

AMERICAN HANDGUNNER — MARCH/APRIL 1993

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By Massad Ayoob

The AYOOB FILES

The JFK Assassination: A Shooter's Eye View

Situation: Thirty years ago in Dallas, a burst of rifle fire alters the course of world history.

Lesson: Preconceived beliefs can alter what we learn from investigations. Modern analysis results in new understanding.

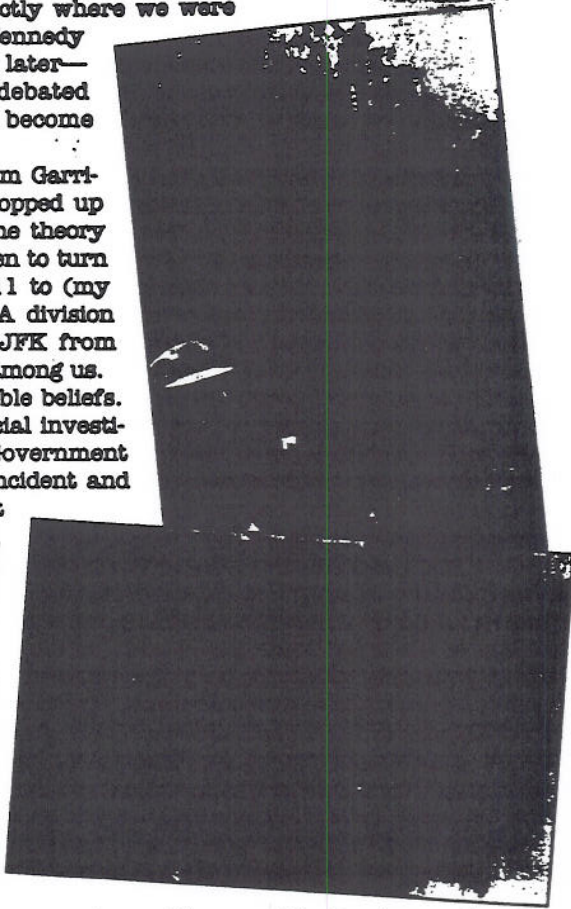
All of us who are old enough remember exactly where we were when we learned that President John F. Kennedy had been shot: We—and those who came later—continue to wonder about the most hotly debated individual death in human history. It has become almost a national obsession.

Conspiracy theories abound, from the late Jim Garrison's one-time supposition that the assassin popped up from under a manhole cover with a .45, to the theory that the driver of the Lincoln can clearly be seen to turn and pop the President in the head with a 1911 to (my favorite) Kennedy was slain by the secret CIA division that handled Project Blue Book, to prevent JFK from releasing conclusive evidence that aliens walk among us.

We all have our own doubts, our own plausible beliefs. So do those closest to the incident and its official investigations. A senior member of the second U.S. Government inquiry, the Select Committee to review the incident and its investigation, concluded that it was in fact a conspiracy with multiple shooters. However, one investigator of impeccable credentials who worked the same investigation, left the inquiry just as firmly convinced that Lee Harvey Oswald was the lone assassin.

Conspiracy theorists weave convincing scenarios in which the Russians, the Cubans, the CIA, or then-Vice President Lyndon Johnson ordered the pulling of the trigger(s). Or maybe it was Jimmy Hoffa or the Mafia. No one has yet seriously suggested that Marilyn Monroe did it, out of jealousy, but don't be surprised if a book comes out suggesting so.

Through it all, voices that said "Oswald did it by himself" seemed to be drowned out. It was as if a nation could not accept a giant being slain by a twisted dwarf, and felt that only a conspiracy of giant proportions could possibly fit the scope of the tragedy that had altered history's course.



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AYOOB FILES

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Preconceived Opinions

This writer has for some time believed in the plausibility of a second rifleman, in addition to Oswald. The explosion of the President's head as seen in frame 313 of the Zapruder film is simply not characteristic of a full-metal-jacket rifle bullet travelling at 2,200 fps or less.

It is far more consistent with an explosive wound of entry with a small-bore, hyper-velocity rifle bullet travelling between 3,000 and 4,000 fps, and probably toward the higher end of that scale. Something on the order of a .220 Swift, or the .22-250, which was a popular wildcat round in 1963.

An explosive wound of entry occurs when a highly liquid area of the body, such as the brain, is struck by a high velocity round. The tissue swells violently during the microseconds of the bullet's passing, and seeks the line of least resistance.

That least resistance is the portal of the entry wound that appeared a microsecond before, and the bullet will not bore an exit hole to relieve the pressure for another microsecond or two—perhaps not at all, if the bullet fragments

itself inside the brain.

Therefore, the force is directed backward and outward, creating an explosion effect and massive wound at point of entry.

