



DAVID W. MANTIK

Cold Case JFK" vs. Cold Hard JFK Facts

Cold Case JFK" vs. Cold Hard JFK Facts

BY DAVID W. MANTIK, MD, PHD (PHYSICS) NOV 26
2013

Note: This is a critical review of the NOVA production (November 14, 2013) – "Cold Case JFK."

G. Robert Blakey (as quoted on "Cold Case JFK"): "...the need that led to the Warren Commission was not to find out what happened but to assure the American people what didn't happen."

John McCloy (Warren Commission): [It was of paramount importance to] "show the world that America is not a banana republic, where a government can be changed by conspiracy."

Jim Marrs (Crossfire 2013, p. 441): "Allen Dulles told author Edward Jay Epstein that since an atmosphere of rumors and suspicion interferes with the functioning of the government, especially abroad, one of the Commission's main tasks was to dispel rumors."

This was a remarkably disingenuous program, with many erroneous assumptions, misleading statements, and crucial omissions. I label these accordingly below. I also list several correct statements and provide additional comments.

Assumption: Lee Harvey Oswald (LHO) owned the Mannlicher-Carcano (MC) Comment: The weapon in evidence is not the one ordered by LHO. The Warren Commission (WC) states that he used a coupon from the February 1963 issue of The American Rifleman (but this ad does not appear in the WC). The ad is for a 36" Carcano carbine weighing 5.5#. The weapon in evidence is supposedly a 40" short rifle and weighs 8# (with sling and gun sight).

Further, when the HSCA interviewed the gunsmith at Klein's, he said he placed scopes on the 36-inch model but not the 40-inch model. Yet this rifle had a scope on it. How did it get there? No one addressed these problems on this program. Or even acknowledged they existed. The first weapon reported in the Texas School Book Depository (TSBD) was actually a 7.65 German Mauser; Eugene Boone filed two separate reports to this effect, and Seymour Weitzman filed a confirming affidavit.

Boone later testified that Captain Fritz and Lt. Day also identified it as a Mauser. The weapon in evidence, however, clearly reads, "Made in Italy" and "Cal, 6.5".

Therefore, how could those affidavits be filed if the police could read properly? Furthermore, no one has explained why a wannabe assassin would purchase a weapon by money order through the mail instead of paying cash locally (with no trace of ownership). In addition, on the supposed purchase date (March 12), LHO was at work from 8 AM to 12:15 PM (see Harvey and Lee by John Armstrong for company employee records). If the post office records can be believed, LHO walked 11 blocks to the General Post Office, purchased a money order, but then did not mail it from there. Instead, he walked many blocks out of his way (eventually using a mailbox) before returning to work, where his absence was not noted. This order then arrived the very next day at Klein's (in Chicago) and was already deposited at the bank that same day!

Unfortunately, the bank deposit actually reads February 15, 1963, not March 13 1963. Of course, if the date really had been February, then the serial number C2766 could not apply to the weapon in the backyard photographs. For even more anomalies on the MC see Reclaiming Parkland by Jim DiEugenio. (Especially Chapter 4, pages 56-63)

Omission: The witnesses pointed to the TSBD.

Comment: The narrator fails to say that most witnesses ran to the overpass and to the Grassy Knoll.

Misleading: John McAdams claims that the ballistics evidence would have been admissible in court.

Comment: The palm print on the weapon was not initially discovered by the Dallas Police Department, but only turned up later, after the FBI apparently fingerprinted LHO at the morgue (according to the mortician). In addition, fingerprint evidence can be surprisingly subjective (see my CTKA review of McAdams' book). Although CE-399 (the Magic Bullet) was supposedly matched to the MC (see Jerry McLeer's website for this controversy), that does not prove that LHO fired the gun on 11/22/1963, or even that LHO handled it that day. After all, the paraffin test on his cheeks was negative.

And then there is the fundamental question of whether LHO actually owned the MC, as well as where the bullets were obtained.

Correct: The FBI did not stock MC bullets.

Comment: Nor did most gun shops in Dallas. Nor were any extra bullets found anywhere in LHO's possessions. In fact, the only MC shells in the case were in the sniper's nest. But the FBI did find a Mauser shell in Dealey Plaza, which they kept secret for 30 years. Therefore, if LHO had actually purchased these bullets, he bought only a few, which is quite remarkable, or perhaps he did not buy any at all.

Although the FBI did not have MC samples, the CIA likely did. In the 1950's, the Marine Corps purchased four million rounds, even though these bullets do not fit into any Corps weapons. This leads one to wonder if the purchase was for the CIA, since they often **prefer weapons (and bullets) that cannot be traced.**

Assumption: LHO was a communist.

