

CBS REPORTS INQUIRY  
"The American Assassins"

Part I

Lee Harvey Oswald and John F. Kennedy

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With CBS News Correspondent Dan Rather

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ANNOUNCER: This is a CBS REPORTS INQUIRY: "The American Assassins".  
Here is CBS News Correspondent Dan Rather.

DAN RATHER: Good evening. In the last dozen years, we have been through a national nightmare, a succession of searing experiences that have shaken confidence in the foundations of our Government. Part of it was the war in Asia - billions of dollars and 50,000 American lives lost. Then there was the criminal conspiracy and cover-up called Watergate - a President and a Vice President forced to resign in disgrace. In between, and during those traumas, three national leaders were assassinated, another was shot and critically wounded. These murderous attacks on political leaders, and their aftermath, helped create a mood of distrust and suspicion that grew darker for a decade.

First, in 1963, came the murder of President John F. Kennedy. This was the scene, and these were the seconds, that shocked and scared the world.

[Zapruder film of President Kennedy being shot runs in silence. . .  
Robert Kennedy supporters chanting: "We want Kennedy! We want Kennedy!"]

And that horror was compounded four years later when the President's brother, Robert, a Senator campaigning for his own nomination to the Presidency--

ROBERT KENNEDY: Thank you very much.

RATHER: --was shot and mortally wounded in a Los Angeles hotel.

MAN: Get a doctor! Get a doctor!

RATHER: That same year, 1968, civil rights leader Martin Luther King was killed on a motel balcony in Memphis as he tried to help black workers on strike against the city.

And in 1972, Alabama's Governor George Wallace, a Presidential candidate, was shot and gravely wounded at a political rally in Maryland.

[Gunshots. . .screaming]

Since that day, he has been paralyzed and unable to walk.

The common thread binding these four crimes together is that in each case, whether they were tried in court or investigated by commission, the official finding was that they were the work of one man acting alone. No conspiracies. Many now suspect that the thread that binds the four crimes together is not a similarity of verdicts, but a series of conspiracies - perhaps even one giant conspiracy, which planned and executed all four crimes.

CBS News commissioned a national public opinion poll in October, and an astonishing 46% of the persons polled believe that there is some connection between the three assassinations and the attempt on Wallace. Only 38% believed the crimes were unconnected incidents. The rest had no opinion.

In an effort to explore and evaluate new information, new contentions and theories, CBS News tonight begins re-examining the Kennedy, King and Wallace cases. This series of broadcasts will continue tomorrow night, and on future dates to be announced. One caveat, please. Keep in mind that a news organization does not have power to subpoena witnesses; nor can we order agencies such as the FBI and CIA to produce evidence. We report the facts as best we can determine them with the tools of journalism.

[ANNOUNCEMENTS]

ANNOUNCER: "The American Assassins" continues with the case of John F. Kennedy and Lee Harvey Oswald. Here again is Dan Rather.

RATHER: In 1967, CBS News broadcast four one-hour reports examining findings of the Warren Commission. We tried to give ourselves every chance to prove that the Commission's conclusion was wrong. We were unable to do that. We did conclude then that there was reason for dissatisfaction with some of the Commission's work, especially the fact that the FBI and CIA were allowed to investigate themselves. But our overall conclusion in 1967 was that what the Warren Commission decided was probably the best and most likely explanation of the John Kennedy assassination based on available evidence.

Let us now briefly review that evidence, and the Warren Commission findings.

On November 22nd, 1963, at 12:30 PM, the youthful 35th President of the United States drove triumphantly through the streets of Dallas, Texas. Seconds later, a dying President sped away from Dealey Plaza into history, into legend, into a controversy that persists to this day.

From the beginning, belief in a possible conspiracy ran high. The new President, Lyndon Johnson, appointed a Commission of seven eminent Americans. This Commission was headed by the Chief Justice, Earl Warren, and including then Congressman Gerald R. Ford, to investigate the assassination and report on all its details. The Commission labored for ten months, came up with this basic story.

A man named Lee Harvey Oswald crouched in this dingy window of a school book depository building as the Presidential motorcade passed below. Oswald, the Warren Commission concluded, probably fired three shots; one missed, one struck both the President and Texas Governor John Connally riding with him, a third killed the President. Oswald, the report decided, had hidden his rifle between cases of books, then

ran down the stairs and left the building on foot. He hurried to his rented room, picked up a revolver, and about 12 minutes later shot to death police officer J. D. Tippit. Oswald was captured, revolver in hand, shortly after that. He was questioned for two days in a confused, almost madhouse, atmosphere.

LEE HARVEY OSWALD: I really don't know what the-- what the situation is about. Nobody has told me anything, except that I'm accused of-- of murdering a policeman. I know nothing more than that. I do request to someone to come forward to give me a legal assistance.

QUESTION: Did you kill the President?

OSWALD: No, I have not been charged with that. In fact, nobody has said that to me yet. The first thing I heard about it was when the newspaper reporters in the hall asked me that question.

QUESTION: You have been--

MAN: Nobody said what?

OSWALD: Sir?

QUESTION: You have been--

MAN: Nobody said what?

