

Today in History November 22

Dallas, Texas -- 12:30 p.m. People inside the Trade Mart milled about, waiting for the guest of honor at the luncheon. It isn't every day that the President of the United States comes to speak, or that you get to have lunch with him. The room boiled with excitement. It should be soon now.

Someone outside the Trade Mart was watching for the motorcade. He saw the presidential motorcade coming. But it didn't turn off. Not only did it not turn off, it was traveling at a high rate of speed as it flew by. Something had gone wrong! Those attending the luncheon would be disappointed because the president never made it.

Known Facts

It was a beautiful November day. The earlier drizzle had stopped, and the sun appeared. A fateful decision was made. The president's vehicle would go on the parade with the top down. The route would take them from Dallas Love Field, through downtown Dallas, and back to the Trade Mart where the crowd anxiously awaited their steak dinner with the president.

Nearing the end its route where the public could see the President, the presidential motorcade turned right on Houston Street near the west end of downtown Dallas. It proceeded one block north, then turned left on Elm Street. It was the last leg before the I-35 freeway. A short 5-7 minute drive would take them to the Trade Mart, where the president was to give a speech at a luncheon.

Shortly after making the left turn on Elm Street into Dealey Plaza, a series of shots rang out. At least two struck President Kennedy, and one struck Gov. Connally. From there, the motorcade raced to Parkland Hospital, and both men underwent emergency surgery. President Kennedy was declared dead at around 1:00 p.m. Just a few minutes earlier, the darkest moments in Dallas history occurred. The nation mourned.

President John F. Kennedy was killed, and Governor John Connally was seriously wounded. Sniper fire hit both of them. That much we know. But what really happened that day? And how exactly did it happen?

It is important to understand where people were sitting in the vehicle when the shots were fired. The Lincoln limo had three rows of seats. In the front left was the driver, Secret Service Agent Bill Greer. To his right in the front passenger seat was Secret Service Agent Roy Kellerman. In the second row was Nellie Connally on the left, and her husband, Gov. John Connally, on the right. Gov. Connally was sitting on a jump seat about 6 inches inboard from the right door, and about 3 inches lower than the President's seat. In the third row on the left was Jackie Kennedy, and to her right, in the right rear seat of the vehicle, sat President Kennedy. Remember this seating chart because it is important to understand what happened. (Somewhere in there is probably a joke about why Kennedy's are never on the far right.)

For those who hope I'll resolve what really happened, I'm afraid you will be disappointed. Even if I clearly stated a position, I doubt I would convince anyone anyway. I'm not sure we will ever know for sure.

As many of you know, I am an attorney. I won't try to prove what happened that day, but I'll go through some of the evidence trying to see it as an attorney. This is a difficult case that requires looking evidence that isn't always clear. It's easy to ask, "Is this a good explanation?" But that may be shortsighted because it begs the follow up question, "Compared to what?" Something might not be a good explanation, but it may be better than any alternative.

The JFK assassination, I believe, puts anyone studying it to some very hard decisions. What I will try to do is look at the actual evidence, as an attorney, and point out the choices that evidence leaves us. I'll try to look at the evidence and help the reader see the hard decisions. Remember as you go through this and consider a particular point, "Compared to what?" That is really a critical question to answer.

Basic Controversy

More than forty-five years later, the assassination is still controversial. Doubts about the official version existed even before the so-called official version came out. It seems that the only two things that did not misfire about that day were the shots that hit the President. Seemingly everything else that happened misfired in some shape, form, or fashion.

The new president, President Lyndon Johnson, appointed the US Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren to head up a commission, the Warren Commission, to investigate the assassination. If it was supposed to eliminate some of the controversy, it failed miserably.

The "Official Version" as Determined by the Warren Commission

The "Warren Report" is 26 volumes in length. The Commission concluded 10 months later that Lee Harvey Oswald was the lone assassin and that he acted without help. It concluded that Oswald, acting alone, set up a sniper's perch in the southeast corner of the 6th floor of the Texas School Book Depository. From there, he fired three shots at the presidential limousine as it was going west on Elm St. One shot missed, one struck President Kennedy in the back, exited through his throat, then entered Governor John Connally's back, passing through chest, his left wrist, and stopping in his left leg. The third shot hit President Kennedy in the head, and that shot was fatal.

The Major Issue – What Everyone Must Decide About the Assassination

Regarding the assassination, it's not that simple to boil it down to one issue, but I'm going to try. Here is the issue: The Warren Report either got it right, or it was very wrong. I see no logical third alternative. I have a simple criterion to determine whether you believe the Warren Report was right or wrong.

You believe the Warren Report was basically right if you believe there was a single shooter. You could believe Oswald was the only shooter but part of a conspiracy and disagree in a significant way with the Warren Report, but still agree it was basically right. You could believe

there was a single shooter but believe Oswald was not the shooter and still basically agree with the Warren Report conclusions.

You believe the Warren Report was basically wrong if you believe there was more than one shooter.

For those who believe the Warren Report is wrong, there are a great many ways they disagree with the Commission's report. The disagreements range from relatively insignificant to believing the Commission was wrong on almost all accounts, but I'm only going to classify those who believe in a multiple shooters as disagreeing with the major conclusions of the Warren Report.

What Do You Think?

There is no doubt that the Warren Report has numerous errors, but was it wrong in its basic conclusions?

The doubters found plenty of reasons to dispute the Warren Commission's report. It was filled with inconsistencies. They ignored numerous witnesses. Key members of the Commission didn't even hear many of the witnesses whose testimony the commission relied upon, much less the testimony of those the commission chose to ignore. The flaws that weren't obvious to the Commission became obvious to others in fairly short order. To the doubters, those flaws would only support the idea that it wasn't just a lone gunman.

I'm not saying I agree or disagree with the Warren Commission's report or with its conclusions. It was flawed, but it might still have been right. Or it could have been way off. What does the evidence show?

What Everyone Wants to Know

What really happened that day? Was Lee Harvey Oswald a lone nut assassin, or was he, as he claimed, the "patsy" (the fall guy) for a wider conspiracy? How many shooters were there?

There are numerous conspiracy theories. I've seen far too many to mention them all. They range from the reasonably plausible to the totally absurd. Two examples of absurd theories are the one that has the driver of the presidential limousine turning around and delivering the fatal shot himself. That no one actually observed such an event hasn't kept someone from suggesting it really happened. Another has (then) Vice President Johnson getting out of his car, and running up to the front of the motorcade with a rifle, and shooting his boss. He would have to have done that in front of numerous witnesses, not one of whom reported such a thing, but he would also have had to run much faster than the vehicle was traveling, which at his age would have been impossible.

The utter absurdity of those theories hasn't kept someone from suggesting them as the way it happened. The people who have suggested those theories give conspiracy theorists a bad name. I will not address the completely absurd theories at all. Some theories are far more plausible and I'll try to look at those.

There have been at least three, and maybe four, official investigations. Since some have arrived at different conclusions, that makes sorting through the official versions even more challenging. I won't focus on any investigations other than the original investigation.

If you can imagine this, in 1963, it was not even a federal crime to assassinate the president. It was just ordinary murder, a crime of the state. Somehow, America has had at least four presidents assassinated, and attempts on the lives of at least three others that we know of. By 1963, you would have thought it would have occurred to Congress to make that a federal crime. But they had not done so. And believe it or not, that has something to do with the controversy. More on that in a bit.

In 1991, the movie *JFK* came out. Oliver Stone's movie detailed some eyewitness testimony, and it was smoothly woven into a story that left even more people wondering what really happened that day, particularly younger Americans who weren't around when it happened.

JFK is an interesting movie and has some historical value, but it fails miserably as a historical account of the events of that day. It was almost presented in documentary style that convinced a lot of people it was authentic. In truth, the movie, when its actual story is examined, is among the least credible of the conspiracy theories. Before going further, let's consider the major conspiracy theories.

Conspiracy Suspects

For those who believe there was a conspiracy, there is no shortage of suspects. In fact, the list is lengthy. Starting nowhere in particular, here are some of the suspects.

- ◆ **Protestants** – They didn't like the fact that President Kennedy was Catholic. This to me is absurd and I seriously doubt it had anything to do with the shooting. I won't even address this theory.
- ◆ **The USSR or the KGB** – Our sworn enemy, and perhaps seeking revenge for the stance President Kennedy took during the Cuban missile crises.
- ◆ **Cuba** – A sworn enemy close to home seeking revenge for our part in the Bay of Pigs? Or maybe Castro got Kennedy before Kennedy got him?
- ◆ **Organized crime** – The mob didn't like the fact that Attorney General Robert Kennedy was going after organized crime. It was costing them money. They have been known to kill people who get in their way. Would they actually kill the president though?
- ◆ **CIA** – Might rogue agents have decided to get even for Kennedy withdrawing air support for the Bay of Pigs invasion in Cuba? The CIA has a long history of being involved in activities other than gathering intelligence. They certainly had access to the kind of people who could do the job.
- ◆ **FBI** – FBI Director Hoover was no fan of JFK. And the rogue agent theory applies here too.
- ◆ **Military** – Angry over Kennedy's lack of support in the Bay of Pigs invasion.
- ◆ **The "Military Industrial Complex"** – Oliver Stone's favorite. Since military spending was up, and contractors benefited from that, I'm not convinced there was sufficient motive here. Even if there was, I suspect they would surely have realized they might not fare as well under someone else.

There are numerous books on the assassination. The first one I read, when I was about 11, was written by Jesse Curry, the Dallas Police Chief in 1963. Chief Curry seemed a little troubled by the official version, but I don't think he ever outright disagreed with it in his book.

Best Evidence of What Happened

Much of the actual shooting was captured on a home movie. One bystander, Abraham Zapruder, had a movie camera he used to film the procession through Dealey Plaza. It shows the limo after the turn on to Elm, through the fatal headshot. Because it captures the critical time frames, we will start with what it shows. I think the Zapruder film offers the best evidence of what happened that I've seen.

The Zapruder film progresses at 18.3 frames per second. It provides a great time line for the actual shooting sequence in what it shows, but unfortunately, it didn't capture everything. I'll not provide much in the way of frame numbers as other writers have focused on that extensively. If you have never seen the film, Google "Zapruder film" and watch for yourself, but be warned, it is graphic. If you doubt what I saw below about it, go look for yourself.

First Shot – the Movement

The Zapruder film shows the effect of the first hit when Kennedy is emerging from behind a street sign. Because the film is silent, we do not know the timing of the first shot. Kennedy is reacting to the first shot by bringing both hands to his throat area. Connally is turned to his right. Connally's facial expression doesn't change at first. But if you see frame by frame pictures, it shows some interesting things. One frame seems to show Connally's lapel being pushed out, then the lapel goes back.

