

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

TO : Mr. DeLoach

FROM : A. Rosen

SUBJECT: ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT
JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY
DALLAS, TEXAS, 11/22/63

DATE: June 2, 1966

- 1 - Mr. DeLoach
- 1 - Mr. Rosen
- 1 - Mr. Malley
- 1 - Mr. Shroder
- 1 - Mr. Raupach
- 1 - Mr. Wick
- 1 - Mr. Sullivan

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SYNOPSIS

An article appeared in the "Washington Post," 5/29/66, under byline of Richard Harwood, in which questions are raised about the findings of the President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy. Questions are based on material in two new books on the assassination, "Whitewash," by Harold Weisberg and "Inquest," by Edward J. Epstein. The article relates that the greatest source of controversy and doubt over the integrity of the Commission's report in the minds of Weisberg and Epstein was the unpublished FBI document dated 12/9/63, that contains "a finding" which would almost certainly have led to the conclusion Oswald had an accomplice. Our 12/9/63 and 1/13/64 reports sent to the Commission are now located in the National Archives and are available to the public.

The article points out that our 12/9/63, report states the bullet which wounded President Kennedy in the shoulder did not exit from his body and our supplemental report of 1/13/64, indicated medical examination of the President's body indicated the bullet which entered the President's back had penetrated to a distance less than a finger length. The article contended these statements are in direct conflict with the official autopsy report made by doctors at the Bethesda, Maryland, Naval Hospital, who stated that the bullet which struck the President in the lower neck passed through his body and came out through his throat. The article infers, based upon Weisberg's and Epstein's books, that the discrepancy between the FBI reports and the autopsy report is crucial for the Commission's conclusion that Oswald acted alone is right only if the autopsy report is right, and wrong if the FBI report is right. The authors conclude that if the bullet did not pass through President Kennedy's neck causing Governor Connally's wound, a second assassin must have been involved, since the time sequence would have prevented Oswald from getting off a second shot in two seconds.

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Section 100

Memorandum to Mr. DeLoach
Re: ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT
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There are no discrepancies in the Bureau's reporting of this matter. On 11/22/63, doctors at the Bethesda Naval Hospital conducted an autopsy on President Kennedy's body. Information set forth in our 12/9/63, and 1/13/64, reports was based upon oral information furnished on 11/22/63, by the doctor performing the autopsy. Initially, the doctors were of the opinion the bullet which entered his back had not exited from the front. The doctors determined subsequently their initial findings were influenced by the fact that the doctors at Parkland Hospital in Dallas had made an incision near the President's throat in order to perform a tracheotomy. This incision was made at the exit point of the bullet, thereby eliminating any visible evidence of the exit hole made by the bullet. In addition, the examining physicians subsequently determined the bullet, after entering the President's back, actually passed between two large muscles (thus resulting in the initial determination that the wound was less than a finger length in depth). Thereafter, the bullet bruised a portion of the right lung and ripped the windpipe in its path through the President's neck.

A copy of the official autopsy report was furnished to the Bureau on 12/23/63, by Secret Service; however, no dissemination was made of the findings because of the request by the President's family to keep the autopsy report confidential. Results of the autopsy were therefore not made public until the Commission submitted its report on 9/24/64.

The article further alleges that the Agents attending the autopsy obtained their information based on hearsay and that the Agents left the autopsy before the doctors had completed their examination. Both statements are false. Our Agents obtained their information from the head pathologist and remained in the autopsy room until the physical examination was completed.

The article further states that the basic error (the bullet did not exit the President's body) was repeated in our 1/13/64, report, which unaccountably acknowledges there was an exit wound in the President's throat. This again is inaccurate. Our 1/13/64, report sets forth examination of the President's clothing indicating there was a small hole in the back of his coat and shirt and that there was a slit in the front of his shirt which had the characteristics of an exit hole for a bullet. Report also indicated there was a nick on the left side of the tie knot, which was possibly caused by the same projectile

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as it passed through the shirt. It would appear the statement concerning the medical examination of the President's body indicating the bullet had penetrated to a distance of less than a finger length was incorporated in this report in order to point out the apparent conflict between the information originally furnished by medical authorities on 11/22/63, and the results of our Laboratory's examination of the President's clothing, which indicated a bullet had exited his body. It is noted the Warren Commission report subsequently concluded a bullet had exited the President's body as reflected in the official autopsy report and as incorporated in the Commission's report.