MAN: Okay. . .okay.

QUESTION: What did you do in Russia?

RATHER: Then, in a grisly climax, Oswald himself was murdered right in the Dallas police station by nightclub operator and police hanger-on Jack Ruby.

That, in brief, is the Warren Commission version of what happened. In the immediate wake of the official report, some people challenged and even ridiculed it. Many Americans simply weren't sure the Warren Commission was right. The doubts never really died, but talk about them did - for awhile. Then came the Robert Kennedy and King killings, the attempt on Governor Wallace, and the conspiracies and cover-ups of Watergate. Theories of conspiracy in the John Kennedy case were revived.

The largest block of new believers may consist of young people, such as those at a recent meeting of an organization called The Assassination Information Bureau at Boston, Massachusetts, listening to Carl Oglesby.

CARL OGLESBY: Most of us started out believing that Oswald probably did it by himself, and there was nothing to the rumors of a larger conspiracy, just as most of us probably started out believing that

American motives in Vietnam were essentially just and that the war was probably winnable and that it would no doubt do us good to try hard to win it. A great many people have been changing their minds about a great many things over these past years, and we think that now, given the-- the work of-- of investigators and-- and researchers, it's now possible to put together a-- a really very powerful visual case for another theory of Dallas.

RATHER: The CBS News nationwide poll last month indicated that in President Kennedy's case 68% believe that Oswald was involved with others in the crime. I remind you that the official version is Oswald alone was solely responsible. Only 15% believe that. None believe that he wasn't involved at all. But curiously, although only 15% of those polled believe the official finding, when asked if the investigation should be re-opened, only 45% said yes; 44% said no; 11% had no opinion. Apparently half of us are willing to let the matter rest. But calls in Congress for re-opening the case have been increasing. The first was a resolution signed by 53 Congressmen, introduced by Representative Henry Gonzalez of Texas. He spoke with CBS's David Culhane.

REP. HENRY GONZALEZ [Dem., Texas]: In essence, what I seek is a Congressional evaluation of a decade of political assassination - its impact on the Government, its impact on our democratic processes, which I think have been great, and they require some kind of a Congressional assessment and evaluation.

DAVID CULHANE: There are people who say: Why stir this up again?

REP. GONZALEZ: "Well, can we afford not to?" is my answer to that.

RATHER: The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, which is probing various CIA operations, also is moving on the John Kennedy case. Pennsylvania Republican Richard Schweiker is one of two Committee members delegated to investigate new leads. Schweiker told Marya McLaughlin why he wants the case fully re-opened.

SENATOR RICHARD SCHWEIKER [Rep., Pennsylvania]: Mainly because the two principal agencies that were doing the investigation have perpetuated cover-ups doing the investigation that we now know about that we did not know about then. We find they deceived us in the Vietnam situation, they deceived us in Watergate, and I think there's an honest and big question in my mind whether they, in fact, didn't deceive us about the Kennedy assassination. And that's what our-- our job will be.

RATHER: Now, as in the beginning, two questions stand above all others in the John Kennedy assassination: Did one gunman shoot President Kennedy? Did Oswald do it? And was there a conspiracy?

While suspicions of a conspiracy long have been around, they have taken on added significance since Watergate, the revelation of CIA connections with the Mafia, and CIA murder plots. Old doubts and questions have been revived: Was the Warren Commission told the whole truth? And has there been a cover-up?

In this hour, we will concentrate on the question: Was Oswald the gunman and the only gunman? Tomorrow night, we will take up the others.

What we have now that we did not have in 1967 includes the original film Abraham Zapruder made of the murder. CBS News bought rights to it from the Zapruder estate. With the aid of new scientific techniques, this film may reveal valuable new information. It is not pleasant viewing for you or your family. We have attempted to keep on-the-air use of it to a minimum; but many conspiracy theories are based on this film, so we believe it must be shown, sometimes at slow speed, in order that you may follow our examination of it. This time we also have had access to x-rays and photographs taken at the time of the Kennedy autopsy. In 1967, they were not available; not even the Warren Commission saw them. This year, those x-rays and photographs were exhaustively examined by an independent consultant for CBS News. He is the President-elect of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences and acknowledged to be one of the nation's foremost experts in this field, Dr. James Weston. You will see and hear two of the most respected opponents of the Warren Commission's findings: Haverford College's Professor Josiah Thompson; and Pennsylvania forensic pathologist Dr. Cyril Wecht, who has also examined those x-rays and photographs.

First, a review of the crime itself. The independent investigation by CBS News in 1967 answered, at least to our own satisfaction, one series of questions dealing with basic facts. For example, did Oswald own a rifle of the make and model that killed President Kennedy? Yes. And he apparently took that rifle to the school book depository building the day the President was shot. Was Oswald's rifle fired from the building? Yes, it was. Where was Oswald? Definitely in the building, and probably on the sixth floor. How many shots were fired? The strongest evidence indicates there probably were three. Another question we considered at length: Could Oswald or any other lone gunman fire his rifle fast enough to have been the sole assassin?

