

Hearings Before the President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy

TESTIMONY OF DR. CHARLES J. CARRICO

The testimony of Dr. Charles J. Carrico was taken at 9:30 a.m., on March 25, 1964, at Parkland Memorial Hospital, Dallas, Tex., by Mr. Arlen Specter, assistant counsel of the President's Commission.

Mr. SPECTER. May the record show that Dr. Charles J. Carrico is present in response to a letter request for him to appear so that his deposition may be taken in connection with the proceedings of the President's Commission on the Investigation of the Assassination of President Kennedy in connection with the inquiry into all phases of that assassination, including medical care rendered at Parkland Memorial Hospital.

Dr. Carrico has been asked to testify relating to the treatment which he rendered the President at Parkland Hospital. With that preliminary statement of purpose, Dr. Carrico, would you please stand up and raise your right hand.

Do you solemnly swear the testimony you will give before the President's Commission in this deposition proceeding will be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Dr. CARRICO. I do.

Mr. SPECTER. Would you state your full name for the record, please?

Dr. CARRICO. Charles James Carrico.

Mr. SPECTER. What is your profession, sir?

Dr. CARRICO. Physician.

Mr. SPECTER. Are you duly licensed by the State of Texas to practice medicine?

Dr. CARRICO. Yes.

Mr. SPECTER. And would you outline briefly your educational background, please?

Dr. CARRICO. I attended grade school and high school in Denton, Tex.; received a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry from North Texas State College in 1957, and an M.D. from Southwestern Medical School in 1961, and served an internship at Parkland Memorial Hospital from 1961 to 1962, and a year of Fellowship in Surgery at Southwestern, followed by my residency here.

Mr. SPECTER. Are you working toward any specialty training, Doctor?

Dr. CARRICO. I am engaged in a general surgery residency which will qualify me for my boards in general surgery.

Mr. SPECTER. And what were your duties on November 22, 1963, at Parkland Hospital?

Dr. CARRICO. At that time I was assigned to the elective surgery service and was in the emergency room seeing some patients for evaluation for admission to the hospital.

Mr. SPECTER. And what were you doing specifically around 12 o'clock noon?

Dr. CARRICO. Approximately 12 noon or shortly thereafter I was in the clinic and was called to come into the emergency room to see these people and evaluate them for admission and treatment.

Mr. SPECTER. Were you notified that there was an emergency case on the way to the hospital at approximately 12:30?

Dr. CARRICO. Yes.

Mr. SPECTER. In which President Kennedy was involved?

Dr. CARRICO. At that time I was in the emergency room seeing these patients and the call was received that the President had been shot and was on his way to the hospital.

Mr. SPECTER. What is your best recollection as to what time it was when you received that call?

Dr. CARRICO. This was probably shortly after 12 :30.

Mr. SPECTER. And how long after that call was received did the President's party actually arrive at Parkland?

Dr. CARRICO. An estimation would be 2 minutes or less.

Mr. SPECTER. Describe what occurred upon the arrival of the President's party at Parkland, please.

Dr. CARRICO. We were in the emergency room preparing equipment in response to the call we had received when the nurse said over the intercom that they were here. Governor Connally was rolled in first and was taken to one of the trauma rooms.

Mr. SPECTER. And what identification was given to the trauma room to which Governor Connally was taken?

Dr. CARRICO. Trauma room 2.

Mr. SPECTER. Who was present at the time that Governor Connally came into the emergency area?

Dr. CARRICO. As I recall, Dr. Richard Dulany, myself, several of the nurses, Miss Bowron is the only one I can definitely remember. Don Curtis, oral surgery resident, and I believe Martin White, the intern, was there. These are the only people I remember being present at that time. We had already sent out a call for Dr. Baxter and Dr. Perry and the rest of the staff.

Mr. SPECTER. Did Dr. Dulany take any part in the treatment of President Kennedy?

Dr. CARRICO. No, no, sir; he didn't.

Mr. SPECTER. Did Dr. Martin White take any part in the treatment of President Kennedy?

Dr. CARRICO. I believe he was in there and did the—he helped Dr. Curtis with the cutdown, the initial cutdown.

Mr. SPECTER. What did Dr. Dulany do?

Dr. CARRICO. Dr. Dulany and I initially went to see the Governor, as I said, and he stayed with the Governor while I went to attend to the President, care for the President.

Mr. SPECTER. Who was the first doctor to reach President Kennedy on his arrival at Parkland Hospital?