If the cataclysmic cranial injury inflicted on Kennedy was indeed an explosive wound of entry, the source of the shot would have had to be forward of the Presidential limousine, to its right, and slightly above... the area of the grassy knoll.

Sound Analysis

In addition, we have the sophisticated modern sound analysis of the dictabelt recording from Dallas Police, made when a motorcycle officer's radio mike was apparently jammed open.

Modern lab studies concluded that four shots, not three, were clearly recorded. Even the staunchest defenders of the "Lee Oswald, three shots, period" school of thought cannot positively and scientifically refute this evidence of a fourth shot.

Open Mind

Minds, like parachutes, work best when open. I have no ego investments in a conspiracy theory. Part of my work is homicide analysis and/or reconstruction; I handle a number of such cases a year and have spent my share of time at homicide investigation and forensic evidence schools.

If someone had asked me at the beginning of 1992 what I thought happened on November 22, 1963, in Dallas, I would have said, "I visited Dealey Plaza while in Dallas for a homicide case, and I've read most of what's been written on it.

"I believe the evidence is overwhelming that Lee Oswald murdered Officer J.D. Tippitt, that he fired at least some shots from a 6.5mm Mannlicher-Carcano from the sixth floor of the book depository building, and that at least one of his shots, the so-called 'magic bullet,' probably did go through President Kennedy and into Governor Connally.

"There is reason to believe that Oswald in 1963 had become a far better shot than he was when he only made Sharpshooter in the Marines.

"However," I would have continued, "I've shot Carcano rifles, and they're junk. I don't think Oswald could have fired all four recorded shots, one of which has a time lapse of only about 1.6 seconds shot to shot, and I believe frame 313 of Zapruder is more consistent with a high velocity rifle fired from the grassy knoll."

In 1992, however, I had two experiences relating to this homicide, which will be almost 30 years old by the time you read these words. One was an experiment I participated in, in Michigan; the other was a class I attended by the senior



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police evidence specialist attached to the House Select Committee that investigated the assassination in the late 1970s.

Six Seconds

Richard Davis is the inventor of concealable soft body armor, the founder and CEO of the Second Chance Body Armor company, and sponsor of one of the most heavily attended matches on the annual combat shooting circuit, the Second Chance Shoot.

He was about 15 years old when JFK was murdered. He has remained interested in the topic since, following each investigation, each theory.

"I never bought into any particular conspiracy theory, and was never sure whether Oswald acted alone or not," Davis says today, "But I felt I had the resources to duplicate the tests done by the Warren Commission and the Select Committee, and I had one more thing they didn't: access to 500 or so top shooters."

At the 1992 Second Chance event, Richard closed down the practice range and opened his calibrated scenario to volunteers. He and his staff supervised the handing out of 6.5mm ammo and rotating the Mannlicher-Carcano carbines.

The cheap scopes that were so popular mail-order in 1963 were no longer available, few if any having stood the test of time, so cheap .22 scopes were mounted by gunsmith Bruce MacArthur on side-mounts like the one on the Oswald rifle.

Shooters fired from an elaborately constructed windowsill designed to exactly duplicate the "sniper's perch" on the sixth floor of the Texas Schoolbook Depository.

Sophisticated electronic timers recorded silently during the span between when the moving target became visible and would have been gone from view—at the same speed and angle that the Presidential limousine would have presented to Oswald—and each "role-player" had six seconds to fire three shots.

I got off the three shots in the requisite time, and achieved the requisite two hits, missing once. I did not, however, come anywhere near the 1.6 second interval between the two fastest shots recorded on the DPD dictabelt.

However, some shooters did hit all three rounds, and two managed to break the 1.6 second time lapse between their two fastest 6.5 rounds.

Southpaw Secret

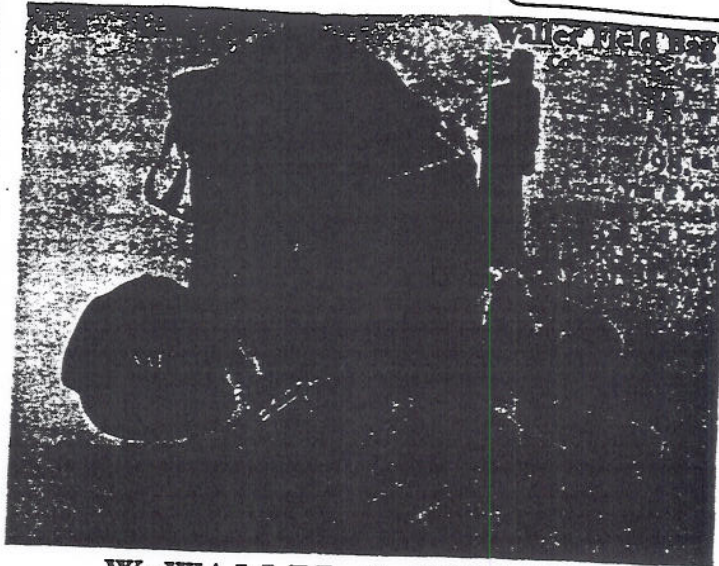
Significantly, the 1.6 was broken, each time, by a southpaw shooter firing from the left shoulder, bracing the fore-end of the rifle on the windowsill, and working the bolt handle with the right hand.

