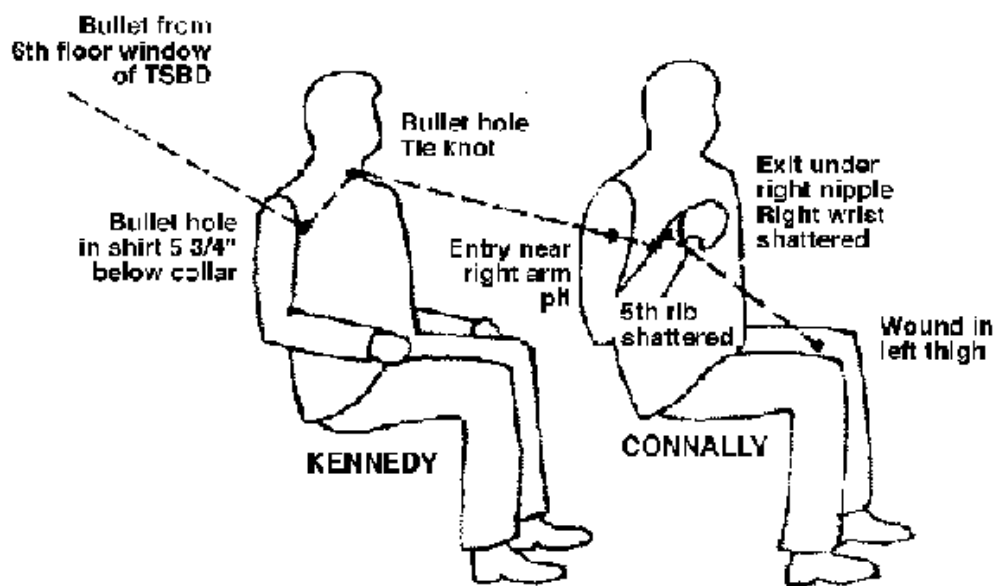


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Gerald Ford's other contribution to American history: The single bullet theory



In the non-stop roller coaster ride that is [the media's coverage of the death of Gerald Ford](#), our 38th president, it is amazing what still gets left behind. For example, [this interesting post](#) shows how Ford -- overridden, thank God -- vetoed the Freedom of Information Act, at the urging of three guys who you may have heard of, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, and Antonin Scalia.

But amazingly, not one article has mentioned the contribution of Gerald Ford that still resonates today, more so than his "[Whip Inflation Now](#)" buttons or his [military triumph over Cambodia](#). It was ultimately Ford's handiwork, on the 1964 Warren Commission, that gave us [the single bullet theory](#), the last line of defense for the belief that President John F. Kennedy had been killed not by a conspiracy, but by a lone nut.

To be sure, as most Pennsylvanians, Attytood readers and [Oliver Stone fans](#) know, it was another prominent politician, Sen. Arlen Specter, a staff attorney for the Warren Commission, who developed the idea -- also known as "the magic bullet" -- that one bullet caused seven different wounds in the president and Texas Gov. John Connally and still ended up on a hospital stretcher in pristine condition. If Kennedy and Connally had been struck by separate bullets, there would not have been enough time for just one gunman to have fired all of the shots in Dealey Plaza that day.

But Specter was a lowly staffer, and his theory would still not have become political and media gospel in the 1960s without help from at least one of the five men that President Lyndon Johnson named to the Warren panel.

And Gerald Ford, then a GOP congressman from Michigan, was that man.

Here's what the Associated Press reported on July 2, 1997 (via Nexis):

Thirty-three years ago, Gerald R. Ford took pen in hand and changed - ever so slightly - the Warren Commission's key sentence on the place where a bullet entered John F. Kennedy's body when he was killed in Dallas.

The effect of Ford's change was to strengthen the commission's conclusion that a single bullet passed through Kennedy and severely wounded Texas Gov. John Connally - a crucial element in its finding that Lee Harvey Oswald was the sole gunman.

A small change, said Ford on Wednesday when it came to light, one intended to clarify meaning, not alter history.

"My changes had nothing to do with a conspiracy theory," he said in a telephone interview from Beaver Creek, Colo. "My changes were only an attempt to be more precise."

But still, his editing was seized upon by members of the conspiracy community, which rejects the commission's conclusion that Oswald acted alone.

"This is the most significant lie in the whole Warren Commission report," said Robert D. Morningstar, a computer systems specialist in New York City who said he has studied the assassination since it occurred and written an Internet book about it.

