

Document 2

Source: Gerald Posner, investigative journalist and author of *Case Closed* (1993), a book that concludes that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone in assassinating President John F. Kennedy, TV interview, 1993.

The House Select Committee on Assassinations used sound experts to listen to a Dallas police Dictabelt. They concluded with a 95 percent certainty that there was a fourth shot fired at Dealey Plaza, and it came from the grassy knoll.

The National Academy of Sciences reviewed their work and found a multitude of errors and omissions. The most serious of which was that at the time that the Select Committee experts thought the shots were fired, [it] actually [was] one minute after the assassination had actually taken place.

Dealey Plaza is a veritable echo chamber, and it makes it very difficult sometimes to analyze the acoustic testimony. However, by looking at the statements of a witness who gave an opinion as to the source of the shots, we can see certain trends.

Eighty-eight percent of the 179 witnesses who expressed an opinion said there were three shots and three shots only. The largest group that identified a location, 28 percent, said they came from the book depository. Only four witnesses, 2 percent of all the witnesses at Dealey, heard shots coming from more than one location.

Questions:

- 1.) What are the statements contained in the primary source trying to show?
- 2.) What conclusions can you draw about the general feelings related to the accuracy of the Warren Commission's findings?
- 3.) What is your opinion of the fact that there were multiple errors and omissions found by the National Academy of Sciences? How could this issue lead to speculation that there is more to the story than the government is telling the American people?

Document 3

Source: Mike Feinsilber, reporter for The Associated Press, story filed July 2, 1997.

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.

"Key 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."

The Warren Commission concluded in 1964 that a single bullet - fired by a "discontented" Oswald - passed through Kennedy's body and wounded his fellow motorcade passenger, Connally, and that a second, fatal bullet, fired from the same place, tore through Kennedy's head.

The assassination of the president occurred Nov. 22, 1963, in Dallas; Oswald was arrested that day but was shot and killed two days later as he was being transferred from the city jail to the county jail.

Conspiracy theorists reject the idea that a single bullet could have hit both Kennedy and Connally and done such damage. Thus they argue that a second gunman must have been involved.

Ford's changes tend to support the single-bullet theory by making a specific point that the bullet entered Kennedy's body "at the back of his neck" rather than in his uppermost back, as the commission staff originally wrote.

Questions:

- 1.) What is the key finding of the Warren Commission? How did the "magic bullet" theory lead to conspiracy theorists doubting the Warren Commission's accuracy?
- 2.) Why do you think President Ford made the decision to clarify the wording of the Warren Commission's finding?
- 3.) What is your opinion of the Warren Commission's findings and the evidence contained in the Zapruder film? Do you feel that the assassination could have been carried out by a single shooter or does the eyewitness accounts suggest another alternative?