

The Kennedy File

PAT BUCHANAN: [voice-over] November 22, 1963, Camelot ends as President John F. Kennedy is shot to death in Dallas, Texas, the result of a monstrous conspiracy or the act of one man named Lee Harvey Oswald. Thirty years later the debate continues tonight on Crossfire.

ANNOUNCER: Live from Washington, Crossfire. On the left, Mike Kinsley. On the right, Pat Buchanan. Tonight, The Kennedy File. In the crossfire, Gerald Posner, author of *Case Closed*. And in Dallas, Dr. Cyril Wecht, pathologist and author of *Cause of Death*.

MIKE KINSLEY: Good evening. Welcome to Crossfire. It's the question that won't go away: Who killed John F. Kennedy? Two months ago we had these same two guests on Crossfire and I personally promised you the viewer that in just 30 minutes we would settle this 30-year-old controversy once and for all. Well, for some reason it did not happen, so we're going to try again. Gerald Posner's book argues that the Warren Commission was right all along, Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone, and the single bullet theory, that one bullet hit both Kennedy and Governor John Connally, has been vindicated by new computer technology. Dr. Cyril Wecht is a well-known forensic pathologist. We had him on to criticize Mr. Posner's book. Now he's got his own new book that says the single bullet theory is impossible, the Warren Commission report is rubbish, and the real killer of JFK was— well, that would be telling. Pat?

PAT BUCHANAN: Dr. Wecht, give us your strongest single piece of evidence that there was either a conspiracy or that there was more than one gunman in Dallas that day.

Dr. CYRIL WECHT, Forensic Pathologist, Author, "Cause of Death": The strongest piece of evidence, Mr. Buchanan, is the absurdity of the single bullet theory, which holds that one bullet caused seven wounds in two men, broke two large bones in Governor Connally and yet emerged near pristine with a total weight loss of less than 1-1/2 percent of its original weight, with slight crimping at the base and no deformation whatsoever of its entire copper jacket, a bullet that moved upward through the President and then upon emerging from his neck turned to the right, slammed downward into Governor Connally's right posterior axillary area, 25 degrees angle of declination through the chest, pierced the right lung, broke the right fifth rib, came out below the level of the nipple, coursed upward into the back of the right wrist, came down through the right wrist into his left thigh and then emerged into his pants leg and found on the stretcher.

BUCHANAN: Dr. Wecht, if there are two bullets that struck the President, where is the exit wound from the second bullet?

Dr. WECHT: The exit bullet— the exit wound from the second bullet is possibly from the neck. That remains in

dispute, Mr. Buchanan.

BUCHANAN: I'll say it does.

Dr. WECHT: The question is— well, sure it does. That right, I agree with you, but some—

BUCHANAN: I mean, you put a bullet through a man. The bullet's either going to remain in his body or it's going to come tear through it and leave a hole coming out. If it's shot from the side, it's going to go across here. If it's shot in the butt, it's going to come out the back.

Dr. WECHT: Too bad you weren't there on the night of the autopsy, Mr. Buchanan, because the autopsy pathologists concluded that the bullet had popped back out of the President's back and the next day, Mr. Buchanan, when they learned that they had missed the bullet hole in the front of the President's neck, they concluded that the bullet, which had been traveling 2100 feet, ripping through his neck, had stopped upon hitting the starched collar and plopped down on the front of his clothing. We needed you, Mr. Buchanan at Bethesda Naval Hospital on the night of the autopsy—

KINSLEY: Hold on.

BUCHANAN: Dr. Wecht—

Dr. WECHT: —and maybe we wouldn't have the problem today.

BUCHANAN: Dr. Wecht, no one I know of— I've even heard of had this theory of that bullet going into the President and popping out.

Dr. WECHT: You're wrong, sir. No, you're wrong. Hume and Boswell and Fink. [sp?] You're quite wrong. As a matter of record, you're quite wrong, sir.

KINSLEY: All right. Hold on, Dr. Wecht.

Dr. WECHT: That was the official autopsy report that night.