Based on the above, it is evident the assumptions made by Weisberg and Epstein are inconclusive and erroneous, since they have extracted only those items from the President's Commission report that bolster their own theories and hypotheses leading to their conclusions.

ACTION:

This is submitted for information.

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DETAILS

An article appeared in "The Washington Post," on 5/29/66, Sunday Edition, under the byline of Richard Harwood, captioned "An Inquest: Skeptical Postscript to Warren Group's Report on Assassination." The article relates the President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy Report is now under attack by scholars and writers who believe the Commission's findings are marred by conjecture and by inconsistencies which the Commission was unable to resolve.

The article relates to grave doubts about the competence of the Commission's work which are raised in two new books on the assassination - "Whitewash" by Harold Weisberg and "Inquest" by Edward J. Epstein. The article revealed perhaps the greatest source of controversy and doubt over the integrity of the report in the minds of Weisberg and Epstein, was the unpublished FBI document which was a five-volume report from the FBI dated 12/9/63, that contains "a finding" which would almost certainly have led to the conclusion that Oswald had an accomplice in the assassination. This report was located in the National Archives. The controversy arises in connection with the report that the bullet which wounded President Kennedy in the shoulder did not exit from his body and the supplemental report of the FBI on 1/13/64, indicated medical examination of the President's body indicated the bullet which entered the President's back had penetrated to a distance of less than a finger's length. Further, the article revealed that one of the bullets entered below the shoulder to the right of the spinal column at an angle of 45 to 60 degrees downward and that there was no point of exit and further the bullet was not in the body.

It was contended this statement is in direct contradiction to the official autopsy report from the Bethesda Naval Hospital written the last week in November, 1963, which indicated that the bullet which struck the President in the lower neck passed through his body and came out his throat. The article infers that the discrepancy between the FBI report and the autopsy report is crucial for the Commission's conclusion that Oswald acted alone is right only if the autopsy report is right and wrong if the FBI report is right.

The article continues, "If a bullet did not pass through President Kennedy's neck and cause Gov. Connally's wounds, a second assassin must have been involved.

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"This is so because films of the assassination proved conclusively that Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Connally were wounded within a period of one-half second, at the minimum, and less than two seconds at the maximum.

"It was physically impossible for a sniper to fire two rounds in that flash of time from a bolt-action rifle of the type Oswald used. Thus, either Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Connally were struck by the same bullet or two men fired two nearly simultaneous bullets."

There are no discrepancies in the Bureau's reporting of this matter. Initially, a five-volume report relating to the assassination of President Kennedy was furnished to Chief Justice Warren on 12/9/63, followed by a supplemental report dated 1/13/64. These are the two reports which are purported to be in contention with the official autopsy report concerning President Kennedy.

It is specifically pointed out the President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy Report clearly states that "of principal importance was the five-volume report of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, submitted on December 9, 1963, which summarized the results of the investigation conducted by the Bureau immediately after the assassination."

The newspaper article indicated that our December, 1963 report revealed the bullet that wounded President Kennedy in the shoulder did not exit from his body. This, in substance, is true. Our 12/9/63, report states "Immediately after President Kennedy and Governor Connally were admitted to Parkland Memorial Hospital, a bullet was found on one of the stretchers (subsequently determined this bullet was found on Connally's stretcher). Medical examination of the President's body revealed that one of the bullets had entered just below his shoulder to the right of the spinal column at an angle of 45 to 60 degrees downward, that there was no point of exit, and that the bullet was not in the body. An examination of this bullet by the FBI Laboratory determined that it had been fired from the rifle owned by Oswald."

