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July, 1997

THERE CAN BE LITTLE DOUBT that of all the conclusions reached by the Warren Commission, none has received greater attention than the so-called *Single Bullet Theory*. It is stated in the final Warren Report of 1964 that *one* of the alleged bullets fired struck *two* men (Kennedy and Connally). However, an even greater dilemma for the Commission members and its staff (which did virtually all the work in acquiring evidence) is the rather embarrassing problem of the *missed shot* which occurred during the attack on the presidential limousine.

The Commission tried as hard as it could to avoid any discussion whatsoever concerning this missed shot - although it did have to conclude reluctantly that it did happen. As this paper will demonstrate, the Commission's arguments (small in content though they were) put that deliberative body on a collision course with truth; in effect, the Warren Commission's 1960s true-life version of *Mission: Impossible*. Indeed, if a television script were written then (or even now) about this bizarre episode in American political life, the reality of it would overshadow any fictional account that could be rendered.

The disbanding of the Warren Commission and its staff in September 1964, after completing its "mission", makes it look as if it were a blessing or a heavenly respite - and the Commission members and staff beat a hasty retreat from that "reality" from which they would never recover.

To review briefly what the Warren Commission concluded, let us turn to page 117 of the Warren Report. After stating that *all* the shots were fired from the sixth floor window of the

# The Warren Commission's "Mission: Impossible"

(How it explained the missing shot in President Kennedy's assassination)

by

Hal Verb

Texas School Book Depository, the report adds: *"Two bullets probably caused all the wounds suffered by President Kennedy and Governor Connally. Since the preponderance of the evidence indicated that three shots were fired, the Commission concluded*

*that one shot probably missed the Presidential limousine and its occupants, and that the three shots were fired in a time*

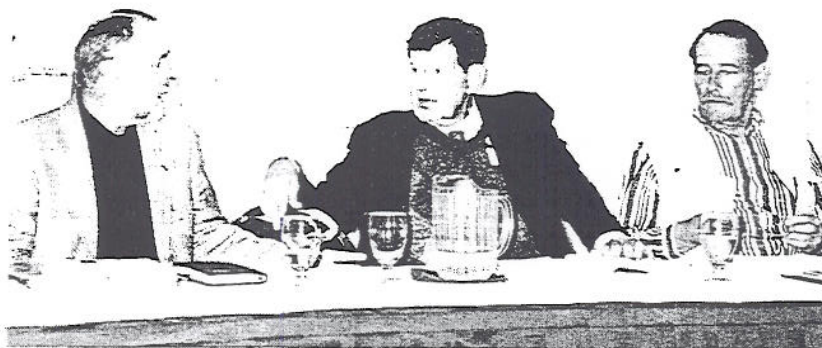
*period ranging from approximately 4.8 to in excess of 7 seconds."*

The above conclusions are included here to place the missed shot scenario in context to be analyzed further. The author of this paper does *not* support a conclusion which states that only three shots were fired; that *all* the shots came from the sixth floor nor the so-called "single bullet theory." Our focus, instead, is on the missed shot and the *timing* of that missed shot.

Students of the Kennedy assassination may have forgotten that in the early days of the deliberations by the Warren Commission, very serious consideration was being given to a "finding" which would indicate that *only two* shots were fired - and *not* three. That this was quickly discarded was due to what the Commission felt was a "preponderance of the evidence" which suggested otherwise. Undoubtedly, this "preponderance" must have included the three shells "found" on the sixth floor and the "consensus" of the witnesses who claimed they heard only three shots.

This is not to say that the missed shot did not enter into the deliberations for it had to if the Commission provided for a finding that a shot "probably" missed. Note here that the Commission also used the same language in describing the "magic bullet" (one bullet through two men)

Staff beat a hasty retreat from that "reality"



Hal Verb makes a point to DPUK Chairman Richard Livingstone at our group meeting in Dallas last year. DPUK Secretary Ian Griggs looks on.

and stated that two bullets "probably" caused "all the wounds suffered" by both Kennedy and Connally. This is tricky language for as we all know, one of those two bullets had to be the "magic" or "single" bullet.

Little noticed, perhaps, by many assassination researchers is the fact that when consideration was drawn to the missed shot, the interpretation of what they meant by "missed" is entirely misleading. Assistant Counsel David Belin's memo to General Counsel J Lee Rankin (January 30, 1964) makes it perfectly clear what they mean by "missed". The memo states (in part): "*In determining the accuracy of Oswald, we have three major*

*possibilities: Oswald was shooting at Connally and missed two of the three shots, the two misses striking Kennedy; Oswald was shooting at both Kennedy and Connally and all three shots struck their intended targets; Oswald was shooting only at Kennedy and the second missed its intended target and hit Connally instead."*

Even though there would be witnesses who would testify after this

memorandum date, nevertheless there was enough evidence prior to the memo to indicate that a missed shot had occurred. Consider the *first day evidence* of a Dallas Police Department radio communication dated November 22, 1963 - timed at 12.37pm - which states: "*I have one guy that was possibly hit by a ricochet, from a bullet off concrete ...*"

This "one guy" turned out to be James Tague, a witness to the assassination who was definitely struck by

**I produced evidence  
that the first shot fired  
was *not* a missed shot**

something during the shooting sequence. The Commission members obviously knew about this "one guy" because contained within the 26 volumes of the Commission's own evidence, at least two Staff Members (Liebeler and Specter) questioned witnesses about a missed shot - even when the witnesses they had questioned had *not seen* a missed shot!