KINSLEY: Let's get Mr. Posner here. Mr. Posner, let's hold on a second. Let's do a little primer for the viewer who aren't as obsessed with this subject as you and Dr. Wecht are about the single bullet theory. The classic interpretation of the Zapruder film is that it shows Kennedy and Connally being shot too close together in time for Oswald to have shot twice.

GERALD POSNER, Author, "Case Closed": That's right.

KINSLEY: Two possibilities, either single bullet did both or there were two gunmen, is that right?

Mr. POSNER: That's right.

KINSLEY: Now, let me just keep going. The classic challenge to the single bullet theory, which you agree with, is that Connally is seen in the film reacting one and a half seconds later than Kennedy.

Mr. POSNER: That's what we used to think. That's right.

KINSLEY: So, now, explain to me why that is not true.

Mr. POSNER: Absolutely. As a matter of fact, when I hear Dr. Wecht, I'm just astonished that this is one of the nation's leading forensics doctors and his information is so antiquated. He admits in the book that he's just written— I'm shocked to read that first of all, that he's the source of information for Jim Garrison. I didn't know he was a special assistant to Jim Garrison in his investigation. I have a whole chapter on Garrison's sham and travesty of justice, but more than that, he's the assistant— he's a paid con-

sultant to Oliver Stone on the question of the single bullet, and we all remember—

KINSLEY: All right, fine.

Mr. POSNER: —how the bullet moves around.

KINSLEY: Fine, we're going to get to that, but explain why this one and a half seconds business doesn't imply—

Mr. POSNER: Why it's old news is because last year a computer analyst in California discovered something that's critical, which is the moment that Governor Connally is hit. You see Governor Connally's right lapel of his suit fly forward at Zapruder frame 224, examine his jacket, that's the very area on the jacket where the bullet goes through. Now, Dr. Wecht, on the last show, this is key, because once you know when Connally's hit, you look at Kennedy and he's reacting at the same time.

KINSLEY: Well, what gives him the idea that it was one and a half seconds apart all these years?

Mr. POSNER: Because they used to look at Connally reacting with his shoulder going down, when his lung collapses, as he takes his next full breath a half second later.

KINSLEY: So you're saying that this new analysis shows that he was shot a second and a half earlier—

BUCHANAN: He reacted— he didn't react immediately the way Kennedy did, went through, and then he reacted, right?

Mr. POSNER: As a matter of fact, what happens, Pat, is it goes through him at 224, and at 226, a ninth of a second later, you see Connally's hat flying up in front of his face with his wrist holding his hat. Kennedy's reacting at the same frame, 226. The new technology and enhancement of the Zapruder film shows that both men reacted at the same time to the bullet that passes through them instantaneously at 2000 feet a second.

KINSLEY: OK.

BUCHANAN: All right, Dr. Wecht, what do you have to say to that?

Dr. WECHT: All right, very quickly, this is a gross misrepresentation in Mr. Posner's book about the Failure Analysis Associates' presentation in Menlo Park. I was on that mock trial of the American Bar Association in September of 1992. This was not a study that was done for Mr. Posner. It was a study that was done for the ABA. (2) He forgot to tell everybody in his book and again tonight that the scientists are split down the middle, and indeed, the president and chief executive officer, Dr. Roger McCarthy, testified for the defense. He does not believe the single bullet theory. I spoke with him then and I spoke with him since. Secondly, let's go—

BUCHANAN: All right, Dr. Wecht, I mean, are you—

Mr. POSNER: What about the lapel?

BUCHANAN: Let me ask you. I mean, were you an adviser to the Oliver Stone film and to Jim Garrison?

Dr. WECHT: Yes. Why is there some shock and incredulity in your voice?

BUCHANAN: I mean, everybody I—

Dr. WECHT: Wait, just a moment. I was a technical adviser, and I think it was a fantastic movie.

Mr. POSNER: Oh, it's a disgrace.

Dr. WECHT: I was there on the set for a couple of days,

and I had input in terms of some of the things pertaining to the single bullet theory; and this great payment, Mr. Posner, was less than I get when I go on a murder or a malpractice case. So let's not use one of those cheap trial lawyer tactic tricks, OK?

Mr. POSNER: Wait, it's not a cheap trial lawyer tactic.