The Warren Commission concluded that a single bullet struck both men. Doubters have referred to this as the "magic" bullet. Oliver Stone didn't invent the term magic bullet; his film *JFK* just demonstrates why doubters call it the magic bullet theory.

In *JFK*, the magic bullet goes through Kennedy, makes a sharp right turn, goes up, makes a sharp left turn, hangs in the air for 1.6 seconds, then continues on its trajectory through Connally to account for Connally's wounds.

Indeed that sounds unbelievable, and it does make one wonder how any intelligent person could believe there was a single bullet that hit both. If those were the real facts, such a theory would be absurd. It's too bad the movie *JFK* significantly altered the alignment of the two men in the vehicle from how it really was. It leads one to erroneous conclusions based on faulty facts. Everyone is entitled to their opinion, but the facts are the facts. You don't get your own facts!

The Stone film has Connally sitting directly in front of Kennedy, at the same height as Kennedy, and facing forward. Those three points are a matter of historical fact. Unfortunately, that deviation from historical facts can easily mislead people into drawing the wrong conclusions. It has another problem in that a bullet that passed through Kennedy's throat from the rear would still have hit Connally, just in a different location. If it didn't hit Connally, where did that bullet disappear to?

The Zapruder film shows the positioning of the vehicle occupants, but other still pictures are even better. Still pictures of the vehicle show that Connally was sitting about 6 inches inside Kennedy and a few inches lower. The Zapruder film shows him turned to his right when he was hit. In fact, Connally's seat was 6 inches to the left of Kennedy's seat and 3 inches lower.

So the "magic" bullet was not so magic. It didn't have to go down, go up, turn right, turn left, wait more than one second, and then enter Connally. Based on the *JFK* film, that angle would appear to be good for a shot from the rear hitting both of them and doing precisely the damage alleged, especially with Connally turned to his right. But again, if the two men were lined up as shown in *JFK*, Connally would still have been hit, just further to his left. Then Connally would have been hit twice from the rear, and his wounds do not support that theory.

The Zapruder film also shows a sudden bulge in Connally's coat jacket, seen in only one frame (18.3 frames per second), while Kennedy was behind a sign. The next frame shows Kennedy reacting to a hit. But was it the same bullet?

When the real facts are considered, are Kennedy and Connally lined up perfectly for one shot to hit both?

Remember I said you have to look an explanation and ask, "Compared to what?" Here's what you are confronted with on the issue of whether there was a single bullet that hit both men.

If it was not the same bullet, you have the incredible coincidence of two separate bullets hitting two separate targets at almost the same moment (or at least within 1.6 seconds of each other). It could happen, but it's unlikely.

Two separate and almost simultaneous hits would also create another troubling problem – there would have to be two shooters from the high right rear for that to happen. I've heard of some claiming a there was a second rear shooter, but no witnesses report shots that close together. I've heard some conspiracy folks claim there was a second rear shooter, but most of them have the "Oswald" gun as a ruse. Thus, even if there were two rifles from the rear, only one of them was being fired. The other was to throw investigators off.

Consider the possibility that a second shot from the rear that hit Connally 1.6 seconds after the first shot hit Kennedy. That scenario has some serious problems. First, something flew through Connally's chest 1.6 seconds earlier. No one has ever claimed, nor does the evidence show, that Connally was hit twice from the rear in short succession. He took one hit that did a lot of damage, but it was still only one hit.

Two rear hits on Connally has another very serious flaw in it. That flaw is that how did that bullet go around Kennedy without hitting Connally?

The Zapruder film shows Kennedy slumping to his left, and Connally moving to his left. Thus Kennedy would have been between a rear shooter and Connally after Kennedy was struck by the

first shot. And while Connally's face may not have shown he was hit, the Zapruder film shows Connally reacting physically to being hit from the rear.

If there was a second bullet 1.6 seconds after the first, it would indeed be a magic bullet. And I mean a serious magic bullet! It would have to have been on a trajectory to go through Kennedy, but instead make a right-angle turn, go past Kennedy from side to side, then make another right-angle turn, go past Kennedy rear to front, then make a third right-angle turn reversing the first turn, then a fourth right-angle turn reversing the second turn, and then enter Connally. It would have been a silent bullet that no witness noticed the sound from. Now that's what I call a magic bullet! No one claimed to have actually seen a shooter in any location other than the 6th floor of the TSBD, so that second shooter was missed by everyone.

It is a historical fact, verified by the Zapruder film, that something went through Connally's chest before pain registered on his face, and that at the same time, that some force time pushed him forward as that something went through his chest. Connally may have taken longer to react by facial expression, but clearly something flew from his chest to push the lapel out. Either that or he had some device in his coat to make the lapel flap forward for some reason. No one ever found such a device.

Which is more believable – that he was hit by a bullet earlier than his facial expression reacted or that he had such a device that he hid after being seriously injured? If you believe in the mystery device, what was his motivation for using it and then hiding it? And how could he have timed its use so perfectly to Kennedy being hit in the throat?

Difficult Choice: Here it is – you have to pick one.

Option 1 is that one single bullet (the so called “magic” bullet) hit both men, made possible by their alignment in the vehicle, that one bullet accounts for the back and throat wounds of Kennedy and all of Connally's wounds, and with Connally reacting slowly by facial expression.

Option 2 is a second rear shooter firing a second bullet that made four right-angle turns to avoid Kennedy since there is almost no possible rear shot that wouldn't have passed through Kennedy, a second rear shooter that no witnesses saw, two shots about 1.6 seconds apart, and since no one on the scene reported hearing shots that close together, using a completely silent bullet (I'll cover that problem later).

Option 3 is that a second rear shooter hit Kennedy earlier, that bullet disappeared into thin air after hitting Kennedy since there was no damage to the car from it and it couldn't have hit Connally, but for some reason no one noticed the sound of the second shot that hit Connally.

You may not like the single bullet theory, but is it a more likely explanation than two separate shots from the rear? You may feel none of them are good options, but which is the best option?

First Shot – the Wounds

Before getting to the wounds, a little background information regarding firearms is required. The rifle found on the 6th floor of the TSBD was a 6.5 MM rifle. Remember this discussion, because it is going to come up later when I talk about the rifle found.

There are two ways to measure the bore diameter (hole size) of a rifle, caliber and millimeters (MM). Caliber is the measure of the bullet diameter in inches. A .30 caliber means that the bullet is 3/10 of an inch in diameter. Millimeters is the metric measure of the diameter. There are 25.4 millimeters to the inch. The equivalent metric number to .30 is 7.62 millimeters (or 7.62MM). A 9MM = .354 caliber, just slightly smaller than a .357/.38 (a .38 is actually .357 inches in diameter). The 6.5 MM translates into about a .256 caliber.

Doctors in Dallas found a bullet hole in Kennedy's throat. They believed it to be an entry wound and said it was about 5 MM in diameter. That is troubling (since that would be .197 caliber). If that was an entry wound, you clearly have a second shooter because that shot had to originate from the front (not rear). It was also a different size than the rifle fired or than the bullet found on Connally's stretcher. There will be more on those subjects later.

Could the doctors, who were used to treating gunshot wounds, have erred in their assessment that it was an entry wound? In 1963, Parkland hospital doctors treated 150-200 gunshot wounds per year. Entry wounds and exit wounds are easy to distinguish in almost all cases. Not quite all, but almost all cases. If that wound was an exit wound, it fooled several excellent doctors.

Entry wounds tend to be relatively small round regular shaped holes. That's because as the bullet enters, it neatly spirals toward its target until something interferes with its flight path. Upon entry, it hasn't usually started to tumble.

Once the bullet hits flesh, bone, and muscle, the bullet starts to tumble inside the body. It may hit a hard enough object to cause the bullet to change directions. Normal exit wounds, because of tumbling, tend to be larger, jagged, and irregular in shape. That is not the only way to tell whether a wound is an entry or exit wound, but it is the most common and usually the easiest.

As an example, what happens to a football spiral when it is tipped? The ball starts to wobble, or tumble. It's the same affect with a bullet, except bullets tend to be longer, slimmer, more efficient aerodynamically, and faster moving than footballs, so the tumbling affect is greater.

Therefore, a small round regular shaped hole would, on first appearance, likely be seen as an entry wound. Doctors would generally assume that until the evidence showed otherwise.

Could the Parkland doctors have mistaken an exit wound for an entry wound? Could they have mis-measured the size of the wound by 1.5 MM? It's possible, especially under those circumstances, but is it likely? Draw your own conclusions. If you believe in the lone gunman, you must conclude they made both mistakes. They identified an exit wound as an entry wound and they mis-measured it by about 30%.

“Wow! 30%? That’s a lot,” I hear some say. Percentage-wise, yes, it’s a lot, but in real distance, it is less than 6/100 of an inch. When you put it that way, mis-measuring is a lot easier to believe. Especially if there is blood everywhere, you are trying to find a pulse, and determine the best action to save someone’s life. It is easy for me to see where precise hole size wasn’t the highest priority. It’s also easy for me to see where they might not have been looking for other indicia of the wound being an exit wound.

At any rate, the Parkland team did an emergency tracheotomy on Kennedy, enlarging the hole. At the autopsy later, that wound was thought to be an exit wound, but at the time, the autopsy doctors didn’t know about the enlarging of the wound. You would think that information would have been helpful information to them. Little mishaps like that appear over and over in the case. They shouldn’t have happened, it wasn’t proper procedure, but it did happen. One could note all of that in a report and just conclude procedurally, a lot of people were pretty sloppy. But sloppy doesn’t mean wrong.

If the throat wound was an entry wound, one is left trying to explain where the bullet went since it wasn’t found. That’s very troubling. Bullets don’t just enter, not exit, and disappear. But if that was an entry wound, that’s what you have to believe happened to that bullet.

The hole in Kennedy’s back was the supposed entry wound, even though the autopsy doctors thought it only went about 1 inch deep at the time. They speculated that the bullet fell out. That might have been a logical conclusion based on what they were seeing, but that is not how bullets entering a body normally act.

The autopsy doctors later decided the bullet has passed through the neck muscles, bruising them but not tearing them, and exited the throat. A bullet passing through something normally leaves a clear hole. What was missing was a clear bullet wound from the back, through the back of the throat, and out the front. From 1 inch into the back until the hole in the back of the throat, it was fleshy with no clear wound channel.

Is it also possible that it didn’t hit enough substance to tumble? It would require the bullet to have gone straight through without tumbling. That seems highly unlikely. But highly unlikely does not constitute proof that it did not.

The fact is that Kennedy had a hole in his back that appeared to be only an inch deep, and that wound was completely missed by the Parkland doctors. While it seems unlikely they would have missed that wound, they were working on the throat wound and head wounds, and the body was removed before they could do any serious post-mortem examination.

