

THE LINGERING SHADOW

Critics of Warren Panel's One-Bullet Theory Employ Conjecture, Not Fact

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(Fifth in a Series)

The critics have assaulted the Warren Commission theory that the bullet which pierced President John F. Kennedy's throat also caused the wounds to Texas Gov. John B. Connally.

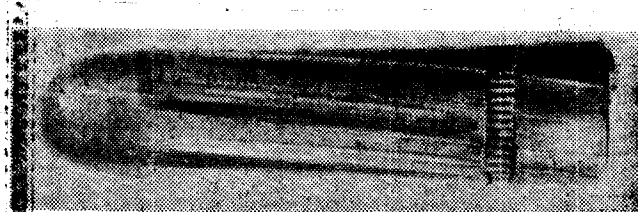
They have assailed the theory, but not with new evidence. They have used conjecture instead of fact. And, when they dig into the report for evidence, they do

not describe all that is on the shovel.

For example:

—Mark Lane contends the "alleged" assassin rifle is the Mannlicher-Carcano was planted. His evidence: the depository rifle was first described in press reports as a "Mauser." Lane also relies heavily on an affidavit by Constable Seymour Weitzman as describing the weapon as "a .45 Mauser bolt action." Lane emphasizes that Weitzman was a rifle expert. What is the fact? Weitzman testified he never handled the weapon and has since said that the word "Mauser" describes the bolt action. The Italian Mannlicher-Carcano as mentioned, was manufactured with the patented German Mauser bolt action, and the Italians rechambered it for 6.5mm ammunition.

—Edward Jay Epstein claims the autopsy report on Kennedy is suspect. His evidence: a dot on an autopsy sketch indicates a bullet entry below Kenne-



THIS IS BULLET 399—the one found at Parkland Hospital in Dallas. Some critics say it came from Gov. Connally's stretcher; the Warren Commission says it came from Kennedy's. Tests showed it was fired from Oswald's rifle, no other.

—AP Wirephoto

NEW YORK (AP) — CBS said Wednesday it "is not frivolous" to suspect that the Harvey Oswald had some connection with either the FBI or the CIA. The network said that the accused assassin's mother may not be quite so wrong about some kind of link between Oswald and various intelligence agencies of the United States."

...y's shoulder, which means the bullet couldn't have emerged to hit Connally. What is the fact? The dot is off the mark. But the descriptive detail with it locates the neck wound precisely.

—Harold Weisberg claims the film taken by a spectator, Abraham Zapruder, shows Kennedy was wounded much earlier than the commission says, and this means there had to be another gunman in another firing position. His evidence is obtained by pruning Zapruder's testimony. Just how and to what effect will be discussed further.

The impact of their attacks has had telling effect, but the most jarring challenge to the single-bullet theory came from one of the victims, Gov. Connally.

"I am convinced beyond any doubt that I was not struck by the first bullet," says the governor. He relates his recollection of the sequence in which he heard a shot — and since a bullet travels faster than sound, how could he have heard the same shot that hit him?

BUT THE commission found it could not be so certain. There was other evidence which indicated the governor could be in error about his reconstruction. The governor was clear about being hit in the chest. But he did not know until the next day that a bullet had gone through his wrist and hit his thigh. He thought there were 10 to 12 seconds between the first and last shots. But analysis of the Zapruder film indicated that there were 5.6 seconds during which one

shot wounded Kennedy and another killed him.

There also was uncertainty due to the testimony of Connally and his wife, Nellie. The governor testified that Kennedy was hit and had his hands at his throat. And then, he said, he was hit by a second shot. His wife agrees.

"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,'" Connally testified.

BUT MRS. Connally testified:

"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.'"

If the governor is correct that he said "Oh, no, no, no" as soon as he was hit, and if Mrs. Connally is correct that he said this before she heard a second shot, then the commission's assumption stands on reasonable ground.

The governor, viewing frames of the Zapruder film, picked Frames 231 to 234 as those representing the moment he believes he was hit. Scrutiny of these

frames shows the governor's hands are rather high, certainly above the point at which the bullet exited from the governor's chest — a point two inches below the center of the right nipple. Since the bullet caused a chest wound from back to

front at a 25-degree downward angle, it would have been necessary for the bullet to then make an upward turn to go through the top of his right wrist and then come down to a point five

inches above his left knee.

HAD THERE not been the Zapruder film, it is possible that investigators might have reached a simple equation of three wounds — three bullets.