Dr. WECHT: You've received \$20 million worth of free publicity—

Mr. POSNER: Dr. Wecht, don't try to over shout me. That film—

Dr. WECHT: —Mr. Posner, from the news media establishment that have embraced you as if—

BUCHANAN: We got that point. Dr. Wecht, we got that point. Let Mr. Posner talk.

Mr. POSNER: The only thing— I'm not exaggerating when I say almost the only thing that Oliver Stone gets correct in that film is the date that Kennedy is killed, and you know that in your heart, but let's do something very important. I believe—

Dr. WECHT: There's a lot that is correct in the film.

Mr. POSNER: There's a major issue here. If I am correct that Connally's lapel was flying up at frame 224, then this issue is over, and the single bullet is proven, as I've shown in the book.

Dr. WECHT: That is absurd.

Mr. POSNER: Now, wait a minute. On the last Crossfire—

Dr. WECHT: That is absurd.

Mr. POSNER: On the last Crossfire, please, I asked you on the air, national television, if you had ever heard of this lapel movement beforehand. I heard a rumor that, Dr. Wecht, you knew about it as early as 1975. This is a transcript from the last Crossfire, and I'm quoting your answer. You say, "No, no, no, I never wrote any such letter. I just heard about the lapel business last year." However it has come to my attention, I have an April 1975— this is from Robert B. Olson, who's an attorney for the Rockefeller Commission, and on page two of a summary of a telephone conversation with you, Dr. Wecht, he says, "He," referring to Dr. Wecht, "also stated that there is now strong evidence that Governor Connally was shot at frame 224 of the Zapruder film. This evidence consists of comparing frame 223 with frame 224, the latter showing a dramatic," your quote, "change in which Governor Connally's suit coat is pushed out toward the front, indicating the bullet just exited from his chest." You know what happened, Dr. Wecht?

Dr. WECHT: You say that's a summary of the Rockefeller Commission.

Mr. POSNER: You knew this in 1975.

Dr. WECHT: No, no, no.

Mr. POSNER: And you suppressed this key evidence because you knew that—

Dr. WECHT: Oh, that is absurd.

Mr. POSNER: —this was the evidence that proved the single bullet.

KINSLEY: All right. Let him answer. Go ahead.

Dr. WECHT: Let's talk about the Zapruder film. The fact of the matter is that Governor Connally's lapel, which you claim to be flapping, and there's a lot of argument as to

whether or not that is demonstrated, but let us say for a moment that it is flapping upward, the fact is that President Kennedy has already been struck in frame 223, 224. Now, that bullet emerging from his neck is moving 1800 feet per second, and therefore in less than two-thousandths of a second, it is already gone through Connally's body—

KINSLEY: Dr. Wecht—

Dr. WECHT: Now, the fact—

KINSLEY: Dr. Wecht, excuse me. What about this letter of 1975 that Mr. Posner has? Did you know about it in 1975, about this lapel business?

Dr. WECHT: No, that's not a letter from me, Mr. Buchanan. That is the summary of a member of the Rockefeller Commission panel. Unless you can show me, sir—

KINSLEY: Where would he get this idea?

Mr. POSNER: It's a typical conversation—

BUCHANAN: That's your conversation.

Dr. WECHT: Wait just a moment, sir. That is his recording of my conversation, not an actual electronic conversation.

Mr. POSNER: Oh, you deny it?

BUCHANAN: Are you denying that?

Dr. WECHT: Absolutely.

BUCHANAN: I mean, it's very dramatic. It just shows you stating that the coat moved—

Dr. WECHT: Don't say that is shows me stating. It refers to—

BUCHANAN: Is that a forgery?

Dr. WECHT: Yes— what do you mean a forgery? He didn't have to forge. That is his interpretation of what he thinks I said then in 1974.

KINSLEY: But, Mr. Wecht, let me ask you this. If— I mean, I'm not an assassination buff. If clearly this Rockefeller Commission was talking about this lapel business back in 1975, how is it that Mr. Posner was the first one to make it public in 1992? What happened in all those years?

Dr. WECHT: Ask Mr. Posner.

KINSLEY: How is it that you had never—

Mr. POSNER: You knew about it, Dr. Wecht, and you hid this fact.

