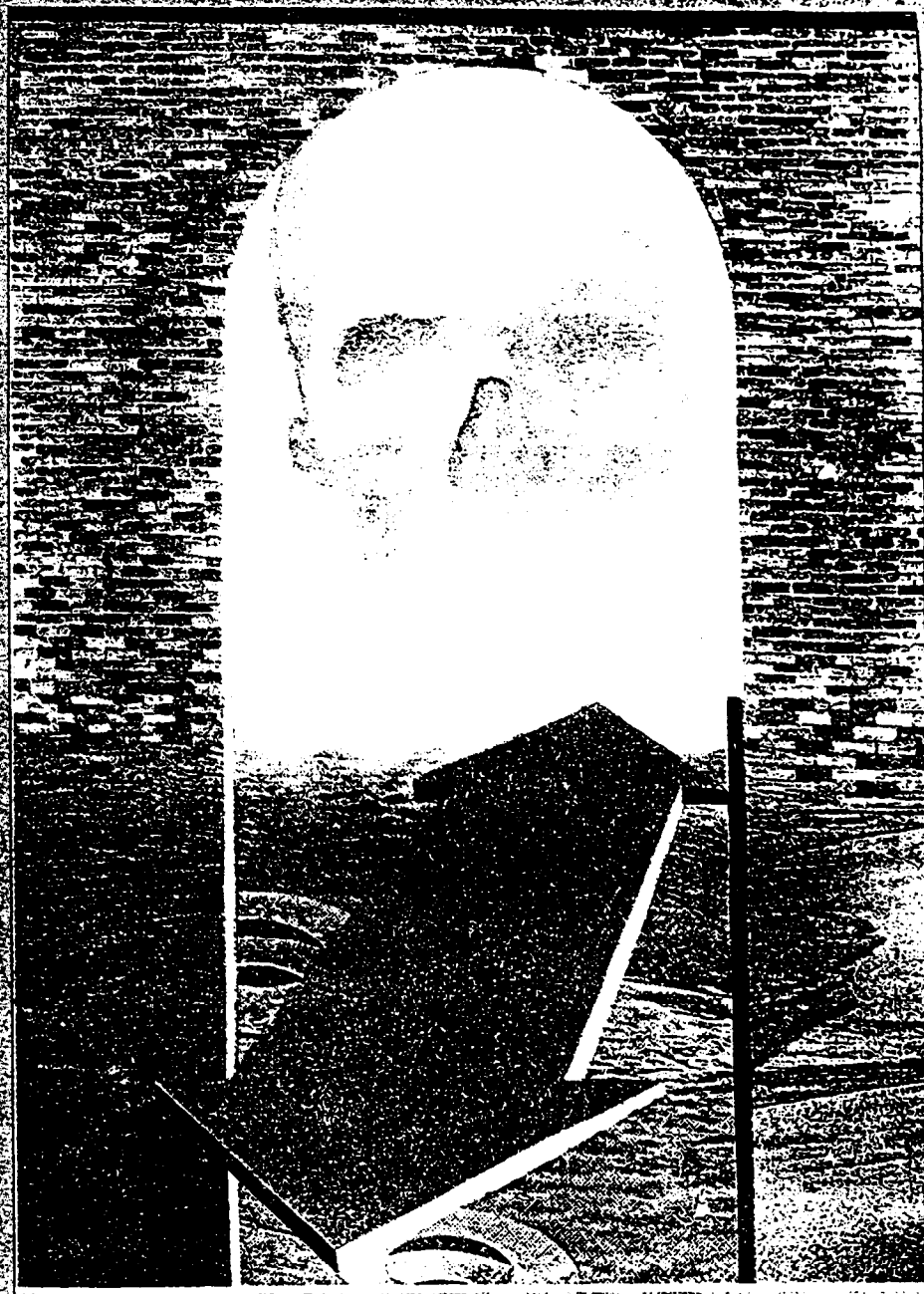


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Radiographer Remembers JFK

The recent release of the film JFK has brought questions about the assassination of President Kennedy back into the public spotlight. The following article first appeared in the Nov. 21, 1988, issue of RT IMAGE, marking the 25th anniversary of Kennedy's untimely death

On November 22, 1963, Edward Reed was a 20-year-old Naval hospital corpsman, second class, stationed at the Bethesda Maryland National Naval Center. He had been transferred in March of that year to attend x-ray school. Little did Reed know that by the end of that fateful Friday, he would become involved in one of the most monumental and mysterious events in the nation's history.