Our supplemental report dated 1/13/64, under "FBI Laboratory Examinations," concerned information relating to bullets used in the

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assassination of President Kennedy and the examination of the President's clothing concerning a small hole in the back of his coat and a slit appearing in the front of his shirt approximately 6 inches below the top of the collar and 2 inches to the right of the middle seam of the coat. Contained in this information was the comment "medical examination of the President's body had revealed that the bullet which entered his back had penetrated to a distance of less than a finger length."

The confusion appears to exist around this comment as our examination of the President's clothing indicated an entrance wound in his back and an exit wound in his shirt which had the characteristic of an exit hole for a projectile.

The initial findings of the doctors performing the autopsy of the President on 11/22/63, at the Bethesda Naval Hospital, were verbally made to two of our Agents who observed the autopsy. The doctors' statement to our Agents appears in the report of SA Robert P. Gemberling dated 12/10/63, captioned "Lee Harvey Oswald, aka," commencing on page 281 (105-82555, Section 12, Part II). It was reported the body of President Kennedy was X-rayed and photographed, which revealed a path of a missile which appeared to enter the back of the skull and the path of disintegrated fragments could be observed along the right side of the skull. During the latter stages of this autopsy Commander James J. Humes, Chief Pathologist, Bethesda Naval Hospital, who conducted the autopsy, located an opening which appeared to be a bullet hole, which was below the shoulders and two inches to the right of the middle line of the spinal column. This opening was probed by Dr. Humes with the finger, at which time it was determined the trajectory of the missile entering at this point had entered at a downward position of "45 to 60 degrees." Further probing determined that the distance traveled by this missile was a short distance, inasmuch as the end of the opening could be felt with the finger by Dr. Humes. No bullet could be located in the back or any other area of the body as determined by total X-rays and inspection revealing there was no point of exit and the medical personnel performing the autopsy were at a loss to explain why they could find no bullets.

This information was telephonically furnished to the Bureau Laboratory, at which time a Laboratory Supervisor advised the Laboratory had received

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through Secret Service, information that a bullet had been found on a stretcher in the emergency room of the Parkland Hospital, Dallas, Texas. Immediately following the receipt of this information it was made available to Dr. Humes, who advised "that in his opinion this accounted for no bullet being located which had entered the back region and that since external cardiac massage had been performed at Parkland Hospital, it was entirely possible that through such movement the bullet had worked its way back out of the point of entry and had fallen on the stretcher."

Also during the latter stages of the autopsy a small piece of skull was furnished to Dr. Humes, who determined one corner of the section revealed minute metal particles. An inspection of this same area disclosed a chipping of the top portion of this piece, both of which indicated that this had been the point of exit of the bullet entering the skull.

On the basis of the developments, Dr. Humes at that time stated the pattern was clear that one bullet entered the President's back and had worked its way out during external cardiac massage and that a second high velocity bullet entered the rear of the skull and had fragmentized prior to exit through the top of the skull. He, therefore, attributed the death of the President to a gunshot wound in the head.

It is to be pointed out that information relating to the official autopsy report of the President was not made public until the Commission's report was released on 9/24/64. In a memorandum Mr. Rosen to Mr. Belmont, 12/24/63, (62-109090-68) it is pointed out that the President's family indicated a strong desire to keep the autopsy report as confidential as possible. It was recommended and approved that the copy of the autopsy report be maintained in Bureau files but that no further dissemination of it be made at that time.

The Commission specifically pointed out, when released, the autopsy examination further disclosed that the bullet after entering the President, passed between two large muscles. It bruised a portion of the right lung, ripped the windpipe (trachea) in its path through the President's neck. The surgeon concluded the wounds were caused by the bullet rather than the tracheotomy performed at Parkland Hospital. Further, doctors concluded the bullet exited from the front portion of the President's neck that had been cut away by the tracheotomy.

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Thereafter, when the conclusion was made the bullet passed through the President's neck, the doctors at Bethesda Naval Hospital rejected the theory the bullet lodged in the large muscle in the back of the President's neck and fell out through the point of entry when external heart massage was applied in the Parkland Hospital. The Commission clearly pointed out in the early stages of the autopsy the surgeons were unable to find a path into any large muscle in the back of the President's neck and at that time they did not know there had been a bullet hole in the front of the President's neck when he arrived at the Parkland Hospital because the tracheotomy insertion had completely eliminated that evidence.

