

To the Editor:

In connection with Hugh Murray's July article, "Surveillance State Louisiana - Coming of Age in New Orleans in the 1950's and 1960's," it is interesting to note that another teacher at the Junior University of New Orleans was Lee Harvey Oswald's well-traveled cousin, Marilyn Murret. In her WC testimony, Murret describes how she heard the news of the assassination from a student's portable radio. (8H156,174)

In addition, I am enclosing an article from the Times-Picayune of September 22, 1960, documenting Guy Banister's tie to the Louisiana Joint Legislative Committee on Un-American Activities.

-J.P. Shinley, 2601 N. Repsdorph #1512,
Seabrook, TX 77586

(Editor's Note: Please see the back cover of this issue for the newspaper clipping sent with this letter.

THE SECRET OF COMMISSION EXHIBIT 399

by
Milicent Cranor

Publication of the true penetrating power of a bullet like CE 399 is so dangerous to the conspiracy that every time they try to stop it, they just provide more evidence of what the bullet can do, and what those who try to stop it are made of.

Fortunately for the conspirators, most critics have been asking how could that bullet do so much—go through Kennedy's neck, Connally's torso and wrist—when they should have been asking why didn't the bullet do more? John Lattimer put a stop to that question 26 years ago.

Nominal Velocity: 2,200 Feet per Second

Ronald Simmons, Chief, Infantry Weapons Evaluation Branch, Ballistics Research Laboratory, Department of the Army, established the average nominal muzzle velocity of the ammunition allegedly used by Lee Harvey Oswald (using Oswald's gun) was 2,200 ft/sec [1] Variation: +/- 40 ft/sec. [2] At 200 feet: 2,000 ft/sec. Watch these figures change.

The Buried Question

The only critic to understand the significance of the bullet's speed, apparently, was the late John Nichols, M.D., Ph.D., a

Milicent Cranor
630 W. 246th St. #921
Riverdale, NY 10471

pathologist at the University of Kansas Medical Center, who performed experiments with weaponry identical to that allegedly used by Oswald. He fired at various anatomical specimens, and then gave the bullet the ultimate test: At a distance of 195 feet, at 1,960 ft/sec, the bullet was fired at laminated, knotless pine (fiber strength: 6,000 pounds per square inch) [3,4]. The bullet didn't stop until it had penetrated 47 inches of it.

This, of course, is equivalent to several necks, several ribs, and several wrists . . . [3]

Why, Nichols asked, why didn't that bullet go all way through Connally's thigh?

Lattimer's Solution: Slow the Bullet in the Muzzle and the Neck

Nichols made the mistake of describing his yet-unpublished results to John Lattimer, a urologist who had been defending the Commission since 1966. Lattimer, claiming the critics "have done no ballistics experiments of their own," [5] duplicated Nichols' experiments using telephone poles [6], and presented the results as support for the claim, unfortunately disputed, that the bullet had the power to go through two men. He also pointed out the bullet's lack of deformity. [7] To explain why CE 399 didn't penetrate the femur, Lattimer just thickened the structures the bullet supposedly penetrated, thus distorting the significance of Nichols' work beyond recognition:

" . . . Passing through the soft tissues of Kennedy's neck, with its two layers of tough skin, and brushing a vertebra would have slowed the bullet slightly more than 30 percent, according to Nichols's figures." [5,8] [Emphasis added.]

In 1966, Lattimer claimed the bullet went through Kennedy's esophagus among other structures. [9] He gave as a reference the hand-written version of the Autopsy Report, which is the same as the typewritten version only much less readable. Neither included the esophagus. Was he already stirring in a little neck-thickener?

If the neck were that dense, wouldn't it cause the bullet to tumble inside, resulting in an exit wound that looked like an exit wound? When Arlen Specter asked Dr. Charles Baxter if the small wound in the throat [3-5mm] was a result of little resistance through the neck, Baxter agreed that the bullet would then behave "as if passing through a sheet of paper." [10] Was Kennedy's neck the equivalent of 16 inches of pine, or a sheet of paper? Was it denser than Connally's torso?

