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President's Brain Is Missing

By RON JAVERS

Possibly the most grisly mystery surrounding the assassination of President John F. Kennedy is the question of what happened to the President's brain.

It was not buried with the body, and medical and legal experts say it could supply solid evidence that would end the debate over exactly how Kennedy was killed.

But the President's brain is missing.

The brain disappeared shortly after the autopsy that was performed on Kennedy's body on Nov. 22, 1963, the day he was slain. Researchers, working over the last 11½ years, have been able to put together only a partial picture of what happened to this important piece of physical evidence in the crime of the century.

It is still not even certain whether President Kennedy's remaining brother, Sen. Edward (Ted) Kennedy, knows what happened to the brain.

THIS MUCH is known: During the autopsy at Maryland's Bethesda Naval Hospital near Washington the brain was removed from the skull and fixed in Formalin, a chemical solution.

That is standard autopsy procedure. It is difficult for pathologists to properly examine a human brain immediately after death. The tissue is extremely soft and often in shock. So doctors fix the organ in a firming solution for about two weeks. They then section it and trace the precise path of a bullet through the tissue.

Doctors at Bethesda reported that this was done to Kennedy's brain. They said that about two weeks later, on Dec. 6, 1963, they re-examined the brain, but didn't section it because they didn't want to destroy the evidence.

The American public didn't find out the brain was missing until a noted forensic pathologist, Dr. Cyril Wecht of Pittsburgh, the Allegheny County coroner, began publishing accounts of his year-long effort to examine the brain and other medical evidence in the case.

DR. WECHT WAS an early critic of the Kennedy autopsy, pointing out mistakes and omissions by other doctors during that crucial examination of the dead President's wounds.

After nearly a year of repeated requests to various authorities, Dr. Wecht managed to get permission to examine some of the autopsy material.

When he arrived in August 1972 at the Na-

tional Archives in Washington to review the evidence, he discovered the brain was not there. The Archives holds virtually all of the evidence, including the dead President's clothing, Lee Harvey Oswald's rifle and the three bullet fragments the Warren Commission says did all of the damage that day in Dallas.

At the time Dr. Wecht visited the Archives, authorities there would say only that they didn't have Kennedy's brain and they didn't know who did.

Persistent seekers of evidence discovered further details when the Archives relented somewhat and released copies of a "memorandum of transfer" dated April 26, 1965. The memorandum indicates that at the request of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, Adm. George Burkley, the late President's personal physician, transferred to Mrs. Evelyn Lincoln at the Archives a large amount of evidence material he apparently previously had retained in his possession. Mrs. Lincoln was JFK's personal secretary.

Listed in the inventory of material transferred is "1 stainless steel container, 7" in diameter x 8" containing gross material." This "gross ma-

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assassination, Drayne said that although Kennedy "has not read all of the Warren Commission report, he is familiar with the findings. He is satisfied. He or the Kennedy family have pursued a course of never encouraging new investigations of the assassination, but never discouraging them either." On Aug. 4 Sen. Kennedy said he was "completely satisfied" with the Warren Commission's findings and the case should be reopened only for new evidence.

"I think he's scared," said Dr. Lecht, one of only three non-government physicians ever permitted to re-examine the medical evidence in the

"I can understand that, though. He's the last surviving brother. I guess he wishes people would just forget about it."

But people won't forget. Kennedy was the President. I can't see why the Kennedy family won't pursue this. If something similar happened in my

family, I'd sure want to pursue it.

"We know these brothers loved each other. There's got to be a reason Teddy doesn't pursue this thing. He's scared."

"AND WHERE ARE ALL these liberal bastards in the media? People like Ben Bradlee (Washington Post executive editor and an intimate of the slain President) and the people at the New York Times? They blast the government on other issues, dug out the Pentagon Papers and Watergate, but they're not interested in this. Their attitude is one of condescension and disrespect for anyone critical of the Warren Commission's findings that Oswald acted alone.

"And the conservatism of Congress on this thing is incredible. They say they don't want it to be painful to the Kennedy family. What's more important, pain for the family or the truth for the American people?"

Tomorrow: Holes in the Warren Commission report.

Reopen JFK Probe? How Do You Feel?

