

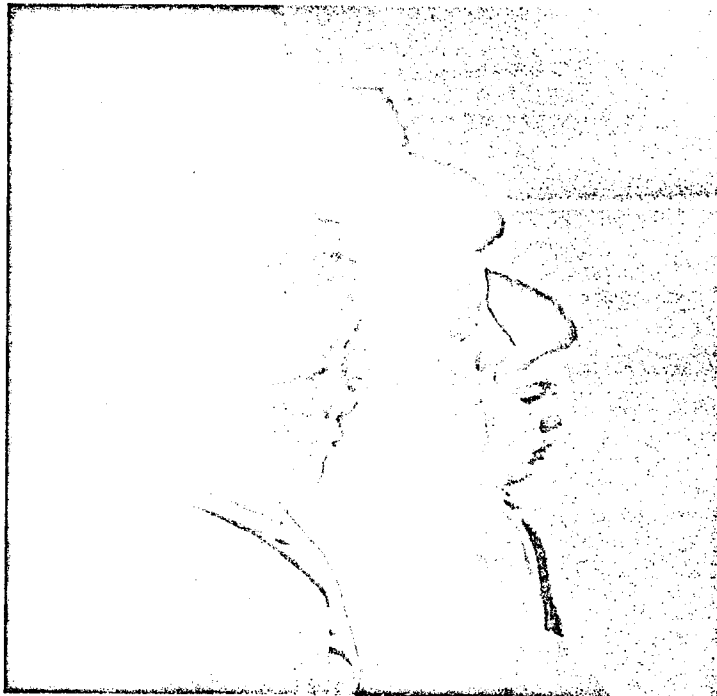
# Physician's Management

OCTOBER 1975

ELIZ K. JEROME, M.D.  
510 METROPOLITAN MED  
MINNEAPOLIS, MN. 55404

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*Gift to  
Gary Schinner*



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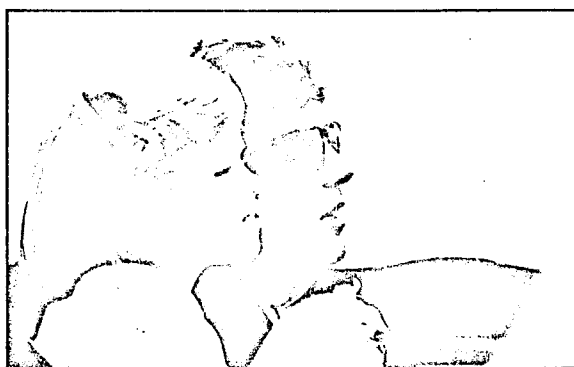
# Physician's Management

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# A civilian M.D. in on the Kennedy autopsy says more than one gun killed J.F.K. Part 1: The evidence

Lee Harvey Oswald, vows a  
prominent pathologist, was not alone.

By Ken Rankin

**Q: You were the first non-Government pathologist to examine the medical evidence concerning President Kennedy's assassination. On the basis of your study of that evidence, what really happened in Dallas 12 years ago?**

Wecht: Let me tell you what did *not* happen. Lee Harvey

Oswald did not kill President Kennedy and wound Governor Connally all by himself. There were at least two gunmen involved. The Warren Commission's prime conclusion, that there was no conspiracy, is pure myth.

**Q: Is this merely an alternate theory to the Warren Commission's findings, or do you feel the evidence supporting this view is conclusive?**

Wecht: This is not a subjective professional opinion on my part. It's an inescapable conclusion when you study the hard scientific and physical evidence completely and objectively. The Government's conclusion that a single as-

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the evidence...

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sassin was responsible for these shootings is a physical impossibility.

**Q: Before I ask you to support these charges: Is it still possible to solve this case?**

Wecht: Yes, it is. On the basis of the evidence that is already available, we know what did *not* happen. There's more medical evidence still being withheld by the Government that should tell us what really *did* happen. If these items were made available to independent forensic scientists, with no ties to either the Federal Government or other forensic scientists who review this evidence for the Ramsey Clark panel or the Rockefeller Commission, then I think the answers would still be forthcoming.

**Q: What medical evidence is being withheld by the Government?**

Wecht: The President's brain, for one thing. We know it was removed from the body and preserved—but today it's missing.

