

Reagan develops fever

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WASHINGTON (AP) — President Reagan developed a fever which hit 102 degrees Friday, a "limited setback" which poses a remote potential for pneumonia, while FBI officials concluded toxic explosive material in the bullet that hit him had not leaked into his body.

The president's chest surgeon discounted the rise in temperature — which later fell to near-normal levels and then rose again — and said Reagan still is likely to be sent home to the White House early next week.

His doctors disclosed in a statement issued at the White House that after the president's temperature rose late in the day, they discovered bronchial plugs — hardened tissue and mucous — and "dormant blood" — blood clots that had been expected to form — and removed them in a "fiberoptic-bronchoscopy."

Under that procedure, tiny light-carrying tubes were inserted through the president's mouth and throat and into his damaged left lung, and other tubes were used to remove the material.

They said Reagan was once again receiving antibiotics he had received following surgery, as a result of Friday's procedure. The antibiotics had been halted for more than 24 hours.

The FBI raised the possibility that a toxic chemical contained in the "devastator" bullet which struck the president may have seeped into his body.

Assistant FBI Director Thomas Kelleher said the White House had been notified of the ballistics finding, which confirmed that the slugs which hit Reagan and three others were explosive rounds which contained lead azide. Kelleher said he preferred to leave it to medical authorities to assess the potential danger of the chemical, but "while it's not healthy material, it's not extremely toxic."

The official said the bullet dug from Reagan's chest — an apparent ricochet which did not explode — had lost about one-eighth of its original weight, raising the possibility that some of the chemical remained in his body. "We cannot tell," Kelleher said.

Dr. Dennis O'Leary, of the George Washington University Hospital staff, said in a telephone interview that while he was "still looking for some information" on the matter, "the lead, as far as I know, is not a problem."

He said that "all the lead in a bullet" would not be "sufficient to create a detectable blood-level of lead" in the president's body.

Asked if the president's fever could be related to the toxic matter, he said, "I'd be very, very doubtful."

Other doctors concurred with Dr. Benjamin Aaron that the president's fever, which dropped to 99 degrees later in the day, was a normal post-operative occurrence. Meanwhile, the president got out of his bed for the second straight day and conferred with two senior Cabinet members about to leave on foreign trips.

The president received Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig Jr. and Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, who reportedly got embroiled in an argument in the White House situation room within hours after the president was shot.

Aaron said at a midafternoon briefing that the 102-degree fever indicated that part of the president's left lung was not functioning as it should be. He called the development a "limited setback," adding that there is no evidence that infection has set in. Fevers are common after major chest or lung surgery, the physician said.

'A Little Bit Of a Setback' For Reagan

Fever Reaches 102; Brady Is Removed From Critical List

By Susan Okie and Lee Lescaze
Washington Post Staff Writers

President Reagan ran a 102-degree fever yesterday morning because of a partial collapse and inflammation at the base of his injured left lung. The fever dropped to 99 in the afternoon, and doctors then said it was still likely that he will be back in the White House early next week. But last night the president's temperature again rose to slightly above 101, according to White House physician Dr. Daniel Ruge.

Meanwhile, presidential press secretary James S. Brady was removed from the critical list at George Washington University Hospital, according to a medical report issued by the White House last night, but he remains in intensive care.

According to the White House, when Brady's physician asked him yesterday what his job was, he replied "press secretary at the White House."

Reagan's surgeon, Dr. Benjamin Aaron, said that the president's "recovery to date has been remarkable," although he characterized yesterday as "a little bit of a setback."

Aaron said that since the operation to remove the explosive "Devastator" bullet that pierced his left lung, Reagan has been coughing up "old blood" that collected in the lung as a result of the wound.

Aaron said Reagan's fever probably was due to collapse of a small lung segment because blood clots blocked his breathing tubes.

He said that Reagan was being treated with intensive physical therapy of the chest to encourage him to cough up secretions and that his white blood cell count was normal, indicating no major infection.

The president was photographed yesterday for the first time since he

was shot, and he met with his secretaries of state and defense, who were about to embark on foreign trips.

Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig Jr. left for the Middle East last night carrying letters from Reagan to leaders of the eight nations he will visit on the first Reagan administration venture into the diplomatic tangle of Mideast politics.

Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger left last night to visit NATO nations in a trip that includes a nuclear planning meeting. There, he also will have the opportunity to press his European counterparts for commitments to united action should there be internal suppression or a Soviet invasion in Poland.

After his visit with Reagan, Haig was asked by reporters at the hospital about his widely reported disagreement with Weinberger in the White House Situation Room while Reagan was undergoing surgery Monday.

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PRESIDENT, From A1

"I think the whole team performed magnificently, and the American people were well served by the team," he replied.

The president was informed by his senior aides of the 88-to-10 Senate vote Thursday in favor of his budget-cut proposals and said, "That's tremendous," Deputy White House press secretary Larry Speakes said.

The FBI confirmed yesterday that the bullet that struck Reagan, apparently after ricocheting off his limousine, was a "Devastator" designed to explode upon impact. The FBI said it did not detonate.

Thomas Kelleher, chief of the FBI's laboratory division, said the bullet could have left a compound known as lead azide in Reagan's body, but he stressed that there is no evidence of leakage from the bullet into his body.

Kelleher added that although lead azide is toxic, it would not threaten the president's life. "It's a lead compound," Kelleher told United Press International, "and depending on the quantity you have in your body, it might make you sick."

Reagan's surgeon was asked about the president's trip to Mexico and California, scheduled to begin April 23, and indicated that any travel depends on how quickly the president regains his strength.

"Blood loss... is one of the more severe forms of trauma," Aaron said.

"He probably, for a period of two or three weeks, will be tired very easily... and will have to have periodic rest periods."

Reagan should be able to begin working part-time in the Oval Office in about 10 days, Aaron added.

The medical report on press secretary Brady continued to be cautiously optimistic.

Brady "has gotten brighter every day since his injury," said Dr. Arthur I. Kobrine, who performed the 6½-hour brain operation on Brady. "He

speaks to me now with three-, four- and five-word sentences. If asked how he feels, he'll say to me, as he did today, that he feels fine."

Kobrine said that Brady moves his right side, which is controlled by the relatively undamaged left half of his brain, "close to normally," but moves his left side very little.

It is too early to speculate about the extent of Brady's recovery because of the continuing risk of complications such as brain and lung infection or blood clots in the legs, Kobrine said.

"Under the very best of circumstances, he could end up with essentially no mental impairment" and "would walk with a cane and have some weakness of the left arm," Kobrine said.

"The worst case is, he can still die," the surgeon added.

For a year, Brady's condition can be subject to change, and any mental loss that remains after a year will probably be permanent, Kobrine said.

Aaron and Dr. Dennis O'Leary, dean of clinical affairs at George Washington University, who has been the principal hospital spokesman since Monday, were questioned yesterday about Reagan's condition when he arrived at the hospital.

"I think he might have been near shock when he first came in the hospital," Aaron said. "None of us was willing to sit around and see how much trouble he would be in."

Aaron said that even after a chest tube drained blood that had collected in Reagan's chest before he reached the hospital, "the blood was continuing to move out... at a rather alarming rate."

He said Reagan lost 3½ quarts, or about half of his blood, and was given transfusions of about eight quarts.

At the White House, Speakes said chief of staff James A. Baker III had ordered a written study of the White House operation during the shooting crisis as a historical record.



White House Photo via United Press International

Nancy Reagan visits husband in his hospital room. It was president's first appearance before cameras since he was shot Monday.

Tapes Support Theory on Hinckley Motive

The Exploding Bullets

By Pete Earley and Charles Babcock
Washington Post Staff Writers

The bullets that struck President Reagan and two of the three other persons wounded in Monday's assassination attempt were positively identified yesterday by the FBI as "Devastators" — expensive, customized .22-caliber cartridges designed to explode upon impact with the force of slugs fired from much more powerful handguns. None of those bullets exploded, however.

A "strong probability" exists that a fourth bullet, which struck White House press secretary James S. Brady in the head, was a Devastator that did explode.

The FBI said last night after further tests that the explosive container in the bullet that hit Reagan was still complete and that none of the material had leaked into the president's chest as was first feared.

Although federal authorities said they were not familiar with Devastators, a check of 21 ammunition dealers in the Lubbock, Tex., area — where alleged assailant John W. Hinckley Jr. purchased five handguns — shows that exploding ammunition, including Devastators, is readily available.