Critics of the Warren Commission contend there is sufficient evidence to cast doubt on the conclusion that Lee Harvey Oswald was the lone assassin of President Kennedy. They want the investigation reopened. Defenders of the Warren Commission contend the investigation was thorough and that no good would come of a new inquiry. Tell us how you feel by filling in this coupon. We'll publish the results soon in the People Paper.

- Yes, reopen the JFK assassination probe.
- No, don't reopen the probe.

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Comments



Above: Oswald

Today, nearly 12 years after President Kennedy was assassinated on Nov. 22, 1963, the nation is caught up in a tumult of interest, investigation and speculation about Who Struck John.

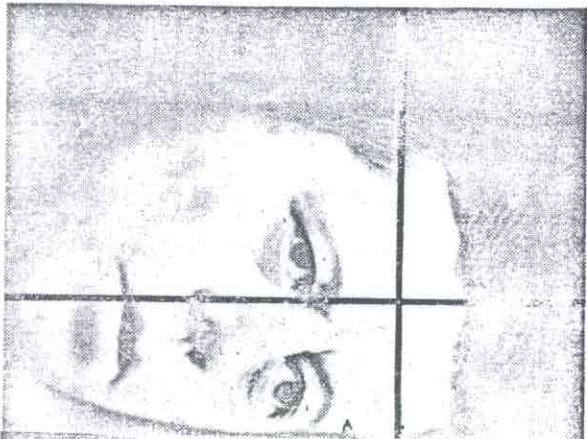
Perhaps a dozen national magazines have carried stories on the assassination in recent months. TV networks have produced documentaries. More are planned. Newspapers have front-paged developments. The Rockefeller Commission was appointed by President Ford to look into—among other things—allegations of CIA involvement in the Kennedy assassination.

Two resolutions calling for investigations of the assassination have been introduced in the House with more than 60 sponsors. One resolution goes further, seeking a look into the assassinations of Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr., and the attempt on the life of Alabama Gov. George Wallace.

On July 20, Pennsylvania's Republican Sen. Richard S. Schweiker, in a national television interview, joined those who have suggested that Kennedy's murder may have been in retaliation for alleged American attempts on the life of Cuban Premier Fidel Castro. Schweiker said the

investigation into Kennedy's death could be reopened as "a spinoff" of the Senate's current probe of the CIA. Schweiker, a member of the Senate committee looking into CIA activities, noted that the Warren Commission, which investigated the Kennedy killing and determined that it was the work of Lee Harvey Oswald alone, had not been told of several previous CIA attempts to kill Castro.

In this series, we'll examine both the work of the Warren Commission and its persistent critics. We'll explore the many mysteries that still surround the killing that became the crime of the century.



Who Struck John?

Re-examining
The Assassination
Of President Kennedy

terial" is thought by researchers to be the brain of President Kennedy.

MUCH OF THE other material turned over to Mrs. Lincoln at the Archives was medical evidence—photographs of wounds, slides, X rays, tissue samples. One entry lists "one broken casket handle."

Dr. Burkley is now retired and living in Bethesda. When the Daily News reached him there by phone and asked him the question, "Did you at any time have in your possession President Kennedy's brain?" Dr. Burkley calmly replied, "I'm not going to answer any questions. I'm making no comment on that. Contact the Warren Commission. They have not called me and I'm not saying anything."

The Warren Commission, of course, went out of existence after it issued its report in September 1964. Evelyn Lincoln could not be located by the Daily News.

Marion Johnson, the staff member of the National Archives probably most familiar with Kennedy assassination material filed there, says the brain was never officially turned over to the Archives. He says it was released to Mrs. Lin-

coln personally who was at that time working in the Archives on material for the Kennedy Library.

"I'm not sure what her (Mrs. Lincoln's) status was," Johnson told the Daily News. "But her salary was paid out of transition funds and her job was to prepare the late President's papers for transfer to the Kennedy Library."

JOHNSON SAID Mrs. Lincoln eventually turned the material over to Angela Novello, then a secretary to Sen. Robert Kennedy. Novello could not be located and that, at this point in history at least, seems to be the end of the trail of the missing brain.

It is possible that even members of the Kennedy family are uncertain what happened to the brain.