Dr. WECHT: Doesn't that prove my point? The fact of the matter is that if this is something that has been known for 18 years—

Mr. POSNER: You knew it.

Dr. WECHT: —how come, therefore— no, no, no. I did not know it, and I do not have any, any acceptance of that proposal. The fact of the matter is that in a discussion, in a debate at New York University two weeks ago with Dr. Michael Bodin, [sp?] my colleague, who is chairman of the Forensic Pathology panel, he dismissed this flapping of the coat lapel. The bullet did not go through the lapel.

BUCHANAN: All right. We're going to move—

Dr. WECHT: Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Kinsley, it went through the coat. The bullet would have gone through the lapel or the coat in less than two-thousandths of a second, and therefore when you see it in 225, if indeed it is there, it is already much too late.

BUCHANAN: OK, Dr. Wecht—

Dr. WECHT: That bullet has already gone halfway down

to the other side of Dallas.

BUCHANAN: We're going to ask you— we're going to ask Mr. Posner, if he— when we come back, if he believes any one had knowledge, prior knowledge of the assassination of John F. Kennedy. We're going to ask Dr. Wecht who he thinks was behind the assassination of John F. Kennedy, if there were, indeed, two gunmen. We'll be back.

Pres. JOHN F. KENNEDY: The energy, the faith, the devotion which we bring to this endeavor will light our country and all who serve it, and the glow from that fire can truly light the world. And so my fellow Americans ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country.

[Commercial break]

Pres. KENNEDY: Two thousand years ago, two thousand years ago, the proudest boast was, *quiewa romanus sum*. [?] Today in the world of freedom, the proudest boast is *Ich bin ein Berliner*.

BUCHANAN: Welcome back. As we approach the 30th anniversary of the assassination of JFK in Dallas, we have invited as guest Gerald Posner, author of *Case Closed*, who believes that new technology has so enhanced the Zapruder film that it is now clear and conclusive that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone, and Dr. Cyril Wecht, a Pittsburgh pathologist who says that an accurate reading of the Zapruder film points directly toward conspiracy. His book is called *Cause of Death*. Michael?

KINSLEY: Mr. Posner, let's go to the second problem that many people have with the single bullet theory, which is the point Dr. Wecht was making. It also is part of a very famous scene in the movie *JFK*, Oliver Stone's movie which has to do with how supposedly the bullet would have to zigged and zagged this way and the other way in order to hit both Kennedy and Connally the way it did and then end up on the—

Mr. POSNER: On the stretcher in such good condition. It's a very easy answer to it, and that's why Dr. Wecht and the rest of the people who want to believe in a conspiracy ignore the timing confirmation of—

KINSLEY: Yeah, yeah, all right.

Mr. POSNER: Because if you have that confirmation, all you do, then, Mike, is you look at the two of them in the car together, Kennedy and Connally, at the frame that they're hit. You put the wounds in Kennedy based upon the autopsy x-rays and photos, the wounds in Connally based upon the surgical reports of Parkland and a computer then answers the question for you in a three dimensional view as to whether one bullet could do the damage to the two of them, those seven wounds, and guess what? It's a straight line trajectory at those frames, straight through Kennedy's high neck, shoulder—

KINSLEY: What about his point about how little damage the bullet has undergone?

Mr. POSNER: Well, as a matter of fact what Dr. Wecht ignores, what the Warren Commission didn't understand and nobody else, and it now makes sense, ballistic experts know this, as the bullet passes through the bodies of the two men, it slows up. So it's fired at 2000 feet a second from Oswald's rifle. It goes through Kennedy, it doesn't hit

bone, it slows. It goes through Connally's chest, it slows. By the time it hits the big radius bone, which Dr. Wecht said could never be hit by a bullet and remain undamaged, it's traveling at about 900 feet a second, fast enough to break the bone, not fast enough to deform the bullet, and this isn't a theory, because, as you know, I reproduce photographs in my book of a shooting experiment last year in California with ammunition just like Oswald used, reduced velocity, through a cadaver's wrist. It emerges in better condition than the bullet found on the stretcher.

KINSLEY: What about—

BUCHANAN: Dr. Wecht, do you want to talk to that before I give you another question?

