

JFK SHOT FROM PATHOLOGIST



COL. PIERRE A. FINCK
Testifies about autopsy.

BEHIND, SAYS

5-12/24/69
An Army pathologist testified at Clay Shaw's conspiracy trial today that President Kennedy was hit by just two bullets — both definitely fired from behind him— when he was assassinated.

"That is my honest professional opinion," said Col. Pierre A. Finck, when asked if anyone in government had tried to influence his findings.

COL. FINCK, a member of the three-man team which performed the autopsy, testified as a defense witness this morning in the trial of

Clay L. Shaw.

Shaw, 55, is on trial before Criminal District Judge Edward A. Haggerty Jr. on charges of conspiring to kill Kennedy, shot to death in Dallas Nov. 22, 1963.

Chief defense counsel F. Irvin Dymond said yesterday Col. Finck is the key rebuttal testimony to District Attorney

Jim Garrison's claim Kennedy was caught in a cross-fire.

A KEY POINT in Garrison's conspiracy theory is whether any of the shots hit Kennedy from the front. Garrison says at least one did, if true, this would destroy the Warren Commission's conclu-

sion that all the shots were fired from the sixth floor window of the Texas School Book Depository by Lee Harvey Oswald.

Garrison contends Shaw conspired here with Oswald and David W. Ferrie to kill Kennedy. The Warren Commission reported Oswald was the lone assassin.

Dr. Finck said both the wound in Kennedy's neck and the one in his head were caused by bullets fired from behind.

THE WARREN Commission used the autopsy report in reaching its conclusion. The records, photos and X-rays

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used in the autopsy have been sealed in the National Archives until 1971.

Garrison made a legal effort to subpoena them but, after a federal judge ordered them released, the state rested its case without receiving them. The DA's office explained the Justice Department planned an appeal which would have delayed the material until too late for use in the trial.

Col. Finck took the stand as today's session opened and qualified as an expert witness in the areas of forensic medicine and pathology.

The witness testified he co-authored the autopsy report on Kennedy with two other military physicians.

DYMOND ASKED the colonel to describe the body wound suffered by Kennedy. He said:

"I saw on the right side in the back of the neck of President Kennedy a small wound."

Dymond asked him to point

out the position on fellow defense attorney William Wegmann, who removed his coat while Dr. Finck indicated the position with his finger.

Describing the wound itself, the colonel said the edges were pushed inward. He said, "I looked at it very closely and I have the opinion . . . that this was a wound of entry . . ."

DYMOND THEN asked the witness to describe the wound in the front of the President's neck. He said he found an opening "in keeping with the type of incision performed for a tracheotomy — a wound made by a surgeon."

He said it was a wound commonly made to let an unconscious patient breathe.

He said X-rays showed no bullets in the lower body, and only fragments in the head.

From his examination of the clothing worn by the president, Dr. Finck said, he concluded the throat wound was an exit wound of the bullet as well as a tracheotomy incision.

ON A DRAWING of a human body, Dr. Finck traced the course of the bullet from back to front. He said he could not establish the sequence of shots from watching the film of the assassination taken by Dallas dress manufacturer Abraham Zapruder, but said the film was valuable in determining the president's position at the time he was hit.

Dymond asked: "Was this wound inflicted by a shot from the rear or front of the president?"

"It was definitely inflicted by a shot from the rear," Dr. Finck said.

Dymond then turned to the head wound.

THE WITNESS described with the aid of a model how head wounds are classified as entry or exit and explained the use of various medical terms.

Dr. Finck then described the wound in the back of Kennedy's head as an entry wound.

"In the case of a high-velocity projectile, there can never be a complete reconstruction of the wound of exit because

of the explosive and shattering force of the wound of exit . . ." he added.

Dymond asked if there were any fragments of skull examined "that would be incompatible with a determination that the bullet was fired from the rear?"

"There were none," Dr. Finck said.

"I HAVE A firm opinion that the bullet entered from the back of the head and exited on the right side of the top of the head, producing a large wound," he added.

Dr. Finck said the bullet disintegrated when it hit the hard bone in the back of the head. He said it was impossible to determine with precision the angle with which the bullet struck the head.

The witness said that, when he signed the report, he had a definite opinion that both bullets struck in the back, one in the back of the neck and the other in the back of the head.

ASKED IF his opinion was affected in any way by government officials, Dr. Finck said:

"My opinion is an honest, professional opinion."

After a recess, the state began its cross-examination of the witness.

Under cross-examination by Assistant DA Alvin V. Oser, Dr. Finck testified that all three of the doctors making the autopsy report agreed on the findings.

Dr. Finck said he was told not to discuss the case "without coordinating with the attorney general of the United States," who at that time was Robert F. Kennedy.

AFTER A LEGAL wrangle which cropped up when both sides misunderstood one of the witness' answers, Dr. Finck said he did not see the photos of the body before writing the autopsy report.

He said the first time he saw the X-rays and photos was in January, 1967. He said he saw photos of the assassination in 1964 but these were from the Zapruder film.

He said photos of the body are "extremely useful" in making an autopsy report and it is normal practice to use them.

ASKED IF the Warren Commission ever viewed the photos, Dr. Finck said:

"When I appeared before the Warren Commission in March of 1964 the X-rays and photographs were not available to us in the preparation of our testimony."

Asked why, he said:

"I don't know. I understood it was the wish of Robert Kennedy."

OSER THEN produced a document he described as the autopsy report from Bethesda Naval Hospital, where Kennedy's body was sent. The witness said drawings on it were made by the two other pathologists who assisted him in the autopsy.

In response to a question from Oser, Dr. Finck said the hole in the back of the body on the drawing is lower and much larger than the one he indicated on Wegmann's back.

In a series of questions,

Oser asked if the person who made the drawing had access to the autopsy photos. To his knowledge, Dr. Finck said, he did not.

Judge Haggerty then recessed the trial for lunch.

DYMOND SAID over the week end he believes the trial will go to the jury by Thursday. This means questioning of defense witnesses would have to be completed during the next three days.

Several more are under subpoena, including former Texas Gov. John B. Connally and William Gurvich, a former Garrison aide.

Others include Alvin Beauboeuf, a one-time Ferrie associate; Hugh B. Exnicios, Beauboeuf's attorney; Jesse J. Garner, Oswald's landlord; Jim Phelen, former Saturday Evening Post writer, and his photographer, Matt Herron, and several police officers.

Shaw is expected to take the stand in his own defense. He testified briefly last week as a traverse witness.