When the surgeons learned of the location of the bullet this led to the speculation it might have penetrated a short distance and then dropped out as a result of external heart massage. Their further exploration during the autopsy disproved this theory. Dr. Humes, who believed the tracheotomy had been performed, based on his later observations, on the morning of 11/23/63, telephoned Dr. Malcolm O. Perry in Dallas, Texas, who was one of the attending physicians at Parkland Hospital, and learned that his assumption was correct that Dr. Perry had used the missile wound in the President's neck as the point to make the incision; therefore confirming Dr. Humes' conclusion that the bullet had exited from the front part of the President's neck.

Based on these professional findings the President's Commission arrived at its conclusion. It is obviously evident that the assumptions made by Weisberg and Epstein are inconclusive and erroneous, as they have extracted only those findings from the President's Commission that would bolster their own theories and hypotheses which led to their conclusions.

It is further pointed out that they have attributed results of investigation to the FBI as all-conclusive rather than the fact that we reported only that information which was furnished to us by authoritative physicians, which was for the specific use of Chief Justice Warren, members of the President's Commission and Attorney General Nicholas deB. Katzenbach, who at that time was the Deputy Attorney General.

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The article further alleges that the Agents attending the autopsy obtained their information based on hearsay and that the Agents left the autopsy before the doctors had completed their examination. Both statements are false. Our Agents obtained their information from the head pathologist and remained in the autopsy room until the physical examination was completed.

Inquest: Skeptical Postscript Warren Group's Report on Assassination

- Tolson
- DeLoach
- Mohr
- Wick
- Casper
- Callahan
- Conrad
- Felt
- Gale
- Rosen
- Sullivan
- Tavel
- Trotter
- Tele. Room
- Holmes
- Gandy

By Richard Harwood
Washington Post Staff Writer

On Sept. 24, 1964, the President's Commission on the Assassination of President John F. Kennedy reported to the world that it had ascertained the truth.

Said the Commission: "The shots which killed President Kennedy and wounded Governor Connally were fired by Lee Harvey Oswald."

This report, issued under the imprimatur of Chief Justice Earl Warren and six other distinguished Americans, is now under attack by scholars and writers who believe the Commission's findings are marred by conjecture and by inconsistencies which the Commission was unable to resolve.

They have unearthed, for example, a five-volume report from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, dated Dec. 9, 1963, that contains a "finding" which—had it been true—would almost certainly have led to the conclusion that Oswald had an accomplice in the assassination.

This "finding" which now appears to have been completely erroneous was the product of an impulsive report by FBI agents a few hours after the President was killed. Although it was apparently based on little more than hearsay, it found its way into the Dec. 9 document.

It has given ammunition to the Commission's critics and contributed to a serious disagreement within the Commission itself over the manner in which Gov. Connally was wounded and over the ultimate explanation given by the Commission of the events of Nov. 22.

For these reasons and others, grave doubts about the competence of the Commission's work are raised in two new books on the assassination. "Who Was" by Harold Weisberg, and "Inquest," by Edward Jay Epstein. Weisberg is a former Government

worker who now operates a poultry farm. Epstein is a Ph.D. candidate at Harvard.

Epstein's book—written as a master's thesis at Cornell—carries an introduction by the New Yorker magazine's Washington correspondent, Richard Rovere, who writes: "Nothing Mr. Epstein reveals is quite so shocking as the fact that the great investigation was carried out by men who could not give their full attention to it and who, because of their own needs and also because of certain political circumstances, were in a desperate hurry to get it over with . . . The day the Warren Commission Report was issued, the American press should have begun to do what Mr. Epstein has done; it should have cast a very cool eye on the Report and sought to learn from those who prepared it how it was prepared . . ."

Weisberg charges: "The superficial and immature manner in which the Report deals with the possibility of a conspiracy or of a different assassin is only one of the ways in which the Commission may have crippled itself."

The Epstein book, based in large part on interviews with members of the Commission and its staff, gives a picture of the investigation at sharp variance with the common conception of how it was conducted.