Dr. WECHT: Yes, very definitely. Anybody listening to the program tonight should do this experiment. Just take two people, sit them in a room, put them in tandem, 25 inches apart, run a string from the upper right corner of the window, OK, in the corner of wherever you are. Take the string into the back of the first person, representing Kennedy. Pick it up on the front of the neck of Kennedy, and if you can get that string to come over and get into behind John Connally's right posterior arm pit area, then you have done something that is magical. What Mr. Posner keeps talking about is this computer enhancement, this simulated thing. He forgets and ignores to tell you—please, Mr. Posner, be honest with your viewers and your hosts tonight and let them know that the other scientists at the FAA who did this work, and not for you, Mr. Posner, but for the American Bar Association, to sell their wares, that one half of them at least disagreed, including the president of the corporation.

KINSLEY: How about that?

Dr. WECHT: So don't talk about—

Mr. POSNER: No, no—

Dr. WECHT: One more point with regard to—

Mr. POSNER: Don't distort the record.

Dr. WECHT: —the condition of the bullet.

KINSLEY: Hold on a second.

Mr. POSNER: What you're doing—

KINSLEY: Hold on, Dr. Wecht.

Mr. POSNER: You know, it's very interesting. You're trying to attack the source, because you can't deal with the substance. Because you know the substance—

Dr. WECHT: The source? You have represented that you had a special study done—

Mr. POSNER: Wait a minute. It's public record, and I have this—

KINSLEY: Mr. Posner—

Mr. POSNER: Yes, Michael?

KINSLEY: Now, let's— hold on, Dr. Wecht.

Mr. POSNER: Let me tell you—

KINSLEY: This— is it true, however, that among the scientists who conducted these studies that you rely on them about half of them disagree with you completely?

Mr. POSNER: No, Dr. Piziali, [sp?] who did the studies that I rely on for Failure Analysis is absolutely convinced that this is the historical truth. What Dr. Wecht is trying to confuse the issue with—

Dr. WECHT: And as far as the president, Dr. Roger

McCarthy, disagrees.

Mr. POSNER: —is that that firm did the defense and prosecution after the mock trial—

BUCHANAN: All right. We got disagreement on the experts. Let's get Dr. Wecht back in here.

Mr. POSNER: There's no disagreement on the people who did the study—

BUCHANAN: Dr. Wecht—

Mr. POSNER: Absolutely not.

BUCHANAN: Dr. Wecht, let me ask you a question.

Dr. WECHT: Sure.

BUCHANAN: Jack Ruby killed Lee Harvey Oswald.

Dr. WECHT: That we know.

BUCHANAN: Now, if he did that at the behest of the mob, why did the mob not kill him, and why did he not confess to that in the three years? Why did he take that secret to his death, and why has no really hard evidence turned up that he was acting under orders?

Dr. WECHT: Mr. Buchanan, you are a very knowledgeable guy. I read your column. OK, you know a lot about the Mafia. To ask that kind of a question, sir, I think is a little disingenuous. You know how the mob works. Jack Ruby goes back with the Mafia to the age of 17. He was a pimp, a hustler, a con artist, a police informant, an FBI informant, sent down to Dallas. He smuggled guns into Cuba. Jack Ruby thought he was going to be a big hero, man. He thought that he would have medals pinned on him. Yeah, he might spend a little bit of jail time, and he'd come out and he'd make millions of dollars. A guy like that doesn't talk. A guy like that wanted to pound his chest and say, "Yes, I did it." The fact of the matter is that Jack Ruby was led into the police station that day by a high ranking official. Gerald Posner has dismissed that—

Mr. POSNER: Absolutely false.

Dr. WECHT: That's a matter of record with the House Select Committee on Assassinations.

BUCHANAN: OK. You've given us your arguments. Let's let Gerald Posner talk to the Ruby matter.

Mr. POSNER: Dr. Wecht, that's such a distortion, and you know it. It's absolutely happenstance on Sunday when Ruby goes down to send a money-gram to a stripper of his and his receipt's time-stamped 11:17. Oswald's killed four minutes later. He was supposed to have been transferred an hour and a half earlier, and you can't deny that, but here's the key question for you.

Dr. WECHT: It was just a coincidence that he happened to be there?