Indeed, the change in wording does seem to be a significant one. As critic Morningstar notes in the AP story:

The effect of Ford's editing, Morningstar said, was to suggest that a bullet struck Kennedy in the neck, "raising the wound two or three inches. without that alteration, they could never have hoodwinked the public as to the true number of assassins."

If the bullet had hit Kennedy in the back, it could not have struck Connally in the way the commission said it did, he said.

There would be nothing wrong with Ford's editing, of course, if were accurate. The matter is still a topic of debate 43 years later, but there is significant evidence that the change was anything but accurate. In fact, Kennedy's death certificate says that the bullet did strike the president's back, a couple of inches below the neck.

None of this means that Ford wasn't "a good guy," or that he didn't do some good things in his career, from supporting the Civil Rights Act to banning assassinations by the CIA. It does remind us, however, that there's usually more to a political leader than the warmed-over CNN soundbites that we get served up. And in the big picture, this does matter, not just for understanding America but for understanding Gerald Ford.

After all, Ford remained a staunch defender of the Warren Commission throughout his career, and the more aggressively he defended it, the higher his political star rose, all the way to the White House.

Coincidence?

You be the judge.

Posted on December 27, 2006 8:37 PM | [TrackBack](#)

Comments

I used to buy into the idea that Kennedy was killed by multiple gunmen in a Conspiracy. This year, on the anniversary of his death, PBS ran a comprehensive documentary on the subject where the makers explored every major aspect

of the assassination. They did exhaustive computer modeling, they examined the evidence, they even reenacted the shooting by using expertly made replicas of Kennedy and Connely (complete with resins that simulate bones, skin, and internal organs).

The documentary completely debunks every point of contention that promotes the multiple gunmen/conspiracy theory and proves the single gunmen (including the single bullet aspect).

I'll give you one example: the documentary makes went to australia where the company that makes the best forensic replica human bodies is located to have replicas of Kennedy and Connely. They aquired the same make and model gun and ammo that Oswald used. The reconstructed the single-bullet scenario completely from a physics point-of-view and filmed the shot with super high-speed film so you could see the bullet in flight. Guess what happened... the bullet went through Kennedy and Connely just as the Warren commission stated. And guess what else... the bullet came out looking just like the one that was found on the stretcher in Dallas (i.e. with very little loss of mass and not deformed).

If you still believe in a conspiracy I guarantee this documentary will change your mind.

...or am I just part of the conspiracy and there really was no documentary?...

Posted by: dsc at December 27, 2006 11:29 PM

Make up your mind, Will. You have used the single bullet theory to trash Arlen Specter ad nausium. Now it's Gerry Ford's pox on America.

Let him be laid to rest. Let his family and friends mourn. Let us be spared your deranged obsession with all things republican.

"De mortuis nil nisi bonum"

You really need to stop in the local VA hospital and get the government issue computer chip in your brain replaced. I think they may have the latest issue of "Tin-Foil Hat Today" magazine there.

Posted by: at December 27, 2006 11:50 PM

It's interesting that this, our nation's only appointed president (if you don't count Bush 2000), had a hand in both the cover up of the Kennedy assassination and the cover up of Nixon's crimes (via the pardons).

A very useful fellow.

Posted by: [News Corpse](#) at December 28, 2006 2:12 AM

"Let us be spared your deranged obsession with all things republican."

Posted by at December 27, 2006 11:50 PM

Good Lord - if he spared us his "deranged obsession with all things republican" there would be no attytood.

.....OK. Maybe there'd be a few posts on the Phils, but that would be it. You know Will, how about expanding a-tood a bit? How about telling everyone about Mohammid and his peace-loving ways. Give us your views on the demographic collapse of the West and impending takeover of Europe by Islam. The most influential person in your life (Marx). Tell us about some of your hobbies (smokin dope). What u do for fun (smoking crack). Your favorite tree. Are you a vegan perhaps? Mix it up a bit bro. Just a thought.

Posted by: sbvft contributor - brake fluid historian at December 28, 2006 8:28 AM

Where do these right wing nuts get all the time to post their superficial thoughts on well meaning blogs? Shouldn't you be listening to Rush Limbaugh or something? I saw that PBS special and, of course, it was less than exhaustive

in debunking serious criticism of the Warren Commission report. It mainly dealt with the aspect of could have Oswald made that shot and the answer was yes. It did not answer a more obvious question; Was it likely? The answer to that question is a joke. Ask anyone and I mean anyone who knows what happens to bullets when they hit human flesh and they will tell you that it deforms every time. This magic bullet passed through two people. I am not going to go any further because apologists for the Warren Commission and the rest of the status quo are never going to be convinced by anything anyone ever says anyway. If god himself came down from the sky and told them the truth they would certainly believe that god was a communist pinko hippie pacifist pansy which proves that they are right and god is wrong. That is just the normal stupid behavior of the right. They listen only to their own no matter how many times they are proven wrong.

