

Articles in two current magazines take up the theory that a conspiracy was behind the assassination of President Kennedy — one supporting such speculation and another undercutting it.

While exploring some territory gone over earlier by other critics of the Warren Commission, Ramparts magazine focuses on the "at least 10" persons "known to have been murdered, to have committed suicide or died in suspicious circumstances since the Kennedy assassination."

The accounts of the deaths are principally the work of Penn Jones Jr., editor of the Midlothian Mirror, a Texas weekly. He was the 1963 winner of the Elijah Parish Lovejoy Award for courage in journalism.

At a news conference yesterday, Jones emphasized his belief that Lee Harvey Oswald was a "patsy" for an unidentified actual killer, or killers, and their co-conspirators. They, Jones reasoned, would have relied neither upon Oswald's "poor marksmanship" nor upon his rifle, which was of inferior design and defective to boot.

It is the very defectiveness of the rifle that helped to persuade Dr. John K. Lattimer, a student of the medical aspects of presidential assassinations, that it was Oswald, and Oswald alone, who killed the President. Writing in the Oct. 24 Journal of the American Medical Association, the Columbia University urologist said:

"President Kennedy apparently sustained his second and fatal bullet wound in the back of the right side of his head, only because of a pair of unusual coincidences which made it possible for Oswald's lethal bullet to hit him.

"The first was . . . that the telescopic sight of Oswald's rifle was aimed defectively, so that the bullets struck approximately 4 inches to the right of the aiming point and a little high.

"Coincidentally, however, the presidential automobile was following a course which curved to the right just enough to compensate for this error in the telescope, making it possible for Oswald to hit the President with two bullets in the course of some eight seconds. Otherwise the fatal bullet might have struck Mrs. Kennedy.

"The second coincidence lay in the fact that President

Kennedy was wearing not only a rigid metal and canvas back brace, but he had further reinforced its rigid support for the lower portion of his body by binding the brace to himself with an elastic knit bandage.

"The first bullet inflicted a nonfatal wound in the soft tissues of the neck and was deformed by these tissues so little that the wound of exit resembled a wound of entrance, leading to confusion as to the direction from which the shot had been fired.

"This confusion was resolved when the complete information from the autopsy became known. As a result of the unusual rigidity of his body, his torso did not crumple or topple over out of sight, as it might have done if he had not been wearing an extraordinarily rigid support.

"Instead, his stiffened body merely tilted slightly sideways, leaving the back of his head exposed to Oswald's rifle with its telescopic sight."

Here are summaries from the Ramparts accounts of the deaths of some of the persons who had "crucial scraps of knowledge" and who "died mysteriously":

Jim Koethe, a young Dallas reporter, was apparently killed in his apartment by "a karate chop" to the neck. Robbery was the indicated motive, but his notes for an intended book on the assassination also were missing. Larry Earl Reno, 22, a former convict was arrested but "District Attorney Henry Wade secretly instructed the grand jurors not to indict" and they did not. Reno is now serving a life term for a hotel robbery.

# Magazines Back, Rap Warren Report

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