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JFK's Assassination: The Continuing Controversy

ANNOUNCER: Welcome to the ACE award-winning Larry King Live from Los Angeles. Tonight: They were riding through Dallas with the Kennedys when the famous shots were fired. He was gravely wounded. Hear what Governor and Mrs. John Connally think of the conspiracy movie *JFK*. Plus: Former RFK press secretary Frank Mankiewicz. Now, here's Larry King.

LARRY KING: Good evening from Los Angeles. A couple of notes before we start. This Sunday night we'll be in Pittsburgh for a 90-minute special on the recession — a Larry King Town Meeting. It's the first ever for CNN. That'll be 9:00 PM Eastern Time, live, around the world from Pittsburgh — a town hall discussing the recession with public involvement. It'll be 90 minutes long. Monday night, when we're back in Washington — the former Speaker of the House, Tip O'Neill.

A small band of conspiracy theorists have been obsessing about JFK's murder for nearly 30 years, but it's taken a big movie to rekindle broad national interest. Oliver Stone's *JFK* has sparked a call for the Government to release secret sealed files on the assassination. The catch is, even Stone acknowledges the movie's partly fictionalized. And some say it's far worse: hysterical, paranoid, a fantasy. Among the skeptics, two who were literally in the crosshairs themselves that day in Dallas. The former Governor of Texas, former Secretary of the Navy, John Connally, and his lovely wife Nellie join us here in Los Angeles, and later we'll meet Frank Mankiewicz whose firm is handling the publicity — and doing a hell of a job — for Oliver Stone's *JFK*.

It's a great pleasure to finally have you on this program — finally.

JOHN CONNALLY, Former Governor of Texas: Thank you. We're delighted to be on your show.

KING: I mentioned shot in the wrist — You were shot in three other places.

Mr. CONNALLY: That's right.

NELLIE CONNALLY: He was shot all over.

KING: Let's go back to that day, November 22nd, 1963. That was a political day for John Kennedy. That was mending wounds in Texas, wasn't it?

Mr. CONNALLY: Yes. Basically, he came, Larry, to raise money and to improve his image in Texas — and for no other reason. You know, there had been a lot of stories written about he came to resolve a dispute between me and Senator Yarber [sp?] and between Johnson and Senator Yarber, and that's hogwash. He did no such thing.

KING: He came to raise money?

Mr. CONNALLY: He came to raise money and improve

his image—

Mrs. CONNALLY: And get votes.

Mr. CONNALLY: To get votes.

KING: Because Texas was going to be a key state?

Mrs. CONNALLY: Yes.

Mr. CONNALLY: It was.

KING: And Johnson was going to stay on the ticket, obviously?

Mr. CONNALLY: I think beyond any question. But, you know, they carried— Even with Johnson on the ticket they carried Texas by 43,000 votes in 1960. That's all.

KING: Nellie, were you in Fort Worth with them before they came to Dallas?

Mrs. CONNALLY: Yes. I was with them all— We were with them on the entire tour.

KING: Now he spoke that morning at a breakfast, right?

Mrs. CONNALLY: Yes.

KING: In Fort Worth?

Mr. CONNALLY: In Fort Worth.

Mrs. CONNALLY: Yes, in the Texas Hotel.

KING: And then flew over to Dallas, right?

Mr. CONNALLY: That's correct.

Mrs. CONNALLY: And we flew with him.

KING: That's like a 10-minute flight.

Mr. CONNALLY: That's right.

KING: And then it was Love Field? [sp?] There was no Dallas-Fort Worth Airport?

Mr. CONNALLY: That's correct.

KING: You landed at Love Field. Was it all designed that you would get in the car that way: that they knew you two would be in front, he and Jackie in the back?

Mr. CONNALLY: Yes.

Mrs. CONNALLY: We were their hosts in Texas. We sat in all kinds of different places, though, during the—

Mr. CONNALLY: During part of the ride and the motorcade, Jackie's hair was blowing and she wanted to move, and she was wearing a hat and she'd sit up on the jump seat alongside Nellie and I got in the back seat. Obviously, that wasn't satisfactory with the President, so he ordered her to get in the back seat. And I was sitting on the jump seat in front of the President. Nellie was sitting on the jump seat in front of Mrs. Kennedy.

KING: So, had you not reversed, she would have been shot?

Mr. CONNALLY: Yes— Well, no—

Mrs. CONNALLY: No, we don't know.

Mr. CONNALLY: We don't know. We don't know that.

KING: Who knows?

Mrs. CONNALLY: How do you know?

KING: Any question about an open convertible? Was that ever raised?

Mr. CONNALLY: No, it really wasn't. What was raised—

KING: Because there was so much—

Mr. CONNALLY: Larry—

KING: That ad in the paper and—

Mr. CONNALLY: Larry, what was raised was, number one, as Governor I resisted the motorcade in the first place. I didn't want it. I thought we'd see some insulting signs.

some ugly signs, some ugly remarks along the motorcade. But they overruled me at the White House. They wanted it. Then I objected to the publication of the parade route for the same reason. They overruled that. A week before the President came they published the parade route — the motorcade route — and that's the history—

KING: And did you want a closed car?

Mr. CONNALLY: No, I never raised that. I never raised that issue. I really wasn't fearful of an assassination. I was fearful of nasty gestures or words or—

KING: Now, in fact, that didn't occur, right? There were no nasty gestures.

Mrs. CONNALLY: No. It was— No.

KING: There were no signs.

Mrs. CONNALLY: It was— couldn't have been nicer.

KING: And you were riding along now— I guess you'll never forget this scene, so relive it for us. You're going down, you make that turn and you're heading toward that depository. That's Elm Street, right?

Mrs. CONNALLY: Right, and you know—

Mr. CONNALLY: On Elm Street.

Mrs. CONNALLY: Well, see, we wanted them to do so well in Texas and we wanted Texans to be so good to them that I was just filled with the joy that everything was working out just fine and—

KING: It was a beautiful day.

Mrs. CONNALLY: Yes.

Mr. CONNALLY: Beautiful day.

Mrs. CONNALLY: Everything was perfect.