The late Abraham Zapruder filmed the assassination from this spot with his eight-millimeter camera. The film from the camera serves as a clock - for if we can see in the film when the shot struck, it should be possible to determine the time between them. Using the Zapruder film as a guide, we can reconstruct what a gunman on the sixth floor would be seeing. Here, at frame 202, the President would be concealed by leaves (those overhead signs were not there then), emerging just as the Zapruder camera across the street is shooting its 210th frame. But Mr. Zapruder's view was blocked by a ground-level sign. The Zapruder film did not show the President again until frame 225, and

here he seems to have been hit. So the assumption is that the first hit occurred somewhere between frames 210 and 225. A possibility is that along here a second shot was fired, and probably missed entirely. But here, at frame 313, the fatal shot. Total time elapsed from the first moment the Commission estimated the President could have been shot until the definitely fatal shot is known to have hit - about 5.6 seconds. That, the Commission estimated, is the time the assassin had to get off three shots - two hits, and a miss. Could one gunman alone really have done this? Could Oswald alone have done it? Let's consider that.

To begin, note that some of Oswald's fellow servicemen say they didn't consider him really an expert, but he did attain the Marine Corps rating of "Sharpshooter", second-highest marksmanship medal given by the Corps, an outfit that prides itself on excellence in riflery. Oswald's rifle was test-fired for the Warren Commission by FBI and military marksmen. The rate of fire for this bolt-action rifle, and its accuracy against a moving target, were critical to the Commission's case against Oswald; and yet, incredibly, all tests for the Warren Commission were fired at stationary targets.

We do not have Oswald's rifle, but we do have one identical to it, right down to the scope. The main conclusion the Warren Commission drew was that a Mannlicher-Carcano such as this could not be fired three times in a span of less than 4.6 seconds, because it took about 2.3 seconds to operate the bolt mechanism between shots. Times to remember: Warren Commission estimate of minimum time rifle could be fired three times with accuracy - 4.6 seconds; Warren Commission estimate of maximum time Oswald had to fire - 5.6 seconds.

CBS News had a tower and target track constructed to match exactly the heights and distances in Dealey Plaza; the target moved by electric motor at 11 miles an hour, approximately the speed of the Presidential limousine. A rifle of the same make and age as Oswald's was fitted with the same four-power telescopic sight found on his rifle. Eleven volunteer marksmen took turns firing clips of three bullets each at the moving target. Results varied. One Maryland State trooper made two hits in the silhouette, one near miss, in slightly less than five seconds. Another state trooper's best time was 5.4 seconds. [Gunfire] One hit, two near misses. A technician at the H. P. White Ballistics Laboratory managed three shots in the fastest time [Gunfire] - 4.1 seconds, half-a-second faster than the fastest time turned in for the Warren Commission, but he had only one hit. A weapons engineer had the best score [Gunfire] - three hits in 5.2 seconds.

There is no pat answer to the question of how fast Oswald's rifle could be fired. We couldn't test his own rifle. We have done more thorough testing on the subject than anyone we know of, including the Warren Commission, and have demonstrated that the rifle probably could be fired three times with fair accuracy in five seconds or less.

So, our answer, based on actual tests, was and is: A lone gunman could have fired fast enough.

[ANNOUNCEMENTS]

RATHER: Even if one accepts the weight of the evidence that Oswald did probably fire at President Kennedy and that his weapon could have been fired fast enough, a big central question remains: Was there only one gunman? And two vital secondary questions behind that: Did a single bullet strike both President Kennedy and Governor Connally? And from what direction did the shots come?

It has been firmly established that some shots came from the rear. If any shots came from the side or front, there were at least two gunmen. Governor and Mrs. Connally have said consistently they believe that there were three shots, and they have no doubts about where those shots came from. Both talked in 1967 with former CBS affiliate News Director Eddie Barker.

GOVERNOR JOHN CONNALLY: All of the shots came from the same place, from back over my right shoulder. They weren't in front of us, or they weren't at the side of us. There were no-- no sounds like that emanating from those directions.

EDDIE BARKER: Was there any doubt in your mind the direction that those shots came from?

MRS. CONNALLY: No. They all came from the same direction.

BARKER: Which was?

MRS. CONNALLY: It was behind us, over my right shoulder.

RATHER: But Professor Thompson, relying on other witnesses and what he says is other evidence, claims the Connallys are wrong.

PROFESSOR JOSIAH THOMPSON [Haverford College]: My own view is that some shots, very likely two shots, came from the depository sixth floor window; that the shot that hit Connally - about a second after the President was hit - came from a different building (had to, given the trajectory); and that a fourth shot was fired from the right front, from the knoll area, and that was the killing shot, and blew half the President's head off.

RATHER: That would be four shots, and from different directions. As we shall soon see, that theory does not correspond with the facts of the President's wounds.

But belief in such theories often is based on what people believe they see in films. For example, many of the seminars being conducted at universities and elsewhere around the nation about the assassination



view a film put together by Robert Groden, an independent film man who made it from a copy of the Zapruder footage plus various other eight-millimeter films shot by other amateur cameramen. At the meetings, speakers show Groden's film and make the point over and over that the President's head appears to move slightly forward and then violently backward when he is obviously struck at frame 313.