Dr. CARRICO. I was.

Mr. SPECTER. And who else was with President Kennedy on his arrival, as best you can recollect it?

Dr. CARRICO. Mrs. Kennedy was there, and there were some men in the room, who I assumed were Secret Service men; I don't know.

Mr. SPECTER. Can you identify any nurses who were present, in addition to Miss Bowron?

Dr. CARRICO. No, I don't recall any of them.

Mr. SPECTER. What did you observe as to the President's condition upon his arrival?

Dr. CARRICO. He was lying on a carriage, his respirations were slow, spasmodic, described as agonal.

Mr. SPECTER. What do you mean by "agonal" if I may interrupt you for just a moment there, Doctor?

Dr. CARRICO. These are respirations seen in one who has lost the normal coordinated central control of respiration. These are spasmodic and usually reflect a terminal patient.

Mr. SPECTER. Would you continue to describe your observations of the President?

Dr. CARRICO. His—the President's color—I don't believe I said—he was an

ashen, bluish, grey, cyanotic, he was making no spontaneous movements, I mean, no voluntary movements at all. We opened his shirt and coat and tie and observed a small wound in the anterior lower third of the neck, listened very briefly, heard a few cardiac beats, felt the President's back, and detected no large or sucking chest wounds, and then proceeded to the examination of his head. The large skull and scalp wound had been previously observed and was inspected a little more closely. There seemed to be a 4-5 cm. area of avulsion of the scalp and the skull was fragmented and bleeding cerebral and cerebellar tissue. The pupils were inspected and seemed to be bilaterally dilated and fixed. No pulse was present, and at that time, because of the inadequate respirations and the apparent airway injury, a cuffed endotracheal tube was introduced, employing a laryngo scope. Through the laryngo scope there seemed to be some hematoma around the larynx and immediately below the larynx was seen the ragged tracheal injury. The endotracheal tube was inserted past this injury, the cuff inflated, and the tube was connected to a respirator to assist the inadequate respiration. At about this point the nurse reported that no blood pressure was obtained.

Mr. SPECTER. Dr. Carrico, with respect to this small wound in the anterior third of the neck which you have just described, could you be any more specific in defining the characteristics of that wound?

Dr. CARRICO. This was probably a 4-7 mm. wound, almost in the midline, maybe a little to the right of the midline, and below the thyroid cartilage. It was, as I recall, rather round and there were no jagged edges or stellate lacerations.

Mr. SPECTER. You said you felt the President's back?

Dr. CARRICO. Yes.

Mr. SPECTER. Would you describe in more detail just what the feeling of the back involved at that time?

Dr. CARRICO. Without taking the time to roll him over and look or to wash off the blood and debris, and while his coat and shirt were still on his arms—I just placed my hands at about his beltline or a little above and by slowly moving my hands upward detected that there was no large violation of the pleural cavity.

Mr. SPECTER. Why did you not take the time to turn him over?

Dr. CARRICO. This man was in obvious extreme distress and any more thorough inspection would have involved several minutes—well, several—considerable time which at this juncture was not available. A thorough inspection would have involved washing and cleansing the back, and this is not practical in treating an acutely injured patient. You have to determine which things, which are immediately life threatening and cope with them, before attempting to evaluate the full extent of the injuries.

Mr. SPECTER. Did you ever have occasion to look at the President's back?

Dr. CARRICO. No, sir. Before—well, in trying to treat an acutely injured patient, you have to establish an airway, adequate ventilation and you have to establish adequate circulation. Before this was accomplished the President's cardiac activity had ceased and closed cardiac massage was instituted, which made it impossible to inspect his back.

Mr. SPECTER. Was any effort made to inspect the President's back after he had expired?

Dr. CARRICO. No, sir.

Mr. SPECTER. And why was no effort made at that time to inspect his back?

Dr. CARRICO. I suppose nobody really had the heart to do it.

Mr. SPECTER. You had begun to describe some of the action taken in order to endeavor to revive the President. Will you continue with that description, please?