" . . . The passage through the thorax of Governor Connally with its two additional layers of skin and a glancing (tangential)

contact with his fifth rib would have slowed it still more, although less than the passage through President Kennedy." [5,8]

Before John Nichols finally published his results in 1973, Lattimer correctly reported the nominal speed of the bullet as 2,200 ft/sec. [11] After 1973, Lattimer changed the bullet's speed to 2,000 ft/sec. [12] And he claimed the **neck** left the bullet with only 1,400 ft/sec with which to strike Connally [13]. Please compare Lattimer's figures with those of Edgewood Arsenal.

Government Solution: Slow the Bullet in Muzzle and the Torso

Dr. Alfred Olivier of the Edgewood Arsenal gives the lowest possible nominal figure: 2,160 ft/sec. [14] When firing at gelatin simulating **neck** at an average striking velocity of 1,904 at 60 yards, the average exit velocity was 1,779 ft/sec, a loss of 125 ft/sec [15], that is, seven percent of the striking velocity, results similar to Nichols' and nowhere near Lattimer's 30 percent.

Edgewood personnel assassinated a goat in a suit (simulating Connally's **torso**) from a distance of 70 yards at 1,929 ft/sec. [16] The bullet exited at 1,664 ft/sec, a loss of 265 ft/sec. [15] They fired at **wrists** with an average velocity of 1,858; the average loss in exit velocity through the **wrists** was only 82 ft/sec [17], results similar to Nichols'. [18] With so little energy lost through the **neck** and **wrist**, this put the burden on the **torso** to explain why, if CE 399 did the job, it didn't live up to its potential. They said a pristine bullet through the Governor, instead of the goat, would have lost 400 ft/sec because "the Governor was about half again thicker," [19] a claim that needs confirming. [20]

When Dr. Nichols fired at a fresh human torso, the bullet lost only one-third the Olivier's 265 ft/sec — 88 ft/sec. [18]

So how many feet per second would have been lost by a bullet that hit nothing else first? 400? 286? 88? The testimony of Connally's orthopaedic surgeon, the late Dr. Robert R. Shaw, may explain Nichols's results.

"The texture of the rib here is not of great density. The cortex of the rib in the lateral portions of our ribs, is thin . . . very spongy, offering very little resistance to pressure or to fracturing." [21]

" . . . the bullet struck the fifth rib at a very acute angle and struck a portion of the rib which would not offer a great amount of resistance." [22]

Case Closed Solution: Slow the Bullet Everywhere

In Case Closed, Gerald Posner makes several attempts to keep the public away from the ballistic evidence, complaining

that Oswald's "intricate personality and temperament are obscured under a deluge of technical details about trajectory angles and bullet speeds." [23]. He even makes a statement that means no one ever suggested Kennedy's throat was shot from the front: "[The critics] insist only that the fatal head shot came from the front." [24] When he does get into the little "details" about bullet speeds, the figures seem to have gone through a funhouse of mirrors:

. . . The 6.5mm slug left Oswald's rifle at 2,000 feet per second and hit Kennedy at the base of the neck between 1,700 and 1,800 feet per second. Passing only through flesh, the bullet lost another one to two hundred feet per second and hit Connally at 1,500 to 1,600. It left his chest and entered the wrist at 900 feet per second. Anything above 700 feet per second is enough to shatter bone. When it left the wrist it was near 400 feet per second, just enough to break the skin and imbed itself into his thigh." [25]

Posner's sources for the above: Dr. Olivier of Edgewood Arsenal who, as shown above, gave quite different figures, and Dr. Martin Fackler, a ballistics expert (Chelsea Naval Academy; Bethesda). [25]

Tip-off From the Real Missile

Dr. Charles Gregory, the surgeon who repaired Governor Connally's **wrist**:

" . . . The wound of entrance is characteristic in my view of . . . an irregular missile which has tipped itself off as being irregular by the nature of itself." [26]

Explaining that the smooth nose of a bullet pushes material aside, and a deformed, irregular bullet tends to "catch and tear," [27] Dr. Gregory felt the **wrist** was hit by an angular, irregular object with sharp edges, because it snagged individual coat threads, carrying them into the wound, cut part of a nerve, and a tendon leading to the thumb.

"The only way this missile could have produced this wound . . . was to have entered the wrist backwards." [28] [Emphasis added in view of preceding.]

No Tearing of Individual Cloth or Tissue Fibers; No Lead Shed

If CE 399 entered Connally's back, it could only have done so sideways, with the base leading: The flattening of the bullet increases toward the base, indicating greatest impact there. Why, then, didn't the base do to the **torso** what it supposedly did to the **wrist**?