At the time, I found it interesting but insignificant. There had been no indication that Oswald was a southpaw.

A month later, however, I found myself staying with Jan Stevenson, my

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predecessor as *GUNS Magazine's* handgun editor, at his home in Essex, England, where he publishes a handgun magazine.

With time to kill, I vamped Jan's impressive library. With the Rich Davis experiment fresh in my mind, I reviewed some of Stevenson's JFK assassination literature.

And I noticed something I had not picked up before. Marguerite Oswald, the accused assassin's mother who had vociferously defended her son's innocence until her death, had testified that her boy couldn't have done it with the right-handed bolt action rifle that was in evidence.

Why?

Because Lee had told her that in the Marines, he had always fired his rifle from the left shoulder.

If right handed, Lee Harvey Oswald was apparently left-eye dominant, something investigators had apparently never thought to ask about.

Conspiracy theorists had alleged that trace swabs for gunshot evidence had come up negative on Oswald. But would they not have been taken on the assumption that a right handed man had fired from the right shoulder?

A bolt action rifle is not famous for depositing trace evidence on the man shooting it in any case, but one wonders: if the evidence technicians had checked the left hand and the left side of their suspect's face?

In any case, one thing had been reinforced for me: it would absolutely have been possible for Lee Harvey Oswald to have fired three shots at the presidential limousine going almost straight away from him, at perhaps 9 mph, at well under 100 yards with even the egregious Carcano rifle, and hit its occupants at least once or twice.

Cecil Kirk Connection

Each year, Ohio's Hocking College runs its famous International Homicide Investigators' Seminar. In 1992 it was located in Scottsdale, Ariz., the last week in October.

I was there to teach 20% of the 40-hour program (covering the dynamics of the justifiable homicide and the management of the officer-involved shooting) but made a point of taking the rest of the program.

On the first morning, the group—made up of seasoned death investigators from Hawaii to London's New Scotland Yard—experienced a compelling presentation on the JFK assassination.

Cecil Kirk is one of the world's leading experts on investigative photography, and is no slouch on any other aspect of forensic evidence-gathering, either. A member of Washington, DC, Metro Police at the time of the assassination, Kirk's first assignment as a police photographer was to take pictures of the deceased president.

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Many years later, now established as a leader among American police investigators and evidence analysts, he would be the sole serving police officer assigned to the House Select Committee on the Assassination of President Kennedy, from 1978 to 1980.

Piece by piece, he demolished most of the "conspiracy theories."

Was the famous backyard picture of Oswald with the .38, the Carcano, and the Communist newspaper, faked?

No. The theorists had only grainy third-generation prints to work from, and Oswald's camera had been a cheap one. Kirk had been given the negative to work with.

The lines where theorists said Oswald's head turned out to be pasted on another's body, and the too-dark shadows, disappear when you see first-generation prints from the original negative. There is no doubt that the photo is genuine.

Nor is there doubt that they came from the Oswald family camera. A camera's internal mechanism can mark the film as individually as the lands and grooves of a gun's rifling mark the bullet that passes through the bore. This camera did so.

The pictures weren't faked. They were taken of Lee Harvey Oswald by his wife, Marina, with the family camera in the backyard of the premises it has been confirmed they lived at, at the time.

Was Oswald's rifle used to fire into the Presidential limo?

Yes. Kirk showed us the photographic evidence that had tediously, exhaustively proven so.

The WW II rifle had doubtless seen battle and been kicked around many storage racks before Klein's Sporting Goods, a mail order gun firm in Chicago that was a subsidiary of Pepsi-Cola, sold it to "A.J. Hidell."

The Hidell alias had been used multiple times before by Oswald, and graphoanalysis indicates that he wrote the order in the same hand that had signed "Lee Oswald" all his life.