Comment: This statement is made without any introduction or any context, almost as if it were a fundamental theory of physics. This is the most overt clue to NOVA's inexorable bias. James Jesus Angleton, who was CIA Chief of Counterintelligence, would have been amused to hear this. After all, according to John Newman, Angleton controlled the Oswald files at Langley. (2013 edition of John Newman's Oswald and the CIA.)

Further, there is evidence from two FBI employees, Carver Gayton and William Walter, that Oswald was an FBI informant. It is even conceivable that LHO ordered a MC at the request of the Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms agency, in order to assist with federal efforts to trace gun purchases.

Misleading: John McAdams speaks of an "entrance" for a bullet hole in JFK's back.

Comment: The pathologists clearly stated that this site could be probed only superficially. No bullet was ever discovered at that site (or at an exit site). The abrasion collar surrounding the wound suggested that the projectile (whatever it was) was traveling upward (not downward, as would be required for a shot from the TSBD). That this projectile penetrated to any real depth is nothing but sheer speculation. Furthermore, an entry into the back would have caused a lung puncture, but this was not reported at the autopsy.

Misleading: The pathologists did not know about the throat wound while at the autopsy.

Comment: My good friend, Dr. Robert Livingston (now deceased), had advised Dr. James Humes, the lead pathologist; about this apparent entry wound during a telephone call before the autopsy began. He repeated this recollection during the depositions for Charles Crenshaw's suit against the Journal of the American Medical Association. Many other witnesses attest to Humes's knowledge of this wound while the autopsy proceeded. These include the autopsy radiologist, Dr. John Ebersole, with whom I had two separate telephone calls. It also includes pathologist Dr. J. Thornton Boswell, who confirmed this directly to the Baltimore Sun (Richard H. Levine, 25 November 1966, front page article).

He later repeated this to the Assassination Records Review Board (ARRB). Finally, tissue samples were taken of the tracheotomy site, and several autopsy witnesses saw probes passing through the tracheotomy. Neither of these items makes any sense unless the tracheotomy site harbored a forensically meaningful wound; it also implies that the pathologists understood that very fact during the autopsy.

Misleading: The shirt collar and tie show evidence of an exit.

Comment: Although both were damaged, such damage is mostly silent about the direction of a projectile. The nurses claimed that scalpels (used to remove JFK's clothing) caused this damage. Neither the front of the shirt nor the tie showed any scientific evidence (low energy X-ray scattering) of metal from a bullet passage, although the bullet holes in the back of JFK's jacket and shirt did show such evidence. Furthermore, the relevant witnesses described the throat wound as lying above the collar and tie. While before the WC, Dr. Charles Carrico clearly implied that the wound was above the necktie and above the shirt collar (3H361-362). To leave no doubt about what Carrico had seen, Harold Weisberg reports his own confirmatory interview with Carrico (Post-Mortem 1969, pp. 357-358 and 375-376).

And then there is nurse Diana Bowron, who saw the throat wound while JFK was still in the limousine, before the shirt and tie had been removed. But here is the problem: the lacerations in the shirt lie well inferior to the top of the collar, and therefore well inferior to the throat wound. Moreover, I have seen the clothing at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). The shirt does not exhibit any missing material, but such missing material would be expected for a real bullet. And the lacerations in the shirt do look like the work of a scalpel.

Misleading: The final shot (a headshot) occurred just an instant before Z-313 (where the bloody spray is seen).

Comment: The skull X-rays show a trail of metallic debris across the top of the skull. Using JFK's orientation in Z-312 (at the instant of impact), this trail lies at an angle of 34° from horizontal (proceeding downward from the rear). But the angle from the "sniper's nest" in the TSBD to JFK's head at this moment is only 16°, according to Thomas Canning, the rocket

scientist for the House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA). Therefore, in order for LHO to reproduce this particle trail in the X-rays (at Z-312) he must have been hovering above Dealey Plaza in a hot air balloon. Furthermore, there is much evidence (including WC documents) for a shot well after Z-313. See this writer's review of Sherry Fiester's book at this website.

There is also evidence for this in overviews of Dealey Plaza (published in Newsweek, November 22, 1993) and in Secret Service photographs (right after the event). In the latter, a traffic cone clearly marks a final shot well after Z-313. Curiously, NOVA's own interviewee, the famous author Josiah Thompson, at the recent Pittsburgh conference (October 17-19, 2013), announced his own new conviction that the final shot came well after Z-313.

Omission: NOVA failed to ask Thompson (their own interviewee!) for his opinion on this critical issue of when the final shot occurred.

