

Kennedy killings

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Who killed Sen. Robert F. Kennedy? The "official" answer to that question is that Sirhan Sirhan, acting alone, shot and killed Senator Kennedy during the 1968 presidential campaign in a Los Angeles hotel. Officially, the case is closed.

Unofficially, there are some major unanswered questions that, according to Los Angeles Supervisor Baxter Ward, need to be answered. Ward, who has promised a full-scale investigation of the assassination if elected governor, has scheduled a one-day hearing May 16 to investigate charges by two nationally recognized criminalists who contend that the bullet that killed Senator Kennedy was not fired from Sirhan Sirhan's gun.

The criminalists, William W. Harper of Pasadena and Professor Herbert Leon MacDonell of Corning, N.Y., have studied detailed pictures of the bullets used in the assassination. Both Harper and MacDonell have concluded that, based on modern ballistics methods of study, the bullet that killed Senator Kennedy could

not have been fired from Sirhan's Iver-Johnson revolver. They have further concluded that the bullet removed from the abdomen of William Weisel, who was shot during the assassination, could not have been fired from Sirhan's weapon.

Clouded Case

Supervisor Ward has been interested in the apparent discrepancies surrounding the Kennedy assassination for several years, first as a newsman covering the story and now as a public official in a position to do something about it.

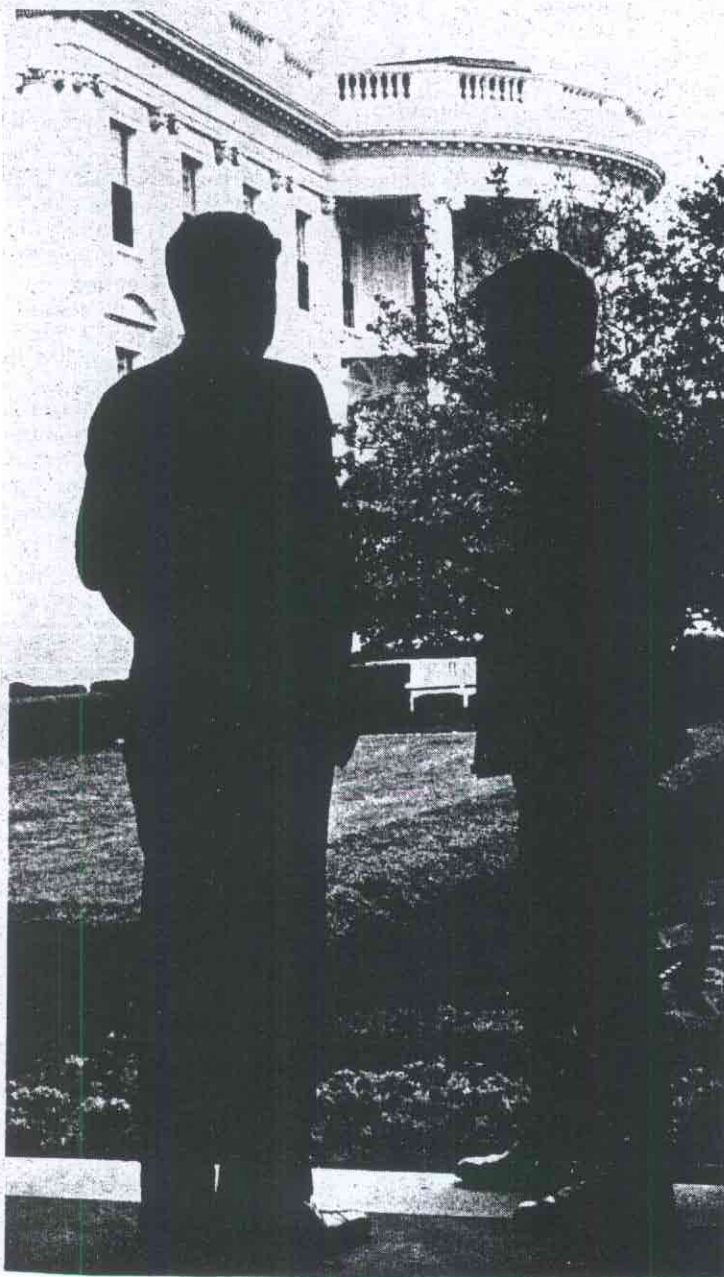
Ward contends there is a "cloud over the case" and is concerned that judicial authorities "haven't acted properly in answering the questions raised. I do not know if these men (Harper and MacDonell) are correct in their contentions, but their suggestions are sufficiently serious that some element of government in this country is obligated to grant them a hearing and to allow additional independent examination of their micro-photographs of that evidence."

