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discrepancies. Equally curious is the absence of a question to Marguerite Oswald such as "date of birth"? Other witnesses (although certainly not all) were asked their date of birth but it may be that the Commission did not have the time to shoehorn in a question amidst the tirade of hysteria that was Marguerite Oswald in front of the Commission.

The most likely scenario seems that Oswald was told by someone to secure a passport, for use in the fall (as it was, and may have been used again but for the lack of purchase of a theater ticket...), and Oswald dummied answers to give himself a fallback option in case his behavior ever required close scrutiny, and at the other end, the mere sight of the name "Lee Oswald" caused the issuance of the passport with no questions asked—or answers examined.

Exclusive:
A NEW INTERVIEW
WITH
DR. PAUL PETERS

by **Russell McLean**
and **Brian K. Edwards**

The following interview of Dr. Paul C. Peters was conducted by Russell McLean and Brian Edwards at Dallas Medical Center, Dallas, Texas on November 2, 1996:

Dr. Peters: "I was over in Parkland Hospital, working in the darkroom of the urology Lab, and was listening to the radio which was broadcasting from the streets in the downtown area, and the radio announcer was saying that the

President was passing such and such street, when suddenly they announced that the President's been shot. I said, "Oh my God, the President's been shot," then interlude music came on over the radio. I knew from when I was growing up in Indiana that meant that the Cubs game was going to be rained out. Whenever that music came on, you knew that something had happened. So I said to my lab assistant that since most of the guys are down in Galveston today, because of a big surgical meeting down there, let's go over and see if we can help, we might even get to meet the President, I'll bet they bring him here. I never thought in my own mind that he was mortally wounded. When they said he had been shot, he could have been shot through the arm or the shoulder. So we walked over to the hospital and in the meantime we heard over the intercom, "Paging Dr. Perry stat, Dr. Baxter stat, they were general surgeons who were here at the hospital. When I got over the hospital and I asked, "Are the patients here?"

Suddenly somebody shoved me through the double doors and I found myself inside Trauma Room 1. Dr. Perry was already in command, and he was massaging the chest of the President and I recognized him immediately. I thought to myself, "My God, he's dead." That was my first thought. The President's hair was shoved down a little bit in front like he had combed it too low. (Dr. Peters indicated that this area was on the right side of the forehead of the President.) Dr. McClelland turned and said to me, "Get in here, Paul, we can use anybody we can get. Dr. Carrico, who was a resident here at Parkland, had tried to insert a tube down the President's windpipe. This was about 30 seconds prior to my arrival into the room. Other doctors were "bagging"

the President (forcing air into the lungs via the nose and mouth). We could hear air escaping through the hole in his throat from a tear in his trachea by the bullet that had gone through that part of the neck. The necktie he was wearing was also torn slightly in the front. Someone had already cut the clothes from the President, Dr. Perry and Dr. Baxter were sorting out the tracheotomy tube, and Dr. McClelland said, "We are going to pull out the endotracheal tube and slip the tube right in through this hole in the throat." They gradually withdrew the other tube that had been inserted into his nose and down into his windpipe. It wasn't doing any good, it couldn't expand his chest because of the big hole in his trachea, so we just put the tube in through the hole. That allowed us to pump up his chest, and we began to "bag him" again.

Dr. Perry was giving the President closed compression (chest compression) with his hand. He looked up and noticed that the EKG was in a straight line, and said, "Do you think we ought to open the chest and squeeze the heart directly?" Dr. Jenkins said, "Boys, before you do that, you'd better look at this brain." At that point I stepped up and looked at the President's head and saw a 7 centimeter hole in the occipital parietal on the right portion of the head. I could see a lot of the brain was missing, and I thought maybe the cerebellum, (which is the part of our brain which helps us keep our position in space), had been torn as well. But I was to find out 25 years later that the cerebellum wasn't torn, but it was shoved way down in his head on that side from the terrific force caused by the bullet going tangentially through the head. So at that moment, we thought the bullet had gone in through the throat and come out the back of his head. A big