Microscopic autopsy tissue slides—they're missing too.

So are special supplemental color photographs of the interior of the President's chest, which are crucial to the determination of the path of the bullet that supposedly entered the President's upper back.

All those items were supposed to have been turned over to the National Archives more than 10 years ago, yet today they're mysteriously unaccounted for. Of course, there are many other pieces of



**Cyril H. Wecht, M.D., J.D.**

is coroner of Allegheny County (Pittsburgh), clinical associate professor of pathology at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, research professor of law, and director of the Institute of Forensic Sciences at Duquesne University School of Law.

Also, he is a diplomate of the American Board of Pathology in anatomic and clinical pathology and forensic pathology.

He is a past-president of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences (1971-72) and the American College of Legal Medicine (1969-72).

Dr. Wecht was the first non-Government pathologist granted permission by the Kennedy family to examine the autopsy photographs, X-rays, and other medical evidence on file at the National Archives.

evidence still being withheld—Government documents concerning Jack Ruby and Oswald in particular—that would shed much more light on the case. But I think the medical evidence alone would lead us to the bottom of this thing.

**Q: Why are you so sure there was more than one assassin?**

Wecht: Let's start with the alleged murder weapon itself—a sluggish, bolt-action, war-surplus rifle that everyone agrees could not have been reloaded, reaimed, and fired a second time in less than two and a half seconds. Then we have the Zapruder film—a motion picture of the assassination—which shows conclusively that President Kennedy and Governor Connally were both wounded in *less than two seconds*.

Those two facts forced the Warren Commission to conclude that both men were hit

by the same bullet. This is the only way that one person, Lee Harvey Oswald or anyone else, could have done all the shooting.

**Q: Isn't it possible that this is just what did happen?**

Wecht: No, it is not. The bullet that supposedly hit both Kennedy and Connally weighed 159 grams when it was recovered. Before it was fired, the bullet weighed between 161 and 161.5 grams. Therefore, the bullet in question lost only 1.5 per cent of its original weight after being fired. Yet this bullet supposedly entered the right side of the President's back, coursed through the uppermost portions of the thorax and mediastinum, and exited from the midline of the anterior neck region at about the level of the knot in the tie. Then this same bullet allegedly entered the right side of Governor Connally's back, broke his fifth rib, exited from  
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the anterior aspect of his right chest, and entered his dorsal right wrist, where it shattered the distal radius. Finally, it exited the wrist and entered Connelly's right thigh.

We're expected to believe that after doing all this damage, the bullet emerged with a total weight loss of only 2 grams.

### **Q: But isn't it possible?**

Wecht: Not when you consider the fact that X-rays of the President's chest and the Governor's wounds showed visible bullet fragments. It's simply not possible for a bullet to leave grossly visible particles in four different anatomic locations in two human beings and emerge with a loss of substance amounting to only 2 grams out of 161.

On top of this, the condition of the bullet after allegedly causing all these wounds was virtually pristine. The upper two-thirds of the bullet show no grossly visible deformities, or any other kind of mutilation. This is not characteristic of a bullet that has struck two bones, particularly a wrist bone.

If all that isn't enough, there's also the trajectory of the bullet.

### **Q: What about the bullet's trajectory?**

Wecht: This single bullet was supposedly fired from the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository Building, which means it traveled on a definite angle of about 10 degrees from the right, as well as above and behind the Pres-

ident. According to the Warren Commission's account, this bullet struck the right side of Kennedy's back and exited in the midline of the anterior neck, grazing the President's tie knot on the left side.

Traveling on this definite right to left trajectory, the Commission states, the bullet struck no bones in the President's body and was not deflected by any other object. We know from the Zapruder film that Governor Connally was sitting directly in front of the President, yet he was struck in the back near the right axilla. This means that the bullet would have had to make an acute turn in mid air back toward the right in order to hit the far right side of Connally's back. Without this impossible turn, it would have passed the Governor on the left side.

If you need more evidence, look at frame 230 of the Zapruder film. It shows Connally's right wrist and hand clear as a bell, with each finger vividly identifiable, holding a large white Stetson hat. At that point, according to the Warren Commission's reconstruction of the events, for at least a full second the end of Connally's radius had been shattered and the radial nerve partially severed. Yet there he sits, holding a large white Stetson, with absolutely no indication of pain on his face.

