Chapter 30

Dealey Plaza Revisited: What Happened to JFK?

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The application of principles of scientific reasoning to the assassination of JFK can contribute to resolving any lingering questions over whether or not he was murdered as the result of a conspiracy. The likelihood $L$ of an hypothesis $h$, if evidence $e$ were true, is equal to the probability of $e$, if $h$ were true. The hypotheses are viewed as possible causes of the evidence as effects. This assumes that evidence $e$ includes all of the available relevant data, which may include findings that specific items of evidence have been planted, altered, or fabricated, discoveries that lend weight of their own. This chapter cannot exhaust the evidence in this case, but presents a sample sufficient to demonstrate that the conspiracy hypothesis has high likelihood and the lone assassin low. It should not have been necessary to frame a guilty man.

According to The Warren Report (1964), a lone gunman fired three shots from the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository Building, scoring two hits and one miss, which injured a distant bystander, James Tague, who was observing from location #6. Prior to this discovery of a shot that had missed, even the commission supposed all three had hit—the first hit JFK in the back, the second hit Governor John Connally in the back, and the third hit JFK in the head, killing him.
The backyard photograph, which was published in *LIFE*, was a fake. His finger tips were cut off; the shadows from his nose and eyebrows were inconsistent with the shadow cast by his figure; the chin was not Oswald’s pointed chin with a cleft but a block chin with an insert line. Jack White used the newspapers as an internal yardstick and discovered that either the person shown was only 5’6” tall--too short to be Oswald, who was 5’10”--or the image of the newspapers was too large.

Two shots were widely reported on radio and television that day, one to the throat, the other to the right temple, which blew his brains out the back of his head. Nevertheless, when the Warren Commission would release its report nine months later, those trajectories had been reversed and JFK had only been hit at the base of the neck and the back of his head, thereby reducing as many as four or more hits to just these two.
The arrest report for Lee Oswald stated, “This man shot and killed President John F. Kennedy and Police Officer J. D. Tippit. He also shot and wounded Governor John Connally.” The time was 1:40 PM. That was very fast work. The assassination had taken place at 12:30 PM and virtually no investigation had yet taken place.


The alleged assassination weapon--a Mannlicher-Carcano carbine--was photographed in Dallas by the Dallas Police and in Washington, D.C., by the FBI. Remarkably, they are not the same. With a muzzle velocity of only 2,000 fps, the Mannlicher-Carcano is not a high velocity weapon. According to the official account, the President was killed by high velocity bullets, which means Oswald cannot have fired the bullets that killed JFK.
A nitrate test revealed traces on his hands but not on his cheek. While he might have fired a revolver, he had not fired a carbine. Washing his face would have washed his hands, too. He worked in a depository with books printed in ink, which contains nitrates. So this test exonerated him of the commission of the crime in two ways.


Oswald appears to have been in a lunchroom on the second floor when the assassination took place. He was confronted there within 90 seconds of the shooting by Motorcycle Patrolman Marrion Baker, who held him in his sights until Roy Truly, Lee’s supervisor, assured Baker he was an employee who belonged in the building. Both described him as acting perfectly normal, neither agitated nor out of breath, but—Truly added—somewhat startled to find an officer pointing his revolver at him.
Two Secret Service agents, who would have accompanied the limousine, were left behind at Love Field by Emory Roberts, the Agent-in-Charge of the Presidential Protection Detail. Here one of them, Henry Rybka, expresses dismay at being called off.

The motorcycle escort was reduced to four, who were instructed not to ride forward of the rear wheels of the Presidential limousine. One of them observed that it was “the damnedest formation” he’d ever seen. JFK’s military aide, who normally sat between the driver and the agent-in-charge, was moved to the last vehicle along with the President’s personal physician.

Richard Trask, _Pictures of the Pain_ (1994)
There are more than fifteen indications of Secret Service complicity in setting JFK up for the hit. In addition to the agents being left behind at Love Field, the manhole covers were not welded, open windows were not covered, and the crowd was allowed to spill into the street.