Several other recognized criminalists and experts have been invited to examine and discuss the evidence during the Ward investigation. One of those experts is Dr. Thomas Noguchi, the Los Angeles coroner who conducted the autopsy on Senator Kennedy. Noguchi, has repeatedly stated that he would like to see the investigation reopened to answer numerous questions surrounding the assassination.

Noguchi's examination of the Senator's body led him to conclude that the fatal bullet was fired from directly behind Kennedy's head in an upward direction and from a distance no further than three inches. Eyewitnesses to the assassination testified that Sirhan was directly in front of Senator Kennedy 6-15 feet away when the fatal shot was fired.

Noguchi has also indicated that it is possible that more than one gunman was involved in the assassination, a theory that is held by many assassination researchers. Sirhan's trial and a 1971 investigation of the assassination of R.F.K. avoided the possibility of a conspiracy and, according to Noguchi, much of the evidence he

reexamined



collected in the killing was never presented.

Supervisor Ward has requested that Noguchi prepare a presentation that will include all information that may be relative to the assassination. Noguchi has indicated he will comply with the request and has decided to withhold any other comments until the hearing takes place.

Politics?

Official reaction from District Attorney Joseph Busch, the man who conducted the original investigation of the assassination, has been sharply critical of Ward's intent to reopen the matter. In a press release issued earlier this month, when Ward first indicated he would like to reopen the case, Busch stated:

"The case of the killing of Senator Kennedy is closed. To this date there has been no credible new evidence developed that would warrant its being reopened. It is unfortunate that this matter is continually revived. There can be no question but that many persons will continue to make a fruitless search to find a more rational basis for this senseless killing, particularly during political campaigns."

Supervisor Ward's office denies any political motivation in holding the hearing, pointing out that such an action is totally in keeping with Ward's history of investigating controversial issues of public concern regardless of whose toes get stepped on.

Meanwhile, a New York computer expert — who has studied political assassinations in the United States over the past decade — states that President John Kennedy was gunned

down in Dallas, Tex., by at least three, and probably four, riflemen.

This is the conclusion of Richard E. Sprague, a computer consultant with the Payment Systems computer company in New York. Sprague arrived at his conspiracy conclusion after carefully analyzing the equivalent of 25,000 still photographs taken during and immediately after the J.F.K. assassination, nearly 11 years ago.

By analyzing all obtainable photos and movies of the assassination, Sprague concludes there were two gunmen located on the grassy knoll ahead of the Presidential motorcade. He claims a third gunman was perched on the second floor of the Dal-Tex building behind the motorcade — and that a fourth assassin was located, also behind the motorcade, in the Texas school book depository building.

According to Sprague's analysis, however, the shots from the book building came from an entirely different window than the one where Lee Harvey Oswald was placed by the Warren Commission. Sprague's photos indicate that the "Oswald window" was actually unoccupied when Kennedy was killed.

Sprague, on the basis of his

analysis, concluded that a total of six shots were fired, the fatal bullet being fired from the front of the motorcade, the grassy knoll area.

Sprague has been publishing parts of his analysis of the assassination in a series of articles for *Computers and Automation* magazine over a period of nearly four years.

The computer consultant has suggested one method by which the J.F.K. killing might be resolved. Sprague points out that computers are commonly used to analyze the photographs relayed back by space probes sent to other planets. These photos usually are received in blurred or unclear conditions but are later sharply improved through a process known as "image enhancement."

Image enhancement is the process of using computers to analyze a series of blurred photos, and to have the computers clarify — on the basis of probability — what is in the blurred portions.

Sprague believes that the 25,000 pictures taken of the J.F.K. murder could be subjected to systematic computer study — and that the results could establish, beyond reasonable doubt, how many shots were fired and exactly where they came from. □