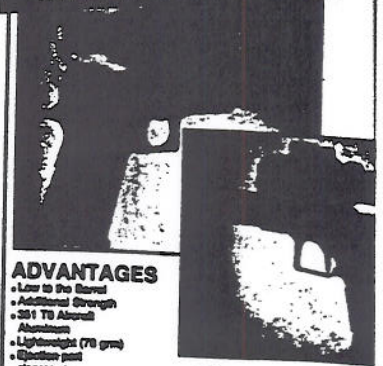
During those decades, the gun had picked up a pattern of dings and dents and scratches unique to it, just as each of many thousands of 1971 Fords will have a subtly different pattern of wear, scratches and other identifiers picked up over its lifetime of use. It is called "random pattern recognition."

From the backyard Oswald photo, to the picture of the gun *in situ* stuffed down behind the boxes in the "sniper's nest," to its trip down the Dallas street held triumphantly aloft by Dallas Homicide detectives in their trademark white Stetsons, to the Warren Commission, to HSCA studies, to its current resting place in the national Archives, *this was the same rifle.*

It conclusively fired the bullet that fell from Governor Connally's clothing onto

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the ambulance gurney at Parkland Memorial Hospital that fateful day. Therefore, at least one of the bullets fired through JFK's body came, through incontrovertible chain of evidence, from the Carcano rifle that is unquestionably linked to Lee Harvey Oswald.

Fingerprints also tie Oswald to the gun found in the book depository. The latents lifted from the gun are flawed in exactly the same point where the rifle was pitted. There can be no serious doubt that, at least at some time, Oswald handled the gun in question.

His ditching of the gun at the scene and taking a bus elsewhere follows his successful strategy in his attempted shooting of General Walker earlier, in which he left the rifle in the bushes and bused home, going back later to retrieve it undetected.

Magic Bullet Theory

Was the so called "magic bullet" a planted piece of evidence that couldn't possibly have followed the path alleged, and could it have remained as "pristine" as it did?

We gun people should have been the first to acknowledge that the bullet could, indeed, pass through Kennedy and Connally without major deformation. It is not unlike the 7mm Mauser FMJ bullets famed elephant hunter Karamojo Bell used to slay so many pachyderms and shoot his way into hunting lore.

Long and narrow, with great sectional density and not enough velocity to deform its heavily-jacketed round nose, it could easily go through a significant amount of flesh, break minor bone and remain fairly intact.

The controversial bullet, by the way, is "fairly intact," and by no means "pristine."

Conspiracy buffs like to show it from the angle where it looks straight, but turned over a quarter revolution, it is bent like a banana—consistent with passing through ribs, wristbones (at greatly reduced velocity by that time, which would also reduce deformation) and only soft tissue in between.

If one accepts the theory that a CAT scan would have shown that the President's spine was in fact damaged by its passing, it would have been a glancing impact, the kind that would bend such a bullet into exactly the shape in which it now sits in the National Archives.

Furthermore, a look at the rear of the bullet where the lead core was exposed will show that during its path, lead was extruded out the rear of the jacketed projectile, and a little bit of it was lost.

This would account for the tiny fragments X-ray showed in the President's body, and in the Governor's. Kirk says neutron activation analysis of fragments still in evidence shows the lead traces left in Kennedy and Connally to be consistent

with the composition of the infamous "magic bullet."

Skill Question

Was Oswald skilled enough to do it?

The only benchmark of Oswald's skill is his Sharpshooter badge from the Marine Corps. This made non-gun people assume he was a deadly Dan'l Boone, while gun people knew that it equalled a grade C or C+.

Remember, however, this was an easy shot.

Kirk noted that the Select Committee's investigation turned up people who identified Oswald as having shot on the public ranges with them. He said they were annoyed by his habit of shooting their targets along with his own, in rapid fire drills—and hitting those rapid-fired targets.

My mind flashed back to the autobiography *KELLEY: The Story of an FBI Director*. When Clarence Kelley took over the Bureau in 1973, one of his first priorities was to review the JFK assassination file.

He was struck by the fact that intelligence indicated that Oswald, while in Russia, had belonged to a rifle club and practiced his shooting intensively there.

Cecil Kirk, unaware of the Michigan experiment when we met in October '92, had already come to the conclusion we had agreed upon separately at Second Chance.

"I believe that Oswald used the iron sights, at least for the second two shots which I believe hit," Kirk said, "Oswald had been trained to use iron sights, not scopes.

The scope on the evidence rifle was junk. He may have missed the first shot and not found his image again, or he may have just used iron sights the whole time. There is reason to believe that his first shot, which we reported to the Select Committee concluded was a miss, was an accidental discharge under stress."

In June '92, I had missed one of the three shots because it was nearly impossible to realign the pathetic excuse for a scope that duplicated Oswald's. Most of the shooters agreed that, given the well-under-100 range involved, iron sights were much easier to use effectively.

There is reason to believe that Oswald might have discovered the same in his practice with the rifle, both live-fire and dry.

