

BOOK REVIEW

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A Review of Medicolegal Investigation of the President John F. Kennedy Murder

REFERENCE: Wilbur, C. G., *Medicolegal Investigation of the President John F. Kennedy Murder*, Charles C Thomas, Springfield, Ill., 1978, 318 pages, \$14.50.

This book presents a rehash of the same old material we have heard and read over and over again for the past 15 years. The book suffers from two glaring deficiencies. First, the author is a forensic biologist, not a forensic pathologist, and second, the author has taken his material almost exclusively from the Warren Commission Report because he had no access to any of the material contained in the National Archives.

As for the book itself, it is well laid out and divided into logical chapter headings. The type is easy to read and the illustrations that are present are well done. The author quotes extensively from the Warren Commission Report and other documents and takes care to point out all the deficiencies and inadequacies with regard to the general handling of the case, the autopsy, the trace evidence, and the investigation. Fortunately, the author does not attempt to play forensic pathologist and interject any personal interpretations of the wounds, trajectories, significance of trace evidence, and so forth. He is content to point out the problem areas, but leaves no doubt that he does not agree with the basic conclusions of the Warren Commission, namely that President John F. Kennedy was killed by a single assassin with a single gun.

Since the publication of this book, there has been another congressional investigation into the assassination of President Kennedy, and most of us were relieved and gratified to find that a panel of qualified forensic pathologists was in nearly unanimous agreement that the President was shot from behind, that he was struck by two bullets, and that one of the bullets also inflicted the wounds received by Governor Connally. Let us hope that at least this much of the controversy surrounding the death of John F. Kennedy has finally been resolved.

What I find amazing in all the books and articles that point out the deficiencies and inadequacies in the entire investigation of the death of John F. Kennedy is that the authors are surprised at the bungling of big government. In my limited dealings with government, I have found that nothing is as efficient as government inefficiency. With regard to the death of President Kennedy, the fact that the body was spirited away from Dallas County, which had, at that time, a well-qualified forensic pathologist in residency, the fact that a forensic autopsy was performed by hospital pathologists, the fact that photographs taken of the body were not available to the pathologist when writing his final report, and the fact that the brain was lost or misplaced do not strike me as unusual

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for a big government-type operation, but is more or less what I would expect. What we should be thankful for is that there are qualified forensic pathologists who have enough experience to sift through the morass of relevant and irrelevant material that has been secreted, distorted, and manipulated for 15 years and who were able to come to an essentially unanimous agreement as to the basic facts surrounding the forensic pathological aspects of the assassination.

Let us hope that we have seen an end to books written by interested dilettantes who for one reason or another need to experience a mental catharsis by writing about the assassination of John F. Kennedy.