

3 Assassins Conspired to Kill

Kennedy, Haverford Author Says

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A Haverford College teacher has developed a theory that President Kennedy was slain by at least three assassins working together.

According to Josiah Thompson, an assistant philosophy professor, a trap was sprung on the President in downtown Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963, and he was cut down in a crossfire.

Thompson, retained as a consultant on the assassination by Life Magazine, explains his theory in a book, "Six Seconds in Dallas," to be published soon by Bernard Geis Associates. Excerpts from the book will be published by the Saturday Evening Post.

The 32-year-old scholar maintains that Lee Harvey Oswald, while certainly involved in the assassination plot, probably was not the sniper who fired on the President from the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository building.

2 Simultaneous Bullets

However, Thompson says he has no idea who the guilty persons are. His purpose, he claims, is to prove to the nation that there was more than one assassin.

To do this, he relies heavily on photographic "evidence" and physical laws.

One of Thompson's principal contentions is that President Kennedy was struck in the head by two bullets fired almost simultaneously. The first, he says, came from the School Book Depository and smashed into the rear of the President's head.

This is adduced from a study

of the home movies of the assassination made by amateur photographer Abraham Zapruder. At frame 312 of Zapruder's film, Thompson finds that the President's head is struck, thrusting it forward violently.

One-18th of a Second

This motion, which Thompson says was caused by a bullet from the building in which Oswald worked, lasted for one-18th of a second, or the duration of one frame of the movie film. At the beginning of frame 314, Mr. Kennedy's head is driven sharply backward and to the left.

This change in direction, Thompson contends, was caused by a second bullet, fired from the right front of the President's limousine by a sniper hiding behind a stockade fence on a grassy knoll.

In support of this, Thompson points out that parts of the President's skull and brain tissue were driven backwards over the limousine and onto two motorcycle policemen, positioned to the left rear of the vehicle.

Like a Shooting Gallery

Quoting Dr. A. J. Riddle, member of the Brain Research Institute and assistant professor of physics at the University of California at Los Angeles, Thompson says:

"At a shooting gallery, for instance, the ducks fall away from the marksman, not toward him. Thus, if someone is shot, and the shot strikes bone, the general direction of recoil will be away from—not toward—the marksman."

A second major point made by Thompson is that Texas Gov.

John B. Connally, seated directly in front of Mr. Kennedy in the limousine, could not possibly have been wounded by the bullet that struck the President in the back.

The 'Single Bullet' Theory

The "single bullet" theory, developed by Philadelphia District Attorney Arlen Specter while working for the Warren Commission, holds that Oswald shot the President just below the collar line in the back. This bullet, according to the theory, passed through the President's body, exiting at the neck, and continued on to penetrate Connally's back, right wrist and thigh.

Since Oswald's Mannlicher-Carcano rifle could not be fired twice in less than 2.3 seconds, and since Connally shows clear signs of having been wounded about 1.5 seconds after the President was hit, the Commission concluded that both men were struck by the same bullet. If they were wounded by two separate bullets, a Commission lawyer has stated, it is tantamount to saying there was more than one assassin.

The Commission reconciled the fact that Connally showed signs of being hit 1.5 seconds after Mr. Kennedy was struck by concluding that the governor suffered a delayed reaction to the shot.

Connally's Exhalation

Thompson challenges this. He states that Connally's reaction came within one-quarter to one-half of a second after he was hit. Connally's right shoulder, Thompson maintains, dropped 20 degrees and his mouth filled



UPI Telephoto
Josiah Thompson

with air almost instantly after he was hit.

These reactions, the author contends, citing medical experts, are involuntary and could not be delayed. The contraction of the chest wall as a bullet pierces it automatically forces air out of the victim's mouth. Connally, himself, still insists he was not struck by the same bullet that hit the President.

If this thesis is true, Connally was hit about 1.5 seconds after Mr. Kennedy, far too long for both men to have been wounded by the same bullet.

Criticizes Warren Panel

In an interview, Thompson criticized the Warren Commission for not attempting to determine whether the bullet fragments recovered from Connally's wrist and the nearly-whole

bullet found at Dallas' Parkland Hospital, described as the slug that did all the damage, actually were part of the same projectile.