Governor Connally was instrumental in making a change to the motorcade route on November 18, 1963, four days before the event. Normally, a motorcade route, once fixed, is never changed, so the Secret Service can check every building and screen its occupants. This change brought the President past the Texas School Book Depository Building.
Most tellingly, the vehicles were in an improper sequence. The Presidential limousine was placed first. Lower ranking dignitaries, such as the Mayor and the Vice President, should have preceded him.

Reporters were moved to the rear and the President’s personal physician to the last car, which put him in the worst location should his patient require emergency medical treatment.

At Parkland Hospital, where the moribund President was taken, a Secret Service agent took a bucket and sponge and began cleaning up the blood and brains from the limousine. When onlookers noticed a through-and-through hole in the windshield, the vehicle was moved.


By Monday, November 25, 1963, the day of the formal state funeral, the vehicle had been sent back to Ford to be completely stripped down to bare metal and rebuilt, including replacing the windshield, which had a bullet hole (the black spot at the center of the small, white spiral nebula) close to the right-center (facing the vehicle from the front). The Secret Service would produce yet a third, different windshield (with cracks) in its place to misrepresent the original damage.

During a press conference at 3:15 PM, Malcolm Perry, M.D., who had performed a tracheotomy through a small wound in the President’s throat, explained three times that the wound was a wound of entry. A transcript of this event would not be provided to the Warren Commission, but would be published in *Assassination Science* (1998).
Charles Crenshaw, M.D., who was present during the efforts to revive JFK at Parkland, drew these diagrams of the appearance of the throat wound before and after the tracheotomy incision, which are consistent with Dr. Perry’s description of it as a wound of entry.

Officially, one shot hit the President in the back of his neck, passed through his neck without hitting any bony structures, and entered the back of Governor John Connally, inflicting multiple wounds. It shattered a rib, exited his chest, damaged his right wrist, and entered his left thigh. Since this trajectory is so implausible and the alleged missile virtually pristine, it has come to be known as “the magic bullet”.

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The jacket JFK was wearing shows a hole about 5 1/2 inches below the collar, which contradicts the official location of the wound. If the bullet entered here, especially at a downward angle, it is difficult to imagine how it could have passed through his neck and exited at his throat.

A bullet hole in the shirt turns out be about 5 1/2 inches below the collar, too low to correspond to the official location at the base of the back of the neck. Neither the shirt nor the jacket were sent forward to Bethesda for the autopsy, a violation of autopsy protocol.
The Bethesda autopsy was conducted by James Humes, who was assisted by J. Thornton Boswell. Neither of them had ever performed an autopsy on a gunshot victim before. Boswell’s diagram of the wounds shows a wound to the back about 5 1/2 inches below the collar. It was verified by Admiral George Burkley, the President’s personal physician.

One of two FBI agents who witnessed the autopsy, James Sibert, drew a diagram showing the relative location of the wounds, where the back wound is lower than the throat wound, making it most unlikely that they were connected by a shot that had been fired from above and behind.

The third thoracic vertebra turns out to be approximately 5 1/2 inches below the collar to the right of the spinal column. Some apologists for the official account suggest that his jacket was “bunched up”, which made the hole lower than the wound. But that would not explain the diagrams of the wound showing it at the same location on the body itself.

Admiral Burkley composed a death certificate on JFK, which said he had been “struck in the head” by one shot and that “a second wound occurred at the posterior back at about the level of the third thoracic vertebra.” He added that the head wound involved “evisceration of the right hemisphere of the brain.”


Gary Shaw, *Cover-Up* (1976)
Even the Warren Commission staff concluded that the back shot had been at that location, as this reenactment photograph displays. The larger circular patch on the back of the stand-in’s jacket represents the back wound, the smaller above it the official entry wound to the head.

