

## **Tom Hanks, Gary Goetzman, and Bugliosi's Bungle: A Comprehensive Review of *Reclaiming History* Part IV**

James DiEugenio

### **Bugliosi on the Zapruder Film and the Autopsy**

In this section, I will address how Vincent Bugliosi addresses two areas of famous physical evidence in the JFK case: the 26-second color film made by Abraham Zapruder in Dealey Plaza, and the autopsy performed at Bethesda, Maryland, on the evening of the assassination. Combined, these two chapters make up one of the largest sections of the *Reclaiming History*, nearly 270 pages—and in both cases the material in the End Notes is longer than that in the main text.

#### **IV.1**

Bugliosi's initial approach to the Zapruder film seems odd to me: he actually writes as if the film is unnecessary to understanding the crime, almost superfluous. He writes that the other physical evidence is "absolutely conclusive" as to the number of shots fired, which he says is three (p. 451). As stated in Part I of this series, he bases this largely on the cartridge evidence found on the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository (Bugliosi, p. 462). Recall, this is the ammunition that no one in Dallas sold to Oswald; and CE 543, the bent cartridge case that could not have been fired that day. Right after this, Bugliosi writes that it is also "absolutely conclusive" that the shot that hit President Kennedy went on and struck Governor Connally (*ibid.*). This, of course, refers to the Single Bullet Theory (SBT): CE 399, the virtually pristine bullet that went through two men, made seven wounds, smashed two of the hardest bones in the human body, and then reversed trajectory and popped out of Connally's thigh and onto John Connally's stretcher at Parkland Hospital. Yet, the men who discovered it, Darrel Tomlinson and O. P. Wright, said that it wasn't found on Connally's stretcher, and that it was a different bullet than the copper-coated, military-jacketed CE 399. This is what the prosecutor terms "absolutely conclusive" evidence in the JFK case.

While all the above would be considered specious to most objective observers, it is interesting to note what Bugliosi then considers dubious evidence. In describing the images on the Zapruder film, he describes two crucial pieces of evidence it contains in the following terms. First, in referring to the stunning backward movement of Kennedy's body that bounces him off the back seat, he writes of this as "the *apparent* backward snap of the president's head at the moment of the head shot" (Bugliosi, p. 451; emphasis in original). Second, in referring to the time lag between Kennedy reacting to being hit and Connally's discernible later reaction, he writes "the *alleged* delayed reaction between Kennedy and

Connally around the time the Warren Commission claimed they were hit by a single bullet" (*ibid.*, emphasis in original). He then concludes that neither of these "allegations"—the rapid rearward movement and the "delayed reaction"—is actually true (p. 452).

From here he goes on to explain why the Warren Commission decided upon the "delayed reaction" hypothesis. He says that the FBI and Secret Service reenactments in Dealey Plaza did much to decide the issue. He writes that, when the Commission found that the sixth floor window, Kennedy's back, and Connally's back existed along a straight line, this "substantiated" the SBT (p. 455). Question: Given the configuration of Dealey Plaza, how could they not line up in a straight line? And how could this, in and of itself, prove that Oswald did it, or that the SBT was viable? The prosecutor's logic here is lacking. (And so is consistency: later on, relying on unnamed ghostwriter Dale Myers, he will insist that Kennedy and Connally were *not* lined up straight.)

Furthermore, as both Pat Speer and Chuck Marler have noted, in these reenactments the bullet firing sequences were different than what the Warren Commission maintains. As Marler notes in *Assassination Science*, the Secret Service reenactment of 5 December 1963 ended up showing "three 'X' markings on Elm Street—ones that correspond to President Kennedy's location at Zapruder frames 208, 276, and 358." And as Marler continues in the same volume, the three X's represented rifle shots from the Texas School Book Depository Building, "and is contrary to the Warren Report" (p. 252). For instance, the Warren Commission said that only two shots hit the limousine, not three, and the last shot was at frame 313, not frame 358. So how does this "substantiate" the Commission's conclusions?

From here, Bugliosi goes on to describe the infamous 18 September 1964 Warren Commission executive session hearing, which contained the debate on finalizing the SBT. This pitted Senators Richard Russell, John Sherman Cooper, and Representative Hale Boggs as the skeptics, against John McCloy, Allen Dulles, Representative Gerald Ford, and Chief Justice Earl Warren as those who abided (at that time) by the SBT. Bugliosi describes the debate, and how Russell wanted his dissent against the SBT described in a footnote. This was parried by Warren and McCloy. The settlement was that the SBT would be described in the *Warren Report* as "persuasive" but not "compelling". What Bugliosi leaves out of his description in the main text is that Chief Counsel, J. Lee Rankin, deliberately made no stenographic record of this meeting. Ward and Paul was the firm hired to do the stenography. At this meeting, there was a woman present, but she was not from the firm; she was there to assure Russell that there would be a stenographic record of both the meeting and his objections—but there was none. As Gerald McKnight notes in *Breach of Trust*, all there is left of this meeting is a six-page memorandum "of some housekeeping items and innocuous motions" (McKnight, p. 295). Russell never found out about Rankin's trick until years later, through Harold Weisberg (*ibid.*, p. 296). Bugliosi deals with this important issue in his End Notes. He writes, "... it is not known if the stenographic notes of this meeting were ever typed up" (End Notes, p. 296). To mimic Keith Olbermann: Dear sir, if they had been, would they not have shown up in 45 years—especially after the Assassinations Record Review Board (ARRB) declas-

sified all the other executive session transcripts? Even after J. Lee Rankin's son turned over all of the rest of the Warren Commission remnants he had to the ARRB? Strangely, Bugliosi also writes, "No one has ever suggested that important matters were discussed at the session ...." Yet it is known that this debate about the SBT language was the main subject. How? Because there is a transcript of a call between Russell and President Johnson, in which Russell describes what really happened at the meeting (McKnight, p. 294)—and the six-page summary includes neither this debate nor any reference to Russell's footnote motion. At the very end of his discussion of this key issue, Bugliosi brings up McKnight's treatment of the matter: he says that McKnight *might* be right in his conclusion (End Notes, p. 297). He does not advance a benign explanation as to how he could be wrong—nor why no one from Ward and Paul was there, nor why there is no verbatim transcript of this meeting.

From here, Bugliosi goes on to examine the SBT in light of the Zapruder film. He prefaces his analysis with this absolute: "... since we *know* Kennedy and Connally were not hit by separate bullets, we know, before we even look at the film, that it *cannot* show otherwise" (p. 458, emphasis in original). With that preface, the reader has an idea of what to expect: the objective is to talk you out of what you see, and into what the Warren Commission insisted upon.

Unfortunately for the author, he begins his demonstration with a factual error—and he compounds it with his usual harangue against the critics for being "gross and brazen" in *their* "misrepresentation of the facts": Bugliosi states that Governor Connally was not lined up in front of President Kennedy, but was actually half a foot inboard of him (p. 458). His faulty source for this is, of course, unnamed ghostwriter Dale Myers. As researcher Pat Speer notes in his critique of Myers, the House Select Committee on Assassinations diagrammed the car in Exhibit 11–19. The seat is actually 2.5 inches in from the door. Myers later realized that Speer was right and, while admitting it on his website, he tried to blame the mistake on the late Peter Jennings' careless narration during the horrendous 2003 ABC special on the JFK case. Myers pleaded innocence, even though he himself had slid the seat over six inches in his ersatz "simulation" for ABC. Furthermore, it does not seem that the former ghostwriter for Bugliosi has told his former employer about this error: on his book tour, Bugliosi was still spouting this "half foot" false argument. What makes this even worse is that, as we will see, Kennedy is hit before he goes behind the freeway sign, so that at the time the Warren Commission says the SBT occurs, he is grabbing his throat and pulled *inward* from the side of the car—therefore lining himself up with Connally.

The reason that Myers did what he did is simple: he had to. Recall, Peter Jennings had hired him through lead consultant Gus Russo. Myers' main job was to sell his ludicrous "Single Bullet Fact" scam. Now, if you go to Dealey Plaza and look out of the Sixth Floor of the Texas School Book Depository (TSBD), you will see that there is a clear right-to-left horizontal angle from that vantage point to the car below. So if any assassin tried to fire at Kennedy from this perch, the trajectory does not align for an exit through his throat, and then an entrance into the *right side* of Connally's back. So Myers did his bit of trickery to fix that problem—and Bugliosi, for whatever reason, followed his folly.

But it is worth noting that Bugliosi actually went even further than this: in his End Notes to his chapter on the Zapruder film, he actually fully endorses Myers' Motion, that is, Myers' phony 3-D computer recreation of the Zapruder film: he calls it "a remarkably compelling view of the assassination of President Kennedy" (End Notes, p. 347). He goes on to add that Myers' SBT contraption is consistent with both the Warren Commission's version of the SBT, and the HSCA's version. Yet he does not note here that the HSCA's photographic panel stated that JFK was hit *before* he went behind the freeway sign. Furthermore, the *Warren Report* never pinpointed the frame in the film where the SBT happened; they just said that it probably occurred during frames Z 210–225 (p. 98), and then acknowledged that there was no reaction visible in Connally at this time. Consequently, it came up with its infamous "delayed reaction": Connally had been struck by a bullet that tore through three limbs of his body and shattered two hard bones, but he didn't know it since this was a "glancing blow" (*ibid.*, p. 112). It is absolutely startling to me that Bugliosi can't bring up one single criticism of Myers' Motion.

This infamous "delayed reaction" is another problem Myers' Motion covered up for ABC and Jennings. Myers actually names Frame 223 as the time that the SBT struck—even though, as Milicent Cranor has graphically proven, Connally does not seem to be reacting at this time ([http://www.ctka.net/myers\\_mc\\_1.html](http://www.ctka.net/myers_mc_1.html)). As Josiah Thompson clearly demonstrated in *Six Seconds in Dallas*, the clearest visible reaction time for Connally is around Frame 237. Myers and his cohort, Todd Vaughn, like to say that the shoulder drop visible directly afterwards is an "optical illusion". The problem is that Thompson actually measured this drop against a constant: the top of the car door; and he then put the results of the measurement on a graph (Thompson, pp. 74, 75). That's some "optical illusion". It is this clear separation in reaction time that Myers' 3-D contraption tries to conjure away. As Cranor proved, part of how he does this is by changing the positioning of Kennedy's hands, and the expression on his face (See [http://www.ctka.net/2008/bugliosi\\_myers.html](http://www.ctka.net/2008/bugliosi_myers.html) for a summary of Myers, and his chicanery with the film.)