This could have been accomplished, Thompson said, through a neutron activation test. This test could show, in a short time, whether the fragments ever were part of the whole bullet, Thompson said. He added that he was confident the test would show the fragments and the whole bullet were never part of the same projectile.

In arguing against the single-bullet theory, Thompson also attacks the government pathologists who performed the autopsy on the President's body. He charges that Navy Cmdr. James J. Humes, chief pathologist, deliberately burned his original notes on the autopsy because they conflicted with the single-bullet theory.

Autopsy 'Bungled'

Thompson says the weight of evidence is that the first shot penetrated the President's back no more than two inches. The wound at the front of his throat, Thompson states, probably was caused by a bone fragment sprung loose when one of the two bullets that he believes struck Mr. Kennedy's head found its mark.

Because of the bungled autopsy, Thompson says, an adequate determination of the head injuries was never made. Also, no proof ever was found that the first bullet indeed had passed through the President's body, exiting at the neck, as required by the single-bullet theory.

Quoting world-famed forensic pathologist Milton Helpert on the use of nonexperienced pathologists to perform "a medico-legal autopsy," Thompson says: "It's like sending a seven-

year-old boy who has taken three lessons on the violin over to the New York Philharmonic and expecting him to perform a Tchaikovsky symphony. He knows how to hold the violin and bow, but he has a long way to go before he can make music."

His Conclusions

Based on his own investigation, Thompson states that:

—President Kennedy was wounded twice by shots fired from the Texas School Board Depository, one penetrating his back, the other striking the rear of his head.

—The President also was wounded in the head by a shot fired from behind the five-foot-high fence on the grassy knoll. The weapon probably was a long-barreled revolver or pistol, fired from about 40 yards.

—Connally was shot by an accomplice hiding on the roof of the County Records Building, the Dal-Tex Building or, possibly, the Criminal Courts Building, all adjacent to the Depository and offering a clear view of the triple underpass toward which the Presidential motorcade was headed. Thompson bases this conclusion also on the angle of entry of the wound in the governor's back.

3 Cartridges? A Ruse

The fact that three empty cartridge cases were found in the sixth-floor lair of the sniper in the Depository, Thompson states, was simply a ruse. One of the three cases, he says, using photographs to prove it, was so badly pinched in that it could not have held a bullet. It was thrown onto the floor with the other two to confuse investigators, he says.

Throughout his book, perhaps the most persuasive of the anti-

Warren Commission works, Thompson makes liberal use of photographic "evidence" heretofore unavailable, as well as charts, tables and exercises in photogrammetry and optics.

Where frames of the Zapruder film still are being kept secret by Life Magazine, Thompson, who has had access to them, has commissioned an artist to reproduce sketches of them.

Film Locked Up

One of his major appeals is for the Kennedy family to release the photos taken at the autopsy and for Life to release the Zapruder film, which it has refused to do, keeping the material locked in a vault as "a valuable asset of Time, Inc.," its parent company.

Thompson went so far as to offer Life all profits from the sale of his book if it would release the film, but the offer was rejected.

Dealing with Oswald, Thompson points out that many witnesses saw persons at the sixth-floor window whose descriptions do not correspond with that of the alleged assassin. He also says other witnesses placed Oswald on the first floor of the building just minutes before the shooting began.

Was Oswald Guilty?

"... The question of Oswald's guilt must remain—nearly four years after the event—still unanswered," Thompson writes.

Thompson said he became interested in the details of the assassination five days after it happened, when he first saw films of the event.

He developed a rudimentary knowledge of photogrammetry, ballistics, and other criminal sciences to help him piece together his thesis.

"There were no experts, so I

had to become my own expert," he said. He succeeded so well that he was hired by Life and was also consulted by Esquire Magazine.

'Responsible for Truth'

"I have no idea who the assassins were," Thompson said. "But I do know that something can still be done. Something must be done."

His involvement in the matter, he added, came because of his

intense interest in the subject. As he delved deeper into it, Thompson said, he found more and more evidence of inconsistencies and distortions in the Warren Report.

"As a member of the intellectual community, as someone with some time to do this work, I felt I had a responsibility," he said. "A responsibility to tell the truth."