KING: So who said something? What happened?

Mrs. CONNALLY: I turned to the President and I said—

KING: So you had to lean that way, right?

Mrs. CONNALLY: Yes, but I could see him because he was right behind John.

KING: Jackie was right behind you?

Mrs. CONNALLY: She's right behind me. And I said, "Mr. President, you can't say Dallas doesn't love you now."

Mr. CONNALLY: The crowds had been tremendous—

Mrs. CONNALLY: They had just been cheering—

Mr. CONNALLY: The enthusiasm was amazing.

KING: Fort Worth was that way too, right?

Mr. CONNALLY: Yes, Fort Worth—

KING: And the day before—

Mrs. CONNALLY: All the crowds were that way—

Mr. CONNALLY: And San Antonio — same way.

Mrs. CONNALLY: —screaming—

KING: Did he respond?

Mr. CONNALLY: Yes, he did. He said, "No, I don't think I can."

Mrs. CONNALLY: Yes, but he was busy acknowledging the cheering and—

KING: What's the next thing you remember?

Mrs. CONNALLY: I heard a noise.

KING: A noise.

Mr. CONNALLY: The next thing I remember was— I thought I heard a rifle shot.

KING: And you turned?

Mr. CONNALLY: I turned to look over my right shoulder because that's where the sound came from, and I saw

nothing out of the corner of my eye, and I turned to look over my left shoulder. About the time I got square again, Larry, I felt a blow — [*Punches fist into palm*] — about like that, as if someone had hit me in the back with a closed fist. It knocked me over and, as I looked down, I was covered with blood.

KING: Conscious all the time?

Mr. CONNALLY: Conscious — and I said, "My God, they're going to kill us all."

KING: And you said that out loud, right?

Mr. CONNALLY: Said it out loud.

Mrs. CONNALLY: He did.

KING: It was a terrible pain in the back?

Mr. CONNALLY: No pain.

KING: No? Just a thud?

Mrs. CONNALLY: It was just a sock—

Mr. CONNALLY: Just a thud. I felt no pain after that. Nellie then immediately pulled me down into her lap and about that time — [*Claps hands*] — we heard another sound and another rifle shot, and the loud smack was the bullet hitting the President's head. I was still conscious. Nellie was there with her head down on mine and we were facing forward into the back of the front seat. The car had a light blue velour interior. And immediately after that smacking sound, the whole car was covered with blood and brain tissue. There were chunks of brain tissue as big as my little finger on my clothes.

KING: And you were turning which way?

Mrs. CONNALLY: I turned to the first noise that I didn't recognize as a gunshot, just a noise. And I turned and I saw the President reach up with both hands, clutch his throat, and then just sink down. He said nothing.

Mr. CONNALLY: No, he said nothing.

Mrs. CONNALLY: Nothing. Then there was this second— Well, John was whirling around and he was hit.

KING: Well, now that couldn't have been the same bullet then, Nellie.

Mrs. CONNALLY: No, and he didn't hear the second bullet. You don't hear the one that hits you. The first shot hit the President. The second shot went through John's back and out under the nipple and through his lung—

Mr. CONNALLY: And the wrist.

Mrs. CONNALLY: —and his ribs and crushed his wrist and landed in his leg. Now all this happened in seconds. I reached over and grabbed him and pulled him down in my lap. And he was holding his hand like this [*Indicates hand at chest*]. And by pulling him over in my lap we closed the wound that he had received that the doctors told us was a sucking wound where he would have strangled or been asphyxiated by if we hadn't closed the wound, which we did accidentally. But then I just leaned over him. All I was trying to do was get him out of the trouble.

KING: So you're fully conscious that both men have been shot?

Mrs. CONNALLY: That's two shots. Then I never looked back in the back again after I had John in my lap, but the third shot — all the smatter and everything sprayed all over us.

Mr. CONNALLY: And then Jackie Kennedy said, "My

God, I've got his brains in my hand—"

Mrs. CONNALLY: "I've got his brains in my hand."

KING: She actually said that?

Mr. CONNALLY: Oh, yes.

Mrs. CONNALLY: Yes.

KING: You heard her say that?

Mrs. CONNALLY: Yes.

Mr. CONNALLY: We both did.

KING: You heard her, too?

Mr. CONNALLY: Oh, yes. I was still conscious, absolutely.

KING: And with all the clamor and the sound and the sirens, you heard that?

Mrs. CONNALLY: Oh, yes.

Mr. CONNALLY: Absolutely.

Mrs. CONNALLY: Well, see, we were as close as we are to you.

KING: And she said, "My God, I've got his brains—"

Mrs. CONNALLY: "I've got his brains in my hand." And the driver called to the escort and said, "Let's get out of here."

Mr. CONNALLY: Called him and said, "Let's get out of here — quick."

Mrs. CONNALLY: And we took off.

KING: We'll be right back with Governor John Connally and Nellie Connally. And later, Frank Mankiewicz will be joining us. We'll be including your phone calls. We're in Los Angeles. This is Larry King Live. Don't go away.

[Commercial break]

KING: By the way, Cybill Shepherd will be with us next week on Larry King Live.

Our guests are Governor John Connally, his wife Nellie Connally, and we're discussing that tragic day, November 22nd, 1963.

You rushed to the hospital. Did you think you were going to lose John?

Mrs. CONNALLY: Yes, I did.

KING: Did you know the President was dead?

Mrs. CONNALLY: I felt in my heart that the President was dead. And as long as John would move a little bit — just anything — then I felt I had a chance—

KING: Did you think the President had any pain?

Mr. CONNALLY: I don't think so. I don't think he could have. I think it was instantaneous death.

KING: Too fast.

Mr. CONNALLY: Yes, death had to be instantaneous.

KING: What do you think when you see the Zapruder film?

Mrs. CONNALLY: We saw it frame-by-frame-by-frame because they wanted to ask us if we could tell them what happened in those various—

KING: This was the Warren Commission people, right?

Mr. CONNALLY: Warren Commission.

KING: And?

Mrs. CONNALLY: Well, I—

KING: Anything surprise you?

