

Second Wound Was Fatal

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When President Kennedy was rushed into the emergency room of Parkland Memorial Hospital in Dallas he was already beyond hope.

The bullet that struck the President in the rear of the skull, just above the nape of the neck and a little right of center, destroyed so much of the brain that survival was not possible.

This is the essential conclusion of the full autopsy performed at Bethesda Naval Hospital. The physicians' autopsy report is published, for the first time, as an appendix to the Warren Commission Report.

Location of Wound

Run your finger up the nape of your neck to the knob marking the base of the skull. Move your finger about an inch to the right of the knob and raise it slightly. That is where the bullet entered.

It went in at an angle. Place your fist a little above and behind your right ear. This is the main area where brain tissue and skull were blasted away as the round passed out of the skull.

The wound was like a starburst, with one tear extending 4 inches to the rear from the main wound. Another tear ripped to a point a little above the tragus, that small projecting flap overlapping the ear hole from the front.

At one angle, the open wound was five inches in diameter.

Three pieces of the skull were recovered from the street and the President's car. One section had a beveled section that appeared to be part of the exit point of the bullet.

The Other Wound

The President's other wound, caused by a bullet that hit in the lower neck and passed through to the front of his neck, might not have been fatal.

This bullet, which nicked the President's tie, probably was the same round that went on to injure Governor Connally. What is assumed to be this round was recovered from the stretcher on which the governor was placed.

When the President arrived at Parkland Memorial Hospital five minutes after the shooting, none of the doctors knew the facts that were to turn up later in autopsy. Dr. Charles J. Carrico, a resident surgeon, noted Mr. Kennedy's color as blue-white or ashen, his breathing slow, spasmodic and uncoordinated. His eyes were open but did not react to light.

The President made no vol-

untary movements. There was no pulse but a few chest sounds were thought to be heart beats.

The wound in the front of the neck was cut further for a tracheotomy, to create an effective airway for breathing, by another surgeon, Dr. Malcolm O. Perry. Blood and fluids were infused into an arm and leg.

Incisions were made in the chest to permit drainage of the chest cavity.

Dr. Carrico administered hydrocortisone because of the President's known adrenal insufficiency.

Closed heart massage helped pump blood through the circulatory system but failed to restore heart action.

No Response

None of these procedures brought any response. At 1 p.m., twenty-five minutes after the President was brought to the hospital, he was given last rites and pronounced dead.

The emergency treatments that were attempted to restore breathing and heartbeat had required that the President be on his back. Thus, the physicians saw only the massive head wound, not the small entry point at the back of the skull.

After the President's death, they made no attempt to further examine the body. Dr. Carrico was questioned about this by the Commission. Here is the exchange:

"Q. Was any effort made to inspect the President's back after he had expired?"

"A. No, sir."

"Q. And why was no effort made at that time to inspect his back?"

"A. I suppose nobody really had the heart to do it."

Brought to Bethesda

The body was flown to Washington and transported to the Naval Hospital by ambulance. Mrs. Kennedy remained in a suite on the 17th floor while the autopsy was performed in an examining room in the basement.

Comdr. James J. Humes, senior pathologist and director of the laboratories at the hospital, was chief autopsy surgeon, assisted by Comdr. J. Thornton Boswell, chief of pathology. Lt. Col. Pierre A. Finck, chief of the wounds ballistics branch of the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, worked with them.

Col. Finck's studies of more than 400 cases showed that when a bullet enters the skull, it causes a beveling or cratering effect — an expanding cone of destruction. Because of this, he felt that the fatal bullet had to enter in the small wound at the rear of the skull.

Tests Made

Col. Finck's view was confirmed at Edgewood Arsenal, Md., by firing 6.5 mm bullets at human skulls. One bullet that struck at the precise point of the real entry, blew out the right side of the skull leaving a gap similar to the massive head wound of the President.

It was also demonstrated at Edgewood that the same bullet that pierced the President's neck could have passed through Governor Connally's chest, tumbled through his wrist and slightly penetrated his right

thigh, as other circumstances indicate.

The Bethesda Naval Hospital autopsy was listed as No. A63-272. It was recorded on a standard government form, No. 503.

On first glance, it would not seem remarkable. Midway on the first page is the entry, "Cause of Death: Gunshot wound, head."

At the bottom of the first page, in a box marked "patient's identification" there is the entry, "Kennedy, John F."

Body Described

Further in the report, the pathologists record, "The body is that of a muscular, well-developed and well nourished adult Caucasian male measuring 72½ inches and weighing approximately 170 pounds. . . . The hair is reddish brown and abundant, the eyes are blue."

There is a notation that X-rays and photographs were made and turned over, undeveloped, to a Secret Service agent.

The removal and preservation of the brain for further study is recorded.

X-rays of the three skull fragments found on the street and in the car were listed as showing minute metallic fragments.

According to its charter, the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology will be repository for these specimens, as well as the bullet recovered, although this is not mentioned in the Warren report. The usual protocol is that they will be kept from public view for decades, usually until the President's close relatives have died.

The President arrived in the Emergency Room at exactly 12:43 p.m. in his limousine. He was in the back seat, Gov. Connally was in the front seat of the same car, Gov. Connally was brought out first and was put in room two. President was brought out next and put in room one. Dr. Clark pronounced the President dead at 1 p.m. exactly. All of the President's belongings except his watch were given to the Secret Service. His watch was given to Mr. G. P. Wright. He left the Emergency Room, the President, at about 2 p.m. in an O'Neal ambulance. He was put in a bronze colored plastic casket after being wrapped in a blanket and was taken out of the hospital. He was removed from the hospital. The Gov. was taken from the Emergency Room to the Operating Room.

The President's wife refused to take off her bloody glove, clothes. She did take a towel and wipe her face. She took her wedding ring off and placed it on one of the President's fingers.

A doctor's account of the President's arrival at the hospital.