

Bullet That Killed Kennedy

May Have Been a Ricochet

Washington

The bullet that killed President Kennedy may have ricocheted off the President's automobile before striking him on the back of the head, an expert on wound ballistics said yesterday.

This presents still another possible odd twist to the medical story of the November 22 assassination.

Or the assassin may have used soft-nosed, incompletely jacketed hunting-type bullets in an effort to produce maximum size wounds, Dr. James Beyer said.

Dr. Beyer, a pathologist at Arlington, Va., hospital who formerly was with the Army Surgeon General's office, is not connected in any way with the Kennedy case.

But he said that these possibilities concerning either the course or character of the fatal bullet appear to offer about the only satisfactory explanation for the extent of the President's lethal wound as described by Dallas doctors who attended him minutes after the shooting — and by a reliable source familiar with findings of a still-unannounced autopsy report.

The autopsy was performed at the Naval hospital at Bethesda, Md., the night of Kennedy's death, but hospital authorities and the White House have not made the report public.

However, a source familiar with the autopsy said Tuesday that the President was struck by two bullets, the first hitting him in the back and the second — and fatal one — in the back of the head. The first bullet, the source said, may have first glanced off some part of the presidential limousine since its penetration was not deep. (The issue of the bullet wounds has been beclouded from the start. For instance, doctors Malcolm Perry and Kemp Clark, who attended Mr. Kennedy at Parkland hospital, told newsmen the day after the shooting that the President "was shot by a bullet in the throat, just below the adam's apple. This wound, they were reported to have said, had the appear-

ance of a bullet's entry.)

Dr. Beyer also had this to say:

"I'm still surprised at the reported size of the head wound if a normal, completely jacketed, military type bullet was used — and if it did not strike some object, such as a portion of the President's limousine, before hitting the President's head."

Ordinarily, he said, a military-type bullet, if fired from

a range of about 100 yards as the fatal bullet apparently was, would cause only a relatively small wound at the point of entry, and would not necessarily cause extensive damage inside the skull.

In contrast, he said, a soft-

nosed hunting-type bullet — whose soft nose tends to "mushroom out" after striking a target — could cause a head wound of the devastating type described even though the initial entrance wound was not large.

Also, he said, if an ordinary military-type bullet was used and "just grazed" a portion of the limousine before striking the President — without losing much of its energy — the slight instability imparted to the missile

by the ricochet could have resulted in the large wound described.

The pathologist wrote the section on wound ballistics in the Army's official medical history of World War II.

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