NUMBER OF SHOTS - INJURIES TO GOVERNOR

Testimony of - Governor and Mrs. John Bowden CONNALLY
April 21, 1964, 4 H 129-49

The Governer is preceded on t he stand by Drs. Shaw and Gregory.

The Governor's first account in his narrative of the shots, who they hit, what he observed and recalls, is lucid, credible, and by its detail reveals he did, in fact, maintain consciousness and knew exactly what was happening. It is as though he anticipated the fiction the Commission was goming to create, that he sustained a delayed reaction, because in advance he answered it. As I believe he points out later, the bullet travels faster than its sound, and he would have felt the first bullet before hearing it had it hit him.

The following excerpt is at the bottom of p.132 and occupies most of p.133:

"We had just made the turn, well, when I heard what I thought was a shot. I heard this noise which I immediately took to be a rifle shot. I instinctively turned to my right because the sound appeared to come from over my right shoulder, so I turned to look back over my right shoulder, and I saw nothing unusual except just people in the crowd, but I did not catch the President in the corner of my eye, and I was interested, because once I heard the shot in my own mind I identified it as a rifle shot, and I immediately - the only thought that crossed my mind was that this is an assassination attempt.

"So I looked, failing to see him, I was turning to look back over my left shoulder into the back seat, but I never got that far in my turn. I got about in the position I am in now facing you, looking a little bit to the left of center, and then I felt like someone had hit me in the back.

"Mr. Specter. What is the best estimate that you have as to the time span between the sound of the first shot and the feeling of someone

hitting you in the back which you just described?

"Governor Connally. A very, very brief span of time. Again my trend of thought just happened to be, I suppose along this line, I immediately thought that this - that I had been shot. I knew it when I just looked down and I was covered with blood, and the thought immediately passed through my mind that there were either two or three people involved or more in this or someone was shooting with an automatic rifle. These were just thoughts that went through my mind because of the rapidity of these two, of the first shot plus the blow that I took, and I knew I had been hit, and I immediately assumed, because of the amount of blood, and, in fact, that it had obviously passed through my chest, that I had probably been fatally hit.

"So I merely doubled up, and then turned to my right again and began to - I just sat there, and Mrs. Connally pulled me over to her lap. She was sitting, of course, on the jump seat, so I reclined with my head in her lap, conscious all the time, and with my eyes open; and then, of course, the third shot sounded, and I heard the shot very clearly. I heard it hit him. I heard the shot hit something, and I assumed again - it never entered my mind that it ever hit anybody but the President. I heard it hit. It was a very loud noise, just that audible, very clear.

"Immediately I could see on my clothes, my clothing, I could see on the interior of the car which, as I recall, was a pale blue, brain tissue, which I immediately recognized, and I recall very well, on my trousers there was one chunk of brain tissue as big as almost my thumb, thumbnail, and again I did not see the President at any time either after the first, second, or third shots, but I assumed always that it was he who was hit and no one else.

"I immediately, when I was hit, I said, 'Oh, no, no, no.' And then I said, 'My God, they are going to kill us all.' Nellie, when she pulled me over into her lap -

"Mr. Specter. Nellie is Mrs. Connally?

"Governor Connally. Mrs. Connally. When she pulled me over into her lap, she could tell I was still breathing and moving, and she said, 'Don't worry. Be quiet. You are going to be all right.' She just kept telling me I was going to be all right.

"After the third shot, and I heard Roy Kellerman tell the driver, 'Bill get out of line.' And then I saw him move, and I assumed he was moving a button or something on the panel of the automobile, and he said, 'Get us to a hospital quick.' I assumed he was saying this to the patrolman, the motorcycle police who were leading us.

"At about that time, we began to pull out of the cavalcade, out of the line, and I lost consciousness and didn't regain consciousness until we got to the hospital." (p.133)

Gov. Connally expresses so clearly what happened that I shall, for the most part, just excerpt his testimony.

