

IL: The irresponsibles/self-promoters/messers up 12/28/75

While resting I read the two-part Ken Rankin interview with Cyril in the October and November issues of Physician's Management. We have also been talking lately about a possible effort to do something about these characters. Whether or not we do. If for no other reason to immobilize Cyril in anything like this, in the event something comes of it in time, I quote several paragraphs with the suggestion that a polite lawyer's ~~xxx~~ letter to another lawyer (cc Bob) Both quotes are from the 11/75 issue:

"The transcript of the Warren Commission's executive session meeting of January 27, 1964, which was classified top secret for more than a decade and released only last year..." (p. 40)

"The FBI performed at least one such N.A.A. test for the Warren Commission, but the results of that test - and even the fact that the test had been conducted were kept secret. The test results were released only this year, but the data made public by the F.B.I. have not given us any meaningful inconsistencies that would permit us to say that the single-bullet theory had been disproved solely as a result of those tests." (p.43)

On these a polite letter reminding him that there was nothing spontaneous in these "releases," as he knows; that you were pro bono counsel in both cases that resulted in the disclosures; that you had neither help nor financing when you are just starting practice; and that regardless of how he feels about me - although I did the work and he didn't - common professional courtesy might be considered as calling for an entirely different representation.

You could add that on questions of fact I disagree with him

Then on p. 44 he says, "For example the government claims that they've released all the N.A.A. test data that exists. However, correspondence between Hoover and ~~Rankin~~ J. Lee Rankin, the chief counsel of the Warren Commission in 1963 and 1964, strongly suggests that there were additional N.A.A. tests conducted. If this is true, and I believe it is, then we must ask ourselves why it was necessary to repeat these tests? Was it because the first tests disproved the single-bullet theory incontrovertibly?"

Here you might remind him of the dangers inherent in second-hand and more remote sources and in not doing one's own work. You could say that I charged perjury in the suit he found it expedient not to mention, although as one lawyer to another you believe mentioning it and the charges would have helped his argument. You could quote me as saying it would make his comments closer to reality and less likely to haunt him in some future proceeding.

(I'm tired and unsure but I think part of the last quote is from the executive sessions rather than correspondence. My recollection, perhaps flawed, is that the first reference is a Hoover response to an Eisenberg personal, verbal inquiry.)

If I were going to write him, I'd thank him for not keeping his promise to help in my suits because having to contend with the FBI is more than enough. Having to co-exist and prevail with this kind of "expert" would, I fear, have me working for the FBI instead of putting all and sundry in the position of taking credit for what they did nothing at all about, while prevailing against DJ and the FBI even with adverse decisions.

He is really crazy. He can be ruined in any malpractice case in which he is an expert by a long succession of stupidities, errors of simple fact and overt dishonesties of which this article is only the most recent I've seen.

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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.

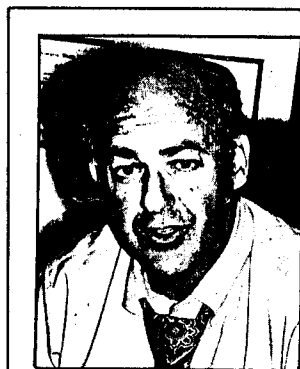
Q: What medical evidence is being withheld by the Government?

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 evidence...

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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

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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

(continued on page 23)

He talked about what they did with Belin

Nothing to do with CIA

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

June 1975

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.

Q: You contend that it would have been medically impossible for a single assassin to have killed President Kennedy, and you've cited numerous discrepancies in the Warren Commission's account of that murder. How did the Warren Commission itself explain those discrepancies?

Wecht: The Warren Commission never bothered to explain the discrepancies in their scientifically absurd theories. You'll find no discussion at all in the Commission's report concerning the bullet's trajectory. As a matter of fact, they deliberately ignored some of the key evidence in the case.

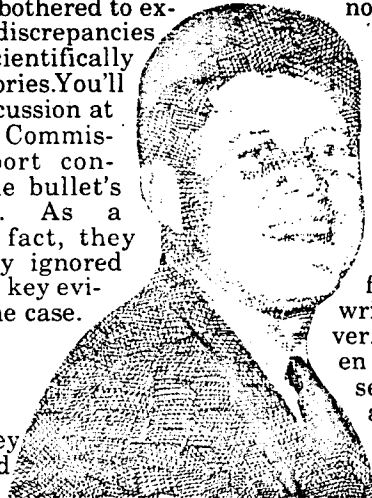
Q: For example.

Wecht: They conducted tests to de-

termine whether a single bullet could have done all the damage Oswald's bullet supposedly did and yet emerge virtually intact. The only way they could support their single-assassin theory was to contend that one bullet passed through President Kennedy's body, struck Governor Connally in three separate locations, broke two of his bones, and ultimately emerged with no visible deformities.