Dr. CARRICO. I believe we were to where the endotracheal tube had been inserted. After this, the President—his respirations were assisted by the Bennett machine. We again listened to his chest to attempt to evaluate the respirations. Breath sounds were diminished, especially on the right, despite the fact that the endotracheal tube was in place and the cuff inflated, there continued to be some leakage around the tracheal wound. For this reason Dr. Perry elected to perform a tracheotomy, and instructed some of the other physicians in the room to

insert chest tubes, thoracotomy tubes. At the beginning of the resuscitation attempt intravenous infusions had been started using polyethylene catheters by venesection, lactated renger solution, and uncross-matched type O Rh negative bloods were administered and 300 mg. of hydrocortisone were administered. Shortly after the completion of the tracheotomy, Dr. Bashour arrived and had connected the cardiac monitor. Although I never saw evidence of cardiac activity, electrical cardiac activity, Dr. Clark stated that there was a perceptible electrical beat which shortly thereafter disappeared, and closed cardiac massage was instituted. The cardiac massage was successful in maintaining carotid and radial pulses, but the patient's state rapidly deteriorated and at approximately 1 o'clock he was pronounced dead.

Mr. SPECTER. What, in your opinion, was the cause of death?

Dr. CARRICO. A head injury.

Mr. SPECTER. Have you now described all the treatment which was given to the President as best you recollect it?

Dr. CARRICO. As I recall; yes, sir; that's all—I'm sorry.

Mr. SPECTER. Did you have any occasion or opportunity to examine the President's clothing?

Dr. CARRICO. We did not do that.

Mr. SPECTER. And was no examination of clothing made, Dr. Carrico?

Dr. CARRICO. Again, this was a matter of time. The clothes were removed by the nurses, as is the usual practice, and the full attention was devoted to trying to resuscitate the President.

Mr. SPECTER. On the examination of the President's back which you described that you performed, did you note any bleeding from the back?

Dr. CARRICO. There was considerable blood on the cart and on his back. I could not tell if this came from his back or had fallen down from the head injury. There was also some cerebral tissue there.

Mr. SPECTER. What did your examination by feeling disclose with respect to whether he had any back wound?

Dr. CARRICO. I did not feel any. Now, this certainly wouldn't detect a small bullet entrance. All this examination is designed to do is to establish the fact that there is no gross injury to the chest posteriorly.

Mr. SPECTER. Is that a routine type of examination, to ascertain whether there is a gross injury to the chest posteriorly?

Dr. CARRICO. Yes, sir.

Mr. SPECTER. What did you observe as to the President's clothing with respect to the presence of a back brace, if any?

Dr. CARRICO. There was, on removing the President's shirt and coat, we noted he was wearing a standard back support.

Mr. SPECTER. Would you describe that back support, please?

Dr. CARRICO. As I recall, it was white cotton or some fibrous support, with staves, bones and if I remember buckled in the front.

Mr. SPECTER. How wide was it?

Dr. CARRICO. How wide?

Mr. SPECTER. Yes, sir.

Dr. CARRICO. I don't know; I didn't examine below—you see—as I recall, it came about to his umbilicus—navel area.

Mr. SPECTER. Was there any Ace bandage applied to the President's hips that you observed?

Dr. CARRICO. No; I didn't remove his pants.

Mr. SPECTER. Did you have any opportunity to observe that area of his body when his pants were removed?

Dr. CARRICO. I had the opportunity, but I didn't look.

Mr. SPECTER. What doctors were involved in the treatment of President Kennedy?

Dr. CARRICO. Well, of course, Dr. Perry, Dr. Clark, Dr. Baxter, Dr. McClelland, Dr. Peters was in the room, Dr. Bashour, Dr. Ronald Jones, Dr. Curtis, I believe, Dr. White was there—initially, at least, I don't recall right offhand anyone else. There were other doctors in there, I just can't specifically remember—there were 10 or 15 people in the room before it was over.

Mr. SPECTER. Do you have an opinion, Dr. Carrico, as to the cause of the punctate wound in the President's throat?

Dr. CARRICO. No; I really don't—just on the basis of what I know. We didn't make an attempt, as you know, to ascertain the track of the bullets.

Mr. SPECTER. I can't hear you.

Dr. CARRICO. As you know, we didn't try to ascertain the track of the bullets.

Mr. SPECTER. And why did you not make an effort to determine the track of the bullets?

Dr. CARRICO. Again, in trying to resuscitate the President, the time to do this was not available. The examination conducted was one to try to establish what life threatening situations were present and to correct these.

Mr. SPECTER. Was there any discussion among the doctors who attended President Kennedy as to the cause of the neck wound?

Dr. CARRICO. Yes; after that afternoon.

Mr. SPECTER. And what conversations were there?