Arlen Specter, then a junior counselor to the Warren Commission, uses a pointer here to exhibit the path the “magic bullet” would have had to have taken in order to account for all the wounds with only two shots. Since the larger circular patch visible below his left hand indicates the back shot, a photo intended to illustrate the theory actually refutes it.
An early document released by the Assassination Records Review Board (ARRB) showed that Gerald Ford (R-MI), then a commission member, had had the back wound re-described from “his uppermost back,” already an exaggeration, to “the base of the back of his neck” in an effort to make “the magic bullet” hypothesis appear more plausible.

David W. Mantik, M.D., Ph.D., who is board certified in radiation oncology, took a CAT scan of a patient with chest and neck dimensions similar to those of JFK. When he plotted the official trajectory, it turned out to be anatomically impossible. Cervical vertebrae intervene.

Stewart Galanor, Cover-Up (1998)

Dr. Crenshaw also drew the massive blow-out to the back of the head, which he described as the size of a baseball or of your fist when you double it up. During an interview broadcast on television, he also described an entry wound at the right temple, consistent with the mortician’s description.

When the House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA) re-investigated the case in 1977-78, its medical panel concluded that the entry wound was actually four inches above the entry location previously specified. It was depicted in diagrams (right) but not visible in photographs (left).
According to the autopsy report, the fatal head shot entered at the back of his head and blew out the top of his skull. The Navy artist who was instructed to prepare these sketches was not allowed to observe the body and drew what he was told to draw.


Some forty witnesses from Dealey Plaza, from Parkland and from Bethesda--including bystanders, physicians, medical technicians, and agents of the FBI--reported that JFK had a massive blow-out to the back of the head, the location of which they demonstrated with their hands.
Another diagram of the head wound by Robert McClelland, M.D., who was also present at Parkland, depicts a massive blow-out that fits Dr. Crenshaw’s description. It was a terrible wound.


These reports were discounted on the grounds that the autopsy X-rays don’t show it. Mantik, a Ph.D. in physics, used the simple technique of optical densitometry to prove that an area--identified here as “Area P”--had been “patched” using material far too dense to be human bone.
It was my suspicion that those who were involved in reconstructing home movies of the assassination, including the Zapruder film, might have overlooked frames past 313-316 that display the wound to the back of the head. I found this image of the blow-out in frame 374.

Multiple competent physicians who were experienced with gunshot wounds observed both cerebral and cerebellar tissue extruding from the massive blow-out to the back of the head. These observations were inconsistent with a blow-out to the top of the head that blew his brains to the right-front, which therefore also impeach the Zapruder film.
The cerebellum is situated at the base of the skull. The cerebrum is a larger mass that comprises the upper portions of the brain. Blown-out tissue of these kinds would look very different in their appearance. Even first year medical students would not confuse them.

Robert B. Livingston, M.D., a world authority on the human brain and an expert on wound ballistics, studied reports of cerebral and cerebellar damage from Parkland. He concluded that the brain in diagrams and photographs at the National Archives cannot be that of JFK.
Mantik also discovered that a 6.5mm metallic slice had been added to other cranial X-rays in an evident attempt to implicate the obscure Mannlicher-Carcano carbine Oswald is alleged to have used. But the weapon is not high-velocity and cannot have fired the bullets that killed JFK, which means that mistakes were made by using the wrong weapon to frame him.


At 1 PM, November 22, 1963, Malcolm Kilduff, acting press secretary, announced that the President was dead, explaining it was a simple matter of a bullet through the head while pointing to his right temple, attributing that finding to his personal physician, Admiral George Burkley.
The mortician who prepared the body for burial told an investigator that, in addition to a large gaping hold in the back of the head, there was a small wound in the right temple, and a wound on the back, 5 to 6 inches below the shoulder to the right of the spinal column.

When the actual entry location is combined with the rest of the “magic” trajectory, the theory lends itself to ridicule as in Oliver’s Stone’s “JFK.” The bullet alleged to have performed these feats was nevertheless virtually pristine with only slight longitudinal distortion.