Mrs. CONNALLY: No.

KING: No?

Mrs. CONNALLY: No.

Mr. CONNALLY: No.

Mrs. CONNALLY: Nothing surprised me.

Mr. CONNALLY: No, but, you know, we were viewing it in the immediate aftermath of the assassination itself and it was— you know, it was a depressing—

Mrs. CONNALLY: Pretty horrifying sort of thing.

Mr. CONNALLY: —depressing thing to look at it.

KING: Again and again and again.

Mrs. CONNALLY: Uh-huh.

Mr. CONNALLY: Yes, because, you know— And for weeks and weeks and weeks for, I would say, three months after the assassination, every night of the world, I had nightmares — every night.

Mrs. CONNALLY: He'd cry out in his sleep.

Mr. CONNALLY: And every night someone under some circumstances was shooting at me. Sometimes I'd be in the Army, sometimes it was robbers, sometimes the wild west. I was a cowboy, the Indians were shooting at me — or it was the reverse. But there was always a scenario and someone was shooting at me, for almost three months.

KING: All these things that had to be going through you, John— You're governor. Here's this blight on your state. You're shot yourself.

Mr. CONNALLY: Yes.

KING: The President's dead. I mean, all these things had to—

Mr. CONNALLY: Well, one of these things that depressed me the most was the blame that Dallas got and that Texas got, and I didn't think either one of them justifiably should have been blamed.

KING: But you had to think—

Mr. CONNALLY: But, oh, we had it in spades.

KING: Have you seen the movie?

Mrs. CONNALLY: Yes.

KING: You, too?

Mr. CONNALLY: Yes, Yes.

KING: As a movie, did you like it — as a movie?

Mrs. CONNALLY: As a movie, yes.

KING: As a movie.

Mr. CONNALLY: As a movie, yes. It's entertaining.

KING: Well made?

Mr. CONNALLY: Yes.

Mrs. CONNALLY: Yes.

KING: Too well made—

Mr. CONNALLY: Well directed.

KING: Well directed?

Mrs. CONNALLY: He's a heck of a director.

KING: You like him as a director?

Mrs. CONNALLY: Yes.

KING: Why are you so angry at the movie, John?

Mr. CONNALLY: Well, you know, this is a national tragedy—

Mrs. CONNALLY: It's baloney.

Mr. CONNALLY: —and he mixed facts and fiction in such a way that he's going to convince particularly every young person that the Federal Government — their own Government — conspired to kill an American President, and I think that's evil, frankly. I just think that—

KING: Evil to think it? Based on the information—

Mr. CONNALLY: Well, evil to leave that impression, to try to create a film—

Mrs. CONNALLY: Just spread it around.

Mr. CONNALLY: —to convince people that their own Government was capable of assassinating an American President. And I don't think that happened. I don't think there was anything even close to it. I think he misrepresented facts. I think he mixed facts and fiction.

KING: Will you agree, though, a lot of things were handled poorly that day?

Mr. CONNALLY: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

KING: Medical examiners—

Mr. CONNALLY: Oh, no question.

KING: —movement of people; why information wasn't released. This is a public that wants information.

Mr. CONNALLY: I understand.

KING: Right?

Mrs. CONNALLY: Yes, but it was such a confusing day—

Mr. CONNALLY: Well, let's go—

Mrs. CONNALLY: In that hospital corridor there was such—I never— It was like a war zone. I never saw so many— so much ammunition — all kinds of guns and things in the hospital corridor.

KING: How do you react to the announcement today that— people accepting now, and people associated with the committee that investigated this, that the Mafia may have been involved?

Mr. CONNALLY: Well, nobody knows that.

KING: You don't deny that?

Mr. CONNALLY: No, I don't deny it. How can I deny it? I don't know that they weren't. I don't know that they were. There's been no credible evidence. Larry, now for 25 years that anybody else was involved.

KING: But I believe you've called that they should seal— everything that's been sealed unsealed?

Mr. CONNALLY: Yes, I'm for that.

KING: Why did they seal it?

Mr. CONNALLY: I don't know.

KING: Did Johnson seal it?

Mr. CONNALLY: Not to my knowledge.

KING: Why is it sealed?

Mrs. CONNALLY: I have no idea.

KING: Why was the Senate committee—

Mr. CONNALLY: The House committee?

KING: Yes.

Mr. CONNALLY: The Stokes committee? I don't know why—

KING: The Stokes committee — Why did they seal it?

Mr. CONNALLY: Well, it came in '79. It was— You know, they spent \$6 million reopening this whole thing and then they sealed their records, and why they did— They say it's because they used— In the files are raw FBI data, and that this can be very harmful to people if it's released — the raw data.

KING: That's true.

Mr. CONNALLY: And that's why they did it. Now as far as I'm concerned, they ought to release it, but I think you ought—

KING: Kennedy— Senator Kennedy says release it.

Mrs. CONNALLY: Uh-huh.

Mr. CONNALLY: But there ought to be a word of caution Larry, about it. As soon as you do, those who breed suspicion and espouse suspicion are going to say, "Oh, they purged the files."

KING: Yes.

Mr. CONNALLY: "They've purged the files."

KING: "They've purged the—"

Mrs. CONNALLY: Yes, "They've purged them and—"

Mr. CONNALLY: Yes, "They've purged them—"

Mrs. CONNALLY: "—it's not all in there."

Mr. CONNALLY: "They took out all the stuff."

Mrs. CONNALLY: "They took it out."

Mr. CONNALLY: "They didn't release it all."

KING: Do you now agree — based on him turning the way slowly to you, your looking, seeing the turn — that there had to be a fourth bullet?

Mrs. CONNALLY: No. No.

KING: No? You don't agree with that either?

Mr. CONNALLY: No.

Mrs. CONNALLY: I'm convinced—

KING: Well, then what happened between the turn?

Mrs. CONNALLY: You mean at the grassing knoll?

KING: No, no, how did—

Mrs. CONNALLY: Well, Kennedy was hit, John was hit Kennedy was hit. Three shots — three reactions.