Reed, who now works as a radiographer for two suburban Philadelphia orthopedic surgeons, recently shared his story with RT IMAGE. His is a timely tale as the 25th anniversary of the assassination of John F. Kennedy has become a time for re-examining that fateful day in Dallas and re-investigating exactly what happened and who may have been involved.

Reed explains that when the news of Kennedy's assassination reached the public, he was "called into the Chief's office and told, 'You're on call tonight; be prepared. Whatever comes in, be prepared.'

"About two in the afternoon I was called in again and told that President Johnson had had a heart attack and that we should set up one of the rooms for a cath lab," Reed continues. "At that time, there wasn't such a thing as a cath lab in the x-ray department, so we just set up a room with the Sanchez-Perez unit we used for angiograms.

"Around 4 p.m. we were called into the office again and told that there was a good possibility that we would be doing the autopsy on President Kennedy anytime between

four and six," he adds. "I took an FE 225 portable unit down to the morgue in case we needed it and went off to the mess hall for dinner. There were four of us on duty — the supervisor and three junior technologists. I was selected to do the the x-rays because I had previous training at Annapolis, I knew the portable unit, and the supervisor had never taken x-rays. I was the only one really qualified to do the job."

Reed was in the morgue when the president's casket arrived. "I was asked to assist in carrying it," he relates. "There were three gentlemen on one side of the casket and two on my side. It started to slip out of my hands because it weighed 600 to 700 pounds. I said to a five-star admiral standing there, 'Admiral, can you help me with this?', and he ran over and grabbed it.

"We laid the casket on the floor and opened it. There was President Kennedy, in the nude, in a plastic bag with no flags draped over him," Reed remarks. "We lifted him onto the table. It was in a large room with an observation podium filled with generals, admirals and secret service men in civilian clothes. A lot of them were crying

and upset.

"Before the autopsy started, they wanted to take preliminary x-rays," Reed explains. "At that time, Captain Brown, the chief of radiology, was at RSNA in Chicago and the radiation therapist took over command for radiology. He said, 'Ed, I'm going to have to follow what you tell me. You're going to have to handle x-ray questions and x-ray inquiries.'"

Reed reports that his first action was to take AP and lateral skull films using a 2 by 4 mm piece of scrap metal taped to the side of the skull for magnification purposes. He explains that he had to go upstairs to the main department to develop the film using an M-3, the third phase of the Kodak automatic processors. "It took six minutes for the film to go from



In the film *JFK*, Jim Garrison (Kevin Costner) is confronted by reporters about his theory of the Kennedy assassination

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dry to dry, not 90 seconds like it does today," Reed says.

"The film came out and it was technically satisfactory," Reed notes. "I had put two films in each cassette; in case one film didn't turn out, I could hand-develop the other. All of my films were perfect, so I never had to resort to that. But I did have extra copies that still had the latent images on the film stowed in the film bin. Later that night, I opened the bin and exposed the duplicate film to light to destroy the copies."

Reed details his radiographic examination of JFK. "They wanted an AP and lateral neck," he says. "Then, when I lifted him up to put a plate underneath his back for an AP chest, I found a large, 1 1/2 inch wound that looked like an exit wound right between the scapula and thoracic column.

"When the doctors and brass were looking at the films, I heard them say something about a conspiracy," Reed continues. "Commander Hume, who did the autopsy, was more interested in the x-rays than a conspiracy. In other words, he was saying, 'Let's get back to business. Let's not worry about what happened.'

"He told me to continue with the x-rays," Reed continues. "So I did both the abdomen and AP pelvis

with a grid. We still didn't find any large fragments — only small fragments — but we could see the trace of the fragments and the line of them projecting upwards and downwards. They couldn't figure out if it was a bullet from the top that went down or from the front that went up, because the bones were outward — which means that he would have been shot from the front. But according to all that was said afterward and certainly in the Warren report, Kennedy was shot from above and his brain imploded rather than exploded."