There was a small round hole in both the front and back of his throat. His tie was nicked by the bullet. There are several problems with that being a frontal wound.

The first problem with a frontal wound is where did the bullet go? There was no exit hole in Kennedy’s back, unless it exited the neat hole found in the autopsy that appeared to be only an inch deep. Neither was a bullet from the throat wound found in the body.

The second problem with a frontal wound is where did the bullet come from? Clearly it had to come from the front, but where exactly? The problem is the wound at the front of the throat was lower on Kennedy's body than the hole in the back of the throat. The measured location of both holes effectively eliminates a shot from the grassy knoll to explain that wound.

A shot from the grassy knoll requires an angle from front to back going from front right to back left and either level or downward toward the back. The holes in fact were higher in the rear and moving somewhat right to left. That doesn't prove the throat wound didn't come from the front, only that it could not have originated from the grassy knoll.

Is there a possible shooting location from the front with the right angle to have created both throat holes? Yes, there is! But don't get excited. The frontal location that would work would have to have come from the street, perhaps with a shooter firing from a manhole. How likely is that?

It's not likely at all for a couple of major reasons. One is that it would have required the shooter to fire without being able to actually see Kennedy. That's because he would have to have fired at an upward angle, from the front center to center-right of the vehicle. He would have to have fired through the grill of the car, the engine block, the front dashboard, and with one of those crazy bullets that made four right-angle turns to avoid hitting Connally before hitting Kennedy. (OK, if a magic bullet makes two right-angle turns, what do you call a bullet that makes four right-angle turns? A super magic bullet? Exactly how many magic bullets were fired that day? Where do you get those bullets?)

The chances of a hit without seeing a moving target are really slim, but here, there is simply no physical evidence of a bullet going through so many hard objects. There were no holes in the grill, the engine block, or the front dashboard. It would have required an armor-piercing round to get through the car. Then you would have to believe that such a bullet never tumbled since when it passed through Kennedy, it was still on a neat spiral. In short, bullets may do some strange things, but all of that is just impossible.

Even if you could get a bullet to do all of that, there is one additional major problem. There are no manholes in the street. That requires you to believe that the shooter built a manhole that morning, hid in it, fired, and after the excitement died down, he exited, filled the hole, and managed to cover it up in such a way that future investigators couldn't even detect it.

You would also have to believe that the vehicle then made it several miles to Parkland Hospital with a hole in the radiator and engine block, either of which would likely have stopped it before it got there. (Hmmm, maybe the radiator was a deluxe self-sealing model that instantly repaired holes on both sides without any fluid being lost since none was found on the street. Same with the engine since no oil was found.)

There is one additional piece of evidence that suggests one bullet hit both men, and it is hard to ignore. The entry wound in Connally's back was a jagged, irregular wound. The means that the bullet was tumbling before it hit him, which meant it had to have hit something else before getting to him. The bullet passing Kennedy's body should have caused that, even if it didn't

tumble while in Kennedy's body. Connally's seat, that the bullet went through, could have caused that tumbling as well. However, a bullet hole in the seat that didn't hit Kennedy requires 4 right-angle turns.

Difficult Choice: Pick your option. **Option 1** is that the bullet passed through Kennedy from the high right rear without tumbling inside his body, the Parkland doctors mis-identified it as an entry wound, and the Parkland doctors mis-measured the hole in the throat. I don't honestly find that an attractive theory. The first fact requires a bullet to fail to tumble when hitting something that would seem to be enough substance to cause tumbling, and the other two facts require some of the finest trauma doctors in the country to make two mistakes in probably the highest profile case in US history. **Option 2** is the super shooter who built a manhole; fired through the vehicle without seeing Kennedy; his bullet passed through the front grill, the engine block, and the dashboard without tumbling, without leaving any holes, without stopping the car before it got to Parkland; then the bullet made four right-angle turns to avoid Connally; then neatly spiraled into Kennedy without tumbling; and then passed through the neck and back muscles and exited or simply disappeared into thin air once inside Kennedy.

For the first shot, the combination of movements and wounds requires you to believe something that is hard to believe. To me, this is a classic case where you have to say the first option is not a good option, but not a good option compared to what? The alternative is far less believable.

Evidence of at Least a Second Shooter

There is some physical evidence of a second shooter. It is hard for me to dismiss that. Some of that evidence is what actually happened when the fatal head shot occurred. Kennedy, already wounded, probably quite seriously, was slumping to his left.

Two evidences of a rear shooter often cited as proof of a second shooter are not as clear as might appear on the surface. Those two things are the movements and the sounds.

Second Shot

The Zapruder film frame 313 captures the split second after impact of the fatal head shot, and it shows an explosion on what appears to be the right side of Kennedy's head. A chunk of skull landed behind Kennedy and to his left. Then Kennedy's head snaps backwards and to the right.

Now, remember the seating I said was important? Blood, brains, and bone bits (I'll be less graphic now and refer to this as the "debris") were found all over the car, but Officer Bobby Hargis was on the left back fender (behind Jackie Kennedy) of the limo. In other words, he was to the left rear of the President. He caught a face full of that debris.

Officer Hargis' location, the skull piece landing, and the head snapping backwards seem to indicate a shot from the front right because...

1. The bullet path would likely have caused the debris to more or less follow a straight line from source of the bullet. That would have put Officer Hargis right in the debris path. ***Is that what happened?*** Yes, in fact he was covered in that debris.

2. The skull part would have likely landed behind Kennedy and to his left with a right front shot. *Is that what happened?* Yes, that is exactly where it landed.
3. The momentum from a bullet from the front right would cause the head to move backwards. *Is that what happened?* Yes, the head did snap back to the right.

“Aha! All of that proves that a shot (the fatal head shot) came from the front right,” I hear some say. They don’t prove it, but they do indicate it. Unfortunately, there is another perfectly logical, though less likely, explanation for all of that. Let’s consider that explanation one piece of evidence at a time.

Could the debris landing behind the president be caused by a shot from the rear? What about where the skull piece landed? What about the head going backwards? I’ve been shooting for years, and I’ve observed inanimate objects being hit, as well as live animals being hit, by bullets. Do things sometimes go in the direction from which they shot came? Yes – it happens frequently. But more often it falls away from the origin of the shot. I think there is a simple physics principle at work to explain that.

When an object is hit well below its center of gravity, it tends to fall toward the direction from which the shot originated, even when the object it is actually knocked backwards. Think of a bowling pin knocked backwards, but falling forward when the bowling ball, or another pin, hits it below its center of gravity.

Adult human beings are rarely “knocked” backwards when shot by most handheld weapons. They sometimes jump in that direction though. When something is hit well above its center of gravity, it tends to fall away from the direction the bullet came from. The closer to the center of gravity the hit occurs, the less reliable these principles are.

There is a scenario where a shot from the right rear, the direction of the Texas School Book Depository (TSBD), would give Officer Hargis a face full of debris. That scenario is that the explosion of debris goes forward, left, and up, then descends on Officer Hargis as he went through it.

The Zapruder film shows the debris being blown up in the air. That means it had to come down. Some landed in front of Kennedy, some on the back of the car, and some on Hargis. Whether he and the vehicle were traveling fast enough for that to happen is debatable. But that is at least another way to look at how Hargis could be covered in debris.

Here’s a difficult question if you believe in a right frontal shot. How would debris have landed to Kennedy’s front left with a shot from the front right? Is it easier to believe a right rear shot or the debris making a right-angle turn?

Second, what about something blown away from an object? Well, that’s what happened – a piece of skull blown from the head landed to Kennedy’s left rear. Sometimes I’ve seen objects go crazy directions when they become detached from the main body, but way more often, those objects tend to go away from the direction of the shot. That would be more indicative of a shot

from the right front, not the right rear. However, just like the debris, it is possible that the piece of skull went up and landed behind the President as the car was moving forward.

Applying these principles, it isn't hard to determine that Kennedy's head was well above his center of gravity. Further, he was already slumping forward and to his left.

Alternate explanation: The skull section, blasted toward the front left by a right rear shot, would have gone up in the air and landed to the left front of the President. Instead, it landed to the left rear. So the shot couldn't have come from the rear, right? Wrong!

Remember that the vehicle was moving forward. The skull would not have gone forward as fast as the vehicle because the instant it became detached, it would no longer have the vehicle's momentum to carry it forward. It could have appeared to land behind Kennedy with a rear shot when it fell on the moving vehicle. Thus with a right rear shot into a moving vehicle, the skull section could have landed behind Kennedy on the back of the car, but only because the vehicle itself was moving the president forward but not the skull piece.

One may not like it, but considering possible shooting locations based on movements, you cannot discount these two things as evidence of a shot from the rear. There is not incontrovertible evidence of a frontal shooter. Indications, yes, but not proof. Not even close to proof.

Third, the head snapping to the right rear seems to strongly indicate a frontal shot. It is harder to explain with a shot from right rear, but not impossible. Without a doubt, it is not normal, but there is a plausible explanation for a head snap to the rear that I think one must consider.

First, would it help if you knew the head went forward first, then approximately 1/3 of a second later snapped to the rear? That is exactly what happened. Since there was only one violent explosion, we can probably safely conclude there were not two separate hits to the head in close succession. Besides, the momentum from the first bullet might have moved the head out of the path of a second bullet if there were two separate bullets. There are two reasonably plausible explanations for the head snapping to the rear.

Alternate explanation 1: The bullet hit the brain – the nerve center of the body, so that is possible. One explanation is that the bullet struck a nerve which could cause the body to react in an unusual way other than the physics might suggest. Kennedy's head moved forward first before moving backward, but the physics of a rear shot bullet pushing the head forward was not overcome, just reversed when acted upon by another force.

Alternate explanation 2: Yet another possible explanation of a shot from the rear is that Kennedy was wearing a back brace that restricted his movement. The restraint caused by the back brace could have caused the body to react in a different way than expected. The brace restricted Kennedy's movement. Thus, when his body reached the maximum forward movement allowed by the brace, it could have created sort of a rubber band affect and snapped him backwards.

However unlikely it may be, this type of reaction is possible and may be the best explanation in this case. Again the question is “Unlikely compared to what?”

Difficult Choice: This evidence does create the possibility of a frontal shooter, but does not offer conclusive proof. To believe in a frontal shooter, other evidence must support a frontal shooter. If you believe in a rear shooter, you must accept these three unlikely pieces of evidence being what happened.

Where does the Zapruder film show Kenney’s head going? Comparing frame 312 (just before the fatal hit) to frame 313-319 or so, Kennedy’s head is pushed forward. If you look at the Zapruder film frame by frame, in frame 312, Kennedy’s head is slumped forward. In frame 313, just after the fatal head shot, his head appears to be pushed forward. The physics of this clearly supports a rear shot, not a front shot. A bullet from the rear would likely have pushed his head forward. That definitely indicates to me a right rear shot, but I’ll admit it’s not perfect.

