

LETTER TO THE EDITOR  
DALLAS MORNING NEWS

The June 28, 1992 edition of The Dallas Morning News carried an editorial concerning my book JFK: Conspiracy of Silence (Charles A. Crenshaw, M.D. with Jens Hansen and J. Gary Shaw; Signet). The editorial, written by Larry Sutherland, stated that my book is "peddling lies," questioned my credibility, and accused me of making "asinine comments." The editorial concluded by endorsing an allegation that my motives in writing the book were "a desire for personal recognition and monetary gain."

The accusations are untrue and damaging.

My response to these personal attacks is to point out the factual errors, distortions, and misstatements contained in the editorial. Primarily, JFK: Conspiracy of Silence relates my personal account of the events of the Kennedy assassination. It includes details of three tragic days at Parkland Hospital when I was a surgical resident, including my perspective of these events.

Sutherland wrote that, "There are two major claims by Dr. Crenshaw in the book." My first claim, stated the editorial, is that the fatal wound to President Kennedy entered the front. Yes, without doubt, I firmly believe the president was shot from the front; not only in the head, but also in the throat.

On that fateful day in 1963, all of the surgeons in the operating room, and numerous other witnesses, believed Kennedy was shot at least once from the front. Testifying under oath, nine physicians who viewed the president's head wound at Parkland reported seeing a large defect in the back of the president's head, indicative of an exit wound.

To refute this claim, Sutherland cites my fellow physicians Malcolm Perry, M. T. Jenkins, Charles Baxter and Jim Carrico. These four doctors, states Sutherland, in interviews published in a May '92 article

of the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), "...all contend that President Kennedy was struck from behind and above." However, what Sutherland fails to point out is that these same four doctors, while testifying under oath before the Warren Commission in 1964, described a large wound in the back of the president's head. These early sworn descriptions are indicative of a wound of exit caused by a shot from the front, and are in total conflict with the official autopsy.

Sutherland admits in the editorial that, "William Kemp Clark, another Parkland physician working on the president, also believed he saw a large gaping hole in the rear of the president's head." It appears that Sutherland made no attempt to contact the other physicians present that day who agree with Dr. Clark and me, nor did he contact me to ascertain my "credibility" on this or any other "claim" in my book.

With regard to these four doctors who now take exception to my description of the president's wounds, Sutherland also asserts that they, "...had a more important role than Dr. Crenshaw in trying to save the president..." Placed in proper context, this is not true. Of the six minor surgical procedures performed on President Kennedy, I did the cutdown on his right leg. There was nothing done to the president which could be considered "major" -- all procedures performed were of a resuscitative and life-saving nature.

Just as I am not alone in my opinion regarding the president's head wound, neither am I alone regarding the throat wound. Dr. Malcolm Perry was the physician who performed the tracheostomy on the dying president, making the necessary incision through the throat wound. Within two hours of the surgery, at a press conference, he described the throat wound three separate times as an "entrance wound" and stated that the bullet which caused the wound was "coming at" the president. Dr. Ronald Jones, another attending physician, also called the wound an "entrance wound" in his report filed that day. Dr. Paul Peters, who also assisted, was still calling it an entrance wound four months later when he testified before the Warren Commission.

My decision to go public, after 28 years of silence, came after viewing the president's autopsy photos. These so-called "official" photos in no way depicted the wounds we observed on President Kennedy's body at Parkland Hospital. As Sutherland correctly stated, "Those photos show no large exit wound at the rear of the head." Sutherland then adds that this "...should dispel the notion of a shot coming from the front..."

Is Sutherland qualified to draw conclusions on what the numerous physicians, as well as others present that day, thought and testified? (Additional "official" photos appear to show a wound or wounds in the president's back, evidence which I cannot dispute. In our resuscitative efforts at Parkland, we never had time to determine all of his wounds before his death.)

