitted that he had based that on an article by Milicent Cranor. He did not bother to fact check it himself.

As Marsh surely knows, the word "admitted" is associated with the reluctant telling of the truth. But it is not the truth, as anyone can see from reading my article.

In addition, Marsh attempts to imply two separate, mutually exclusive concepts, neither of which is true: (1) that Jack made up the quote "from his imagination" and (2) that he based the quote on my article. It cannot be both. Did Jack get such a quote from my article? Absolutely not. Did Jack "make up" that quote "from his imagination?" This suggests a lie from whole cloth. Jack probably combined what Connally said he did (turn to the left) with what he sees him do on the film (turn to the right). Jack obviously believes Connally, his wife,

and other witnesses who said he turned all around to the left. And since the Z film does not show this as well as many other events described in detail by the closest witnesses, he believes the film has been edited. This is a far cry from making up a lie to support an accusation of tampering.

### Sneaky, Sneaky

On page 2 of his essay, Marsh provides—in very light type—the undoctored quote in which Connally said he turned to his left to look in the back seat. (In all essentials, his transcription matches my own, so I certainly did not make up the statement.) Following the quote, Marsh writes:

So, where is the left, then right turn which Jack White cites. Nowhere to be found... Jack simply made it up...

If Jack made it up, then why write in the beginning of the essay that Jack "finally admitted" I was the source? After implying that I had misquoted Connally (deliberately?) Marsh compounds the false impression by implying, on page 2, that I gave no source for the quote, thereby making it impossible to verify my "false" claims:

Fortunately, other researchers have pointed out that this segment of the original statement was preserved in toto on other videotapes, such as the Italian documentary, *The Two Kennedys and Kennedy in Texas*.

On page 39 of *The Fourth Decade*, I gave my source of the quote (ref.#2: *The Two Kennedys*). But Marsh's comment, "Fortunately, other researchers..." suggests that this researcher, Cranor, had given no source.

### True, but less significant

In *The Fourth Decade*, I noted that Martin Agronsky of the *New York Times* at least preserved Connally's reference to the left turn. However, in the less important second half of the quote, I reverted to Connally's own words.

Agronsky had omitted "almost simultaneously," and I inadvertently put the words back in. Anthony Marsh devotes space to this error. Why? Marsh seems to have been trying to render less suspicious Josiah Thompson's revision of the Connally quote. As shown earlier, Thompson misquoted Connally, and gave Agronsky as a source. Marsh attempts to excuse this as a mere "copying error," apparently hoping the reader will find it understandable, since I, too, made an error. But my error was to render Agronsky's quote more faithful to Connally's. Thompson's "error" radically changed the meaning of Connally's words. Result: Connally's quote did not challenge the SBT—or the authenticity of the Z film.

### Marsh's Conclusion

Eyewitness testimony is the most unreliable form of evidence. It is even worse when the sloppy researcher simply makes up fictitious quotes to support his pre-conceived conclusion that the Zapruder film is a fake.

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## Mutant Quote

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More likely the researcher is a fake.

### Summary

Anthony Marsh implies that I misquoted Connally, perhaps deliberately, and did not provide a source, thus preventing the verification of my "false" claims. Marsh makes Jack White's misquote seem much further from the mark than it was by omitting essential facts that give context to White's impressions. By saturating the air with numbing trivia Marsh discourages further exploration of the subject, or so he probably thinks. I am especially intrigued by his confidence that no one will check to see if the impression he wishes to create reflects reality. He is even oblivious to the lack of internal logic in his essay. This is a good thing. ♣

## Ray's Rifle

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realizing they were about to be dealt a fatal, though just, blow, went whining to the state court of appeals. The court of appeals removed Judge Brown from the Ray-King case, claiming he was biased in favor of the defense (Ray) and biased against the prosecution.

• The prosecution claims James Earl Ray, perched in the bathroom of Bessie Brewer's flophouse, shot Dr. King as he stood in front of room # 306 of the Lorraine Hotel and Motel, approximately 200 feet "as the bullet travels." I asked the same 12 ballistics experts what the chances were for a .30-06 slug to hit a normal male anatomy, under 200 lbs., fired from only 200 feet away, and remain in, not exit, that same anatomy. The responses ranged from "1 in 100," to "1 in 1,000," to "It just wouldn't happen." I find it hard to believe that Posner and his FBI reference—along with the rest of those who write and side with the prosecution—are correct and all those I talked to are incorrect.

