"THE SHOT THAT MISSED"

This is the tantalizing mystery presented by the Commission in its reconstruction and in its topical heading. One section of Chapter 3 is devoted to this topic. The introduction to this section on p.lll of the report reads as follows: "From the initial findings that (a) one shot passed through the President's neck and then most probably (my emphasis) passed through the Governor's body, (b) a subsequent shot penetrated the President's head, (c) no other shot struck any part of the automobile, and (d) three shots were fired, it follows that one shot probably missed the car and its occupants. The evidence is inconclusive as to whether it was the first, second, or third shot which missed."

My underlining of "most probably" with reference to the bullet that caused the Governor's wounds is to call attention to the fact that, even if everything else the Report says is true, its conclusion that only three shots were fired - a conclusion at top means that only one person was involved - is based upon a presumption and not upon fact. This alone should have been enough to have caused a thorough investigation of the possibility of shots from another source and a person other than Oswald. No such investigation occurred.

Note that even with its typical cagy language the Report says, "It follows that one shot probably missed the car". Elsewhere in the report they state that a bullet did hit a curb. They nowhere identify the spot at which it hit the curb. They leave it, also, a complete and totally unnecessary mystery. Totally unnecessary, of course, means only if the purpose of the Report is to present all of the facts. Suppression was necessary to protect the Commission from charges of neglect, and sloppiness in its procedures and practices, inexcusable prejudice and bias, and generally just refusing to do the job.

~~expected of it.~~ With all the nonsense and trivia in this Report, with all the blank white spaces on the many pages, there was no consideration of space that caused the Commission to evade description of the spot at which the bullet struck.

Nonetheless, there is no question. The Commission considers the shot that missed a third shot. Not a fragment, not a ricochet, an entirely separate and distinct shot. But it didn't want to. Not until the very, very end did it give up.

Not because it didn't know sooner. Photographs of the curb at which this bullet hit were taken immmediately by 2 men who were subsequently witnesses in another connection. They were photographers C. Dillard, who photographed the face of the Book Depository building, and Underwood, the TV news director.

From its own records the Commission didn't look into this until July 7, 1964, when it asked the FBI to make an investigation. ~~I~~ discovered this entirely by accident, there ~~was~~ no logical means by which ~~I could have found it~~. What follows is a credit to neither the FBI nor the Commission.

Not until September 1 did the Commission call back Lyndal Shaneyfelt, the FBI photographic expert. Asst. Commission Counsel Norman Redlich took a deposition from him beginning at 10:45 a.m. at the Commission's offices. ~~This appears in Vol.~~ (XV, ~~pp.~~ 686-702) ~~The related exhibits appear in Vol. XXI, beginning on p.472.~~

Upon receipt of the request from the Commission, the FBI Dallas field office conducted an investigation that led to naught. This was reported in an unsigned memorandum of July 17, ~~appearing on pp.472-4.~~ In it the author politely ~~recalls~~ to the Commission's attention that the photographs in question "had been forwarded to the President's

Commission by Martha Joe Stroud, Assistant United StatesAttorney, Dallas, Texas."

In other words, if the FBI was going to be subject to criticism for not finding out what the Commission wanted, the FBI was going to have it on record that there was no need for the Commisson to have delayed so long in seeking further information.

This FBI report quotes Dillard as locating the point at which he took the picture. It was, he said, "on the south side of Main Street about twenty feet east of the triple underpass." This report located the point at which the bullet hit to within a half-inch of a specific landmark and says that, although "The area of the curb from this point for a distance of ten feet in either direction was carefully checked and it was ascertained that there was no nick in the curb in the checked area, nor was any mark observed." In the concluding paragraph, repeating the above information almost word for word, the Dallas Field Office concludes, "It should be noted that, since this mark was observed on November 23, 1963, there have been numerous rains, which could have possibly washed away such a mark and also that the area is cleaned by a street cleaning machine about once a week, which would also wash away any such mark."

Bear this in mind in considering what Shaneyfelt reports.