Bugliosi's second reason for accepting the SBT, in spite of the Zapruder film, is just as specious: he says that there is a lack of physical evidence of any second gunman. This, of course, discounts the backward movement of Kennedy's body. Bugliosi also then states that there were no remnants of a second gunman, and he specifically states that there was a lack of other bullets or shell casings. As I showed in Part I, this is simply wrong: such artifacts were found. He then goes on to say that the bullet hole in Connally's back was ovoid, not circular, and that this proves that the bullet had hit something to make it lose its stability in flight. Yet the angle of Connally's body at the time of impact could also affect this shape—and what Bugliosi omits is the fact that the shape of Kennedy's wound in his jacket is even more ovoid than that in Connally's jacket (JFK's jacket: 1 cm by 1.5 cm; Connally's jacket: 1.5 cm by 1.7 cm). Another important point omitted by Bugliosi is the opinion of two Dallas doctors who worked on Connally, Robert Shaw and Charles Gregory. Thompson asked them if they felt that Connally was hit with the same bullet that hit JFK. They said no. Why? Because no fibers from the victim's clothes were carried into the wound. This contrasted with the wound in Connally's wrist, which contained a number of

cloth fibers. As Thompson concluded, “The absence of any cloth fibers in the back wound, together with its clean-cut edges, suggested to both physicians it had been caused by a pristine bullet ... both were convinced that the President and the Governor had been hit by different bullets.” (Thompson, p. 77) Next, Bugliosi gets really strained, and writes that there was not enough time to get off a second shot from the Mannlicher-Carcano, to hit Connally right after JFK had been hit. This, of course, is an argument that works both ways. Bugliosi's fifth and last reason is that since only three bullets were fired, this leaves no more bullets in the scenario, since one missed and hit bystander James Tague. This is a perfect example of what is called circular reasoning, or reasoning from a predetermined conclusion (Bugliosi, pp. 458–464).

After seventeen pages of all this prefatory material, Bugliosi finally gets to what he sees on the Zapruder film (Bugliosi, p. 467). He borrows the first leg of his scenario from Gerald Posner. He says that the first shot, which missed, was fired at Frame 160. Posner used a phony fact to place the shot this early, namely, a little girl turning backwards toward the TSBD at this time. (It turned out that someone was calling her.) But this points out just how hard it is to find any evidence for a shot on the film at this point. What Bugliosi dredges up is so weak and imprecise that it is not worth criticizing (*ibid.*, p. 468).

Now, on the other hand, there is a well-known serious problem with this shot scenario: How could Oswald miss at this point, yet score two direct hits while the car is further away? What Bugliosi says here is worth noting: “... since the oak tree started to obscure his vision of Kennedy at the time of frame 166, ... he necessarily would have felt very hurried and hence rushed the shot” (*ibid.*, p. 470). Well, one logical response to this is: why didn't he fire a few frames earlier, then? But, furthermore, how could a man who is about to get two direct hits miss the closest shot by about 200 feet?—which is how far James Tague was from the kill zone. (In this section, Bugliosi never specifically mentions the distance problem.) Bugliosi tries to counter this by saying that the Tague hit was not really a bullet, but a fragment. But get this: Bugliosi says it was from a bullet aimed at the car that bounced off the pavement (*ibid.*, p. 471)—so here you have a ricochet that went almost 200 feet, and then ricocheted again off a curb, and wounded James Tague in the face—but it left no copper as it hit the curb near Tague, even though these Mannlicher-Carcano bullets are copper-coated! Apparently, Bugliosi wants us to believe that the impact of bouncing off the pavement precisely sheared the jacket from the lead core. Can anyone imagine such precision? Sort of like the Sundance Kid shooting a man's holster off his waist without wounding him. Second problem: Why did no one find this sheared-off jacket? According to Bugliosi, it was laying on the pavement right in the middle of Dealey Plaza—yet no one saw it.

In the restored Zapruder film—that is, with the frames that were lost, due to a printing error, put back in—it is pretty clear to any objective observer that Kennedy was hit before he went behind the freeway sign. In fact, when I first saw this film, as projected by Robert Groden at the 1993 Harvard Conference, it was actually kind of shocking, since it was so obvious. This is also what the photographic panel of the House Select Committee on Assassinations had concluded. But Bugliosi cannot allow this—the reason being that this hit almost surely

could not have been fired by Oswald, since, except for a fraction of a second, his view was blocked by the branches of an oak tree. So Bugliosi now goes into prosecutorial overdrive: he says that Kennedy was still waving at the crowd as he disappeared behind the sign (*ibid.*, p. 481). This is simply not true, as can be seen on the restored version of the film (see, for example, [http://assassination-science.com/johncostella/jfk/clip\\_G.mov](http://assassination-science.com/johncostella/jfk/clip_G.mov)). But, in spite of that, Bugliosi concludes that Kennedy was hit between Frames 207 and 222.

Before commenting on why this is hard to swallow, let me first make one easy observation: you cannot see Kennedy at Bugliosi's chosen frames; he is hidden by the sign. But you can see Connally. There is not anything discernible to indicate he is hit at Z 222 (Thompson, p. 79). So if Kennedy is hit before he goes behind the sign, and Connally is not hit even after he emerges from behind it, the likelihood is that they were not hit by the same bullet. There goes the SBT, due to the timing problem with the rifle: it would have been quite difficult for Oswald to have fired the manual bolt action rifle that fast. And this is why I think that Bugliosi, and Posner, place the first shot as early as they do, despite the paucity of evidence: they have to stretch out the firing sequence time in order to make it more believable to the public.

From here, Bugliosi goes on to the fatal headshot on the Zapruder film. Quite naturally, Bugliosi uses Larry Sturdivan's film of the shooting of a goat to endorse the so-called "neuromuscular reaction" explanation for the backward movement of Kennedy's body in the film (Bugliosi, p. 484). As Randy Robertson pointed out at the Duquesne Conference of 2003, if this was the case, then Kennedy's arms as well as his legs would have been extended, because in the film that Sturdivan showed to the HSCA, the goat's front and back legs extended outward before the goat died, after being shot. Yet Kennedy's arms stay at his sides, precisely as they were before the bullet struck. And since Kennedy did not die immediately afterwards, this can be no last, dying spasm. And, in fact, Sturdivan abandoned this position himself in his 2005 book, *The JFK Myths*—which, apparently, Bugliosi did not read—even though he lists it in his bibliography.

Another visual effect that Bugliosi uses to endorse his shot from the rear at Z 313 is a still film of Kennedy's head tilting slightly forward at the time the bullet explodes. Bugliosi plays this up quite strongly: for him, it proves that this shot came from the rear, and he makes his discovery of it quite dramatic (Bugliosi, p. 486). For me, I was puzzled by this "Eureka!" type of reaction: if you look at Z 312, Kennedy's head is tilted slightly forward; this is the instant before he is shot. So at the precise nanosecond the bullet impacts—the next frame—his head would still be in that position. Somehow, this escaped the prosecutor.

Two other things about this photo also escaped Bugliosi. It appears that the *front* of JFK's head is being impacted at this frame—as if a bullet from in front of JFK is hitting him; and it appears to do a lot of damage. Why does none of this show up in the autopsy photos?

The third argument that Bugliosi uses to counter the backward movement of JFK is this: a 6.5 mm Western Cartridge bullet could not have the kind of impacting force to drive JFK backwards as shown in the film. Bugliosi also then asks himself: how does a human body react after being hit by a bullet (*ibid.*, p. 487)? I found this self-query slightly humorous. Bugliosi is in his seventies, so he was alive during the Vietnam War—but he apparently forgot one of the most famous images from the Tet offensive: the film taken in Saigon during the uprising when an officer of the Army of South Vietnam summarily executes a suspected Viet Cong guerilla. He fires his pistol into his head at close range. The impacting force drives the victim backwards, and drops him to the ground. It is difficult to believe that Bugliosi could have forgotten that famous image when he asked himself that question.

Another point that Bugliosi does not bring up here is one that HSCA investigator L. J. Delsa brought up with me in New Orleans: he said that the first time he watched the film, he said to himself that the shot from the front must have been from a weapon of a larger caliber than the one from behind. This, of course, also indicates a second assassin—which is probably why Bugliosi does not mention it.

## IV.2

*I was 19 years old, and all at once I understood that my country was not much better than a Third World country. From that point on ... I had no trust, no respect, for the government. And this was the start of it.*

—James Jenkins, JFK autopsy assistant, on his feeling afterwards

Bugliosi begins his chapter on the autopsy with two quite dubious statements. In the very first paragraph, he says that he does not agree with the statement that many authorities have pronounced about the episode, namely, that JFK's autopsy was botched (p. 382). What makes this opening statement so startling is that, as he acknowledges on the same page, Bugliosi's own chief expert has stated as such! Dr. Michael Baden has written for the record, "Where bungled autopsies are concerned, President Kennedy's is the exemplar." (Quoted in Gary Aguilar's essay in *Trauma Room One*, by Charles Crenshaw, p. 176; hereafter denoted "Aguilar") So what Bugliosi does here would be like a District Attorney disagreeing with his own expert witness in court. The second questionable opening statement he makes is that only two shots hit Kennedy, they were both from the rear, and this "remains unassailable". As we shall see, it is not.

Bugliosi author then proceeds to do something that—except, perhaps, for the former editor of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*—would be rather unthinkable: he actually says that the House Select Committee on Assassinations was too harsh in their treatment of the original autopsy doctors, James Humes, J. Thornton Boswell, and Pierre Finck. In fact, he calls the HSCA's critique of their work "considerably overstated" (Bugliosi, *op. cit.*). Perhaps nothing in the book is more revealing of just how committed the author is to defending the Warren Commission—and yet, at the same time, having it both ways: for, later on, he actually agrees with the changes that the HSCA made to

the original autopsy—that is, the raised entry point on the head, and the lower point on the back (although, as we shall see, at times he even quibbles with this).

