EXPERT EXAMINATION OF RIFLE, CARTRIDGE CASES, AND BULLET FRAGMENTS

On the sixth floor of the Depository Building, the Dallas police found three spent cartridges and a rifle. A nearly whole bullet was discovered on the stretcher used to carry Governor Connally at Parkland Hospital. As described in the preceding section, five bullet fragments were found in the President's limousine. The cartridge cases, the nearly whole bullet and the bullet fragments were all subjected to firearms identification analysis by qualified experts. It was the unanimous opinion of the experts that the nearly whole bullet, the two largest bullet fragments and the three cartridge cases were definitely fired in the rifle found on the sixth floor of the Depository Building to the exclusion of all other weapons.

Discovery of Cartridge Cases and Rifle

Shortly after the assassination, police officers arrived at the Depository Building and began a search for the assassin and evidence.[108] Around 1 p.m. Deputy Sheriff Luke Mooney noticed a pile of cartons in front of the window in the southeast corner of the sixth floor.[109] (See Commission Exhibit No. 723, p. 80.) Searching that area he found at approximately 1:12 p.m. three empty cartridge cases on the floor near the window.[110] When he was notified of Mooney's discovery, Capt. J. W. Fritz, chief of the homicide bureau of the Dallas Police Department, issued instructions that nothing be moved or touched until technicians from the police crime laboratory could take photographs and check for fingerprints.[111] Mooney stood guard to see that nothing was disturbed.[112] A few minutes later, Lt. J. C. Day of the Dallas Police Department arrived and took photographs of the cartridge cases before anything had been moved.[113]

At 1:22 p.m. Deputy Sheriff Eugene Boone and Deputy Constable Seymour Weitzman found a bolt-action rifle with a telescopic sight between two rows of boxes in the northwest corner near the staircase on the sixth floor.[114] No one touched the weapon or otherwise disturbed the scene until Captain Fritz and Lieutenant Day arrived and the weapon was photographed as it lay on the floor.[115] After Lieutenant Day determined that there were no fingerprints on the knob of the bolt and that the wooden stock was too rough to take fingerprints, he picked the rifle up by the stock and held it that way while Captain Fritz opened the bolt and ejected a live round.[116] Lieutenant Day retained possession of the weapon and took it back to the police department for examination.[117] Neither Boone nor Weitzman handled the rifle.[118]

Discovery of Bullet at Parkland Hospital

A nearly whole bullet was found on Governor Connally's stretcher at Parkland Hospital after the assassination. After his arrival at the hospital the Governor was brought into trauma room No. 2 on a