ROBERT GRODEN: And then the fatal head shots. Two shots hitting him simultaneously, the more powerful of which throws him violently backwards and to the left. There is a double motion to the President's head.

RATHER: That is his speculation. It isn't supported by most of the evidence. It is a fair example of the theories of critics based on films. All of them ask: How could a man struck by a bullet from the rear possibly move so violently backward? It is, they insist, against the law of physics. The Zapruder film does indeed show the President lurching backward after moving forward. This is what the unaided eye sees. CBS News asked Itek Corporation, world-renowned for film analysis, to study the film scientifically, using the best modern techniques and equipment. It is important to remember that Itek had, for this first-time-ever study, not copies of the Zapruder film, but the original.

According to John Wolfe, President of Itek's Optical Systems Division, this is what they found. When the fatal bullet struck, the President's head went forward with extreme speed, almost twice as rapidly than it subsequently travelled backwards.

JOHN WOLFE: So, in the-- in the three frames following 313, he reversed his direction and came back to where he was before. It took him three frames to do it, so he's moving considerably slower coming back than he moved forward.

RATHER: No matter how many times you look at it, that's not the impression that one gets just sitting in a room and looking at the film. The very clear impression is that his head jolts backward faster than it went forward.

WOLFE: That, of course, is the whole point of doing this kind of-- applying this kind of technique, is to get away from the subjective impressions that are developed by looking at a-- at a blurred motion picture. My answer to your implied question is: I don't know what I see, I know what I measure.

RATHER: What Itek measured in head movements is an important indication that the fatal shot struck President Kennedy from behind. That's point one. Now point two. Computer analysis shows that all major particles from the President's head travelled away from him, forward - another strong indication that the fatal shot came from the back.

RATHER: Any doubt that the particles are moving forward?

WOLFE: No doubt.

RATHER: What about Mrs. Kennedy? What, if anything, do her movements indicate? Additional computer analysis of the film, measuring motions' direction and the velocity, suggests the following: she may have pushed her husband backward while pushing herself forward, away from him, as a reflex reaction when the fatal shot hit. If true, that could help account for some of the backward movement of his head and body.

CBS News also had the scientists examine a strip of eight-millimeter film taken by Robert Hughes just as the motorcade turned onto Elm Street, seconds before the assassination. This is the only known film in which one is able to view all together the motorcade, the school book depository building, and the sixth floor window. Through use of a computerized process called "image integration", Itek experts first sharpened the visual content of the Hughes film; then they studied the frames for movement. In one four-second span, they found what they called "definite signs of movement in the window."

But the key conclusion of this complicated computerized study of the films is: analysis of the President's head movements and the direction of particles blown from his head both indicate the bullets that hit him came from behind. That is one of the most important results of this new CBS investigation.

Another is what we learned about the President's wounds. John Kennedy autopsy x-rays and photographs that were not seen by the Warren Commission and were not available to CBS in 1967 now have been studied.

CBS News commissioned Dr. James Weston, Chief Medical Examiner for the State of New Mexico and President-elect of the National Academy of Forensic Sciences, to make an independent study of the x-rays and photographs taken at the Kennedy autopsy. He is very positive about what his examination disclosed. I talked to him in the National Archives.

Doctor, based on your own examinations, how many shots hit the President?

DR. JAMES WESTON: Two.

RATHER: Only two?

DR. WESTON: Only two.

RATHER: You're certain of that?

DR. WESTON: Yes.

RATHER: How can you tell?

DR. WESTON: Well, you can tell on the head-- you can tell, because any place where there's an entrance wound of any kind the bullet bevels the skull in such a way that there's a crater on the inside; and where there is an exit wound, it bevels the skull in such a way that there is a crater on the outside.

RATHER: So you're prepared to say, without any doubt whatsoever, the President was hit by two shots?

DR. WESTON: Yes.

RATHER: From what direction?

DR. WESTON: From the rear and above and slightly to the right.

RATHER: Any possibility that either of the two shots could have come from the side or front?

DR. WESTON: No.

RATHER: Based on your experience and your standing as a forensic pathologist, you don't have any difficulty reconciling the movement of the President's head you see on the film with your statement that it was definitely an entry wound in the back of the head that caused that fatal wound?

DR. WESTON: No. I-- I would have trouble reconciling it. On the other hand, I've had the privilege of examining in photographs the entire interior of the skull, and examining on the x-ray the three pieces which were recovered which were not a part of the skull; and in none of those is there anything that suggests other than an entrance hole in the back and an exit hole here in the right front.

RATHER: Doctor, are you willing to stake your reputation on the statement that President Kennedy was not struck from the front in the skull?

DR. WESTON: Absolutely. Yes.

RATHER: Note, Dr. Weston says that he would have trouble reconciling the movement of the President's head backward after being struck from that direction, except for the fact the medical evidence, he says, leaves him no room to doubt it.

All of the shots that hit the President and Governor Connally probably came from the rear. We believe this to be one of our most important findings. The wounds in both the President and the Governor lead to the inescapable conclusion that whoever was firing, and from wherever, the shots that hit came from behind.