Ask yourself two simple questions:

1) If James Earl Ray, indeed, shot Dr. Martin Luther King with that Remington .30-06 rifle, why did he and his defense labor so hard all those years to have the rifle re-tested?

2) If the state truly believed that was the murder rifle, why did they fight so adamantly against it being re-tested?

Why will the state not allow Jerry Ray to take possession of the rifle? Simply assess the facts for yourself before you draw your conclusion. Go talk to some ballistics experts of your choice.

Whether or not you believe James Earl Ray assassinated Dr. Martin Luther King, documentation irrefutably proves James Earl Ray purchased the alleged murder rifle in Birmingham, Alabama. Legally, that makes it the property of Jerry Ray. He deserves it. So do the pages of history. ♣

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## Newman

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crets to the Soviets. Imagine their horror to find the cables they were in receipt of, just six weeks earlier, linking this commie-defector-saboteur to Cuba and a KGB assassination officer. Imagine their consternation to learn that no one had done anything, let alone put him on the security index.

Naturally one of the first things done was to listen to the Mexico City tapes. Imagine the puzzlement and anxiety which ran through the minds of those few who were privy to the startling discovery that it was not Oswald's voice on those tapes. It would have looked then very much like it looks today: someone wanted to make sure that Oswald's Cuban and KGB contacts in Mexico were fully documented inside US intelligence channels. The day after the president's murder, as Hoover was reassuring president Johnson that Oswald shot JFK, the first thing Johnson asked about was Mexico City. And, perhaps for the first time in his career as FBI Director, Hoover admitted he was confused. He informed LBJ that the voice was not Oswald's and added, "In other words, it appears that there is a second person who was at the Soviet Embassy down there."

The knowledge that someone impersonated Oswald was held very closely. Hoover did inform James Rowley, the head of the US Secret Service, but only a handful of people in the FBI were privy to this arcane and horrific detail. Just who in the CIA knew about it is not clear, but we do know that in the days following the assassination, the CIA undertook an intricate effort to hush it up. Part of the effort to do so was the invention of the story that the Mexico City tapes had been routinely destroyed before the assassination. This lie permitted the concoction of another cover story: that the CIA knew nothing of Oswald's activities in the Cuban Consulate in Mexico until after the assassination. Finally, as discussed above, it appears the CIA also went as far as to rewrite the cables betraying their

knowledge—and thus their culpability—of the whole episode.

FBI Director Hoover decided to go along with this CIA cover-up. He was not thrilled about doing so. We know the FBI listened to the Mexico tapes and therefore understood the Cuban connection. Yet all details of the Cuban story were excised from the detailed memoranda concerning Hoover's punishments of his subordinates. Furthermore, the FBI never publicly contradicted the false CIA claim that the tapes had been destroyed before the assassination. Finally, Hoover was apparently still fuming over the CIA Mexico City lies just seven weeks later. He happened to be reading a memo from his subordinates, discussing how to keep abreast of CIA operations in the US, when he scrawled this on the memo: "O.K., but I hope you are not being taken in. I can't forget the CIA withholding the French espionage activities in the USA nor the false story re Oswald's trip to Mexico, only to mention two instances of their double-dealing."

It would appear that the Warren Commission, too, went along with the CIA's lies and cover-ups concerning Oswald in Mexico City. Researchers have heard rumors for years that Warren Commission lawyers actually listened to one or more of the Mexico City tapes. At the first Experts Conference of the Review Board in May of 1995, Warren Commission counsel David Slawson said he "was not at liberty" to discuss whether he had listened to the tapes. When the Board assured him he could discuss the matter he simply repeated his refusal to talk. In view of the enormity of this particular cover-up, it is small wonder that the discoveries of the HSCA investigators about it was kept under lock and key for so long.

From the foregoing it seems that Peter Scott's phase-one phase-two analysis is reasonable. In the early going after JFK's murder, the Cuban-Kremlin backed plot and concerns—if only fleeting—about an upcoming World War III, precipitated a lone-nut official explanation to bury the whole affair. In other words, the world's most powerful law enforcement and intelligence agencies were prevented from doing their jobs, and were instead prodded into a massive cover-up. Given the punishment being doled out by Hoover at the FBI, it is no surprise that there was no chorus demanding a real investigation. Instead, there were only excuses explaining why it was all right to have done nothing.

The question which remains is this: did the plotters understand this before the fact? Did they manipulate Oswald and, perhaps, intelligence operations, to keep the virus dormant until the shots rang out in Dealey Plaza? ♣