~~After the negative report Shaneyfelt himself went to Dallas.~~ He whom he

Under date of August 12, 1964, by courier service, J. Edgar Hoover reported the fruit of Shaneyfelt's investigation to Commission Counsel Rankin. This appears in Vol. (~~XXI, pp.~~ 21H 475-7.) ~~He apparently~~ Shaneyfelt had no trouble locating the spot. He used exactly the same raw materials as the Dallas field office had used - the two photographs.

4 - shot

What follows is all conjecture, and the most basic conjecture, ~~to bear in mind is~~ that all the shots came from the sixth-floor window. ~~They assume that all shots were fired accurately - that there was no wild shot. With these bases they concluded~~ that the shot would "correspond to frame 410 in the Zapruder film ..."and that it "went directly over the President's head." (~~Vol~~ XV, p.699).

Before supervising the removal of the curb and its transportation to the FBI in Washington on August 5, 1964, Shaneyfelt took a number of photographs, none of them with the possibility that the shot could have emanated from any other source in mind.

Redlich, rather than Shaneyfelt who conducted the investigation, in his own words refers to the contents of Mr. Hoover's report. But at this point, everyone has forgotten the original caution of the FBI field office about the lapse of time, the effect of the weather, and of the regular "cleaning machine". Even so, the language has so many qualificiations in it that it really proves nothing. Spectographic examination showed the metal smears on the curb were "essentially lead with a trace of antimony." This could have come from the mutilated bullet of the type presumed to have been used in the rifle. It could have come from a bullet of another type of manufacture. Or it could have come from other sources. By "mutilated bullet is meant one that hit another object first. In his letter Hoover precluded a bullet such as "from Governor Connally's stretcher", (He couldn't bring himself to say it was "found" there.) or "The bullet or bullets represented by the jacket fragments ... found in the Presidential limousine." He said "It was also determined from a microscopic study that the lead object that struck the curbing causing the mark was moving in a general direction away from the Texas School Book Depository Building." If it

were a fragment, he said, they didn't know enough to determine "whether it was caused by a fragment of a bullet striking the occupants of the Presidential limousine, such as the bullet that struck the President's head, or whether it is a fragment of a shot that may have missed the Presidential limousine."

Is Mr. Hoover saying that there couldn't have been a fragment from any other bullet that hit an occupant of the Presidential car?

To even entertain the thought that a fragment of the bullet that struck the President in the head could have gone this distance in this direction and left any kind of a mark on the curb is to do violence to Euclid, whom the Commission has already left unchaste. The most cursory examination of the clear photograph showing the impact of the bullet on the President's head, ~~together with~~ the chart drawn by the Bethesda Naval Hospital, makes it clear that a fragment could not possibly have gone in that direction without going in either a curve or without ricocheting in turn from something else, and there would appear to be nothing but air from which it could ricochet. The President's injury was entirely on the right side of his head. The place of impact of ~~the~~ bullet was ~~on~~ the left of the President. The President also was not turned in such a fashion as to make this possible.

Far from finished with speculation, Mr. Redlich (XV, H. 701) swings into this one: Assuming "a tentative conclusion that if three shots were fired during the assassination sequence, that one of these three shots missed the occupants of the car. Assuming that tentative conclusion to be a definite finding of fact for purposes of this question, are you able to tell us whether in your opinion, the location, ... provides any basis for determining which of the three shots fired by the assassin missed the Presidential limousine?"

Shaneyfelt was very cagy in his reply. It was, "Based on the assumptions as stated (my emphasis), it is my opinion that the examination of the mark on the curb has furnished only limited further information in this regard because it is not possible to establish whether or not this mark on the curb could have been made from a fragment of the shot that hit the President in the head or a fragment of another shot that missed. The very fact that it can be considered as one of the possibilities suggests a possibility of a third shot that missed."

The point of impact on the curb is located in terms of the President's location at the time his head was hit and it is 260 feet further away. Shaneyfelt said that, based on his information, "I have very little opinion" on which of the three shots missed.

Here again the Commission accomplishes the opposite of what it set out to do. It leaves more questions unanswered than it attempted to answer. And it really answered none.