When he lived in New Orleans, the Select Committee learned, at least one of his neighbors was annoyed by Oswald's practice of incessantly dry-firing his rifle and working its bolt on the back porch of the apartment house.

This harkens back eerily to John Wesley Hardin's landlady, who told historians how the infamous gunfighter would dry-fire his revolvers in his furnished room at all hours of the night. Hardin, we know, used this practice to become one of the most deadly accurate gunfighters in the

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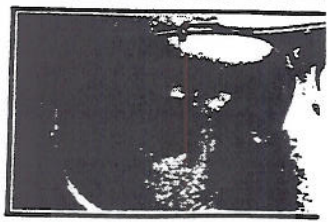
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Missing Brain

If there was no conspiracy, why was the President's brain missing?

Those of us into wound ballistics have long known where President Kennedy's brain was. It was all over the limo, and on the First Lady's clothing and in a fine mist that jetted several feet over the President's head, as seen in the Zapruder film's frame 313.

The contents of JFK's cranial vault—arguments to the contrary—appear to have been almost completely evacuated by the explosive effects of the bullet that tore his head apart.

Varmint hunters are thoroughly familiar with the "red mist" effect when something weighing 25 pounds or less—the human head for example—is blasted asunder by a high velocity bullet. The white color seen in the infamous frame is probably a mix of cerebro-spinal fluid and steam, mixed with disintegrated blue-grey brain tissue and pinkish blood.

The effects of the shot that killed the President are most graphically evident in the seldom-seen frame 337 of the Zapruder film.

Editor's Note: The reason why frame 337 is "seldom seen" is because Time-Life, owners of the Zapruder film, refuse to release for publication certain "graphic" frames depicting the gruesome aspects of President Kennedy's death. American Handgunner attempted to obtain both frame 313 and frame 337 and, when we truthfully stated that the pictures would be published in a gun magazine in connection with a "ballistic analysis" of the assassination, Time-Life refused to release the controversial photos.

Frame 337 shows an exploded portion of the President's skull, still attached by a flap of elastic scalp tissue, flopped down beside the right ear. Behind it is what appears to be the white inside wall of the left side of the skull, with nothing in between.

And beyond that, poignant with an unspeakable horror so deep that LIFE magazine didn't put that image on its cover, is the face of Jacqueline Kennedy, realizing for the first time that her husband's brain has been murderously blasted out of his head.

Unanswered Questions

When Cecil Kirk stopped talking and opened things up for questions, there was little doubt expressed by the audience. That audience at the International Homicide Investigators' Seminar, where Kirk has been a fixture since 1974 because of his internationally recognized skill and for reasons that have nothing to do with the JFK case, was comprised of trained homicide investigators from Hawaii to London's New Scotland Yard. Within the

7,000+ mile radius of their collective jurisdictions dwelt a tabulated 941 years of police experience.

They did not argue the above theses. This says something.

Yet other questions remain unanswered.

The Select Committee tried to correlate the fragments of bullet from Kennedy's head wound to the Olin-manufactured 6.5 Carcano round recovered from Connally's clothing and fired from the Oswald rifle.

Many believe the results of that spectrophotometry were inconclusive. Kirk can accept that they may have come from the same lot of ammunition, others cannot.

The bullet that exploded the President's head, Cecil Kirk believes, disintegrated. I believe that it disintegrated, too.

However, that pattern of disintegration is not consistent with an FMJ bullet that could go through two men's flesh and bones and remain essentially intact.

The multiple forensic postmortem analyses of Kennedy's wounds contradict one another. You have (a) the recollections of the surgeons, who tried to save him in Dallas, (b) the notes of the pathologists at Bethesda who, realizing that their bloodstained notes would be part of history, supposedly destroyed the original notes and recreated them from memory a few hours later, and (c) the after-the-fact reconstruction by later medical examiners based on photos, X-rays (some of which were under-exposed and later computer-enhanced), and drawings.

Some of these put the entry wound too far below the avulsed portions of the skull for it to be believable that a round of the FMJ 6.5 Carcano's ballistics could have blasted apart and emptied the skull's contents as it did.

Some critics say entry wound in the rear of the skull is too small for a 6.5mm Carcano; others say that the skull has sufficient elasticity to close the entry portal slightly.

Hyper-Velocity Bullet

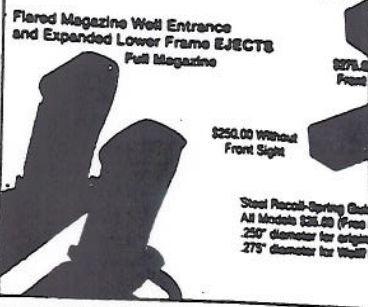
The evidence does not rule out the possibility that a hyper-velocity rifle bullet evacuated the President's cranial vault without any other bullet hitting him in the head.

