

'Reasonable Doubt' presents a strong case in murder of JFK

It is estimated early in "Reasonable Doubt," a meticulous documentary on the assassination of President Kennedy which can be seen at 7 tonight and 11 p.m. tomorrow on the Arts and Entertainment cable network, that only 13 percent of Americans believe the findings of the Warren Commission report on the events in Dallas Nov. 22, 1963.

If the remaining believers watch this show, the percentage could drop to zero.

The documentary, made by University of Maryland graduate student Chip Selby and a winner of the CINE Golden Eagle Award for best documentary, does not attempt to solve what remains America's biggest murder mystery. But it makes a pretty convincing case that "from the beginning, the government concerned itself not with the facts but with restoring public confidence."

Several researchers, including former Texas Gov. John Connally's own surgeon, suggest forensic work on JFK's body was sloppy at best and a planned coverup at worst, and that the available evidence suggests Lee Harvey Oswald could not possibly have been the only shooter in the assassination.

Yet the Warren Commission concluded that Oswald acted alone. "Reasonable Doubt" conducts a close examination of the Commission's finding that the bullet which wounded Connally first passed through Kennedy and was subsequently recovered from a hospital stretcher.

The famous "Zapruder film," shot by an amateur movie-maker, is seen in actual time and slow motion in

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the documentary. It seems to clearly show that Kennedy was struck first, with a relatively long lag before Connally shows a reaction to being shot, making a single bullet unlikely.

The show includes press conference footage of Connally maintaining the same thing.

Further, a lengthy exploration of the angle of trajectory a single bullet would have to have followed discounts the theory. In addition, extensive ballistics tests on similar bullets showed they would have been markedly deformed after passing through two bodies, yet the recovered slug was hardly damaged at all.

The doctors who operated in vain on Kennedy first contended a wound in his throat—incredibly, a bullet wound completely ignored in the autopsy report because pathologists apparently believed it to be merely a tracheostomy wound—was an entry wound, not an exit. That gave rise to the belief that a second shooter in front of the Kennedy limousine,

on the so-called "grassy knoll," was involved.

Later, however, the physicians told the Warren Commission the opposite. And because Oswald was himself assassinated by Jack Ruby, there was no trial to bring out the irregularities.

As the documentary concludes, "there are few answers, and many questions."