wound of exit, and a small wound of entry. We worked on the President with great care for 20 or 30 minutes and we had all decided that he was dead. We said, "Well, we are going to have to declare this man dead, where is Mrs. Kennedy?" Someone said to me, "She's standing right beside you." I asked Mrs. Kennedy if she wanted to step outside, and she replied, "No not until he's had last rites." Someone had brought Father Huber into the trauma room, and in the meantime, we had put in two chest tubes, and given the President two pints of blood through a "cut-down" in his ankle. He had not responded at all during the entire procedure. I placed the chest tube on his right upper chest. [ed. note: Humes told WC no chest tubes were placed, based on his autopsy observations.] I think Dr. McClelland had done the "cut down" on the left side of the chest. Dr. Baxter and I were standing on the right side of the President, and on the left side of his body was Dr. Perry and Dr. McClelland. Dr. Ron Jones did a "cut-down" on his left ankle and gave him two units of blood, and two grams of steroids. "Did somebody tell you to give him steroids?"

Yes, there was an Admiral standing behind me shouting, "Give him steroids, give him steroids." I told the Admiral, "We've already given him two grams, sir." "Was that a standard procedure, to give someone steroids?"

Yes, steroids were introduced to reduce the possibility of going into shock at that time. That would not be the practice today. He had numerous resuscitative efforts, even by today's standard. He had the best emergency care that was available that we could give him in that situation.

"Did you have an opinion that the throat wound that you saw was a

wound of entrance and the head wound was one of exit; did anything change your opinion?"

We (the doctors at Parkland) got more information later from the doctors who performed the autopsy. You see, we had him for 25 to 30 minutes, and he got all the treatment, and had been declared dead. They hauled him out of here right away. Dr. Earl Rose came down, and the Secret Service was trying to take the casket out of the hospital, and Dr. Rose said, "Wait a minute. this is a homicide in Dallas County, and I'm the forensic pathologist and I intend to do this autopsy." Dr. Rose was told by the Secret Service, "Doctor, if you don't want to get run over by this casket, we suggest you step to the side, this is the President of the United States and we're taking him back to Washington." I believed that this was a terrible mistake; Earl Rose was one of the best qualified forensic pathologists in this country, and he would have done a very good medical-legal autopsy, which might have answered some questions.

"Did you assume that an autopsy was going to be done in Dallas?"

Yes, because after we had declared the President dead, Father Huber was brought in and he sized up the situation and began to read from the Bible. Mrs. Kennedy said, "No, No, the final unction, don't you understand?" Father Huber quickly turned to another part of his book and began reading what were obviously the right words. After the last rites, Mrs. Kennedy took a ring off the President's finger and gave him a kiss. There were only about three doctors in the room at that time. Mrs. Kennedy then walked over to the door of the Trauma Room and sat down on a chair that had been brought in for her. The doctors left and

immediately went upstairs to the operating room where Dr. Shaw was working on Governor Connally. We sat in the anteroom where we would change clothes, and we listened to the radio broadcasting bulletins coming in from all over the world, and they were getting the news that President Kennedy had been assassinated.

"When the casket was taken from the hospital, did you get a sense that something was not right, because no autopsy had been done on the President?"

They told us that day that this might be a conspiracy, and we want to get out of the "frontier," and back to Washington as quick as we can. It was rumored that Lyndon Johnson was having a heart attack in another part of the hospital. I did not see Vice-President Johnson in the hospital at any time. They got him right out to the airport and onto *Air Force One*. Judge Sarah Hughes had been driven out to the airport to give the oath of office to Johnson (she had been one of my [Peters'] Sunday school teachers).

"Did you have to write a report detailing what procedures you did on the President?"

The only report I gave was to the Warren Commission, I just gave it verbally. I did not write anything down of what I did that day. But when I got home that night, I dictated a tape of the events of the day, but I have not been able to find it.

"Did anyone approach you afterwards and tell you not to discuss the events at Parkland with anyone?"

No, I've always told just what I say to anyone who asked....