The 6.5mm Carcano throws a 162 gr. bullet at a bit under 2,300 fps muzzle velocity. The closest commonly used cartridge to it in terms of ballistics is probably the .30/30, which has a .308" diameter. The Carcano round, about a .263" diameter.

Ask any homicide detective if he's ever seen a .30/30 round blow a man's head up at 55 to 60 yards, exploding the calvarium up and away from the body proper.

Ask any hunter of deer-size game if he's ever seen the same thing at that distance.

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It happens only at very close range with that ballistic technology. The wound we see happening in frame 313 in the Zapruder film—and see the results of most clearly in frame 337—is simply not consistent with this rifle cartridge, at that distance, in living tissue.

It is particularly inconsistent with a round-nose full metal jacket bullet of the type Oswald had in his rifle.

Fourth Shot

Even Cecil Kirk cannot say that the fourth "shot" recorded on the dictabelt was an explosive "railway torpedo" charge from the nearby railroad yard, or an accidental discharge from one of the cocked-and-locked Colt automatics carried by some Dallas officers that day that might have been fired prematurely as a defensive reflex, or that it could not have even been an AR-15 rifle accidentally fired by a Secret Service agent.

All these things have been postulated, but none has been conclusively proven. Kirk's own boss on the Select Committee believes another shot was fired that day, and believes that organized crime pulled the trigger by remote command.

However, Kirk believes that Oswald was the sole triggerman, and when Cecil Kirk talks, I listen. With respect.

In conclusion, it appears to me that the evidence overwhelmingly indicates that Lee Harvey Oswald fired his 6.5mm Carcano rifle from the Book Depository window into the presidential Lincoln, shooting both John F. Kennedy and John Connally.

It is entirely possible that he also shot JFK in the back of the head with another bullet, which for unexplainable reasons did damage out of all proportion to its ballistic capability as most of us would perceive that to be.

However, it is by no means impossible based on evidence I've seen thus far that at least one more shot with a much higher velocity was fired from another rifle, from an angle consistent with the grassy knoll.

The books are not yet closed on the single most controversial and most intensively analyzed killing of a man in the history of the human experience.

To understand why that book may never be closed, I leave you with the words of Cecil Kirk:

"People refuse to believe that a loser can buy a \$19 rifle from Pepsi-Cola and blow away Camelot."

Though best known as a police trainer and firearms journalist, Massad Ayoob analyzes a number of homicides each year as an expert for the courts. He has successfully completed numerous homicide investigation courses, and taught programs on the effects of bullets on human bodies in formats that range from police instructor schools to medical school.

NATIONALS

Continued from page 63

It's asinine to expect fans to wait five days for official word of who's winning in this marathon contest. It is also distracting and degrading to the skill of the athletes.

You can't tell me that with today's computer technology the standings couldn't be updated by the hour and posted on an electronic leader board. If golfers and auto-racers can do it, we can do it. They aren't that much smarter than shooters.

Agony Of Defeat

It was during the Standard Exercises that Todd Jarrett suddenly and irretrievably experienced the agony of defeat. His gun broke.

After the second shot of a 12 round stage on the 30 yard short barricade, the spring plug holding the recoil spring and guide rod in place fractured and sheared completely into two pieces.

He set to work replacing the broken part with another from his shooting bag, but he told me later he was really fighting nausea. All he wanted to do was hurl.

The officials allowed him a small amount of time as he worked on his gun behind that short barricade and the competitor on his right, Rick Byfield, helped him get the gun back together.

But for Todd, the quest for a pair of back-to-back national championships was over. He was scored with 10 "Mikes" on the Standards.

Missing Hole

Another drama that occurred during the scoring of the Standards prompts me to offer another comment. We need better targets or we need to change them more often!

When some members of the Super Squad came to the line to shoot, they were shooting patched targets.

I'm sorry, but that's inexcusable. The finest shooters in the world deserve clean targets, especially the way they are shooting with these scoped guns. I realize the targets were changed to fresh paper when the entire squad started, but the targets were not changed after the first or second relays.

All went well until it came time to score the Burner's target. Rob had just shot the Standards of his life with a 165 out of a possible 180.

Jerry's far right-hand target on the bank of three showed evidence of only 11 holes when he and the RO approached. The Range Officer scored one shot as a miss.

Jerry immediately requested a target check and the overlays were employed with the target still in place. It was still ruled a miss.

"Okay, I guess it's not there," Jerry sighed, but he requested a second check by the Senior Range Officer, Chris Edwards.

Edwards arrived, took the target in



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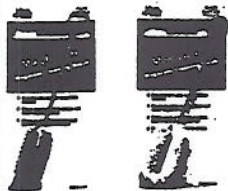
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What happened to the other 233?