The explosion shows on the right front part of the head behind the hair line. That wound is more likely the bullet exiting the head than entering the head. However, the bullet also hit the brain, which could cause the head to move in an unusual direction because of nerve function.

Difficult Choice: The fatal head shot offers one of the most difficult choices because there is actually what I would consider solid evidence to support either a front or rear shot. You can’t, by this evidence alone, eliminate shots from both directions, but it would be incredible if shots hit almost simultaneously from both the front and rear. That is most unlikely, so you probably have to choose the best explanation for the origination of the fatal head shot.

Sounds of Shots

What about the sound of the shots? Right after the shooting, Hargis proceeded on his motorcycle up the hill of the grassy knoll to pursue the shooter. The grassy knoll was to the front right of the motorcade, and there has been a lot of speculation about a shooter near the grassy knoll.

Hargis found nothing, but at least at the time, that is where he believed shots came from; his actions prove that. Later, he agreed with the official version, but his action right after the shooting continues to fuel speculation about a second shooter to the front right. Once again though, sounds could easily have been misleading.

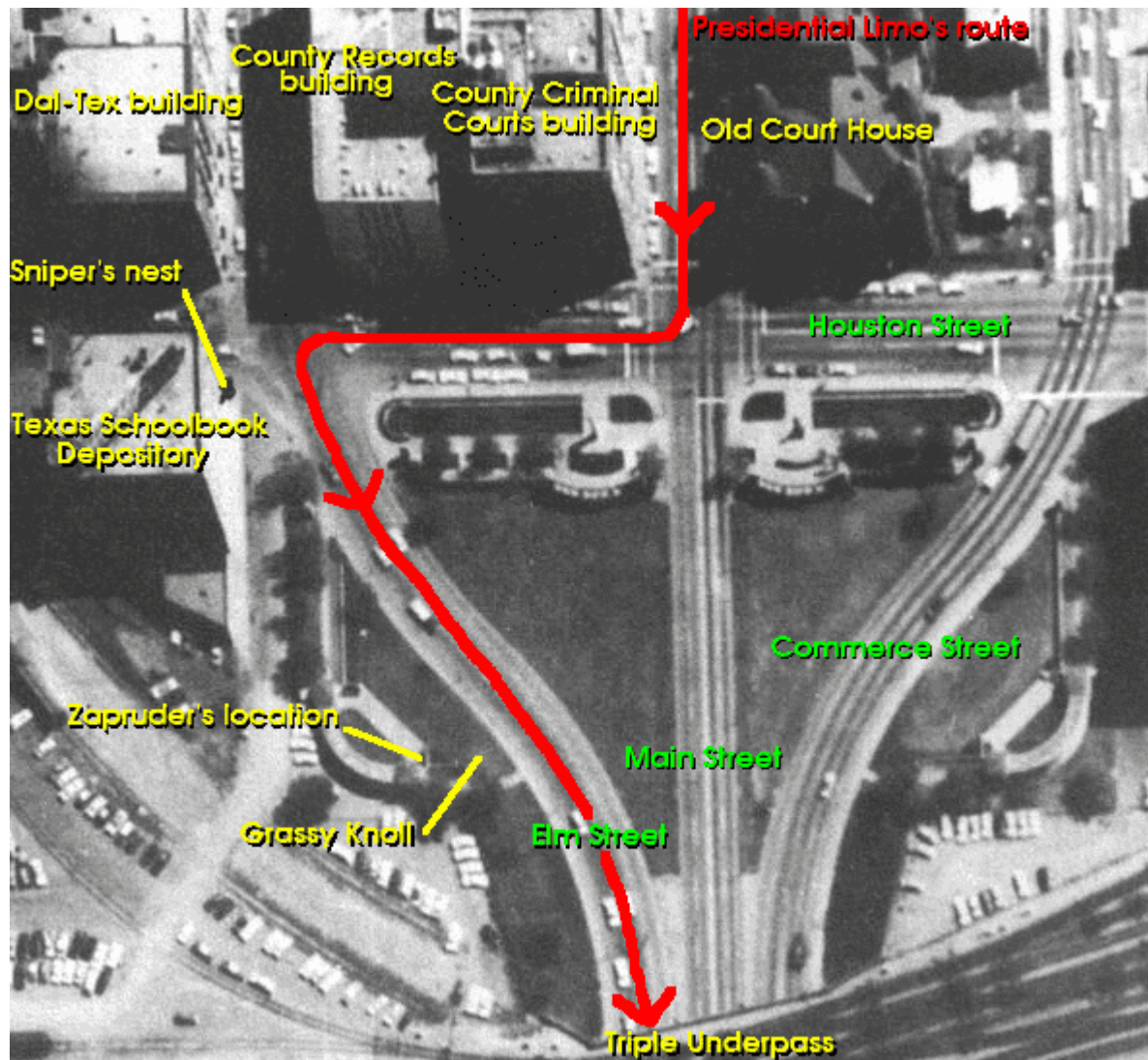
To know why, you need to understand a little about the geography of Dealey Plaza. I’ll start in the center, then go to the north and we’ll briefly go around the compass. See the picture below, which is oriented with East on top.

In the center are two triangular shaped grassy areas between the streets.

To the north is the TSBD. Notice the tree on the south side of the TSBD at approximately the halfway east-west point of the TSBD. West of the TSBD is a grassy knoll, with a concrete and granite area. There is a fence that juts into the knoll, and there are several trees at the fence line. West and north of that fence is a parking lot – uncovered and unshaded.

The east side is two blocks long and bound by Houston St. To the north on the east side is the county records. Just south of the records building and county courts building is the old red courthouse. Three streets go east and west. On the north is Elm, which curves to the south to converge with Main, which is the street in the middle. Elm is one way going west. Main is a two-way street. On the far south is Commerce Street, which like Elm to the north, converges with Main on the west end.

- Here is a picture of Dealey Plaza with the limo route marked in red.
- The yellow line marked “Grassy Knoll,” if extended to the red line, is the approximate location of the fatal head shot.



On the south side is a building, but it is not in the picture. On the west end of the Plaza is a triple underpass (bottom of the picture), and west of that is I35 (out of the picture). The three streets go downhill going west. Railroad tracks go over the triple underpass.

Why does all that matter? Because the area has a lot of concrete, steel, and glass. Over approximately a 150-200 yard distance from the east side to the triple underpass, the terrain slopes downward about 15-20 feet. Thus it sits sort of in a bowl. The area lends itself to tricky echoes with loud noises because there a lot of things sounds can bounce off of.

If you were there, and there was a loud, unexpected noise, it might be hard at first to pinpoint the source. It would depend on where you were exactly as to where you might think sounds came from, and where the sound actually came from.

Hargis might have thought he heard a shot from the front right. Some people did think they heard shots from the grassy knoll, but not everyone. But there is another logical reason for him going that direction to look for a shooter.

He might have gone there assuming that since someone to his right front was shot and the debris landed on him, the shot came from the right front. That is an entirely logical conclusion, and even if it is erroneous, the reasons for it being erroneous might not be obvious until later.

Difficult Choice: Choose your option. **Option 1** Officer Hargis was tricked regarding the location of the shot either because the echoes misled him, he based his decision to look there because he believed the debris came from the direction of the shooter, or both. **Option 2** Officer Hargis heading toward the grassy knoll is a good indicator of there being a shooter there. Despite expecting to see a shooter, neither he nor any other witness saw a shooter in that area. The shooter got away clean. Which option is the better option?

Eyewitness Accounts

There is some other evidence of a second shooter. I've seen what the eyewitnesses said at the time, and it seems that they fell into four groups. Some thought the shots came from the Texas School Book Depository (TSBD) (behind and to the right of the limo), some thought the shots came from the grassy knoll (to the front right), some thought shots came from both directions, and some thought the shots came from somewhere else entirely.

Now let's look at rough percentages (my estimates) – TSBD only, 45%; grassy knoll only, 45%; both, 5%; somewhere else, 5%. Needless to say, many witnesses were confused about the origin(s) of shots.

No one actually saw more than one weapon. Several people saw what appeared to be a rifle barrel sticking out the 6th floor window of the TSBD, and some said they saw a man with a rifle in that window. Employees of the TSBD working on the fifth floor actually heard what they believed to be shell casings hitting the floor above them after each shot was fired. That is strong evidence that shots were fired from that building.

That particular window has a good angle over the area. It is in the very southeast corner of the building, looking out on the south side. That is where Dealey Plaza is.

Eyewitnesses, (or maybe they should be called “ear” witnesses) can't agree on the number of shots fired. The number ranges from 2 to 8, with 3, 4, and 5 being the most common. Allegedly

scientific evidence in the 1978 investigation indicated four shots, but that evidence was found to be flawed. A look at people's reactions after the shots were fired indicates that people were confused about the location of the shots.

The police focused in on two areas – the grassy knoll, where they found nothing, and the TSBD, where at least one rifle was found. I say at least one rifle because some conspiracy theorists say two were found, but there is no official record of a second rifle.

Could a shooter have gotten away from the grassy knoll without being spotted? Yes, if he (or they) moved quickly after shooting. It would have been in the shadows on a sunny day. Anyone looking into the foliage would have trouble making anything out since it would have been quite dark in there.

Some say there was smoke there; others say they saw a man with a rifle there. The problem with the smoke theory is that in 1963, most modern gunpowder was smokeless. So if a weapon admitted any smoke, it wouldn't be much. That wouldn't leave much to see. Someone should have informed Mr. Stone that smokeless powder was the norm in 1963 – he apparently didn't get that. In fact, it had been the norm for about 70 years then. So any modern rifle would have used smokeless powder.

As for the man with the rifle, no one ever provided a description of such a man, and once out of that foliage, the parking lot offered little cover. One witness on the railroad bridge had a good view of the parking lot and saw no unusual activity there. Thus it seems unlikely a shooter could have gotten away back there. There was just no place to hide and any number of people were very close and could have looked and seen something. But no one did.

Truthfully, the fuzzy images I've seen of photographs taken at the time of the assassination have always been somewhat speculative as far as evidence of a shooter. Shadows tend to look like anything. It's kind of like the Rorschach ink blot test. What do you see in that ink blot? I say a horse, you say a cat, and then there's the idiot who sees only random shapes. At least you and I agree there is something there, but the idiot can't see the obvious.

Well, now it turns out the idiots (I'm using a term commonly applied to those who disagree with conspiracy theorists about the concept that there was a conspiracy involving multiple shooters) might not be such idiots after all.

Fairly recently photograph enhancing technology pretty casts serious doubt about the theory that there was a shooter there and someone got a picture of that person. Matching the possible location of a shooter (near the corner of the fence on the south side of the grassy knoll) with other objects and taking other photographs with common elements, we can determine the approximate size of a shooter. Get ready – it would have to be a shooter not quite 3 feet tall.

