



NEW TIMES, AUGUST 8, 1975, Volume 5, Number 3

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# The media and the murder of John Kennedy

By Jerry Policoff

*"... It happens to be to our interest, as well as the interest of the Commission and of the country, to obtain as wide a distribution of this document as we can...."*

Letter from then-Assistant Managing Editor of the *New York Times*, Clifton Daniel, to J. Lee Rankin, Chief Counsel to the Warren Commission, dated May 21, 1964 (four months prior to the publication of the Warren Report)

It has been nearly 13 years since John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the 35th President of the United States, was felled by a hail of bullets as he rode through Dallas. The case was officially closed with the issuance of the Warren Commission's Report, which found that Lee Harvey Oswald was the lone assassin. Those findings have recently come under renewed attack as the controversy has reemerged after a rather lengthy period of hibernation. Once again, charges of omission and distortion by commission detractors and similar counter-charges by commission defenders are filling the air, leaving many confused and befuddled.

In this atmosphere, one might expect the press to clarify the facts—to delve into the story, follow up the leads and unmask the cover-up, if one existed. Unfortunately, the story of the Kennedy assassination controversy is one of continuous government manipulation of a press that seems only too willing to be manipulated. With conspiracy rumors raging anew, the press shows few signs of change on this issue.

The press could learn a good deal about the assassination, and about its own failure to pursue the story independently,

by reviewing its own initial reporting out of Dallas. Those early reports stand in stark contrast to what is officially alleged to have transpired. The infamous "grassy knoll," for example, was no concoction of the Warren Commission critics. "The shots apparently came from a grassy knoll in the area," reported the Associated Press in its initial dispatches.

Word of shots from the front-dominated early reports from the site (witnesses interviewed by the press seemed to be nearly unanimous on this point), but

**Most Americans don't believe the Warren Commission's version of what happened in Dallas. But the press seems unwilling to pursue the truth independently**

these reports were forgotten by the press within several hours, as Dallas authorities began to make it clear that a local "communist" by the name of Lee Harvey Oswald had fired all of the shots from a sniper's nest constructed on the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository to the rear of the presidential limousine.

Leaked biographical data depicting the "erratic" nature of the "political malcontent" Oswald began to flood the media almost immediately. The

word "alleged" contrasted starkly with the obvious assumption of Oswald's guilt. "Left Wing Lunacy, Not Right Is Suspect," wrote Stuart Loory in the *New York Herald Tribune*; "Career of Suspect Has Been Bizarre," headlined the *New York Times*; "The psychotic impulses that aided Lee Harvey Oswald..." began a story in the *New York Journal American*; "Marksman Castro 'Red,'" was the title of Bob Considine's column distributed by the Hearst chain; "Assassin Named," blared the headline of the *New York Post*.

The following day the *New York Times* and *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* typified press coverage with these respective headlines: "Evidence Against Oswald Described as Conclusive" and "Dallas Police Insist Evidence Proves Oswald Killed Kennedy."

By the time Oswald himself was assassinated, all pretense had disappeared. The press had found Oswald guilty without benefit of trial. "President's Assassin Shot..." proclaimed the *New York Times*. *Life* profiled the "Assassin: The Man Held—And Killed—For Murder." *Time's* combination biography/obituary was titled simply "The Man Who Killed Kennedy."

Successive leaks from Dallas authorities, the FBI (whose report on the assassination was summarized in the press before it was received by the Warren Commission) and the Warren Commission itself continued to implicate Oswald as the sole perpetrator of a deranged act. The press, by its uncritical reporting, was allowing itself to be set up to the point at which official findings, regardless of what they might be, would have to be accepted, applauded and defended. Thus, the press' curiosity was not aroused when a 7.65 caliber German Mauser mutated into a 6.5 caliber Italian Mannlicher-Carcano; or when the grassy

knoll receded into oblivion; or when an entrance wound in the President's throat became an exit wound (first for a fragment from the head wound and then for a bullet from the back wound); or when a wound six inches below the President's shoulder became a wound at the base of the neck. The press was thereby weaving a web that would inevitably commit it to the official findings.