KING: How about the bullet that did that whole thing that went—

Mr. CONNALLY: That is not—

Mrs. CONNALLY: That is baloney.

Mr. CONNALLY: No bullet did that.

KING: No bullet did that?

Mrs. CONNALLY: No. No.

Mr. CONNALLY: That's the single-bullet theory. That didn't happen. Now we disagree with the Warren Commission to that extent, and in the film they try— they draw, they diagram how that bullet had to have gone—

Mrs. CONNALLY: About eight different ways.

Mr. CONNALLY: —that circuitous route to get to me.

KING: Yes.

Mr. CONNALLY: And to that extent, I think the film is right. I don't think it was a miracle bullet.

KING: OK, but you still think it was only three shots from Oswald's rifle?

Mr. CONNALLY: Yes.

Mrs. CONNALLY: Yes.

Mr. CONNALLY: Absolutely.

KING: How about the sound techniques that the House committee had that they didn't have available in 1963 that told them there could have been a fourth shot that day? And in fact, I think the House committee came to the conclusion there was a fourth shot.

Mrs. CONNALLY: I don't know.

Mr. CONNALLY: I don't think they did. I think they said it was a possibility, but then there was a great deal of talk that it was a backfiring motorcycle. So as far as we're concerned, there were only three shots.

KING: Isn't the story itself— Supposing I gave you this fantasy. I'm going to make a movie about a man, a down

and-outer. He goes to the Soviet Union. He comes back to the United States. He marries a Russian girl. He never spoke out about John F. Kennedy, to our knowledge. He supports Cuba. He goes to Dallas alone. He becomes a marksman of incredible shooting. He shoots three shots in a moving car; gets a President and a governor; goes downstairs; kills a cop on the street; goes to a movie theater; says "I'm a patsy"; gets arrested; and a friend of the Mafia shoots him the next day.

If I presented that as a story we could have two people here saying, "That's crazy!"

Mr. CONNALLY: Oh, yes. You could.

KING: Isn't that just as crazy?

Mr. CONNALLY: Yes, it's—

Mrs. CONNALLY: But that's what happened.

Mr. CONNALLY: —a lot you can't explain. And the Ruby thing— Again, remember David Bailand [sp?], who was the chief of the staff of the Warren Commission, said that he had Rabbi Silverman [sp?] give Ruby a lie detector test. They didn't use them on the witnesses before the Warren Commission because the Chief Justice said, "They're unreliable and we won't permit it." But Bailand had Silverman, who was very close to Ruby, give him one. He passed it—

KING: Right.

Mr. CONNALLY: —and then, after all the time Silverman spent with Ruby, Rabbi Silverman said he was convinced that Ruby was not a part of a conspiracy.

KING: We have to take a break. We'll come right back, get some calls in, and then Frank Mankiewicz will join us. Don't go away.

[Clip from "JFK," courtesy of Warner Bros.]

ACTRESS: [sp?] Mary fell to the ground right away. She was yelling, "They're shooting! They're shooting! Get down!" I just stood there watching. The driver had stopped. I don't know what was wrong with that driver. Then out of the corner of my eye I saw a flash of light in the bushes, and that last shot — just ripped his head off. I looked up and I saw smoke coming from over there on the knoll.

[Commercial break]

KING: We're going to start including your calls for the Connallys. In a little while, Frank Mankiewicz.

San Clemente, California, hello.

1st CALLER: [San Clemente, California.] Thank you, Governor, since you were unable to see Kennedy after the first shot was fired and, therefore, couldn't know whether he was hit, is it possible in your mind, or in Nellie's, that the first shot missed everything and that the second shot hit both of you?

Mr. CONNALLY: No. Nellie testified a moment ago, if you heard her—

KING: Didn't testify. She's just appearing. [laughs]

Mr. CONNALLY: [laughs] Well, as she testified before the Warren Commission and said a moment ago, that the first bullet, the first shot hit him in the neck and she turned and saw him grab his throat. I did not see him. You're correct. I didn't see him.

Mrs. CONNALLY: But I saw him, and he did get hit and

he did clutch his neck—

KING: Now explain to me—

Mrs. CONNALLY: —and he said nothing.

KING: —something which everybody who sees Zapruder and sees JFK can't figure out.

Mrs. CONNALLY: What?

KING: If he's shot from the back, why did his head go back? His head went back.

Mrs. CONNALLY: You mean if it—the third shot?

KING: Yes. Something had to hit him from the front.

Mr. CONNALLY: No, Larry—

KING: No?

Mrs. CONNALLY: Nothing hit him from the front.

Mr. CONNALLY: No, the doctors will tell you that that's a muscular reaction. It's a muscular reaction.

Mrs. CONNALLY: Your body just tenses.

Mr. CONNALLY: If you get a hit from the back you immediately react by falling back.

KING: No sound came from him at all?

Mrs. CONNALLY: No sound. And, see, it went through the trachea. He couldn't utter a sound.

KING: Smyrna, Georgia, hello.

2nd CALLER: [Smyrna, Georgia.] Hello, Larry.

KING: Hi.

2nd CALLER: Governor, I've read a great deal about the assassination of President Kennedy. There's one area that's always seemed a little gray to me. The motorcade was originally scheduled to pass through Dealey Plaza going straight on Main Street, from what I've read. I was wondering if you could tell me why the route was changed to include that Houston to Elm Street turn, when it was changed and, specifically, who initiated that change?

Mr. CONNALLY: I cannot answer that. I was opposed to that motorcade from the beginning. I assume the reason it was changed— We were through— under the overpass on the Stemmins [sp?] Freeway in order to get up on the Stemmins Freeway and get out to the Trademark where the luncheon was. And I assume that's why we were going down Elm Street, because that was the easiest, the quickest way to do it, and that's why we came off of Main to get on Elm.

KING: You didn't question it when you were in the motorcade?

Mr. CONNALLY: No, no. I didn't question it at all.

KING: Charlotte, North Carolina, hello.

3rd CALLER: [Charlotte, North Carolina.] Governor Connally, how do you explain the witnesses that claim they saw shots from the grassy knoll?