Gary Shaw, Cover-Up (1976)

Taken by James Altgens, this famous photograph shows (1) the through-and-through hole in the windshield, (2) an Oswald look-alike—probably a co-worker named Billy Lovelady—in the doorway of the building; (3) the open window of a closet belonging to a uranium mining company that was a CIA asset, from which three shots appear to have been fired; and (4) the Secret Service assigned to Vice President Johnson responding, even while the Presidential detail still seems to be unaware what’s going on.

JFK appears to have been hit four times: once in the throat (from in front); once in the back (from behind); and twice in the head (once from behind and once from in front). The shots to his throat and to his right temple appear to have been fired from above-ground-level sewer openings on the south and north sides of the Triple Underpass.
The most probable sequence: A shot fired from the Country Records Building struck the President’s back shortly before the shot to the throat from the south end of the Triple Underpass. Then a shot from the Dal-Tex missed and injured Tague. A shot from the Book Depository hit John Connally. The driver pulled the limo to the left and stopped. A second shot from the Dal-Tex hit JFK in the back of the head. He fell forward and Jackie eased him up. She was looking him in the face when a shot from the north end of the Triple Underpass hit his right temple with an exploding bullet. A third shot fired from the Dal-Tex missed and hit the chrome strip. Other shots probably hit John Connally or missed and were found in the grass. No shots were fired from the “assassin’s lair”.

The first frames from the Zapruder film to which the public had access were published in *LIFE*. Most were unremarkable, but this one--frame 313--posed special problems. The plate was broken twice to revise description (6), which appears to be unique in the history of publishing. There are many indications this and other films have been edited, including the all-but-motionless spectators, the driver’s head turns (twice as fast as humanly possible), and the “blob” and blood spray, which appear to have been painted in. Blood and brains across the trunk and the driver’s pulling to the left and bringing the vehicle to a halt had to be removed, because it was such an obvious indication of Secret Service complicity in setting up JFK for the hit.

When the frames were published in the 26 volumes of supporting evidence, they were in the wrong sequence, greatly mitigating the back-and-to-the-left motion of JFK’s head in the extant film. David S. Lifton had a friend write to J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the FBI, and Hoover acknowledged they were in the wrong order.

Michael Baden, M.D., head of the medical panel for the HSCA, has observed that, if the “magic bullet” theory is false, there had to have been at least six shots from three directions. That turns out to be correct.
A question that has been asked many times is: "If the killing of Kennedy was a conspiracy involving many people, how could it possibly have been kept secret all this time? Why hasn't somebody talked?" The answer to that question is simple: a lot of people have talked. The talking started before the assassination and continued to this day. There are many examples: Carlos Marcello bragged in front of Ed Becker that Kennedy would be killed and described how it would be done; Santo Trafficante Jr. bragged that Kennedy would be killed; Joseph Milazzo, a right-wing nut, bragged that Kennedy would be killed and how it would be done; Jimmy Hoffa, Sam Giancana's right-hand man, told Jack Anderson years later that Ruby was "their man and was ordered to silence" Oswald; David Alfaro Siqueiros, suspected of being the mysterious Maurice Bishop and perpetrator of the multiple Oswalds, said before he died that he was fed lies of U.S. intelligence or possibly involved in the conspiracy. As noted earlier, Lyndon Johnson's mistress, Madeleine Duncan Brown, in Texas in the Morning (1997), and Barr McClelland, Blood, Money & Power (2003), Billy Sole Estes, A Texas Legend (2005), implicates LBJ in the assassination, as has E. Howard Hunt in his Rolling Stone "Confession" (2007).

Noel Twyman, Bloody Treason (1997)
Among the photographs of onlookers in Dealey Plaza discovered by James Richards and Allan Eaglesham, some include persons who appear to be high CIA officials, such as this one. Lucien Conein was among the most notorious of CIA assassins. His presence in Dealey Plaza thus lends further weight to the inference that the CIA played a leading role in the assassination.

James Richards, “Familiar Faces in Dealey Plaza II”


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