[ANNOUNCEMENTS]

RATHER: The one question that perhaps more than any other has solidified in assassination literature over the years is: Did a single bullet strike both President Kennedy and Governor Connally? The Warren Report version of the assassination is that three shots were fired: one missed the limousine entirely (they are not sure which one); another killed the President with a shot to the head; and one single bullet - quote - "most probably" passed through the President's neck and Governor Connally's body. David Belin, one of the Warren Commission's principal attorneys and author of the book "November 22nd, 1963: You Are the Jury", which defends the Report, tells how the single bullet theory came into being.

DAVID BELIN: Well, the single bullet theory really developed out of an attempt on my part to really try and prove there was more than one gunman. According to the FBI reports, the first bullet struck the President, the second bullet struck Governor Connally, and the third and fatal bullet struck the President. Governor Connally's physicians agreed that the bullet entered the back of his wrist, came out of the front.

I then went back to the FBI lab people and our slides of the Zapruder film, and lo and behold, it turned out that Governor Connally was not in a position to have been hit after frame 240. If President Kennedy was hit at frame 220, and if Governor Connally could not have been hit after frame 240, and if the camera ran at roughly 18.3 frames a second, then less than a second elapsed between those two wounds. And lo and behold, I had, preliminary at least, thought that I might have come up with proof that there was a second gunman. The only possibility that there wouldn't be a second gunman would be if the bullet that went through President Kennedy's neck (and we knew that it exited from his neck) hit Governor Connally. We reconstructed Governor Connally's position and the President's position in a motorcade frame by frame down Elm Street in Dallas. Governor Connally and President Kennedy were right on line at the time of the assassination, and I reluctantly in a sense had to conclude that the same bullet struck both.

RATHER: Professor Thompson, interviewed by David Culhane, belittles the Belin theory, and says it is demonstrably untrue.

PROFESSOR THOMPSON: The crucial issue remains, to this day, this famous single bullet theory.

DAVID CULHANE: But we looked at the Zapruder film frame by frame. What do you think it tells us about the-- the single bullet theory?

PROFESSOR THOMPSON: It tells us that the witnesses were right; that when Mrs. Connally and Governor Connally say he was hit by a second shot, they're right, because we can see that second shot hit him about a second after the President has already been hit. Now let's go to the film.

CULHANE: Okay.

PROFESSOR THOMPSON: Here we have Zapruder frame 222. The car is just emerging from behind the sign. One sees Governor Connally just to the right of the sign. Two twenty-five, Kennedy has obviously been hit at this point; so 225, he's reacting. Now, let's go on in time five-eighteenths of a second to Zapruder frame 230. Here's Zapruder frame 230; and now we go to it in close-up. Here's Governor Connally. Notice he's gripping his Stetson upside down with that wrist that, according to the Warren Commission, has already been shattered by a bullet. Let's go on in time.

This is Zapruder frame 236. Governor Connally is now turning to his right, as he said he was turning when he was hit. This is Zapruder frame 237. Now, the hit occurs right now - between this and the next frame. Two thirty-eight, and I'll go on to 239, 240, and now-- now we're back in close-up. This is Zapruder frame 237. That bullet, according to the Commission, went through President Kennedy, came out his throat, smashed into Governor Connally's back, blew five inches out of his fifth rib, blew a hole that size out of his chest, shattered the radius bone of his wrist, and continued on to imbed itself in his thigh. Now, the Government performed tests at Ars-- at Edgewood Arsenal, firing bullets from Oswald's rifle to see what they looked like. This bullet was fired through the chest cavity of an anesthetized goat to simulate, mind you, just one-half, 50%, of the wound in Connally's chest. Notice how grossly it's deformed. Finally (this is a beauty), this one was fired into a corpse's wrist to see what would happen to a bullet from Oswald's rifle when it hit a wrist bone. Notice, all of these are grossly deformed.

RATHER: Taken at face value, Professor Thompson's arguments are powerful, but there is another side, beginning with his major point - this bullet, the famous single bullet, the one Professor Thompson insists is not deformed enough. The expert who performed the tests Thompson mentioned is Dr. Alfred G. Olivier. Olivier told David Culhane he is convinced a single bullet could have done the damage and still emerge in relatively good shape.

CULHANE: Now, as far as the-- the bullet itself appearing--

DR. ALFRED G. OLIVIER: Relatively undamaged?

CULHANE: --relatively undamaged on the nose. Is that not a puzzle?

DR. OLIVIER: No, considering first that it went through the President's neck, taking out some velocity - not a great amount, only about 100 feet per second - but then travelling sideways, it lost considerable velocity passing through the Governor; even though it didn't hit the bone directly, it did travel through a lot of flesh and connective tissue around his side. It lost a considerable amount of velocity there and expended quite a bit of energy doing considerable damage to his lung. By the time it hit the wrist, it was at a very much reduced velocity; otherwise, hitting that wrist at an angle the way it did, it would have torn the wrist right off if it was at full velocity, because even a bullet hitting straight on on the wrist does tremendous damage.