It reveals that no single member of the Commission heard all the testimony and that "most of the Commissioners were present for only a minor portion of the hearings. Senator (Richard) Russell (D-Ga.) who attended the fewest, heard only about 6 per cent of the testimony; whereas Allen Dulles, who attended the largest number of hearings, heard about 71 per cent. Only three Commissioners heard more than half the testimony, and the average Commissioner heard

Lawyers' Comment

"Opinions differ," Epstein writes, "as to what the Commission actually did. Joseph Ball (one of the Commission's staff lawyers) commented that the Commission 'had no idea of what was happening; we did all the investigating, lined up the witnesses, solved the problems and wrote the Report.' Wesley Liebelier (another Commission lawyer) when asked what the Commission did, replied, 'In one word, nothing.'"

(Others connected with the investigation dispute these harsh judgments. "The Commissioners," said one staff lawyer, "contributed significantly to the final Report.")

The actual work of the Commission fell, in any event, on a few younger

*W. J. Harwood
dissemination
att. by D. E. etc.
K. J. Harwood*

REC 30

- The Washington Post and Times Herald
- The Washington Daily News
- The Evening Star
- New York Herald Tribune
- New York Journal-American
- New York Daily News
- New York Post
- The New York Times
- The Baltimore Sun
- The Boston Globe
- The New Leader
- Wall Street Journal
- The National Guardian
- Time
- Date

JUN 20 1966

MAY 29 1966

JUN 22 1966

...ers of the...
...e able to devote full
...e to the job. Many of the
...ent private lawyers
...ought in to help continued
...eir private professional
...ivities and gave little
...e to the inquiry.

Among the working staff,
...stein reveals, there were
...ter disagreements about
...e credibility of witnesses,
...out the quality of the evi-
...nce compiled by Govern-
...ent agencies, and about
...e ultimate wording and
...onclusions of the Report.

FBI's Unpublished Report

Perhaps the greatest
...ource of controversy and
...oubt over the integrity of
...the Report—at least in the
...minds of Epstein and Weis-
...berg—was the unpublished
...FBI document, which is now
...in the National Archives.

It states categorically that
...“medical examination of the
...President's body revealed
...that one of the bullets had
...entered just below his
...shoulder to the right of the
...spinal column at an angle of
...45 to 60 degrees downward,
...that there was no point of
...exit, and that the bullet was
...not in the body.”

This statement is in direct
...contradiction to the official
...autopsy report from the Be-
...thesda Naval Hospital, writ-
...ten the last week in Novem-
...ber, that the bullet which
...struck the President in the
...lower neck passed through
...his body and came out his
...throat. The autopsy report
...said:

“The missile contused the
...strap muscle of the right
...side of the neck, damaged
...the trachea (windpipe) and
...made its exit through the
...anterior (front) surface of
...the neck.”

The discrepancy between
...the FBI report and the
...autopsy report is crucial, for
...the Commission's conclusion
...that Oswald acted alone is
...right only if the autopsy re-
...port is right, and wrong if
...the FBI report is right.

If a bullet did not pass
...through President Ken-
...nedy's neck and cause Gov.
...Connally's wounds, a second
...assassin must have been in-
...volved.

This is so because films of
...the assassination proved
...conclusively that Mr. Ken-
...nedy and Mr. Connally were
...wounded within a period of
...one-half second, at the mini-
...mum, and less than two
...seconds at the maximum.

It was physically impos-
...sible for a sniper to fire two
...rounds in that flash of time
...from a bolt-action rifle of

the first... used Thus,
...either Mr. Kennedy and Mr.
...Connally were struck by the
...same bullet or two men fired
...two nearly simultaneous
...bullets.

Both Epstein and Weisberg
...argue that the first possibil-
...ity—two wounds from a sin-
...gle shot—is disproved by
...the evidence itself and that
...a second assassin was in-
...volved who remains free.

Independent study of the
...evidence does not necessar-
...ily lead to the same con-
...clusion, although there is
...substantial testimony other
...than the FBI report that
...raises grave questions about
...the manner in which Gov.
...Connally was wounded.