For some, the ultimate publication of those findings was anticlimactic. The *New York Times*, for example, published a Page 1 exclusive on June 1, 1964, by then-Supreme Court correspondent Anthony Lewis: "Panel To Reject Theories of Plot in Kennedy Death." The story amounted to a detailed preview of the Warren Report three months before the commission completed taking testimony and nearly four months before the report was released.

The release of the Warren Report on September 27, 1964, was greeted with near-unanimous praise by the press, led by the *New York Times*, which went to the enormous expense of publishing the entire report as a 48-page supplement to the September 28 editions. The *Times* also collaborated with The Book of the Month Club and Bantam Books to publish hard-bound and soft-cover editions of the Warren Report.

Two months later the *New York Times* followed the commission's release of the 26 supplemental volumes of hearings and exhibits by collaborating with McGraw-Hill and Bantam Books on *The Witnesses*, a book consisting of "highlights" from the hearings that was prepared by a "group of editors and reporters of the *New York Times*." The selection and editing of testimony for this volume showed a clear understanding of that evidence which supported the Warren Commission findings and that which did not. Testimony that fit into the latter category was edited out in a manner that could hardly have been accidental. References to shots from the front, for example, were consistently edited out, as was the admission by one of the autopsy surgeons that he had burned his original notes. Deleted from the testimony of three Secret Service agents present at the autopsy was the description each gave of a wound approximately six inches below the shoulder—a description at significant variance with the official autopsy report, which located the wound at the base of the neck. Included in *The Witnesses* was the affidavit of Arnold Rowland to the

*Jerry Policoff is a New York ad man who has devoted much of his spare time since 1966 to assassination research.*

FBI in which he stated that he had seen a man with a rifle on the sixth floor of the Depository before the assassination. Not included was his later testimony in which he told the Warren Commission that he had actually seen two men but that the FBI had told him to "forget it," and in which he stated his conviction that the shots had been fired from the railroad yards in front of the President.

In short, a volume purporting to be an objective condensation of relevant testimony compiled by America's "newspaper of record" was little more than deliberately slanted propaganda in support of the Warren Commission Report.

If the *Times* early handling of the Warren Report was less than professional, it was nevertheless commendable in contrast to that of the Luce publishing empire. *Life* magazine quickly cornered the market on one of the most important pieces of evidence, the Zapruder film, for which it paid \$150,000 in \$25,000 installments. The film was to become controversial because of its depiction of the fatal wounding of the President. When the fatal bullet strikes, Ken-

**Harrison Salisbury led a *Times* investigation with limited goals: "We will go over all the areas of doubt," he said, "and hope to eliminate them"**

ned's head is rocketed violently backward and to the left. Critics of the Warren Report would contend that the film supported their contention that the shots had come from the grassy knoll, located to the right front of the presidential limousine.

On the morning of November 25, 1963, the *Life* publisher, the late C.D. Jackson, first viewed the Zapruder film. At that time *Life* had purchased only print rights to the film. Richard Stolley, then Los Angeles bureau chief for *Life*, described the scene for *Esquire* magazine ten years later. Stolley described Jackson as "so upset by the head-wound sequence that he proposed the company obtain all

rights to the film and withhold it from public viewing at least until emotions had calmed."

The November 29 issue of *Life* and the John F. Kennedy Memorial Issue published shortly thereafter contained several frames from the Zapruder film. The backward head snap was not among the sequences selected.

Within days of the assassination enough questions had arisen to provoke much of the European press into proclaiming conspiracy. Doctors at Parkland Hospital who had performed a tracheotomy upon the late President had described his throat wound as "apparently" one of entrance. How, they asked, did Oswald shoot the President from the front from behind? Eyewitnesses were nearly unanimous in describing the rapidity of the shots, but the rifle allegedly used in the shooting was an old World War II bolt-action model known for its sluggishness. And, of course, there were those consistent reports about police and bystanders converging upon the grassy knoll rather than upon the Book Depository.