CULHANE: So wouldn't the bullet really have been enormously deformed by that?

DR. OLIVIER: Only if it was travelling at a high velocity.

RATHER: I asked Dr. Weston, who examined the x-rays and photographs and the bullet for CBS News, about that.

Doctor, is it consistent with your experience that a bullet such as this could go all the way through a man's body and come out and be in the condition that this bullet is in? And the Archives has this bullet, and the Archivist is holding it. Now, that bullet is in remarkably good condition.

DR. WESTON: Yes, it certainly is. It's-- It's not, though, what you'd call pristine. If you look at it carefully, you can see it's quite a bit flattened on one side, and-- See, it's quite a bit flatter this way than it is this way. In other words, if you measured it with a ruler, it would be, oh, close to about three-quarters as thick as it is wide that way.

RATHER: So, you wouldn't consider it pristine?

DR. WESTON: No, I certainly wouldn't.

RATHER: About the condition of the famous, and infamous, single bullet, our judgment is it is not conclusive for evidence, one way or another, overall. It does make the single bullet theory difficult; not impossible, but difficult to believe.

Now, as for the film and the single bullet theory, Professor Thompson says he can see in the Zapruder film exactly when Governor Connally was struck. He says it was 1.1 seconds after the President was first hit. That is less than half the time it takes to work the rifle bolt and fire a second shot. Remember, 2.3 seconds minimum to work the rifle bolt. Thompson says there was only 1.1 seconds between the time Kennedy and Connally were hit. But 1.1 seconds is too much of an interval for one shot to have struck both men. So, if Professor Thompson is right, there was a second gunman, and the single bullet theory is wrong.

We at CBS News agree that Kennedy probably was struck somewhere between Zapruder frames 210 and 225. We cannot, however, tell when precisely Connally was hit, and frankly, we do not believe anyone can. The experts at Itek Corporation came up with an estimate that strikes us as the most scientific of any thus far.

Frames 210 to 240 - any indication in those frames as to when Governor Connally may have been hit?

JOHN WOLFE: What we've done there is to have five trained photo-interpreters look at the original positive for evidence of anything unusual. And they have all come to the same conclusion, namely, that between frames 223 and 226, which is a short span - three frames or about a sixth of a second.

RATHER: About a sixth of a second?

WOLFE: Yes. Over-- Somewhere in that one-sixth of a second, they all see evidence of the beginning of an arm-and-wrist movement on Connally's part, which later, in frame 228, culminates in his very rapidly flipping his hat from one position to the inverted position.

RATHER: So, what your people see over the space of a quarter of a second - frame 225, roughly, to frame 230 - is what?

WOLFE: We see the-- the arm-- In fact, it's-- it's illustrated fairly well here in this graph. I'll-- but I'll just tell you that we see his, Connally's, wrist move, first down, and then up, and then very rapidly down. And by frame 228, his wrist begins to rotate very rapidly, so that two frames later - in other words, a total of one-ninth of a second - and sometime in that one-ninth of a second he has rotated the hat completely from one position to the other. So the-- the interval I'm describing then, which is on the order of, what did I say, a sixth of a second total, we think shows evidence of unusual arm-and-wrist motion, and we see that beginning approximately at frame 225.

RATHER: Unlike Professor Thompson, Itek scientists don't claim to know the precise moment Connally was hit. Even with microscopes, computers and the original film, they say, the instant simply cannot be pinpointed. They did find unusual reactions in Connally, including facial expressions and movement of the hand and hat, which raise serious doubts he was wounded as late as Thompson claims. The Itek findings indicate Connally may already have been reacting to a bullet strike only a third of a second or less after the President. If this is true, it increases the probability that the same bullet hit both men.

One of the most respected critics of the single bullet theory is Dr. Cyril Wecht, a forensic pathologist and coroner of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. He has also examined those x-rays and photographs in the Archives. Dr. Wecht said before the examination that the single bullet was too little damaged to have wounded two men; he still believes that. He also stresses what he believes is an impossible trajectory for a single bullet. He theorizes that a second shot by a second gunman came from the school book depository building but from a different window.

DR. CYRIL WECHT: If you take a sketch of the Presidential limousine, a piece of tracing paper, a ruler and a pencil, you can readily demonstrate the pathway of that bullet, which would have been

travelling at about 2,000 feet per second. The bullet hit the President in the back on the right side, exited from the front of the neck just to the left of the knot of the tie. The straight line will possibly miss Connally, but to be quite conservative in my presentation, let's say that it might have caught Connally on the left lower lateral, back area. In other words, it's way over toward the side, just above the belt line. But in real life, Connally's wound was just behind the right arm pit.

RATHER: The trajectory. You say there is no way, looking at the trajectory, that that bullet could have done what the Warren Commission said that it did?

DR. WECHT: That's correct.

RATHER: So, this is from the Zapruder frame?

DR. WECHT: Yes, frame 230 of the Zapruder film. And look at Governor Connally, and in his right hand he holds a large Texas white Stetson, which is a hat of some weight, in the right hand, and yet, the nerve and the bone have been severed and he's been wounded.