Lubbock pawn shop owner Scott Elmore said exploding bullets were the "in thing" about a year ago for hunting rabbits and were sold at most gun stores. They are usually

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Phone Calls Recorded

By Ron Shaffer and Laura A. Kiernan
Washington Post Staff Writers

Investigators who searched the downtown hotel room of John W. Hinckley Jr. confiscated two tape recordings — including one of telephone conversations between Hinckley and a woman believed to be Jodie Foster, the teen-aged movie star Hinckley was apparently trying to impress when he allegedly shot President Reagan, according to informed sources.

The other tape recording taken from Room 312 of the Park Central Hotel here, the sources said, was of Hinckley playing the guitar.

Law enforcement officials are considering the recorded conversations as further evidence of an obsession with the actress, an obsession that investigators believe led the shy, 25-year-old drifter to shoot the president.

An unmailed, two-page letter also found in the hotel room — addressed "Dear Jodie," signed "John Hinckley" and apparently written less than two hours before Monday's shooting — refers to telephone conversations with her.

"Although we talked on the phone a couple of times, I never had the nerve to simply approach you and introduce myself," the letter reads.

"Jodie," the letter reads, "I would abandon this idea of

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HINCKLEY, From A1

getting Reagan in a second if I could only win your heart and live out the rest of my life with you, whether it be in total obscurity or whatever. . . . The reason I'm going ahead with this attempt now is that I just cannot wait any longer to impress you."

Foster, an 18-year-old freshman at Yale University, said in a news conference Wednesday that she had never talked with Hinckley, although numerous letters signed "John W. Hinckley" or "J.W.H." were among the thousands of pieces of unsolicited mail she has received.

Investigators are working on the theory that the conversations referred to in the letter may have been made by an anonymous caller that Foster never knew by name. That caller could have been Hinckley, and the taped conversation could be one of the calls, sources said.

The tapes are now in the custody of the FBI, which is evaluating them as part of its investigation into the shooting that wounded Reagan, presidential press secretary James S. Brady, D.C. policeman Thomas K. Delahanty and Secret Service agent Timothy J. McCarthy. All are recovering in downtown hospitals.

Federal investigators are checking the long-distance telephone calls from every place Hinckley is known to have stayed, including the home of his parents in a fashionable suburb of Denver, Colo.

The FBI has declined comment on all aspects of anything recovered from Hinckley's hotel room here. The FBI inventory of those items is said to number more than a dozen pages, but the usually public record of that inventory has been sealed by the court.

Meanwhile, a task force of some 50 people, principally FBI agents complemented by Secret Service officers and D.C. policemen, is sifting through hundreds of leads in an attempt to trace Hinckley's travels across the country in the months prior to the shooting.

Hinckley has been charged with attempted assassination of the president, a charge that could result in life imprisonment upon conviction, and assault on a federal officer — the Secret Service officer.

A federal judge yesterday tentatively declared him mentally competent to stand trial, but ordered more thorough mental tests, including some to determine if he was sane at the time of the shooting. Hinckley is now being



Associated Press
Actress Jodie Foster and an unidentified friend shown after a class at Yale yesterday.

held in a psychiatric wing of the Federal Correctional Institute in Butner, N.C..

John Hinckley Sr., chairman of the board of Vanderbilt Energy Corp. of Denver, and his wife visited their son for about two hours yesterday, along with lawyers from the Washington firm of Williams & Connolly, sources said.

Before he was flown to Butner by helicopter Thursday, Hinckley was being kept isolated in the Quantico Marine Base brig under extraordinarily tight security precautions.

While there, his demeanor was

marked by passive behavior, particularly considering the gravity of charges against him. Hinckley's sole request during his confinement was for an electric razor, which law enforcement officials promptly went out and bought for him, informed sources said.

Investigators believe that Hinckley developed an obsession for Foster, whose most talked-about role was that of a teen-aged prostitute in the 1975 film "Taxi Driver."

Australian TV Bans 'Taxi Driver'

SYDNEY, April 3 (UPI) — The Australian Broadcasting Tribunal has banned a television showing of the film "Taxi Driver" because of the assassination attempt against President Reagan, officials said today.

A subplot of the film involves an attempt to assassinate a Senate candidate and some officials believe it influenced John W. Hinckley, Reagan's alleged assailant.