Well, such a shooter could more easily hide in the crowd or in small places a bigger shooter couldn't hide. But would he (or she) be less conspicuous? I doubt it, especially if carrying around a long firearm, and no one has ever suggested shooters from a distance using anything

other than rifles. Of course, to some conspiracy buffs, maybe a small shooter explains the small bullet hole in Kennedy's throat.

Difficult decision: Choose the better option. **Option 1** is that the police found evidence of the only shooting location and the only weapon used, and that was in the TSBD. **Option 2** is that there was an inconspicuous midget shooter near the grassy knoll, in broad daylight, that he was shooting from the foliage, not one witness got any kind of description of him, and he got away clean.

Potential Problems with Oswald as the Shooter

The TSBD was a warehouse filled with boxes of books (schools books in case you are wondering). What no one doubts is that a rifle was found on the 6th floor of the TSBD. But it wasn't found in the "sniper's perch" where three rifle casings were found. Instead it was found in the northwest corner, stashed behind some boxes, which is the corner opposite the sniper's perch. If Oswald was the shooter, that is troubling because of the timing involved. Why is that a timing problem?

Let's assume for a minute that Oswald was the shooter. That possibility raises several questions. The real ultimate question is whether what is known about his movements make it possible for him to have been the shooter in the 6th floor window. To determine if it is possible, we need to answer some preliminary questions. Let's start with what he would have had to do.

He was seen in the break room earlier (prior to the shooting), and no one seems to have seen him after that. Then the shooting occurred. After the last round is fired, he ejected the empty casing (taking about 2.3 seconds, but maybe less), then took the rifle, and ran rifle in hand about 45-60 yards to the rifle's hiding place.

How did I get 45-60 yards? Geometry! The building is 100 ft. x 100 ft. The sniper's perch was in the SE corner, the stairs in the NW corner. A direct angle outside the building would be a maximum of 47 yards. Inside it would be less, but it might not have been possible to go straight. However, it shouldn't be more than 60 yards.

Why eject the last round and carry the rifle across the building? The stairway was in the opposite corner of the building. He could have chambered a round, prepared to kill any witness who might have come barging up (or down from the top floor) to see what was going on. When no one came when he neared the stairway, he could have stashed the rifle, then darted down the stairs.

He stashed the rifle behind some boxes, perhaps in a location he had already prepared for his escape, then went to the stairway. He descended four flights of stairs; no one saw him on the stairs. Then he proceeded to the break room in approximately the middle of the building (about 25 yards or so from the stairs), and was "calmly drinking a Coke" on the second floor not more than 90 seconds after the last shot was fired. A supervisor and a police officer saw him in the break room as they were rushing through the building going to the 6th floor. The supervisor confirmed to the officer that Oswald was in fact an employee in the building and that he had authority to be there.

Is that what someone who had just shot the president might do? Well, I can't rule it out. It makes sense to me.

Could he have done all that in the time allotted? Yes, it's very possible. The distances covered in the time allotted don't leave a lot of room for error, but there was plenty of time.

A young man of 24 could cover the distance in the time. In fact, as a Marine, Oswald would have to have been able to cover 300 yards in full combat gear in 45 seconds. Given twice the time, less than half of the distance, and not hauling a combat pack makes the task seem quite possible and very reasonable.

Multiple subsequent tests by several different individuals produced some interesting results. Everyone tested made it from the sniper's perch on the 6th floor to the break room on the 2nd floor in between 48-72 seconds, well within the 90 second time frame of the Oswald sighting.

Why would he stop to get a drink and stop to drink it? Maybe he was thirsty. Maybe he heard everyone coming and decided to look cool – perhaps more cool than he felt. Perhaps he got a Coke out of a machine, or maybe he just picked one up off the counter when he heard others coming. Maybe he only appeared to be drinking a Coke and immediately bolted after the others left. Given how quickly he got out of the building, that is almost certainly what happened.

A professional killer could look calm afterwards and have the presence of mind to purchase a drink or pick up someone else's off a table or counter. Could Oswald have pulled that off? Why not? I can't think of a reason why he couldn't have done that.

The problem is no one saw Oswald at all during that period until 90 seconds after the shooting. What he did between being seen prior to and right after the shooting remains a mystery. No witness has ever come forward detailing his whereabouts during either period. And you would think that TSBD employees would have every incentive to finger Oswald if they weren't involved. After all, they were all potential suspects.

How did Oswald become a suspect so quickly?

Conspiracy theories abound regarding how Oswald became a suspect so quickly. The main conspiracy theory I've heard is that he must have been set up. Was Oswald set up, or was there a legitimate reason why he quickly became a suspect?

Employees heard the rifle being fired from their building. Some heard shell casing hitting the floor on the 6th floor. Oswald was in the building when the shooting occurred. Oswald, after his brief encounter on the second floor 90 seconds after the shooting, then managed to get out of the building before it was sealed. All employees were accounted for at the roll call except for Oswald; he was the only employee not present at a roll call shortly thereafter. He had no reason to leave the building, but he did get out before the building was sealed. That is how he became a suspect so quickly. (See, the person who isn't there frequently gets blamed for things.)

That of course does not prove he did it. But if he wasn't a shooter, why did he leave the building? Let me ask you something. If you were the shooter, and you wanted to get away with it, would you have tried to get out before the building was sealed if you could have? Really, if he had stayed, how long would it have taken to finger him as the prime suspect? I suspect a few hours at most, but maybe a lot less than that. They found the rifle on the 6th floor, the perch, the shell casings, and they would have fingerprinted everyone eventually. If Oswald was known to be up there, and I don't know that he was, that would have raised suspicion immediately.

While no one else saw him, who knows how long the fact that his whereabouts were unknown would have been kept from suspicion? Everyone whose whereabouts during the shooting were in question would have had some serious explaining to do, and it's just hard to believe with employees trying to save their own hide that Oswald wouldn't have been fingered pretty quickly, unless they came up with another suspect in the building. And if they did find another suspect, that would have been one cool customer. He stayed right there in the building despite them finding the rifle, not having a logical explanation for his whereabouts during the shooting, and acting completely normal.

If Oswald was the shooter, it makes sense to me that he decided to get out while the getting was good. I absolutely can't rule that out. His best chance to get away was to get out as soon as he possibly could, but without raising suspicion on the way out. If he'd been running madly for the nearest exit, others would have noticed that.

If he wasn't the shooter, why did he leave the building? When I consider all the possibilities, his leaving the building is just plain bizarre if he was not the shooter, or at least a shooter, and I'm unable to come up with a logical explanation for that.

It was his absence that made him a suspect so quickly. Does that suggest a setup?

Logical Conclusions from the Rifle

Three rifle casings, especially with a bolt-action rifle, don't prove that three shots were fired. A bolt-action rifle leaves the spent casing inside the breach of the rifle until the bolt is pulled back, the spent shell ejected, and a new cartridge mechanically inserted by the bolt closing. So three casings might mean only two shots fired, or it could mean three. Logic suggests three since otherwise the shooter would be starting with one less round than if the first one was live. But if you wanted to throw off investigators, one might do exactly that. It is little tidbits like this that fuel conspiracy theories.

The fact is three shell casings all by itself doesn't prove anything one way or the other, but the most likely explanation is that there were three shots. Would it help if TSBD employees heard what they believed were three shots from inside the building? And they heard three shell casings hit the 6th floor? That's what those employees reported.

Was Oswald a good enough shooter to make it happen? He was a sharpshooter in the Marine Corps, but don't be too impressed yet. Of his 54-man platoon, only one shot worse than Oswald. On the other hand, Marines don't flunk marksmanship – they just keep sending them back out to

the range until they qualify. And the minimum qualifier is by most standards a good shot and one who could hit a human target at 200-300 yards without a scope on the rifle.

The maximum distance of the president's shooting was less than 100 yards (estimated fatal head shot from the 6th floor was only 88 yards). But that isn't comparing apples to apples. Let's try to compare apples to apples as best we can.

In the Marines, Oswald shot an M-1 Garand. It is a .30-'06 that is one of the most accurate rifles in the world. Numerous world champion shooters have chosen it for competition, even in relatively modern times (even several years after 1963). It is semi-automatic, meaning it will fire as fast as you can pull the trigger.

In the Marines, he had no trouble hitting a man-sized target at 200 yards. If he was the assassin, he was shooting at a target about the size of a watermelon, not a man, and it was a moving target, not a stationary target. So Oswald was good enough with an infantry rifle to qualify for infantry, which is what you would expect from a Marine in the infantry. The shooter however, didn't use an M-1 Garand.

Poor Choice of Assassin's Rifle

The rifle found was a Mannlicher Carcano 6.5 MM bolt-action carbine. That rifle would not be the choice of many shooters. The rifle is Italian made. The Italians discarded it in World War II because it was inaccurate and unreliable.

Pardon me? Discarded by the Italians? The country that raised money after the war with their famous "dropped once, never fired" rifle sale? (OK, I'm kidding about that last part.) Against the Allies in World War II, the Italian army is most famous for its long marches with soldiers' hands clasped on top of the back of his head.

Yeah, *those* Italians are the ones who discarded the Mannlicher Carcano 6.5 MM bolt-action rifle because it was inaccurate and unreliable. It could be unreliable for combat and be perfectly good for other shooting purposes, so let's throw unreliable out. The lack of accuracy presents a problem, but how big of a problem?

The Mannlicher Carcano 6.5 MM fires a rounded 6.5 millimeter bullet at approximately 2000 feet per second. The M-1 Garand fires a .30 caliber round at between 2800 and 3300 feet per second. The 6.5 MM translates into about a .256 caliber.

Several factors affect the performance of a bullet – its speed, its weight, its diameter, and its shape are the big ones in flight. The bullet design and material affect what happens when the bullet collides with something. OK, enough explaining.

The Mannlicher Carcano 6.5 MM is no match for the M-1 Garand .30-'06. The bullet is smaller in weight, smaller in diameter, slower, nowhere near as accurate, and its shape is nowhere near as efficient aerodynamically. The carbine (carbine means short rifle) used is nothing like the M-1 Garand rifle (or for that matter any other quality military rifle in use at the time or since). Just

by design, the M-1 rifle is far more accurate. But the number of shooters in the world who could outshoot the Mannlicher Carcano 6.5 MM is small.

The Mannlicher Carcano 6.5 MM isn't a long range rifle, capable of accurate fire out to 800-1000 yards like the M-1, but it is quite capable of being accurate at the ranges involved in the assassination. Without a doubt, it's accurate enough for the job in question, though a high quality shooter wouldn't likely choose it. An expert shooter wouldn't choose another weapon because the Mannlicher Carcano 6.5 MM couldn't get the job done; they would choose another weapon because so many other rifles would be capable of doing the job much better.