Dr. CARRICO. As I recall, Dr. Perry, and I talked and tried after—later in the afternoon to determine what exactly had happened, and we were not aware of the missile wound to the back, and postulated that this was either a tangential wound from a fragment, possibly another entrance wound. It could have been an exit wound, but we knew of no other entrance wound.

Mr. SPECTER. Was the wound in the neck consistent with being either an entry or exit wound, in your opinion?

Dr. CARRICO. Yes.

Mr. SPECTER. Or, did it look to be more one than the other?

Dr. CARRICO. No; it could have been either, depending on the size of the missile, the velocity of the missile, the tissues that it struck.

Mr. SPECTER. Dr. Carrico, assume these facts, if you will—first, that President Kennedy was struck by a 6.5-mm. missile which entered the upper-right posterior thorax, just above the scapula, being 14 cm. from the tip of the right acromion, a-c-r-o-m-i-o-n (spelling) process, and 14 cm. below the tip of the right mastoid process, and that the missile traveled between two strap muscles, proceeded through the fascia channel without violating the pleural cavity, striking the side of the trachea and exiting in the lower third of the anterior throat. Under the circumstances which I have just described to you, would the wound which you observed on the President's throat be consistent with the damage which a 6.5-mm. missile, traveling at the rate of approximately 2,000 feet per second, that being muzzle velocity, with the President being 160 to 250 feet away from the rifle, would that wound be consistent with that type of a weapon at that distance, with the missile taking the path I have just described to you?

Dr. CARRICO. I certainly think it could.

Mr. SPECTER. And what would your thinking be as to why it could produce that result?

Dr. CARRICO. I think a missile of this size, traveling in such a direction that it had very little deformity, struck nothing which would cause it to begin tumbling, and was slowed very little by passing through this relatively easy traversed planes, would not expend a great deal of energy on exit and would very likely not tumble, thus producing a small, round, even wound.

Mr. SPECTER. What has been your experience, if any, with gunshot wounds?

Dr. CARRICO. In working in the emergency room at Parkland, we have seen a fairly good number of gunshot wounds, and with .22 and .25 caliber weapons of somewhat, possibly somewhat lower velocity but at closer range, we have seen entrance and exit wounds of almost the same size, especially the same size, when passing through superficial structures.

Mr. SPECTER. And what superficial structures did those missiles pass through to which you have just referred?

Dr. CARRICO. The ones I was referring to in particular were through the muscles of the leg superficially.

Mr. SPECTER. Approximately how many missile wounds, bullet wounds, have you had an opportunity to observe in your practice, Doctor?

Dr. CARRICO. I would guess 150 or 200.

Mr. SPECTER. Would you describe as precisely for me as possible the nature of the head wound which you observed on the President?

Dr. CARRICO. The wound that I saw was a large gaping wound, located in the right occipitoparietal area. I would estimate to be about 5 to 7 cm. in size, more or less circular, with avulsions of the calvarium and scalp tissue. As I stated before, I believe there was shredded macerated cerebral and cerebellar tissues both in the wounds and on the fragments of the skull attached to the dura.

Mr. SPECTER. Did you notice any other opening in the head besides the one you have just described?

Dr. CARRICO. No, sir; I did not.

Mr. SPECTER. Specifically, did you notice a bullet wound below the large gaping hole which you described?

Dr. CARRICO. No, sir.

Mr. SPECTER. What is your opinion, Doctor, if you have one, as to how many bullets were involved in the injuries inflicted on the President?

Dr. CARRICO. As far as I could tell, I would guess that there were two.

Mr. SPECTER. Prior to today, have you ever been interviewed by any representative of the Federal Government?

Dr. CARRICO. Yes, sir; the Secret Service talked to us shortly after the President's death.

Mr. SPECTER. Do you recall who talked to you on that occasion?

Dr. CARRICO. No; I don't recall his name.

Mr. SPECTER. What was the content of that interview?

Dr. CARRICO. We spoke to him in Dr. Shires' office in the medical school concerning the President's death, mostly my part was just a statement that the written statement that I had submitted was true.

Mr. SPECTER. I now call your attention, Doctor, to a document heretofore identified as Commission Exhibit No. 392, to a 2-page summary which purports to bear your signature, and dated November 22, 1963, 1620 hours, and ask you first of all if that is a photostatic copy of a report which you submitted?

Dr. CARRICO. Yes; it is.

Mr. SPECTER. And, is that your signature at the end?

