

Governor John Connally and his wife, Nellie, studied the Zapruder film and the enlargements in the kitchen of their Picoso ranch house outside of Floresville near San Antonio. Connally sat hunched over the light table on which the pictures were laid out. Mrs. Connally sat to his left, just as she had in the presidential limousine on Nov. 22, 1963. As he reached the crucial sequence in which he says he was struck, the governor put down the magnifying glass and sat back, elbows on his knees, head tilted forward, his eyes staring at the floor. Until then, he had been commenting on each photograph. Now he paused to sum up the key moments:

“Between the time I heard the first shot and felt the impact of the other bullet that obviously hit me, I sensed something was wrong, and said, ‘Oh no, no, no.’ After I felt the impact I glanced down and saw that my whole chest was covered with blood.”

The governor and Mrs. Connally are absolutely convinced that their memories of that day are total and precise. “I’ll bet,” he challenges friends, “that you can recall every detail of the circumstances under which you heard of the assassination—or Pearl Harbor Day or the death of F.D.R.

“And that’s why I know every split second of what happened in that car until I lost consciousness. When I heard that first shot and was starting to turn to my right to

see what had happened, Nellie saw the President’s hands reaching for his throat. I started to look around over my left shoulder, and somewhere in that revolution I was hit. My recollection of that time gap, the distinct separation between the shot that hit the President and the impact of the one that hit me, is as clear today as it was then.” To Connally, a corroborative detail is that he remembers *hearing* the first shot before he felt a bullet hit him. Bullets, he reminded the Commission, travel faster than sound, and therefore the shot he heard could not have been the shot he felt.

Mrs. Connally’s recollection is as vivid as her husband’s. “As far as the first two shots go,” she says, “my memory is divided into four distinct events. First I heard the shot, or a strange loud noise—I’m not that expert on rifles—back behind us. Then next I turned to my right and saw the President gripping at his throat. Then I turned back toward John, and I heard the second shot that hit John. . . . I must have been looking right at him when it hit because I saw him recoil to the right . . . so you see I had time to look at the President *after* he was already hit, then turn and see John hit by a second shot. Then, of course, he slumped, and I reached to pull him toward me.”

Governor Connally bears a scar on his back, one on his chest, one

on either side of his right wrist, and one on top of his left thigh. “The doctors tell me there’s still a little metal left in me, but they did a beautiful job. I never have any pain whatsoever. But I can’t turn my right hand past a certain point. . . . I can’t even turn it palm up. It’s not even a handicap, just an occasional inconvenience, but it’s a reminder.”

The governor and his wife made only one appearance before the Warren Commission. He was questioned less than an hour, and she for approximately five minutes. “As a matter of fact,” says Mrs. Connally, “it was almost two months before any of the investigators showed any interest in examining John’s clothing. When he went into surgery they gave me his tie, trousers and socks in a paper bag. We finally located John’s shirt and suit coat, which we were concerned about because of the wallet and personal papers in his breast pocket, in Congressman Henry Gonzales’ clothes closet in Washington. I told the Secret Service and I guess the FBI that I had the clothes, but nobody seemed interested. After about seven weeks I took John’s shirt . . . it was all smeared with his flesh and blood, and dipped it in cold water several times to try and preserve it. Someone finally came to pick up his clothes. I think the Commission said his shirt was useless as evidence because it had been ‘laundered.’ But I never laundered it,