The Mannlicher Carcano 6.5 MM carbine itself is slow to cycle, taking about 2.3 seconds to cycle a new round. In reality, it can be cycled faster, but that figure is widely accepted so that is the time figure I will use. In 2.3 seconds, the M-1 could easily fire all 8 of its bullets. Rapid fire with the M-1 is much easier.

Shooting an M-1 at a man-sized target that is standing still would be much easier than firing the Mannlicher Carcano at a target moving away at an angle and going down hill when the target itself is much smaller (only the shoulders and head showed) than a full torso. In other words, a very good shooter with an M-1 on the range might have a difficult time carrying off the assassination using the M-1 rifle. He almost certainly would have a much more difficult time with the Mannlicher Carcano, but that doesn't mean it couldn't be done.

The time from the first shot to the last shot is widely reported to be about 5.5 seconds, but it could have been as long as 8.5 seconds. (Don't ask how they seem to be so precise on those figures, because I don't know.) Most conspiracy theorists point out that it would take a minimum of 4.6 seconds to fire three shots from the Mannlicher Carcano. (The sequence would be fire, 2.3 seconds to cycle another round, fire, 2.3 seconds to cycle another round, and then fire again. This leaves little time for aiming.) Make that .5 seconds each to aim two rounds through a telescopic sight (a 4x scope in this case, but small opening, making it more difficult to sight through) and you have 5.5 seconds.

That would be tough, but very doable, though it leaves no margin for error. As a matter of fact, numerous shooters have duplicated the feat with the Mannlicher Carcano 6.5 MM bolt-action rifle. They did in well within the time limits, and many outshot the actual JFK shooter in terms of the number of hits per shot using 5.5 seconds as the time for 3 shots. At 8.5 seconds, it proved fairly easy for good shots.

Hits and Misses

I've heard two theories. One is that the first shot missed (a popular theory today) and the second and third shots hit. The other theory says the first shot hit, the second missed, and the third hit. I must confess I'm not comfortable with either theory, but either could be right.

Why am I not comfortable with either theory? It's easy enough to believe one of the first two missed, but the third shot being a hit I find troubling. Normally it would be the most likely shot to miss, unless the shooter took additional time for that last round. The problem is most witnesses have the second and third shot coming closer together than the first two. But how

much closer together? The truth is, no one had a stop watch running to time it. I know of no reliable evidence that tells us how far apart any of the shots were.

Now I'm assuming we are only considering the possibility of three shots, all from the TSBD. Several things seem to make that third shot hit less likely – small sight radius of the small scope making it harder to re-sight on the target; confusion starting to take shape below; car moving further away, more angled, and slightly downhill; and car slowing down (any variation in speed would complicate things for the shooter, but the car slowing down as it did might help the shooter overcome that). Before long, we have some very good shooting going on with a very poor rifle. The quality of the shooter for that type of shooting is also suspect. It could have happened, but I can easily understand why skeptics doubt it.

A very logical explanation of a first shot miss is that the shooter from the 6th floor of the TSBD fired the first shot through a tree, probably hitting branches, and causing the bullet to go somewhere other than the intended location. Why would the shooter fire through a tree? It's simple, really.

The shooter was looking through a small scope. When looking through a rifle scope, you get tunnel vision. You don't get a panoramic view looking out the business end of a rifle scope. When you are tracking something (moving the rifle with the target remaining in the scope view), about to fire, and suddenly a tree appears in the scope, squeezing the trigger can't always be stopped in time. There in fact was a tree outside the window that, according to the Zapruder film, would likely have interfered with the first shot.

Why Would the Assassin Wait so Long to Fire?

I have another problem with the official story, but it isn't evidence. I'm a shooter (been shooting rifles since ... 1963 – but it wasn't me – I was 5 at the time and having been about 15 miles from there when it happened, I have an airtight alibi). For approximately 110 yards, the presidential limo was headed straight toward the SE corner of the TSBD. A shooter perched in that corner on the 6th floor (approximately 50 feet up), would have had the easiest possible shooting from that vantage point while the car was on Houston Street. The vehicle turned north on Houston, drove one block, then turned west on Elm.

While on Houston St., the vehicle was going at a low speed and couldn't really speed up to make the turn. It couldn't go backwards because of the vehicles behind it. The vehicle was moving straight on level ground, not going away at an angle and downhill. So shooting while the car was on Houston Street had several advantages. At least twice as much of President Kennedy would have been visible. The shots would have been much easier. The vehicle would be less subject to sudden lurching if the driver realized what was happening because the driver would still be concerned about hitting something or someone and having to come to a complete stop. No such obstacles impeded the vehicle's progress once it was on Elm.

The shooter could easily have fired two or three times during that stretch on Houston, and still given himself another chance if he had missed after the car passed. And he would have been less likely to have hit anyone else. (OK, I realize the average assassin doesn't care about killing

people since that is what they do, but it would have made for a better surgical strike from the SE corner of the TSBD to do it then.) It would have been a much easier shot.

There is one risk a single shooter ran is that with the vehicle going away down Elm. It is possible that the vehicle occupants would have just ducked down where the shooter couldn't see them while the driver sped up to make additional hits extremely difficult. So waiting until the car was on Elm and already passed seems a lot riskier (in terms of hitting the target) for the shooter in the TSBD. But the risk was small. The shooter would have been looking down into an open top vehicle.

For the occupants to duck down, the occupants would have to instantly realize what was happening, take immediate appropriate action, and the driver would have to take off immediately. Any confusion or delay and the shooter would still have a chance. Who would you bet on in that situation? The shooter who knew exactly what he was doing, or the occupants who were confused? I'd favor the shooter.

I know that doesn't prove anything. Oswald might not have been smart enough to figure it out, but if he was a good enough shooter to have done what he allegedly did, he should have figured that out. His three years in the Marines should have taught him something about that kind of shooting. By all appearances, the sniper's perch on the 6th floor was set up by a shooter who knew what he was doing and it provided a nice rifle rest to improve accuracy.

Conspiracy theorists have also focused on the fact that shots from TSBD while the limo was Houston Street would have been much easier to make. I can understand that. That is absolutely true, and I'm troubled by that. But the shooting on Elm wasn't as difficult as some would have you believe, so a single shooter might not have been looking for the easier hit, but the easiest getaway with doable shots. Escape might have been much more difficult if the shooting had taken place while the limo was on Houston. Why? Because more people would have had their attention drawn to where the shooter was!

Oliver Stone's *JFK* postulates that the shooters waited until the car was in Dealey Plaza to catch the president in the "triangulating cross-fire" of several shooters. With several shooting at the president in a moving vehicle, the chances of a hit go way up, no doubt about it. And if it was an intentional ambush with more than one shooter, you have shooters in front, to the side, and to the rear. What could be better for a team of shooters? Well, getting the car to come to an almost complete stop for one thing. And that is exactly what happened. I hear the cry, "Aha! That must be it! See, we have a conspiracy." Well, not so fast.

The car did come to an almost complete stop, but that may have been because the driver feared driving further into a crossfire ambush. The best way to get out of an ambush is to back out, and I guess Oliver Stone didn't check that out either. The driver, if he realized a shooting was going on, was more likely trying to determine the source of the shots before proceeding further into an ambush.

If Stone was right, Dealey Plaza was a regular shooting gallery. Bullets would have been flying everywhere. They had to land somewhere, and I've seen some point to "bullet" marks in various

locations, but none can be proven as fresh on that November day. Where were the bullet fragments from those bullets? None were ever found. Also, a lot of witnesses would have noticed the sounds of supersonic bullets going over their heads. It's a very distinctive sound – even the uninitiated can't miss that! But strangely, very a few witnesses reported such shots. Go figure.

Driver Helping Shooters

Did the driver slow deliberately to help the shooters? I can't put much stock in it. In fact, I find that laughable. The driver claimed that he knew a secret service agent was trying to get on the back of the car, and he slowed down to let the agent safely get on. Since an agent did climb on from the back, I see no reason to doubt that story. But suppose he were willing to help out the sniper team.

Don't you think he (the driver) would realize that he would be questioned about stopping later? Assuming his IQ to be higher than a rock, you know he would. And they don't let people with low IQ's drive presidential limos in parades, at least not while the president is in the car. So to me, that's just stupid to believe he stopped to help the shooter or shooters.

The main argument against that is that he was in the car. Who wants to sit in a car like a sitting duck? Nellie Connally said if she hadn't been pinned down, she would have tried to exit the car. Jackie Kennedy DID get out and crawl toward the back. She said she was trying to grab part of the skull that was on the trunk. I believe her, but I also wouldn't blame her if she was just trying to get out! I doubt she was – surely she must have realized that would have put her out in the open with NO protection. At least in the car they could take off, but on foot what chance would she have? I think her explanation is most likely why she crawled back there.

Having real bullets fired in your direction is not fun, and if kept up for long periods of time can shorten one's life expectancy considerably! Now, would a right thinking driver be willing to stop a car while several shooters tried to eliminate one of the passengers? Oh sure, especially if he knew the shooters and they promised to not hit him. I bet you could think of at least a dozen people you trust that much.

You would also have to believe that no wild ricochet would happen and take you out accidentally because you happened to be within the kill zone. The possibility of a ricochet alone would bother me. Bullets go all kinds of crazy directions when they hit bone, metal, or anything else hard. Even hitting something soft can redirect a bullet.

Of course, you'd be trusting them to not try to take you out to silence you and you would trust their shooting skill enough to believe they wouldn't hit you. But no one can control ricochets or what happens when a bullet hits the mark. There are so many variables the very best shooters couldn't know all of that.

So go ahead and make a list of those 12 people. When you have it, give me their names and tell me how certain you are before you tell me the driver was involved. Until then, I don't think the driver was trying to help the shooters (if there was more than one).

Oh, and if I were the driver and I knew that one of the shooters to the rear was using the alleged assassin's rifle, or that one of the shooters was someone with Oswald's recorded shooting skills, I'd back out right then. If I were actually willing to risk it, I'd want men with the ability to take the wings off of fleas off-handed at 200 yards using a rifle capable of that kind of precision shooting. Lee Harvey Oswald and the Mannlicher Carcano 6.5 MM rifle? No way! That is the wrong man, using the wrong rifle, and firing the wrong bullet.

Connally Stretcher Bullet (the "Pristine" Bullet)

A bullet was found on Gov. Connally's stretcher. It was assumed to be the single bullet that caused the wound to Kennedy's neck and all of Connally's wounds. Some say it was planted on the stretcher to support the lone gunman theory. If so, consider the bullet planter's entire task:

1. He had to know what bullet to plant;
2. He had to know that no autopsy would reveal a wound path other than a shot from the rear;
3. He had to have access to the stretcher to plant it;
4. He had to be able to distinguish between the Kennedy and Connally stretchers;
5. He had to believe that something wouldn't happen to disprove that it could have been the right bullet (such as another caliber weapon showing up);
6. He had to have planted it without getting caught; and
7. He also had to rely on there being no recording of the shooting sequence that might prove there was more than one shooter.