Mr. CONNALLY: I think they're wrong. I just think they're wrong.

KING: Just wrong?

Mr. CONNALLY: Yes, just wrong. I didn't hear a shot from there. I don't think a shot was fired from there and, you know—

KING: Nellie?

Mrs. CONNALLY: No, I just want to say that everything that was done in that car was done by three shots before we got to the grassy knoll.

KING: No doubt in your mind?

Mr. CONNALLY: No. None in mine.
Mrs. CONNALLY: None. Huh-uh.
KING: Are you shocked that three out of four people don't agree with you? I know, you were—
Mrs. CONNALLY: I am.
KING: Nobody was closer to this than the two of you.
Mr. CONNALLY: Well, three out of four think there was a conspiracy.
KING: Three out of four viewing us now—
Mr. CONNALLY: Yes, think there was a conspiracy.
KING: —don't believe the Warren Commission.
Mr. CONNALLY: And they always will.
Mrs. CONNALLY: And there may have been some kind of conspiracy. What do we know?
Mr. CONNALLY: We're not in a position to—
Mrs. CONNALLY: How can we say?
Mr. CONNALLY: —disprove a conspiracy. But the movie implicated the CIA, the FBI, the military, the Warren Commission, Johnson, and the Mafia — and I say to you that is utterly impossible.
KING: We'll be right back with Governor John Connally and Nellie Connally, and then we'll be meeting Frank Mankiewicz. This is Larry King Live in Los Angeles.
Acor Dack Rambo talks about having AIDS tomorrow night. We'll be right back. Don't go away.
Senator EDWARD KENNEDY (D-MA): I have been always satisfied with the Warren Commission report. Robert— My brother Bob and I had spent a lot of time with Chief Justice Warren and there was no reason whatsoever, as far as we were concerned, to doubt the conclusion.
[Commercial break]
KING: Our guests are Governor John Connally and Nellie Connally — John Connally, the former Governor of Texas, former Secretary of the Navy in the Kennedy Administration, by the way. And Frank Mankiewicz will be joining us shortly.
Eules, Texas, hello.
4th CALLER: [Eules, Texas] Hello?
KING: Go ahead. You're on.
4th CALLER: Oh, Larry, I'm sorry. Governor Connally, you look wonderful, and so does your beautiful wife.
KING: They do.
Mr. CONNALLY: Thank you very much.
Mrs. CONNALLY: Thank you. Thank you.
4th CALLER: I would like to ask you one question, and then I'll hang up. Are you aware that there are many, many people in this area who believe that you were the target and John Kennedy got in the way?
Mr. CONNALLY: Well, I'm not sure I agree with that but, you know, I don't think that's correct. I was an easy target. If he was after me, he could have gotten me any day, any week he wanted to. I was traveling the state. I'd just been elected governor, as you know, and taken office in January. I had one DPS [sp?] driver. That's all I had. I had no security.
KING: So you never bought the theory? You could have been—
Mr. CONNALLY: He could have killed me any hour of

any day he wanted.
Mrs. CONNALLY: Anywhere.
KING: Fayetteville, Arkansas, hello.
5th CALLER: [Fayetteville, Arkansas] Good evening. I'd like to ask Mr. Connally if he has any information about what Mr. Oswald might have said in his day and a half of police custody? After all, he was the Governor.
KING: They didn't tape that.
Mr. CONNALLY: No, I do not—
KING: Doesn't that surprise you?
Mr. CONNALLY: Strangely enough. Larry, sometime you might want to talk to Henry Wade [sp?]. He was the district attorney in Dallas at the time, an old classmate of mine, and he interviewed him. But I don't know what those conversations—
KING: We ought to try to get Mr. Wade on.
Mr. CONNALLY: —what took place.
KING: Los Angeles, hello.
6th CALLER: [Los Angeles, California] Good evening. I'm curious if the Connallys have ever had any contact, or what kind of relationship they have with Mrs. Kennedy.
KING: Nellie?
Mrs. CONNALLY: We have very little, if any, relationship with Mrs. Kennedy.
KING: When was the last time you talked to her?
Mrs. CONNALLY: I cannot remember.
Mr. CONNALLY: Almost 30 years ago.
KING: None at all?
Mr. CONNALLY: No. No, not really.
KING: Is that by her choice?
Mrs. CONNALLY: Well, our paths never crossed.
KING: Have you ever called her? I mean the three of you share a moment that—
Mrs. CONNALLY: Yes, we called. We called. We were in Washington. You were— John was still in his sling and we called to speak to her, but she was resting and — didn't talk to us.
KING: Did you think you were going to die?
Mr. CONNALLY: Yes, I did. Strangely enough—
KING: They turned— Talk about— They turned you over? They thought you were—
Mr. CONNALLY: Well, I was in the trauma room number two and they were preparing me to operate on me and I heard one of them say— I was in and out of consciousness and I heard one of them say, "Turn him over. Let's see if he was hit anywhere else." And I spoke up and said, "No. I was only hit once." [laughs] And everybody in the trauma room almost fainted.
KING: [laughs] Las Vegas, hello.
7th CALLER: [Las Vegas, Nevada] Yes, how're you doing, Larry?
KING: Hi.
7th CALLER: Good show.
KING: Thank you.
7th CALLER: Yes. Listen, I have a question for Governor and Mrs. Connally there. My question is, after that assassination thing and that, did you ever get a chance to talk to Jackie and find out why she was climbing on the back of that car when the Secret Service agent was

running towards it and, you know, what was all of that all about?

KING: Did you?

Mr. CONNALLY: No, we did not and, if we had, I wouldn't have asked her.

KING: Yes. Now, we assume the Warren Commission asked her.

Mr. CONNALLY: I assume so.

KING: Did they?

Mrs. CONNALLY: I don't know.

Mr. CONNALLY: I don't know.

Mrs. CONNALLY: They didn't before us.

KING: When they questioned you, was it staff that questioned you?

Mr. CONNALLY: Oh, the whole—

Mrs. CONNALLY: The whole commission.

KING: The full commission?

Mrs. CONNALLY: The full commission and the staff.