Why Bugliosi does this seems strange. What he seems to be trying to do is to soften the critique of the autopsy, and actually vouch for the competence and skill of the pathologists (*ibid.*, pp. 384–5). But this leaves him with a huge problem: if he is right about their competence, then how does one explain why the autopsy was so poor? He mentions the idea—as Pierre Finck testified to at the trial of Clay Shaw—that the military controlled the autopsy. He then tries to counteract this powerful testimony by saying that Finck said that there were no generals in charge of the autopsy. But Finck added that he didn't have to take orders from generals, "... because there were others, there were Admirals ... and when you are a Lt. Colonel in the Army, you just follow orders ..." (James DiEugenio, *Destiny Betrayed*, p. 292).

To further remove the doctors from responsibility for their work product, Bugliosi says that the Kennedy family must have limited the autopsy. This idea has been so completely and repeatedly discredited by writers, like the late Harold Weisberg, and Gary Aguilar, that I was surprised that Bugliosi even surfaced it. Both Humes and Boswell said that this was not the case before the Assassination Records Review Board (Aguilar, p. 179). Humes once told a friend that he was ordered not to do a complete autopsy, but the orders were *not* from Robert Kennedy (William Law, *In the Eye of History*, p. 150). The HSCA concluded that the Kennedys did not interfere with the autopsy—a very good proof of this being the fact that Robert Kennedy left blank the space marked "restrictions" on the form he signed, authorizing the autopsy (Aguilar, p. 180). The Commanding Officer of the Naval Medical Center, Admiral Galloway, said the same—and he was quite specific: "... no orders were being sent in from outside the autopsy room, either by phone or by person" (Aguilar, p. 179). Now, in light of Galloway's words, since the Kennedys were out of the room, the interference had to have come from the inside. For, as Bugliosi argues, if there was no interference, then these eminently-qualified doctors would have given the slain President an excellent and complete autopsy—rather than, as Harold Weisberg has written, one more suiting a bowery bum.

To illustrate the lengths that Warren Commission stalwarts must go to in order to deny that the military limited the post-mortem, consider the following: when Pierre Finck testified at the Clay Shaw trial, he recalled Humes being flustered by this interference, and asking the question, "Who's in charge here?" Finck further testified that an Army General, who was neither a pathologist nor doctor, replied, "I am." (Aguilar, p. 181) This is about as clear as it gets in figuring out who was running things that night. When this episode was depicted in Oliver Stone's film *JFK*, it became necessary to construct a cover story to conceal the truth. So Humes now told his friend George Lundberg, the editor of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, the following fairy tale, in order to make it go away: before the autopsy commenced, he saw a man with a camera in the building. He did not want to chase him, so he went to the loading dock and saw some generals milling around. He asked, "Who's in charge here?" When he found out, he told the officer to remove the guy with the camera (*ibid.*).

Bugliosi, predictably and dutifully, repeats this tale (End Notes, p. 220). But as Gary Aguilar notes, and Bugliosi does not, Finck *could not* have been referring to this “loading dock” episode at the trial. Why? Because Humes places this incident before the autopsy started—and Finck did not arrive until after the autopsy began. Second, Finck testified that this incident happened not before, but while the autopsy was in progress (Aguilar, p. 181). This is how desperate the late Jim Humes was to get himself off the hook. It’s a painful human predicament that Bugliosi does not seem to understand.

But yet, in the face of all the above, Bugliosi insists that the military did not control the autopsy. Now anyone can read Finck’s testimony at the Shaw trial; it is excerpted at length in my first book, *Destiny Betrayed* (pp. 290–309). There, one can see the true answer to this question: not only were the doctors constrained by the military, but Finck was uncomfortable in admitting to this fact. For instance, when prosecutor Alvin Oser asked him if he saw the autopsy photos in advance of signing either the first autopsy report or the supplementary report of a few days later, it is clearly difficult for Finck to admit that he did not. In fact, he actually tried to dance around the fact that he had previously said that he *did* see the photos (p. 293). When Oser had this answer read back to him, Finck actually tried to blame his previous misleading answer on a stenographic error. He finally admitted that he did not see the photos until—get this—1967. And then when Oser asks Finck the simple question as to why he did not dissect the track of the back wound, which allegedly exited the neck—well, the colloquy gets almost painful to read. Oser has to ask him this question—I counted them—eight times! This posing and repetition of the question is spread out over two pages in my book, and much more than that in the transcript (*ibid.*, pp. 301–2). Oser even has to ask the judge to order Finck to answer the question. Finally, Finck answers with, “As I recall I was told not to but I don’t remember by whom.” (*ibid.*, p. 302)

Question for Mr. Bugliosi: If Robert Kennedy had told him not to—or if Kennedy’s physician, George Burkley, had done so—wouldn’t Finck have recalled it? And wouldn’t he have readily answered the question, since it would have gotten him off the hook for his negligence? The answer is obvious. And it renders silly the idea that it was the Kennedys, and not the military, that limited the autopsy—an autopsy so bad that we still can’t figure out what happened to President Kennedy, 45 years later.

What makes the above question to Finck so vital today is that, after the work of the ARRB, we can now see that the failure to dissect this wound seems to have a rationale behind it, because in reading both the interviews conducted by Chief Counsel Jeremy Gunn, along with the declassified interviews of the HSCA, the evidence indicates that this wound did not transit the body. Compelling evidence for this is the new information about the probing of the back wound with a malleable instrument, done that night at Bethesda Naval Center. Both pathologist Robert Karnei, and photographer Robert Knudsen, say that the probing revealed that the back wound was clearly below the throat wound (Aguilar, p. 228). Furthermore, and even worse for the Warren Commission and SBT advocates, photographer George Knudsen, and assistants Paul O’Connor and James Jenkins, said that the angle of the probe was steeply downward (William

Law, *In the Eye of History*, p. 41; Harrison Livingstone, *Killing Kennedy*, p. 215; James H. Fetzer, ed., *Murder in Dealey Plaza*, p. 241, hereafter denoted “MIDP”). Jenkins actually told William Law that, from his observation, the trajectory to connect the two was impossible (Law, p. 79). And there were photos taken of this which—no surprise—do not exist today (see MIDP, p. 208). Finally, at least six witnesses, including radiologist John Ebersole, pathologist Robert Karnei, and FBI agents Jim Sibert and Francis O’Neill, said that the instrument used could not find an exit point (Law, p. 215; Livingstone, p. 214). All of this seems to me very strong evidence that the back wound did not connect to the neck wound, and was not a through-and-through wound.

And this is just the beginning of the problems with the alleged track of this back wound. Another is this: if this bullet entered and exited as the Warren Commission said it did, then why are the cervical vertebrae intact? As Dr. John Nichols pointed out at the trial of Clay Shaw, if the bullet followed the path as specified in the autopsy report, then certainly the vertebrae would have been broken. David Mantik has taken this point even further, with skeletal diagrams that he has projected at certain conferences, like the ASK seminar in Dallas in 1993, that geometrically dramatize this point. Further, as Pat Speer has pointed out, why, on the original measurements, is this anterior neck wound too small for the Mannlicher-Carcano 6.5 mm bullet, and smaller than the entry would be on the back (see Chapter 11 at patspeer.com)? Furthermore, as Henry Hurt has written, why were no metal traces found on Kennedy’s shirt or tie, “traces that should have been there if a bullet had caused the damage” (Hurt, *Reasonable Doubt*, p. 60)? Finally, as Milicent Cranor discusses in her fine essay, “Trajectory of a Lie” (at the History Matters website), wound experts Vincent DiMaio and J. C. Aguilar have written that in a “shored exit wound”, as the anterior neck wound was with the shirt tight around the neck, there should have been an abrasion collar, and there should have been skin on Kennedy’s shirt. There was neither. Further, in a shored exit wound, the abrasion collar looks “scalloped or punched-out”. According to Malcolm Perry, who saw the wound close up, this was not the case. (More on Perry later.)

In 45 years, no credible evidence has yet surfaced that connects this back wound to this anterior neck wound. In retrospect, this may be why the pathologists were ordered not to dissect the wound—because if they had, there would have been no track to find, and that would have created some serious problems. It would have strongly suggested shots from two directions, and therefore two assassins. This is one reason why James Jenkins, in the quote that begins this section, felt like he did after the autopsy. He told author William Law, “I felt what we saw that night was nothing related to the pathology report. There was no relation to it. I came out of the autopsy totally expecting them to say there were two shooters. One from the right and one from behind.” (Law, p. 102)

In fact, Bugliosi seems confused by this issue himself. On p. 421 he writes that Dr. Charles Petty explained to him that the back wound was lower than the throat wound anatomically, but since Kennedy was leaning forward, it could have exited at his throat, which was actually higher. But then, just three pages later, on p. 424, he writes that it is clear from the autopsy photos that the back wound was clearly above the neck wound. Is this a photo that Petty did not see?

Since Petty was on the HSCA forensic panel, how could that possibly be true? Whatever his problem, Bugliosi has a devil of a time convincing the reader that these two wounds connect. And part of that problem is the diagrams he prints on p. 422: in them, he tries to account for this dubious path by leaning President Kennedy forward by an amount that simply is not seen in the Zapruder film until after JFK is clearly struggling in pain—which is after he emerges from behind the sign. But yet, the HSCA photographic panel concluded that he was hit in the back *before* he went behind the freeway sign. If you look at those several frames before he disappears behind the sign, the lean simply does not exist for Bugliosi's depicted trajectory to work. I believe that this is one reason why many who advocate for this forward-lean place the hit to the back behind the sign, simply so that they can say that this lean exists in a place where no one can see it.