Posted by: Chris Giaccone at December 28, 2006 9:20 AM

I still get a kick out of the way that the conspiracy theorists use that depiction of JFK and Governor Connally as sitting straight and level in order to exaggerate the path of the bullet. Just by looking at the Zapruder film, it is clear that JFK is sitting on a seat that is elevated, and during the time of the shooting, neither man is sitting as depicted. I saw that documentary, but I thought it was on Discovery channel. It may have been a different program. They also noted that the bullet was in "good" condition, but not "pristine", and certainly could have fallen out of the shallow leg wound of the governor.

Anyway, the pathetic saga of Florida's Catherine Harris is more indicative of what would happen to an enabler.

Posted by: SteveMG at December 28, 2006 9:22 AM

Another gov't censor (Ford) dies, who cares? He censored the Warren Commission report and who knows what else. After all, censorship is becoming America's favorite past-time. The US gov't (and their corporate friends), already detain protesters, ban books like "America Deceived" from Amazon and Wikipedia, and fire 21-year tenured, BYU physics professor Steven Jones because he proved explosives, thermite in particular, took down the WTC buildings. Bye, bye Ford, now the CIA can be assured you'll keep their secrets.

Last link (before Google Books caves to pressure and drops the title):

http://www.iuniverse.com/bookstore/book_detail.asp?&isbn=0-595-38523-0

Posted by: Mike J at December 28, 2006 9:51 AM

"<http://mcadams.posc.mu.edu/sbt.htm>"

"Thomas Canning was a NASA scientist who studied the Single Bullet trajectory for the House Select Committee on Assassinations. He used the Betzner photograph to establish a line to the right of which Connally could not have been. He also estimated the rotation of Connally's torso from the Zapruder film. The result was an alignment that showed the bullet leaving Kennedy's throat to strike Connally in the back near the shoulder — which is where Connally was actually struck. Of course, you don't really have to be a rocket scientist to figure this out."

"The Back and Throat Wounds

Another thing conspiracy authors will do to attack the Single Bullet Theory is to move the entrance wound in Kennedy's back down below the Warren Commission location, and move the wound in the front of Kennedy's neck up in order to require an absurd trajectory through Kennedy's body. This drawing, again taken from Groden and Livingstone's High Treason, shows this assumption.

Posted by: Tell me more at December 28, 2006 10:43 AM

The most clarifying object that would prove once and for all whether Oswald acted alone is gone. Kennedy's brain was removed during autopsy and then disappeared. Hasn't been seen since. The back of JFK's head being blown away leads the debate because entrance wounds generally are small while exit wounds, the bullet pushing bone and matter ahead of it, are much larger. Remember Jackie climbing on the back of the limo to pick up pieces of his skull, which she held till they got to the hospital?

The track of the bullet through JFK's brain would prove conspiracy or not, but we'll never know. All I know is he was

slumped forward, then violently shoved backward as his head exploded. A shot from behind would have had the opposite effect.

Posted by: stryker at December 28, 2006 11:03 AM

So the single bullet theory is "the last line of defense for the belief that President John F. Kennedy had been killed not by a conspiracy, but by a lone nut."

Two comments: 1) Last line of defense? Nonsense. While the single bullet theory is false, the "lone nut" one is not. Computer simulation of the shooting (shown on PBS) shows clearly that Oswald, firing from the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository, had both the time and the field of fire to fire ALL of the shots involved.

2) Since Oswald was a confessed Marxist, I think this explains the modern Left's obsession with the "conspiracy theory" of the Kennedy assassination, namely, the Left simply cannot accept the fact that one of its own did the deed. I guess this comes under the heading of "since Marxism and Marxists are the source of all hope and inspiration in the world, all bad things that happen absolutely, positively MUST be the fault of evil right-wingers."

Case closed.

Posted by: George Tomezsko at December 28, 2006 11:19 AM

Something I've never forgotten about the JFK assassination was: Witnesses testified that George Bush Sr. was seen in Dallas that day. At that time, Bush Sr. was part of the CIA. Bush Sr. denied that he was in Dallas. When credible witnesses testify that they saw him in Dallas, why would he deny it? Something smells like a dead carp here.