"When the Warren Commission contacted you by letter, did the letter discuss what kinds of questions they

would be asking you, or any specific questions that you would probably be asked?"

No, they just told me that I would be testifying at a certain time.

"You mentioned earlier that your testimony lasted only a few minutes, I think you said less than 10 minutes?"

Yes, I was delayed in testifying at the assigned time because of some lady who they were talking to. She knew nothing about the assassination at all, and was just downtown shopping. They talked with her for two hours and a half, and they talked to me for just a couple of minutes. [ed. note: Peters testified on 3/24/64, at 4 p.m., and the testimony was taken by Arlen Specter; the witness before him was Jean Hill, whose testimony is printed as having been taken at the Post Office, (although Ms. Hill insists she was deposed at Parkland) by Specter, at 2:30 the same afternoon. How could Peters have known the previous witness knew nothing of the event and was downtown shopping? Did Jean Hill leave the room mumbling, "Gee, I didn't know anything; I was just downtown shopping"? Or did Specter make a comment to Peters suggesting such a role for Ms. Hill? There is no record of any woman giving testimony that day who knew nothing about the assassination but just happened to be nearby "shopping";]

"Have you read any of the books about the assassination?"

Oh, yes, I read about it all the time.

"Has your opinion changed in any way about the assassination?"

No. I was given the opportunity some 25 years later to go to the National Archives to view the autopsy photos. During that period, I had been given most

of the autopsy photos by someone who had befriended that Secret Service agent [ed. note: Agent James K. Fox, now deceased] who smuggled them out of the files. When I viewed the autopsy photos, they were essentially the same. They showed me a brain at the Archives, and I said, "This brain has a wound in it, comparable to the one that President Kennedy might have received." These were just pictures they showed me. I said, "I'd like to see the real brain--I can see that I was right when I said the cerebellum had been damaged, but it isn't torn it's just pushed down." I asked them, "Do you have the real brain?" The archivist replied, "That has been made unavailable by Robert Kennedy."

"Did you see autopsy photographs of the brain inside the head?"

No, the brain had already been taken out. They've got a picture of it at the National Archives.

"Where were you on Sunday the 24th?"

I was home, but I was coming out to the school (Medical Center), and so I turned the radio on in my home. About then Dr. Shires, who was professor of surgery, zoomed past my house. I then heard that Oswald had been shot, so I went out to the hospital. I went right into the operating room and stood behind Tom (Shires) while he was operating on Oswald. Oswald had what we call a smorgasbord injury. The bullet that killed him hit all the major organs. While they worked on him, no anesthesia was given, but he was unconscious. Oswald started to come around and by then he had been given 14 or 15 units of blood. He began to move his arms up towards his chest. Secret Service men dressed in green surgical gowns to mix with the surgeons were shouting in his ear, "Did you do it, did

you do it?" hoping to get him to nod his head or something. But his blood pressure gave way and he died.

"Did you assume that these people were Secret Service agents who were dressed in the surgical gowns?"

Well, they had come in and mingled with the crowd. I supposed they could have been FBI agents, I wasn't sure who they were. I must have taken 15 or 20 pictures of Tom operating on Lee Harvey Oswald and a guy came up and identified himself and said, "I'll take the camera." I told him the camera was not mine, that it belonged to the Radiology Department. He said he was going to take it and he said he would give it back.

"Have you ever seen those pictures that you took?"

No, I have not. I never got the camera back, or the film.

"Does that surprise you?"

No. Dr. Dockery, a radiologist who was here at Parkland at that time, who then went out to West Texas to practice, was the owner of the camera. I talked to him several years later, and he told me that he got the camera back, but the film was kept.

"There has been some controversy over the years about the wound in the President's throat. Can you clear this up for us?"

Well there was a hole there, you could have stuck your finger in it, and Dr. Perry made it just a little bigger on either side, so he would have an access to the airway. The tube had a small rounded head on it so that it would easily slip into the throat of the patient. *(Dr. Peters was then shown copies of the autopsy photographs.)*

"Would the rounded edge of this tube have cause the skin to become jagged like we see in this [stare of death]

photo?"