Do you expect us to believe that nobody in the city of Chi-town was done with anything larger than .357? Did all the shotguns sneak off to Philly and Gary, Ind.?

After we get by that, someone should inform the illustrious mayor of Chicago that banning the cause of approximately 2 percent of the homicides will not appreciably help next year's stats whereas banning hammers and baseball bats would be a 7 percent loss in the figures.

Scissors, gasoline and pillows, not to mention electric cords! Will he attempt to ban them next? How about "hands, feet and fists"? Nice try, and keep up the good work.

Steven A. Benson
Pahrump, Nev.

Several sharp-eyed readers added up the murder statistics and realized the discrepancy. We accidentally omitted some footnotes from our synopsis of the official report. Of the 927 homicides, 96 were ruled "narcotics related" and were not included in the statistics; 133 were "gang related" and were not included; six involved the careless use of weapons and eight were committed during a sex offense.

Here are more statistics from the Chicago study: August was the worst month with 121 homicides and February was the most peaceful with only 56. Indoor homicides totalled 252 while murders on the streets were 307, with another 30 in alleys. There were 64 in public buildings. Two were killed in a car wash.

Male/black suspects accounted for 702 homicides, male/hispanics caused 131 and female/black caused 94. Male/white suspects totalled 51 and female/white caused three while one each were accredited to male/indian and female/indian. (The totals are higher than the 927 homicides because in some cases there was more than one murderer per victim.)

—Editor

Where's The Brain?

In the March/April *American Handgunner*, Massad Ayoob suggests that a .220 Swift-like bullet fired from the Grassy Knoll struck the right front part of JFK's head. He also tells us that JFK's "missing" brain "...appear(s) to have been almost completely evacuated by the explosive effects of the bullet that tore his head apart."

He also wrote that the 6.5mm Mannlicher-Carcano, with about the same potential as a .30-30, could not cause as much disruption as seen in JFK's head, especially with FMJ bullets.

Mr. Ayoob is badly mistaken:

1) Three-fourths of JFK's brain was still in his head when the autopsy was begun: a brain weighing over three pounds was removed.

Brain disruption was limited to the right side, extending from back to front the entire length of the brain, exactly

where one would expect it, given the location of the unmistakable bullet entrance wound in the back of the skull and the blown out exit wound in the right front.

This damage pattern is totally inconsistent with having been caused by any kind of projectile entering the right front part of the skull. The official autopsy report can be read in Dr. John K. Lattimer's *Kennedy and Lincoln—Medical and Ballistic Comparisons of Their Assassinations* (New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980, pp. 183-190). A drawing of the brain wound, reproduced from the *National Archives*, is also shown on p. 221.

2) Front and side view X-rays of President Kennedy's head (p. 299 of Dr. Lattimer's book) show small bullet fragments, all on the right side of the brain, along the path of the 6.5mm bullet. The deformed jacket (rifling matched to Oswald's rifle) and separated core of this bullet were found in the front-seat area of the presidential automobile.

These are also shown on p. 219, with two other similarly separated FMJ test bullets which had been fired through human skulls duplicating the angle of the JFK shot. This proves, conclusively, that even a heavily jacketed rifle bullet is likely to deform and fragment when it hits the thick and hard part of the human skull.

3) As for Ayoob's claim that the .30-30 is incapable of causing the amount of disruption observed in JFK's head, in DiMaio's book (*Gunshot Wounds*, Elsevier, NY, 1985, p. 151) is a photograph of a head wound, caused by a .30-30, which exhibits considerably greater disruption than JFK's head did.

In my teaching slide collection I have another example of a .30-30 caused head wound in which essentially everything above the cheekbones has been blown away.

Any reader interested in the JFK assassination should find Dr. Lattimer's superb book mandatory reading.

Martin L. Fackler, M.D.
Hawthorne, Fla.

Massad Ayoob replies:

I have long spoken and written respectfully of Dr. Fackler's knowledge of treating gunshot wounds. His letter is proof that the finest computer, when fed garbage in, will return garbage out.

His failure is largely his reliance on the Bethesda autopsy. For nearly 30 years, the JFK autopsy has been used in pathology and homicide classes as a glaring example of horribly botched post-mortem protocols, for reasons that would take a long article to explain.

Even Fackler's other key source, Dr. Lattimer, calls that autopsy, charitably, "incomplete."

Responding to Dr. Fackler point by point:

1) *A thorough study of the matter shows that far more of JFK's brain tissue was blown away by the shot than the*

Bethesda autopsy showed. Dr. Kemp Clark, the eminent neurosurgeon who pronounced JFK dead, was heard to state that the entire side of his head had been shot away.

