

Physicians Didn't See Prints Until Three Years Later

Pathologists in JFK Death Denied Official Photos

By ARTHUR C. EGAN JR.

WASHINGTON — The three military pathologists who performed the autopsy on the late President John F. Kennedy were not allowed to view the photographs of the President's body taken during the autopsy until nearly three years later.

This fact was disclosed for the first time Jan. 16, 1969, when a statement, signed by the three pathologists, was admitted as evidence in a General Sessions Court hearing in Washington.

The three medical doctors, Cmdr. James J. Humes, Direc-

tor of Laboratories, and Cmdr. J. Thornton Boswell, Chief of Pathology, both assigned to the Naval Medical School in Bethesda, Md., and Lt. Col. Pierre A. Finck, Chief of Pathology at the Walter Reed Medical Center, said the photographs were taken at their direction and

supervision at the time of the autopsy, Nov. 22, 1963. In their signed statement, Dr. Humes and Dr. Boswell, both said the photographs were turned over to Secret Service agents at the conclusion of the post mortem examination and they, the pathologists, never

saw the developed photographs until Nov. 1, 1966. Dr. Finck said he saw the photographs for the first time on Jan. 20, 1967, a little over three years after they were taken. The statement signed by the three-man autopsy team was

obtained as evidence from the Justice Department by attorneys acting in behalf of Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison of New Orleans. Garrison had petitioned the General Sessions Court for an order forcing the federal government to produce the

photographs and X-rays taken at the time of the Kennedy autopsy for the trial of Clay Shaw in New Orleans. Shaw, a New Orleans businessman, has been charged by Garrison with "conspiracy" in the death of President Kennedy. Page 12

The Garrison petition also forced Attorney General Clark to disclose, for the first time, that a second team of pathologists had made a secret review of the photographs and X-rays taken of Kennedy's body.

This action was kept secret by Clark and the results were not made known by the Attorney General until Jan. 16, 1969, the day before the hearing on Garrison's petition was to open.

These four pathologists were known to the Justice Department as "The Panel" and were not connected with the original autopsy team nor were they involved in the first "review" by Drs. Humes, Boswell and Finck.

"The Panel," which conducted its review of the autopsy material on Feb. 26 and 27, 1968, consisted of Dr. William H. Carries, University of Utah; Dr. Russell S. Fisher, University of Maryland; Dr. Russell H. Morgan, John Hopkins University; and Dr. Alan R. Moritz, Case Western Reserve College in Cleveland, Ohio.

The findings of this panel were kept secret by Clark for nearly one year but some of the findings not only raised more questions concerning the assassination but even questioned the credibility of the original autopsy report filed by the military pathologists.

The 1968 review Panel noted the original autopsy report stated "X-rays of the entire body of the deceased were taken."

However, when the Panel conducted its review in February of last year it reported "X-rays of the lower arms, wrists and hands, lower legs, ankles and feet were missing."

In commenting on the photographs of the frontal region of the skull and a portion of the internal aspects of the back of the skull, the Panel said, "due to the lack of contrast of the structures portrayed and lack of clarity of detail in these photographs the only conclusion reached by The Panel from study of this series was that there was no exciting bullet defect in the supra-orbital region of the skull."

The Panel went on to say that additional photographs "do not show where a bullet emerged from the head although those showing the interior of the cranium with the brain removed indicate it did not emerge from the supra-orbital region."

The 1968 Panel also found metallic fragments in the neck of the President which were not seen or reported by the original autopsy team at the Bethesda Naval Hospital.

On page 8 of The Panel's report is this statement: "In the central portion of the

general's base there can be seen a grey brown rectangular structure measuring approximately 13 by 20 mm. Its identity cannot be established by the Panel."

The original autopsy report also failed to make note of this foreign substance which is about 1 1/2 by 1 1/2 inch, a fairly sizable mass.

"The Panel also indicated that the original autopsy team did not conduct a thorough post mortem examination when it said, 'Although the precise path of the bullet could undoubtedly have been demonstrated by a complete dissection of the soft tissue between the two cutaneous wounds . . . and went on to add it was possible this failure on the part of the autopsy team did not mean too much from a medical standpoint."

In commenting on the missing photographs of the President's body, attorneys told the court, "Many photographs taken on Nov. 22, 1963, appear to be missing. Incredible as it may seem, either there were no photographs taken of the front of the body or these photographs were ruined in the process of development or they were simply not shown to the 1968 Panel — or is there something else unexplained."

It was noted that the 1968 review Panel describe the entrance wound in the head as ranging from 8mm to 20 mm. in diameter. Yet the alleged rifle used by Lee Harvey Oswald fired bullets of only 6.5 mm.

Rifle experts claim that entrance wounds are normally approximately the size of the calibre of the bullet.

Dr. Cyril H. Wecht, Pittsburgh, Pa., who holds a law degree from both the University of Maryland and the University of Pittsburgh, and is now a clinical instructor in pathology at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, appeared as a witness for Garrison in the court hearing.

Dr. Wecht, in his testimony, noted that, at one time, Dr. Fisher, a member of the 1968 Panel, was his chief instructor and trained him in pathology and was also a personal friend of the slain President was in the Pittsburgh medical clinic. In differing with some of the conclusions reached by the

original autopsy team at Bethesda Naval Hospital drew the wrath of the government attorney, Carl Earley, deputy assistant attorney general under Ramsey Clark.

"But you weren't at the autopsy were you? Have you ever attended the autopsy of a famous person like the President. You never have been surrounded by Treasury agents, FBI agents, admirals and doctors, all anxious to have this thing over with? It makes a difference doesn't it?" charged Earley in defending the inconsistencies in the original autopsy report.

The Warren Commission Report disclosed between 30 to 40 various government officials were hovering around the three pathologists while the post mortem examination of the slain President was in progress.