A spokesman for the commercial television station said "Taxi Driver" had been scheduled for showing because its star, Robert

DeNiro, won an Academy Award for best actor for his role in "Raging Bull."

A statement by the tribunal said it "reviewed the film's classification in the light of the recent events involving President Reagan" and "decided under the circumstances that the film is not suitable."

Hinckley allegedly wrote a letter saying he would kill Reagan to win the love of actress Jodie Foster, who played a child prostitute in "Taxi Driver."

In that film, the driver, a mentally unstable war veteran who has fallen in love with the prostitute, stalks a political candidate and plans to assassinate him. But those plans are foiled by a security guard.

Hinckley was arrested at the Nashville metropolitan airport on Oct. 9 when three guns he was carrying in his suitcase set off a metal detector. Then-president Carter was in town on the same day and then-candidate Reagan was scheduled to be in Memphis on the same day.

The plane Hinckley was trying to board when he was arrested was headed for New York — where both Reagan and Carter were scheduled to be the following week.

Federal investigators now believe there are definite parallels, sources said, between the behavior of Hinckley and that of Arthur Bremer, who shot George Wallace in Laurel, Md., in 1972 after stalking the candidate around the country. The author of the screenplay for "Taxi Driver" said the story was inspired by Bremer's life. It is still unclear, however, whether Hinckley ever saw the film.

What is clear, from the letter and the findings of investigators, is that Hinckley pursued Foster for seven months. He followed her to Yale, bragged to bar patrons that he was her boyfriend, hand-delivered numerous notes to her doorstep and stood outside her dormitory until, the letter says, he became "a topic of more than

a little conversation, however full of ridicule it may be."

Foster said at her press conference that the letters she received at Yale that presumably came from Hinckley "were assumed to have been love-type letters."

In one instance, she said, she received a greeting card with the words, "I love you," written several times. Foster said she threw away the first letters she received, but several received after March 1 were turned over to her college dean and are now in the possession of the FBI.

The Hinckley family has said little about their son since his arrest. On Thursday, their next-door neighbor, William Sells Jr., told reporters that the Hinckleys were unaware of their son's reported infatuation with Foster or his possession of guns until it was reported in the media.

Investigators have found evidence that Hinckley purchased at least six guns, three of which were confiscated in Nashville and two others of which were the same type of cheap, .22 caliber revolver used in the shooting of Reagan.

Federal investigators now have five of the guns in their possession, including one found at the scene of Monday's shooting outside the Washington Hilton Hotel, sources said yesterday.

On the day of the shooting, Hinckley's parents said that their son had been under psychiatric care for five months before the shooting.

Law enforcement officials have located the psychiatrist, who is practicing in the Denver area, but he has refused to discuss Hinckley with them, citing the confidentiality of his

relationship with his patient.

Meanwhile, Hinckley's defense lawyers told government prosecutors yesterday that they would not appeal the federal court order committing their client for psychiatric examination, a procedure that is expected to last at least 90 days.

BULLETS, From A1

used in rifles. The bullets, however, were not reliable, Elmore said, and their popularity diminished. At least one major Lubbock ammunition dealer, K-B Guns, still sells Devastators, primarily to police.

Thomas Kelleher, assistant FBI director in charge of the agency's laboratory, said the bullets removed from Secret Service Agent Timothy J. McCarthy and D.C. policeman Thomas K. Delahanty also were identified as Devastators.

The crime lab chief said it is unclear why the bullet that hit Brady exploded while the three other slugs did not. An official for Bingham Ltd., the Norcross, Ga., company that manufactures Devastators, told the FBI that the bullets had to be traveling at least 900 feet per second to burst on impact.

One possible reason the slugs didn't explode, a ballistics expert suggested, is because the RG14 six-shot revolver which Hinckley is accused of using had a 1 3/4-inch barrel, far too short to allow the bullet to reach its full power.

Sandy L. Brygider, director of Bingham Ltd., said Devastators were created for "defensive use." They were designed primarily for use against skyjackers by skymarshals who needed a round that could be fired aboard an airplane without the risk of penetrating the aircraft skin and causing rapid decompression. The bullets have been available commercially since 1978.

