

APPENDIX II.

THE HYPOTHETICAL MEDICAL QUESTIONS

The following hypothetical question was asked of Dr Malcolm Perry by Commission counsel:

Q. And have you noted in the autopsy report the reference to the presence of a wound on the upper right posterior thorax just above the upper border of the scapula, being 7 by 4 mm. in oval dimension and being located 14 cm. from the tip of the right acromion process and 14 cm. below the tip of the right mastoid process?

Dr Perry: Yes; I saw that.

Q. Assuming that was a point of entry of a missile, which parenthetically was the opinion of the three autopsy surgeons, and assuming still further that the missile which struck the President at that spot was a 6.5-mm. jacketed bullet shot from a rifle at a distance of 160 to 250 feet, having a muzzle velocity of approximately 2,000 feet per second, and that upon entering the President's body, the bullet traveled between two strap muscles, through a fascia channel, without violating the pleural cavity, striking the trachea, causing the damage which you testified about being on the interior of the President's throat, and exited from the President's throat in the wound which you have described in the midline of his neck, would your findings and observations as to the nature of the wound on the throat be consistent with the set of facts I just presented to you?¹

The question incorporated many of the elements of the case against Lee Harvey Oswald, including the use of the Mannlicher-Carcano, the distance from the sixth-floor window to the Presidential limousine, a bullet fired from the rear and even the caliber of the bullet. Although Dr Perry agreed that the assassination could have occurred in the manner described by counsel,² he added that he could not authenticate or vouch for 'the veracity of the factors' he had been asked to assume.³

RUSH TO JUDGMENT

An answer given by the three military physicians at Bethesda to a hypothetical question was the basis for another hypothetical question—which counsel asked of Dr Kemp Clark:

The physicians, surgeons who examined the President at the autopsy specifically, Commander James J. Humes, H-u-n-e-s (spelling); Commander J. Thornton Boswell, B-o-s-w-e-l-l (spelling); and Lt. Col. Pierre A. Finck, F-i-n-c-k (spelling), expressed the joint opinion that the wound which I have just described as being 15 by 6 mm. and 2.5 cm. to the right and slightly above the external occipital protuberant was a point of entrance of a bullet in the President's head at a time when the President's head was moved slightly forward with his chin dropping into his chest, when he was riding in an open car at a slightly downhill position. With those facts being supplied to them in a hypothetical fashion, they concluded that the bullet would have taken a more or less straight course, exiting from the center of the President's skull at a point indicated by an opening from three portions of the skull reconstructed, which had been brought to them—would those findings and those conclusions be consistent with your observations; if you assumed the additional facts which I have brought to your attention, in addition to those which you have personally observed?²⁴