Comment: While in Pittsburgh, Thompson shared with me the steps that led to his conclusion, which I found extremely interesting since I had independently arrived at the same endpoint.

Misleading: CE-399 was quite deformed.

Comment: Not at all the case... For a truly deformed bullet, see Commission Exhibit 856, a bullet fired through a cadaver's wrist (See Cover-Up by Stewart Galanor, Document 23).

Misleading: Luke Haag, NOVA's ballistics expert, claims to see "bullet wipe" around the hole in the back of JFK's jacket. (This is superficial debris transferred from the bullet surface to the jacket.)

Comment: This critical observation was not demonstrated visually at this point in the show (although the bullet wipe from the experiment was clearly shown). Oddly, the hole in the jacket had been shown earlier, so it could easily have been shown again. When I rewatched the recorded show to examine the jacket hole, I saw no bullet wipe. I also carefully inspected close-up and high-resolution images of this hole from other sources (e.g., Galanor, Document 6) and still could see no bullet wipe. Finally, I have personally inspected the jacket at NARA.

I recall no bullet wipe from that visit either. Curiously, Haag describes the jacket hole as showing a "small, round hole." Although Galanor's image agrees with Haag's description, the hole shown by NOVA is very elongated and quite irregular (obviously different from Galanor's image). In fact, about 1/2 of the circumference had been removed by the FBI, but Haag seems unaware of this. If samples had been taken, then whatever evidence initially existed for "bullet wipe" has been severely compromised.

Correct: The MC bullet traversed 36" of pine board in a straight trajectory and emerged undeformed.

Comment: This is very old news, as John Lattimer and John Nichols performed similar experiments many decades ago. They found that the bullet penetrated two feet of tough elm or through four feet of Ponderosa pine.

Correct: But a misleading omission: The exit hole (in soap) was larger than the entrance wound.

Comment: In fact, the images show that Haag's thumb would likely have fit into the exit hole. All of this, of course, is grossly inconsistent with JFK's throat wound, which was often described as the size of a pencil. And JFK's throat wound, of course, was also smaller than the purported entry wound in the back. Of course, NOVA avoids any discussion of these gross paradoxes.

Misleading: The bullet yaws (its axis of rotation varies) after leaving JFK and then strikes Connally's (JBC) back sideways, leaving an elliptical hole in his jacket and an elongated wound on his back.

Comment: Dr. Cyril Wecht testified to the HSCA that an elongated wound might well result if the bullet had struck at an oblique angle. In fact, since no one really knows where the bullet (that struck Connally's back) originated, such an oblique strike must logically remain on the list of possibilities. (NOVA merely assumes that the SBT is true, thus creating a circular argument.) Even worse though, the size of the JBC's back wound has often been misrepresented. In particular, Millicent Cranor stated that "Connally's back wound was only as long as the wound in the back of Kennedy's head: 1.5 centimeters. No one has suggested Kennedy was hit in the head with a tumbling bullet." She adds that "The head wound was 1.5 x

0.6 centimeters, and the back wound, 1.5 x 0.8 centimeters, as documented on at least four occasions by the governor's thoracic surgeon, Dr. Robert Shaw (4WCH104, 107; 6WCH85, 86). The holes in the back of Connally's shirt and jacket were as small as his back wound (5WCH64)." JBC's back wound became 3 cm (exactly the length of the MC bullet) when it was surgically enlarged, as Shaw explained.

Dr. Charles Gregory, who operated on JBC's wrist, also doubted that the bullet (that hit JBC's chest) had struck anything before JBC. He even speculated that a fragment from JFK's head wound had caused JBC's wrist wounds. Finally, John Hunt has argued that Connally was likely turned to the right when struck; that would, of course, produce a tangential strike and therefore an elongated wound. In particular, Hunt states that if JBC had been rotated by 43°, and the bullet was approaching at 10.2° (right to left), then a yaw of merely 6° is enough to yield the 1.5 cm wound.

Misleading: Luke Haag states that there is no reason not to believe in the single bullet theory (SBT).

Comment: This is a breathtaking, almost staggering statement. Because it fails to take into account in any way, the entry and exit points in either man, nor does it require any knowledge of cross sectional anatomy! A CT scan, with a cross section through the area of interest (that I presented long ago, see Galanor, Document 45) still remains an effective demolition of the SBT. The trajectory for the SBT would either have shattered a vertebra body or it would have punctured the apex of the lung, but neither was seen at the autopsy. NOVA did not address this profound conundrum. With simplistic conclusions such as this one by Haag, forensic pathologists could be spared much serious work.