Dr. Gregory noticed the hole in the back of the coat did not have the ragged appearance of the sleeve on the jacket and shirt [26], and he thought it strange that no lead fragments were found in the **torso**. According to Lattimer, the bullet's

lead is "unusually soft" [28], and when travelling backward and sideways, "the protruding leaden fragments were now scraped off by the arm and leg bones . . ." If CE 399 entered backwards, wouldn't the "unusually soft lead" protruding from the base come off in the torso?

For reasons stated above as well as below, Gregory told the Commission in plain English he thought the bullet behaved as if it had never hit anything else first. [29]

Lattimer to the Rescue with a New "Tip-off"

Two serious problems for the Commission, CE 399's penetrating power, and evidence of a bullet that was very different from CE 399 striking Connally's wrist, apparently lead John Lattimer to transform the small wound in Connally's back to one that was the exact length of CE 399, 3cm. [38,39] The size would presumably prove: (1) Connally was struck by CE 399, (2) the bullet struck sideways, so it had to be tumbling, a result of hitting Kennedy first, (3) a sideways hit would also slow the bullet down, helping to explain why it didn't go through the Governor's thigh. In at least five different places [30-34], Shaw described the entrance wound in Connally's back as 1.5cm. Gregory described it as 3/4" (approximately 1.5cm), elliptical, "rounded central portion" [35] — 1/8" larger than the holes in the back of Connally's jacket and shirt. [36]

Shaw explained that he had enlarged the hole to 3cm when debriding it [37]. The hole, as it appeared on Gregory's diagram of the body, reflected the enlarged size, and Shaw, following Specter's instructions, drew the smaller, actual size in a space above the diagram.

Lattimer never told his readers the hole had been artificially enlarged, and "proved" the 3cm size with Gregory's diagram — cropped to exclude the corrected hole — and testimony, cropped (below, in bold print) to give the illusion Shaw was speaking of the entrance wound when, in fact, he was referring to the exit wound in the chest: [40]:

You say the hole which appears on Governor Connally is just about the size that it would have been on his body?

Yes; it is drawn in good scale.

In good scale to the body?

Yes.

Would you draw it on another portion of the paper here in terms of its absolute size?

Five cm. it would be — about like that — do you want me to mark that?

Put your initials right in the center of that circle.

I'll just put "wound of exit."

John Lattimer, now in his 80's, is still at it. This spring, he published something called "Experimental duplication of the important physical evidence of the lapel bulge of the jacket worn by Governor Connally when Bullet 399 went through him." [41] For once, we have a published report of an experiment in which a bullet like CE 399 was fired through all three anatomical parts (or simulations thereof). The jacket bulged at a much lower level than it does in Zapruder frame 224. More important, not once was bullet speed mentioned.

Notes

1. 5H443 [2,200 ft/sec]
2. 5H400 [+/-40]
3. Nichols, J. Assassination of President Kennedy. The Prac 1973; 211:625-633.
4. Nichols, J. The Wounding of governor John Connally of Texas November 22, 1963. Maryland State Med J, October, 1977; 58- 77.
5. Lattimer, J.K., Lattimer, The Kennedy-Connally Single Bullet Theory. A Feasibility Study. International Surg 1968;50(6):524-532. [critics: no studies; neck: 30%]
6. Lattimer, Gary, Lattimer, John K., Lattimer, Jon: The Kennedy- Connally One-Bullet Theory. Medical Times 1974;102:33-56. [telephone poles; 3cm entrance into Connally]
7. A bullet travelling through stable, homogeneous material, such as a wide, deep block of wood does not deform, perhaps, because it is continuously surrounded on all sides by a hard substance; the nose can't be smacked to the side if there is resistance on the side.
8. Lattimer, John K. Kennedy and Lincoln: Medical & Ballistic Comparisons of Their Assassinations. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980 [neck: 30%]
9. Lattimer JK. J Am Med Assoc 1966;198(4):328-333. [esophagus]
10. 6H43 [Baxter]
11. Lattimer JK, Lattimer G, Lattimer J. Could Oswald have shot President Kennedy? Further ballistic studies. Bull NY Acad Med 1972;48:513-524. [2,200 ft/sec]
12. Lattimer JK, Lattimer J, Lattimer G. An experimental study of the backward movement of President Kennedy's head. Surg, Gynecol & Obstet 1976;142:246-244. [2,000 ft/sec]
13. Lattimer JK. J Am Med Assoc 1993;269(12):1544-1547. [1,400 ft/sec]

