

SF Examiner Oct 25 1966

Too Rigid

Back Brace Factor in JFK'S Death

By ARTHUR J. SNIDER

Examiner Correspondent
Chicago Daily News Service

President Kennedy was wearing a stiffer back brace than usual at the time of his assassination and this may have been a factor in his death, a physician said today.

Rigidity of the brace did not permit him to topple or crumble forward or sidewise, which might have put him out of the line of fire, after being struck by the first bullet, which the physician believes was non-fatal.

"Instead he could only tilt stiffly and slightly to his left, toward Mrs. Kennedy, with the back of his head still exposed to Oswald's telescopic rifle sight," said Dr. John K. Lattimer of New York in the Journal of The American Medical Assn.

"It was while he was in this position that he was struck by a second bullet from Oswald's rifle."

The fragments of the second bullet devastated the skull and caused death, Lattimer said.

The first bullet went through the soft tissues of the neck, grazing the pleura (membrane lining the chest cavity) on the right side and causing a blood clot with some purple discoloration, but no perforation and little blood loss.

Fate of the third bullet is unknown and it appears to have missed the auto completely, Lattimer said.

The President was wearing an unusually stiff brace because of persistent pain and a large number of injections of medication into the back, it was pointed out.

The brace consisted of the customary canvas corset with metal stays. It was laced tightly around the President's waist to give rigidity to the spine.

"In addition to this, however, he had immobilized himself further by wrapping a knitted elastic bandage around the lower portion of his body and the lower portion of the frame in a figure-eight arrangement to give the back added rigidity," Lattimer said.

Lattimer, a urologist at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, is a student of the medical aspects of Presidential assassinations.

Had it not been for that stiff brace coincidence and still a second one — a defective telescopic gun sight — Oswald would not have been successful, Lattimer said.

The bullets struck about four inches to the right of the aiming point and a little high because of the defective sight.

Coincidentally, however, the Presidential auto was following a course that curved to the right just enough to compensate for the error, the physician said.