Correct: Jefferson Morley points out that the acoustics evidence is not decisive.

Comment: It is not even relevant. See my review of Don Thomas's book at the CTKA website.

Correct: Based on a meticulous reconstruction of Dealey Plaza, using detailed laser data, a shot from the top of the stockade fence to JFK's head is possible; the distance is 105 feet, with a downward trajectory of 4°.

Comment: Hmm, I cannot add anything to that.

Correct: Connally and his wife both strongly disagreed with the SBT for their entire lives.

Comment: Furthermore, while in the hospital, JBC referred to shooters (in the plural). He later told a reporter that he never for one second believed the conclusions of the Warren Commission. (Joseph McBride, *Into the Nightmare*, p. 418)

Misleading omission: The skull X-rays show no shot from the front, but they do show a posterior entry.

Comment: This contradicts the experts for the ARRB, none of whom could identify an entry. Nor could I, via detailed optical density (OD) measurements at NARA. To rule out a frontal entry requires a good measure of hubris: e.g., it assumes that Humes and Boswell did not tamper with the skull before the official autopsy began. There is now serious evidence that this did occur. One line of evidence for such tampering is the major absence of brain in the anterior skull (on both sides) on the skull X-rays, as the OD data clearly demonstrate. Why is this evidence of tampering? The answer is that multiple witnesses at Parkland described a major loss of posterior brain tissue. Dr. Robert McClelland recently confirmed this during his videotaped presentation at the Cyril Wecht Duquesne conference. This is a major paradox, because the brain is not likely to have fallen backward while en route to Bethesda.

However, if the major moorings of the brain (the falx) had been severed shortly before the official autopsy (e.g., illicitly by Humes), then the brain would indeed have fallen backwards. (On the other hand, if the falx had been severed before Parkland, the brain should already have fallen to the rear, thus leaving little significant brain tissue loss for McClelland to see.) Moreover, NOVA assumes only one headshot. NOVA's participants, of course, fail to point out this fundamental assumption. After all, following a second shot, the evidence of the first shot may no longer have existed.

Misleading: No shot came from the (right) side.

Comment: My recent detailed discussion of the Harper fragment (presented at Duquesne, and soon to be posted at the CTKA website) clearly demonstrates, from multiple lines of evidence (especially including intrinsic information from the skull X-rays) that it arose largely from the occipital bone. In that case, the trigger for such an ejection most likely was a frontal shot (e.g., entering near to the right ear). Furthermore, there is strong eyewitness testimony (from the closest witnesses) that JFK was struck near the right ear. Even Kemp Clark, the neurosurgeon, described just such a tangential shot. As further corroboration for a tangential shot, at the recent JFK Lancer Conference (November 22, 2013), the autopsy technician James Jenkins recalled an apparent entry hole near Kennedy's right ear that was surrounded by a gray border; even the pathologist Finck commented on this (off the record) during the autopsy.

(Also see my review of Sherry Fiester's book at the CTKA website). And G. Paul Chambers (a Ph.D. physicist, who worked for NASA), in *Headshot* (p. 136) agrees that a shot "...striking Kennedy's head from the right front side was possible, even probable."

Misleading: Fracture lines on the JFK skull X-rays begin at the rear and go forward. (In general, these typically begin at the point of entry and very quickly extend outward from that point.)

Comment: In *Enemy of the Truth*, (p. 212) Sherry Fiester, a forensic specialist, reaches the opposite conclusion: she concludes that the fractures radiate from the front of the head, which would imply a frontal shot. More importantly, though, if two headshots occurred (especially one from the rear and one from the front, as is quite likely based on witnesses, the X-rays, and pathologic evidence), then this entire argument becomes moot.

Assumption: The JFK autopsy photographs of the brain are authentic.

Comment: Again, this is breathtaking. The experts seem oblivious to the serious doubt cast about this issue by the ARRB. Because, under oath before that body, official photographer John Stringer did not recognize the film or the process which took them, because he did not use either. They also seem unaware of Douglas Horne's essays on the two brain examinations, which was well publicized in the media. My own OD data on the skull X-rays show virtually no brain (on either side) in a fist-sized area at the front of the skull. This is radically inconsistent with the autopsy photographs, which show a completely intact left side and a nearly intact right side. In principle, one can accept as authentic either the skull X-rays or the brain photographs, but not both.

Misleading: Larry Sturdivan interjects his now, hoary explanation for the posterior head snap, the neuromuscular reaction.

Comment: This has been refuted so many times that I leave this for the reader to pursue.

Misleading: Josiah Thompson states that Humes was not very competent.

