

FACE THE NATION KCBS

Hale Boggs George Herman, CBS
 David Schumacher, CBS
 Richard Harwood, Washington Post

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Q (Herman): Mr. Boggs, do I gather from your answer a moment ago, that you feel that the situation is such that nothing need be done and the pendulum of public opinion will swing back by itself without any further investigation?

A: No, Mr. Herman, I didn't. I didn't say that. I said I had complete confidence in the commission report. As far as I'm concerned, as a member of that commission, if new evidence can be presented, then it should be looked at objectively. The only thing that I've seen that has been presented in all of these books, essays, speeches, comments, has been the fact that the commission did not look at the x-rays of the President's body made at the autopsy. Of course, the members of the commission themselves are not doctors. Looking at them, just looking at x-rays would not prove anything to me, I don't know how to read medical x-rays. We brought before the commission the men who performed the autopsy, we examined them in great detail. Now, if it would please anyone, if it would help to clarify any doubts that may exist in the minds of objective people, then I would say that if the Attorney General or some appropriate authority wants to appoint a totally objective group of doctors and others to look at these x-rays, maybe it should be done. But I would try to disassociate myself from those who are making these comments for gain, for notoriety, for profit, rather than those who have legitimate questions in their minds.

Q (Harwood): Mr. Boggs, did you agree with the commission's general finding that it was very likely that one bullet struck President Kennedy and Governor Connally?

A: The language that we used in the commission report - and I have it here, I reviewed it just a few minutes ago - we used the word "persuasive", and the evidence is very persuasive, Mr. Harwood. To begin with, we examined very closely the clothes that President Kennedy wore on that dreadful day, we discovered that there was a bullet hole right here in the collar, right where the tie is tied, which indicated that a missile penetrated his body. We knew that one other missile had hit his skull and had been the fatal one that killed the President. It was very obvious that this missile had come from the rear, the one that penetrated his tie, and it was - to use a word - it was persuasive that this bullet had also penetrated Governor Connally. Now, we said in the report that we were trying to prove by negatives. The idea that you can prove a case beyond any shadow of a question, in a situation like this, is utterly impossible. But we examined every conceivable witness, we had about 500 witnesses before the commission, there must have been - well, there were many millions of words of testimony, 26 volumes of them altogether. The report is 900 pages long (I have it here), and assuming for the moment that Governor Connally is right, that he was struck by a bullet other than the bullet which penetrated the body of President Kennedy, I think it is still very well established that all of the bullets came from the rear, which is a significant point.

Q: But Mr. Boggs, you say - rather the commission said in its report - that there's persuasive evidence, in any event that this wasn't necessary to any essential finding of the commission, and you have just said that again. But according to the film, isn't it true that two bullets could not have struck the men and come from that same rifle, that even though they may have come from behind, that that then meant that there was a second gun being fired at the motorcade?

A: No, I don't think the films prove that. I think the films have to be viewed in the light of the whole context of evidence before the commission. To begin with, the notion that any member of the commission or any member of

the staff of the commission sought to do anything except establish the truth is one that I reject offhand, as I am sure all of you gentlemen do. We conducted an exhaustive research into everything that transpired on that day in November, including the life of Oswald from the time he was born. And everything, every scintilla of evidence pointed up to the fact that this man was what Mr. Hoover called a "loner", he was a man who didn't have associates, who was not conspiratorial, who didn't bring in other people. In looking at the assassination you must examine Oswald's life and his character and how he lived, aside from the physical evidence. And all the physical evidence points to the fact that the bullets came from the rear. The members of the commission went to Dallas and went to the Book Depository. I sat there where Mr. Oswald sat and I raised the rifle that he used to my own shoulder. I looked through the sight that he had. The idea that you had to be an expert marksman, for instance, is one that I reject. This car was moving this way, away from the building. Almost any marksman using a telescopic sight could have performed that dastardly deed. So that these are the things that have to be considered in any appraisal of the matter.