This evidence is of such
...weight that Sen. Russell, ac-
...cording to Epstein, “report-
...edly said that he would not
...sign a Report which con-
...cluded that both men were
...hit by the same bullet. Sen.
... (John Sherman) Cooper (R-
...Ky.) and Rep. (Hale) Boggs
... (D-La.) tended to agree with
...Russell's position.”

Accordingly, the Commis-
...sion was forced to hedge its
...conclusion by saying that
...the evidence, while not cer-
...tain, was “very persuasive
...to indicate that the same
...bullet which pierced the
...President's throat also
...caused Governor Connally's
...wounds.”

(Congressman Boggs said
...any implication by Epstein
...that the Commission was
...divided on its ultimate
...conclusions is wrong. There
...were many discussions in-
...volving many points of evi-
...dence, he said, but the find-
...ings were unanimous.

(Sens. Russell and Cooper
...were out of the city and
...could not be reached for
...comment.)

The reasons for the Com-
...mission's uncertainty on this
...vital point are well docu-
...mented:

(1) Gov. Connally, who
...was conscious when all
...three shots were fired, told
...the Commission he could
...not have been wounded by
...the bullet that struck Mr.
...Kennedy in the neck: “It is
...not conceivable to me that
...I could have been hit by
...the first bullet... Obviously,
...at least the major wound
...that I took in the shoulder
...through the chest couldn't
...have been anything but the
...second shot.”

(2) Two of the three patho-
...logists who performed the

autopsy on the President
...Commander James J. Hill,
...and Lt. Col. Pierre Finck,
...an authority on gunshot
...wounds—testified that it
...was either “unlikely” or
...“impossible” that the wound
...in President Kennedy's
...neck and the wounds Gov.
...Connally sustained were
...caused by the same bullet.

(3) The FBI's principal
...ballistics expert, Robert
...Frazier, told the Commis-
...sion: “I myself don't have
...any evidence which would
...permit me to say one way
...or the other, in other words
...which would support it (the
...theory that Mr. Kennedy
...and Mr. Connally were hit
...by a single shot) as far as
...my rendering an opinion as
...an expert. I would certainly
...say it was possible but I
...don't say it probably oc-
...curred...”

(4) After reporting on Dec.
...9, 1963, that the bullet that
...wounded Mr. Kennedy in
...the shoulder did not exit
...from his body, the FBI on
...Jan. 13, 1964, issued a sup-
...plemental report on the
...President's wounds which
...stated:

“Medical examination of
...the President's body had
...revealed that the bullet
...which entered his back had
...penetrated to a distance of
...less than a finger length.”

(5) On Dec. 18, 1963, The
...Washington Post and other
...newspapers reported on the
...basis of rumors from Dal-
...las, that the first bullet to
...strike the President “was
...found deep in his shoulder.”
...This report was confirmed
...prior to publication by the
...FBI.

The cumulative effect of
...these various statements
...was to raise very consider-
...able doubt about the prin-
...cipal conclusion of the War-
...ren Commission: that “the
...shots which killed President
...Kennedy and wounded Gov-
...ernor Connally were fired
...by Lee Harvey Oswald.”

They have no bearing on
...Oswald's involvement but,
...if true, they point unmis-
...takeably to the involvement
...of at least one other assas-
...sin.

The commission handled
...this crucial problem, in ef-
...fect, by rendering a highly
...misleading verdict:

“Although it is not neces-
...sary to any essential findings
...of the Commission to deter-

mine just which shot hit
...Gov. Connally, there is very
...persuasive evidence from
...the experts to indicate that
...the same bullet which
...pierced the President's
...throat also caused Gov. Con-
...nally's wounds. However,
...Gov. Connally's testimony
...and certain other factors
...have given rise to some dif-
...ference of opinion as to this
...probability but there is no
...question in the mind of any
...member of the Commission
...that all the shots which
...caused the President's and
...Gov. Connally's wounds were
...fired from the sixth floor
...window of the Texas School
...Book Depository.”