Such speculation presented no problem for *Life*. Both the memorial issue and the December 6, 1963, issue carried a page-length article by Paul Mandel. It was entitled "End of Nagging Rumors: The Six Critical Seconds" and explained that Oswald's rifle could fire three shots rapidly enough. Mandel explained that because the film operated at 18 frames per second (it was actually 18.3) "it is possible to reconstruct the precise timing and placing and feasibility of the shots." He then described the film. The first shot, he said, hit the President in the throat. 4.1 seconds later, a second shot hits Governor John Connally, who was seated in front of the President. 2.7 seconds after that, the final bullet strikes the President's head. "Altogether," explained Mandel, "the three shots take 6.8 seconds. Time enough for a trained sharpshooter, even through the bobbing field of a telescopic sight." Mandel's description of the film placed the first Kennedy hit at a point just under one second before he temporarily disappears from the film as a road sign comes between Zapruder and the limousine. However, the film actually shows Kennedy smiling and waving at the crowd, seemingly unhit, as he disappears behind the sign. Similarly, Mandel's description of the Connally hit is contradicted in the film, for the hit he describes actually takes place nearly two seconds earlier, when Connally's shoulder collapses, his hair flies up and his face contorts in pain, leaving little doubt that he has been hit.

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**Books of The Times**

### Who Killed John F. Kennedy

By JOHN LEWIS

AMERICAN OBSERVER: An account of the Warren Commission's investigation of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. 320 pages. \$12.95.

A SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE: By the Warren Commission. 320 pages. \$12.95.

New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison accused New Orleans businessman Clay Shaw, charging that Mr. Shaw conspired in murdering President John F. Kennedy. Mr. Shaw was acquitted by a jury. Mr. Garrison then had Mr. Shaw re-arrested on two charges of perjury. Mr. Shaw is suing Mr. Garrison, and a host of others. The judge of Mr. Shaw's trial has also been arrested in a scandal over alleged ring parties and money women and charged with several felonies. The president's witness against Mr. Shaw has since been accused of kidnapping a 12-year-old boy in the New Orleans Athletic Club, which is investigating whether Mr. Shaw illegally had talks with the New Orleans businessmen, underpinned.

Mr. Shaw is not a Dallas by any means. It is a scandalous case in the best sense of the word. Mr. Garrison's charges are not only untrue but also highly inflammatory. Mr. Garrison's charges are not only untrue but also highly inflammatory. Mr. Garrison's charges are not only untrue but also highly inflammatory.

**Books of The Times**

### The Shaw-Garrison Affair

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AMERICAN OBSERVER: An account of the Warren Commission's investigation of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. 320 pages. \$12.95.

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The New York Times Book Review for December 1, 1970, was edited between editions to remove the reviewer's expressions of doubt about the Warren Report.

off and send me out to California on another story or something. We never really detached anyone for this. We weren't really serious."

The Times return to the fold is amply illustrated by its relationship with David W. Belin, a junior counsel for the Warren Commission who recently has gained a degree of prominence as executive director for the Rockefeller Commission on the CIA.

The story of Belin and the Times begins in August 1971, when an article by Warren Commission critic Sylvia Meagher implicating Belin in subornation of perjury appeared in *The Texas Observer*, a liberal Texas weekly with a small but influential national circulation. Meagher's 1967 book, *Accessories After the Fact*, is generally considered by those familiar with Kennedy assassination literature to be the most scholarly, objective and definitive critique of the Warren Report.

Meagher took Belin to task for his treatment of the testimony of an Oswald co-worker named Charles Givens. In a deposition taken by Belin, Givens testified that he had left the sixth floor of the Depository at about 11:30 a.m. on the day of the assassination, but that he had forgot-

entitled "Oswald: Evolution of an Assassin."

Time countered growing rumors of conspiracy in Europe with an article in its June 12 issue: "J.F.K.: The Murder and the Myths." Time blamed the speculation upon "leftist" writers and publications seeking a "rightist conspiracy," and proceeded to characterize the culprits as "that sometime philosopher" Bertrand Russell; American expatriate Thomas Buchanan "fired by the Washington Star in 1948 after he admitted membership in the Communist party"; and the "wind-mill tilting" Mark Lane, who had recently "received smash play in the Eastern European press."