Posted by: Grey Wolf at December 28, 2006 11:31 AM

With the aid of science and computers, its no longer a "single bullet theory". It a "single bullet fact".

Posted by: michael at December 28, 2006 11:32 AM

That crude drawing above has been debunked scientifically by both an ABC News investigation (with the assistance of the National Science Foundation) as well as the independent investigation done by the History Channel.

In fact, Posner's book clearly shows the exact moment when Connally was hit (via Zapruder) - and it turns out that Connally is in exactly the position (he was in the jump seat btw - 16 inches lower than the back seat - something that drawing doesn't show, does it?)that one would expect if he had been hit by a bullet exiting Kennedy's throat, losing speed, tumbling at a downward angle, and causing all the damage done to Connally's ribs and wrist.

I am by no means convinced that Oswald acted alone. But for God's sake, at least get up to date on where the evidence is before you make a fool of yourself by posting a 20 year old drawing that's been debunked scientifically.

Posted by: Rick Moran at December 28, 2006 12:29 PM

Single bullet-sure-why not. Just because the back of JFK's head was blown off. I guess that was because of pressure build up in his body

Posted by: robert at December 28, 2006 12:31 PM

New clues in JFK shooting

Julian Borger in Washington
Guardian

Tuesday March 27, 2001

A report in a British forensic science journal has reopened the debate over one of the central mysteries of the assassination of John F Kennedy, arguing from audiotape evidence that a second sniper was almost certainly involved.

The analysis by a US government scientist was subjected to review by a scientific panel before publication in Science & Justice, quarterly journal of the Forensic Science Society.

It lends weight to the longstanding insistence by conspiracy theorists that at least one of the shots on Dealey Plaza in Dallas on November 22 1963 was fired from a "grassy knoll" ahead and to the right of President Kennedy's motorcade. The official verdict of the Warren commission on the assassination found that Lee Harvey Oswald had acted alone, firing three shots from the Texas school book depository behind the president.

But DB Thomas, a government scientist, conducted an acoustic analysis of police tapes of the assassination and concluded that it was 96% certain that a fourth shot had come from the grassy knoll.

Continued at:
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,4160028,00.html>

Posted by: BC at December 28, 2006 12:49 PM

Well I see the tin hat brigade has checked in. No meds again, hmmm???

Did you ever put it together that the Bush Sr & Ford probably also hid JFK's real body at Area 51, which is where they also got the explosives that brought down the Twin Towers.

Posted by: Paul at December 28, 2006 12:53 PM

Watch the Zapruder film frame by frame and note how the back of JFK's head explodes. Then watch how Jackie climbs on the trunk of the vehicle to collect his skull fragments. Hardly the result of a head shot from the back.

Kennedy wanted to eliminate the CIA, withdraw from Viet Nam and reclaim money creation from international bankers (the Federal Reserve). Certainly there was motive for the PTB to off him.

Whether Oswald actually fired that weapon or not is not critical. The fact that his description was circulated within minutes of the shooting and that he was silenced by an underworld figure is very suspicious. Not to mention the crude cut and paste picture of his head on another's body holding a rifle and "communist propaganda" that was released to the media for wide circulation. A picture exists where a man who could be Oswald's twin, wearing indential clothing as when he was arrested, is seen peering out from the front foyer of the School Book Depository, only moments after the shooting. <http://www.whatreallyhappened.com/RANCHO/POLITICS/JFK/postphotos.html>

Gerald Posner wouldn't admit to a conspiracy if it rose up and bit him in the ass. Official conspiracies do exist. Here is a link to a more recent example where incriminating documents escaped the shredder.
<http://www.tbrnews.org/Archives/a2603.htm>

Manufactured terrorism anyone?

Posted by: brisa at December 28, 2006 12:59 PM

The "acoustic evidence" was the open mic of the motorcycle policeman in Dealy Plaza - another myth that has been

debunked so many times that it's ridiculous anyone would insist that it was any kind of breakthrough.

The policeman - H.B. McLain - was shown to be far back on Houston Street when the shots were fired (just turning onto Houston from Main). Also, the time sequence of the shots being fired compared to where McLain was are way off - not even close.

The evidence was first debunked by a 17 year old kid who listened to the recording on a plastic insert that was in Hustler magazine. He heard the dispatcher in the background utter something that proved that the recording was actually a minute and a half after the assassination. And while there is some question about the time on Dallas Police logs, it is clear from several different investigations that the Committee erred in its original contention that the recording was of a second gunman.

Posted by: Rick Moran at December 28, 2006 1:07 PM

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