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JFK Autopsy, 450 Two takes, 530

DENVER AP - A leading medical expert says a four-inch mistake by a pathologist who examined the body of John F. Kennedy after he was shot to death in Dallas produced a series of false speculations about the assassination.

Dr. Russell H. Morgan said the bullet actually entered the president's skull some four inches higher than initially reported, but the Warren Commission's detailed report on the assassination failed to clarify that point.

Morgan, dean of the medical school at Johns Hopkins University, is the only radiologist to examine the X-ray photographs of the slain president's skull.

In an address to the 34th mid-summer conference of the Rocky Mountain Radiological Society here, he gave X-rays the credit for finally revealing the pathologist's error and disproving many of the more extreme speculations spawned by the mistake, which is included in the Warren Commission report.

Morgan's four-year investigation of the photographs and the Abraham Zapruder film of the assassination led him to several conclusions, he said.

The most important finding was that one of the pathologists who examined Kennedy's body in Washington the night of the assassination erred in saying the fatal bullet entered the "occipital protuberance," or the bulge at the lower section of the back of the skull.

This statement, which Morgan said later proved to be false, was included in the Warren report. Critics of the report immediately noted a major inconsistency between that alleged entry point and several features of the Zapruder film which showed a frame-by-frame sequence of the shooting. Critics said the film showed the president's head in a near vertical position when the bullet hit and also showed him lurching backward, leading to speculation the bullet came from the front.

The angle of the bullet became controversial. Some contended it couldn't have been fired from Lee Harvey Oswald's rifle in the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository and entered the skull where the pathologist said it did.

Morgan said Friday the Warren Commission, which named Oswald as the assassin, made no effort to explain the contradiction, allowing it to provide controversy for several years.

When he was given two days to examine the X-ray photographs, Morgan found them of poor quality, severely over-exposed. Of the 14, he said, only three were of the head wound. He said one had pencil marks on the negative itself showing "where somebody thought the bullet had gone."

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The penciled line corresponded to the mistaken pathologist's conclusion that the bullet entered the base of the skull and exited at an upward angle out of the right of the forehead.

But Morgan said he found the actual entry wound was 120 millimeters away from the penciled line, more than four inches higher on the back of the head.

The lurching of the president's body backward, he said, was caused by body spasms after the massive wound was inflicted.

Morgan said the Zapruder film, the ballistics tests, the projected line of fire and the angle of entry of the fatal bullet all were consistent with the explanation that a single shot fired from above and behind killed the president.

"The Warren Commission's diagnosis was correct," he said, "even though the evidence cited was inconsistent."

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