KING: With Chief Justice Warren?

Mr. CONNALLY: That's one thing I have against this movie. They imply that Chief Justice Warren, Senator Richard Russell, John Sherman Cooper, John McCloy [sp?], Gerald Ford, Hale Boggs, Allen Dulles, all were part of a coverup. And I think that's an insult that's unbearable.

KING: We're going to take a break, come back. Frank Mankiewicz will join us. Mr. Mankiewicz was press secretary to Robert Kennedy. He's part of that famed Mankiewicz film family. That name is embellished here in Los Angeles — the Mankiewicz name. And he's currently with the major public relations firm of Hill and Knowlton. That firm is representing the movie *JFK*. We'll get Mr. Mankiewicz's thoughts; continue with your phone calls. The Connallys, of course, will stay with us — all that ahead. Don't go away.

ANNOUNCER: The case for conspiracy — from: Robert Kennedy's press secretary Frank Mankiewicz.

[Commercial break]

KING: Our guests are Governor John Connally, his wife Nellie Connally. Our next guest is a long-time Democratic Party fixture who raised a few eyebrows in Washington when his public relations firm, Hill and Knowlton, took on the assignment of promoting Oliver Stone and *JFK*. Frank Mankiewicz is at our studios in Washington. He has a personal link to the sad Kennedy legacy. He was RFK's press secretary when the young senator was shot to death here in Los Angeles in 1968. And now Frank joins us.

I know you've heard what the Connallys have had to say, Frank. Is this an account that you're merely representing, or is this a full-hearted Mankiewicz belief in this film?

FRANK MANKIEWICZ, Former RFK Press Secretary: Well, it's quite a bit of both, Larry. I frankly — along with, I think, most Americans — never believed the Warren Commission version. I have always thought there had to be a conspiracy, partly because of Lee Harvey Oswald's history and the peculiar way in which he got to Dallas and the way in which he was disposed of within a day or two later. And I think the Oliver Stone movie

presents a very plausible version of that conspiracy because for the first time it begins to question not who shot President Kennedy or how was he shot, but why was he shot, and I think that's something we Americans have not even thought about for nearly 30 years.

KING: Did Bobby ever express an interest in opening up files, looking into it?

Mr. MANKIEWICZ: He indicated a couple of times — once to me and, I gather, once to Arthur Schlesinger and once to Dick Goodwin [sp?], at least — that he was concerned about the Warren Commission verdict; that he didn't quite believe it. He asked me to learn as much as I could. And then a week or two, as I recall, before he was killed in Los Angeles at a political meeting he was asked if he would open the files on the assassination of President Kennedy and he said, yes — if he were elected President — and he said, yes, he would.

KING: Now, Frank, it would seem — talking to the Connallys, hearing from everybody, hearing from Congressman Stokes, Senator Kennedy — they're going to open these files, right? Would you say that this film has accomplished that? Aside from making a lot of money and pulling in a lot of people, it's going to open the files.

Mr. MANKIEWICZ: If the files are opened — and there seems good reason to think they will be — then I think it's certainly a tribute to the movie that that will happen because it certainly wouldn't have happened without the film.

KING: All right, now is the movie saying what Governor Connally said happened? Is it saying the Federal Government, the government of the people involved in Texas, the FBI, the CIA, the Mafia — Or is it saying all this is — What is the movie saying?

Mr. MANKIEWICZ: I think that tends to overstate it somewhat, although I've seen that in reviews. I'm just not clear how people who see the movie conclude that. What the movie says is that Jim Garrison's theory, and one on which he went to trial unsuccessfully — is that a conspiracy, including elements — some people — from the CIA, the FBI, a couple of ex-FBI people, and some elements of the military and the military-industrial complex, were responsible for the assassination; and that, obviously, some of the recent reporting in the last four or five days about the involvement of the Mafia are not inconsistent with that. But it certainly didn't imply that the Government or the CIA or the FBI participated in this — not by any means; but some elements of it.

I don't think, Larry, you can study the record of Lee Harvey Oswald and conclude anything except that he was involved with, run by, and protected by some elements of American intelligence. I don't think there's any doubt of that.

KING: Join?

Mr. CONNALLY: Well, you know, I'm going to argue, Frank, with you a bit here. In the movie, in the teasers for the movie, you have Kevin Costner say, "This was a military operation from start to finish — a coup d'etat." And then you say, "Well, there was no real charge that it was Government."

Mr. MANKIEWICZ: Oh, no, no. No, no. Jim Garrison did say that.

Mr. CONNALLY: He sure did.

Mr. MANKIEWICZ: He said it was a military operation, but that doesn't mean that all of the military was involved in it. You can have a military operation with 10 soldiers or sailors, as you know.

Mr. CONNALLY: Well, I know, but, Frank, you and I both have a lot of experience with Government. The movie clearly says that the CIA, the FBI, the military, the Warren Commission, Johnson, and the Mafia were all involved in this conspiracy. You and I know this is a physical impossibility.

Mr. MANKIEWICZ: No, I don't think—I really don't think it says that, Governor. I think it says some elements of that. I think the reference to the Warren Commission refers to the fact that the Warren Commission—and I think there's evidence for this—saw its mission—at least, the Chief Justice did—as one to calm the country: to come up with a reasonable answer: to avoid any inflammatory findings that would have set Americans off and set them against each other. I'm not sure that was an unwise decision. I think, given the political atmosphere at the time, that was a reasonable conclusion to come to, but I think the result—I think the report of the Warren Commission has caused us for 25 years now to disbelieve our Government on what turned out to be from that day forward the crime of the century.

Mr. CONNALLY: David Bailand—

Mr. MANKIEWICZ: It's robbed us of a history.

Mr. CONNALLY: Well, David Bailand of the staff of the Warren Commission says that they got one charge of the Chief Justice and that was to find out the truth. And he said that was their sole charge and that's what they did. And he defends the Warren Commission—

Mr. MANKIEWICZ: I know.

Mr. CONNALLY:—vociferously and aggressively. And let me say this. There might have been a conspiracy, Frank, but by whom and with whom? In 25 years we've not heard who was involved. Who was conspiring? Who was involved in it?

