

shape from its description by the autopsists, the Clark panel found at the base of Kennedy's skull "... a large metallic [bullet] fragment which ... is round and measures 6.5 mm in diameter."

This could be construed as strong evidence against Lee Harvey Oswald, since he reportedly used a 6.5 mm rifle. However, recall that the official version states that one bullet—the "Magic Bullet"—traversed the President's neck, penetrated Connally, and was found intact at Parkland Hospital. Since officially no large fragments had been noted by the autopsy doctors and no such fragments could have come from the whole bullet found at Parkland, it seems probable that either more than two shots struck Kennedy in the head area or that the autopsy materials viewed by the Clark panel were somehow faked.

Furthermore, yet another bullet base, about 6.5 mm in diameter, was said to be found in the front seat of the presidential limousine. All this goes far to prove that more than two bullets struck Kennedy.

A Navy officer who might have been able to clarify some of the questions about the President's autopsy is unavailable. He died under strange circumstances.

Over the years, as attempts have been made to clarify and substantiate the medical evidence, the wounds seem to take on a life of their own.

The head wound as seen by the Dallas doctors, consisted of a large blasted-out area in the right rear of the skull. Both medical and nonmedical persons in Dallas gave consistent descriptions of this wound.

Secret Service Agent Clint Hill told the Warren Commission:

The right rear portion of his head was missing.

Dr. Charles J. Carrico noted a large hole:

... in the posterior skull, the occipital region. There was an absence of the calvarium or skull in this area . . .

Dr. Malcolm Perry:

I noted a large avulsive wound of the right parietal occipital area, [The occipital is the large bone on the back of a human skull.] in which both scalp and portions of skull were absent . . .

Dr. William Kemp Clark:

I then examined the wound in the back of the President's head. This was a large, gaping wound in the right posterior part, with cerebral and cerebellar tissue being damaged and exposed. [The cerebellum controls muscle coordination and is located at the low rear portion of the head behind the occipital bone.]

Dr. Robert McClelland:

... I noted that the right posterior portion of the skull had been extremely blasted.

Yet the autopsy doctors saw a head wound that stretched from the upper side of the rear to the right front of Kennedy's head.

The autopsy doctors said a small entrance wound was located in the back of the skull at about the hairline, while the House Select Committee on Assassinations' medical panel placed the entrance wound four inches higher, near the top of the head.

Neither the Warren Commission nor the House Committee spoke of hole blasted out of the right rear portion of the President's head. The House Committee even produced a drawing reportedly made from a autopsy photograph that depicts the rear of Kennedy's head. It is entirely intact except for what appears to be a small hole—the entrance wound—near the top.

Humes had problems with this drawing, stating he had never seen the small hole before. He suggested it might be dried blood. But he was certain that he had seen no entrance wound in that location.

Robert Groden, a researcher and photographic consultant to the House Select Committee on Assassinations, had a simple explanation for the mystery surrounding the autopsy photographs—after careful study, he decided several, if not all, were forgeries. After discovering evidence of retouching, Gordon wrote:

The vital autopsy photos of the back of the President's head were altered immediately after the autopsy in order to cover up the fact that the President received two bullets in the head, one from the rear and one from the front, and this second shot blew out the back of his head, a Jackie Kennedy testified to the Warren Commission.

Contemporary autopsy drawings and reports placed the location of the back wound in the middle of the back, between the shoulder blades—this description is corroborated by the bullet holes in Kennedy's clothing—yet the Warren Commission placed the back wound on the right shoulder near the base of the neck.

X-rays and other autopsy materials such as photographs, tissue samples and blood smears—including Kennedy's brain, which was removed and preserved—could have provided definitive proof of the location of the wounds. However, much of this material is missing from the National Archives. (The House Select Committee on Assassinations hinted that the brain may have been taken by Robert Kennedy to prevent future public display, however, this has not been proven and Kennedy is not alive (comment.)

It also should be noted that the Warren Commission—the group officially charged with finding the truth of Kennedy's assassination—apparently never was allowed to view for themselves the President's autopsy photographs and X-rays. Commission attorney Arlen Specter, in an October 10, 1968, interview in *U.S. News & World Report* stated:

679 TRWK

The complete set of pictures taken at the autopsy was not made available to me or to the Commission. I was shown one picture of the back of a body which was represented to be the back of the President, although it was not authenticated. It showed a hole in the position identified in the autopsy report. To the best of my knowledge, the Commission did not see any photographs or X-rays. . . . The photographs and X-rays would, in the thinking of the Commission, not have been crucial, because they would have served only to corroborate what the autopsy surgeons had testified to under oath as opposed to adding any new facts for the Commission.

But they are crucial—if not in truthfully understanding Kennedy's wounds, then in understanding the manipulations surrounding the medical evidence. As Groden later told his author:

The key to understanding who killed Kennedy lies with the autopsy photographs. These photographs may tell us more about the assassination than all of the official investigations. Perhaps the single most important question in the investigation was never asked: Why were the autopsy photographs and X-rays never officially shown to the numerous doctors and nurses in Dallas who treated President Kennedy? Had this question been pursued, the true nature of the conspiracy would then have been exposed, because the crucial pictures allegedly of the back of the President's head are forged! That forgery is one of the keys to the conspiracy. Who would have had that kind of access to the evidence in order to alter it? Who had the capability to alter it?

Summary

The medical evidence in the JFK assassination, which should be the basis for truthful determination of how many bullets struck Kennedy and from which direction, is hopelessly flawed. Some of it is still missing and other material has come under serious question as to its authenticity.

Kennedy was given an incompetent autopsy, with military and civilian authorities directing the three inexperienced and intimidated military doctors. The late Dr. Milton Helpern, who as chief medical examiner for New York City supervised sixty thousand autopsies, once described Kennedy's autopsy thusly:

679 TRWK

It's like sending a seven-year-old boy who has taken three lessons on the violin over to the New York Philharmonic and expecting him to perform a Tchaikovsky symphony. He knows how to hold the violin and bow, but he has a long way to go before he can make music.

Dr. Cyril H. Wecht, an experienced coroner and former president of the American Academy of Forensic Medicine, was more blunt:

[Kennedy's autopsy was] extremely superficial and sloppy, inept, incomplete, incompetent in many respects, not only on the part of the pathologists who did this horribly inadequate medical-legal autopsy but on the part of many other people. This is the kind of examination that would not be tolerated in a routine murder case by a good crew of homicide detectives in most major cities of America.

For whatever reasons—some innocent bumbling and some not so innocent—the medical evidence in the JFK assassination will forever be considered tainted, incomplete, and inconclusive.

And the question remains—who had the power to misdirect and confuse the official medical examination of the assassinated President?