But as Josiah Thompson pointed out, it's even worse than that: the HSCA finally decided that the angles through JFK and Governor Connally were 11 degrees *upward* through Kennedy, and 27 degrees downward through Connally. Think about this. The official story has this Magic Bullet not hitting any bone as it traverses Kennedy's neck, since, as I have noted, no cervical vertebrae reveal this. Yet, this military-jacketed bullet—which was good at holding trajectory—deflects a total of 38 degrees while striking nothing but soft tissue! This is very difficult to believe. And this is one of the major problems that Cyril Wecht had with Michael Baden's leadership of the HSCA's forensic panel. Bugliosi writes that Wecht did not understand this forward-lean issue (Bugliosi, p. 423). This is not accurate: Wecht did understand it, but he said that the lean is not present in the Zapruder film at the necessary point. Wecht was very clear about why he disagreed with Baden on this point, and he talks about it at length in Chip Selby's fine film, *Reasonable Doubt*: he said that Kennedy does not exhibit this lean as he disappears behind the sign; and he does not exhibit it just as he emerges from it. So what are we to believe? That he was in this position for only the fraction of a second when he was behind it? Wecht didn't buy it. Bugliosi does.

### IV.3

*What a liar. I feel he got his orders from above. How far above I don't know.*

—FBI agent James Sibert, describing Arlen Specter

What is so interesting about the SBT trajectory problem in *Reclaiming History* is that Bugliosi likes the way the HSCA handled it—at least some of the time—but he says that the Warren Commission mishandled it. Yet something he does not make clear is this: the HSCA *had* to handle it this way, because they detected something on the autopsy photos that either the autopsy doctors missed, or was not there in 1966–67: the HSCA said that there was an abrasion collar on the back wound, which indicated directionality—and the direction was from below. Now, here is a question for the ages: how could a bullet fired from sixty feet above, following an unobstructed path, enter its target at an upward angle? I see no credible answer to that question in Bugliosi's book.

When you combine this observation with the actual placement of the back wound, which is below the neck wound, then it is panic time for the official story—and the Warren Commission knew it. This is why they lied about it. As James Sibert said, “Well the way they got that was by moving that bullet hole in the back, keeping moving it until they got it to the base of the neck so it would come out ... the anterior part of the neck, you know, as an exit wound.” (Law, p. 195) Both Sibert and Francis O’Neill, who observed the autopsy for the FBI, have said that there was nothing stated on the night of the autopsy about a path connecting the two wounds (Law, p. 194). They both said that this was all created after the fact, without the body in front of the doctors. In fact, it is now possible to create the trail that led to such folly.

It appears to begin with a visit that Arlen Specter made to James Humes. At this meeting there was a preliminary discussion of the wounds. Specter actually described this meeting at the Duquesne Conference in 2003—and how Humes would not talk to him until the top Navy brass authorized it (see the invaluable DVD collection, *Into Evidence*, Disc 4). But after this initial hesitancy, the two became friends—after all, they needed each other. Humes and Boswell later admitted to meeting with Specter eight to ten times, before their Warren Commission testimony (Gerald McKnight, *Breach of Trust*, p. 158). Specter, working with the Commander of the Medical School at Bethesda, John Stover, and also with Admiral Galloway, then sent Humes and Boswell to Bethesda Naval Hospital to see a young man, aged 22, named Harold Rydberg (Law, p. 295). To this day, Rydberg does not understand why he was chosen to draw the wound illustrations for the Warren Commission (*ibid.*, p. 293): he had only studied medical art for one year. Rydberg told William Law that Humes and Specter could have easily obtained a much more experienced illustrator from Walter Reed or the University of Maryland for the job. Rydberg later figured out that one reason that he was chosen was that a veteran medical illustrator would not have gone along with the forlorn exercise. Why? The two doctors appeared before him with nothing: no pictures, no X-rays, no official measurements. They were equipped only with their memories.

But they did have one thing: Humes and Specter had already decided on the Single Bullet Theory (Law, p. 294). They had to, because Humes was going to testify in just three days’ time, that is, on 16 March 1964. Rydberg later deduced that the reason they showed up with nothing in hand was that they wanted no paper trail. As we will see, if they had come properly prepared, the ultimate illustrations were so wrong that it would have proved that they were lying to Rydberg to attain a desired end result; but since they came with nothing, they could just say that they remembered things incorrectly. Once the illustrations were done, they were placed in a safe, and then given to Admiral Galloway. Galloway then gave them to the Commission to use for Humes’ testimony (*ibid.*, p. 295).

But, as noted, the actual drawings give the game away—which may be why they are not in the *Warren Report*, but rather are stuffed away in the volumes (CE 385, CE 388). As James Jenkins told William Law, the doctors instructed Rydberg to draw renditions that fit the conclusions that the Commission needed, not depictions of what they saw during the autopsy. Even though he

had 2,600 pages, these drawings are not in Bugliosi's book—yet you can find them in much smaller books, like Charles Crenshaw's, or Josiah Thompson's. Now, these drawings were made in the first two weeks of March, that is, only three months and three weeks after the pathologists performed the most important autopsy in American history. Yet if one looks at the drawings that Humes and Boswell instructed Rydberg to sketch, they made two unbelievable errors. In the profile view of the throat wound, with JFK depicted as erect, they placed the posterior wound up into Kennedy's neck—that is, they moved the back wound upwards, to make it align with a theoretical exit in his throat. Then, completing their mission, they told Rydberg to draw a flight path connecting the false points.

The diagram they instructed the young illustrator to draw for the head wound is just as wrong. They had Rydberg place Kennedy's head in a much more ante-flexed position—looking down into his lap—than he is at Zapruder Frame 313. This false positioning allows for a shot from behind and low in the skull to exit the right side of the head. To sew it all up, they had Rydberg draw another flight path, through this false position. It is hard to believe that these errors are accidental or can be chalked up to a lapse of memory, since, as with almost all of these “errors”, they point in one direction: they use false evidence to make the case against Oswald as the lone assassin.

What makes this supposition all the more tangible is what Specter did with Humes when he testified on 16 March 1964. At this point in time, the Commission had blow-ups of individual frames of the Zapruder film, which they could have given Rydberg. But Specter did a strange thing when Humes testified: he waited until Humes was in mid-testimony—*after* Rydberg's diagram of the head shot had already been entered into the record—and then, and only then, did he show Humes the prints of frames Z 312 and Z 313. The clever prosecutor now posed an artfully-framed query: he asked Humes if the prints depicted Kennedy's head in “approximately the same position” as it was in Rydberg's CE 388. On cue, Humes replied, “Yes sir.” Allen Dulles later rammed the point home by asking Humes if Kennedy's head posture was “roughly the inclination that you think the President's head had at the time.” Humes again agreed. No one on the Commission asked to actually compare the Rydberg drawing with the Zapruder film prints. (See [patspeer.com](http://patspeer.com), Ch. 13, p. 2.)

Bugliosi spends exactly one paragraph on this entire episode—and that paragraph is not in the main text (End Notes, p. 257). He admits that Rydberg's drawings are not accurate; but he does not explain how they could have been made accurate if the Commission—and Specter—had wanted them to be. He notes that CE 385 depicts Kennedy in an upright position for the back wound. He then writes that JFK was never in this position. Maybe not exactly, but he is close to this in the frames leading up to his disappearance behind the freeway sign. And if he was shot there, as the HSCA photographic panel says, then, in addition to his being concealed by the branches of an oak tree, it is very hard to make the trajectory from a lower back wound to a higher neck wound work. Bugliosi also admits that Rydberg's CE 388 is not accurate with the positioning of Kennedy's head. Incredibly, he adds that the drawings “therefore could only have *confused the Warren Commission staff*” (emphasis added). He can write

this because he does not describe what Specter and Dulles did with Humes, which reveals that the two knew precisely what was wrong with the Rydberg depictions, and wanted it that way.

Bugliosi also does not mention the fact that the Warren Commission never interviewed FBI agents Francis O'Neill and James Sibert, nor Kennedy's personal physician George Burkley. The agents were shocked by this omission (Law, p. 187). Specter had read their report on the autopsy, which did not buy into the SBT. He then tried to discredit the report by saying that Sibert made no contemporaneous notes, and O'Neill destroyed his (*ibid.*, pp. 191, 226). Neither attack is true. But Specter conveyed this lie about their report to Warren Commission Chief Counsel J. Lee Rankin (*ibid.*, p. 226) The Sibert-O'Neill report placed the back wound too low to exit through the throat—and Burkley's death certificate did the same. Consequently, these three important witnesses were not interviewed by the Commission, and neither the FBI report on the autopsy, nor the Burkley death certificate, appears in either the *Warren Report* or the 26 volumes (McKnight, pp. 92, 179–180). This all reveals that, far from being confused, the shrewd and ambitious Specter understood quite early what he was doing—and he manipulated the evidence to arrive at his desired goal: the unbelievable SBT.

The reader will have noted that I have taken some time to describe Finck's testimony at the Shaw trial, and the Specter-Rydberg-Humes episode, in detail. This is because I want to show just how compromised the autopsy doctors had become by early 1964. And this is not all there is to indicate such. For example, before the ARRB, Humes admitted that he destroyed not just the first draft of the autopsy report, but also the notes that it was based upon (Aguilar, p. 185). And the ARRB further discovered that some mysterious figure also confiscated the contemporaneous notes that the meticulous Finck had prepared (*ibid.*, p. 187). What this does, of course, is open up the possibility that, as with the Rydberg drawings, the autopsy report in evidence today is not based upon facts discerned on the evening of 22 November 1963, but rather upon later revisions, necessary to make it align with an evolving story.

Gerald McKnight makes a strong case that this actually happened. As he deduces, CE 397 contains the surviving notes, which are just a few pages. Yet the autopsy report is a six-page, single-spaced document. In a two-page analysis, McKnight shows that of approximately 90 facts in the autopsy report, about 64 cannot be found in the official notes. And he further writes, "Some fifteen of these pieces of information involve measurements and numbers that are not found in the published record." (McKnight, p. 162) This is one of the most maddening things about the autopsy report in evidence today: its lack of specific measurements and locations about the head wound and the back wound, which should have been in the notes.

