

STATEMENT OF GEORGE O'TOOLE
GRAND BALLROOM, NATIONAL PRESS CLUB
March 10, 1975

We have asked you here this morning so that we can report on the results of a two-year project sponsored by PENTHOUSE magazine and aimed at re-investigating the circumstances surrounding the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in November 1963. As many of you are probably aware, the Warren Commission, which investigated the assassination and published its Report in September 1964, failed, in the minds of most Americans, to uncover the complete truth. In 1970, Senator Richard Russell of Georgia, who had been one of the seven members of the Warren Commission publically announced that he had never believed the Commission's official conclusion that the assassination was not the work of a conspiracy. In 1971, President Lyndon Johnson, who had brought the Commission into existence, said that he too believed that John Kennedy was killed by a conspiracy. Public opinion polls have shown repeatedly that more than two-thirds of all Americans do not accept the Warren Commission's findings.

During the late 1960s, several studies were published by private researchers aimed at exposing many of the flaws in the Warren Report. I refer to the works of Mark Lane, Edward Jay Epstein, Sylvia Meagher, Josiah Thompson, Harold Weisberg, and several others. In general these books examined the Warren Commission, its 888-page report, the twenty-six volumes of evidence published by the Commission, and some of the unpublished Warren Commission evidence which became available in one way or another after the Report was released. The common theme of all of these studies was that the Warren Commission's own evidence did not support its conclusion that the assassination was not the result of a conspiracy.

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Because I felt that the critics of the Warren Report had generally made their case, it was not my intention to undertake yet another analysis of the old evidence to come up with further arguments that the official account was incorrect. It seemed to me that the only useful course open to a private researcher who wished to pursue the case further was to try to come up with some new information. It was obvious that what we needed was not more questions, but, instead, some answers.

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The possibility of developing some useful new information in the case became a real one to me late in 1972 when I first met the inventors of the Psychological Stress Evaluator. Most of you have heard of the Psychological Stress Evaluator or PSE, or read about it in magazines or newspapers. It had been referred to in the popular press as the "voice lie detector" because it performs the same function as the polygraph through an electronic analysis of the human voice. Unlike the polygraph, the PSE requires no wires, tubes, straps, or other physical connection to the suspect. It requires only that his statements or replies be tape recorded.

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Because it works from the tape recorded voice, it occurred to me when I first heard of the PSE two years ago that the instrument might be useful as a tool of historical research, apart from its more common function as an investigative aid. I realized that almost all of the history of the last few decades has been recorded through electronic sound recording techniques. The voices of the players in all of the great dramas of our time are stored away in the film and audio archives of the world. The Psychological Stress Evaluator, I realized, is a lie detector that can be used on a dead man.

When I first decided to try to use the PSE in this way, dozens of puzzles from recent history suggested themselves to me, but none seemed as significant as the question of what really happened in Dallas, Texas, at 12:30 Central standard time on November 22, 1963. I set out to use the PSE to investigate the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

Before going into the substance of that investigation, I believe a short explanation of the Psychological Stress Evaluator is in order. The basic principle of the PSE is the discovery that the stress or anxiety psychologists have found accompanies the act of lying causes minute, inaudible variations in the vocal frequencies, and these can be detected by the PSE. The PSE is currently in use by more than ninety law enforcement agencies, including the Camden County New Jersey's Prosecutor's Office, the Florida Department of Public Safety, the police departments of St. Petersburg, Florida; Stockton, California, and several communities in the Maryland and Virginia suburbs of Washington, D.C. The police departments of some of the largest American cities use the PSE but have requested that they not be publically identified. The PSE is also in widespread use by researchers in the behavioral sciences for use in studying stress and anxiety.

Because the PSE played such an important role in the PENTHOUSE investigation, an information kit on the PSE has been distributed to you, and two of the inventors of the PSE, along with several other experts in the field, are here today to answer your specific questions about the instrument.

Several systematic studies of the PSE have been undertaken during the last few years. With a single exception the studies have confirmed the PSE as an effective lie detection instrument. However, that one exception received national publicity, and I know that it is on the minds of some present here, so I'd like to take a moment to address it.