RATHER: If it didn't strike Governor Connally, where did that bullet go?

DR. WECHT: The answer to that question, I believe, is that the bullet that struck President Kennedy was fired from a position to the rear of the President, but at a slightly more westerly fashion and at a point lower in the Texas school book depository building than the sixth floor. I believe that that bullet had a slight downward trajectory from the back to the front; that when it came out of the President's neck, it went between the heads and shoulder areas of Governor Connally and Mrs. Connally, and then out over the top or to the side of the left shoulder of Greer, the Secret Service man who was the driver of the Presidential limousine. So we can easily account for the movement of that bullet after it emerged from the President's neck.

RATHER: But only if there was someone besides Oswald firing?

DR. WECHT: Oh, yes, of course. This is all related to the two gunmen concept, which I believe is a proven fact, based upon the destruction, argumentatively, of the single bullet theory.

RATHER: But it requires a-- a bullet that's unaccounted for?

DR. WECHT: Oh, yes, but please keep in mind that the Warren Commission Report also has a bullet that is totally unaccounted for. They have 399 that did all the damage to the two men; they've got the bullet, or fragments thereof, that struck the President's head; and then they say, in their official Report, a third bullet missed the car completely. So, I'm taking no greater liberty than that which was permitted the Warren Commission in saying that a bullet escaped the car.



RATHER: One problem with Dr. Wecht's theory, and with the Warren Commission's single bullet theory, is that no one knows precisely how Kennedy and Connally were positioned in that instant. The independent forensic pathologist we commissioned, Dr. Weston, says there is no way to determine the exact trajectory.

DR. WESTON: You can't be sure exactly what the angle was of the window with respect to the President's body. And also keep in mind that when you're looking at the Zapruder movie you're only looking at-- at two angles; you're looking at a plane surface, you're not looking at a three-dimensional surface. And the-- all of these are imposed restrictions that you have to live with.

RATHER: Where was the President hit, precisely?

DR. WESTON: Well, precisely it is rather difficult to say, because the landmarks which the pathologists used are moveable. I couldn't locate it with respect to the spine, because the only picture that they had that showed it clearly to be close to the-- to the root of the neck, the pictures that they had that had a ruler in it, covered up the spine. With everything that was available to me, I could say quite accurately that the bullet hole that entered the President's back was right pretty much at the base of his neck. It was at about the level of the sixth or seventh cervical [verte]brae.

RATHER: Doctor, you say that you are absolutely certain that one entry bullet hole was here?

DR. WESTON: Yes, sir.

RATHER: Well, explain to me why, on this autopsy descriptive sheet 63, number 272, from the Archives, and verified by Admiral Burkley, that the hole is placed down so low in that sketch.

DR. WESTON: Well, I think I ought to explain the purpose of this. This is really a work sheet, and nothing more than that.

RATHER: But you are aware that many murder theories are based on this difference?

DR. WESTON: Yes.

RATHER: But you're an expert in the field, and you don't attach any significance to this, really?

DR. WESTON: Yes. Let-- Let me explain to you, Dan, if-- if the bullet hole had been down there, which is way below his shoulder, then it would have gone through the lung; and if it had gone through the lung, the lung would have collapsed. And if the lung had collapsed, you'd have been able to see the collapsed lung in the x-ray.

RATHER: Are you absolutely confident you had enough material on which to make judgments?

DR. WESTON: Yes.

RATHER: No doubt in your mind about that?

DR. WESTON: Yes, sir.

RATHER: As recalled earlier in this broadcast, in 1967 we expressed belief, hope, really, that qualified examination of the x-rays and photographs taken at the time of the Kennedy autopsy might clear up many major questions. Such examination has helped, some. For example, establishing (to our satisfaction, at least) that only two entry wounds can be found, both shots from the rear. But the materials don't answer as many questions as they should because the autopsy was so poorly done. The autopsy was conducted by two Naval pathologists, Commander James J. Humes and Dr. J. Thornton Boswell, and an Army Lieutenant Colonel, Pierre Finck. Unfortunately, Finck was the only qualified forensic pathologist there.

The officer in charge in the room was John Kennedy's personal physician, Admiral George G. Burkley. He reportedly directed that certain vital, normal procedures not be carried out. Burkley may have been motivated by an understandable desire to limit disfigurement of the body; but for whatever reason, it is a fact that the autopsy in many important ways was botched. As a result, we have for history a record that Dr. Wecht and Dr. Weston agree is flawed. We think the available evidence shows that the single bullet theory is at least possible. That's the most that can be said.

So, we look again at our questions. Where did the shots come from? Our inquiry has turned up new evidence strongly indicating that President Kennedy and Governor Connally were shot from the rear.

Did Oswald shoot President Kennedy? The evidence indicates yes, he probably did.

Was there only one gunman? There is positive evidence of one gunman. Twelve years after the crime, most evidence still points to one gunman. As far as we can determine now, the answer is yes.

The case for Oswald's guilt is, in our judgment, solidly established. Whether he acted entirely alone has not really been established, and may never be.