As McKnight further reveals, the story that Humes has told about the destruction of his notes and report does not completely jibe with the record. In a meticulous reconstruction, the historian establishes a paper trail that ends on 26 November 1963 with White House physician George Burkley handing "the autopsy notes and the holograph draft of the final report" to the Secret Service

(*ibid.*). Before the HSCA, Humes admitted to the time of his wholesale destruction by burning: it was when Oswald was shot by Ruby, which was Sunday, 24 November 1963. This is doubly interesting. First, with Oswald dead, there would be little need for the notes to be preserved for a criminal trial; if Oswald had lived, they would be absolutely necessary—because, without them, a sharp defense attorney could question the factual foundation of the report. After 24 November, however, the legal imperative for preserving the notes was gone. Second, many of the alterations to the first draft appear to have been done in the office of Admiral Galloway, that very Sunday (*ibid.*, p. 163; Livingstone, p. 190). This is also the day that Nicolas Katzenbach issued his infamous memorandum to White House assistant Bill Moyers, which laid out the official story about Oswald as the lone assassin.

As students of the case know, the actual destruction of the autopsy draft and notes was originally said to have been done by Humes, at his home and in his fireplace. His excuse? He did not want those notes “stained with the blood of our beloved President” to come into the possession of some crass souvenir hunter. This is another deception that collapsed before the ARRB: it was revealed that the draft in question had been written in the privacy of his home (McKnight, p. 165). This was one of the points at which Humes, caught up in a web of deception and contradiction, became flustered. When asked for a more realistic reason, he first replied that it may have been errors in spelling which caused him to do what he did. Then he said that he could not remember, and he apologized for not recalling. But he also offered this: that he might not have “even ever did that” (*ibid.*)—that is, burned the documents.

If the last option is the truth, then the revisions made in Galloway's office were made with the originals intact—which makes their subsequent disappearance even more interesting. As McKnight notes, they may have survived to 26 November 1963, with Burkley.

Again, Bugliosi deals with this issue not in the main text, but in his End Notes (pp. 276–280). He manages to mention the date of 24 November 1963, without tying it to Oswald's murder. He mentions the revisions made in the report, without placing them in Galloway's office. He does not describe the lack of factual basis in the report, compared to the extant notes. Therefore, he doesn't have to raise the question: Where did these facts come from? And he doesn't detail how the ARRB pierced Humes' cover story about the burning of the first draft (he actually says that Humes had become confused on this point). This latter exclusion allows him to write that, if Humes did do such a heinous thing, then why would he admit to it? As outlined above, it may be because he didn't do such a thing at all. And he knew that his superiors in the Navy, who were cognizant of that fact, and their cohort on the Warren Commission, Specter, would cover that lie for him.

#### IV.4

*Oh what a tangled web we weave, when we first practise to deceive!*

—Sir Walter Scott

The doctors were first co-opted by the Army and Navy brass on the evening of the autopsy. Arlen Specter then further compromised them before the Warren Commission. From here on in, there was no turning back. But the problem was this: the Commission published 26 volumes of evidence, and one of the exhibits was autopsy doctor Thornton Boswell's autopsy face sheet, which placed the back wound low, about five to six inches below the neckline. Second, they also published frames from the Zapruder film. The frames were small, black and white, and of poor quality, but they revealed enough to entice some people to go to the National Archives and view the real thing. One of those interested was Josiah Thompson. As we shall see, with these exhibits, the critical community now began to doubt the credibility of the autopsy.

In 1966, Edward Epstein published *Inquest*. In this book, he showed clear and large photos of Kennedy's jacket and shirt. To those who had purchased the Warren Commission volumes, this created a serious problem. The bullet holes in those two pieces of clothing depicted a wound well down in the back, as Boswell's drawing showed; it was not in the neck as Humes and Boswell had instructed Rydberg to draw. It also now made sense how, as Finck later said, "I was denied the opportunity to examine the clothing of Kennedy. One officer who outranked me told me that my request was only of academic interest." (Aguilar, p. 183) If he *had* seen the clothes, how could he have thought that the back wound could have exited at the level of the throat?

How does Bugliosi deal with this important point—namely, the autopsy doctors not being able to inspect the clothing? He leaves out the quote by Finck saying that a superior officer overruled him. He then says the Secret Service had picked up Kennedy's clothing at Parkland Hospital. But, since the Secret Service was in attendance that night at Bethesda, why didn't Finck's superior just ask them to produce the clothes for the doctors? Specter also seemed cognizant of this problem. When he was running the Warren Commission's reenactment of the assassination, he used Connally's actual jacket—but he didn't use Kennedy's (Speer, Ch. 10, p. 9). So it is difficult to escape the assumption that Specter and the autopsy doctors knew where the entry hole in the back was—nor that Epstein was correct, since Boswell's autopsy face sheet coincided with the photos.

But, caught in the tangled web, Boswell now had to backtrack on his own diagram. Part of the reason for the Justice Department review of the medical evidence in 1966 seems to be to counteract the effect of Epstein's book, for after this review, on 25 November 1966, Dr. Boswell gave an interview to the *Baltimore Sun*. He told the newspaper, "If I had known at the time that this sketch would become public record, I would have been more careful." He now moved the wound up, from down in the back, to just below the collar of JFK's shirt. The *New York Times* also picked up the story. Boswell now asserted that he and Humes had just recently inspected the photos, on 1 November 1966, and there

was “absolutely no doubt in our minds now” about the single-bullet theory (*New York Times*, 25 November 1966). The idea that Epstein’s book was part of the reason for this review was made clear by an Associated Press article of the previous day by Jack Miller. Miller wrote, “In an interview, Boswell said that when he examined the autopsy photographs for the first time Nov. 1, the pictures showed clearly that the wound was in the neck. The photographs are in the National Archives and are not available to the public. One of the critics of the *Warren Report*, Edward Epstein, used the diagram (the autopsy face sheet) and the FBI reports to suggest the possibility that there may have been a second assassin. But Epstein ... conceded in the current issue of *Esquire* magazine that if the autopsy photos showed the wound in the neck, there would be no further doubt about the autopsy report and that second assassin would be ruled out.” (Speer, *op. cit.*, p. 14) Since the public would not be able to see the photos for five more years, Boswell knew that his lie was temporarily safe from exposure—for the autopsy photos, which have since been published, show the wound clearly in the back, not in the neck. If Boswell saw the photos just three weeks earlier, how can we believe that this was just a mistake? It is more likely that the government was using a willing tool to ridicule and demean the critical community. Bugliosi does not mention this strange and mendacious upward migration of the wound in 1966 by Boswell.

But Boswell’s stooping was not enough. The critical community was gaining steam in late 1966 and early 1967. There was another review of the autopsy materials in late January 1967. This time, Pierre Finck was brought back from Vietnam to take part. We complain today about a press complicit with the government, e.g., the false circumstances bandied about by the media for the Iraq War; but this phenomenon is not new for those who follow the Kennedy assassination: as the 1966 review was done for the partial benefit of the print media, the 1967 review seems planned with the cooperation of broadcast media. In fact, Warren Commissioner John McCloy was an adviser for a CBS special on the JFK case, which had been planned as early as December 1966.

In May 1967, the Justice Department wrote a letter to Humes, saying that CBS had requested to interview him for its upcoming special. They were therefore giving him permission to talk to CBS. The Justice Department then prepared a script for Humes to follow when he was questioned by CBS reporter Dan Rather. This script was clearly meant to reinforce what Boswell had previously done, i.e., neutralize Epstein, by revivifying the SBT. The Department wanted Humes to say that a bullet “entered the back of the neck and exited through the throat”; that the autopsy face sheet portrayed this wound too low; and that Humes’ review of the autopsy photos and X-rays supported the conclusions of the Warren Commission, i.e., the SBT. Humes dutifully told Rather that the photos clearly showed that the wound was exactly where the doctors stated it to be in their Warren Commission testimony, and as was shown in the Rydberg drawings (Speer, *op. cit.*, pp. 23–24)—which was false. Bugliosi mentions Humes’ story for CBS, but he does not tell the reader that it was scripted by the Justice Department (Bugliosi, p. 392).

However, the critics were not just confining themselves to the questions about the Rydberg depiction of the SBT. On 14 January 1967, the *Saturday Evening*

*Post* ran a cover story previewing Josiah Thompson's upcoming book, *Six Seconds in Dallas*. As Russell Fisher, director of the Clark Panel, later stated, Attorney General Ramsey Clark got hold of the proofs of Thompson's book after this article appeared (Speer, Ch. 13, p. 3). What he saw must have startled him, because—as Fisher related—one reason that the Clark Panel was convened, and its findings released, was to “partly refute some of the junk” in the book (*ibid.*).

For Thompson did to the Rydberg drawing of the Kennedy headshot what Epstein did to his drawing of the SBT: he brought it under the most serious question, and he did it by visually dramatic means: he simply placed Zapruder Frame 312, the frame right before Kennedy's head explodes, on the same page (p. 111) with what the doctors told Rydberg was the path of this bullet through Kennedy's skull. (For a powerful look at this comparison, see <http://www.patspeer.com/chapter13%3Asolvingthegreatheadwoundmystery>.)

As the reader can see, if Oswald is the assassin, then Kennedy's head is not in the proper position to make this flight path work. The trajectory does not align for an entrance at the bottom of the skull with an exit at the top above the right ear. For that to work, the bullet would have had to have been fired from the level of the trunk of the limousine. Tasked by Clark, forensic pathologist Russell Fisher now went to work. Before I describe the result, it is important to note that Fisher was later brought in to review the mysterious death of CIA Officer John Paisley. Paisley's body was found floating in Chesapeake Bay in 1978. Understandably, the original coroner who saw the body said he was murdered, because he was shot through the head, had indications of rope burns on his neck, and was weighted down with two diving belts when the body was recovered. As one commentator said, “Strapping on two sets of diving belts, jumping off the boat with a gun in hand, and then shooting yourself in the water is, to be charitable, a weird way to commit suicide.” Further, the fatal head wound was through the left side of his brain—yet Paisley was right-handed. Finally, no blood, brain tissue, weapon, or expended cartridge was found on board Paisley's boat. Did he take it all with him when he jumped overboard? None of this was a problem for Fisher. He ruled the case a suicide (*Probe*, Vol. 3, No. 1; Jim Horgan, *Secret Agenda*, pp. 315–320).