Technical experts at Bingham Ltd., said they enlarge the hole in the tip of a standard .22-caliber long-rifle hollow-point bullet and insert a small aluminum cup which is filled with from one to three grains of lead azide. The tip is sealed with lacquer. The bullet is designed to explode on impact when the lead azide is crushed.

Asked if the bullet is more or less deadly than a conventional .22 bullet, Kelleher said, "I really don't know but, normally, fragmentation causes more damage. It's made to reduce penetration and keep all the punch that you can."

A company spokesman for Devastator said the bullet has the impact of one shot from a .38-caliber or larger handgun.

Kelleher said it was possible but not probable that the bullet in President Reagan's lung could have detonated or exploded during the operation to remove it.

Noting that the bullet had hit the president's car before striking him, Kelleher said, "It already had taken as big a shock as it was going to take on the ricochet."

Delahanty underwent emergency

surgery Thursday night at the Washington Hospital Center to remove the bullet lodged near his spinal cord after the FBI had told his doctors it might be explosive. "Our concern was the bullet's location in the neck near the spinal column," Kelleher said. He added that there were concerns that the bullet still might ignite because of heat or shock from some hospital treatment.

Kelleher and FBI spokesman Roger B. Young defended the length of time it took for the FBI to determine that the bullets were Devastators. The Washington Post reported yesterday that an empty box labeled "Devastator" was found in Hinckley's hotel room by investigators Monday. But Kelleher said the bureau had not heard the name "Devastators" until Tuesday.

There was further delay because not a single reference about Devastators was found in the 3,000 cases on file in the bureau's firearms lab, he said. After a full day's search Tuesday, it was learned that the manufacturer was the Bingham company, and a request was sent to the manufacturer for specimens of the shells, Kelleher said.

The cartridges didn't arrive until Thursday afternoon and after a quick examination Delahanty's doctors were informed about the possibility that he was still carrying a potentially explosive round.

Kelleher noted that it was also likely that the two bullets that did not hit anyone were Devastators as well. One hit the president's limousine window and fragmented. The other hit the window of a building across the street and fragmented.

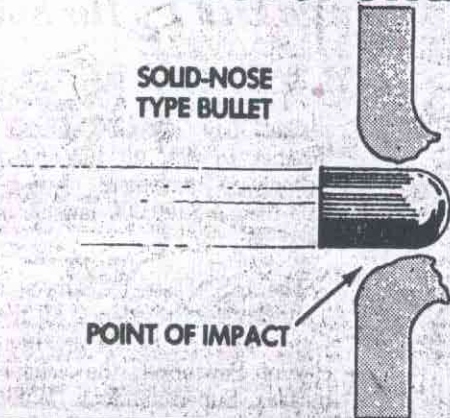
A source said, however, that FBI agents were told two hours after the shooting that the bullets fired at Reagan could not have been conventional ammunition because the bullet hole in the glass window across the street was too large for a .22-caliber and because pieces of the bullet were found on the floor between the glass and a drape.

Although the FBI did not have any records about Devastators in its files, the D.C. Police Firearms Unit has a box of Exploders made by Bingham in its bullet library. Exploders are made exactly like Devastators, except they are a larger caliber bullet than .22s.

The Devastators fall under the same regulations as less powerful conventional bullets even though they have exploding heads. A bullet must have at least one-fourth of an ounce of explosive in its tip to come under stricter federal rules governing artillery shells.

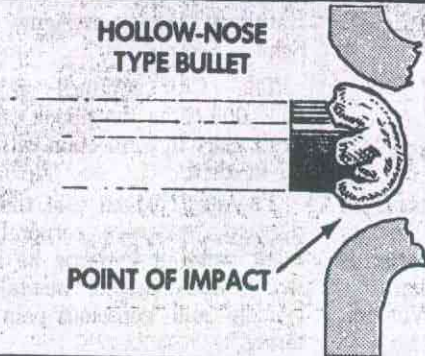
HOW THREE TYPES OF BULLETS REACT UPON IMPACT

SOLID-NOSE TYPE BULLET



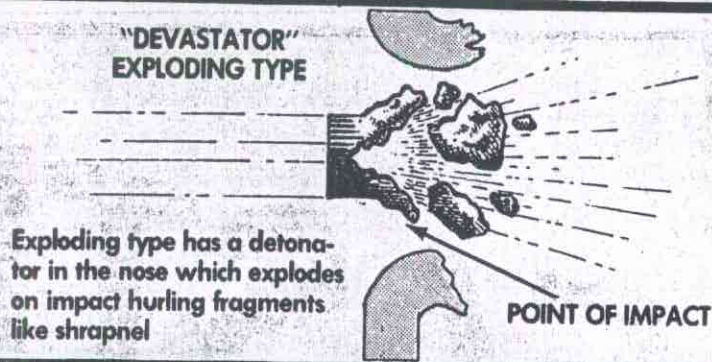
Solid-nose type makes a clean hole slightly larger than the diameter of the slug itself