By late 1966 the Kennedy assassination became a major issue as Gallup and Harris polls revealed that few Americans were satisfied that the truth was known and Mark Lane's critical book *Rush to Judgment* climbed to the top of the best seller list. Such pillars of the establishment as *The London Times*, former Kennedy aides Arthur Schlesinger Jr. and Richard Goodwin, *The Saturday Evening Post*, the Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore*, William F. Buckley, Walter Lippmann, Cardinal Cushing and The American Academy of Forensic Sciences began to call for a reopening of the case.

Under this setting, the New York Times quietly undertook an investigation

of its own in early November 1966 under the direction of Harrison Salisbury, who had recently called for a new investigation in the pages of *Progressive* magazine, acknowledging that questions of major importance remained unanswered. Salisbury, an early ardent defender of the Warren Report, clarified his limited objectives in *Newsweek*: "We will go over all the areas of doubt," he said, "and hope to eliminate them."

Later that month the Times, in a carefully worded editorial, "Unanswered Questions," called for an end to official silence, saying that thoughtful citizens had articulated enough solid doubts to require official answers.

Rather than attempting to answer those questions itself, however, the Times investigation ended as abruptly as it began. It was "temporarily" suspended in December, when Salisbury received permission to visit Hanoi. It was never completed—nor would the New York Times ever again question the findings of the Warren Commission. Some added perspective into the Times inquiry was provided recently by the Times Houston bureau chief, Martin Waldron, in an interview with *Rolling Stone*. Waldron, a member of the 1966 team, said that he and others came up with "a lot of unanswered questions" that the Times didn't bother to pursue. "I'd be off on a good lead and then somebody'd call me

**The press, by its uncritical reporting, was allowing itself to be set up to the point at which official findings, regardless of what they might be, would have to be accepted and defended**

ten his cigarettes and returned about 15 minutes later to retrieve them. There, on an otherwise empty sixth floor, he encountered Oswald. Belin did not challenge Givens' testimony and it was given great weight by the Warren Commission in its efforts to establish Oswald's presence on the sixth floor during the period leading up to the assassination.

But on the day of the assassination, Meagher pointed out, Givens had told authorities that he had last seen Oswald on the first floor of the Depository reading a newspaper. Neither then nor in

subsequent affidavits prior to his Warren Commission testimony had Givens ever mentioned a sixth floor encounter. However, a document found in the National Archives by Mrs. Meagher placed Givens' later testimony in a rather sinister light. The document, an FBI report, quoted Lt. Jack Revill of the Dallas Police Department to the effect that Givens, who had once been arrested on a marijuana charge, "would probably change his testimony for money."

Belin replied in the same issue of the *Observer*; he ignored the charges while viciously attacking the "assassination sensationalists" and proclaiming his own integrity. The *Observer*, in an editorial, branded this "the slick irrelevant reply of a lawyer who doesn't have much of a defense to present."

Meagher sent a copy of the Belin exchange to several media people including Harrison Salisbury, who was then editor of the *Times* Op-Ed page. The result: On November 22, 1971, the eighth anniversary of the assassination, the *Times* Op-Ed page featured a condensed version of Belin's *Texas Observer* attack upon the critics of the Warren Report. "The Warren Commission Was Right," proclaimed the headline.

An angry letter from Sylvia Meagher to the Op-Ed page received a form card reply. An angrier letter to Salisbury received the following verbatim reply from Salisbury: "Do forgive the form card which went back to you. That was a product of our bureaucracy, I'm afraid. I hadn't seen your letter, alas, having been out of the office for a few days."

Belin, in his foray against the critics, had threatened to write a book that would answer the wild charges once and for all. In 1973 Quadrangle Books, the publishing company of the New York *Times*, published *November 22, 1963: You Are The Jury*, by David W. Belin. Harrison Salisbury provided a laudatory introduction, and Belin, for his part, expressed special thanks to Salisbury, "who was the catalyst in my undertaking to write this book."

It is difficult to understand why the *Times* published this work, for it is literally little more than a rewrite of the Warren Report accompanied by excerpts of testimony from the 26 volumes. The "definitive" reply to the critics addresses only two of them; Sylvia Meagher is not even relegated to footnote status. The testimony of Charles Givens is cited as if its veracity had never been challenged. Predictably, the book sold few copies.