To test this theory, they fired a number of shots from Oswald's rifle. One bullet was fired into a goat carcass, striking a rib in the animal. Another shot was fired through the wrist of a human cadaver. Pictures were taken of the bullets by research investigators and placed side-by-side with the bullet which al-

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A civilian M.D. in on the Kennedy autopsy says more than one gun killed J.F.K.: Part 2: The cover-up

By Ken Rankin

This may be the best-reasoned dissent from the Warren Commission report that you've yet seen. It comes not from still another assassination crank but from a well-trained colleague of high reputation and professional stature. His thesis, simply put: The cover-up was—is—well intentioned, unwitting.

the cover-up...

The single-bullet fallacy

A filmed account of President Kennedy's assassination shows that he and Governor John Connally were struck by bullets within two seconds of each other. Yet Oswald's war surplus rifle was incapable of firing two shots in less than 2.3 seconds. Thus, if Oswald was the only gunman in Dallas, Connally and Kennedy were hit by the same bullet.

That was the central conclusion of the Warren Commission. But after reviewing the evidence on file at the National Archives, prominent forensic pathologist Cyril Wecht, M.D., J.D., concluded that this single-bullet theory is a physical and medical improbability.

In last month's issue of *Physician's Management*, Dr. Wecht explained why one bullet could not have passed through President Kennedy's back and neck and then caused three separate wounds in Connally, breaking two of the Governor's bones. Wecht's points:

- ☐ The bullet that allegedly did all this damage, leaving visible fragments in four anatomic locations of two human beings, lost only 1.5 per cent of its original weight after being fired.

- ☐ The bullet emerged virtually pristine, with no visi-

ble deformities, after shattering Connally's rib and wrist bone.

- ☐ This same bullet, which the Warren Commission says traveled on a definite right-to-left angle, would have had to make an impossible acute turn in midair after hitting Kennedy in order to produce Connally's wounds.

Dr. Wecht further charged that an inexperienced team of Government physicians bungled the autopsy and that there's evidence that the autopsy doctors were instructed to omit a number of routine procedures which could have proved that the bullets were fired from at least two different locations.

In addition, key medical evidence—including the President's brain, microscopic autopsy tissue slides, and color photographs of Kennedy's chest cavity—are today missing from the National Archives, Dr. Wecht said.

In this final installment of *Physician's Management* interview with the Pittsburgh, Pa., coronor, Dr. Wecht discusses the cover-up of J.F.K.'s assassination in detail and tells how a team of independent medical and scientific experts might still solve this murder case today.

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legedly broke both Connally's rib and his wrist. The bullet that supposedly struck Connally was a pristine missile, yet both of the test bullets show substantial deformity and mutilation.

The Warren Commission never even commented on these test results! This was a deliberate concealment—one might even say a fraudulent concealment—of evidence! What's the difference if you actively misrepresent something or you simply choose to ignore the available evidence? The end result is the same, and the law would recognize no difference in either kind of deceitful conduct.

Q: Then the Warren Commission started with the single-bullet theory and worked backward?

Wecht: Exactly! They started with the premise that Lee Harvey Oswald was the sole assassin, and they built their case from there. The end point was the beginning—a procedure that is antithetical to every generally accepted principle of medical and legal investigation. When Oswald was killed on November 24th, there was even less pressure on them to solve President Kennedy's murder. The case was closed from their point of view, and all they had to do was keep it closed.

Q: Why should the Warren Commission undertake this cover-up?

Wecht: The Warren Commission inherited the cover-up. It started long before the Warren Commission was created. It began with the law-enforcement people in Dallas, it was continued on the night of the autopsy, and from there it led directly into the Warren Commission's own investigation.

I don't think the Warren Commission was deliberately malicious or conspiratorial. But they did deliberately withhold the truth about what happened in Dallas 12 years ago in order to come up

with answers that they felt would be plausible and acceptable to the American public. They had to tell the country how a very popular President could be struck down on the streets of this great civilized nation.

They could do so in only one way: by ascribing the murder to a single crazed gunman. Anything more than that would get too sticky, too hairy, too frightening for the public to handle, so the Warren Commission was not about to go any further than Oswald. And, of course, neither was the F.B.I., the C.I.A., or anybody else.

Q: Who was in charge of the cover-up?

Wecht: I don't think anybody was—at least not in the sense of manipulating investigations and evidence. It was a sort of silent conspiracy, with all the theories and evidence channeled in one direction, probably even without any words being spoken, because everybody involved was of a single mind and intent.

Q: But certainly someone must have been coordinating the cover-up?