He repeated his appraisal of the rapidity of the shots and the thought that if it was one person he would use an automatic rifle:

"It was extremely rapid, so much so that again I thought that whoever was firing must be firing with an automatic rifle because of the rapidity of the shots; a very short period of time." (p.134)

On what Mrs. Kennedy said: "Yes; she said, I heard her say one time, 'I have got his brains in my hand.'" (p.134)

They then get into his wound (p.134). On the thigh wound:

"Mr. Specter. Can you describe the nature of the wound in the thigh?

Governor Connally. Well, just a raw, open wound, looked like a fairly deep penetration." (p.1 35)

His further explanation, including why he didn't hear the bullet that hit him:

"Mr. Specter. In your view, which bullet caused the injury to your chest, Governor Connally?

Governor Connally. The second one.

Mr. Specter. And what is your reason for that conclusion, sir?

Governor Connally. Well, in my judgment, it just couldn't conceivably have been the first one because I heard the sound of the shot/ In the first place, I don't know anything about the velocity of this particular bullet, but any rifle has a velocity that exceeds the speed of sound, and when I heard the sound of o that first shot, that bullet had already reached where I was, or it had reached (p.135) that far, and after I heard that shot, I had the time to turn to my right, and start to turn to my left before I felt anything.

It is not conceivable to me thatI could have been hit by the first bullet, and then I felt the blow from some thing which was obviously a bullet, which I assumed was a bullet, and I never heard the second shot, didn't hear it. I didn't hear but two shots. I think I heard the first shot and the third shot.

Mr. Specter. Do you have any idea as to why you did not hear the second shot?

Govemor Connally. Well, first, again I assume the bullet was traveling faster than the sound. I was hit by the bullet prior to the time the sound reached me, and I was in either a state of shock or the impact was such that the sound didn't even register on me, but I was never conscious of hearing the second shot at all.

Obviously, at least the major wound that I took in the shoulder through the chest couldn't have been anything but the second shot. Obviously, it couldn't have been the third, because when the third shot was fired I was in a reclining position, and heard/ it, saw it and the effects of it, rather - I didn't see it. I saw the effects of it - so it obviously could not have been the third, and couldn't have been the first, in my judgment." (p.136)

There is further discussion of the Governor's wounds. He unclothed himself so the Commission could better see the scars. The doctors came forward and offered further explanations and interpretations. Asked the angle of the chest wound, Dr. Shaw estimated it from 25 to 30°. With a caliper, he said it was right at 25°. (p.137) There is then explanation of the nature of othe treatment, including the measures necessary for drainage and to prevent infection, things of that sort. The entry point of the woundon the Governor's thigh is located at 5 or 6 inches frmm his kneee.

Connally again explains himself:

"Mr. Dulles. How did you happen to turn then to the left, do you remember why that was?

Governor Connally. Yes, sir; I know exactly. I turned to the right both to see, because it was an instinctive movement, because that is where the sound came from, but even more important, I immediately thought it was a rifleshot. I immediately thought of an assassination attempt, and I turned to see if I could see the President, to see if he was all right. Failing to see him over my right shoulder, I turned to look over my left shoulder.

Mr. Dulles. I see.

Governor Connally. Into the back seat, and I never completed that

(p.138)
turn, I got no more than substantially looking forward, a little bit to the left of forward, when I got hit." (p.139)

When shown the Commission's artist's conception (Exhibit 689, 17 H 346) and asked if it represents the approximate position or "the alinement with your right hand being on your left leg as you have just described?", he replied, "No; it looks like my right hand is up on my chest. But I don't know. I can't say with any degree of certainty where my right hand was, frankly." (p.139)

This exhibit does show the Governor's right hand on or near his chest. It does not show his hand on his thigh. (p.139)

Gov. Connally's opinion: "I assumed that I had turned as I described a moment ago, placing my right hand on my left leg, that it hit my wrist, went out the center of the wrist, the underside, and then into my leg, but it might not have happened that way at all." (p.140)

They then go into questioning about any threats from Oswald, whether or not Connally thought there was a conspiracy, etc. (p.140)

Oswald's attitude toward Connally was friendly, according to Dulles, who said, "I think I can say without violating any confidence, that there is nothing in the record to indicate that there was - in fact, Marina, the wife, testified, in fact, to the contrary. There was no animus against you on the part of Oswald ..." (p.141)

On the marksman's targets:

"Representative Boggs. You have no doubt about the fact that he was deliberately trying to hit you?