Belin's book was reviewed in *The New York Times Book Review* on November 18, 1973, by George and Priscilla

## Tunnel vision at CBS

Early this year CBS completed negotiations with President Ford for the rights to his book *Portrait of the Assassin*. Ford's book, written immediately following his tenure on the Warren Commission, was based on the commission's conclusion that Lee Oswald acted alone in murdering the President. Sources say the network intends to produce a documentary based on the book but has acceded to Ford's insistence that it wait until after the 1976 presidential election before airing any material derived from the book.

Revisionists within the network were incensed upon learning of the CBS decision, feeling that the network should not continue to view the assassination from only one perspective. Many Warren Commission critics continue to blast CBS for a series of specials defending the commission's work. Those specials, aired in 1967, were produced by Les Midgley and anchored by Dan Rather.

Staff members connected with the award-winning CBS public affairs program *60 Minutes* began this spring to investigate the possibility of producing a counter-program based on independent investigation. It was hoped that the program would not only diminish the *Portrait of the Assassin* documentary but would also serve as a coup for correspondent Mike Wallace, long considered a maverick by the CBS hierarchy. In April the producers of *60 Minutes* began active consideration of a segment entitled "The Oswald-Ruby Connection." The segment was to be the first hour-long, one-subject treatment in the program's history.

On April 22 producer Harry Moses and CBS researcher Harriet Rubin started a cross-country, fact-finding trip which took them to both coasts and in one instance even out of the country. A basic problem in the pair's approach was they were committed to proving a connection between the assassin and the assassin's assassin, and tended to disregard any evidence not related to that premise even if the evidence they discovered also contradicted the research of the Warren Commission.

By May 15, the project had moved from the front burner to the back, and producer Moses had been assigned to another project. Moses said in defense of *60 Minutes* that the program was in effect scrapped because he was unable to produce "anything that was airable." Moses later released a formal statement:

"In April of this year, due to the current spate of publicity surrounding the assassination of John F. Kennedy, '60 Minutes' began to investigate various conspiracy theories. As you know, the general thrust of all these theories is that the Warren Commission's characterization of Lee Harvey Oswald as a lone Marxist assassin was incorrect and that Oswald was part of a plot to kill the President that day in Dallas. '60 Minutes' spent approximately two months in research and although we were able to uncover some new information about Oswald, we found no hard evidence whatsoever which could prove that Oswald was a figure in a conspiracy plan. Because of this and our own time limitations (we go off the air in September for four months), '60 Minutes' decided to stop researching the story. We have turned over what information we have found to another production unit at CBS News. . . ."

Researcher Rubin stayed on the project, however, and was in Washington when CBS issued another press release in mid-May. The network revealed that it now planned a two-hour special in the fall on the assassinations of the Kennedy brothers and Martin Luther King and the attempted assassination of George Wallace. Rubin was ordered soon thereafter to turn over all her research—66 pages of material that either contradicted or at least raised questions about the Warren Commission's findings—to the team assigned to produce the specials.

But Rubin has no real hope that her research will be used by the project team, since it is controlled by the same people responsible for the network's 1967 whitewash of the Warren Report—producer Les Midgley and reporter Dan Rather.

—Allen Stone

McMillan, a remarkable choice of reviewers. George McMillan, who is writing a biography of James Earl Ray that is yet to be completed seven years after its undertaking, told the *Times* in a 1969 interview: "This guy is a loner." "I have never investigated any aspect of conspiracy," he said, "which left me free to work on his biography." George's wife, Priscilla, has long been one of the most vocal and intriguing defenders of the Warren Report. As Moscow correspondent for The North American Newspaper Alliance, she had interviewed a young defector in 1959—Lee Harvey Oswald. She filed no story on her interview, but she did deliver her notes to the American Consul, at whose request she had conducted the interview. Following the CIA-engineered defection of Svetlana Alliluyeva to the United States, it was Priscilla McMillan who translated her book. An unpublished Warren Commission document includes her name