Wecht: On the contrary, all the evidence indicates that it was a very sloppy, transparent, and uncoordinated cover-up. It was like Watergate—after the initial concealment, they just had to continue it. The deeper they got into it, the more self-perpetuating it became. Ultimately, the tangled web fell apart when they were confronted with an actual motion picture of the assassination.



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, and research professor of law and director of the Institute of Forensic Sciences at Duquesne University School of Law.

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 of 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.

The interview, presented by Physician's Management in two parts, was conducted in Pittsburgh by the magazine's Washington editor, Ken Rankin. "Part 1: The Evidence" appeared in last month's issue. A limited number of back issues are available at \$2 each from Circulation Department, Physician's Management, HBJ, 1 East First St., Duluth, Minn. 55802.

The Zapruder film was a formidable obstacle for the Commission because it showed Kennedy and Connally being struck within two seconds of each other, supposedly by a bolt-action rifle requiring at least 2.3 seconds from shot to shot. That's when they had to invent their ludicrous single-bullet theory.

Q: Since you and a number of other people are still raising serious questions about the assassination, this cover-up must still be going on. Is that right?

Wecht: Yes, except that now the trail is cold. Many of the people originally involved are dead, others are no longer in positions of responsibility, and many of the people who

are in positions of responsibility today don't really understand the case. A deliberate cover-up isn't even necessary any more. All that is necessary is for good men to do nothing, and that's exactly what's happening today.

It's much easier to accept the conclusions already arrived at by official Washington agencies than to get involved in the procedural headaches and political ramifications of a new investigation. Right now inertia is the biggest barrier to uncovering the truth about J.F.K.'s assassination.

Q: How can we get to the bottom of this?

Wecht: It's really up to Con-
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the cover-up...

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gress now. That's the only body with the political muscle to reopen the case and conduct a truly independent and impartial investigation. Congress has the power to do this, but I'm not sure it has the will. Somewhere between two-thirds and three-quarters of the American people do not believe the Warren Commission's conclusions, and I'm sure they'd be in favor of reopening the investigation. But too many Congressmen still labor under the misconception that the public accepts the official version and just wants to forget about those tragic events.

Q: What about the Kennedy family? Certainly they should have a sincere interest in getting to the truth. Have they been instrumental in uncovering the facts?

Wecht: No, not at all. In the early stages, the Kennedy family knew less about the assassination than the man in the street. We know that for the longest time no one in the Kennedy family had even read the Warren Commission report, let alone the commentary of other individuals who discovered serious discrepancies in that report.

Then Bobby Kennedy was killed. What was he thinking about back in 1968? I have no way of knowing, but it's certainly reasonable to speculate that he must have had some very definite feelings about the death of his brother. He must have had a desire to learn the truth. But remember, Robert Kennedy was a very pragmatic politician. He was painfully aware of his

relationship with J. Edgar Hoover, and he knew that, even as an attorney general or a United States senator, he couldn't force certain things to happen. It's not unreasonable to speculate that back in 1968 he might have said to himself, "I can wait another eight months until I'm President of the United States and then get to the bottom of this."

Nobody knows for sure what the Kennedy family was thinking about in those days, and the Kennedys are equally enigmatic today. Who knows what Edward Kennedy's true feelings are? I certainly don't! In his last public statement on the subject that I'm aware of, he said he wouldn't be opposed to reopening the investigation of his brother's death if there were new evidence to consider. Well, we haven't even dealt with the old evidence yet!

Q: Let's talk about some of that old evidence. What else do you have to support your claims of a cover-up?

Wecht: There are strong indications that the autopsy report was doctored—that the official version published by the Warren Commission differed significantly from the one originally prepared by the autopsy team. The transcript of the Warren Commission's executive session meeting of January 27, 1964, which was classified top secret for more than a decade and released only last year, clearly shows that the Warren Commission was under the impression that the autopsy report in their possession at that time indicated that the President's neck wound was caused by a

bullet fragment—not by the single bullet that supposedly struck Kennedy in the back and then wounded Connally in three places. This discussion took place more than two months after the assassination and more than one month after the autopsy report was delivered to the Warren Commission by J. Edgar Hoover. Yet the version of the autopsy report published by the Warren Commission makes absolutely no mention that the throat wound might have been caused by a bullet fragment.

In fact, the published version is very clear on this point. It says the "missile entered the right superior posterior thorax above the scapula," passed through the President's throat, and "made its exit through the anterior surface of the neck." There's no way to misinterpret this and conclude that a bullet fragment caused the throat wound. The only plausible explanation is that on January 24, 1964, the Commission did not have in its possession the same autopsy report which was ultimately published in their report. They had an earlier and obviously much different version.*

Q: Your arguments are persuasive, but still it's difficult to conceive of such a widespread and prolonged cover-up, particularly since
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*Physician's Management attempted to verify Dr. Wecht's double-autopsy-report theory by obtaining copies of the preliminary notes taken by the original autopsy team. The magazine was told that one of the Government autopsy physicians burned them in his fireplace on the morning of November 24.

the cover-up...