Dr. CARRICO. Yes.

Mr. SPECTER. And are the facts set forth in there true and correct?

Dr. CARRICO. They are.

Mr. SPECTER. With respect to this notation of a ragged wound of the trachea, which is contained in your report, could you describe that in more specific detail?

Dr. CARRICO. In inserting the endotracheal tube, a laryngo scope was inserted and it was noted that there was some discoloration at the lateral edge of the larynx and there appeared to be some swelling and hematoma and in looking through the chords which were partially open, a ragged tissue and some blood was seen within the trachea itself. This was the extent of what I saw.

Mr. SPECTER. Would that specific portion of the wound give any indication as to direction of the bullet?

Dr. CARRICO. No; it wouldn't.

Mr. SPECTER. Was there any characteristic within the neck area to give any indication of the direction of the bullet?

Dr. CARRICO. No, sir.

Mr. SPECTER. Did the Secret Service man whom you just described ask you any questions beyond whether the contents of your report were true?

Dr. CARRICO. I can't recall any specific questions. He did ask some others and they did concern the wounds, and what we felt the wounds were from, the direction, and so forth.

Mr. SPECTER. And what response did you make to those inquiries?

Dr. CARRICO. Essentially the same as I have here. I said I don't remember specifically.

Mr. SPECTER. Have you talked to any other representative of the Federal Government prior to today?

Dr. CARRICO. Not in connection with this.

Mr. SPECTER. Well, have you talked to someone in connection with something else?

Dr. CARRICO. Just some Government employment—Civil Service.

Mr. SPECTER. But the only time you talked to anyone about your treatment of President Kennedy and your observations relating to that treatment was on this one occasion with the Secret Service?

Dr. CARRICO. Yes; except I just recalled since that time, another Secret Service Agent—I did speak to him briefly. He asked me if I had any other information and I said "no".

Mr. SPECTER. Is that the total contents of that conversation?

Dr. CARRICO. Yes.

Mr. SPECTER. Prior to the time we went on the record here before you were sworn in, did you and I have a brief conversation about the purpose of this disposition, and the general nature of the questions which I would ask you?

Dr. CARRICO. Yes, sir.

Mr. SPECTER. And was the information which you gave me at that time the same as that to which you have testified here on the record?

Dr. CARRICO. Yes; it was.

Mr. SPECTER. Have you ever changed any of your opinions regarding your treatment and observations of President Kennedy?

Dr. CARRICO. Not as I recall.

Mr. SPECTER. By the way, Dr. Carrico, how old are you at the present time?

Dr. CARRICO. Twenty-eight.

Mr. SPECTER. Was any bullet found in the President's body.

Dr. CARRICO. Not by us.

Mr. SPECTER. Do you have any other notes or written record of any sort concerning your treatment of President Kennedy?

Dr. CARRICO. Not concerning the treatment. I have a note I wrote to my children for them to read some day, but it doesn't concern the treatment.

Mr. SPECTER. What does that concern?

Dr. CARRICO. It just concerns the day and how I felt about it and why it happened—maybe.

Mr. SPECTER. Personal observations on your part?

Dr. CARRICO. Yes.

Mr. SPECTER. Did you participate in any of the press conferences?

Dr. CARRICO. No.

Mr. SPECTER. Do you have anything to add which you think might be of assistance in any way to the President's Commission?

Dr. CARRICO. No, sir; I don't believe I do.

Mr. SPECTER. Dr. Carrico, have I made available to you a letter requesting your appearance on Monday, March 30, before the Commission, and do you acknowledge receipt of that?

Dr. CARRICO. I do.

Mr. SPECTER. And would it be possible for you to attend and testify at that time?

Dr. CARRICO. I certainly can.

Mr. SPECTER. Washington, D.C.

Dr. CARRICO. Yes.

Mr. SPECTER. Thank you very much, Dr. Carrico.

Dr. CARRICO. Yes, sir.

TESTIMONY OF DR. MALCOLM OLIVER PERRY

The testimony of Dr. Malcolm Oliver Perry was taken at 3:25 p.m., on March 25, 1964, at Parkland Memorial Hospital, Dallas, Tex., by Mr. Arlen Specter, assistant counsel of the President's Commission.

Mr. SPECTER. May the record show that Dr. Malcolm O. Perry is present in response to a letter request that he appear here to have his deposition taken in connection with the proceedings of the President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy, which is now inquiring into all facets of the