Most of those are things he had no control over. In fact, if you look at that list, what things on that list would the bullet planter, if he was part of a conspiracy, have any control over? After the first two, he couldn't control any of the others! Being caught planting the bullet would almost certainly cause the planter to be tried as a conspirator. Possible? Yes, but highly unlikely.

One way to assure you put the right type of bullet on the stretcher would be to make sure every shooter used the same caliber weapon. Is that possible? Absolutely, but would a group of qualified shooters choose that rifle and that round? I consider that an absolute no. You can bet that the rifle used by a group of professional shooters would not be that rifle or that round. A team that was good enough to be a team would have made much better weapon and round choices.

Suppose that there was another shooter who somehow got caught red-handed. The "bullet planter" would then implicate himself (or herself) in the conspiracy if caught. Or what if a clear wound path showed bullets coming from a different direction? Or what if the bullet that hit Connally had clearly come from the front? The bullet planter would have to know too much prior to the incident that he couldn't control EVEN IF HE KNEW THE PLANNED SEQUENCE OF THE SHOOTING. And the shooting would have to go exactly as planned for the bullet plant to work. I'm not buying it because it's absurd.

Whatever you believe about that, consider the bullet itself. The bullet was not the pristine bullet frequently shown by conspiracy theorists. It was almost flat on one side, and misshapen, but shown from one angle it did look almost pristine. Of course, one side of a car in an accident can

look fine while the rest is demolished. To show that side and say no accident occurred would be silly. Numerous conspiracy theories do just that.

What About Possible Conspirators

Now let's look at some of the possible conspirators. I think most can be eliminated with just a little logic. Start with foreign enemies.

Could it have been the KBG? Are they capable? Of course, I don't doubt that. But I think you have to eliminate both the USSR and the KGS as suspects because of Oswald's proximity to the case. Let's pretend for a moment you are the Soviets. What would you be thinking? Is it something like this?

“Wow, we have an American who defects to the USSR and marries a Russian girl. How perfect. We can turn him into one of our agents, have him act disgruntled about our country, and send him back to the US. Then we can arrange for him to kill the president of the United States. We don't even have to train him to shoot because the US Marines have already done that for us. Those stupid Americans would never even think of us doing something like that. It's too obvious. If we get caught, what's a little nuclear war between friends? Why, we would have killed that pesky Kennedy and it would be worth losing millions of citizens and have our country devastated just to do that! And think, we could find out for sure whether we could take the US in a fight after we ticked them off by killing their leader. Besides, none of this could happen unless the stupid Americans were smart enough to think of the possibility of this being a KBG plot. Yeah, it's perfect!”

OK, as you can tell, my oversized sarcasm gland is still working fine. But if it had been the KGB, they almost certainly would have kept Oswald as far away from it as possible. It's just too obvious. The KGB is not a group of bumbling idiots. They are professional. They would have selected a better weapon than the Mannlicher Carcano rifle. Besides, what if Marina decided she liked the US better and they couldn't get her back? Who knows what she might have said if such a thing had happened?

No, I just think that possibility is way out there – too remote to seriously consider, and not nearly as entertaining as Johnson leaping out of his car and doing the deed himself! Oh yea, and Marina never did go back to the USSR.

What about Cuba? Well, Kennedy was trying to kill Castro; that we know. Is it possible that Castro got him first? Sure, but boy, if we seriously thought that, don't you think that would give the US the pretext to invade Cuba and get rid of Castro? Of course, and it would give us the incentive to show up in force! Could the USSR have defended Cuba? Not likely, and probably not committed enough to try. Besides, with Kennedy dead at the hands of Castro, could Castro doubt the ability of the US to use whatever assets were necessary to get him? I don't think so, and if we proved our case that Castro set it up, the Soviets would have egg all over their faces if they tried to defend him.

Then there is Oswald's involvement with the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. Oswald actually passed out fliers in New Orleans for that committee. I'm not convinced it was a committee that consisted of more than one person – Oswald. If the Cubans did it, I think they, like the Soviets, would have kept Oswald as far from it as possible. Again, it is possible it was Cuba, but it's just too remote to seriously consider if there is a more logical explanation.

What about organized crime? Well, why not? The mob has certainly killed a lot of people. But getting the president of the US? Nothing would convince J. Edgar Hoover that not only do they exist, but they need to be exterminated, like proof the mob did it! And ultimately, the US as a nation has more resources than the mob (even though as a country we might not be as profitable). Was the death of the president likely to fade the heat so to speak? Not likely – it was likely to increase it.

If the mob did it, they may have believed that Johnson would replace Robert Kennedy as the Attorney General. When that didn't happen, their plan would have gone terribly awry. The mob back then didn't talk when they got caught, but they have since. If the mob was involved, it seems likely that at least one would have come forward to give some additional details since then. And I mean credible, verifiable details.

What about the mob involving Oswald? The mob isn't really picky about their hitmen. They are willing to use anyone who could get the job done. Would they have used Oswald? Honestly, I think not. Oswald was a trained shooter, so if he was willing, I think the mob would consider that. The mob is pretty good at murder though. Like others, they would have chosen a better weapon than appears to have been used. And they certainly would have had a less traceable source.

If you are unaware, the Oswald's revolver was purchased by an O. H. Lee. See the connection? It's Lee Harvey Oswald reversed, using two initials. The rifle was purchased in the name of something like A. Hiddell. Oswald had a fake ID on him when he was arrested with that name on it. Both are really kind of obvious. If it wasn't Oswald, why would he have an ID for A. Hiddell on him?

For the mob, Oswald was too high profile. Active politically, defector who returned, etc. I think the mob would have chosen someone less conspicuous.

The only way it would work would be if the mob worked in conjunction with forces within the government. What about that possibility?

Could the mob and rogue government agents cooperate on a joint venture? Sure they could, but if things went wrong, let's suppose it was the FBI (or CIA – pick one, it doesn't matter for my argument here). If it got traced back to a government agency, what will they do? Like George Washington, they'd probably say, "I can't tell a lie. Yes, I helped, along with some friends in the mob." I don't think so.

They might say, "Hey, we were trying to get some info about the mob. The mob managed to get the trigger pulled before we agreed upon it. We intended to nail them before they got the

president, but they tricked us!” Yeah, real believable. Heads would roll, careers would be ruined, and people would be charged with treason, conspiracy, etc. If something went wrong and it was traced back, the mob would just be stupid for being involved because you know they will get blamed. The only way it would work would be if the government could cover its tracks AND the mob’s tracks.

What about that cover up? It would take too many people. Eventually one of them would talk. They would have to know the heat might fade, but for the rest of their lives, everyone would have to worry about someone talking. The possibility of someone’s guilty deathbed confession would no doubt cause all conspirators sleepless nights. The only real solution would be the systematic killing off of participants, and who knows when it would be their turn? Such a move just wouldn’t increase one’s life expectancy.

Could the mob have planned it with someone other than Oswald as the shooter? Yes, but what would make Oswald leave the building in that scenario? How exactly would he suspect the mob of doing that and blaming him. That same rationale can be applied to anyone who set up Oswald. He would have to have known about it. Instead of leaving the building, why wouldn’t he just not show up for work that day? He could have called in sick and given himself the perfect alibi.

What about the military? Kennedy withdrew support for the Bay of Pigs invasion, and that certainly angered some people in the military. Let’s see though. Hmm, I think military spending was up under Kennedy, and the military enjoyed a favored place in Kennedy’s administration. Kennedy himself was a WW II hero. And it would be the first time in our nation’s history that the military didn’t just submit to the civilian authorities. If it was the military, I’m surprised that President Clinton lasted a week, much less eight years! President Obama wouldn’t have lasted long either. I just completely reject the notion of rogue military personnel in this case.

What about the military industry (Stone’s military-industrial complex)? Well, if the shooters were caught and their bosses were found out, that would be a sure fire way to never get another government contract. Get real. These people are businessmen.

They want to make money, and they tend to think long term, not short term. Presidents come and go naturally in our system. To hurry the process you would be risking everything you were trying to accomplish. In fact, this would be an all out risk. And you’d be depending on people who could later get ticked off at you and rat you out. The bigwigs wouldn’t suffer that much. Oh, they’d lay people off, and the employees would be hurt. The bigwigs wouldn’t make as much money for a while, but they’d come back as soon as the system turned over a new government issued leaf. If the original employees didn’t come back, so what? Others needing jobs would gladly step in. Sorry Oliver, I just don’t see it.

If not the usual suspects, then who? Good question. I think the basic problem with conspiracy theories is this. A friend once said to me, “The more people involved in a conspiracy, the less believable it becomes.” I couldn’t agree more. It’s been said that three people can keep a secret if two of them are dead. I think those involved in a conspiracy know that to be the case. The

more people involved, the more complex it gets, the more likely it is to fail. Even if successful, the more people involved, the less likely it is to go undetected.

Thus, I think if there was a conspiracy, it had to be small. It had to be limited to very few people. The parade route was public knowledge – printed in the paper three days before. How much planning time does that allow? Not a lot. Could the idea of doing it in Dallas have been dreamed up months before? Could the conspirators have gotten Oswald a job at the ideal location five weeks before the assassination? Suppose you think yes.

What if the parade route had been down Main instead of Elm? Then it never would have turned on Houston. Instead, the vehicle could easily speed up through Dealey Plaza making shooting more difficult. Or, you could wind up with the vehicle passing in front of a crowd and the shooter never getting a shot at the president. If the parade had continued down Main, then it would have been a much longer and more difficult shot from the TSBD. It would have been much further for the other shooters too. It would have been far less likely to work. Now that route was unlikely.

What if the route hadn't even gone through Dealey Plaza? That could easily have happened by having it turn and go to the freeway on another street. There were just too many things not known far enough in advance to know that your sniper would be in the right building.

Or you believe they had a lot of potential snipers, but Oswald became the guy because of the route. Again, the problem with a larger conspiracy is that it makes it less and less likely that it would go unnoticed.

Maybe a conspiracy would have Oswald as the patsy, like he claimed. The problem with this is Oswald would have to know about the possibility of the assassination, figure out it happened, and leave the building before it was sealed off. He'd have to know who was setting him up. If he suspected that, why not go to the FBI and tell them? Then once the shooting occurred, he would have to have figured out that things were going wrong for him very quickly and tried to escape. And if that happened, what was he doing calmly drinking a Coke 90 seconds after the shooting? Wouldn't he have been trying to get away then? He could have calmly walked by them without arousing suspicion then.