Governor Connally. Yes, I do; I do have doubt, Congressman. I am not at all sure he was shooting at me. I think I could with some logic argue either way. The logic in favor of him, of the position that he was shooting at me, is simply borne out by the fact that the man fired

three shots, and he hit each of the three times he fired. He obviously was a pretty good marksman, so you have to assume to some extent at least that he was hitting what he was shooting at.

On the other hand, I think I could argue with equal logic that obviously his prime target, and I think really his sole target, was President Kennedy. His first shot, at least to him, he could not have but known the effect that it might have on the President. His second shot showed that he had clearly missed the President, and his result to him, as the result of the first shot, the President slumped and changed his position in the back seat just enough to expose my back. I haven't seen all of the various positions, but again I think from where he was shooting I was in the direct line of fire immediately in front of o the President, so any movement on ~~it~~ the part of the President would expose me.

The Chairman. Have you seen the moving pictures, Governor?

Governor Connally. Yes, sir; I have, Mr. Chief Justice." (p.141)

The thigh wound, Connally says, has no exit point.

Dr. Gregory describes the scars on the wrist as well healed and about an inch and a half on one side and a half inch on the other. (p.141)

Connally then identifies the clothing he was wearing. (Exhibits 683-8, 17 H 340-5). In the photographs, the coat and trousers are so arranged that the entry and exit points of the missile are not visible. On the shirt, which contains many markings, presumably of blood, certain markings on the front and back are encircled, apparently indicating the point of entry and exit of the bullet.

Specter gives dignity to rumorsby referring to information in the following excerpt from p.142:

"Mr. Specter. Governor Connally, in 1963 we were informed that

Lee Harvey Oswald paid a visit~~xxxxxx~~ to Austin, Tex., and is supposed also to/have visited your office. Do you have any knowledge of such a visit?

Governor Connally. No, sir." (p.142)

After Connally's statemant that he was unconscious on the short trip to the hospital:

"Mr. Specter. Do you have recollection of your arrival at the hospital itself, at the Parkland Hospital?

Governor Connally. Yes. I think when the car stopped the driver was obviously driving at a very rapid rate of speed, and apparently, as he threw on the brakes of the car, it brought me back to consciousness.

Again, a strange thing - strange things run through your mind and, perhaps, not so strange under the circumstances, but I immediately - the only thought that occurred to me ~~was~~ that I was in the ~~jump~~ jump seat next to the door, that everyone concerned, was going to be concerned with the President; that I had to get out of the way so they could get to the President. So although I was reclining, and again Mrs. Connally holding me, I suddenly lurched out of her arms and tried to ~~s~~and upright to get myself out of the car.

I got - I don't really know how far I got. They tell me I got almost upright, and then just collapsed again, and someone then picked me up and put me on a stretcher. I again was very conscious because this was the first time that I had any real sensation of pain, and at this point the pain in the chest was excruciating, and I kept repeating just over and over, 'My God, it hurts, it hurts,' and it was hurting, it was excruciating at that point.

I was conscious then off and on during the time I was in the emergency room. I don't recall that I remember everything, but I remem-

ber quite a bit. I remember being wheeled down the passageway, I remember doctors and various people talking in the emer gency room, I remember them asking me a number of questions, too, which I answered, but that was about it." (p.143).

There were no bullets or bullet fragments in Connally's body or clothing as he was placed on the stretcher at Parkland Hospital, so far as he knows (p.143).

