

MAGAZINES

Back to Dallas

Few deaths in the history of mankind have been so minutely scrutinized as that of John F. Kennedy. Every detail of that fateful November day has been exhumed, examined and crammed into some theory or other, ranging from the plausible to the inconceivable. This week both *LIFE* and the *Saturday Evening Post* offer more intriguing bits and pieces on the assassination, but regrettably nothing so conclusive as to put an end to all the speculation.

Publishing excerpts from a forthcoming book, *Six Seconds in Dallas*, the *Post* can hardly contain its excitement. Calling Author Josiah Thompson, 32, a philosophy teacher at Haverford College, a "warm and engaging idealist with a mind like a ripsaw," Editor Bill Emerson Jr. enthusiastically writes that the book "demolishes" the Warren Commission Report. An equally emotional editorial declares that the details amassed by Thompson "cry out for the truth to be told and for the murderers to be punished."

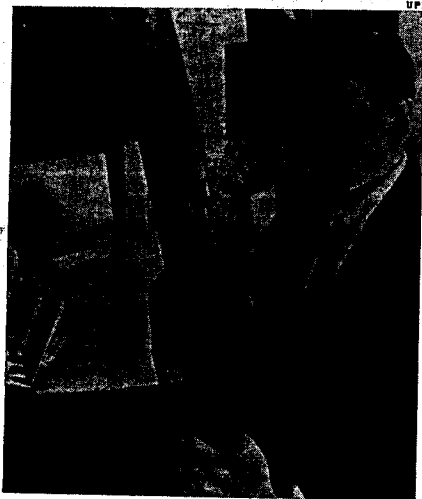
The details are not all that new; the conclusions are. Thompson states that "there were four shots from three guns in six seconds." What led him to this belief was a close examination of the film of the assassination. As he saw it, a split second after President Kennedy's head lurched forward under the impact of a bullet, it lurched back again. Thompson speculates that another bullet must have struck him from the front. Much of the debris from the wound, moreover, landed to the rear of the car, again an indication to Thompson of an oncoming bullet. After talk-

ing to various eyewitnesses, Thompson decided that one assassin had been posted behind the fence on the grassy knoll, a second on top of the Dallas County Records Building. The other two shots came from the sixth floor of the Texas Depository—but not from Oswald. Two other assassins had done the shooting; Oswald was the fall guy. The Warren Commission concluded that one assassin had fired three shots. This forced the commission to adopt the controversial "single bullet" theory: the assumption that the same bullet passed through Kennedy's neck, passed through Connally's chest and then struck his wrist and thigh.

Demand for Exposure. In *LIFE*, Governor John Connally gives his side of the story of the events leading up to Dallas. Contradicting William Manchester's contention that the President had reluctantly gone to Texas to patch up a local factional quarrel within the Democratic Party, Connally insists that Kennedy went to mend his own political fortunes. He wanted to show conservative Texas Democrats that he did not have horns. Connally, just emerging from a bruising election campaign, was in no mood for a presidential visit.

When the President insisted on coming anyway, Connally argued for a relatively low-keyed tour aimed mainly at Texas businessmen. Kennedy's advance men demanded more exposure to the crowd. After a "heated argument," the Kennedy people prevailed over Connally, and a Dallas motorcade was scheduled. The route was released to the press three days ahead of time, though Connally had objected that this would give hecklers a chance to organize. When Kennedy arrived, Connally was pleasantly surprised by the size of the crowds and their friendliness. In his last conversation with the President during the Dallas motorcade, he assured Kennedy that he would probably carry Texas in 1964.

TIME, NOVEMBER 24, 1967



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55