Fisher worked this same magic for Clark. He took care of the trajectory problem posed by Thompson in a rather easy manner: he simply moved the wound on the back of the skull up by four inches! This was a milestone in the medical evidence for this case. The autopsy doctors had placed the entrance wound in the head at the level of the external occipital protuberance (EOP), which is near the bottom of the rear of the skull; Fisher was raising it to the level of the cowlick. It is difficult to believe that the autopsy doctors, who had the body in front of them for hours, and manipulated the scalp, could have made such a serious error. But this is what the Clark Panel insisted had happened. To demonstrate even more forcefully that this third review in two years was politically motivated, Clark did not release the results of this inquiry until 16 January 1969—almost eleven months after the panel was convened—but just happening to be the day that Jim Garrison's prosecution of Clay Shaw finally began, after being delayed for almost two years. Can there be any doubt that the government was out to neuter the work of the critics? And if they had to force the doctors to fal-

sify the facts, or if Russell Fisher had to miraculously elevate wounds, then so be it: the ends justified the means.

I have spent some time on the historical aspect of the interaction of the pathologists with both the media and the government. I think that this is necessary, in order to understand the confusion about the medical facts of the case in the early years. That confusion was brought on by the attempts in Washington to counteract the holes poked in the Commission's autopsy case. To counteract these points, the autopsy doctors were trotted out, and given permission to speak—but only after being briefed and scripted—and they willingly read their lines, even if the script differed from the facts. They apparently felt safe, since a shroud of secrecy existed, and they knew that their side would protect them—which they did. It is important to remember that this rather sordid part of the story in regard to *Reclaiming History*, for Bugliosi attempts to portray the pathologists as competent and uncompromised, and if they committed errors, then they were honest errors. In light of the above, this is untenable. And it is now about to get worse.

#### IV.5

*Q: Do you recall having seen an X-ray previously that had fragments corresponding to a small occipital wound?*

*A: Well I reported that I did, so I must have. But I don't see it now.*

—James Humes to Jeremy Gunn, 13 February 1996

I couldn't find this exchange in *Reclaiming History*—yet it is surely one of the most gripping and important revelations of the Assassination Records Review Board. Some would say that it holds the key to the medical evidence in the JFK case. Humes here is denying both his own autopsy report, and what he himself said he saw during the autopsy of President Kennedy. ARRB researcher Doug Horne said that, when the Chief Counsel of the ARRB pressed him ever-so-slightly on this point, Humes became visibly frustrated—to the point that if Gunn would have asked him one more question, Humes would probably have walked out (*MIDP*, p. 451).

To understand why this point was so sensitive with the late pathologist, we must return to what Russell Fisher did with the rear skull wound. We must also be reminded that Thompson's visual exposure of the falsity of the Rydberg headshot partly provoked that review. The problem was simple: the Commission's story was that Oswald was firing from sixty feet up. This downward head shot hit Kennedy low on the rear skull, but it exited at a *higher* point, above the right ear on the right side of the head. So now you had a second bullet that, although it entered going downward, it exited going upward. What makes this even more fascinating is that in the autopsy report, Humes wrote that there was a trail of metal fragments that connected the entry in the occipital region to the top of the skull in the supraorbital area, i.e., above the eye socket—which, at least, would be evidence that this indeed did occur. The insurmountable problem is this: no such trail exists in the X-rays we have today—and this is what

Gunn was questioning Humes about. How could he have made such a grievous error? Humes couldn't explain it—hence his agitation.

To really understand the depth of this problem, we must return to Russell Fisher, and the main reason why he raised this rear skull wound. It is on the basis of something that reversed the pattern of Humes' errors, as described above. In the above ARRB questioning, Humes saw something—the trail of metal particles—that later bodies did not. Well, with the Fisher Panel, Fisher saw something that Humes allegedly did not—and it's a doozy: Fisher observed that there was a 6.5 mm fragment near the top of the rear skull table. Of course, the size and shape of this fragment fits the exact description of the ammunition allegedly fired by Oswald. So the question then became: how the heck did all the autopsy doctors and radiologists and FBI agents miss it, if Fisher saw it?

Again, Jeremy Gunn questioned Humes on this particular point. After drawing his attention to it, Humes commented on this 6.5 mm fragment as follows: "The ones we retrieved I didn't think were the same size as this ...." Gunn then asked him if they were smaller or larger. Humes replied, "Smaller, considerably smaller .... I don't remember retrieving anything of this size .... Truthfully, I don't remember anything that size when I looked at these films." (*MIDP*, p. 449) When Gunn interviewed J. Thornton Boswell about this fragment, he said the same: "No. We did not find one that large. I'm sure of that." (ARRB interview of 26 February 1996) When William Law asked FBI agent James Sibert if he saw this fragment on the night of the autopsy, he also responded in the negative: "... there was nothing like that." (Law, p. 257) Furthermore, he said that he recalled no one in the room mentioning it either (*ibid.*, p. 267). His FBI partner, Francis O'Neill, said the same: "If there was such [a fragment] as that, it certainly wasn't pointed out to me." (*ibid.*, p. 166) John Ebersole was the Navy doctor in charge of radiology during the Kennedy autopsy. When David Mantik called him in 1992, the two radiologists were having a nice conversation about a number of things; yet when Mantik asked him why the Clark Panel found the 6.5 mm fragment, but Ebersole did not, Ebersole promptly terminated the conversation and hung up on him (*MIDP*, p. 439). Jerrol Custer, the X-ray technician, told William Law that all the bullet fragments he saw were small (Law, p. 120). (In an interview with Gary Aguilar for this article, he told me that the 6.5 mm fragment would have been at least 50% larger than the second-largest fragment retrieved that night.)

Now, these last four witnesses are key, I believe. First, Custer and Ebersole were involved in actually taking the X-rays, and were therefore experienced in looking at them. The two FBI agents were formally tasked with retrieving bullets and fragments for the FBI lab. Recall, this is the evening of the assassination: Oswald is still alive, and these fragments would be absolutely crucial evidence at his trial; yet they recall nothing like this fragment either being on the X-rays, or being mentioned by anyone else. Taken together, this testimony strikes me as being probative. It is very difficult to say that this fragment existed on the X-rays seen during the autopsy at Bethesda; if it did, it would be incompetence of a preposterous degree—almost frightening, actually.

Bugliosi does not mention this incredible “error” in the text of *Reclaiming History*. In fact, he never mentions at all how it would be possible for all six witnesses I have mentioned—and more—to miss such a crucial exhibit in what would have been a murder case. He calls this key exhibit “... the presence of what appears to be a bullet fragment ... embedded in the back of the skull” (End Notes, p. 221). He then adds that Dr. Mantik believes that this 6.5 mm fragment did not exist on 22 November 1963, and was later imprinted onto the X-rays. As usual, Bugliosi then questions the logic of anyone doing such a thing: “How could this ... implicate Oswald?” (End Notes, p. 222)

Let’s help the prosecutor: First, how about the size? It matches the alleged ammunition used by Oswald. Second, maybe it helps with the trajectory problem I outlined earlier? If the entry point is on the bottom of the skull, how could the bullet exit higher on the right side? That trajectory is made easier with the new and improved higher entry point. Third, it helps cure the problem of JFK’s head not being nearly as anteflexed as needed at Zapruder Frame 312. Fourth, it also helps with the metal particle fragment trail being too high in the suborbital area for the low entry point. That’s four ways in which the Fisher Panel, and its discovery, helped in the case against Oswald.

But yet, as Walter Scott wrote, when we “practise to deceive”, we sometimes build a tangled web that is difficult to navigate. The new 6.5 mm “discovery” ameliorated some problems, but it created some of its own.

The first was this: the autopsy doctors would not sign off on it. The Clark Panel did not consult with them when they first switched the location in 1968. But the next Kennedy investigation, the HSCA, was much more public, and much more reported on—so the HSCA had to consult with the original autopsy team. Michael Baden, the head of the HSCA’s Forensic Pathology Panel, was all on board with the new cowlick location: he, and the overwhelming majority of the panel, wanted Humes, Boswell, and Finck to switch from the EOP location to the new higher one. And in the newly declassified HSCA interviews, it is clear that the autopsy doctors were quite reluctant to do so. For one thing, Finck said that, having had the body in front of them, they had the opportunity to manipulate the scalp (Livingstone, p. 38). And before the HSCA, he actually described the separation of the scalp from the skull in detail (*MIDP*, p. 207). Second, all three were utterly unconvinced by the photographic evidence the HSCA used, i.e., the appearance of a red spot at the cowlick area. To many this looks like nothing more than a spot of dried blood. HSCA medical investigator Andy Purdy asked Pierre Finck what inference “... would you draw if you saw just that?” Finck replied, “On the basis of the photograph alone, nothing.” (Livingstone, p. 244–5) The HSCA was so intent on “flipping” the autopsy doctors that one of their doctors even asked Finck to look at this red spot with a magnifying glass! To which Finck replied that it would be embarrassing (*ibid.*, p. 245). Finck was so baffled by the HSCA’s insistence on making the red spot at the cowlick the new entry wound that he posed a remarkable question about the spot and its provenance: “I don’t know what it is. How are these photographs identified as coming from the autopsy of President Kennedy?” (*ibid.*, p. 36) This from a man who said he actually directed that photos be made of the entry wound in the

skull (*ibid.*)! Dr. Boswell said about the Fisher Panel elevation of the head wound, "I never believed this." (*MIDP*, p. 443)

According to Andy Purdy, when he first talked to Dr. Humes, he seemed unaware of any great discrepancy between the Clark Panel and his own work. When Purdy described this split in opinion on where the rear entry wound on the skull was, Humes strongly disagreed. Purdy wrote, "Dr. Humes stated categorically that his physical measurements are correct and emphasized that he had access to the body itself ..." (Livingstone, p. 239) Then, before Baden's panel, Dr. Humes even pointed out a paradox in the photographic evidence: although the red spot was visible in the color photograph, he added, "I almost defy you to find it in that magnification in the black and white." (Livingstone, p. 245) Further, as David Mantik has observed, in years of research on the JFK case, he has yet to find one witness at either Parkland Hospital or Bethesda who has ever testified as to noticing this red spot at the cowlick area, let alone identifying it as an entry hole (*MIDP*, p. 238). In fact, Purdy told the ARRB that when Humes refused to budge on this issue, Dr. Charles Petty took him outside and yelled at him (Speer, Chap. 13, p. 10).