Asked again about the shots, Connally qualifies himself as an expert with long experience: " ... I have all my life been familiar with the sound of a rifleshot, and the sound I heard I thought was a rifleshot, at the time I heard it I didn't think it was a firecracker, or blowout or anything else. I thought it was a rifleshot. I have hunted enough to think that my perception with respect to directions is very, very good, and this shot I heard came from back over my right shoulder, which was in the direction of the School Book Depository, no question about it. I heard no other. The first and third shots came from there. I heard no other sounds that would indicate to me there was any commotion or disturbance of shots or anything else on the overpass." (p.144)

Specter asks Connally if he had seen the films and the clips or slides, and when Connally affirms he had, Specter asks at approximately what point Connally was hit. Connally placed it at after frame 230 and by frame 234. He identified the location as "just after we came out of the sign ..." (p.145)

There are no questions about the cleaning andlaundering of the Governor's clothing, which have been placed in the archives of the state of Texas.

Mrs. Connally's testimony begins at the bottom of p.146. Her

dramatic description of the events that immediately followed upon her telling the President that Dallas loved him, completely corroborates her husband's account of these events. Note especially that she saw him react to the second shot. She saw him recoil from it. She clearly distinguished between the first, the second and the third shots. There are often weaknesses in eyewitness accounts, but the testimony of the two Connallys taken together requires a lot more than the conjecture of the Commission to refute it:

"Mrs. Connally. ... Then I don't know how soon, it seems to me it was very soon, that I heard a noise, and not being an expert rifleman, I was not aware that it was a rifle. It was just a frightening noise, and it came from the right. I turned over my right shoulder and looked back, and saw the President as he had both hands at his neck.

Mr. Specter. And you are indicating with your own hands, two hands crossing over gripping your own neck?

Mrs. Connally. Yes; and it seemed to me there was - he made no utterances, no outcry. I saw no blood, no anything. It was just sort of nothing, the expression on his face, and he just sort of slumped down. Then very soon there was the second shot that hit John. As the first shot was hit, and I turned to look at the same time, I recall John saying, 'Oh, no, no, no.' Then there was a second shot, and it hit John, and as he recoiled to the right, just crumpled like a wounded animal to the right, he said, 'My God, they are going to kill us all.'
I never again -

Mr. Dulles. To the right was into your arms more or less?

Mrs. Connally. No, he turned away from me. I was pretending that I was him. I never again looked in the back seat of the car after my husband was shot. My concern was for him, and I remember that he

turned to the right and then just slumped down into the seat, so that I reached over to pull him toward me. I was trying to get him down and me down. The jump seats were not very roomy, so that there were reports that he slid into the seat of the car, which he did not; that he fell over into my lap, which he did not.

I just pulled him over into my arms because it would have been impossible to get us really both down with me sitting and me holding him. So that I looked out, I mean as he was in my arms, I put my head down over his head so that his head and my head were right together, and all I could see, too, were the people flashing by. I didn't look back any more. The third shot that I heard I felt, it felt like spent buckshot falling all over us, and then, of course, I too could see that it was the matter, brain tissue, or whatever, just human matter, all over the car and both of us. I thought John had been killed, and then there was some imperceptible movement, just some little something that let me know that there was still some life, and that is when I started saying to him, 'It's all right. Be still.'" (p.147)

Of the arrival at the hospital, she confirms her husband's testimony, saying "John just sort of heaved himself up. He did not rise up in the car, he just sort of heaved himself up, and then collapsed down into the seat." (p.148) Mrs. Connally also recalls Mrs. Kennedy saying she had her husband's brains in her hand.

She recalls the presence of two waiting stretchers and the trip into the emergency room with them at a run. She ran along, she said. (p.148) Mrs. Connally describes her feelings and observations in the hospital.

She saw the frame from the Zapruder film and said she is "in agreement with the Governor. I am not sure I remember the numbers, so correct

me, but I thought at the time that it was that 229 - it could have been through the next three or four frames." (p.149)