Or perhaps you believe their coming through that break room is what tipped Oswald off that things were going wrong for him. Well, suppose so. Then Oswald really doesn't have time to plan his escape. At least if he figured it out 90 seconds earlier it gives him that much extra escape time. Oswald left the building, went to his rented room and got his revolver, and went to a theater, which is where the Dallas police found and arrested him.

There's another problem with Oswald being the patsy. He shouldn't have known about the rifle on the 6th floor. Thus he would have stayed like the other employees and been at roll call. He could have heard the shooting, but if he was in the break room, how would he have known what that was all about and that he was about to be set up? Since he was there, he certainly wouldn't have been an immediate suspect. Further, if he was innocent, he would have no reason to believe his fingerprints would show up on a rifle in the building.

Once the rifle was found, it would have eventually led to Oswald being a suspect. It was purchased in the name of A. Hiddell, and Oswald had an ID on him with that name.

The fact that Oswald left indicates he made a hasty exit when he otherwise had no reason to. He could have been the patsy just as easily by staying in the building. If he'd done that, it would have taken a lot longer for someone to determine he should be a suspect. But being the only missing employee made him a suspect instantly.

What Does Oswald's Family Think?

Do you think what Oswald's surviving family members think has any value at all? If your brother or son were accused of being a presidential assassin, and they died, would you try to clear their name if you believed they were innocent?

Oswald's older brother believes he did it. He said in a TV interview that if he thought his brother was innocent, he'd be doing everything possible to clear his brother's name. But he isn't doing that because he thinks his little brother is guilty and did it all by himself. He believes he knew his little brother. He believes Lee wanted the attention and that was a way to get it.

I have no idea what the conspiracy theorists make of that, but it doesn't seem to fit a conspiracy theory. Now, could his older brother believe the worst? Of course. Could he be wrong? Absolutely.

What makes the most sense to believe though? I think his brother had good reasons for believing Lee was guilty, but of course he could be wrong. Even if his older brother is right, it isn't proof that Oswald is guilty, or if he is guilty, that he acted alone.

Difficult decision: Who do you think knew Oswald the best and could best opine about his being a suspect and his possible motivation? **Option 1** is Oswald's family, especially his big brother. He believed Oswald was hungry for attention and did a lot of things to be different and to get noticed. Shooting a president will certainly get you noticed. **Option 2** is people who never actually met Oswald, think he was not guilty, and that he lacked the motivation.

Murder of J. D. Tippett

Oswald allegedly shot Dallas Police Officer J. D. Tippett. The more you look at the facts surrounding that shooting, the more you realize that like the Kennedy assassination, eyewitnesses (and there were several) don't agree about what they saw and what the perpetrator looked like. Oswald got blamed for that whether he was involved or not.

Some believe he killed Tippett but not the president. The why of that remains a mystery to me. Maybe he didn't kill anyone that day, or maybe both, or maybe he was just one of the Kennedy shooters. If Oswald didn't shoot Kennedy, then when he was approached by an officer, why would he just shoot the officer down? Presumably, based on what he told the police, he had no reason to believe he was even a suspect in the assassination. So why kill a cop? And why try to shoot another in the theater?

Once at police headquarters, he was given the “paraffin” test to determine whether he had fired a firearm. It showed he had fired a handgun but not a rifle, but the test is only evidence, not proof. If he’d fired a rifle, it is likely there would have been gun powder residue on his face, but there was none. Ah, the mystery deepens. Yes, there are ways that he might have fired a rifle without getting gun powder residue on his face. But would he have thought to do that? And if he did, why didn’t he do the same thing for his hands?

Oswald the Suspect

Did Oswald act guilty? You decide:

- He left the building immediately after the shooting. Why?
- He went to his rented room and picked up his revolver. Why?
- Most people who have studied the J. D. Tippett shooting believe Oswald was the shooter. Why would he have shot Officer Tippett?
- When police entered the Texas Theater where Oswald went, he yelled, “This is it. It’s all over now.” Why?
- Then he struck one officer in the face. Since Oswald started that, why?
- He tried to shoot a Dallas police officer. Had the round under the cylinder not been dented, he would have shot the officer at point blank range. Why?
- A paraffin test revealed gunshot residue on his hands. If Oswald had not shot firearms that day, that would not have been the case. He was at work that morning, so other than the two major shootings that day, when would Oswald have had time to shoot a weapon?

Was Kennedy’s Body Altered?

Whether the body arrived in Washington in the same casket it left in has been debated. I won’t get into that except to note it. Different people in different locations under different lighting described the color of the casket. Is it reasonable to believe they all described the same color?

If the body didn’t arrive in the same casket, that proves nothing other than that the casket was changed for some reason. A body leaking all over the inside of it might be one reason for the change, if it occurred. By that time, the shooting had already occurred.

The problem with body alterations is that there were only a few hours to do them. Kennedy’s autopsy was the night he was killed. To alter the body, you would be relying on nothing else going wrong somewhere else in the conspiracy to prove absolutely that there were other shooters. And if something came up, then they would start looking at who could have altered the body.

Federal Issue

Now back to that federal crime issue. Technically Kennedy’s murder was a state crime. Under Texas law, he was required to undergo an autopsy before leaving the State of Texas. He didn’t. Government agents whisked his body away in violation of state law. It was wrong, but it doesn’t prove anything. They may have feared a wider conspiracy, wanted to get people to safety, and broke the law to accomplish their job. Their actions fuel conspiracy theories, but hardly prove them.

If killing the president had been a federal crime, the FBI should have interviewed Oswald, not the Dallas police. Would they have gotten more information from him? Probably not within that time frame.

Perhaps the FBI would have done a better job of protecting Oswald, but who knows? They could have botched that as well. But the FBI would not have given as free of access to the press, which might have prevented Oswald's murder. Jack Ruby was mixed in with the press when he shot Oswald.

What about Jack Ruby as the fall guy for a conspiracy? It just doesn't seem likely. He had no, as in ZERO, chance of escape where he chose to shoot Oswald. Surely after only 48 hours a conspiracy had not become so desperate to have one guy take the fall. And how would you convince that one guy to do it so quickly. Besides, that act that early might still have not helped.

The results of the autopsy were not public. His claim of "I did it expecting to be a hero" would definitely not fly then. If it turned out that the autopsy clearly showed more than one shooter, someone would then have to take out Jack Ruby. Then the guy who took him out would have to be taken out. Then that guy, and the one after that... It really doesn't make that much sense.

Jack Ruby did have ties to organized crime, but he also liked to be the big shot. I doubt seriously the mob would have involved him. He talked too much.

You could have a conspiracy and not have Jack Ruby involved. Now that would be fortuitous for the conspirators! Fortuitous, yes, but also highly unlikely.

Claims of Conspiracy

What about all the various "documentaries" about people involved in a conspiracy? Well, there are too many different conspiracy theories that have been "documented" for me to believe there is absolutely nothing to them. Given that I've personally seen five or six different ones, each with different conspirators and using a different theory, and each one seeming to eliminate other possibly conspiracies, it's hard to say they are all wrong.

It is possible, even likely, that various people wanted to assassinate President Kennedy, and several might have made some preliminary plans to do so. Then, when it happened, perhaps people who knew bits and pieces of those various conspiracies assumed that the plan had been completed. Then they filled in the blanks for what they didn't know.

I'm not sure. I'm just sure of this. It seems highly unlikely to me that two conspiracies came together at the same time, so I'm sure if there was a conspiracy, it was only one conspiracy in action.

It's also possible that one guy says "Hey, we ought to have that guy shot. Why all it would take is..." He then lays out a plausible way to do it. Then, when Kennedy got shot, those who might have heard that believed they knew who did it, and perhaps even how. They didn't know all the details, but they could easily speculate and come up with a seemingly plausible theory. That doesn't necessarily make those providing that information nuts. They may really believe it. In

other words, they are sincere, but that doesn't make them right. They could just be sincerely wrong.

Autopsy Problems

The autopsy was conducted at Bethesda Naval Hospital, but not by any doctors with experience in autopsies or in forensics. One of the doctors burned his notes. It only added fuel to the conspiracy fire (pun intended). Or should I say he fanned the flames of conspiracy?

If Dallas County officials had conducted the autopsy as the law required, we might have known for sure about the bullet paths. That could have eliminated the controversy. It might have proved one way or the other whether there was a conspiracy. Because of the way things were handled, one mistake after another was made. Each mistake adds fuel to the controversy, which makes for more possible (regardless of how plausible) conspiracy theories.

I'll add it is possible that Oswald was the lone shooter, but was part of a bigger conspiracy. If so, who else was involved in the conspiracy? Or if Oswald did it, was it just that he got lucky in the parade route going by the place he'd been working a few weeks? Was he lucky that the parade not only went by his building, but gave someone of his skills an excellent opportunity to pull it off? Given everything else we know about Oswald, it seems unlikely he could orchestrate and coordinate much of a conspiracy; he was too much of a loner. That hardly seems his style. But maybe he was part of a conspiracy and his appearance as a "loner" made him ideal for keeping his mouth shut.

Conclusions

Ask anyone who was alive where they were when they heard the news that President Kennedy had been shot and they can tell you. I was 5, had come home from Kindergarten, and was playing in my room with my little brother when my mother told us what happened. I was too young to really comprehend it, but I could tell it was a big event.

It's probably the most scrutinized event of the last half of the 20th Century. Just a few years later, I was bitten by the assassination bug. Since then, I bet not a year has gone by that I haven't spent at least some time studying that assassination. Despite that, there is plenty of material out there on the assassination I have not read.

Difficult decision: After all these years of study, I find myself unconvinced by the official version. There is some conflicting evidence, and some things about the official explanation are just hard to believe. I understand that. I find it hard to believe someone as insignificant as Oswald could have had such an impact on our nation. I have a hard time believing if he did it, that he did it for attention only, and yet, I haven't yet seen a deeply motivating reason for him to have done it.

That may be my biggest problem with the official explanation. However, having said that, I've tried really hard to look at the evidence and go where it leads. Because of that, I am even less convinced by the various conspiracy theories I've heard. I've cited some reasons why certain parts of the conspiracy theories I've heard just do not match the evidence.

Option 1 -- Do you believe the lone gunman theory? If so, you have to believe in numerous implausible events, several mistakes by professionals, numerous procedural breaches, and several eyewitnesses being wrong all coming together to have a single shooter.

Option 2 -- Do you believe in a multiple shooter conspiracy? If so, you either have to believe in one so big it involved almost half the free world, or one too small to fit any of the standard conspiracy theories. And you must overcome strange behavior by both Lee Harvey Oswald and Jack Ruby.

I hope you enjoyed today's history lesson. Feel free to write and tell me what you think.

Rex L. Hogue

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