

The Kennedy Testimony

The publication by the Warren Commission of twenty-six volumes of testimony and supporting exhibits brings to a close its inquiry, at once monumental and meticulous, into the circumstances of President Kennedy's assassination.

The commission has performed an impressive public service in gathering and setting forth on the record all the available evidence. The procedure it has followed was the only course available to the nation after Lee Harvey Oswald, the accused assassin, was himself murdered. The commission has actually produced a more coherent and comprehensive chronicle than would a murder trial, conducted under the strict rules of admissibility that apply in a courtroom.

Because the commission has done such an exemplary job, it is regrettable that members of its staff resorted to nice nelly-ism in editing at least one section of the testimony. This related to Mrs. Kennedy's refusal to change out of her bloodstained clothes for the post-assassination flight to Washington. Mrs. Lyndon Johnson in her testimony offered an insight into the fierce emotion behind this refusal when she quoted Mrs. Kennedy as saying, "I want them to see what they have done to Jack."

Mrs. Kennedy's remark was deleted from the published account of the testimony. It would not have come to light had it not been printed by a columnist with access to the unedited testimony. The commission's prudishness—if that was the explanation—was a disservice not only to the public but to history.