

Another Piece In JFK Puzzle

By JOSEPH BERGER

A one-time employe at Dallas Parkland Hospital has told the House Select Committee on Assassinations that one of the bullets allegedly fired by Lee Harvey Oswald was not found on former Texas Gov. John B. Connally's stretcher, where the Warren Commission said it was found.

Instead, House committee sources say, the new witness claims the bullet was discovered on a different stretcher that was placed for a time alongside the Connally stretcher.

Mark Lane, a leading critic of the Warren Commission, promptly welcomed the report of a new witness, saying that the witness's statement buttressed his view that the bullet was surreptitiously planted at the hospital by someone trying to blame the murder of John F. Kennedy and the wounding of Connally on Oswald. That individual, Lane said, evidently placed the bullet on a wrong stretcher.

But a spokesman for the committee acknowledging that a new witness to the events at Parkland had been interviewed, was more cautious.

He said that the new testimony posed a "possible conflict" with the Warren



LEE HARVEY OSWALD Was bullet planted?

Commission's report and raised questions about "where the bullet came from." He declined to speculate further. But he did say that the witness had never been interviewed by the Warren Commission.

The committee was created last September to re-examine the murders of Kennedy and Martin Luther King in the wake of disclosures that agencies such as the FBI and CIA had withheld important information during the initial investigations.

In its report 10 months after the Nov. 22, 1963 assassination, the Warren

Continued on Page 63

Commission concluded that Oswald, without the aid of any co-conspirators, killed Kennedy and wounded Connally by firing three shots at the Presidential limousine as it traveled past the Texas School Book Depository in downtown Dallas.

While several bullet fragments were found at the scene and traced to Oswald's rifle, Warren Commission critics point out that only the bullet found at the hospital had survived substantially intact and thus, they say, it

formed the linchpin of the case against Oswald.

The commission — with some members dissenting on this point — said that the bullet had entered the base of Kennedy's neck, pierced the neck in a downward spiral, entered Connally's back, penetrated his chest, shattered his rib, passed through his right wrist and came to rest in a surface wound in Connally's left thigh. The bullet, the commission said, eventually slipped out of the wound onto the stretcher.

Commission critics, however, argue that a bullet that followed that arduous route would have undergone substantial mutilation while the bullet found at the hospital was almost totally pristine.

The bullet, they conclude, must have been placed there. Thus the circumstances under which the bullet was discovered became crucial.

In recounting the discovery of the bullet, the Warren Commission described how Connally was brought into Parkland on a stretcher, then moved up to the second-floor operating room and transferred onto an operating table. An attendant, the commission said, wheeled the empty stretcher into an elevator and then a hospital engineer, Darrell Tomlinson, moved the stretcher to a corridor on the ground floor "alongside another stretcher wholly unconnected with the care of Gov. Connally."

Tomlinson, the commission's report said, "bumped one of the stretchers against a wall and a bullet rolled out" from the edge of the mat.

The report went on: "Although Tomlinson was not certain whether the bullet came from the Connally stretcher or the adjacent one, the commission has concluded that the bullet came

from the Governor's stretcher."

No precise reasoning for this conclusion was offered.

The commission did not identify who had last occupied the second stretcher. But it ruled out the possibility that Kennedy was the occupant because, it said, the Kennedy stretcher was left in one of the emergency rooms and not in the corridor.

Lane theorized that "anyone who wanted to plant a bullet would see that there were two stretchers, both of them covered with blood-drenched sheets, and would assume that one was Connally's stretcher and the other Kennedy's."

He maintained that the bullet in question was "the only link between Oswald and Kennedy." The commission, however, produced a good deal of additional evidence, including receipts showing Oswald purchased the murder weapon, a Mannlicher-Carcano 6.5 millimeter Italian rifle, witnesses who saw Oswald enter the depository and stand at the sixth-floor window shortly before the shots were fired, and Oswald's palm print on the rifle.

The disclosure of a new witness, hinted at earlier this month by committee counsel Richard Sprague, was the second such revelation to emerge from the committee in recent days.

Over the weekend, a committee member told of a report that James Earl Ray, who alone pleaded guilty to King's assassination, had received instructions from a secret contact in Portugal.

The committee is seeking \$6.5 million so it can continue its investigation for another year.