Richard Drayne, spokesman for Sen. Edward Kennedy, was asked if he knew what happened to the brain.

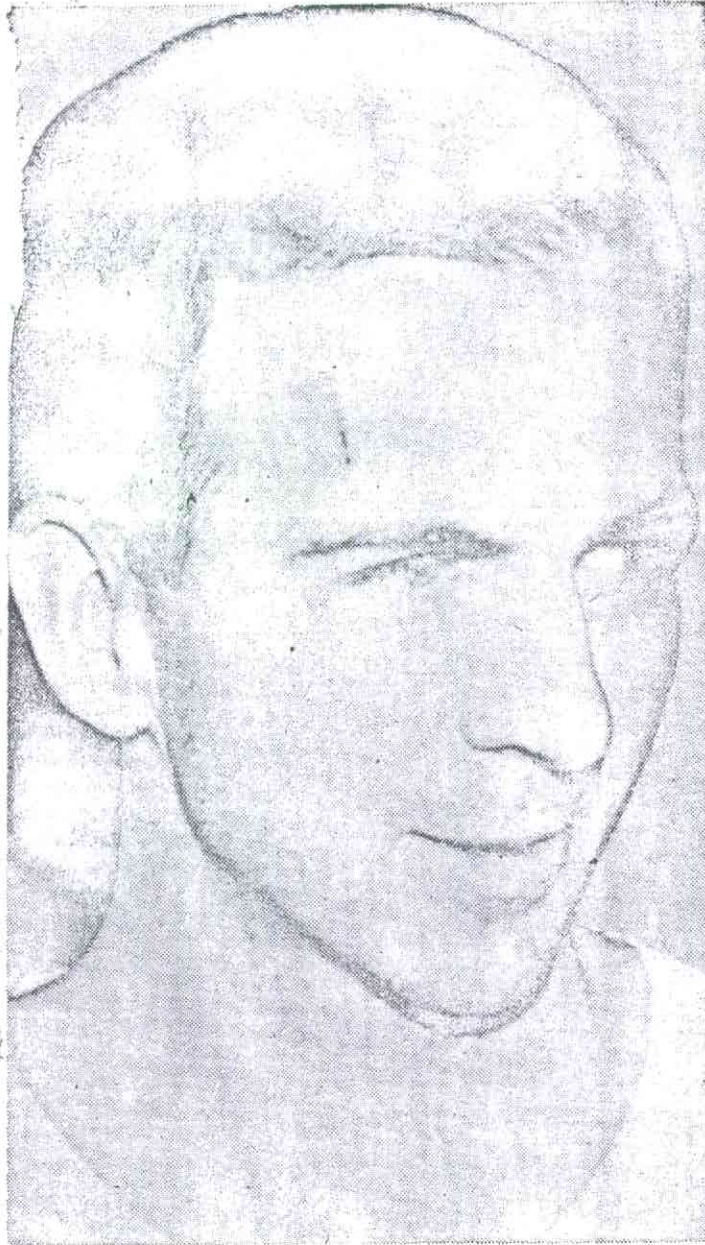
"I don't have any idea," said Drayne when reached at Kennedy's Washington office. "I don't know where it is and I haven't been able to find out. I've talked to the senator, but have not been able to learn the answer. There is speculation that the brain was re-buried in 1966 when President Kennedy's body was moved from the temporary grave to the permanent grave. This was done in the evening. The family wanted to avoid publicity. The brothers were there and so was Cardinal Cushing (the Boston prelate who officiated at Kennedy's funeral)."

Asked the source of that "speculation," Drayne said he didn't know. "It's just speculation, that's all."

What did Sen. Kennedy reply when Drayne asked him about the brain? "He didn't really give me a reply," said Drayne. "He said to refer all such questions to Burke Marshall."

MARSHALL, A KENNEDY family intimate, today is dean of the Yale Law School. He represents the family in matters dealing with the assassination. On vacation in Europe, he couldn't be reached while this article was being prepared. But when asked about the brain in 1973 at the 10th anniversary of Kennedy's assassination, Marshall told one reporter, "I can't answer that question. I have never asked that question of the family and I do not know."

As far as Sen. Ted Kennedy's position on the
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Lee Harvey Oswald: the official assassin