Returning to the Belin memo of

January 30, 1964, however, the "missed shot" interpretation is quite obviously not directed to Tague at all but a meaning that requires any of the three proposed Oswald shooting scenarios to mean an *unintended victim* for a "missed shot." There can be no doubt of that even if Belin were *not* relying on a December 1963 FBI report claiming that only three shots were fired and *all three* struck a human target! (The FBI report made no mention at all of a missed shot.)

Even as late as April 1964, almost five months after the assassination, two highly significant conferences were held in Washington, DC to discuss the scenario of the shooting and the timing. Only the first and second of the three alleged shots were discussed since the third shot (the fatal head shot equivalent to frame 313 in the Zapruder Film) was not part of the controversy. The two conferences *ignored* the Tague incident if one follows the memorandum "for the record" by Assistant Counsel Melvin Eisenberg.

Present at these conferences were some of the most influential individuals who provided the final (Warren) report - such people as Doctors Humes, Boswell and Finck, FBI experts, Norman Redlich, Arlen Specter, David Belin and Governor and Mrs Connally. What is important to note here is that Governor Connally (at the April 21, 1964 conference) is reported by Eisenberg as having stated that "*he felt the President may have been hit by frame 190 of the Zapruder film.*" Significantly, if what Connally had to say was correct, then it ruled out a first shot missing if an earlier shot could be shown to be non-existent! (At the 1994 COPA Conference in Washington, DC, I produced evidence that the first shot fired was *not* a missed shot and indeed it had struck Kennedy from the front.)

Moreover, Connally's views about Kennedy being "hit by frame 190" were not idle speculation on his part because at that conference he was not only able to view the entire Zapruder film but also study individual slides which had been prepared for the conference.

Prior to the conclusion reached by the Warren Commission (as noted above in the third paragraph of this paper), an outline of various categories is summarized (see pages 110 - 117 of the Warren Report). These include the following: (1) the number of shots; (2) the shot that missed; (3) the three shots fired and (4) the time span of the shots. Of these categories, the shortest is that of the shot that missed. This comprises just a single paragraph consisting of two short sentences totalling seven lines. That makes this paragraph (and category) one of the shortest in the entire Warren Report - understandably so, for the "evidence" offered by the Commission totally misrepresented this aspect of the case.

As the Warren Report itself states (see page 111): "From the initial findings that (a) one shot passed through the President's neck and then probably passed through the Governor's body, (b) a shot hit any part of the automobile, and (d) three shots were fired, it follows that one shot probably missed the car and its occupants. The evidence is inconclusive as to whether it was the first, second or third shot which missed." (my emphasis).

This latter sentence within the context of this paper and the evidence provided herein represents a brazen obfuscation by the Commission to avoid the implications of its own theory and/or theories!

Why then, one must ask, did the Commission come up with a version of a missed shot even though it is

stated above as being no more than "probable"?

The answer lies mainly in the person of James T Tague, the witness to the assassination who stood near the triple underpass and was slightly wounded on the cheek by an object. As the Warren Report noted (see page 116): "In Tague's opinion, it was the second shot (my emphasis) which caused the mark (on the curb), since he thinks he heard the third shot after he was hit in the face."

The Warren Report attempts to refute or belittle the significance of this curb and wounding episode (page 116) by pointing out that the FBI carried out a "scientific examination" of the south curb on Main Street (where the bullet struck) and concluded that the mark "precluded the possibility" of a bullet fired during the assassination. (For more on debunking the FBI "proof" you are directed to Harold Weisberg's *Whitewash* series and also his more recent *Case Open*.) Two necessary conclusions must be noted here for the purposes of this paper: (a) James Tague was definitely struck by an object during the sequence of shots; and (b) this event occurred subsequent to a first shot and not as a result of the first shot.

Whilst too long to provide evidence for both (a) and (b) above, I will list 17 witnesses who can provide support for this evidence. The following names can be pinpointed. There may well be others that I have perhaps overlooked or who have not yet stepped forward to indicate what they observed.

(1) Mrs Donald S Baker; (2) Hugh W Betzner, Jr.; (3) Harry Cabluck; (4) James A Chaney; (5) Roger D Craig; (6) Bill Decker; (7) Stavix Ellis; (8) J W Foster; (9) Clyde Haygood; (10) George Hickey; (11) Austin Miller; (12) Royce G Skelton; (13) James T Tague; (14) William Taylor; (15) Eddy

R ("Buddy") Walters; (16) Linda K Willis and (17) Phil Willis.

The above 17 individuals by themselves obviously cannot solve the ultimate question of *how and by whom* the assassination was carried out but the evidence provided within this paper is sufficient to show that of all the scenarios proposed by the Warren Commission, *none* fits the known facts!

A third of a century later, we still do not know *how* the assassination occurred!

If the Single Bullet Theory were not truly a *theory* but became an absolute necessity, as author and researcher Harold Weisberg has proposed, then this necessity required the Warren Commission to meet the consequences of that necessity - avoidance of the missing shot in the Kennedy assassination.

A "Mission: Impossible" indeed!

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