Mr. MANKIEWICZ: No, I—

Mr. CONNALLY: I'm not going to deny that Oswald might have been influenced by the Cubans or the Russians or brainwashed or even involved with the Mafia, but there's been no evidence of that. You know, we can all dream up things. We can all fantasize about what might have been, but the truth of the matter is in all this time there's been no hard evidence of any such conspiracy.

Mr. MANKIEWICZ: Well, there's certainly no—The movie doesn't claim that there's hard evidence or that anybody has solved the crime. What the movie does is to say that there seems incontrovertible evidence now that President Kennedy was, in fact, determined to start withdrawing troops from Vietnam—

KING: How do you explain, Frank—I guess, without tipping your hat to yourself—how a film could do this—a film could suddenly change the consciousness of America: get files that have been held in unheld; get Senator

Kennedy to speak out on something he's never spoken about—a movie?

Mr. MANKIEWICZ: Well, because it's a very powerful movie. Have you seen it?

KING: Yes.

Mr. MANKIEWICZ: It's an enormously powerful movie—

KING: It is.

Mr. MANKIEWICZ:—and whatever the message is to which Governor Connally and others have objected, the central point, which is that here is an event of enormous importance in our history that has never been properly addressed, and certainly not solved—and then it ends by saying these files have been concealed and held arbitrarily until the year 2029. It invites enormous popular resentment against that, and that's what it's led to.

KING: Nellie, why is it—

Mr. MANKIEWICZ: The film is extraordinarily well made.

KING: Oh, oh, it's a brilliant movie.

Why, Nellie—When Frank's talking I see you making faces. Why does it upset you so much?

Mrs. CONNALLY: It just upsets me that he—that they insinuate all these things. And they couldn't all happen, but when you lump them all together and you show this film to young people they will believe that this very Government conspired to kill a President.

KING: Couldn't we make the case that no one more than you should want the truth?

Mrs. CONNALLY: I want the truth. Of course, I want the truth.

KING: You were in the car.

Mrs. CONNALLY: Yes, seeing is believing, but feeling is knowing.

Mr. MANKIEWICZ: Larry, I think the problem here is exacerbated by the fact that over the last 15 years we've had plenty of evidence of conspiracies, the most recent one being the people at the leadership of the National Security Council, with or without the President of the United States—

KING: Jimmy Hoffa.

Mr. MANKIEWICZ:—conspiring to sell arms to our sworn enemy in Iran. We had Watergate—certainly a conspiracy. We had—

Mr. CONNALLY: Frank, it all came out immediately. It all came out.

Mr. MANKIEWICZ: Well—

Mr. CONNALLY: Nothing's been hidden in this country for 25 years.

Mr. MANKIEWICZ: Well, we don't know that. We know the ones that came out. I think if somebody had participated in a conspiracy to kill the President of the United States, I think there's a good possibility that would have remained—those people would have remained silent.

I think there's a problem, Larry, that we ought to talk about for just a minute, about the number of bullets, because Governor Connally and Mrs. Connally have been very adamant about that. I think the problem is that there was one bullet from that rifle of Oswald's that went astray and it was found on the curb. It had chipped the curb and

missed. So the problem is that, since he only had time for three shots, the other two shots had to be the ones that did all the damage. That's why, if you believe that Oswald acted alone, you have to believe in the magic bullet. And as Governor Connally and Mrs. Connally have made very clear, it's very hard to believe in that bullet and, therefore, you have to believe there was a second gunman.

Mr. CONNALLY: I don't believe in a magic bullet and I don't believe there was a second gunman.

KING: You think the commission was wrong, though?

Mr. CONNALLY: Yes, I do. I don't think the commission was right in everything that it did, no.

KING: But in essence, right?

Mr. CONNALLY: In essence, right.

KING: We'll come right back with the Connallys and Frank Mankiewicz and more phone calls on Larry King Live.

Tomorrow night — Dack Rambo and Drew Barrymore. Monday night — Tip O'Neill. And Sunday night, a special Larry King Town Meeting in Pittsburgh — 90 minutes on the recession, 9:00 PM Sunday. Back with more calls after this.

[Clip from "JFK," courtesy of Warner Bros.]

ACTOR: [sp?] The FBI tried two sets of tests. Not one of their sharpshooters could match Oswald's performance — not one — and Oswald was, at best, a medium shot. The scope was effective on it, too. I mean, this is the whole essence of the case to me. The guy couldn't do the shooting — nobody could. And they sold this lemon to the American public.

[Commercial break]

KING: This is Larry King Live. Back to your phone calls. Buffalo, hello.

8th CALLER: *[Buffalo, New York]* Yes, hello, Larry.

KING: Hi.

8th CALLER: This is for Governor Connally.

KING: Yes.

8th CALLER: I was wondering if he could explain or comment on why Vice President Johnson soon after the assassination, knowing that President Kennedy was thinking or had strong feelings about completely pulling out of Vietnam, took the measure of— or took whatever he had to do to escalate the— you know, our—

KING: One of the key hypotheses of the film.

Mr. CONNALLY: Well, I don't know that that's true at all. You know, there's been some talk now about President Kennedy withdrawing from Vietnam, but there was nothing said about that at the time. You have to remember that President Johnson kept every single Cabinet member that President Kennedy had, including all of his military advisers, his Secretary of Defense, his Secretary of State, and they were giving him the same advice they gave President Kennedy.

KING: All the best and the brightest.

Mr. CONNALLY: That's correct.

KING: Baton Rouge, Louisiana, hello.

9th CALLER: *[Baton Rouge, Louisiana]* Hello, Larry.

KING: Hi.

9th CALLER: I'd like to ask Governor Connally and Mr.

Mankiewicz what their views are on David Lipton's [sp?] theory of the President's body being altered somewhere between Parkland and Bethesda for the autopsy that night?

Mr. CONNALLY: Well, I don't believe that at all.

KING: Frank?

Mr. MANKIEWICZ: I find that very hard to believe.

KING: When these files are opened, what are we going to see?