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Answer for Dick

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A little over a year ago there was some considerable publicity given to a so-called "Army study" of the PSE which was reported in the press to have discredited the instrument's effectiveness. The study was actually conducted by a researcher at Fordham University under contract to the Army Land Warfare Laboratory. It has been the focus of much controversy in the field of lie detection. I don't want to present a detailed scientific critique of the study -- the PSE's inventors are much better able to do that -- but I would like to tell you what I found out while interviewing the people who carried out the study. First, Dr. Joseph Kubis of Fordham, who wrote the study, told me that the study had involved the analysis of so-called "artificial crimes" -- that is, student volunteers working in the Fordham University laboratory committed mock "crimes" and then later tried to lie about them under PSE and polygraph examination. Dr. Kubis told me that he did not feel that his study proved the PSE ineffective in real criminal investigations where guilty suspects would experience much higher levels of stress.

Second, I learned that neither Dr. Kubis nor his Fordham staff ever actually used the PSE during the course of their study. Instead, they tape recorded polygraph examinations and sent the tapes to another researcher who performed the actual PSE analysis of them. I spoke to that researcher, and he told me that the tapes had been defective, that is, they contained extraneous noise and had been recorded at insufficient volume level for PSE use. The researcher, who was the only one involved in the project with any actual PSE experience, told me he believed the poor PSE results achieved were largely the result of these defective recordings.

Handwritten note:
 I have a copy of the letter of transmittal in which the Army reluctantly made the Kubis report available to a Congressman who wanted to publicize it. The letter reads: "The Army is not in a position to either validate or refute the evaluations or conclusions reached by the report's author, and thus release of the report does not indicate Army acceptance or endorsement of the findings and conclusions of the study." I have a copy of the letter here if any of you should wish to examine it.

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The PSE has been validated by several other research studies, however, and we have a file of signed statements by law enforcement officials who use the instrument and say it is highly effective in lie detection. The PSE specialists here today can furnish you with additional information on this.

Lie detection, whether it is done with the PSE or the obsolete polygraph, consists of the comparison of stress. The classic format of the lie detection examination involves asking the subject a series of questions, some of which involve non-significant issues about which the truth is known. For example, is today Monday? or, are we now in Washington, D.C.? Whatever stress is elicited by the subject's responses to such questions is compared to that demonstrated when significant questions are asked, such as, did you take the missing money? If the significant questions produce greater stress, deception is believed to be indicated (this is, of course, a great oversimplification of the procedure, omitting the more complex techniques used to identify stressed reactions not indicative of deception).

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When I set out on my own investigation, I realized that the tape recordings I might find in sound archives of statements by people having knowledge of the JFK assassination would differ greatly from this kind of planned and controlled lie detection interview. I knew that, if I found stress in a witness's voice, it would be impossible to say with any certainty that the stress was there because the speaker was lying. But I was encouraged to pursue this technique for several reasons. First among these was the fact that I was investigating the possibility of a conspiracy. Stress in the voice of any one speaker might be ambiguous, but stress in the voices of many witnesses to the same event would offer a very considerable probability that deception was involved.

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Second, although stress is a necessary but not sufficient condition of lying, the absence of stress is a sufficient (but not necessary) condition of truthfulness. Put more simply: psychologists who have studied the physiology of deception agree that it is impossible for someone to lie about a matter of real importance to himself without experiencing a very distinct surge of psychological stress. I might have to guess about the reason for stress in a speaker's voice, but if I found no stress there, then I could be completely sure the speaker was telling the truth. Thus, in using the PSE as I did, the instrument was a highly reliable "truth detector." And the single most significant finding of my investigation into the Kennedy assassination derives from the PSE showing that someone was telling the truth.

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Where I found stress in an unstructured interview, I focused my investigative efforts on the speaker and the particular issue involved, in order to find other collateral evidence to settle the matter. This usually involved a close examination of the official Warren Commission record contained in the 26 volumes of published evidence and those documents in the National Archives which have not been published but are available to the public. Thus, the PSE functioned in the same way a metal detector is used. A metal detector will tell you if there is a mass of metal buried in the ground; if you want to discover whether that mass is buried treasure or an old automobile bumper, you have to dig. Much of my digging was in the National Archives, and some of it was in Dallas, Texas.