When you look at all these factors, the single-bullet theory—and therefore the single-assassin theory—becomes a medical absurdity and a physical impossibility.

### **Q: Government doctors per-**

**formed an autopsy on the President shortly after the assassination. Why weren't the questions you've raised about the various shell fragments and the path of the bullet resolved during that autopsy?**

Wecht: Certainly they should have been resolved, and they would have been had the autopsy been performed by competent, experienced forensic pathologists. Instead, it was performed by two hospital pathologists with essentially no experience in forensic pathology and a third man—a junior-rank Army doctor with limited exposure to forensic pathology—who was called in more or less as an afterthought. As a result, the autopsy was not only inadequate, it was poorly performed.

For even a perfunctory murder case, I wouldn't have tolerated the procedures used by the pathologists in this office. Neither would any other good coroner or medical examiner in this country. Yet here with the President of the United States, when a particularly thorough autopsy was in order, we have a botched-up job.

### **Q: How was Kennedy's autopsy botched up?**

Wecht: For one thing, they missed one of the bullet wounds entirely! The doctors in Dallas described the bullet hole in the President's neck as small, circular, and symmetrical, and several of them who had experience with gunshot wounds concluded that it was an entrance wound, not a wound of exit. Obviously, if



they were correct, it means that there were gunmen both in front and in back of the motorcade. In trying to save the President, the doctors in Dallas used that throat wound as a site of a tracheostomy. The pathologists who did the autopsy did not even realize at the time that a tracheostomy had been superimposed over an existing bullet hole.

That's one reason why the missing autopsy materials are so important—without them it's not possible to unequivocally conclude that all the shots came from the rear. This is just one of the irregularities in this autopsy. Their descriptions weren't even adequate, and in several instances they have been shown to be inaccurate to a significant degree. The measurements of the bullet wounds were not made properly in terms of relating them to the top, bottom, and midline of the body. The tracks of the bullets were not even adequately traced out. The brain, for example, was not examined and serially sectioned to study the bullet tracks. Particularly in a case like this, coronal sections—parallel cuts spaced every one-half inch—are the proper way to examine a brain. In this manner you can trace bullet paths and locate foreign objects. Why wasn't this done?

**Q: Other forensic pathologists have studied the Kennedy autopsy procedures. What were their conclusions?**

**Wecht:** Even the forensic  
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## the evidence...

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pathologists who have chosen to defend the Warren Commission's report are privately scornful of the manner in which the autopsy was performed, and some of these Warren Commission defenders have expressed this view publicly.

**Q: Were the autopsy pathologists merely incompetent, or were they instructed not to undertake these procedures?**

Wecht: Both. They *were* incompetent in terms of forensic pathology at the time they performed the autopsy, and there is evidence that they were specifically instructed *not* to perform a complete and adequate examination. They were told, for instance, not to comment on the President's adrenal glands. Although the adrenal glands would not have any direct bearing on the assassination, it's an indication of the degree of control exercised over the autopsy team by the military authorities.

I believe they were instructed not to do a complete examination of the brain. There's evidence to this effect in the testimony of Lt. Col. Pierre A. Finck at the Clay Shaw trial in New Orleans some years back.

Certainly the Government interfered with the autopsy, but again this gets back to the competence of the original autopsy team. A competent, experienced forensic pathologist would not have tolerated orders from somebody who was not learned in his field. He would have simply said, "No, I cannot do this."

**Q: Several groups, most recently the Rockefeller Commission on C.I.A. activities, have looked into charges that the Warren Commission's conclusions were false and that the truth of what happened in Dallas is being covered up. Haven't these investigations shed any light on the case?**

Wecht: Of course not. These were not efforts to get at truth. They were themselves part of the cover-up. The Rockefeller Commission set up a panel of Government sychophants to defend the Warren report.

This isn't just my opinion. At the time the Rockefeller Commission appointed its team of medical specialists to review the J.F.K. autopsy materials, a number of prominent physicians expressed the same view. Robert Joling, M.D., of Phoenix, Ariz., the president of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, Herbert L. MacDonell, professor of criminalistics at Elmira College, and I presented the commission with a petition signed by four past-presidents of the academy calling for full disclosure of all medical and scientific evidence in the assassination.