Dr. Malcolm Perry, the chief attending surgeon at Parkland, also noted a massive loss of brain tissue. Dr. Charles Crenshaw observed what he said appeared to be the entire cerebellum hanging out the back of the head wound.

Dr. "Pepper" Jenkins, the anesthesiologist, removed some two fistfuls of the President's brain tissue from Jacqueline Kennedy's hands. Crenshaw also was adamant that the death injury was a frontal-entry wound from a high-velocity rifle, something he was far more familiar with than Dr. Humes and the Bethesda team and Dr. Perry stated at the time that a frontal entry was not inconsistent with the wound he observed.

2) Dr. Fackler's suggestion is incongruous in that it is completely refuted and contradicted by his own earlier work, as well as some of what appears in Lattimer.

The Lattimer book shows that a 6.5mm Carcano bullet will travel through nearly four feet (47") of solid wood without deformation or deviation. Many experts have long known that breaking one inch of pine board roughly equals breaking a human bone.

Fackler's workup of the 6.5mm Carcano roundnose bullet indicates that it will penetrate 106cm (41+") of flesh simulant, will traverse some 50cm (20") before it even begins to yaw or tumble.

Dr. Fackler's caption to his wound profile of this 6.5 round, as it appeared in The Surgeons Library, made reference to "...the unanimous reports of minimal severity of the wound." The Fackler 6.5 Carcano profile indicated no temporary wound cavity would exist until the bullet had passed 50cm of depth.

3) Dr. Fackler's defense of his fellow military MD's is perhaps noble but it compares apples to oranges. He does not present the distance of the shooting in his "teaching slide," nor the type of bullet, nor the slide itself, no evidence at all.

Regarding the DiMaio photograph, Dr. DiMaio himself has told me it was an unusually destructive .30-30 wound from a softnose or hollowpoint bullet at some 30 yards. Dr. DiMaio, the acknowledged leading expert in forensic examination of gunshot wounds, says he himself thought at first it was a muzzle contact wound.

Interestingly, Dr. Fackler does not cite a much more representative .30-30 softnose head wound in the same book, with the more typical 2" defect.

Does a grossly atypical softnose wound at 30 yards equal a likely roundnose full-metal jacket wound at nearly three times the distance? Not hardly, as Dr. Fackler should know.

It was Fackler who wrote in 1991, "...the wound profile of the 6.5mm

Mannlicher-Carcano, which was typical of the first generation of full-metal jacketed bullets, reveals the very deep penetration and minimal disruption caused by the nondeforming jacketed bullet..." (Emphasis is mine, not Marty's.)

Sorry, Doc. I'll buy the rest of the lone assassin theory, but the head shot in frame 313 of the Zapruder film is totally incongruous with what the 6.5 Carcano ball round is known to do. And besides, even Zapruder said he heard a deafening blast behind him... on the Grassy Knoll.

Iron Sight Theory

I was intrigued by Mr. Ayoob's article on the JFK assassination in your March/April issue. The idea that Oswald used the iron sights is interesting and I have long believed that one of the shots was an accidental discharge that missed the entire car.

Now for the "however." Ayoob has reservations that the FMJ bullet would have disintegrated upon striking the skull, thus causing the massive injury.

In the Warren Report on pages 585 and 586 is the summary of tests performed at Edgewood Arsenal by Dr. Alfred Olivier. In his tests using gelatin filled skulls, Dr. Olivier re-created damage very similar to President Kennedy's wounds.

In addition Dr. Olivier recovered bullet fragments which closely resembled the two largest fragments found in the limousine. It is also stated that prior to these tests Dr. Olivier doubted that such a bullet could cause this injury.

I always enjoy reading Massad Ayoob's work. He is objective in forming his conclusions as he did in this article. Keep it up.

Robert Talley
Houston, Texas

Cut Above The Rest

I'm a big fan of American Handgunner and believe you guys are a cut above the rest.

I am an amateur photographer as well as a gun enthusiast. One of the many things that make your magazine so great is the photography of Ichiro Nagata. The composition and detail of his work is spectacular. He even succeeded in making the grips in Hogue's catalog seem more appealing.

I do not feel that enough people bring attention to his contribution to your magazine. Give the man a raise!

Does Mr. Nagata do commercial work for any company other than Hogue? If so, what company?

Rick J. Riley
Athens, Ga.

Ichiro is very selective in what products he photographs on a commercial basis, but he has taken the pictures for several catalogs and advertisements including Wilson's Gun Shop, PACT Inc., Ed


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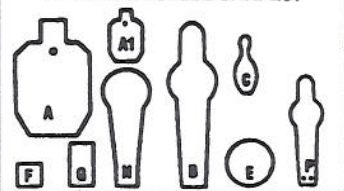


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