While the autopsy team was pondering the lack of fragments, a message came that medical workers at the Texas hospital had found a bullet laying on the gurney that had been used to transport Kennedy's body.

"They thought it was one of the bullets that went through Kennedy's back and Connelly's shoulder, femur and hand," Reed explains. "This relieved everyone, because at last they were able to find a large fragment or bullet. After this, I x-rayed the bilateral humeri, both arms — APs only — and APs of his femorae and fibulae. I took films of everything but his hands, feet



Kevin Costner as New Orleans district attorney Jim Garrison in JFK

Photographs courtesy of Warner Bros

and dental work."

When Reed had finished his work, he stayed on for about an hour to watch the autopsy before retiring to the on-call area for some much-needed rest. He was awakened at about 2 a.m. by Captain Brown, who had flown back from Chicago and wanted an update. Shortly after 6:30 a.m., Reed was called to the office of the Master of Arms to sign statements avowing not to discuss any of the events which had transpired the night before.

"I was supposed to go home to Philadelphia that weekend," Reed remarks, "but I called my parents and I couldn't say anything over the phone because I was afraid it might be tapped. I told them I couldn't come home. They asked if it was about President Kennedy. I said, 'Yes, but that's all I can tell you.' I was really scared. What I did started to sink in. At the time, I didn't think about it; I

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Director Oliver Stone brought questions about Kennedy's assassination back into the spotlight with the film JFK

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just did my job. I happened to be there and I happened to be the one who did the x-rays. I did my job as I was trained to do."

The chapter, as far as Reed was concerned, was closed. The episode was not discussed further, and he transferred to Great Lakes, IL, for his second year of radiography school. It wasn't until Reed left the service and was contacted by David S. Lifton, author of *The Best and Worst Evidence of President Kennedy's Assassination* that he had the occasion to tell of his experiences.

"He inquired about the x-rays," Reed explains. "My wife was pregnant and was shook up because people related to the Kennedy assassination were dying unusual deaths. In fact, about 80 percent have died, but that's since 1963. A lot of strange deaths have occurred that were not

just due to old age.

"I quoted some things over the phone," Reed continues. "He asked if there was a conspiracy, and I said, 'No. As far as I'm concerned there wasn't a conspiracy, but there was a discussion about a conspiracy.' He put some things in the book mentioning that I said this and that. Dumb answers that really didn't make sense and that I didn't say."

One night while Reed was driving home, he heard Lifton being interviewed on a call-in program. Lifton cited Reed as the person who took the x-rays and proceeded to say that the films were of poor quality. Reed called the radio station, challenged Lifton on the air, and got the admission that while the technical quality of the films was excellent, the physical condition of the film material was poor due to age and breakdown.

Reed is not only quoted in Lifton's book, there is also a photo of him walking down the hall carrying a lead apron. The picture was taken by an enterprising freelance photographer who took advantage of the fu-

ror surrounding a presidential assassination to slip into the hospital and mingle with the crowd.

In addition to Lifton's book, Reed is referenced in Jim Bishop's book *The Day Kennedy Was Shot*, and his x-rays appear in the Warren report.

"Over the years, when I meet people in radiology, I always tell them that they can say that they've met the person who x-rayed President Kennedy," Reed continues. "They usually ask me a lot of questions."

One of the obvious questions is: Did Oswald act alone? Reed says he subscribes to the two-shot theory — one that has been given some credence in the past few years. "When I saw Kennedy and took the x-rays, he had a large, gaping wound about the size of my fist in his right carotid, temple and frontal areas," Reed explains. "That was supposedly where he was shot by Oswald, but it was supposed to be from the back, posteriorly. His head was turned slightly to the right, and when he was hit, he

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The Controversy Continues

As with the mystery surrounding Kennedy's assassination, questions were raised after RT IMAGE printed Edward Reed's story. The following are excerpts from a "Forum" by Marilyn Custer printed in the Dec. 19, 1988, issue of RT IMAGE.

...My husband, Jerrol (Jerry) Custer, RT, New Hospital Corp. E4, was that so-called unqualified supervisor on Nov. 22, 1963, who Reed mentioned. Reed's picture was in David Lifton's book, but it was taken along with Jerry's picture as they walked down the hall together — Jerry as the supervisor and Reed as the student....