There are some things about this affair, such as the question of the single bullet, which simply cannot be settled one way or another with the means available to us today. And there are other frayed ends to the Oswald story - events, incidents, tantalizing bits and pieces that are bound to keep suspicions alive. In a moment, we'll be back with one such fascinating tangled thread.

[ANNOUNCEMENTS]

RATHER: During our reporting on the case of Lee Harvey Oswald, CBS News located Robert Ray McKeown, a known supplier of illegal weapons. In 1959, he had been convicted of running guns to Fidel Castro in Cuba. McKeown showed me the house in Texas, the exact spot on a front porch, where he says he received a visit from Lee Harvey Oswald a few weeks before John Kennedy's murder. This is a story the Warren Commission never heard, never investigated.

ROBERT RAY McKEOWN: It must have been on a Saturday morning. I think it was around eleven o'clock, I'm not sure. I seen these two men get out and come up to the door and knock, so I went to the door. And this little guy, the small, blond-headed fellow, he says, "Well, I see we found the right-- found the man we're looking for." He says, "I-- I can tell you by the-- I know-- I know I've got the right man, because I-- I've seen your picture in the paper so much." That's what he said. So I told him, I said, "Well, my name's McKeown." And he said, "That's-- That's the man I'm looking for." And he said, "My name is Oswald, Lee-- Lee Oswald."

RATHER: He introduced himself that--?

McKEOWN: Right. He says, "There's no need of beating around the bush." He says, "I would like to talk to you about getting some arms. I'm in the market-- The people I represent--" (but he never told me who he represented) "--is in the market for lots of arms like bazookas and machineguns and everything like that." I said, "Well, I tell you, you came to the wrong man." I said, "In-- In one respect you came to the right man, but you're in the wrong--" I says, "I'm not in that kind of business no more." I says, "I'm on tri-- five year probation." And I says, "There's no way-- There's not enough money in the world to get me back in that mess."

RATHER: Did he have someone with him?

McKEOWN: He had a-- a tall fellow with a-- I think he had a mustache, and he was a Latin. But he didn't do-- he introduced me to him, but it's been a long time. I think his name was Hernandez, or either-- some kind of a Latin name, you know. But you could look at him and see that he was Latin. I bade him good-- good-by, and in about maybe two or three minutes, maybe five minutes - right quick - he knocked on the door again. So I went to him, and he says, "I want to ask you--" I said, "Wait a minute, I'll come outside." He says, "It won't be nothing like that you was into." He said-- He says, "I'd just like to get four powerful maybe .300 Savage automatics with a telescope sight on them." He says, "Now, we'll be willing to pay you \$1,000 each. That'll be \$4,000 you could pick up right quick." He said, "We want them unregistered, you know." I says, "Well, like I told you before, and like I'm telling you now" - and I pointed my finger - I said, "Just like I'm telling you right now, I am not getting involved no more with no arms."

RATHER: You're absolutely certain it was *the* Lee Harvey Oswald, the assassin of John Kennedy?

McKEOWN: I-- I would put my hand on the *Bible* and say it was, and I believe in the *Bible*. And it was certainly him. It was the-- It was the man who killed-- that Ru-- that Jack Ruby killed.

RATHER: Did you talk to the FBI about Oswald coming to see you?

McKEOWN: I think they did ask me if I knew Oswald. I-- I think I told them I didn't know him, never heard of him, or something like that. I-- I'm not sure. It was up in the Federal building up in Houston where they asked me to come up there, and, of course, I was scared, you know, and nervous, too.

RATHER: McKeown told me that one of his friends, Sam Neill, who was at his house the day of the Oswald visit, would corroborate his story.

Are you absolutely certain that the person you saw was Lee Oswald?

SAM NEILL: Yeah.

RATHER: No doubt in your mind?

NEILL: No doubt in my mind, because I saw him, you know, on the deal when the President was shot, and I saw him then and he was the same guy.

RATHER: What did you say to yourself when you saw him?

NEILL: I said to myself-- "Just keeping my mouth shut" is what I said to myself, you know, because I don't want to get involved. That's the general public's attitude about everything. I just don't want to get involved, you see. So, that's what I did.

RATHER: Neill did not get involved. He never was interviewed for the Warren Commission. McKeown was interviewed by the FBI, but he told them nothing about Oswald. Curiously, he did say that Jack Ruby had come to see him in 1959, offering \$25,000 for a letter of introduction to Fidel Castro. Ruby never came back to pick up the letter, McKeown says.

This whole McKeown involvement, if true, has mind-boggling implications. Why four guns, for example, unless there were plans for more than one assassin? Is it mere coincidence that Cuba figures in McKeown's story? And the - quote - "Latin looking man" - unquote. Is he another link to Cuba? For Oswald's past was full of Cuba connections. Just how much was known about them by the FBI and the CIA? These are some of the matters we'll be examining tomorrow evening in Part Two of this inquiry as we confront the next questions in the Oswald case: Was there a conspiracy? Was there a cover-up? Until tomorrow night, Dan Rather. Good night.

[ANNOUNCEMENTS]

ANNOUNCER: This has been the first of a series - a CBS REPORTS INQUIRY: "The American Assassins".