Now, it is true that Humes eventually relented to the HSCA's pressure, and, on camera, pointed to the cowlick location as the entry wound (*MIDP*, p. 443). But it is clear that this was for show-trial purposes only, because two years later, in a phone interview with Harrison Livingstone, he insisted that his autopsy was correct in 1963: the entry was at the EOP. Livingstone wrote that he got the impression that Humes would never retreat from this position: "... he was very strong on this issue" (Livingstone, p. 240). And when Humes was interviewed by both the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* in 1992, and by the ARRB in 1996, he stood by his original location (*MIDP*, p. 446).

The way Bugliosi deals with this issue is rich. This is what he says on p. 395: "How have the three autopsy pathologists reacted to this apparent gaffe in their report? Not very well I'm afraid. By and large most people don't want to admit they made a mistake. The three autopsy surgeons were no exception." (Note the use of the word "gaffe" for a mistake that all three apparently made, that turned out to be the biggest mistake of their careers.)

It is imperative to add two more key points about the "discovery" of the cowlick location for this wound. First, Dr. Petty seems to have had a change of heart about this, later on: in 1993, in *JAMA*, Petty seemed to agree with Humes on the elevated placement; he wrote, "There were no bullet defects other than those described by Humes in his report." (See David Mantik in *Assassination Science*, p. 120.) Bugliosi used Petty as his London trial medical expert. Yet in *Reclaiming History*, I could find no note of Petty's subsequent endorsement of Humes.

Finally, let me add what I consider to be an absolutely crucial revelation in this "wandering head wound" saga. At the Duquesne Conference of 2003, Dr. Randy Robertson projected on screen a document that tells us a lot about how obsessed the HSCA really was in its mad pursuit of its "wound in the cowlick" goal. Robertson had unearthed the document from the then-newly released HSCA files, as declassified by the ARRB. Baden clearly felt that no one would

ever see it, let alone show it in a public forum with him in attendance. What was it? It was a personal note from Baden to Ida Dox. Dox was the artist the HSCA employed to render lifelike renditions of the Kennedy autopsy photos. The note instructed her: "You can do better than this." Attached to Baden's note was a photo of a skin laceration from a medical textbook: Baden was clearly telling his employee that he wanted this cowlick spot to be embellished to look like a *real* gunshot wound. And right after Robertson flashed this on the screen, Gary Aguilar, who had seen the actual photos in the National Archives, chimed in: he exclaimed, "The actual autopsy pictures do not have those raised edges like that!" This clearly indicates that the "red spot" was altered by Dox for public consumption—read "deception"—to give it depth and a "crater look". Since Bugliosi turned down his invitation to attend this conference, he was unaware that his own chief medical witness was falsifying evidence. Unaware of this declassified exposure, he prints the embellished Dox drawing of the rear skull wound as representing the "entrance wound".

#### IV.6

*I've said that when you perform an autopsy without the body, you're getting out of medicine and into magic.*

—James Sibert, on the creation of the Single Bullet Theory

The above is only the beginning of the problems with the new and improved cowlick location for JFK's head wound. What Fisher apparently did not realize is that he had now created a second "magic bullet", because when one analyzes this new autopsy, it is very hard to explain the 6.5 mm fragment in any other terms. And although the American public is generally aware of the mythological properties of the pristine condition of CE 399, i.e., the back-to-neck magic bullet, the critical community has not yet excelled in presenting the almost equal absurdity of this new one. But since Bugliosi accepts Fisher's placement of this new-found fragment, I should explain why it is so unbelievable.

Consider what Bugliosi is maintaining: Oswald is firing from the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository at a target that is now about 250-plus feet away. The military-jacketed Western cartridges manufactured for the Mannlicher-Carcano rifle are said to be quite stable in their flight path. So this bullet is flying through nothing but air, at a downward trajectory, and strikes Kennedy's skull in the cowlick area. Would it not strike nose first? Yet the nose and tail of this projectile (CE 567 and CE 569 respectively) were reportedly found in the front of the limousine. As David Mantik has written in *Assassination Science*, "How is it possible for a nearly complete cross section from somewhere *inside* the bullet to embed itself on the *outside* of the skull?" (p. 115)—because this is what the Fisher Panel, and later the HSCA forensic panel, would have us believe, namely, that a bullet traveling at almost 2,000 feet per second, striking the top of the head, would immediately break into thirds, and in the space of a instant, it would then presumably flatten sideways and leave the middle third of the bullet up against the *outside* of the skull—even though that part of the bullet should not have struck the skull first. In other words, it would appear that the nose of this bullet did not even penetrate the back of the skull before it

shattered; then the other two fragments hurtled through the head, and into the front of the car. Yet the exit for this bullet path is out the top of the right ear. Wouldn't they then have gone outside the side of the car, since JFK was next to the door?

Now, Bugliosi wants us to believe that the first Magic Bullet, CE 399, went through two people, caused seven wounds, and smashed two bones—and, miraculously, it emerged almost completely intact. This other bullet, upon entering one layer of bone, broke into thirds immediately upon contact. Also, this military-jacketed bullet started off going from right to left, and then, on its trajectory through the skull, went left to right—because, in width, the new bullet entrance was about in the center of the skull, yet its exit is on the right side. Also, I noted above that the bullet had to have been on its side upon contact. The reason I say this is because to accept that it entered and stayed nose-first is to imagine something even more incredible: that, entering the skull in that natural position, it would arbitrarily have the middle part just sectioned off—and that part then stayed where it was sectioned.

Let me add one more anomaly: the stray 6.5 mm fragment is not actually at the new entry site; it is located 1 cm below it (*ibid.*, p. 124). Go figure; my imagination is spent.

Understandably, Bugliosi does not describe this bizarre phenomenon in anything like the detail I have here. That's because—as with CE 399—no ballistics expert can explain or remember such a thing happening. Howard Donahue could not even recall a nose from a bullet doing such a thing (*ibid.*). Larry Sturdivan, a man who—for unexplained reasons—Bugliosi actually believes, at times, has said the same. He actually wrote, "... to have a cross section sheared out is physically impossible." (*MIDP*, p. 266) Question for the reader: what are the odds of having two magic bullets in the one murder case—occurring six seconds apart?

Mantik notes another problem with the new fragment: it is the only piece of evidence to indicate this new trajectory, namely, there is no corresponding entry hole in the skull on the anterior-posterior (front-to-back) X-ray. On the lateral (side) X-ray, the fragment is 1 cm below a fracture line; therefore, the fracture lines do not actually emanate from it. As Mantik writes, "Unless they unequivocally extend to this 6.5 mm object they cannot represent fracture lines caused by a posterior skull bullet." (*Assassination Science*, p. 112) And finally, the mysterious trail of dust-like particles at the front of the skull lies above this new cowlick entrance (*ibid.*)

So let's sum up the prosecutor's case. No witness at Parkland or Bethesda ever saw the red spot at the cowlick in 1963. No witness who saw the X-rays at Bethesda recalls the 6.5 mm fragment. The autopsy doctors manipulated the scalp from the skull, and they say that the entry bullet hole was well below it. No other corroborating physical evidence on the X-rays jibes with the new location. Now, in evaluating this forlorn (and five years late) fragment entry hole, it is important to quote a standard guide to court procedure, *McCormick on Evidence*. It reads, in part: "The principle upon which photographs are most commonly ad-

mitted into evidence is the same as that underlying the admission of illustrative drawings, maps, and diagrams ... a photograph is viewed merely as graphic portrayal of oral testimony, and becomes admissible only when a witness has testified that it is a correct and accurate representation of the relevant facts personally observed by the witness." (Quoted in *MIDP*, p. 11) Can one imagine presenting the 6.5 mm fragment, when the X-ray technicians and autopsy doctors deny its existence—or the “red spot” cowlick entry that the photographers and pathologists did not see? Again, you could not get this evidence into court under accepted standards—but, even if you could, why would you want to? It would be an evidentiary debacle with the court and the jury.

So are there any clues as to this weird upward migration of the wound, and the materialization of this impossible object? Consider the following: According to X-ray assistant Jerrol Custer, his boss, Dr. John Ebersole, made a strange request to him right after the assassination. After being called to the White House by the Secret Service, Ebersole returned to Bethesda and asked Custer to do a strange thing. Ebersole asked him, “I need you to do a special duty. I have skull fragments here and I’ve got bullet fragments. I want you to tape the bullet fragments to the skull fragments—and take X-rays of the different densities. This is for a bust of Kennedy.” (Law, p. 120) Consider this for a moment. Kennedy has just been killed by having his head blown apart. Now a bust is being prepared to depict the bullet fragments as they ripped his head open? Was it for J. Edgar Hoover’s private enjoyment? Custer said that he just looked at Ebersole in disbelief. But, he told Law, “When you’re in the service, you don’t question what an officer tells you to do. You do it.” (*ibid.*) During this videotaped interview, Law asked Custer what he was really thinking at the time. Custer said, “Well ... I won’t say it on camera.” (*ibid.*) Custer felt that this may have been an initial, exploratory attempt to manipulate the X-rays (*MIDP*, p. 268). A few weeks later, Ebersole gained access to the National Archives, and, still working on measurements for the Kennedy “bust”, reviewed the skull X-rays. He actually drew lines on them. When the HSCA asked him about this, he said that one of the lines was to “get a line from the highpoint of the forehead back to the occipital” (Livingstone, pp. 352–3). This, of course, would align with the original particle trail that Humes wrote about in his autopsy report—the trajectory that does not exist on the X-rays today.

Understandably, I could not find this fascinating tale in Bugliosi’s mammoth book.

To me, I see no reason to believe this elevated location of the wound, as advocated by Fisher, and Michael Baden of the HSCA. And I cannot understand how if Bugliosi argues that the pathologists were competent. Simply stated, competent pathologists do not make mistakes about fatal bullet holes. Furthermore, I believe that Pat Speer has made a good case for locating the EOP wound (see <http://www.patspeer.com/chapter13%3Asolvingthegreatheadwoundmystery>).