HOLLOW-NOSE TYPE BULLET



Hollow-nose type "mushrooms" on impact, making a more ragged hole somewhat larger than the slug

"DEVASTATOR" EXPLODING TYPE



Exploding type has a detonator in the nose which explodes on impact hurling fragments like shrapnel

Ford Rips Crimes With Guns

Favors Death Penalty When Injury Occurs

HASBROUCK HEIGHTS, N.J., April 3 (UPI) — Former president Gerald R. Ford says people who commit crimes with guns should get the death penalty whenever they injure someone else.

Responding to reporters' questions about the assassination attempt on President Reagan, Ford said there should be mandatory sentences for people who commit crimes with guns and "capital punishment if someone is injured."

He opposed registration or other

gun-control measures, and said the country would never be able to outlaw handguns because such an attempt would cause a revolt by millions of hunters.

But the former president said it might be wise to "take discretion away from the judges" in determining sentences.

Ford made the comments while speaking at a fund-raiser for Republican gubernatorial candidate Thomas Kean here Thursday.

Colman McCarthy

The Gun Message Is Getting Through

GUN, Smith & Wesson, .44 Magnum,
excel. cond. \$200. 544-7100.

So read a tiny ad in The Washington Star two days after the president and three others were shot by a gunman. But it was a phony. If you called the number, you were answered by the National Coalition to Ban Handguns, the non-profit organization that works tirelessly against the nation's gun madness.

"The ad was just another way of harassing us," said Michael Beard, the executive director of the five-year-old coalition. "In the twisted mind of whoever placed the ad, this was designed to get us to waste our time answering all the phone calls."

A lot of time was wasted, what with 50 callers responding to the ad on the day it ran, and 10 callers by 9:45 the next morning. The market is hot for .44 magnums.

In context, the ad was one of the milder forms of abuse directed at the coalition. In Washington, Beard or someone on his staff of seven receives an average of one death threat a week. While appearing on a television program in California recently, Beard received three death threats and had to be sequestered out of the studio to safety.

Filthier-minded sickos send his organization envelopes stuffed with used toilet paper. The mail also brings bricks, sent first-class but with the postage left off. The intent is to force the coalition to pay the \$4 postage due, and thus eat away at its resources.

When I visited Beard the other morning following the Reagan shooting—which is one of an estimated 300,000 handgun crimes this year—he said that after five years the hostility of gun crazies is less and less jarring. He is more unsettled by the reactions of the supposedly rational people who accepted the assassination attempt as an almost inevitable tragedy: "We are coming close to expecting that our politicians are at the mercy of handgun killers."

Beard—who is 40, was dressed neatly

and was about to have an orange for lunch, is refreshing to talk with. Because of some breakthroughs since the Lennon killing against the might of the National Rifle Association and its champions like Ronald Reagan, he senses that this lost cause of banning handguns is suddenly being found. "The message is getting across to large numbers of citizens that the handgun is hidden death. A recent Gallup poll showed that six out of 10 teen-agers favor an outright ban on private possession of handguns. It was the other way around a few years ago. Teen-agers tended to be very pro gun."

A few years ago also Beard found himself pursuing candidates to get them to speak out against handguns. "Now they are coming to us," he said. "A fellow running for the congressional seat of Gladys Spellman in Maryland walked in the other day to rent our membership list for a mailing. Something else that has never happened is that gun-control positions are popping out voluntarily at state and local levels. In New Jersey, the president of the state senate, who is also a candidate for governor, has chosen to make the banning of handguns his campaign issue. Just two years ago, we couldn't have begged politicians to run on this issue."