Contrary to what the Com-
...mission reported, it was not
...only “necessary” but abso-
...lutely essential to determine
...which shot hit the Governor.

“To say that they were
...hit by separate bullets,”
...Norman Redlich of the
...Commission staff told Ep-
...stein, “is synonymous with
...saying that there were two
...assassins.”

Specter Had Responsibility

One of the reasons the
...Commission had difficulty
...with this problem was that
...while, on paper, 34 men, in-
...cluding the seven members
...of the Commission, were
...engaged in the investiga-
...tion, “the entire task as-
...certaining the basic facts of
...the assassination fell upon
...one lawyer—Arlen Specter.
...Specter,” according to Ep-
...stein, “had the responsibil-
...ity for determining the
...sources of the shots, the
...number of assassins, the
...exact manner in which the
...President and Gov. Connal-
...ly were shot, and the se-
...quence of events—in short,
...all the facts of the assassina-
...tion.”

Specter read mountainous
...stacks of reports and con-
...ducted the examination of
...key witnesses before the
...Commission. But Specter's
...independent investigation,
...Epstein reports, consisted
...of nothing more than inter-
...views with 23 doctors and
...other medical personnel at
...Parkland Hospital in Dallas,
...none of whom had any thor-
...ough knowledge of the Pre-
...sident's wounds. “With one
...minor exception,” says Ep-
...stein, “these interviews com-
...prised Specter's entire field
...investigation of ‘the basic
...facts of the assassination.’”

Specter, moreover, was
under constant pressure
from the Commission — as
were all members of the
staff—to complete his work
by June 1, which was the ar-
bitrary deadline chosen by
the Commission.

Deadline Extended

The deadline was not met
and Chief Justice Warren,
according to Epstein, "re-
portedly lost his temper and
demanded that (Howard)
Willens (the staff director)
close down the investigation
immediately." The deadline,
in the end, was extended to
July 15, then to Aug. 1, and
then into September, de-
spite Epstein says, pressure
from McGeorge Bundy at
the White House and mem-
bers of the Commission to
complete the report well in
advance of the presidential
election.

Specter developed the
theory that a single bullet
must have wounded both Mr.
Kennedy and Mr. Connally
and he filled the record with
testimony that supports his
hypothesis.

He never entirely con-
vinced the Commission that
his theory was correct, in
part because of the frequent
absence of Commissioners
from the hearings. Nor did
he convince Epstein and
Weisberg, in part because
his evidence was so scat-
tered through the 26 vol-
umes that it was hard to
piece together.

Thus, it was possible for
a reader—or a member of
the Warren Commission—to
find in the hearings evidence
to support almost any con-
clusion, even contradictory
conclusions. Some of the
contradictions are relatively
simple to resolve, however.

The first one involves the
credibility of the FBI report
of Dec. 9, which states that
the bullet which struck Mr.
Kennedy's shoulder did not
leave his body.

This report, the FBI said
last week, was based on the
medical evidence at that
time. But there is other evi-
dence that it was based on
nothing more than hearsay.

The autopsy on the Presi-
dent began at Bethesda
Naval Hospital at about 8
o'clock the night of Nov. 22.

Wound Confused Doctors.

Two FBI agents who were
present overheard Dr.
Humes, Dr. Finck and Dr.

J. T. ... all speculate about
the President's shoulder
wound. The doctors were
confused by it because an
incision made in the front
of the President's throat in
Dallas obscured the exit
wound.

Before the three doctors
at Bethesda had completed
the autopsy and before they
had traced the path of the
bullet from the President's
shoulder to his throat, the
FBI observers left the room
and called in a report that
the bullet had not passed
through the President's
body.

Incredibly, this verbal re-
port became the basis of the
erroneous statement that ap-
pears in the Dec. 9, five-vol-
ume summary submitted to
the Warren Commission.

The official autopsy report
which contradicts the FBI
was in the hands of the Se-
cret Service, not the Bureau,
and may never have been
supplied to the FBI.

In any case, the basic er-
ror was repeated in the Jan.
13 report from the FBI
which unaccountably ac-
knowledges that there was
an exit wound in the Presi-
dent's throat.