#### IV.7

*That was the worst experience of my life.*

—Paul O'Connor, on the aftermath of the autopsy

So far, we have traced some very strange occurrences in the JFK medical evidence. We have discussed the following:

1. The military limited the autopsy
2. Arlen Specter co-opted Humes and Boswell's recollections of the bullet wounds.
3. No credible evidence exists to connect the back and neck wounds.
4. Humes destroyed the notes and first draft of his autopsy report.
5. Specter did not interview Kennedy's personal physician, who signed his death certificate.
6. The pathologists did not look at the photos nor examine Kennedy's clothes before writing their report.
7. In 1966, the media, the Justice Department, and Boswell conspired to lie about the location of the back wound to the public.
8. In 1967, Humes did the same.
9. In 1968, a secret panel raised the fatal head wound four inches up JFK's skull.
10. In 1977, the pathologists strongly disagreed with this new entry point.
11. Michael Baden ordered his artist to embellish the photos to make this new location more credible.
12. According to two ballistics experts, the part of the bullet located in the X-rays at this new location cannot be there.

I want to close this installment with another very troubling issue in the JFK autopsy—one which shows that a government agent deliberately changed a witness's testimony to make the SBT plausible. Witness tampering in a homicide is the kind of behavior that should be an affront to any criminal lawyer—but especially a prosecutor.

Before the creation of the ARRB, very few people in the critical community had ever heard the name of Elmer Moore—and that was the way it was supposed to be. Today, scores of people know the name. And a few—including Gary Aguilar, Pat Speer, and myself—see him as one of the crucial components of the medical evidence cover-up. In fact, things were still being revealed about him as late as

2003, after the ARRB had been shut down for five years. At the Duquesne Conference of 2003, Arlen Specter revealed two things about Mr. Moore that no one had ever known before. First, this Secret Service agent who, at the time of the assassination, was stationed in San Francisco, eventually became the bodyguard to Earl Warren while he was on the Warren Commission. (Why any of the Warren Commissioners would need a bodyguard escapes me: their work was done almost entirely in secret; so if no one knew what they were doing, how could anyone object to it—and, moreover, object to it so strongly that they would either want to hurt or kill them? Also, no other Commissioner that I know of was given a personal bodyguard.) The second thing that Specter revealed about Moore was equally extraordinary: Earl Warren did see the autopsy photos. Specter knew this, because Moore had them, and wanted to show them to him as well (see the DVD series, *Into Evidence*, Disc 4). I thought that these dual Specter revelations about Moore were stunning—but to appreciate them in full, one needs to know a little more about Moore.

Now, it had always been a mystery as to why Dr. Malcolm Perry essentially reversed his story about President Kennedy's neck wound. On the day of the assassination, Perry was the doctor at Parkland who had performed the tracheotomy on the dying President; therefore, he would have had the closest and longest look at his neck wound. Right after Kennedy died, during a press conference in Dallas, Perry appeared with Dr. Kemp Clark, the professor of neurosurgery who pronounced JFK dead. On three occasions during the press conference, Perry declared that the wound in the neck was an entrance wound (*Probe*, Vol. 4, No. 3, p. 20). The day after the assassination, he said the same thing to reporters from the *Boston Globe* (*ibid.*).

These public pronouncements were made well before the creation of the Warren Commission. But when Arlen Specter studied the record, he understood how deadly they were to the creation of his two main goals: the Single Bullet Theory trajectory, and Oswald as the lone assassin. When Perry testified before the Commission, something had clearly happened to him. First, after testifying that the wound had edges which were not ragged, but clean, he then qualified this by saying that they were neither clean-cut, nor were they very ragged. When asked by Specter if, by the appearance of the neck wound, it could have been either an entrance or an exit, he replied, "It could have been either." Specter even got Perry to say that the SBT was possible if the throat wound was a wound of exit. Gerald Ford asked Perry if the reporting of his news conference was accurate or inaccurate. Perry replied with the latter. And Allen Dulles chimed in by saying that Perry should now issue a public correction about his 22 November 1963 remarks—which, of course, had now been neutralized (*ibid.*).

It had always been a mystery as to why Perry, and other Dallas doctors, could have changed their original remarks, and gone along with the SBT for the Warren Commission—especially since, much later (in 1986), Perry told Dr. Robert Artwohl that he regretted having to cut through the wound, and so he made a good mental note of it. There was no doubt to him that it was an entrance wound (*MIDP*, p. 196). So, like Humes with the HSCA and the upper-level entry wound, Perry threw out his professional ethics for a show-trial presentation.

But the ARRB made it possible to find out how this happened: it was not a pretty picture, and Moore was in the middle of it.

As Gary Aguilar wrote in *Probe*, after 22 November 1963, Moore began to hang around Parkland a lot. He had clearly done a lot of work on the medical and ballistics aspects of the assassination. And, by 11 December 1963, he had turned Perry around on the trajectory issue. Up until this time, the Dallas doctors had been talking freely with the press, including the *Saturday Evening Post*. They still thought the neck wound was an entrance. Armed with the official autopsy report, Moore now began to turn the tide, and their minds. Perry was now saying that the neck wound was an exit, and it was exiting at a downward angle (*ibid.*, p. 21). Moore evidently had good contacts in the press as well. The first known media report of a transiting bullet (one that exited the throat) appeared in the *Dallas Times-Herald* on 12 December 1963, just one day after Moore got Perry to sign on to the official story (*MIDP*, p. 272)—so Allen Dulles got Perry to issue his Orwellian public “correction”.

The revelation about Moore’s massaging the doctors’ testimony was first revealed to the Church Committee in 1975. A man named Jim Gochenaur said that while living in Seattle in 1970, he had met Moore. Moore had told him that he was the liaison between the Warren Commission and the Secret Service. He said that, as a member of the Secret Service, he had to do what he was told (*Probe*, *op. cit.*). And one of his tasks in this new Warren Commission function was to get Dr. Perry to change his story—so he admitted to pressuring Perry to alter what he had said. Moore added something quite revealing: he said that he had to do this, since there was no conclusive evidence at that point in time as to where the shots had come from. Here, Moore is essentially saying that the Commission had to badger Perry to make the case against Oswald.

Moore also revealed that *on the day of the assassination* he flew from California to Washington. He then was detailed to Dallas on 29 November 1963. Once there, he immediately got into contact with the Dallas doctors (*ibid.*). What makes this timing interesting is that Nurse Audrey Bell told Harrison Livingstone that when she saw Perry the next day, on 23 November, he looked tired and worn. He then told her that he had been getting calls that night from Washington (Livingstone, p. 192). This may have been Moore—but if not, then Moore was surely continuing the assignment. (This also brings into serious doubt the story that Humes knew nothing about a wound in the neck until the next day.) There is also evidence that Moore and the Secret Service got their own agents to change things that they had said to FBI agents Jim Sibert and Francis O’Neill on the night of the autopsy (Law, pp. 228–9). This was a way of further discrediting the Sibert–O’Neill report, therefore neutering its differences from the Commission’s conclusions.

Gochenaur provided some private insight into Moore. Moore said that he later felt badly about pressuring Perry into altering his story. But Gochenaur also added that the longer Moore talked, the scarier he got: he seemed to have to rationalize what he had done for the Commission, by going on a long and violent rant about Kennedy: he said that JFK was a “pinko” who was selling out the

Free World to the communists. By the time the conversation was over, Goche-  
naur was actually frightened (*MIDP*, p. 116).

This is the man who was entrusted to be a bodyguard to Earl Warren. In his  
1 January 1976 appearance before the Church Committee, Moore showed up  
with an attorney. During his interview it became clear why he had hired one. He  
said that he understood that talking a witness out of his testimony in a criminal  
case constituted a felony. Then things got really interesting: Moore informed the  
Church Committee that, after his Dallas assignment, he then met with Earl  
Warren and convinced him that he needed Secret Service protection while on  
the Warren Commission. And, as Specter mentioned in his Duquesne talk,  
Moore was in the room when Jack Ruby was questioned in Dallas. But, as the  
above discussion shows, Moore was there for much more than “protection”: he  
admitted to having daily talks with Warren—and, as we have seen with Perry,  
we can imagine what those talks were like.

Pat Speer has unearthed documents that reveal the whole “protection” side of  
Moore’s function to be a myth. Warren wanted Moore to help “the Commission  
for an indefinite period to assist in its work” (Treasury Department memo,  
7 January 1964). Secret Service Chief Rowley, in a similar 8 December 1963  
memo, wrote that Moore was assigned to “furnish any service, assistance, and  
cooperation the Commission considers necessary”. As Gerald McKnight notes in  
his excellent *Breach of Trust*, after the 22 January 1964 Warren Commission  
meeting about Oswald being a possible FBI informant, J. Lee Rankin instructed  
his secretary to give all the excess material—tapes, notes, and carbons—to  
Elmer Moore to be incinerated (McKnight, p. 402). Moore was much more than  
a bodyguard: he was someone’s mole at the highest level of the Commission.  
Whose mole he was is an intriguing question.

But to return to Specter: with Moore actually showing him the autopsy photos,  
we know for a fact that Specter himself knew that the Warren Commission’s  
SBT was a lie, just as we know that his ballet with Humes about the positioning  
of Kennedy’s head at the time of the fatal shot was a charade. For, as even  
Bugliosi has to note in this aspect, Gerald Ford altered the *Warren Report* before  
it was printed: at the last minute, Ford changed the wording of the location of  
the back wound in the text—he raised it to the neck. This, of course, makes the  
SBT trajectory more possible. Bugliosi notes this incident, and actually makes it  
into a debate about the intentions of the Commission. He says that either this  
was a mistake, or the Commission “deliberately changed the facts to solve the  
high-exit-wound problem” (Bugliosi, p. 425). He then comes down on the side of  
innocence of the Commission—that is, this was nothing but a benign error. But  
Specter’s belated confession about Moore creates a huge problem for this “be-  
nignity”, because the autopsy photos reveal this wound to be unquestionably in  
the back. Moore, Warren, and Specter all saw the photo, so unless they were  
blind, they had to know that what Ford did was not borne of benignity, but  
rather from malignancy.

Bugliosi says that he spent 21 years writing and researching the 2,600 pages of  
*Reclaiming History*. Elmer Moore—the man most responsible for turning the  
throat wound from an entrance into an exit—is not in the book.