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the assassination has been investigated and reinvestigated several times.

Wecht: But look at who has been doing this reinvestigation: impartial groups of experts? No. At least as far as the medical aspects of the case are concerned, the Government has been careful to select people either with close ties to the Federal establishment or with close professional relationships with defenders of the Warren report.

Let's look at the matter not in terms of a criminal investigation but in terms of a malpractice action. And in the generic sense we do have a malpractice case on our hands. We had a sloppy, botched-up job performed back in 1963. Who is called in now to review that performance? The defendants' closest friends and professional colleagues—and in one instance the same individual who was involved back in 1963! This kind of jury-rigging wouldn't be tolerated for a minute in even a minor malpractice case, yet here it is in a case involving the murder of an American President.

Q: The latest Government-appointed group to look into the Kennedy assassination, the Rockefeller Commission, seemed particularly interested in the fact that you, unlike most other Warren Commission critics, do not dispute the contention that all the shots were fired from behind the motorcade. What is your position on this point now?

Wecht: My position is the

same as it has always been. I've always said that it was possible that all the shots came from the rear, perhaps even from the Texas School Book Depository building.

The Zapruder film shows that, when the President was shot in the head, he was jerked violently backward. This led some critics to conclude that the shot came from the front. I, however, have always said it was possible for the President's body to move in the direction it did even if the shots came from behind. But I've also said that it's just as likely, and perhaps even more likely, that this kind of movement could be explained on the basis of a shot from the side or synchronized shots from the side and the rear.

The Rockefeller Commission, on the other hand, states unequivocally that the movement of the President's body is consistent only with a shot from the rear. They say a neuromuscular reaction caused him to move violently back and to the left when the bullet struck. No experienced forensic would use a term as broad and meaningless as "neuromuscular reaction." Their explanation only serves to corroborate my conclusion that they don't know where all the bullets came from.

I don't blame them for not knowing—I don't know, either. We can't take live human beings, drive them down the street in a car, then shoot them from several different angles to see which way their bodies move. Yet the Warren Commission and the Rockefeller Commission are desperately trying to convince us that they know with absolute certainty that all the bul-

lets could have been fired only from the rear.

My point is, we don't know from the available evidence where all the shots came from—and the Government doesn't know either.

Q: You've said that the Kennedy murder case can still be solved. How?

Wecht: One simple way might be to have an impartial expert test the bullet fragments found in the bodies of President Kennedy and Governor Connally to determine whether they were all left by the same bullet.

This can be done through a process called neutron activation analysis (N.A.A.)—a highly sophisticated procedure which can detect and measure trace elements down to several parts per billion.

The F.B.I. performed at least one such N.A.A. test for the Warren Commission, but the results of that test—and even the fact that the test had been conducted—were kept secret. Those test results were released only this year, but the data made public by the F.B.I. have not given us any meaningful inconsistencies that would permit us to say that the single-bullet theory has been disproved solely as a result of those tests.

Q: Then the F.B.I. test data support the Warren Commission's findings?

Wecht: All we can say is that this information doesn't, in itself, disprove the official version. But considering what has transpired in the past, we have a right to be somewhat
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the cover-up...

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skeptical of the F.B.I. data. For example, the Government claims that they've released all the N.A.A. test data that exist. However, correspon-

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dence between Hoover and J. Lee Rankin, the chief counsel of the Warren Commission in 1963 and 1964, strongly suggests that there were additional N.A.A. tests conducted.

If this is true, and I believe it is, then we must ask ourselves why it was necessary to repeat these tests. Was it because the first tests disproved the single-bullet theory incontrovertibly?

Q: Does the evidence still exist? Is it still possible to conduct an independent N.A.A. test on the bullet fragments?

Wecht: Yes, the bullet that supposedly struck both President Kennedy and Governor Connally and some of the bullet fragments are in the National Archives today.

Q: Then the single-assassin theory could be proved or disproved conclusively.

Wecht: It wouldn't be possible to prove that the single-bullet theory was correct because, in order to do that, we'd have to have the fragments from the President's neck as well as Connally's chest, wrist, and thigh. They don't have fragments from all those places, only from some of them.

But even with the limited amount of evidence still available, it could be possible to *disprove* the single-bullet theory once and for all.

I've asked for permission to go back to the National Archives with a team of independent specialists in neurosurgery, firearms investigation, radiology, criminalistics, and questioned-document examination. With such a group of scientists working together on the case, free of Government harassment, I feel we can still uncover the truth about what happened in Dallas 12 years ago. ■

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