Sutherland continued his attack and wrote that my claims concerning the president's head wounds were in contradiction "to [the] unanimous findings of a nine-member panel of forensic pathologists hired to study the head wound for the House Select Committee on Assassinations in the late 1970's." Sutherland should have informed his readers that these findings -- which came fourteen years after the assassination -- were based on the "official" photographs and X-rays, and are in conflict with the observations of at least 27 people who actually saw the wounds that weekend. Not one single person -- from Mrs. Kennedy to the Dallas doctors and nurses -- saw the wounds as the autopsy photographs show them.

It is noteworthy to comment that the same panel of forensic pathologists who studied the 1963 autopsy report concluded that the report was "incomplete" and "inaccurate"; that the pathologists who performed the autopsy "...had insufficient training and experience to evaluate a death from gunshot wounds"; and that the location of the head wound was "incorrect." I had believed that the best forensic pathologists in our nation would perform the autopsy on President Kennedy. I regret that this did not happen. It is surprising that The Dallas Morning News followed the publication of the JAMA article with an editorial lauding the two autopsy doctors for publishing "the facts." The editorial added, "This is in stark contrast with many of those who have profited by writing Kennedy assassination books [which are] heavy on paranoia and light on facts."

Is it because I disagree with the "official" version of the highly suspicious pathological examination of the slain president that The News and Sutherland say I am "peddling lies?" Are my observations of the assassination threatening to the "official" version? Obviously, an entrance wound to the front of the throat, an exit wound in the back of the head, and an entrance wound(s) in the president's back meant at least two assassins, one of which could not have been accused assassin Lee Harvey Oswald.

My second "major claim" in Conspiracy of Silence, writes Sutherland, is that, "President Lyndon



Johnson called Dr. Crenshaw as he and other physicians were trying to save the life of Mr. Oswald...Mr. Johnson allegedly told Dr. Crenshaw over the phone: "I want a deathbed confession from the accused assassin." Sutherland wrote that this was "hard to believe."

I never said President Johnson called me personally. A man called requesting to speak to someone in the operating room, and I was asked to take the call. Corroboration to the fact of this call includes Phyllis Bartlett, former Parkland Hospital switchboard chief, who vividly remembers receiving the call from a man who identified himself as -- and sounded like -- President Johnson. Additional verification is provided by Dr. Phillip E. Williams, then an intern, who told the New York Times (May 26, 1992 edition), that he remembered someone say, "the White House is calling and President Johnson wants to know what the status of Oswald is." And still further confirmation is found in official FBI documents which state that agents were ordered to the operating room where they donned robes and masks with the intent of obtaining a deathbed confession from the alleged assassin.

Finally, Sutherland singles out as the "most asinine" of my comments my publisher's news release which spoke of "Robert Kennedy's involvement in a possible coverup." I never made such an allegation in the book. What was actually written about the president's brother concerned missing autopsy materials and comments he made at San Fernando State College during his 1968 presidential campaign. These missing autopsy materials, which have never been recovered, would be crucial to any reinvestigation of the president's death. Prior to their disappearance, they were in the care and control of Robert Kennedy. His comment at San Fernando State College, three days before his own assassination, indicates that he was suspicious of the "official" conclusions about the president's murder. RFK told students, "Only the powers of the Presidency will reveal the secrets of my brother's death." In light of his actions, it is not unwarranted speculation to suggest that RFK, if elected president, anticipated producing the "missing" autopsy materials and ordering a reinvestigation into President Kennedy's death.

In conclusion, The Dallas Morning News/Larry Sutherland editorial determined that my "credibility"

is in "critical condition"; that I am guilty of making "asinine comments"; and that my book, Conspiracy of Silence, is "peddling lies." My book was not written as a historical treatise, but as the recollection of a major event in my life, one that affected me, the history of our nation, and the world. Sutherland's editorial appears to be another example of unjustified and defamatory remarks intended to enhance the highly controversial "official" version of John F. Kennedy's assassination, thereby perpetuating the conspiracy of silence.

**Total of 1562 words**