No, I think that would be the bullet coming out that did that. Dr. Perry would have made a real neat incision. His incisions are probably right at the edge of this wound. The wound wasn't quite that big, but you can see where he's enlarged it. He didn't have to enlarge the wound very much. [ed. note: at autopsy, no trace of the wound was found...]

"Could you tell us what we are seeing in this [back of the head] photo?"

Here, they got the thing covered up [ed. note: no argument there], you've probably seen pictures where the wound is turned back and you can see a huge hole there in the head. The parietal area is over the ear. The thing that was amazing to me when I saw the x-rays of President Kennedy's head was there was a huge hole in the back, but the fracture of the skull had extended forward even to include the cribriform plate where the eye rests on the skull.

"With the damage extending that far forward in the head, would you expect to see damage to the face in the other photos from the autopsy?"

I believe the bullet that hit his head, stopped his heart so quickly, and the heart was in shock and did not have the power to rush all the blood into that area that would have made his face black and blue over a period of time. He just died so quickly.

"Does this photo represent the same injuries you observed on the President at Parkland?"

Yes. What they've done here is this flap has been pulled back. This is a loose flap of tissue that could be pulled down this way to cover the hole where the brain was, that's what I saw. If you could pull this flap of skin away, you'd see a huge hole in the head. A large amount of the

brain is missing, and the cerebral cortex is sunken down there a little bit, whereas the brain would have almost touched the skull. A large amount of brain was missing back there, as if you would open the lid of a jar.

"Is this similar to the photograph you were shown at the National Archives?"

Yes, it is one of the pictures I was shown. Both of these are the same ones I saw.

"Dr. Peters, a normal tracheotomy incision is about how wide, 3 to 5 millimeters?"

Oh, I've seen some that were wider than that, maybe even up to 7 millimeters. This photo shows very accurately what Perry did to the President. I watched him do it, he cut laterally across that hole.

"Could you have put your fingers into that hole? Was it wide enough to put 3 or 4 fingers inside the hole?"

Yes. When he cut into the neck, the edges of the skin diverged and it opened up. The edges were, maybe one-half inch long on both sides of the hole.

"Do you have an opinion, 33 years after the assassination, of what happened?"

I think the evidence points to Lee Harvey Oswald, acting alone, pulled the whole thing off. I believe he could have done it without any other help. We're all influenced by people, and things we read. Oswald was no doubt influenced by the Communists and the Communist Party, in fact, he even went back to Russia. [ed. note: back?] He became disenchanted and came back, and so in that way, they influenced him, but I believe in pulling it off, he acted alone. We had the evidence within 24 hours, we had his handprints on the gun that fired the bullet to the exclusion of all other guns based on the

ballistic markings that hit President Kennedy. They had the sweater [???] that had some fibers in it to the exclusion of all other sweaters had been caught in the gun, so that's evidence that he held in his hands, the gun that fired the bullet that killed President Kennedy. That was enough to convict him had he lived. That would have been the trial of the century. **"When you gave testimony, was that done here at Parkland?"**

Yes, it was right next door to the administrator's office where they quizzed me. A couple people who had played a more active role than I did, like Dr. Perry and Dr. Carrico, had to go to Washington to testify. Most of us didn't have to go to Washington.

"Did you read your Warren Commission testimony, and was it accurate?"

Oh yes.

"How would you describe the general mood or feelings of the staff at Parkland?"

Well, naturally, we were in shock and many were depressed about the events that had taken place. I remember talking to an officer with the Texas Department of Public Safety up in Parkland's cafeteria afterwards, and he was telling me, we were talking about the effects, the explosive effects of bullets. He said, "Doctor, I can make a bullet for you that if I shoot an old crow up in a tree, all you'll see is the beak and two legs come down. But if I hit a leaf in front of that crow, the bullet doesn't even hit the crow. [ed. note: sounds like a "magic bullet...."]"

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