We pointed out that all the members of the medical panel appointed by the Rockefeller Commission have strong ties to the Federal Government and close professional relationships with persons who have participated in earlier studies defending the Warren Commission. We asked for an *independent* panel of forensic scientists to review the evidence. Instead, they simply ignored us.

**Q: They didn't ignore you completely. You yourself presented testimony to the Rockefeller Commission—**

Wecht: I sure did. I gave them a verbal deposition for almost five and a half hours straight without a coffee break or a lavatory break. It covered many of the same points I've discussed with you. They won't release that statement now, and I can't even get a copy of it myself.

**Q: Why not?**

Wecht: Because now they're in a bind. They deliberately and deceitfully misrepresented my views to support their own preconceived theories. I spent five and a half hours explaining why all the medical and scientific evidence proves there were at least two assassins. The official Rockefeller Commission report ignored that completely and took one sentence out of context to support their view that there were no shots fired from the front of the President. The fact that the Government is hiding evidence that could prove or disprove the contention that Kennedy was shot from the front as well as the rear does not prove that he wasn't shot from the front. And it certainly doesn't prove that there was only one assassin.

**Q: Who selected this panel of medical experts for the Rockefeller Commission?**

Wecht: The executive director of the Commission, David W. Belin, who just happens to be a former staff counsel for the  
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the evidence...

### Rockefeller Commission cover-up?

Earlier this year, the White House appointed a special commission, chaired by Vice President Nelson Rockefeller, to investigate charges that the Central Intelligence Agency was involved in, among other things, the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

That commission, under the staff direction of former Warren Commission attorney David W. Belin, questioned Dr. Wecht for more than five hours. According to Dr. Wecht, the thrust of his marathon deposition was that the medical evidence proves there was a conspiracy to kill President Kennedy in Dallas 12 years ago and that at least two gunmen—maybe more—participated in the assassination.

In its final report, however, the Rockefeller Commission ignored this testimony completely, noting only:

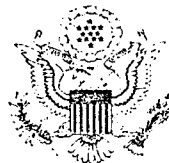
"Dr. Wecht testified that the available evidence all points to the President being struck by only two bullets coming from his rear, and that no support can be found for theories which postulate gunmen to the front or the right front of the Presidential car.

"In a 1974 article written by Dr. Wecht and an associate, Dr. Wecht stated that 'if any other bullet struck the President's head, whether before, after or simultaneously with the known shot, there is no evidence for it in the available autopsy materials.' He testified that on the autopsy photographs of the back of the President's head, there was something above the hairline which he could not identify at all, and he thought it was possible that this was an exit wound. He stated that other autopsy photographs and the autopsy X-rays provided no support to that possibility, but he thought it was possible that the physicians who performed the autopsy could have missed finding such a wound.

"Dr. Wecht said there was some question about

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Report to the President  
by the  
COMMISSION ON  
CIA ACTIVITIES WITHIN  
THE UNITED STATES



the backward and leftward movement of the President's head and upper body after Frame 313 [of the Zapruder film], but he also said that a neuromuscular reaction could occur within about one-tenth of a second."

According to Dr. Wecht, the Commission deliberately misrepresented his testimony by taking one minor point out of context and ignoring the basic thrust of his statements. Although Dr. Wecht stresses that no national security issues were raised during his testimony, the Rockefeller Commission has refused requests by Physician's Management and Dr. Wecht for a transcript of his statement, citing "national security" as its reason.

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old Warren Commission and one of the original architects of the single-bullet theory. Of all the people who could have been chosen to head the Rockefeller Commission's staff—law professors from Harvard, Yale, or Columbia, outstanding trial attorneys,

past-presidents of the American Bar Association—we wind up with a corporate attorney from Des Moines, Iowa, who turns out to be the principal defender and apologist of the Warren Commission over the past 12 years.

**Q: Who's responsible for Be-**

**lin's appointment to the Rockefeller Commission?**

Wecht: Gerald Ford, who served on the original Warren Commission himself. ■

*Ken Rankin is the Physician's Management Washington editor. Next month, "Part 2: The Cover-Up." Watch for it.*