**Between early and late editions, the title of the review changed from "Who Killed John F. Kennedy" to "The Shaw-Garrison Affair"**

among "employees of the State Department" who had contacted Oswald in Moscow. On the day of the assassination, she filed a story with the *Boston Globe*, "The Stuff of Which Fanatics Are Made." This and other articles in *Harper's* and *The Christian Science Monitor* published in the weeks and months following the assassination were widely quoted and helped bolster the public image of a hapless fanatic who had murdered the President. Still later, Priscilla became a confidant of Marina Oswald and was designated her official biographer (like her husband's, the book is unfinished after 11 years). Nor was Priscilla any stranger to the *Times*. Her Freudian pieces on Oswald had twice graced the Op-Ed page. Four days after the Belin review, she informed *Times* readers that the reason people cling to conspiracy theories is that Oswald had committed symbolic patricide and since we all subconsciously want to kill our fathers we believe in conspiracy "as a defense, a screen, a barrier,

against having to hold those feelings in ourselves."

But the best illustration of *Times* policy involves another book review that dared to be critical of the Warren Report. Between early and late editions the title of the review changed from "Who Killed John F. Kennedy?" to "The Shaw-Garrison Affair." A paragraph headed "MYSTERIES PERSIST" vanished, along with the last 30 lines of the review, which were critical of the official version of events. Readers of the *Times* were thus spared the confusing and disquieting questions of a reviewer who did not, apparently, know better. That reviewer, John Leonard, later became editor of *The New York Times Book Review*, where he continued the *Times* policy of selecting hostile reviewers for conspiracy books.

The 1966 flood of criticism aimed at the Warren Report also left its mark at *Life*. As the controversy grew, Richard Billings, then *Life's* associate editor in charge of investigative reporting, assigned his staff to look into controversial aspects of the Kennedy case. The objective was to produce several articles on the Warren controversy.

On November 25, 1966, what was to be the first article of the series appeared. The cover of *Life* carried a frame from the Zapruder film with the caption: "Did Oswald Act Alone? A Matter of Reasonable Doubt." Billings and his staff examined the single bullet theory: The Warren Commission had theorized that one bullet had inflicted both of Kennedy's non-fatal wounds and had gone on to inflict each of the five wounds suffered by Connally (including shattering a rib and a wrist) while emerging virtually unscathed. The bullet in question had been discovered on a stretcher by an orderly at Parkland Hospital. Although the commission had alleged otherwise, the single bullet theory was absolutely essential to the lone assassin theory because the rifle allegedly used by Oswald had been proved incapable of firing two shots rapidly enough to hit both men.

*Life* concluded, based upon its examination of the Zapruder film, that the single bullet theory was wrong and that the lone assassin theory was thus in doubt. A *Life* editorial called for a new investigation.

*Time* magazine's November 25 issue, on the other hand, editorially attacked the "phantasmagoria" and concluded that "there seems little valid excuse for so dramatic a development as another full-scale inquiry."

Questioned about the conflicting editorial postures, Hedley Donovan, editor-in-chief of both *Time* and *Life*,

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said: "Time and Life agree that valid doubts and discussions about the Warren Report will continue. Life advocated a new special investigation, while Time questioned whether a full-scale inquiry would achieve anything without new evidence. We would like to see our magazines arrive at consistent positions on major issues, and I am sure in due course we will on this one."

Due course was not long in coming. In January Billings was told by a superior, "It is not *Life's* function to investigate the Kennedy assassination." The first article on the Kennedy case became the last, and the investigation by Billings' staff was terminated. After that, neither *Time* nor *Life* again questioned or criticized the Warren Report.

For all their efforts, the New York *Times* and Time Inc. could not approach CBS' performance in a four-part documentary, *The Warren Report*, broadcast in June 1967. The documentary was produced by Les Midgely and reported by Walter Cronkite, Dan Rather and Eddie Barker, news director for CBS' Dallas affiliate, KRLD. This same quartet had collaborated on a two-hour special broadcast on the eve of the release of the Warren Report—a program that had echoed the rest of the media in heaping praise upon the Warren Commission.