Q (Harwood?): Well, Mr. Boggs, in talking about the single bullet, I just proposed the question to you that if it wasn't one bullet it had to be two and therefore it had to be more than one gun, and the only answer, really, that you've given here is that Lee Harvey Oswald generally was a loner, which doesn't seem to me, at least -

A: No, no, no, no, no, no - I've given -

Q: - a second man -

A: No, no - I - no, no - I think you misunderstood me. I said that you must examine all of the facts and the facts point - the facts do indicate that he was a loner, but in addition to that, all of the evidence, all of the evidence, before the commission shows that the bullets came from the rear, which indicates that they all came from Oswald's gun. None of these people have said that a bullet came from the front. This is a significant point.

Q: But the discrepancy that does exist which is pointed out (or which is claimed to exist, I don't say myself that it does exist because I don't think anybody can), but it is claimed that when you look at the Zapruder movie film made by Abraham Zapruder, an amateur photographer, when you look at this film of the President's death and you check the point where the President is visibly hit, you check the point where the President is visibly hit again, and you check the point where the Governor Connally and his wife think he was hit, that comes at a point such that no one could have fired the gun these three times -

A: Well, now, wait a minute -

Q: Let's not make a -

A: Wait just a - just a minute. We are talking in terms of split seconds -

Q: Indeed, fractions of -

A: Fractions of seconds. And these determinations are made by people who in many cases are something less than expert. Merriman Smith, who was one of the witnesses to the assassination, wrote a very exhaustive piece about this very matter in last week's Washington Post. He goes into these very issues that you're talking about. Now, every person who has had anything to do with the investigation - Mr. Hoover of the FBI, Governor Connally who was there, the members of the commission - have all said that we have examined every conceivable piece of testimony. All I'm saying to you is this: that we established, as best that competent men can establish, that Oswald assassinated President Kennedy and also shot Governor Connally. Now, if there's any further evidence that can be turned up I'm for developing it. But the point I make is that the idea that the commission didn't make a thorough, an exhaustive and an objective examination is one that I reject.

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Q: Well, Mr. Boggs, you carry tremendous weight in the House, Senator Russell carries tremendous weight in the Senate, and without the at least tacit approval of you two gentlemen it's unlikely that there'll be another investigation authorized by Congress. Do you have any doubt at all that Lee Harvey Oswald, acting alone, for personal reasons, murdered President Kennedy?

A: None whatsoever. I am totally convinced of it.

Q: Would you actively oppose, if other persons were in favor of it, would you actively oppose a re-investigation, say by Congress - without the introduction of new evidence, simply going over the same old ground that you plowed in the commission?

A: Well, I would not actively oppose it. I would be for - if any new evidence exists, for it being brought out. The Attorney General - remember, the Warren Commission has been dismissed, we have finished our work. We were formally terminated by the President, who appointed us. Now, if there is new evidence, certainly it should be gone into, but remember this, Mr. Herman, there are many people who would rather believe that there was a conspiracy. This is unfortunately human nature.

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Q: Would you say that an investigation at this time would do more harm than good - that is, it would only explore the same old questions?

A: Well, again, I don't like to say anything would do more harm than good, but if the investigation - if the objective of the investigation - is to pursue new evidence, that's one thing. If the objective is to answer some of the things that have been raised up to the present, I would say that I would have grave questions about it.

Q: Let me give this a slightly -

A: Except for the autopsy - x-rays.

Q: Let me give this a slightly different turn. You have considerable experience with criminology and legal affairs in your long term in and out of Congress. Do you think that Lee Harvey Oswald could have been convicted under the laws of your state by the evidence that you saw?

A: Oh, no question about it!

Q: The evidence was legally binding, none of it would have been thrown out by constitutionality rules and so forth?

A: I don't think there is any question about the fact that he could have been convicted of first degree murder.

Q: OK.

(Interview turned to other subjects.)