Comment: Humes conducted the weekly brain cutting seminars at the Bethesda Naval Medical Center. All his life he had the respect of his peers. Although more experienced forensic pathologists would have done better, Humes's chief problem was that he was boxed into a corner, where he often had no choice but to lie. The best example of this is his barefaced misplacement of the metallic trail of particles on the skull X-rays. (He became greatly embarrassed about this during his ARRB deposition.)

Even my son at age six would not have done that. This was not a mistake by Humes. After all, consider the consequences: if he had reported the truth about the superior location of this particle trail it would have directly implied a second gunman, which he knew was not (politically) allowed.

Misleading: NOVA's illustrations for the SBT demonstrate the trajectory going through JFK's collar.

Comment: This is incredible, inasmuch as the hole in the jacket (shown earlier in the program) is about six inches inferior to the collar. So is the hole in the shirt. No one in NOVA even comments about this bizarre discrepancy.

Misleading: Jim Lehrer and John McAdams both believe that LHO did it, and that he fired three shots.

Comment: Among other things, Lehrer is a prolific novelist, and may say whatever he likes. Regarding McAdams, I have critiqued the SBT thoroughly (and with detailed anatomic models) in my review of his book at the CTKA website (this also includes the aforementioned CT scan). I have never seen any response from him about this. Until one is forthcoming, he really should cease to pontificate. Furthermore, the media have no cause to listen to someone (especially

on human anatomy) who is solely a professor of "American politics, public opinion, and voter behavior." In fact, NOVA should be mortified to quote such slender sources. Surely the American public deserves better.

Correct: But a misleading omission: Most witnesses heard three shots.

Comment: Many, many witnesses heard two final shots in very quick succession (much too close for the MC), which could well imply two, near-simultaneous headshots. Further, there was never any systematic interviewing of witnesses either on the grassy knoll or in the Texas School Book Depository. Therefore, this database is sorely incomplete.

Misleading omission: NOVA seems to refer to the Edgewood Arsenal skull shooting experiments, and then implies that these supports the Commission's theory.

Comment: Dr. Gary Aguilar and Kathleen Cunningham have discussed these in detail. In particular, they point out that these experiments (supposedly using the official entry site) actually destroyed the faces of the skulls. Furthermore, the actual movies shown on NOVA (of exploding skulls) also show destruction of the anterior skull. Of course, since JFK's face was intact, we (not surprisingly) have another paradox.

Misleading: CE-399 entered JBC's thigh and then fell out, but not before depositing a small metal fragment. (On the X-ray, the fragment is 3.5 mm x 1.3 mm.)

Comment: The wound was no more than 1 cm deep, while the bullet was 3 cm long. The only site from the bullet for lead to extrude into the wound is from the tail. (NOVA shows the bullet entering the thigh nose first.) So how does the lead get under the skin, when the tail of the bullet is at least 2 cm outside of the skin? Dr. Tom Shires, who worked on the thigh wound, claimed that it looked like a tangential hit, or else a large fragment had stopped in the skin and then had subsequently fallen out. Dr. Malcolm Perry told Harold Weisberg that the hole in Connally's skin was too small to be caused by a bullet. Arlen Specter shrewdly avoided this entire issue.

Misleading omission: NOVA assumes, without any proof, or even any discussion that CE-399 actually flew over Dealey Plaza that day.

Comment: Their own interviewee Josiah Thompson is the reigning 'expert on this question, but NOVA did not discuss the chain of possession of CE-399 with him. (Thompson confirmed to me, via e-mail, that he was not asked.) If CE-399 is the wrong bullet, then the entire program immediately becomes hapless and hopeless. In fact, Thompson's original pursuit of this issue (in Six Seconds in Dallas) was more recently renewed with the assistance of Dr. Gary Aguilar.

The critical witness at Parkland Hospital (who actually handled the bullet) clearly did not recognize CE-399. On the contrary, the bullet he saw had a pointed nose, like the four bullets from World Wars one and two that NOVA displayed. John Hunt has also incisively highlighted serious problems with the timeline for receipt of this bullet (or perhaps even two different bullets) in Washington, DC. If the producers knew that Thompson had shattered the provenance of CE-399, and they nonetheless deliberately avoided this issue, then they are hypocrites. On the other hand, if they did not know this fundamental fact, then they are amazingly ignorant.

In the lead up to this program, both McAdams and the director Rush DeNooyer proclaimed that their program would prove with modern forensic science that Lee Oswald alone shot John Kennedy. (See Los Angeles Times, August 7 2013.) If that was their intent from the outset, then they were being unprofessional. But even with that inherent bias, they have failed ignominiously.