

## CHAPTER

### JAN GAIL RUDNICKI

"Nick" Rudnicki was a lab assistant to Dr. Thornton Boswell and was called out especially by Boswell to help him the night the President's body came in for autopsy at Bethesda Naval Hospital. Nick, as he is known, was not on duty, but ended up working many hours that night. Many of his recollections are quite clear 27 years later, and at no time during my interview did he express confusion or inconsistency with regard to the facts as he remembers them. Rudnicki is presently a sales representative, with two children and a normal life.

Rudnicki has following the case all of these years and was intensely aware that there were various controversies raging over what the back of the head had looked like, as well as whether the body had in fact arrived in a body bag and a shipping casket.

I told Nick that Dr. Boswell had told my chief investigator, Richard Waybright, a couple of weeks before that there was no entry wound in the cowlick area as the present photos and X-rays seem to show, and where all the outside doctors who have reviewed those materials have insisted there was a large ext wound. Boswell, of course, had himself insisted that the entry wound in the back of the head was just where they had placed it in the autopsy report, near the hair line at the back of the head, four to five inches lower than where it is now.

In addition, Dr. Boswell had stated most emphatically to my investigator that the floor of the orbit was merely cracked, not entirely missing as is the case in the official X-ray--which shows the whole right side of the face missing.

In other words, Boswell was not retreating from what he and Dr. Humes had insisted upon before the panel of doctors the House Select Committee on Assassinations provided. Even though the autopsy doctors were adamant on that point--a clear red flag that there was something seriously wrong with the autopsy photos and X-rays, they refused to accept the testimony of the autopsy doctors themselves, and said "They made a mistake" in the autopsy report.

Doctors don't make mistakes like that. This was the price Humes and Boswell were paying for fudging part of their report which told of a bullet transiting the neck, when they never knew during any part of the autopsy that there was a bullet wound in the front of the neck. All that, of course, was invented later.

To digress a bit more, Dr. Ebersole, the radiologist, stated that he had taken another set of X-rays at 1 AM trying to

find a bullet in the body, after he says he was told by the Dallas doctors that there had been a bullet entry wound in the front of the neck. (to Art Smith, July, 1978, The Continuing Inquiry) This is another example of an out-right lie, since no such call was made to Dallas until the next day, when Dr. Humes in the privacy of his own home, after sleeping, called Dallas and talked with Dr. Malcolm Perry. (2 WCH 361)

In addition, Dr. Humes and Dr. Boswell told the panel of doctors interviewing them for the House Assassinations Committee that "all of the X-rays were taken before any manipulations were performed." (7 HSCA 249)

It does not help us to try to sort through this evidence when there was so much lying from the start by the doctors. In any court of law their testimony would be seriously impugned, their credibility open to such great question in view of the fudging and lying which we all see so clearly now.

I told Nick that Paul O'Connor, Jerry Custer, and the other witnesses insist that "there was no back of the head back there," and he immediately said "That's correct." Rudnicki lived in the San Francisco Bay area and had seen the important KRON show with Sylvia Chase and had seen them on that show stating that there simply was no scalp to make such pictures and X-rays as we now have.

"I was there through the whole autopsy, but most of my time was spent in the back room--the tissue room which adjoined the autopsy room itself." He prepared the slides and put the organs and other tissues in jars of formaldehyde.

"I remember the casket being wheeled in and I helped put the body on the table," he told me.

"I don't ever remember seeing a shipping casket. The only casket I have in my mind's eye is the ornamental one. After everything was over they did bring in an ornamental casket, also, but that could be my recollection is of that one." He said that they were all then scooted out while the X-rays and photographs were taken.

There has been some confusion due to the fact that the Kennedy entourage bought another casket to replace the one from Dallas, which had a broken handle.

He thought that the autopsy began at seven or eight o'clock, but could not recall for sure. He said that he was there until about 11:30 PM, "Twelve o'clock maybe," when the mortician was brought in. "I was out of there before the remains were out of there."

I asked him if he personally had a chance to examine the wounds. He said yes, because he was working with Boswell. "I remember the wounds to the throat, the wound to the rear right quadrant of the head."

He said that he did not remember suturing to the throat wound which Ebersole had described as being present when the body arrived from Dallas. (Ebersole was the only witness to ever

describe suturing to the throat wound, and he did this unofficially in some interviews in 1978. (to Art Smith, July, 1978, The Continuing Inquiry, p. 3)) Ebersole had made other totally conflicting statements, both contradicting himself, and the evidence.

David Lifton notes that Ebersole had said that the throat wound had arrived at Bethesda sutured up, and Lifton immediately stated this as a fact, swallowing the bait hook, line and sinker. (P. 541 Best Evidence, says "The simple fact that the wound was sewn up was evidence that someone had intercepted the body between Dallas and Bethesda. No one in Dallas had sutured a wound.") even though Ebersole's observation of suturing has never been corroborated by a single witness. Why would anyone do something so obvious as suture up the wound and risk exposing the whole plot?

I asked him about the wound to the back of the head: "It was a big hole." He did not see Custer put his hands inside the head.

"Was the scalp missing on the back of the head?"

"Yes."

"Not just shredded, but gone?"

"As far as I could tell, it was gone (his emphasis). I couldn't see any gray matter in there, you know. There was some hair hanging over it. There wasn't a big hole type thing, but there wasn't any scalp there, either. It was a lasting impression, as I recall."

I asked Rudnicki if he knew anything about composite photos or X-rays being made right in the Naval Hospital the next day, and he said no. "Is that when they made the new pictures?" He asked. I considered the fact that he used the word "new" when referring to the photos and X-rays, which he had seen, most significant.