Mr. CONNALLY: I think you're going to see very little of probative value, so far as this assassination is concerned. I think you're going to see a lot of raw data.

KING: Are we going to see autopsy reports?

Mr. CONNALLY: Probably, yes.

KING: Frank, will we see that?

Mr. MANKIEWICZ: Yes, but I don't think that's what is so urgent here. I think you're going to see files of the House Select Committee, but the important thing is whether we're going to see the CIA files and the FBI files and the ONI [sp?] files on Lee Harvey Oswald. The CIA has a bulging 201 file on Lee Harvey Oswald and if that file is intact — and knowing the bureaucracy at the CIA, I have an idea it probably is — that could very well yield us an awful lot of information.

KING: Chicago, hello.

10th CALLER: *[Chicago, Illinois]* Hello, Mr. Connally?

Mr. CONNALLY: Yes, sir.

10th CALLER: You talk about hard evidence. I have two questions for each— or one question for each of you, but in the meantime I'd like to make the statement that, you know, harking back to the Warren Commission, in '78-'79 the House Select Committee on the assassination did find a probable conspiracy.

KING: What's the question, sir?

10th CALLER: My questions are, Mrs. Connally, did the limo at the point of the shots stop, or move in reverse?

Mrs. CONNALLY: No, it did not stop. It slowed down, but it did not stop.

10th CALLER: OK, Mr. Connally, why did you yell, "My God, they're going to kill us all"? Who were—

Mr. CONNALLY: You know, I don't know. I've often wondered myself. The shots were coming rapidly and I do not know. I assume that the mental processes were such that I thought it might be an automatic weapon of some kind.

KING: San Diego, hello.

11th CALLER: *[San Diego, California]* Yes, I have two questions for Governor Connally. First of all, how could he say that he knew how many shots there were, first of all, if he had been hit and possibly been in shock and his wife been in shock from that? You know, a good example of that is maybe a football game where the refs see it one way, but the replay shows it a different way. And also, another thing is—

KING: Well, let's just handle the shock factor.

Mr. CONNALLY: Well, I could be sure. The first shot I heard, I recognized it as a rifle shot. Mrs. Connally saw the President grab his throat after that shot. The second bullet hit me. I did not hear that shot. I felt it, obviously.

It went through my chest—

Mrs. CONNALLY: But I heard it.

KING: You heard it?

Mr. CONNALLY: Mrs. Connally heard it. The third shot. I was still conscious. I was lying there, looking. My eyes were open. I saw the effect of the shot when the President was hit in the head. There's no question in my mind about it.

KING: Frank, how well is this movie doing?

Mr. MANKIEWICZ: The movie is doing extraordinarily well. I think, unlike an awful lot of movies, it's picking up attendance and revenue as it goes along. It's done better in the fourth and fifth weeks than it did in the second and third weeks.

KING: Is it going past— well past 50 million?

Mr. MANKIEWICZ: I don't know if it's gone past 50 million, but if it hasn't it probably will this week. You know, it suffers slightly by comparison to other films because it's three hours and some-odd minutes long, and that means you can only show it twice in one evening — or twice in one day, instead of three times.

KING: All right, we'll come right back with our remaining moments with the Connallys and Frank Mankiewicz, after this.

[Commercial break]

KING: Time for one more quick call. Miami, hello.

12th CALLER: [Miami, Florida.] Hi. We keep talking about those files, but who decides when to open the sealed files?

Mr. CONNALLY: Well, Congress will respond to the bill that's being introduced to open the files of the House investigating committee that was chaired by Congressman Stokes.

KING: He will ask?

Mr. CONNALLY: I beg your pardon?

KING: He will ask?

Mr. CONNALLY: Yes.

KING: And Congress will say "Yes"?

Mr. CONNALLY: Yes.

Mr. MANKIEWICZ: Well, that will take just a simple resolution of the House of Representatives—

Mr. CONNALLY: The House.

Mr. MANKIEWICZ: It doesn't even take both houses. The CIA and FBI will have to decide on their own, and one hopes there will be pressure on them to make that decision. Judge Webster, who headed both the CIA and the FBI, has said he hopes both those agencies will release their files.

KING: So in summation, we all want everything released—

Mrs. CONNALLY: Yes.

KING: —but, as Connally pointed— as Governor Connally points out, with the advisory that a lot of this was raw evidence—

Mr. CONNALLY: Right.

KING: —taken from people, and all statements are not necessarily correct.

Mr. CONNALLY: That's right.

KING: I thank you very much, Governor.

Mr. CONNALLY: Thank you.

KING: It's good to see you in good health.

Mr. CONNALLY: Thanks, Larry.

KING: Nellie.

Mrs. CONNALLY: Thank you.

KING: Frank, thank you very much.

Mr. MANKIEWICZ: Thank you, Larry. I enjoyed it.

Governor, Mrs. Connally, a pleasure to be with you.

KING: Thank you.

Mr. CONNALLY: Thanks, Frank. Same to you.

KING: It would not shock me to see Hill and Knowlton get a lot of movie accounts, either. Not too bad a job.

Tomorrow night, Drew Barrymore and Dack Rambo will be our special guests. And when we're back in Washington Monday night, Tip O'Neill will join us. And don't forget, Sunday night, a Larry King Town Meeting CNN special, 9:00 PM, on the recession — 90 minutes, live, from Pittsburgh. We'll be with you in one hour on *The Larry King Show* on Mutual Radio — Alex Haley and Piper Laurie among the guests.

Nobody forgets where they were November 22nd, 1963. Also high on the list would be January 16th, 1991. Nobody forgets where they were. We've got a very special concept coming up dealing with that, and someone who remembers very well where he was.

Bernie?

BERNARD SHAW, Washington, D.C.: Thank you, Larry — for the rest of my life.

Coming up next: A special report on the one-year anniversary of the war in the Persian Gulf. We'll hear from Defense Secretary Dick Cheney, and Colin Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Also, we will speak with a fighter pilot who took part in the first bombing wave against Iraq, and another pilot who was shot down and became a POW. That, and much more, right after this.

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