Mr. POSNER: Wait. If Ruby is a hired hit man by the Mafia, as you think, then why didn't he kill Oswald on Friday night, the first opportunity he had, the day of the assassination, not wait until Sunday? He's at the jail. He has his gun with him. Oswald walks two feet in front of him, and Ruby doesn't make a move to kill him. Now, G. Robert Blakey, who's the counsel for the Select Committee, when asked that question, he thinks the mob's involved, says, "Well, Ruby was staking him out." You mean that Jack Ruby had a contract to kill the President's assassin, but they're going to let him live for a couple of days so he could spill the beans? Why doesn't he kill him on Friday?

Dr. WECHT: He chose his time and his place for his own purposes, possibly even to be on national television.

BUCHANAN: Is it true that Ruby—

Dr. WECHT: It's remarkable—

BUCHANAN: —was supposed to be moved an hour and a half earlier?

Dr. WECHT: Let me just make a—

BUCHANAN: Was Ruby supposed to be moved an hour and a half earlier?

Dr. WECHT: Come on, Pat. All you got to do is make one phone call from the same kind of people that let him in. Isn't it remarkable that you've gotten Mr. Posner here, Pat, and you are putting him on some kind of a pedestal? Did you it ever occur to you, sir, that in all these years, all of these people, including, as Mr. Posner himself just said, G. Robert Blakey, professor of law at Notre Dame, who was head of the HSA counsel—

BUCHANAN: Who did it?

Dr. WECHT: —all of the criminals, all the forensic psychiatrists, everybody's wrong, Mr. Gerald Posner—

BUCHANAN: Who killed Kennedy?

Dr. WECHT: —a lawyer in New York City for seven years, he comes forward and he's got everything. He's created a second magical bullet that hits a—

BUCHANAN: Dr. Wecht, calm down and tell us an answer to one question. Who killed Kennedy, in 10 words? Who killed Kennedy?

Dr. WECHT: Do you mean, sir, who orchestrated this, or do you mean who pulled the trigger?

BUCHANAN: Who ordered it?

Dr. WECHT: I can't tell you who pulled the trigger. Who ordered it? A small maverick element, no more than six people, a rogue element, unauthorized of the CIA, possibly one liaison with the military intelligence establishment. They are the ones who orchestrated this—

KINSLEY: I've got to cut you off—

Dr. WECHT: —to get rid of John Kennedy.

KINSLEY: All right. Thank you, Dr. Cyril Wecht. Mr. Posner, you wanted back in. You can't be back in. People can buy both their books. Pat and I will settle this in just a moment.

[Commercial break]

BUCHANAN: Michael, Mr. Posner has a very good point. I happen to believe it's Oswald acted alone, but look, if it is, so-called CIA guys or military guys, give us the names of the six conspirators or the six organized crime guys, then people can run down and disprove it was those guys. They never name them.

KINSLEY: Well, don't look at me. I'm not one of these conspiracy theorists, but I do think that when Mr. Posner calls his book *Case Closed*, he's engaging in a bit of hype, both on substantive grounds — his book is not going to be definitive — and secondly, even if it was definitive, people would not believe it. This case will never be closed.

BUCHANAN: Well, you know, I think for reasonable— look, if it is true that the scientific evidence shows that that one bullet went through and Connally's flap occurred just at that very point, I think it's awfully conclusive that the one bullet theory is right, and if that's right, Oswald

fired alone.

KINSLEY: It's probable, it's not conclusive.

BUCHANAN: How did the other bullet exit?

KINSLEY: From the left, I'm Mike Kinsley. Good night for Crossfire.

BUCHANAN: From the right, Pat Buchanan. Join us Monday for another edition of Crossfire.

KINSLEY: *PrimeNews* is next. Here's Bernard Shaw with a brief look at the headlines. Bernie?

BERNARD SHAW, PrimeNews: Thank you, Michael. Ahead on *PrimeNews*, one senator calls it a dramatic step in stemming the tide of violence on U.S. streets; the crime bill passes. And regrets and apologies come from Republican consultant Ed Rollins. We'll have the latest in the allegations of voter suppression in New Jersey's gubernatorial election. *PrimeNews* is next.

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