"There was some controversy about whether they took the brain out or not," he said. He said he seemed to remember the brain being removed, but wasn't too clear. James Curtis Jenkins recalled taking the brain out very clearly.

He said that he thought there were some discrepancies among the comments of Paul O'Connor and some of the others. Specifically, he did not feel that there wasn't any brain at all in the head.

In my discussions with Paul O'Connor, I felt that he was inconsistent on this, and that he was simply not being careful enough with his language when he exaggerated and said that there was no brain in the head when it arrived. He at various times in many talks with me clarified this to mean that there was some brain in the head, but a great deal had been blown away.

Rudnicki suggested the situation could be confused with other situations.

I asked him if he recalled the body of an Air Force officer being there that night. He said that he did not recall. He had a

vague recollection of a pick up of the remains of someone else just before Kennedy's body arrived.

Once again I asked him if he remembered anything about the body bag and the shipping casket, and he said "I remember him coming in in the bronze casket."

I asked him if he recalled what happened to JFK, or how he had been shot or where the bullets had come from. "Did you see the back wound at all?"

"Yeah, I remember--at least I think I remember--a small--what appeared to be an entry wound several inches down on the back.

"Did it look like a real wound--not something that someone had artificially made with a knife to look like he had been shot from behind?"

"No, no, it was real. It seemed like a fine hole."

"I remember them making a comment, and there seemed to be some controversy about looking for a shell fragment, and one was missing, and looking through the sheets. It fell out, or something of that nature."

I asked him if he remembered anything about Admiral Osborne's comment that a whole bullet had fallen out of the sheets or from the back area when they moved him. This was also stated to me by James Curtis Jenkins, who remembered very clearly that a bullet had rolled out of the sheets from the back area. Of course the House Committee got Osborne to appear to retract this. I later found that so many of these "retractions" were anything but.

"Yeah, that may very well be. I may not have been in the room during that time, but I remember some conversations concerning that."

I asked him if it was a whole bullet or a fragment, and he said "I assume it was a bullet."

He said that Lifton had come to see him in 1988 or 1989. "Did you read his book?"

"Yeah, I tried to plow my way through it. I didn't get through all of it. I kind of skipped around a little bit. There seems to be some controversy as to when Jackie actually arrived at the hospital. I remember seeing her--I peeked my head out--the entourage coming down the corridor. I remember looking out and I remember seeing her, and for some reason he (Lifton) seems to think she wasn't even there at the time I supposedly saw her. So I don't understand that one. I don't see these people every day so I'm sure it wasn't something that happened previously."

Jerry Custer is the man who told Lifton he thought he saw Jackie come into the hospital after he took his first x-rays, and so he thought that the body had preceded her and the ambulance it was supposed to have been in.

He said that he thought the body had not been there when he

first saw her coming down the corridor. "She preceded it in?"

"That's correct." This was good enough reason for Lifton not to mention Rudnicki's testimony to him in his book, since it interferes with the grand theory that Lifton proposes.

I began going over the ground again of what the photos and X-rays of the back of the head seemed to show. I pointed out that all of the witnesses had said there was no bone or scalp in the back of the head on the right.

"Yes, from the ear back the scalp was either gone or definitely destroyed in that area. I don't know whether it was implosion or explosion. I can't recall that. Not being an expert in forensic medicine or anything, it would look more like it was an exit than an entrance."

He recalled a controversy at the time as to whether the throat wound was a bullet wound or a tracheotomy and whether it was an entry wound or an exit. But he is not sure that he really saw the throat wound. "I did not get down close and look at it."

"I remember seeing it," the big gash in the throat. "I don't have a direct memory of it as I do with the type of wound to the head."

"With the recent pictures that were shown on television I recall the frontal area missing in the X-rays rather than the back area."

"How did the face appear to you?"

"Normal. It looked perfectly normal, if you didn't look at the back of the head."

"What did the top of the head look like? Was there a large hole in the top of the head?"

"No, not that I recall." But he said that he did not get a good look at it." Then he clarified something by saying that when he said that the right rear quadrant of the head was missing, "That could extend to the top of the head."

I again asked him if there was any scalp left in the right rear of the head behind the ear, and he said no, "That was gone."

He did not recall any entry wound in the back of the head.

After he left the Navy, Rudnicki would return from time to time at Bethesda Naval Hospital as a salesman of medical gear, and saw Boswell and discussed the events of the night of November 22nd, 1963, but not in any great detail. "Boswell said, 'hey, I'm tired of it!'" Rudnicki babysat Boswell's kids, and for some years maintained their friendship.

He said that after the assassination "there was a lot of concern and panic" about what was really going on. There were rumours that the Cubans, the Mafia, and even LBJ were involved in the assassination. "Then everyone got suspicious when everyone else started dying like flies: Oswald, Ruby, etcetera."

Then we began to say heh, its definitely a conspiracy, but who's behind it?"

He said that the Kennedy family must know what really happened, and demonstrated some of the thought he had been doing about the case. Nick was an intelligent man, who later put himself through the University of Maryland when he left the Navy.

"Boswell and Humes got dumped on pretty heavily," he said. "I can't imagine that somebody would put out photographs like that when there must have been at least five hundred people that saw it otherwise," he said.

"Nobody was supposed to see these pictures, I said."

"So they just switched the photos for Warren to see and nobody else saw them?!" he said.

He said that everybody was asked to leave the room during the X-rays, because of the radiation.

"The next day we were all up in the office there and what can I say? It was 'forget everything you saw, everything you said, everything that you knew. Wipe it from your mind!' Like a dutiful little soldier, I did so. And consequently, I didn't make notes."

(Date of this interview Oct 14, 1990)