14. 5H75 [2,160 ft/sec]
15. 5H77-78 [neck]
16. 5H80 [goat]
17. 5H81-82 [wrist]
18. Nichols, J. 1977, p.68
19. 5H86 [goat]
20. A veterinarian who wishes to be unnamed told me that a goat's torso, unlike that of a human, is a very resilient, weight-bearing structure, thicker dorsal-ventrally (barrel-chested) than laterally, and is likely to slow down a bullet more than would a human torso. To date, I have not confirmed whether the thickness is greater in goats than in humans in absolute values.
21. 4H105 [rib]
22. 4H113 [rib]
23. Posner, Gerald L. Case Closed. Random House, New York, 1993, p.x [details]
24. Case Closed, p.237 [only head shot]
25. Case Closed, p.338 [slow bullet]
26. 4H122,124 [irregular fragment, debris]
27. 4H121 [backwards]
28. Kennedy and Lincoln p.269 [lead]
29. 6H103 [Gregory: pristine]
30. 4H104 [1.5cm]
31. 4H107 [1.5cm]
32. 4H110 [small shirt hole]
33. 6H85 [1.5cm]
34. 6H86 [1.5cm]
35. 6H97 [Gregory 3/4"]
36. 5H63 [jacket, shirt]
37. 6H88 [enlarged to 3cm during debridement]
38. Lattimer, Medical Times 1974;102:33-56. [3cm p.270]
39. Kennedy and Lincoln, p.266 [3cm]
40. 6H87 [exit wound]
41. Lattimer JK, Laidlaw A, Heneghan P, and Haubner EJ. Experimental duplication of the important physical evidence of the lapel bulge of the jacket worn by Governor Connally when Bullet 399 went through him. J Am Coll Surg 1994;178:517-522.

EDITORIAL: OVER THE WALL

One of the occupational hazards of a professional sociologist such as myself is that we tend to see oft-repeated patterns of human behavior in widely separated episodes. So with the ongoing investigation of the murders of which O.J. Simpson is accused. As Simpson's trial nears, the close student of the JFK assassination may get that old *deja vu* feeling—haven't we seen much of this before? Haven't we seen the instant recovery of evidence suggesting that the suspect in the murder went out of his way to incriminate himself? Oswald supposedly carries identification on his person that ties him to the "Hidell" who ordered the rifle and the pistol, Simpson supposedly leaves one bloody glove at the scene of the crime and another on the grounds of his residence, apparently with a "thump" on Kato Kaelin's air conditioner, just to be sure that police will be directed to search in the area in which the glove is left. Haven't we seen police officers leave a primary "crime scene" to go to another location not because of a major crime committed there but because it would put them on the trail of a designated patsy? I refer, of course, to the phalanx of DPD officers who rushed to a location in Oak Cliff where a citizen had committed the dastardly crime of entering a movie theater without paying. I refer to four LAPD detectives who left the murder scene to go to Simpson's residence—not, God forbid, because they suspected him as the killer, but to "inform" him of Nicole's death and to arrange for the protection of children that were already being cared for at the police station. And finally, so as not to go on and on, haven't we seen a botched medical examination twice now: in 1963, when the autopsy surgeons couldn't trace the path of a bullet from the point of its supposed entry (in the back) until a phone call to Parkland informed them of a throat wound that they had not observed—and in 1994 when a coroner did not examine the bodies until 11-14 hours after their deaths, so that a 3-hour span of "time of death" was the best the coroner could do?

The Simpson prosecution claims it has a "scientific case" against the defendant. Haven't we JFK assassination researchers, if no one else, come to question the claims of police agents that they have maintained a decent chain of possession of the evidence? The big difference between 1963 and 1994 is that now, but not then, we have a vigorous defense team that will challenge evidence based on the integrity of that chain of possession. But, of course, one must wonder if the LAPD, like the DPD, has its "Jack Ruby" waiting in the wings to short circuit the playing out of the judicial process.