...Edward Reed's ego sure is strongly evident in his story to you. Everyone wants to be a part of history, but to change and omit facts is a disgrace. Reed never carried the casket. Jerry and Reed went in the door at the opposite end of the corridor from where JFK's body was taken into the autopsy room. Reed helped Jerry position the body a few times, but my husband took the

pictures of JFK — not Reed, as he stated. You see, Jerry had met the president many times before when he came into Bethesda Hospital to have his back x-rayed. President Kennedy even called Jerry by his first name because he came to know him personally, before the assassination. When they were notified that his body was being brought into Bethesda...Jerry was personally upset, not only because it was the president, but because he knew the man as a friend. The autopsy was hard on Jerry, but he was not going to allow a student to do films on his friend.

...History is important to all of us, but even more so if told and studied correctly.

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ANNUAL MEETING

Conjoint Meeting in NC

In North Carolina, four organizations are joining forces for one meeting to be held April 22 through 25 in Research Triangle Park.

The four organizations—the North Carolina Society of Radiologic Technologists, the North Carolina Nuclear Medicine Technologists Inc., the southern region of AHRA, and Region IX of the ASRT—are offering an educational program that promises to hold something for everyone.

The educational part of the meeting begins on Thursday, with sessions being offered for both managers and technologists. In the first sessions, managers will explore the true value of motivating employees. Later in the afternoon, a session on equipment specifications and negotiating contracts will be offered.

General educational sessions will highlight areas such as chest imaging and pathology, pediatric radiog-

raphy techniques, and density control. A student technical bowl and NCSRT business meeting will also take place.

Friday will offer sessions geared to both technologists and educators. ASRT president Robert Walker, RT, will discuss professional issues, and Beverly Buck, RTT, will examine satisfaction in the profession.

Other topics to be addressed later in the afternoon include resume preparation and juggling home and work responsibilities. An awards presentation and memorial lecture will also be featured.

Educators will have an opportunity to examine how instructors help relationships. ASRT president Walker will also examine the topic of clinical evaluations.

Saturday's sessions will again highlight general radiology as well as mammography.

General sessions include orthopedic positioning tips, spine pathology, and shoulder imaging. Mammography courses will review basic and advanced positioning, quality control of the mammography environment, and breast implants.

Saturday will also present radiation therapy sessions. Buck will return to discuss quality assurance in radiation therapy, as well as treatment of medulloblastoma. Other sessions for therapists will examine brachytherapy, radiobiology and 3-D radiotherapy.

Nuclear medicine topics are still being planned, but possible subjects of interest include adenosine thallium imaging, thyroid functions, and signs and symptoms of pulmonary embolism.

For more information on the meeting and registration fees, call Barry Barnes at (919) 966-5146.

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went backward. Because his head went back, a lot of people think he was shot from the front. But that wound could have been from the back because it could have been what we call an implosion. The bullet went in and exploded, and the fragments went outward.

"My theory is that there was someone on the bridge in front of the motorcade — an umbrella man. It could have been Ruby. He could have shot Kennedy in the manubrium, and the bullet could have gone upward. That's why there was such a large area in the tracheal area. It could

have gone out from his right carotid and temporal region.

"Kennedy could have been shot in the back by Oswald," continues Reed, "and that bullet could have gone down through his chest and into Connelly, traveling down into his arm and into his femur, where it lodged."

Reed notes that "two or three times in the past few years, they've come out with that theory, but each time they disregard it. They come up with information but not enough to reopen the investigation.

"We may never know what happened that day," he adds. "That's what makes it intriguing when people ask me what happened, how many bullet wounds, or what's my theory. No one really has a theory. Even

Cmdr. Humes, who was doing the autopsy, didn't know exactly which way the fragments went or from where they came. He couldn't find the bullets. I x-rayed Kennedy's whole body, and we only had fragments. He didn't have anything larger than 4 or 5 mm long."

Reed was one of those people who just happened to be in the right place at the right time when history was made. He has a story to tell — one of how radiography was used in the postmortem investigation into the death of a president.

If the case is re-opened, Reed may once again have the opportunity to tell his story on a national level.