CBS designed spurious tests to support the Warren Report. When these loaded tests disproved the report, they were interpreted to support it anyway. Eleven master marksmen were supplied with a rifle capable of firing faster than Oswald's, were allowed to practice with the rifle and then fired 37 firing runs of three shots each at a target simulating the President. CBS eliminated 17 of these runs "because of trouble with the rifle," which actually meant that the marksman took more than 7.5 seconds to get off three shots. The average for the remaining firing runs was identical to the *maximum* time available to Oswald, a poor marksman who owned a slower gun. CBS' masters averaged only 1.2 hits compared to Oswald's two hits. Cronkite's conclusion: "It seems reasonable to say that an expert could fire that rifle in five seconds. It seems equally reasonable to say that Oswald, under normal circumstances, would take longer. But these were not normal circumstances. Oswald was shooting at a President."

To clear up the location of the back wound, CBS called upon Commander Humes, the pathologist who had directed the autopsy and had subsequently burned his notes. Humes confirmed for CBS that the wound was indeed in the

neck (indicating that three Secret Service agents, a Dallas motorcycle policeman and two FBI agents were all mistaken about the location of the wound below the shoulder, as were the President's shirt and jacket, which displayed holes 5½ inches below the collar).

To test the single bullet theory, CBS called upon the same "expert" utilized by the Warren Commission (and more recently by the Rockefeller Commission). Blocks of gelatin and masonite were set up to simulate most, but not all, of the tissue and bone supposedly traversed by the missile. (Connally's rib, which was shattered and would have slowed the bullet down considerably, was *not* simulated.) None of the bullets test-fired into the gelatin was able to do what

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**Under normal circumstances, Cronkite conceded, Oswald couldn't have fired the rifle rapidly enough. "But these were not normal circumstances," he said. "Oswald was shooting at a President"**

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the Warren Commission's magic bullet had done, but CBS said that it would have taken "very little more velocity." CBS thus interpreted this test as proving "that a single bullet could indeed have wounded both men." Using these and other equally dubious tests, CBS concluded that "Oswald was the sole assassin."

Robert Richter, formerly a producer for *CBS Reports* and an associate producer on the Warren Commission project, was dismayed by what had finally appeared on the air. "From the material gathered for the program," he told me, "someone could have taken the same raw footage and utilized the same tests, chosen different excerpts from the same interviews, and given the audience a completely different, more objective impression of what the facts added up to."

A new CBS look at the assassination, involving essentially the same cast, is in the works (see box on page 34).

After an eight-year hiatus, the controversy over the Warren Report is as strong as ever, spurred by Robert Groden's clear copy of the Zapruder film (which has been shown twice on national television) and by the release of two transcripts of Warren Commission executive sessions (thanks to freedom of information suits by Harold Weisberg and Paul Hoch) which clearly show that both the FBI and Warren Commission investigations functioned as cover-ups.

Yet the press (with a few exceptions) has shown little interest in pursuing the case. The *Washington Post*, which has largely ignored the revival of the conspiracy issue as a news story, published a typically Freudian piece by Priscilla McMillan on its May 4 editorial page. The *Washington Star* on June 28 came out against a reopening of the case, asserting that there were no major questions that remain unanswered. The *Boston Globe* on June 29 featured a lengthy article debunking conspiracy theories.

*Newsweek*, rushing forth to defend the Warren Report in its April 24, 1975, issue, characterized the critics as "an oddlot assortment of skeptics and ideologues, rationalists and fantasists," to whom "supposition is elevated into fact; accident becomes criminal design; evidence is accepted on faith if it fits a conspiracy theory and rejected as manufactured if it does not. . . ." The article called upon an obscure, never-published, highly conjectural study by a former assistant professor of physics at UCLA to support the lone assassin from the rear theory. *Newsweek* felt it unnecessary to inform its readers that the study had originally been prepared for Wesley Liebeler, a Warren Commission lawyer, or that Wesley Liebeler had supplied them with the study. John J. Lindsay, co-author of the piece, saw nothing wrong in protecting his source. "I don't care if the goddamn thing flew in here on a dirigible as long as its valid," he told me.

I. F. Stone, a rabid defender of the Warren Report during the earlier airing of the controversy, continues to characterize the critics as "paranoids," while Seymour Hersh refuses to take conspiracy theories seriously, likening them to flying saucer stories.

The Kennedy assassination cover-up has survived so long only because the press, confronted with the choice of believing what it was told or examining the facts independently, chose the former. Unless and until the press repudiates that choice, it is unlikely that we shall ever know the truth. ●