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I went down to Dallas in the guise of a magazine writer commissioned to write a commemorative piece for the tenth anniversary of the assassination and I taped interviews with several individuals who I had already identified as subjects of interest after analyzing the recorded statements of more than thirty witnesses whose statements I had obtained from television network sound archives. Most of the Dallas witnesses I sought were present and former members of the Dallas police. What I wanted them to discuss was the chain of evidence that linked Lee Harvey Oswald to the assassination.

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Because time constraints makes it impossible for me to review the investigation here issue by issue, explaining the significance of each evidentiary point to the total case, you have been given copies of my final report, which is a 265 page book called THE ASSASSINATION TAPES. An excerpt of the report appears in the April issue of PENTHOUSE magazine, copies of which have also been distributed here.

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Of course, the report does not present everything I turned up during my two year investigation. I have tried to avoid including instances where all I can report is that someone said something on tape and the PSE shows stress, period. Wherever possible I have used instances where I was able to dig further into the issue and come up with some collateral evidence that the stressed statement was not true. For example, in my PSE analysis of statements made by present and former members of the Dallas police the PSE led me to the discovery of ten separate misstatements regarding critical links in the chain of evidence linking Lee Harvey Oswald to the assassination. I have presented them in the report.

While I can offer no innocent explanation for such misstatements, neither do I claim that, beyond any question, the speakers were lying. I have not, nor am I now, accusing any individual of anything. I prefer to present the information I've uncovered as completely and as fairly as I know how, so that those who read the report can draw their own conclusions. It was not even my original intent to offer any sort of theory or scenario to interpret my findings and show how they might provide an alternative explanation of what happened in Dallas eleven years ago. However, many people have urged me to do so, insisting that my readers would want to know what I think these new facts imply. Therefore I have acceded to their wishes, although I have relegated such speculation to one chapter of the book, clearly labeled "a theory."

I imagine that for the purpose of reporting on this investigation, you will be most interested in the PSE analysis of Lee Harvey Oswald's own statements about the assassination of President Kennedy. Therefore I have prepared a visual presentation focusing on that aspect of the investigation, and if we may turn off the lights now I'll show it to you.

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Because my interpretation of the Oswald PSE charts led to such a startling conclusion, I asked several people much more experienced than I with the PSE to check my findings. In some cases I showed them the charts "blind," that is, they were not told the speaker was Oswald. I changed the transcript so that it did not read "Did you kill the President?" but rather "Did you kill him?" I was gratified when they confirmed my own findings, and I especially appreciate the fact that some of them kindly agreed to come here today. I would like to introduce Dr. John Heisse. Doctor Heisse is a medical doctor who uses the PSE in his work. He is also president of the International Society of Stress Analysts, the professional PSE society. Col. Charles McQuiston, one of the inventors of the PSE is also here. Mr. Rusty Hitchcock, a seasoned veteran of both polygraph and PSE is here. So is Mike Kradz, who I might mention was the first policeman to use the PSE. Mike is now director of PSE training the Dektor Counterintelligence and Security.

In addition, Allan Bell, Jr., a former Army intelligence officer and another co-inventor of the PSE has graciously consented to be here today. Col. Bell probably knows more than anyone else about the electronics and psychophysiology of the PSE and can answer any questions you may have about the instrument itself.

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Before completing these prepared remarks and opening the session to questions, I would like to express my own sincere appreciation to every member of the press or other news medium who came here today. Some who continue to express dissent with the official government version of the assassination of President Kennedy have been guilty at times of leaping from unwarranted assumptions to foregone conclusions and have earned a reputation for eccentricity and irresponsibility. I thank you for not so judging me in advance, and I hope that after examining the evidence you will find me not guilty of that.

A final word should be addressed to the perfectly valid question "So what?" If, after examining THE ASSASSINATION TAPES, it is granted that the case presented has merit, what should be done? Ultimately, of course, others must decide this, but I'd like to offer my recommendations. I don't think we need yet another presidential commission or blue ribbon panel. I notice that in recent weeks Congressman Henry Gonzalez of Texas has called for a reopening of the case, and that this has been seconded by a former member of the Warren Commission's legal staff. Such a reopening would be most effective, I believe, if conducted by a joint congressional committee, bi-partisan in make-up, and armed with the power of subpoena and the power to grant immunity from prosecution. It is my belief that such a panel could answer for us, once and for all, that most painful question of our time, "Who killed John F. Kennedy?" I thank you and invite your questions.