The second contradiction
involves the conflicting
medical testimony on the
likelihood that one bullet
wounded both Mr. Kennedy
and Mr. Connally.

The bullet which caused
these wounds was found and
was virtually intact. It
weighed about 158 grains, as
against an original weight of
about 161 grains.

Commander Humes and
Lt. Col. Finck, the presi-
dential autopsists, doubted
that this bullet could have
caused all of Gov. Connally's
wounds because they
had read a medical report
from Dallas describing the
presence of fragments in
his wrist wound. Thus, they
thought the bullet must
have been broken into frag-
ments rather than emerging
intact.

They were unaware that
these fragments were min-
iscule and that Connally's
principal surgeon, Dr. Rob-
ert Shaw, was convinced that
the intact bullet did cause
the wounds. The "frag-
ments" left in the Gover-
nor's body were thin shav-
ings, not much larger than
dust particles.

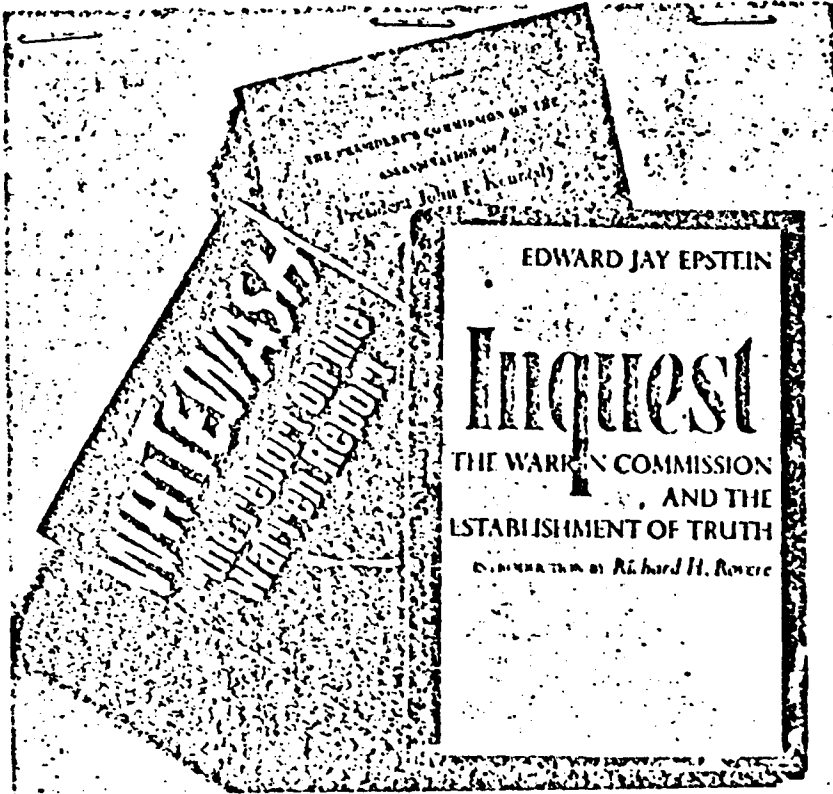
The final problem—Gov.
Connally's own recollection
of what happened—cannot
be dismissed.

But his surgeon, Dr. Shaw,
had an explanation for that,
too. It is not uncommon, he
testified, for people to suf-
fer a wound without know-
ing it immediately.

This would account for
Mr. Connally's belief that
he was not hit by the first
bullet and this explanation
is consistent with the
Governor's failure to hear
the "second shot" which he
believed caused his wound
and his recollection of the
final shot which smashed the
President's skull.

The "single-shot" theory
developed by Specter and
the Commission, in other
words, is not refuted by the
apparent inconsistencies in
the record which Weisberg
and Epstein recite.

And so long as that theory
holds up, assumptions that
there was a second assassin
in Dallas on Nov. 22 can
only be assumptions.



By Charles Del Vecchio, Staff Photographer

DISAGREEMENT—The Warren Commission's report on the assassination of President Kennedy, for all its detail, still leaves some questions open, with the result that books and articles continue to debate the investigation's findings.