On the question now on the minds of many—will Ronald Reagan's acceptance of private ownership of handguns be tempered?—Beard believes "that there are bound to be some subtle changes in the president's attitude. I would think that he's in the kind of position—because of being shot—from which he could not make a dramatic switch. It would make him look self-serving. But some subtle changes are possible."

In his personal life, Beard feels the tensions of an armed America as much as anyone. But he hasn't adopted the Nancy Reagan "little gun" method of home protection, which, statistics reveal, provides mostly false security. Beard says he keeps a pool cue next to his bed: "A police chief told me that that would work best against intruders. It's a very effective weapon: It's quiet, you can club with it, jab it, throw it. And it won't go off accidentally, which kills 2,000 of us every year."

Mark Shields

Very Special Agents

Jerry S. Parr, 50, lives in Gaithersburg and works in Washington. For the past 18 years, he has been a Secret Service agent; for the last two of those years, he has been special agent in charge of presidential protection. That was Jerry Parr, on Monday's videotape, thrusting himself into the line of fire so he could shield the president and shove him into the limousine.

Timothy J. McCarthy, nine years in the Secret Service and only 31, was the agent who immediately occupied the position between the president and the gunman. He assumed his post and absorbed a bullet through his liver.

In 17 good years on the Washington police force, Thomas K. Delahanty, 45, has earned a file full of commendations as well as the respect of his colleagues. While protecting the president of the United States, he was hit by a .22 bullet that had to be removed from his neck, not far from his spinal column.

The medical reports are encouraging. Both McCarthy and Delahanty, like press secretary Jim Brady and the president himself, are doing better than was at first expected. Maybe, we have begun to hope, after the suffering they and the rest of us will be able to celebrate their survival and recovery.

That's the way it was last January when 52 Americans returned home after spending two Christmases in cruel captivity. After their suffering, there was a celebration filled with fitting tributes to the patriotism and the guts of those Americans who had persevered. Those deserved testimonials must have been especially welcome to the men and women of the career Foreign Service. Foreign Service personnel have had very little experience in accepting public praise. Ridicule and mockery have been their regular fare: the cookie-pusher and striped-trousers set are not spoken about respectfully.

For some reason, we have overlooked the one demographic characteristic shared by 51 of the 52 repatriated Americans with Jerry Parr, Timothy McCarthy and Thomas Delahanty. It has nothing to do with race, region, religion or reading scores. Most generations and both sexes were represented in this very non-homogeneous group of 54 American heroes. All of them, of course, did their jobs. They fulfilled their responsibilities, and then

some. And each and every one of the 54 is—are you ready?—a public employee.

Public employees—that indolent subspecies that candidates and commentators love to attack. You know the mindless public employees: You could line up an office full of them and clean their ears with one long Q-tip. Over and over we have been told that if public employees are not incompetent, they are indifferent and surly. And if they are not mindless sloths, then they have to be zealous meddlers, feverishly regulating American business right out of business. You've read of them, those faceless bureaucrats who've never met a payroll.

It's been a long time since any politician talked publicly the way John Kennedy did in his first State of the Union speech, when he said: "Let the public service be a proud and lively career." Not many of today's winning candidates borrow that line from JFK. In fact, along with WASPs, public employees must be the last remaining group in our society without its own anti-defamation department. Both those groups are attacked with regularity and without fear of reprisal. If half the things muttered about public employees were spoken about any religious or racial group, the speaker would be dismissed as a hopeless bigot.

So what of the 54? Are they simply rare exceptions? Then so, too, must have been Col. John Glenn, Sen. Arthur Vandenberg and Gen. George Marshall because they were all public employees. Dwight Eisenhower was a public employee and so was Warren Christopher when he negotiated freedom and so was Secret Service agent Larry Buendorf on Sept. 5, 1975, in Sacramento when he took a Colt .45 away from a Charles Manson disciple who was trying to murder President Ford.

Of course, there are indifferent, incompetent and surly public employees. Too many of them in fact. But surliness and incompetence are not entirely alien to our vaunted private sector either.

The next time we see a picture of a fire fighter risking his life to save a child or hear about a government worker's risking her career to blow the whistle, let's remember that both of them are public employees. And the next time someone starts in with the predictable blanket indictment of public employees, simply remind him of three names he should recognize: Jerry Parr, Timothy McCarthy and Thomas Delahanty.