Three used shells near the sixth-floor window of the depository fortified the conclusion there were three shots. And of the 205 persons who gave statements regarding the number of shots, 119 said they heard three, seven heard two or more and 39 heard "some."

In analyzing the Zapruder film, the commission found that at the most there was a 1.6-second time span during which Kennedy and the governor were first wounded.

This was determined by measuring the average operating speed of Zapruder's type of camera — 18.3 frames per second. Other evidence — the shells and rifle in the depository, the rifle seen protruding through the window, the nature of wounds, and so on — established that the sixth floor of the depository was one fixed point.

BUT THE Zapruder film had one drawback: the progress of the limousine was obscured for approximately seven-tenths of a second by a road sign. So there is no pictorial evidence in the film showing exactly when Kennedy was first hit.

Investigators positioning themselves in the sniper's window perch could determine when Kennedy or Connally were probably in position to be targets. Since the foliage of an oak tree blocked the line of fire until the limousine had gone past the depository on its way to Stemmons Freeway, it was determined that the President could not have been struck at the base of the neck until Frame 210 of the Zapruder film. At this point, the limousine is already moving behind the road sign, traveling at a rate of 11.2 miles an hour.

Weisberg says the computations are meaningless. He says there is evidence the President was hit earlier. He cites Zapruder's testimony in Vol. VII, Page 371. Zapruder was describing details regarding different frames. In reference to the movement of the limousine, Zapruder says, "It reached about — I imagine it was around here — I heard the first shot and I saw the President lean over and grab himself."

"LAWYERS know very well that such words as 'here' in testimony relating to a location reflect nothing on the printed page. When they want the testimony clear, they ask the witness to identify the spot meant by 'here.' Zapruder was not asked to explain where 'here' was," Weisberg says. And then he says:

"But the startling meaning of Zapruder's testimony is this: He saw the first shot hit the President! He described the President's reaction to it. Had the President been obscured by the sign, Zapruder could have seen none of this. Therefore, the President was hit prior to Frame 210, prior to Frame 205, the last one that shows the top of his head

Turn to page 574 of the same volume and there is Zapruder being specific. He is shown Frame 225, which is the first one in which the President can be seen as the limousine emerges from behind the sign. The President appears to have his hands moving toward his throat, and Zapruder, looking at this frame, says:

"Yes:
"Yes; it looks like he was hit — it seems — there — somewhere behind the sign. You see, he is still sitting upright."

EPSTEIN tends to confuse the commission's interpretation of the Zapruder film by saying that because foliage of an oak tree blocked the view "... the commission concluded that the earliest point the President could have been first hit was film Frame 207." No, if that happened, the President would have had a head wound then, since his neck was blocked from a line of fire until Frame 210.

But when, then, was the governor hit? On the basis of computations and the visible movements of the governor, it was determined that at the very latest, he could not have been hit after Frame 240. That would mean that if the

ZAPRUDER'S ASSASSINATION FILM TRIGGERS

DISPUTES

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President was hit at Frame 210 and the governor at Frame 240, it would have occurred within a span of 1.6 seconds.

THIS time element is important to the commission — and the critics.

Firing tests of the Mannlicher-Carcano showed that three master riflemen couldn't fire it and work the bolt and get off another

round in less than 2.3 seconds.

If the time span between the Kennedy and Connally wounds is reduced too radically, the critics' argument might falter because the shorter time would support the plausibility of one bullet hitting both men.

ARLEN Specter, now district attorney of Philadelphia, was the commission

counsel generally describe as chief architect of the single-bullet theory. He and Wesley Leibeler both say that the Zapruder film shows that on Frame 230 the governor's right arm can be seen above the side of the car and that he was probably in his delayed reaction to his wounds at that point. On that premise, there was little more than a

second between the time the President and governor were hit. It can be reduced further when it is considered that the President may not have been hit until just before Frame 225.

There is agreement among critics and commission about one thing the Zapruder film does show: the shot that killed the President. The impact of

this hit is clear in Frame 313. The running time from Frame 210 to Frame 313 is 5.6 seconds.

The agreement ends there. Because of the limited firing capacity of the Mannlicher-Carcano, the critics say (1) the President and governor could not have been hit within 1.6 seconds by two rounds fired from that rifle, and (2)

three bullets could not have been fired within 5.6 seconds.

NEXT: The battle over split seconds.